A Lexicon of Non-aligned Poetics

EDITORS

**Bojana Cvejić
Goran Sergej Pristaš**

PARALLEL SLALOM

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Introductory Note

≈ **Bojana Cvejić and Goran Sergej Pristaš**

What does it take to create one's own concepts? What does it mean to own a concept? These questions are posed from the viewpoint of a distinctive set of artistic and theoretical practices that have been developing since the 1960s, and subsequent to the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 into – to borrow curator Ješa Denegri's apt phrase – the "common Yugoslav cultural space",[1] and else-

where. What distinguishes the artists, dramaturges, theorists, editors, writers and "cultural workers" who write or are written about in this volume isn't the same historical, geopolitical, and cultural framework of belonging they are supposed to represent here – also because a considerable number of writers come from contexts other than those in Eastern Europe – but rather a kind of thought that arises from within, or close to, artistic practice that in turn becomes an instrument of looking past art. We account for it by "poetics", using the term to emphasise the productive power of thought as opposed to the genre of interpretation that classifies specimens of kinds: a body, or a language, or an idea of this or that kind.

Many of the notions explored in these essays have either emerged in reflection on principles, procedures, manners, moods or modes of art production, or served to cross-check, re-cut, or recompose art works, movements, tendencies, contexts and lived, experiences according to poetical and political problems that may not have been foregrounded as identifying features. What makes them non-aligned is that they are neither curatorial nor technical terms, nor do they effectively represent what is essentially Yugoslav, East-European, or for that matter exclusively of artistic or theoretical provenance. The reason why "artists' pages" presenting performance artists from the Yugoslav context are "empty" while theorists from the East continue to rehearse discourses on Western art (Pristaš) lies in the peculiar position of both this thought and these art practices that cannot be adequately accounted for by post-colonial theory and other academic variants for representing difference and otherness in culturalist logic. It is equally dissatisfying to regard them by the aesthetic criteria of a hegemonic view of modernity, for which many artists, works, concepts, and tendencies discussed here would appear *not* (individualist, pure or original, disinterested or radical, crafted or savage, and above all, recognisable) *enough*. By contrast, they often qualify as *too* (collectivist or contextual (the *Terms* study group), bungled or "second-hand" (Vujanović), over-informed but "unschooled", hybrid or *bricolé*) to merit special theoretical attention. They might pass as aes-

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1   This poetical term was proposed by Ješa Denegri, for the title of the exhibition he curated at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade ("Jedinstveni jugoslovenski kulturni prostor", 2000). The common Yugoslav cultural space is, as Borislav Mikulić has interpreted Denegri, the artistic and intellectual world determined by historical polycentredness and decentralisation in the organisation of the state, whereby the "common" isn't given or assigned, but is an effect of the dynamics of individual and institutional connections between the actors of this scene, being also the effect of the artistic production (collectives, groups, movements) and its autonomous constitution. Cf. Branislav Mikulić, "Poietički pojam prakse i njegov kulturni kontekst", *Anagram,* vol. 18, available at http://www.hrvatskiplus.org/prilozi/dokumenti/anagram/Mikulic_Poieticki.pdf, accessed in January 2013.

thetically unnoticed or dull because they are radically amateur (Milohnić) or aesthetically "unburdened" (Cvejić), that is, indifferent to the imperative of branding themselves through the genealogy of medium-specificity or style.

To answer the opening questions, we can say that making concepts and claiming them as one's own here isn't about finding autonomy in conceptual self-determination, akin to a defence of minoritarian voices against co-optations of hegemonic positions. It is rather about investing common notions with historically and politically specific meanings, as in Stilinović's apology of laziness, for instance, or in Šuvaković's notion of "generation", or in Kunst's exegesis of the judgement of belatedness. On the one hand, devising new words – such as Milohnić's "artivism" or Cvejić's "proceduralism" – might seem to risk nominalism, where names correspond to singularities but don't validate themselves in proper case studies; but on the other hand, the notions behind these neologisms help to sharpen discussion on wider concerns, such as the nexus between art and political activism, democratically legitimate knowledge and political handicap.

Let us give an example that will explain how this collection of essays arose. In response to a quest of reconsidering education in dance in a laboratory organised by Tanzquartier Wien in 2008, Kunst, Pristaš, Milohnić, and Janša observed that contemporary dance in the countries of the former Yugoslavia doesn't have a legacy in democracy, with which the rise of modern dance in America has been associated. However, the dominance of ballet, military parade, and folklore in socialism had it that dance "pierced through" other forms and sites in which it wasn't expected or couldn't be silenced, as Janša's operation of reconstructing the performance *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks* demonstrates. Accessing contemporaneity requires rehallucinating the past from its blank spots and making a "tiger's leap" (Vujanović) into history, where, in Benjamin's words, appropriating "a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger",[2] can have the redemp-

2 Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History", in *Selected Writings, volume IV, 1938-1940*, trans. E. Jephcott (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 391.

tive power of recasting the future from the unfulfilled promises of the past. Thus, the piercing of modern-dance movement through the visual arts, poetry, and theatre helped Kunst, Pristaš, Milohnić, and Janša to argue for contemporary dance as a "non-disciplinary form of expression", and as a parable for a non-identitarian type of education in the opening essay of this collection ("East-Dance-Academy").

"Piercing through" exemplifies a poetical concept with an operation that we deemed comparable to "parallel slalom". The metaphor of a sloping ride underlines the swift parallel connections between artistic conceptual imagination and critical insight into history as the agency of the political unconscious, conjoining the poetical and political registers in a materialist analysis, as Kostanić's perspectives on recent performance reconstructions shows. Therefore, the first heading ("Historicize, or else") reformulates Kostanić's use of Fredric Jameson's motto ("always historicize") with an ironic reference to Jon McKenzie's book *Perform, or else*, in order to define terms for political attitudes and procedures of reconstructing performances or reconceiving art history ("Reconstructions" by Marko Kostanić, "Operation, Re-enactment, Reconstruction" by Goran Sergej Pristaš, "Reconstruction 2, On Reconstructing *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks*" by Janez Janša, "History Reloaded: A Tiger's Leap" by Ana Vujanović and "Generations" by Miško Šuvaković). In a counterintuitive move for the current knowledge economy, "The Lapse of Knowledge" groups three essays that undertake knowledge in negative terms of amateurism, ignorance and inadequacy ("Radical Amateurism" by Aldo Milohnić, "Unlearned, Terminally" by Terminally Unschooled, "Secondhand Knowledge" by Ana Vujanović).

The third part unravels the currency of cinematographic modes of production, action, and expression in choreography, performance art, visual arts, as well as social theory throughout the twentieth century, as Tomislav Gotovac's text put so eloquently: "As Soon As I Open My Eyes I See a Movie" (apart from Gotovac, *"We cannot promise to do anything more than to experiment"* by Ana Janevski, "Americanism and Chaplinism" by Owen Hatherly and "Slideshow" by Isabel

de Naverán). "Passion for Procedures" presents essays that discuss politically activist ("Artivism" by Aldo Milohnić) and politically debilitating procedures ("Proceduralism" by Bojana Cvejić), as well as a point of departure of art-making that ideologically differs from individualism ("Eastern European Contextual Art: Approaching, Diagnosing, and Treating the Problems" by the *Terms* study group). The fifth heading stands for a tactical approach to poetics, regarding physical space, discursive site, and directing attention ("*Prvi broj* (The First Issue) / Acting Without Publicising it / Delayed Audience" by Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača, 'Why Do We Produce Ourselves, Promote Ourselves, Distribute Ourselves, Explain Ourselves and Why Are We 'As Well' Around?" and "Notes on Spaces and Intervals" by Goran Sergej Pristaš, "Protocol" by Ivana Ivković, "A Shift of Attention" and "Notes on Temporary Zones, Shelters, and Project Spaces" by Ric Allsopp). By "Dramaturgy of the Non-aligned" we delineate a thematically dispersive zone of problems that have a potential to dramatise thought ("Problems that Aesthetically 'Unburden' Us" by Bojana Cvejić, "In Praise of Laziness" by Mladen Stilinović, "Politics of Affection and Uneasiness" and "Delay" by Bojana Kunst, "The Festival as a 'Microphysics of Power' (Foucault) in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia" by the *Terms* study group, "18 Paragraphs for a Metaphysics of Movement" and "Better Group, Sex Better Life" by Mårten Spångberg, and "Digitality and the Shattering of Tradition" by Jonathan Beller). Reading this lexicon will not help anyone make better art or better theory. Perhaps, what it could do most is arouse interest in considering ideology in its positive connotation, as passions and concerns that do not just shape a worldview (unconsciously), but also trigger experiments in art and thought alike.

<p style="text-align:center">∗ ∗ ∗</p>

We would like to thank Performance Studies International Conference #15 in Zagreb (2009) for hosting a shift called "Parallel Slalom" in which some of these essays were orally tested. The following projects and initiatives have contribut-

ed to the process of making this book: Allianz Kulturstiftung, which supported the project "What to Affirm? What to Perform?" (issuing from East-Dance-Academy) in cooperation with the partner institutions Centre for Drama Art Zagreb, Walking Theory Belgrade, Per Art Novi Sad, Centrul Naţional al Dansului Bucureşti Bucharest, Maska Ljubljana, and Tanzquartier Wien. We are grateful to all of our authors for their contributions, especially written for this volume, or generously shared with us. A special thanks goes to Dragana Jovović and Jasna Žmak for coordinating the publication, as well as to Žarko Cvejić and William Wheeler for translating and proofreading.

EAST-DANCE-ACADEMY

≈ **working notes by Janez Janša, Bojana Kunst, Aldo Milohnić, and Goran Sergej Pristaš**
taken on July 5th, 2006 in Tanzquartier Vienna

Premises and Concept

The great advantage of contemporary dance as one of the youngest art disciplines is its permanent articulation and re-articulation. Although it is still struggling for its own institutionalisation in most parts of the world, we may say that the greatest chance for dance is to establish itself as a practice of permanent re-articulation rather than a discipline. This would be possible only if dance were understood as a cultural and mental paradigm, rather than a mere aesthetic discipline.

Education in contemporary dance is still rarely found. If it does exist, it is mainly based on the master-student relationship, on the situation in which someone's personal knowledge is objectified in the moment of transfer to those who are exposed to the transfer of knowledge. The objectification of personal knowledge is possible because of the authority of the situation, which authorizes the master as the bearer of knowledge. This situation has rarely been reflected upon, since dance education has been established as an extension of general education, constructed as an ideological apparatus of the state. Education in dance understood as a discipline means to discipline a student, to prepare him/her for the reproduction of the master-student matrix in the choreographer-performer situation. If general education in schools trains us to become good citizens, dance schools train us to become good citizens in the profession of dance, turning us into an always-already standing by work force.

The idea of the East-Dance-Academy is based on the fact that we can still rarely find regular dance education in Eastern European countries (the same holds for Southern and Northern Europe). The knowledge of dance is fragmentarily imported via students who have been educated in Western Europe or in the United States. Mostly, they are trained dancers, who visit schools and workshops and import the acquired technical knowledge. Local dancers are educated through the knowledge of a returnee or through workshops where the knowledge of a Western master is compressed in time and space. Therefore, everything we know in dance is based on the institutionalised dance knowledge from the West. And dance knowledge in the West is mainly institutionalised as the knowledge of the master.

The East-Dance-Academy should definitely have a completely different name, but for the purposes of its initiation, its present title is sufficiently associative and provocative to keep the debate sharp. Its potential programme, structure, institutional frame … they should be based not on compiling existing Western models, but on rewriting European dance history, which should include the specific dance history of Eastern Europe.

Rewriting the History of European Dance

An urgent issue in dance is to redefine European dance history: to substitute it by one that would not be deter-

mined by Western parameters or based on aesthetic evaluation. That approach would be something that we might call *political aesthetics* (analogous to political economy).

Dance as an art form has always been considered an art form of democratic societies. There is no other art form that would be so closely linked to contemporaneity (modern, post-modern, contemporary) and freedom as dance is. Dance is an art form *par excellence* of the First World, the democratic and free world.

It is not surprising that the official histories of contemporary dance do not mention dance in non-democratic societies. There is only folklore, ballet, and the military parade – all of them being forms typical of pre-democratic regimes.

Even in Second and Third World countries, the history of dance as an art form is seen entirely through the eyes of the West. If there is a dance history, it is the history of some student of a great Western master, mostly Laban, Wigman, or Palucca.

The history of dance is not understood here as an institutional history with its developed blank areas and blind spots, which comes very (suspiciously enough) close to the geopolitical mapping of the Western world. What interests us is precisely this "different history", which Derrida defines as the "history of paradoxical laws and non-dialectical discontinuities, a history of absolutely heterogeneous pockets, irreducible particularities, of unheard of and incalculable sexual differences…"[1] What one should do is map the spaces and the articulation of bodies differently, disclose the history of events and the affirmations of dance through other forms. Such a history might reveal that the history of dance in the West has existed all the time, but as the domain of material, bodily transition of genres and recognised forms.

What one should do is detect and find those places, areas, and events where dance has been *piercing through*. If

1 Jacques Derrida and C. McDonald, "Interview: Choreographies", in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 167.

FORENSICS AND FUGUE FOR THE FOLDER, Marjana Krajač
Zagreb, 2009, photo by: Iva Korenčić Grubišić-Čabo

we take the example of our close environment, then performances by the conceptual group *OHO* and the *Pupilija Ferkeverk* poets' collective (both active in Slovenia in the late 60s) as well as *Kugla glumište* and Milana Broš (both active in Croatia in the 70s) were the places where dance was *piercing through*. Dance could not find its own institutional status until the communist regime had started to decline (in the 80s), but it was constantly present and emerging in those fields that were the so-called fields of experiment – visual arts, experimental music and theatre, performance art. The critical interpretations of performances by *Pupilija Ferkeverk* say that 'they used elements of dance'. But actually it was the other way around – it was dance that had found its way into their performance, however poetic this may sound. To put it simply, the notion that dance did not exist in non-democratic societies is a highly questionable thesis, and the urgent thing to do is redefine the history of dance. This would also shed a completely new light on the processes that have been going on in European dance over the last ten years.

East

East is not only a geographical category, it is also a political notion, as well as a mental structure.

There are, however, *hidden* histories of the East, histories that some researchers even consider *impossible* (cf. *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, edited by D. Djurić and M. Šuvaković, MIT Press, 2003). In order to create the preconditions for these histories to become possible, there should be evidence of a *third* history included in the canonic dance historiography. On the other hand, many performances that were produced in Eastern European countries in the last few decades of the 20th century incorporated not only material elements of dance but – and that is even more important – a mental operation of "thinking-through-dance", which was not merely aesthetic, but also had important political implications. This fact of dance

Samo Gosarič: *Walk Performance* – re-enactments (Tomislav Gotovac's "Streaking"), Ljubljana, 2008, Photo by: Urška Boljkovac

tomislav gotovac
STREAKING
(belgrade1971)

Performance instructions:

Run naked for 90 seconds in the town centre

re-enactmenttextSAMO.GOSARIČ designMAGLISH.MA productionMASKA.LJUBLJANA

piercing through other media and genres was also related to the status of art production at that time and the lack of institutional background, supporting infrastructure, etc. In the Eastern context, dance and performance arts were produced in rather poor material conditions, in a spontaneous manner, and even on the edge of political or/and cultural incident. Furthermore, performers were coming to the performing arts from different artistic contexts, i.e. literature, fine arts, art history and theory, etc. Usually they lacked any specific dance education.

There are many *vectors of research*; each points in a different direction. One of them might be an analysis of the (cultural, political, economic...) context and a mapping of dance production that was geographically located in the East. More precisely, it should include not only the artistic production of performances, but also the theoretical production, i.e. dance theory, which was (and still is) well developed and innovative in that part of Europe. Another vector of research might be a more relational approach, comparing East and West as mental categories, each with its own patterns and presuppositions. In this context, it could be productive to work with a range of notions that might provide good starting points for such a theoretical operation: for instance, the list of the so-called "seven sins" of the East as it was constructed in the framework of the *7 Sins* exhibition in Ljubljana (Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, December 2004 / January 2005). These "sins", which are allegedly typical of Eastern Europe, would be *collectivism, utopianism, masochism, cynicism, laziness, non-professionalism,* and *love of the West*.

Rather than thinking in aesthetic terms, we are interested in "coming out" of the dance *habitus* of the politically and ideologically dense societies of the East. Although there is nothing essential about the East as such, there is at least a persistent idea of transitivity that was always assigned to the former political regimes of the East in terms of transition from socialism to communism, then from fake communism to wild capitalism, etc. This never-ending flow/ flood of transition(s) is in fact something like living in a con-

Samo Gosarič: *Walk Performance* – re-enactments (Vojin Kovač – *Chubby's Walking in Pyjamas in the Streets of Ljubljana*), Ljubljana, 2008, Photo by: Urška Boljkovac

vojin kovač - chubby
WALKING IN PYJAMAS IN THE STREETS OF LJUBLJANA

(ljubljana1967)

Performance instructions:

1. Put on your pyjamas and walk in them along the streets

2. Do not address people, keep your distance
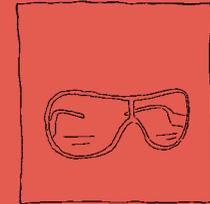
Option: you can wear sunglasses

re-enactmenttext**SAMO.GOSARIČ** design**MAGLISH.MA** production**MASKA.LJUBLJANA**

stant *trans*, i.e. in a state of art that is always in motion, in constant transformation, transition, and translation. Moments of transgression, of subversive singularities rather than massive oppositional cultural practices, are at the same time chains of transitional moments with their intrinsic potential to transform both space and time, to shift the co-ordinate system in which the artwork is produced. In other words, the specific quality of transition comes out of an intensive approach to the debate on the "transitional moment" (here and now) rather than the transitional period (understood as a massive time metaphor, in which one acts now and then), which demands a reconnection of our optic and sonic links to the world we live in through a different approach to the production of time. In the process of transition, of becoming the same, only more redistributed and actualised, one is always late, especially in comparison with the engaging speed of capital. Mental sets that we call "dance" are *trans*-positions of thinking, which are graspable in a metaphorical, yet material (traceable) way.

Dance

The problems that East-Dance-Academy is formulating are not relevant only for the Eastern European context. We do not think that there is anything essential about Eastern European Art, but this longing for essentialism produces an over-identification with the Western *imaginarium* of the East. In fact, it seems the problems we are dealing with are becoming more transparent once they are on the outside of this image, being a part of it, but also a threshold to its sphere.

Dance's piercing through is, therefore, not a phenomenon that we wish to pursue in comparison with the disciplinary history of Western dance. What we would like to do is to   isolate dance as a cultural category that still produces a sort of discomfort within the aesthetical disciplinary debate. And that is because dance is still predominantly perceived as or accused of self-expressionism and romanticism, of freedom from all meaning.

EAST-DANCE-ACADEMY
Janez Janša, Bojana Kunst, Aldo Milohnić, and Goran Sergej Pristaš

Samo Gosarič: *Walk Performance* – re-enactments (David Nez – *Selection Criteria for Actions (leaflet)*), Ljubljana, 2008, Photo by: Urška Boljkovac

david nez
SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ACTIONS (LEAFLET)   **(ljubljana1970)**

Performance instructions:

1. Photocopy the leaflets
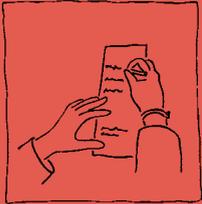
2. Under heading 1., insert the date and hour of the action. Under headings 1. and 2., insert the place of the action

3. At a chosen time, stand in a chosen location and hand out the leaflets to the passers-by

re-enactmenttextSAMO.GOSARIČ   designMAGLISH.MA   productionMASKA.LJUBLJANA

This leads us to the necessity of exploring the cultural category (strategy) of dance as a non-disciplinary form of expression, emerging from and piercing through other disciplinary forms of art, such as performance art, music, film, etc. Therefore, we will focus on the reconstruction and archaeology of those emancipatory strategies of art production in Eastern Europe, in which dance has pierced through and inscribed a lightness of thinking in favour of joy, creativity, and improvisation.

Unprofessionalism

The unprofessional attitudes that have allegedly been characteristic of Eastern Europe are reflected in works by artists who are interested precisely in the potential of such attitudes.

First, not being professional may imply a sincere and "loving" (amateur) approach to a certain field. Unprofessional and non-professional attitudes developed by artists and social groups are directed not only against structured work procedures and established ways of relating, but also against the marketplace. Such attitudes imply joy, improvisation, and creativity.

Additionally, it is possible for artists to enter numerous fields in which they are by no means professionals and to work within, and with, these fields, offering new insights, approaches, and perspectives as well as, sometimes, criticism.
Quoted from the concept for the 7 Sins *exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana*

The fact that the Eastern European visual and performance artist is engaged in dance and takes part in language inevitably leads to the discussion on the formative categories of choreography and performance as metaphors in favour of thinking dance as a cultural rather than merely an aesthetic category. It asks for re-approaching the expressive character of dance, but also, beyond the paradigm of self-expression, for redefining dance in accordance with the philosophical concepts of "lightness" (Nietzsche, Badiou), *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger), "weak thought" (Vattimo), "whatever" (*quodlibet*) (Agamben), etc.

Samo Gosarič: *Walk Performance* – lecture performance (Tomaž Šalamun – *Drawing the Line*), Ljubljana, 2008, Photo by: Urška Boljkovac

tomaž šalamun
DRAWING THE LINE
(novisad1969)

Performance instructions:

1. Decide on a path in a town from point A to point B

2. Take a large pair of compasses for drawing with chalk on a school blackboard

3. With a big box of chalk under your arm and the school compasses in your hand, follow the path and carefully draw a continuous line behind you

4. At the end of the path or in response to the questions of the passers-by, read the poem attached on the back. (Instead of the word *gallery insert the starting point of your walk).

Option: you can take along two friends

re-enactment+textSAMO.GOSARIČ designMAGLISH.MA productionMASKA.LJUBLJANA

The strategies of dance should be rethought in the light of emancipatory will, opening up towards the material change, the passion for reality. There is a risk that those strategies will remain ungraspable or non-objectifiable, but we should also think about the field of art as a sort of space generated by technicity, a discovery of practical methods of ordering and structuring, which do not guarantee results, but nevertheless generate powerful effects, products of social and cultural change.

Academy

It seems to us that today we should start thinking from the beginning and consider a generic model of production and exchange of knowledge in art, escaping the idea of a centre in opposition to which a periphery is configured, that we should open the highways of knowledge between old and new institutions, those that still need to be defined.

There are several steps that need to be taken:

1. One should formulate a model in which the consumers define the type of knowledge they wish to obtain (there are modified variants on the black market of knowledge).
2. The existing institutions for the production of knowledge should not be perceived as competitive or opposed; instead, they should be integrated in the network of other institutions and non-institutionalised subjects in the production of knowledge, which would erase the difference between centre and periphery and introduce a new dynamism in the distribution and exchange of knowledge.
3. One should consider forms of knowledge production and transmission that exclude or postpone the appropriation of knowledge by institutions, since forms of knowledge within the network should remain a sort of public good.

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Samo Gosarič: *Walk Performance* – lecture performance (Marko Pogačnik – *Walking With an Embroidered Beetle on a Winter Coat*), Ljubljana, 2008, Photo by: Urška Boljkovac

marko pogačnik
WALKING WITH AN EMBROIDERED BEETLE ON A WINTER COAT (around1965-)

Performance instructions:

1. With colourful threads embroider a beetle on the back of a coat or jacket, so precisely that it seems real

2. During your everyday errands, wear the garment at a time when there are no beetles, in a place where there are no beetles (e.g., in winter, in a town)

3. In the street, overtake people ...
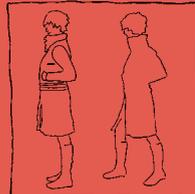
4. ... or stop in front of them, so that they notice the beetle

re-enactmenttextSAMO.GOSARIČ   designMAGLISH.MO   productionMASKA.LJUBLJANA

By the term "generic model" we mean a certain non-identitarian type of education, which is again a tautology, since it screams out the fact that it is happening in art. Therefore, it means running away from the representation of the state of things, but at the same time running towards the edge of an abyss where the situation can only be observed from behind. In a way, that is a reflection of transformativity in art; learning how to look through and from art rather than learning how to create art. Hereby, we are necessarily entering a paradox where the "theatocracy" becomes rather interesting, though not as an identification with the spectator's gaze, but rather as the artist's effort to learn how to become an observer by looking from his or her own work and than backwards through it.

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The project *Parallel Slalom* is initiated as a part of the East-Dance-Academy activities within the project *What To Affirm? What To Perform?*, a cooperation of Allianz Kulturstiftung, Centre for Drama Art Zagreb, Walking Theory Belgrade, Per Art Novi Sad, Centrul Naţional al Dansului Bucureşti Bucharest, Maska Ljubljana, and Tanzquartier Wien.

I

Historicize, or Else

Reconstructions*

≈ **Marko Kostanić**

Always historicize!
Fredric Jameson

Reconstruction has become one of the domi-nant models of production in contempo-rary performing arts. While methods, moti-vations, and types of representation may vary, there is a noticeable common frame-work that encompasses all of those proce-dures. However, that common framework does not consist of an aggregate of specific artistic solutions that authors em-ploy in their reconstructions, nor is it determined by any similarly "endogenous" factors. The framework is a politico-ideological context that a reconstruction project assumes as determinant and then exhausts and finally reproduces. The accentuated interpretative primacy of this wider perspective is conditioned by whatever it is that is being reconstructed, a performance or an artistic event, the basic ground that every

reconstruction entails. The very act of choosing a certain performance or artistic event from a specific historical mo-ment and reconstructing it at a later date implies a straight-forward premise: the selected event was exceptionally im-portant and the moment at hand, defined in any range what-ever, calls for reconstructing it. (This bears an uncanny re-semblance to a typical director's explanation for choosing a play from the literary canon: there is something in it that may tell us about our society today, usually in terms of mo-rality. The difference is that such explanations assume a to-tal historical vacuum, except the "now", which is necessary to construct the vacuum.) The premise is necessarily associat-ed with a certain stance that incorporates a number of polit-ical and historical epistemological layers, explicated or not. The central point in the stance is the perceived political inad-equacy of the art practice at its present historical juncture. The selection criteria themselves are defined by the "politi-cal" significance of the event chosen for reconstruction. The meaning of "political" varies from one instance to the next, but there is a common denominator: in its own day, the cho-sen event had to affect the institutional framework of an ar-tistic discipline, the administratively arranged division of la-bour in artistic production vis-à-vis non-artistic production, or provoke discussions of wider social significance. Or, in that contextual framework, it had to emerge retroactively as a symptom. And to determine of what exactly those recon-structions might have been a symptom and how to open up more theoretical space to rearticulate them, one must exam-ine the constitutive factors of that politico-ideological con-text. Historical genealogy is always the most efficient tool. In this case, one must draw a number of genealogies, in their in-ter-dependences, coincidences, and mostly irregular coales-cences: the recent politico-economic history of the West, his-tory of reflecting on the place of art in that history, history of dance and performance art,[1] and history of theories that have become lucrative in the art field. While offering an exhaus-

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* This text was originally written in 2009.

1 This history is the dominant source of most authors' reconstruction procedures, but in my opinion it is unproductive to remain within such a narrow framework.

tive and comprehensive genealogy would go beyond the scope of this essay and my expertise, I will nonetheless attempt to highlight some key points, so as to facilitate analysing the phenomenon of reconstructions from a more productive position. Toward the end of this text, my selection of examples from the already rich reconstruction practice in this region will concretise the geopolitical frame of my writing as the condition of socialist and post-socialist Yugoslavia. The region's history and relationship with the West further intensify and complicate the analytical tangles.

Walter Benjamin's 1934 address to the Paris Institute for the Study of Fascism, "The Author as Producer", may serve as a rather useful starting point. In this talk, Benjamin attempted to articulate the place of the author within the capitalist mode of production and offer directions for engaged art in the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. His line of argumentation follows his elaboration of the coincidence between formal technical-artistic and political innovation, or, more accurately, making a concrete impact in concrete political and ideological strife. For Benjamin, as well as in countless later debates on the relationship between the artistic and the political, one figure functioned as the ultimate and unique personification of that coincidence. That figure was Brecht. A direct effect of Brecht's theatre-productive innovation was the exposure of the ideological mechanism of the world beyond theatre, including theatre itself. Brecht's special status and Benjamin's brilliant address, the general propositions of which and clearly expressed politico-epistemological intent would sound completely implausible in terms of today's academic and curatorial practices, drew their epithets from the specificities of interwar Europe's urgent political condition. Comparisons of that situation with our condition of the last 30–40 years have been saturated with the concept of co-opting, that is, with a rather unclear and theoretically imprecise usage of that term.

The propulsive power of the concept of co-opting as an analytical solution is proportional to its theoretical impotence, conditioned by its lack of historical support. The problem is that the concept is typically used in a historical vacu-

um. The subject of co-opting is usually isolated as the a-historical notion of "the system", sometimes also "System", whereas its mode of operation is seldom precisely articulated, ranging from patriarchy to the capitalist mode of production. And the target of co-opting is the progressive efforts of isolated artists and groups. The dominant and most readily available explanatory example is the advertising sector and PR industry. While these examples are self-evident and irrefutable, the problem is the failure to analyse the historical, political, and material conditions that enable the co-optation. For instance, Benjamin noticed such procedures during in 1920s and '30s, attributed them to the weaknesses of "habitual leftists", and explained them in terms of the relations of concrete ideological strife. But the status of such cases in Benjamin's time is entirely different from the status of co-optation mechanisms today. In the wake of the October Revolution and given the strength of organised labour movements in Western Europe at the time, with socialist parties demanding fundamental changes in the existing regime of production and regularly receiving over 30% of the vote, co-opting the artistic strategies emerging on behalf of and from those movements themselves simply did not function as an efficient ideological weapon. The direct link that connected political actors and a certain model of their representation constituted a material power that rendered different manoeuvres of co-option impossible. The struggle went on in different co-ordinates – remember just how many countries of Europe Sergei Eisenstein was forbidden to enter at the time. Pacification by co-option became functional only once it was attained on the level of direct political confrontation. Following the Second World War, that pacification was carried out in two stages. Immediately after the war, during capitalism's so-called golden age, the social welfare state performed that function. Following capitalism's structural crisis of the early 1970s, direct exploitation, to borrow Marxian economist Costas Lapavitsas's term, came to the fore.[2] This

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2 Costas Lapavitsas, "Financialised Capitalism: Crisis and Financial Expropriation", 2009, http://www.researchonmoneyandfinance.org/media/papers/RMF-01-Lapavitsas.pdf (4 March 2013).

was about the financialisation of personal income, that is, credit cards, mortgages, and consumer loans. The history of capitalism and resistance is much more complex than the version offered here, reduced to two factors, but those two factors played a decisive role and indicate the problematic clearly enough for the purposes of this essay. The process of re-institutionalising cultural production, that is, rearticulating the cultural field, went hand in hand with these processes. However much producers in the cultural field favoured or literally worked for the "Cause", their social positioning vis-à-vis the base and the increasing unravelling of an organised base, which was their political driving force and which they exploited, make their products an easy prey for the system's ideological services, which instantly depoliticise them. As a result of that, any antagonism grows dislocated and closed off within the cultural field itself, producing what today goes under the name of alternative culture.

In the wider domain of alternative culture, contemporary dance and performance art also find legitimising supports of their own. These supports are shot through with a specific vocabulary, dislocated from political discourse. Wielding terms that used to articulate progressive political practices has become routine in cultural struggles. Freedom, resistance, and transgression are some of the terms that carry the heaviest semantic burden. Those terms used to be adequate in analysis, but due to the specific material and institutional conditioning of the field, outlined above, in which they were deployed, they have experienced some reverse transformations. I am not advocating normatising our vocabulary, but merely pointing to some concrete historical and material relations through which these terms have been articulated. Performance art practice has played an exemplary role in that turmoil and transformation. The strategic stake that performance as an innovative artistic practice had invested into confronting with, and thereby necessarily also rearticulating, the scene and gallery has been transferred, totally, into political space in general. Artistic transgression has become entirely assimilated with political transgression. Of course, the emergence of various sub-cultural tendencies

that were rather easily co-opted into lifestyles also contributed to that development, not, however, following the model of the co-optation mechanisms mentioned above, but quite smoothly, because, as the label "sub-cultural" might remind us, these were not political but cultural projects. Therefore, what performance has achieved by rearticulating the scene and gallery is its entry into the public arena, where it functions as a replacement strategy for political protest.

In current cultural production, the work of curators, no longer exclusively associated with the visual arts, is becoming a determining factor in production and distribution, due to its growing flirtation with managerial rationality.[3] The practice of curating is likewise showing clear signs of taking up and analytically deactivating concepts and practices from political history and theory. Relationality is probably the most blatant example. In addition to Bourriaud's celebrated concept of relational aesthetics, relationality is routinely stretched so as to cover a variety of sexy exhibits of the curatorial jargon, usually extracted from Deleuze and Guattari's categorical apparatus. Not only is the concrete production and consumption of artistic products elaborated through the analytically quite inoperative concept of relationality, but equally, curatorial strategies are theoretically justified with descriptions of society today as inextricably permeated with relations. Insisting on a vague notion of relationality as fundamental to contemporary sociality betrays not only political disorientation, but also, if we take into account, for instance, the banal fact that currency has existed for 2,500 years, an utter deficit of intellect on a most basic level. Thus it is little surprising that in such a context, in certain circles, theorists of immaterial labour, cognitive capitalism, Precarity, and related concepts enjoy exceptional popularity. Leaving the value and plausibility of those theories aside and notwithstanding the fact that geopolitical reality and basic contemporary economy statistical data raise serious doubts about their very premises, what makes them attractive to curators and

3 This section is primarily indebted to Owen Hatherley's brilliant insights in his review of Nicolas Bourriaud's *The Radicant*: "Post-Postmodernism?", New *Left Review* 59, 2009, pp. 153–160.

artists alike is the identification mirror they provide. By means of an ostensible change in the regime of production and a transformation in the labour market, one's mode of artistic work comes to personify the revolutionary subject. No longer does it matter what and how the artist actually produces – it is his very method of work and cunning historical mind that qualify him as politically engaged. In fact, he need not do anything, as long as he remains embedded in relations of any kind.

The participation of post-Yugoslav (and Eastern European in general) artists in this Euro-Atlantic political and ideological context, outlined here, further mystifies those irregular coalescences. Those mechanisms are at their clearest when it comes to the phenomenon of reconstruction. The very basic procedure of reconstruction reveals what the dominant perspective on the region's art practice is – that it is lagging behind the West. Eastern European artists are always seen as lagging behind the established narrative junctures of Western art history. A common motive for engaging in reconstruction in post-Yugoslav art practice is moored in the desire to find evidence contrary to that theory – in simple terms: we had that, too. Sometimes, those procedures are valuable in terms of education (taking the cue from "education" as the previous great boom in the performing arts), rewriting and uncovering a past hitherto unknown to the public or to the institutions. Nevertheless, what matters is rejecting the logic of "lagging" and seeking to disprove it, belatedly. The ideological subtext of the logic of "lagging" is not merely the patronising view of the West's curatorial elites. It is moored deeply in the wider political spectrum of transition liberal revisionism. The alleged deficit of democratic, open, and experimental art practices in the region is explained by invoking its conservative-patriarchal matrix and so-called real socialism and conflating them as if they were mutually entirely equivalent and inevitable. Any venturing out of that framework is interpreted as a result of contacts with the West. In such interpretations, the freedom of the individual vis-à-vis the all-encompassing system has always been the key term for articulating such ventures. In any field

of reasoning, methodological individualism is a compensation strategy for erasing historical conditions from any analysis. The issue of artistic freedom must not be treated in isolation from the wider social processes. After 1945 in particular, it was a Cold War ideological weapon. Also, the freedom of particular artists and their democratised field of work were directly correlative with the democratic deficit in the process of production. That was the gist of Benjamin's claim in 1934 that an artist's political position lies not in his stance on the system of production but the place he occupies in that system. The urgency of the political situation at that time ensured that Benjamin's claim was both historically plausible and materially prescriptive. Today, the place of culture in the production process as well as the low intensity of political confrontation in that process have made Benjamin's thesis inoperative, but it is still an indispensable signpost in theorising and practising in the field of culture.

If we take literally the questions "What to affirm? What to perform?" in the title of this initiative, which seeks to articulate post-Yugoslav practices of reconstruction, two responses stem from the above. First, one should avoid letting the logic of revolt and progressivity expand smoothly from the art field proper into a wider socio-political context. The effects of fighting authoritarian, rigid, and conservative cultural institutions do not always constitute progressive political acts in general. On the contrary, insisting on it sometimes precludes concrete democratic political participation. A successful example of avoiding that is a recent reconstruction of Tomislav Gotovac's "controversial" "Akcija 100" (Action 100) from the 1979 Zagreb Music Biennale. With his precise setting and accompanying text,[4] elaborating the conditions of the reconstruction and the decision-making process, Oliver Frljić, the author of the reconstruction, managed to eliminate every undesirable layer of contamination that might have degraded his reconstruction into sloppy journalism, especially in terms of exploiting Gotovac's nudity. In his reinterpretation, Frljić managed to extract moments of the specificity of an artistic procedure and made it relevant in

4 Oliver Frljić, "100", *Frakcija* 51–52, 2009, pp. 4–7.

terms of history and education. Second, procedures that do not take avoidance as their starting point should address forms of artistic practice moored in concrete political struggle and reflections on the place of that artistic practice in the struggle. One example in this regard might be a project of the Belgrade collective "Prelom" (Break) and their exploration of the activities of the Belgrade Students' Cultural Centre during the late 1960s and early 1970s and articulation practices of Belgrade artists that directly addressed issues of self-managed socialism. Another might be an exhibition and hefty volume by Slovenian art historian Miklavž Komelj *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?* (How to Think Partisan Art?), where he attempts to elaborate on its specificities and values beyond the dominant interpretations.

Reconstructions ought to teach us that the framework for articulating interpretations of the avant-garde and post-avant-garde tendencies that they are based on does not consist in endlessly re-examining the relationship between art and life. The neutral concept of life should be replaced with concrete historical and social processes, whereas art should be treated as only one of those processes.

Reconstructions
Marko Kostanić

Operation, Re-Enactment, Reconstruction*

≈ **Goran Sergej Pristaš**

Here is a reconstruction model: Zagreb, early May 1945. German and *Ustaše* troops are retreating from the city. Several filmmakers, mostly pioneers of Croatian film, participate in the action of saving the filming equipment and material, which the occupation forces intend to take with them. A part of the equipment has been transported from the former building of state production into private homes, but it is impossible to hide everything. Therefore, the cameramen have grabbed their cameras and come out into the streets, filming the retreat of German and *Ustaša* convoy from Zagreb. In order to avoid suspicion, they camouflage some of the cameras behind the windowpanes or behave as if they were fleeing themselves. Sometimes they even ask the retreating soldiers to help them transport the equipment to a filming location. The whole action is coordinated by film director Branko

* This text was written for *documenta XII magazines* project and published in *Frakcija* 42, 2007, pp. 24-31.

Marjanović, who is based in the city centre and plans the locations. On 8 May, the Partisan forces enter the city, but the filming goes on. The mistrustful Partisans occasionally stop civilians carrying cameras, but the cameramen tell them the predefined password: "Florijan knows everything!". Even though Florijan does not exist and the cameramen have invented the password, a name behind the action helps regulate the situation. The cameramen are left alone. In this way, a historical document is created that is known in present-day literature as the "Liberation of Zagreb" (Škrabalo 1984, 109).

So what is there to be reconstructed? Everything has been filmed, documented; the object of the cameraman's attention is permanently available, evidencing the fact of a rupture, a revolution, an "event" of truth (Badiou), a breakthrough from the situation, from the way things are. The film, just as the con password naming some unidentified Florijan, resituates and names the event, de-constituting a community in decline and establishing another on the rise. Still, the story narrated above is indispensable for the "truthfulness" of the filmed material.

The film is apparently neutral, void of all action. The main difference between the shots made before 8 May 1945 and the later ones is the fact that the documents about the retreat of troops from Zagreb are voyeuristic, filmed from behind the windowpanes, clandestinely or with great caution: they have been made by cameramen with a mission. The shots of the Partisans entering the city indicate uncertainty, but also show the enthusiasm of the cameramen, their cameras running with the momentum, the filming operation having become an action. The shots were presented in the first issue of *Filmske novosti*, a cinema journal created by our filmmakers. Prior to 8 May 1945, they were employed in the production sector of Hrvatski slikopis, an institute producing propaganda film journals for the puppet regime of Croatia. The day of the liberation of Zagreb also brought changes in the production staff. The material made by the staff of Hrvatski slikopis became the material of *Filmske novosti*, first released on 21 May 1945. The idea behind the documentary operation became the "thought of a founding fic-

Operation, Re-Enactment, Reconstruction
Goran Sergej Pristaš

Liberation of Zagreb, 1945., Video still
Courtesy of: Croatian Film Archives (Croatian Cinematheque)

tion, or a foundation by fiction" (Nancy 1991, 53). In this way, our story has been transformed into a myth, since that fiction is the operation as such. To say it more clearly: the operation is no fiction, but its fiction (the way our story goes, the notes on the making of the first post-war film material in Croatia, the history of Croatian film that includes it, or the narrative in the margins of the film) is an operation. The story about the operation accompanying the documentary has transformed its own fiction into the "foundation or into the inauguration of *meaning* itself" (Nancy 1990, 53).

Paradoxically, the film does not document the story about the operation, but the very embeddedness of that story in the film, that is, before it has become a narrative, presents the "living heart of the logos" (Nancy 1990, 49). The myth of an operation being *the* operation is lived and living because it was created on the very spot of the event, at the site of its origin. It was created at the site where one cinematography was declining and another emerging, at the site of birth, of innovation – both social and aesthetic.

However, what makes this operation interesting is also the fact that it was an operation of saving one's bare life. But saving one's life did not consist in retreating or hiding – rather, it meant investing one's life into an action that was ideological and corresponded with the mimetic aspect of the film. If a political decision merged the documentation of the operation of retreat with the action of saving the equipment, it was ideology that homogenised the enthusiasm of the cameramen and the action of saving one's life with the entry of the Partisans into the city. It was the ideology of the codename (Florijan), of situating the whole thing in vagueness, which homogenised the two social choreographies (cf. Hewitt 2005): the organisation of the filming plan according to the flow of refugee convoys and the enthusiasm of confronting the new in the flow of history.

But we are still preoccupied with a question containing the word "reconstruction": Why reconstruct? The third stage of liberation in the story of our cameramen is their rehabilitation with respect to ideology. Thus, if we wish to help them and leave them in the field of the aesthetic, we will have to

take the action upon ourselves, to accept that our action, the one that would reconstruct the whole thing in the mode of a repeated performance, will be a representation of the immanently political in the narrative of Operation Florijan. Let us assume that we have production facilities that enable us to engage a sufficient number of performers, vehicles, weapons, and old equipment – the operation will still fail. The best we can accomplish is a re-enactment or staging of the adapted narrative, rather than its reconstruction. Why is that so? Because the situated narrative such as that of Operation Florijan requires a previous interruption of myth, a sort of Brechtian literarisation, an introduction of the originating speech, of mythological operation before the interruption, of communication that no longer establishes a community, but points to the performers that have nothing in common now with those in the situation of having to fight for their bare lives, however aestheticised their social choreography may be:

> This literarization of the theater, as indeed the literarization of all public affairs, must be developed to the greatest possible extent. Literarization means putting across ideas through actions; interspersing the "performed" with the "formulated". [...] So far as the communication of the subject matter is concerned, the spectator must not be misled along the path of empathy; instead, a form of intercourse takes place between the spectator and the actor, and basically, in spite of all the strangeness and detachment, the actor addresses himself directly to the spectator. (Brecht 1964, 44)

The literarised theatre is a theatre in which footnotes and observations help us look left or right, beyond the situation or narrative by which the aesthetic ideology homogenises.[1] In

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1 Regarding the literarised theatre, the theatre of interrupted myth, Nancy has written: "This does not mean that there is no theater – as though there could be literature without theater. But theater, here, no longer means the scene of representation: it means the extreme edge of this scene, the dividing line where singular beings are exposed to one another.
What is shared on this extreme and difficult limit is not communion, not the completed identity of all in one, nor any kind of completed identity. What is shared therefore is not the annulment of sharing, but

this respect, we must distinguish the reconstruction of a performance from the re-enactment of an action, which we receive in the form of myth or narrative. Narrativised action presupposes that our film on the Liberation of Zagreb can substitute Operation Florijan or serve as its metaphor. The fact that I have called it Operation Florijan means that it is possible to use the narrative about shooting the first post-war film in order to derive a *blueprint* for the performance of a social narrative on an undercover agent. Therefore, the re-enactment of such an action has its recognisable performative scheme, its social choreography, in which Operation Florijan is only a metaphor for the birth of new cinematography. The reconstruction of performance, however, presupposes that artistic performance is a possible "*blueprint* for thinking and effecting modern social organization: it is not only a secondary representation but also a primary performance of that order" (Hewitt 2005, 14).

This means that we have two possible procedures and a single goal: 1) creating an artistic performance as a *mise-en-scène* of the narrative (Operation Florijan) or a *re-enactment* of the action; 2) *reconstructing* such a performance as a literarisation or interruption of a myth, even if the performance has never existed, since its operation is its fiction; 3) *reconstructing* the situation, that is, acting retrospectively in the field of political action and seeking to re-enact the situation of the Liberation of Zagreb (whereby one should at least apply another type of situating, depriving Stalin of his revolution).

The interest of this artistic plan will remain in the field of reconstruction, primarily because re-enactment includes restarting the mechanism of the aesthetic ideology of action. Reconstruction presupposes a new approach to construction, in which we will find a place for the voice of those who speak non-constitutively, at the brink of muteness, at the brink of becoming literature:

> sharing itself, and consequently everyone's nonidentity, each one's nonidentity to himself and to others, and the nonidentity of the work to itself, and finally the nonidentity of literature to literature itself." (Nancy 1991, 68).

Tomislav Gotovac: *Action 100*, Republic Square, Zagreb, 12.5.1979., performed as part of the 10th Music Biennale Zagreb, Photo by: Siniša Knaflec, Sarah Gotovac collection, Zagreb, Courtesy of: Tomislav Gotovac Institute

Oliver Frljić: *100*, Reconstruction of the *Action 100* by Tomislav Gotovac Zagreb, 10.12.2009., Photo by: Lovro Rumiha

On this limit, the one who exposes himself and to whom – if we listen, if we read, if our ethical and political condition is one of listening or reading – we expose ourselves, does not deliver a founding speech. On the contrary, he suspends this speech, he interrupts it and he says that he is interrupting it. (Nancy 1991, 68)

The practice of re-enactment often comes close to the practice of reconstitution, namely in the case of re-enactment to which the author or performer of the original performance is invited. Instead of de-mythologisation and non-identitarian presentation, such a re-enactment mythologises the performance by placing it operatively in non-time, on the level of the permanently possible rather than the potential. Such practices never reach the brink of presentation in non-identity, since they are identitarian and establish their origin and identity in time – falling into the utopian trap of aesthetic ideology.

Therefore, reconstruction will open up the possibility of bringing mythologised performance back into the field of affirmation, of the politics of emancipation rather than identification – by literarising it, as Emil Hrvatin has done on the basis of *Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilički*, a mythical Slovenian performance from the 1960s. Whereas originally it was performed by artists who were "illiterate" in terms of acting and dance – poets, musicians, and students – Hrvatin re-enacted it with a team of performers who were too literate for that – which generated an entirely new relational frame and created a new performance, while its contextual and referential aspect was transferred to the presentation machinery of PowerPoint, running in the background. The reconstruction consisted of a complex set of questions, suppositions, re-enactments, footnotes, quotations, original shots, etc. However, there was a point in which the entire performance reopened into the field of myth, and that was the mise-en-scène of the Law, the scene that the reconstruction owed to the sacrifice as a constitutive act of Western society. The original performance of *Pupilija* ended by slaughtering one of the seven hens that were freely roaming around the scene. With no ritual whatsoever, the end of the performance ended the life of

the hen – the *gallus sacer*. By interpreting performance as a state of exception, a state of illusion, the act of subversive affirmation took the life of someone whose identity had been erased completely, by which he obtained a new identity, the identity of a performer. Until the moment of death, the moment of restarting the reality. And in that reality, the Reconstruction of *Pupilija* ends with a mise-en-scène of the Law: the version that I have seen ends with a video clip in which a lawyer explains the legal repercussions of killing an animal in public place. In another version, the audience votes for or against killing the hen. Eventually, the hen is not killed, since the legal consequences would be drastic, while the fictional relationship between the law and violence gives a new fundamental power to Hrvatin's reconstruction, power of the community of those who, deprived of their identity, expose themselves to one another at the brink of the scene, on the margins of the law.

However, if we understand politics as the brink of the scene (rather than mere obscenity), the place where the subject is radicalised in performance, the procedures of reconstruction will open up numerous other issues – from the redundancy in art to the metaphor of art as a state of exception to the constitutive role of artistic experiment in the community or the problem of social invention in post-avant-garde art.

In the performing arts, the majority of referential investigations or reconstructions focused on the 1960s and on those authors whose work, among other things, did not set a disciplinary framework to their own artistic practices, but rather offered a possibility of participation to those who were illiterate in art, and even a possibility of becoming illiterate in the process, e.g. Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, etc. It is difficult to say whether it is the immanent politicality of social choreography, or the impression that all artistic practice in the 1960s was steeped in the political tensions of the time, that has been so attractive to researchers interested in the political aspect of performance, but it is certain that the

mythology of the 1960s did deeply steep the performing arts of the time into the myth of politicality, which indirectly corresponds to the aestheticised policies of today. For this reason we find interest in the performance of *Majski i ostali rituali* (*May and Other Rituals*) from 1970 (which was actually interrupted by lowering the curtain and never performed completely), in which a group of filmmakers gathered under the name of PAN 69, among them the now famous visual artist Mladen Stilinović, re-enacted some selected events of that historical month, such as: the celebration of 1 May – Labour Day, the Youth Baton, Tito's birthday, the student protests, the speech of President Tito addressing the students, the expulsion from the Party, admittance to the Party, etc. These events are just as interesting as those from 1945, since the student protests of 1968 remain equally unreadable from today's perspective. It is generally known that there were protests and that they were an echo of those happening all over Europe, as well as that they occurred after the student demonstrations in Belgrade. It is known that they were organised and even the names of the leaders are known. However, very few people know the real proportions of the protests, whether the organisers of Operation 1968 fought purposefully, with the aim of achieving more communism, less socialism, or whatever. Thus, what we know about 1968 in Zagreb is a myth and we should reconstruct a whole series of events in order to obtain a real picture of the politics behind the protests, since many among the participants were later situated in the Croatian national movement of 1971, which had a significantly different ideology from what we know about the myth of 1968.

Seen from today's perspective, the events of 1968 have, unlike Operation Florijan, their own construction in the performative body of the happening of *Majski i ostali rituali*, which opens up space for investigating the blueprint of socio-political relations in the artistic community of Zagreb in the 1960s.

Majski i ostali rituali is a rather unknown happening and there is very little evidence that it has ever been actually performed. All that we may discover or state about it today is ac-

tually constitutive and basic for the group that performed it and for the community in which it was created, as well as for the community that takes interest in historicising a living artistic act. Someone might observe that these are only historical facts, just like any other facts in today's art of archivable data. However, that is not quite correct. What distinguishes a mythologised performance from an article about that performance, photographs from the past, or remnants of the action is precisely the fact that a performance, since performed live, is a specific and directly political or social intervention that establishes a new potential set of relations, a system that we may not understand at first, but if it offers the joy of production, it will certainly open up the possibility of a new social or communal organisation. Here we must go beyond the framework of the production of meaning or context, beyond all interpretations indicating that it is possible to read what we call our present from those performances. It is precisely such interpretations that mythologise performance and identify invention with foundation.

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Reconstruction 2*

On Reconstructing *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks***

≈ **Janez Janša**

Pupilija, papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks* [*Pupilija, Papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki*] was performed in 1969 by a group of poets, visual artists, musicians, and amateurs. It comprised twenty scenes, including elements from everyday life, popular culture, folklore, children's games, contemporary dance, performance, and improvisation. The performance is an iconic event in the history of neoavantgarde theatre in Slovenia and one of the most influential experimental works in Slovenian performance art. It introduced an interdisciplinary approach into Slovenian theatre and broke ground for understanding the performing arts as an area where different artistic and social practices come together. *Pupilija* included elements of a happening, body art, performance, improvisation, contemporary dance, everyday life, pop culture, ritual theatre, cabaret, and political protest.

There are quite extensive records of the 1969 performance. It was filmed at the Viba studio with five cameras and excellently edited as well. The Slovenian Theatre Museum holds a large number of documents regarding the performance, its reception in the media, and the public's response to it; most of the participants are still alive and serve as an important oral source; a quite detailed version of the script has been preserved. In a strictly historical and analytical sense, the performance is well documented and those sources are easily accessible in the public archives, so there was no need to reconstruct it due to a lack of historical evidence. Therefore, the motives for reconstructing it lie elsewhere. The purpose of reconstructing *Pupilija* was not to re-experience a performance from the past, but our very relationship with history: watching a reconstruction, we are actually looking at our relation to history. Together with Inke Arns, we could say that re-enactments "are *questionings of the present* through reaching back to historical events that have etched themselves indelibly into the collective memory".[1]

What can we conclude from the fact that, back in 1969, *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks* was filmed without an

1 There is an interesting terminological paradox regarding reconstructions of the historical avant-garde or neo-avant-garde. The 1980s in Europe saw a number of reconstructions of Russian avant-garde performances: Schlemmer's ballet, Picasso's Parade, Kandinski's Yellow Sound, etc. In English literature, the term "reconstruction" was established for these performances. But when reconstructions of works from the 1960s also started to appear, so did the term "re-enactment" in specialised literature, hitherto used to denote only re-enactments of historical events. It would be interesting to see what might have caused this change in terminology, linked as it was to some other related concepts that were appearing at the same time (for example, appropriation art).

audience?² What makes a performance part of its time is not only the performance itself, but also its audience. In this sense, the only real reconstruction would be to reconstruct the audience. By filming without an audience, both recordings of *Pupilija* (the original and the reconstruction), at a certain level, are meant to blur the time of their making. Many of the actors of the original *Pupilija* were skeptical about the feasibility of reconstructing it, especially because they had doubts about the possibility of re-enacting the time of the late 1960s. Our answer had to be that our focus was not on the time of the original performance but on the present.

In a sense, reconstructions have to "betray" the original to make it work at present at all. The approach I used in my reconstruction was nevertheless essentially different from a contemporary interpretation of a classic, because a reconstruction openly demonstrates its procedures; it discloses and screens documentary material and constantly questions the status of the truth of a historical event, whereas in an interpretation of a classical text, the historical evidence, documents, and procedures are part of the creative process and are, as a rule, excluded from the final staging. In reconstructions, one first needs to prove that the object of reconstructing actually existed.

The fundamental directorial and dramaturgical move made in *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks – The Reconstruction* was the displacement of the gaze. The object of our gaze constantly eludes us; there is something else that constantly wants to appear before us. When we think we are watching the original *Pupilija*, the present, reconstructed *Pupilija*, shows up before our eyes. Likewise, the 1969 original keeps lurking underneath the reconstructed *Pupilija*, but we do not know how much we can believe it. I call this kind of displacing the gaze *zooming*, a procedure of watching whereby spectators may focus, zoom in or out, at a certain segment, part of the performance, or events taking place before

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2 The reconstruction was likewise filmed without an audience. Some spectators are visible in the final version of the filmed material, but they were filmed during a different staging. The original footage by TV Slovenia was made at the same venue (the Old Power Plant), but without an audience.

them, or use the same operation to distance themselves from the performance; they can even bracket it and, for a moment, apply themselves to extraneous perceptual effects, which at first may seem unrelated to the performance, yet are possible only due to its dramaturgical structure and thus for the audience become part of the performance. For the spectators, the performance is not only that which the creators perform in front of them, but all that happens in the allotted space and time.

On Interpretations of *Pupilija*

Every age operates with a certain interpretative language of its own and, at a certain level, it is understandable that most interpretations of *Pupilija* at the time used terms such as "the death of literary theatre," "anti-literariness", etc.³ Most of them point out the ritual nature of the performance, above all, due to the final scene, which features the slaughtering of a chicken. The performance of the actors shows a conspicuous distance from the expressiveness typical of the 1960s, which is an essential difference between *Pupilija* and, for example, the Living Theatre. The acting in *Pupilija* is much closer to what Michael Kirby called "non-acting".

Our reconstruction attempts to stress the procedures used in the original performance, especially openness and non-formality. What was especially interesting for us was re-enacting the following elements: everydayness and unskilfullness; non-spectacularity and extremity of execution; open improvisation, folklore, and military discipline; collective mind and mindlessness; the open, non-aestheticised, and non-linear language of the performance and its political engagement.

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3 "Whether we agree or not, and even if we throw a piece of pear on the stage, as it happened on the opening night, the death of the white chicken was also the death of literary, exclusively aesthetically functional theatre in Slovenia" – Veno Taufer, "Experimental Theatre at Križanke: Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks", *Naši razgledi*, 7 November 1969. Interestingly, nobody has asked what Rapa Šuklje was doing at the performance with a pear.

Pupilija's *politicalness* – in Jacques Rancière's terms – lay primarily in its resistance to all forms of authority and not in a direct expression of a political protest. *Pupilija* mocked, subverted, and distanced itself from all kinds of authority, whether external (the state, nation, party, church, market) or internal (theatre and aesthetics). With its suggestive, yet almost innocent speech, it still easily attracts modern spectators as well. This is why *Pupilijia*'s politicalness has to be understood in Rancièrean terms: it lies in admitting voices into the public sphere that otherwise could not be heard. *Pupilija* was definitely a generational performance, made by members of a generation who were not interested in waiting for a permission to enter political life, but acquired their own voice. On another level, *Pupilija*'s politicalness should be understood in the way that Hans-Thies Lehmann writes about political theatre, namely, in terms of its format. By this, we mean the structure of the performance and especially the stance of its creators on- and offstage, in the media, in court, etc.

The next dimension that the performance attempted to open up was the introduction of dance. Like all other socialist and communist countries at the time, Yugoslavia, too, hindered the development of contemporary dance, which therefore had to use experimental performance forms to make its way to the forefront. In an interview, Rok Vevar has said that "if we look at *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks* as a dance performance, we will see what has been happening in dance in the USA since the 1960s".[4] *Pupilija* introduced various choreographic procedures without defining them as dance. These procedures were conceived by appropriating already existing forms of movement, ranging from spontaneous children's games, parodies of folk dancing and military exercises to improvised scenes. We can look at the structure of the performance, the twenty more or less arbitrarily composed scenes, in the way Slavoj Žižek understood the notion of a happening in pop art, at the time:

> The happening is directed into the exhibited object, which is not there just like that, but in order to be there just like that. The object is arbitrary and determined (i.e. eliminated from the environment) by this arbitrariness" (Žižek 1967–68, 11).

4 Rok Vevar, *Dnevnik*, 18 October 2006.

In the 1980s, arbitrary combinations of fragments were to become one of the key structural procedures of postmodern theatre. In dramaturgical and structural terms, *Pupilija* is much closer to this type of postmodern theatre than to 1960s experimental theatre and we might even say that its structure resembles that of *Baptism Under Triglav*, the founding performance of postmodern theatre in Slovenia.

Reconstructing *Pupilija* for the Past, Present, and Future

In his review of *Pupilija*, Blaž Lukan wrote that, in the reconstruction, we actually see three performances:

> The first is the original that no longer exists; the second – today's performance – has contemporary performers who are more than mere substitutes for the original ones; the third is the reconstruction as a whole. […] This whole seems like some kind of a superstructure, supra-performance that upgrades both (or more) of the others and establishes itself in front of the spectator as the only possible performance "based on the model", as performance as such, no longer an imitation or something that feeds from imitation whilst seeking its own mechanisms and effects. (Lukan 2006, 13)

Drawing on this view, I would say that the performance and the whole strategic spectrum encircling it are where the past, the present, and the future intertwine.

We look at the present in the form of documents projected onto a screen. Together with Samo Gosarič, who made the slides, and Igor Štromajer, who designed the projection matrix, we thought about what MTV or a news channel would look like if it had existed in 1969. The projections thus consist of an uninterrupted series of clips from the original performance, statements from its creators, and media reactions to it at the time. This produced an additional media layer running in parallel to the performance and comprising historical sources only. We translated the past into history by projecting it onto a screen. We thus literally used a procedure that every historical process already employs: because there

is no past, we are left with no alternative but to project it. Every projection is actually a construction of our view (of the past). A document as the locus of truth is always-already *mediated*: it exists only as a mediatised event. By being presented *in* a performance, it is doubly mediated.

In the same text, Lukan wonders: "What or who – to say this with a certain amount of drastic irony – should be slaughtered today to achieve a similar effect in public?" Since the manager of the Old Power Plant, the venue where the reconstruction was staged, would not let us perform the final scene, that is, slaughter a chicken onstage, we decided to stage the prohibition, that is, the present, rather than perform the final scene as a historical component. We let the spectators decide about the final scene of the reconstruction: they could choose between three recordings (a recording of a reconstructed slaughtering of a chicken; statements by Junoš Miklavec and Dušan Rogelj, who performed the slaughtering in the original *Pupilija*; and an excerpt from the regulations on the protection of animals valid in 1969), and the fourth option was slaughtering the animal live. We thus made the audience responsible for the execution of the event. But we were less interested in this participatory dimension than the tension between the legal and the legitimate. The legislation permits slaughtering animals only in appropriate places (slaughterhouses) or at home, for domestic use. So to slaughter that chicken legally, we would have to stage our performance at a slaughterhouse, or turn the theatre into our home. Instead, we empowered our audience as a micro-community to defy the law, which is what usually happened, since, except on one occasion, the audience always chose to see the live slaughter of a chicken. In view of this, let us not jump to the conclusion that every audience wants blood and that nothing has changed since ancient Roman times. For it was precisely because the course of the performance itself and the dramaturgy of its execution were mostly playful and at times easygoing that the audience wanted to play a joke on the performers. What we wanted to show in the final scene was that the performance had become the here and now, that the reconstruction had made a cut in its time and thus managed to stage the present.

I have already said that every historicisation is a construction of the past. We construct the past through the gaze of the present, and that gaze is in turn constructed by a set of social, political, cultural, methodological, interpretative, and other factors. We historicise the past in the present, but we do it for the future. Every historicisation includes, on the one hand, restoring the overlooked and the concealed; it brings forth and strengthens the unheard voices, while, on the other hand, it closes or, better yet, uses this operation to *package* a certain chapter of the past.

On that basis, we thought about building a mechanism into our reconstruction of *Pupilija*, which would resist this packaging and demand two different packagings from the outset. Let us first take a look at how two of the most important critics, Rok Vevar and Blaž Lukan, interpreted the ending of our reconstruction of *Pupilija*:

> In compliance with the changed political context, the spectators democratically vote whether or not the Chicken should be slaughtered. [...] When at the première the majority voted for the slaughter, the conditions for the Event were re-established. "Would a member of the audience who voted for the slaughter please come to the stage and perform it." The answer/responsibility of the gaze, what else! What followed was a painful wait and to be honest: democracy upset the Chicken, too. In those painful moments, I, signed below, could not help thinking: "Well, well, the Chicken is watching us…" Right after that I was overcome by a thought: "Mother Chicken! Could one get a more genuine experience of (Slovene) democracy?" (Vevar 2006, 12)[5]
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> At the most recent staging in the Old Power Station, despite the

5   "Let there be no mistake: toward the end of a reconstruction of Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks last week, whose late-1960s original ended with one of the performers slaughtering a chicken, but now this cannot be done as easily or legally (how quickly awareness develops!), when they asked for a volunteer from the audience to do it, I came very close to coming forward and doing it. To take the killing upon myself, to the outrage of those who, in private, stuff themselves with kebabs and chicken sausages and at receptions 'only' with salmons and basses fattened on slaughterhouse waste, and thus to unmask social propriety and hypocrisy like Hermann Nitsch and Franc Purg did in their slaughterhouse performances. Bravo!" – Matej Bogataj, "Najboljši ribiči rib ne lovijo več" (The Best Fishermen No Longer Fish), *Večer*, 30 September 2006, p. 14

ambiguous ending – it remained unclear whether Grega Zorc in his white butcher's apron had actually slaughtered the chicken or not – suddenly there was a painful silence that went on and on; in it we could feel discomfort because it awakened the memory of a "slaughter" from almost four decades ago, which we knew something about, due to the – not quite verifiable – death of a living being that happened in front of our eyes; but the horror was actually the result of an exceptionally well constructed scene or epilogue, in terms of dramaturgy, direction, and acting, which concluded the whole performance. (Lukan 2006, 13)

So we projected into the future a doubt as to which ending actually took place. Did Vevar and Lukan see the same performance, even if they saw it on different nights? Was the chicken nevertheless slaughtered? And if it was, how come its slaughter was so unproblematically received, although outraged writings about the possibility of a chicken being slaughtered onstage had appeared already before the opening night?[6]

Scandalising as Censorship

At this point, we should speak about one of the reasons for reconstructing *Pupilija*. The 1969 *Pupilija* is generally remembered in Slovenia as a scandal. When Slovenians think of this performance, their first reaction, first memory of it, is the slaughter of a chicken, while those who actually saw it may

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6 For example: "History must repeat itself, first as tragedy, then as farce. That is why I would suggest to Hrvatin to slaughter himself, rather than the chicken. It would be even better if a giant chicken could slaughter both him and Jovanović together. The scene should look like the scene from that Woody Allen film in which he is chased by a giant pink breast. Dušan Jovanović and Emil Hrvatin would thus choose the most powerful kind of immortality, neither the Small (that of a person remembered only by their personal acquaintances), nor the Big (that of a person remembered as well by those who did not know them personally), but the Funny kind. They would be so immortal, that they'd even end up in jokes. Like those about Irishmen. Yay!" – Matjaž Pograjc, "Brezglava kura napadla brezglava režiserja" (Headless Chicken Attacks Headless Director), Življenje je najboljše maščevanje (blog: Life is the Best Revenge), 19 October 2006. Matjaž Pograjc is a well-known Slovenian theatre director from Janez Janša's generation.

add nudity, homosexuality, having a sexual intercourse with a globe, etc. *Pupilija* does not belong in the concealed part of the history of contemporary performing arts in Slovenia; there is reference material on it. Instead, we might say that it represents a *skipped* part of that history. But in our collective memory, it exists as a scandal. And, paradoxically, this scandalising excluded *Pupilija* from the main course of history. Approaches that devote attention to *Pupilija*'s artistic qualities have been exceptionally rare.

In our reconstruction, we were interested in the manner of acting. At first sight, we could say that it was a youthful, amateur approach; but a more thorough look at what has remained, what we can read from the tape, reveals a whole range of performing poses, from everydayness, non-acting, over-identification, and Luddite acting, to a parodying of the sublime. These approaches to acting were kept secret and were ousted from the academic canon, wherein lies one of the cultural circle's fundamental censoring moves.

The second act of censorship took place at the level of production. In reconstructing *Pupilija*, we also focused on affirming modes of production that emerge on the basis of group affinities, the need for experimentation and a different kind of expression, the need to cooperate in non-hierarchical conditions, which essentially differ from working in theatre, one of the most hierarchically organised art forms. The reconstruction of *Pupilija* was not created in the same group way as the original. I put together the cast so that the interdisciplinarity of the original performance would be even more pronounced, with various kinds of expert knowledge brought to the performance by the performers' different backgrounds. I cast a dancer (Dejan Srhoj), actors (Grega Zorc, Ajda Toman, Alja Kapun), a film actress (Aleksandra Balmazović), a TV host (Dražen Dragojević), a writer, radio host, and musician (Matjaž Pikalo), a singer and dancer (Irena Tomažin), and three musicians (Boštjan Narat, Gregor Cvetko, and Lado Jakša). On average, the original cast had fifteen members. We could afford eleven at most, due to the conditions of production. This is why, when they were not musically engaged, the musicians performed in the acting

and dancing scenes. At the same time, that way we were able to reassert the interdisciplinary nature of the performance.

The Reception of *Pupilija* in the West and the East-Dance-Academy

When *Pupilija* was on tour in Austria and Italy, doubts were raised as to the existence of the original.[7] The reason for such comments should be sought in the West's stereotypical view of Eastern European theatre and art during socialism. Behind the Iron Curtain, the West saw only depression, suffering, and oppression, and the theatre artist who ideally embodied that perception was Jerzy Grotowski. The West simply could not imagine that a non-authoritarian performance such as *Pupilija* could have been created under a socialist regime. And it is still hard for the West to accept that important performance experiments did take place in Eastern Europe and that they belong in the context of European experimental performing art practices on an equal footing with similar experiments performed in the West.

Because *Pupilija* is not an isolated example, my colleagues Bojana Kunst, Aldo Milohnić, and Goran Sergej Pristaš and I developed an idea for a platform called the East-Dance-Academy (EDA), meant to help articulate a different history of contemporary dance and performance art in Eastern Europe and Europe in general. The aim of the EDA is to detect those places, areas, and events in Eastern Europe where contemporary dance and interdisciplinary performance appeared. Contemporary dance was not institutionalised until the decline of the communist regimes in the 1980s,

7 "Following the reconstruction of the avant-garde event Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks in Vienna, a journalist tried to get Emil Hrvatin to admit that the original, the 'cult performance' directed by Dušan Jovanović, was really his idea and the reconstruction only an ingenious hoax. Maska's performance thus became a real enigma at Mittelfest on Thursday evening, since the confused spectators were wondering if the company may have been trying to fool them with a theatre document as 'original' as the name of its author, Janez Janša." – ROP, "Predstava Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki pretresla občinstvo" (The Performance Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks Shocks the Audience), *Primorski dnevnik*, 26 July 2008, p. 10.

but it was constantly present and developing in interdisciplinary experimental forms, such as experimental music and theatre, video, performance art, etc. The EDA emphasises interdisciplinarity and a strong social contextualisation of artistic production. In this sense, it brings together audiences from different fields and different perspectives.

The EDA is a working space where its participants present historical examples of performances and actions in their local contexts and reflect on contemporary dance and performance art within a broader cultural perspective. We may view the EDA as a continuation of the processes of articulating the history of contemporary art in Eastern Europe, which began in the field of the visual arts and resulted in the East Art Map project conceived by the Irwin group.

Pupilija would not have had such a contemporary feel to it, had it not given room to contemporary dance, contemporary choreographic procedures, and the movement practices of everydayness.

Document and Documentary Theatre

Perhaps we could suggest a difference between documentary theatre – theatre that deals with real events and is based on facts – and a *theatre of documents*, which would focus on documents as the bearers of truth. What aligns *Pupilija* with documentary theatre is its use of documents in the making of its content and dramaturgy. Thus, there is this constant tension between the real and the performed. In this, the question of the status of truth is not crucial; what is crucial is its continual displacing of the point(s) of reference. If we, for example, used facsimiles of newspapers from 1969, the point would probably be to show that what we are watching is taking place in 1969. In our performance, newspaper documents are additionally mediated by being projected onto a screen. When a document becomes a quotation projected on a screen, it is torn away from its concrete temporal dimension and thus becomes not a document of its original time but of our own time, in which we are watching it. If at the time of *Pupilija*'s original performance the artists were seeking the real on-

stage – the reason why they staged the death of a chicken, death being the ultimate reality – it is exactly the confrontation between the real and the performed that creates the real in performance today. In that sense, we could even say that reconstructions were not possible before the advent of new media and technologies and that reconstructions are a paradigmatic performative format of media culture.

The Procedures

In her lecture entitled "Re-enactment of Performances and the Productive Potential of Calculated Failure", Astrid Peterle differentiates between copied and reflected reconstructions (Peterle 2009). She seeks to distinguish between reconstructions (in English, we could use the standard term "re-enactments") that try to re-stage an original piece of theatre or performance art literally and those that attempt to open up space for analysing and reflecting on the original event and the present performance. In this case, the approach we used in our reconstruction of *Pupilija* belongs to the latter type.

Copying

Copying is one of the essential layers in our reconstruction of *Pupilija*. We approached it through a number of protocols, but the basis of our decision to copy was the difference between the two periods. The original *Pupilija* belonged to the spirit of a time that searched for an authentic language, immediacy, and directness, not only in art, but also in everyday life. In this sense, the ultimate gestures in this original performance were Tomaž Kralj and Manca Čermelj's kissing in the bathtub (some of the original performers say that was actually a sexual intercourse) and the slaughter of the chicken. Today, at the time of our reconstruction, the subject is no longer searching for the authenticity, honesty, and immediacy of an undistorted identity, but must deal with a plurality of identities, with his/her mediations, with the contextualisation of every act, and the subjection of every gesture to a network of meanings that inhabit it through complex recep-

tive operations. In each scene of the original copied in the reconstruction, we show precisely the procedure of copying.

Copying in Real Time

In the photo romance scene, the actors watch a video recording of the scene from the original and copy it in real time. The action is not learnt; all that is learnt is the text. The recording appears as a point of reference and a dictation of action.

The bathing scene is not preserved in TV Slovenia's recording. In our reconstruction of the scene we tried to replicate the original aesthetic, off the scene, projected on the screen behind them, as preserved in the video material. The black-and-white film stock and the white, sterile set at the Viba film studio are reminiscent of silent film aesthetics, which is why the text from the script was screened in the form of inter-titles. The actors onstage use mime to copy themselves in the recording. There are no props, no set, and even the musicians are only miming playing on imagined instruments.

Copying as a Choreography of Space

We used copying as a mode of distributing bodies in space and made it into an obvious procedure. In the Elle scene, the actors on the right-hand part of the stage copy the action on the left-hand side of the stage.

In the Snow White scene, the choir in the back copy the performance of the couple in the front, and this copying triangle is completed by a trio of musicians who copy the performance of the choir in the background. In addition to the scene itself, the procedure of copying is plainly demonstrated.

To Be in the Picture

In the computer scene, a photo from the original performance with the actors standing in a formation is projected onto the actors in the reconstruction standing in the same formation. The actors in the reconstruction thereby become a literal projection of the original actors and thus function in a similar way as documents projected onto a screen.

Looping

The only document related to the gibberish scene available to us while we were working on the reconstruction (a year later, Slavko Hren found a recording of this scene in the archives of TV Slovenia) were the memories of performer Milan Jesih, whom we filmed whilst working on the performance. We edited his performance into a loop in a rhythmical structure that enabled us to create a music and dance score. Just as the original gibberish was not meant to be intelligible, so, too, the music and dance sequence stands *in lieu* of something that need not be understood but is there to show that there is a constitutive place in the performance that need not be understood, that is, that the very moment of incomprehension is inscribed in any understanding of the performance.

Rotating the Cast

In the original cast, there was much fluctuation. A total of thirty performers cooperated in the performance, although the original cast comprised only fifteen members (three of whom were musicians). The main reason for that was the performers' youth, most of whom were between 18 and 21 at the time and under much pressure from their parents and social environment in general. Many of them quit after the opening night. We included this aspect in the reconstruction by rotating the tasks among our performers. The cast of every individual staging was determined just before the start. All of the actors knew most of the roles/tasks. In this way we ensured that every reprise remained as fresh as the première, with the performers taking responsibility for the whole performance and not just their particular parts/tasks.

Chance

Although this procedure was not used in the original *Pupilija*, some of the decisions in the reconstruction were made by chance. We emphasised this procedure in two scenes: the Snow White scene was casted anew each time it was performed, by means of an elimination game in the previous scene: whichever two performers remained at the end of the elimination game, appeared in the next scene. In the Alpine Milk scene, the actor chooses his or her co-actor in that scene.
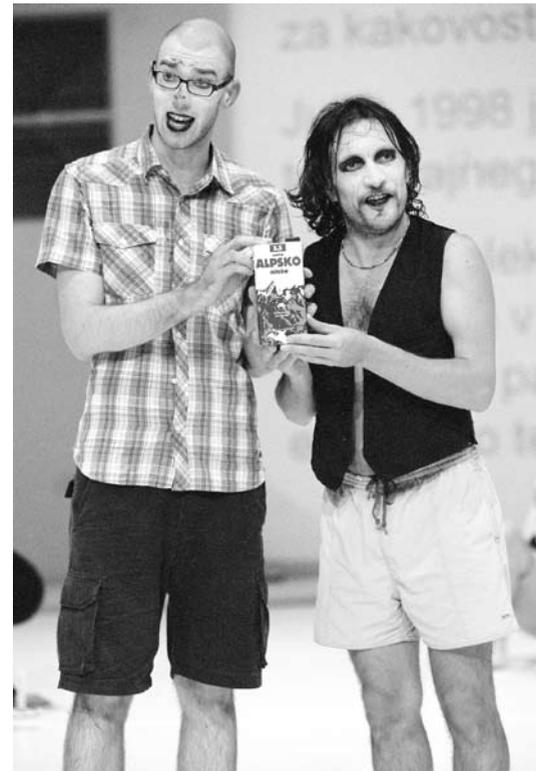
Performing the Script / Practising the Task

In the breastfeeding scene, we hear the voice of Dušan Jovanović, the director of the original performance, reading from the script; following each sentence, the actors perform the task described in it. Thus in this scene, the director of the original performance gets to direct the performers of the reconstruction.

De-constructing the Conductor

For each cast, we engaged a conductor, who was either a member of the original cast of *Pupilija* (Barbara Levstik, who was the conductor in the original, and Dušan Jovanović), or an artist, festival director, etc. (e.g. Jovan Ćirilov, Dragan Živadinov, Tone Partljič, etc.). Thereby we followed the logic of the relationship between an orchestra and its conductors: conductors come and go, whereas the members and repertoire of an orchestra mostly remain the same.

Over-identification

We played Koseski's Poem as the original Pupilčeks did – over-identifying with it, which produced an ironic distance, on the one hand, and an ideological effect, on the other.

Open-ended Structures

The duration and course of the Alpine milk scene are uncertain. The actor has to cut a log in two and if he does not succeed at once (which happened in several instances), the scene can be transformed into a negotiation between what is real and what is staged, what is improvised and what directed. It is a particular task with an improvised end.

Staging the Gaze

In two scenes, a video recording of the original Pupilčeks appears on the screen, made during a screening of the original performance, which they attended at the end of the opening night at the Križanke Knight's Hall in May 2006. The Pupilčeks thus watch themselves (in the 1969 recording), while we watch them watch themselves being reconstructed onstage. The gazing of the young Pupilčeks' onscreen directs the movements of the actress playing the beautiful Anka, who in turn directs the movements of the round dance.

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Tiger's Leap: A Method of Reloading the History of Local Scenes*

≈ **Ana Vujanović**

Many experts agree that contemporary dance emerged in the West (Western Europe and the USA) during the second half of the 20th century and, therefore, that it was conditioned by the democratic character of those societies. At the same time, it is commonly accepted that societies in the East overslept the second half of the 20th century behind the Iron Curtain that divided the democratic (capitalist) West from the totalitarian (communist) East. So it only stands to reason that there was no contemporary dance in the East. Adhering to this teleological view of history as progress, contemporary dance accordingly appeared in the Eastern societies only with their transition to democracy-capitalism in the 1990s and 2000s. Many agree not only that contemporary dance organically had to appear in the East at that time, due to the new social conditions, but also that its appearance is a proof that those ex-Eastern societies have become democratic. Naturally, this late awakening of the East results in its *always-being-late* in its efforts to keep up with the contemporary dance scene in the West.[1]

A lot of experts may agree about a lot of things. And when a majority agree on many "things", the river of history may flow smoothly, all the way from its source, right down to the mouth, the past clearly shaping the future… And here we are, in the present, where one can see, on the international dance scene, contemporary dance both from the ex-East and the ex-West – although still not in equal proportions – that belongs now to the borderless – although not quite "history-less" – global society.

Good morning, Columbus: My colleague, performer, and cultural worker Saša Asentić and I have spent a lot of time discussing the (hi)story above. At one point, it dawned on us: isn't this just like Columbus's discovery of America – a land that had existed for centuries under another (its own) name? With this "Good morning, Columbus" kind of insight, we em-

* This text has already gone through several versions, starting with a short statement in the leaflet accompanying the performance *A Tiger's Leap* in 2007. It was presented as a lecture at the 2008 Maska seminar on contemporary performing arts in Ljubljana. The first published version appeared in *Maska* 23/117–118, 2008, pp. 63-68. In 2009 and 2010 it was presented as part of *My Private Biopolitics*, a performance which evolved with every showing, at the Live Art Festival, Kampnagel, Hamburg; Bil-Bak / ARTEA, Universidad del País Vasco, Bilbao; Stadsfestival Brugge Centraal, Brugge; Dance & Politics conference, Giessen; Wiener Festwochen, Vienna; Off Europe, Leipzig; Personal Profile, Moscow; TransEurope, Hildesheim; and Dance Theatre Workshop, New York. In 2010 it was reworked again and published in *Making History: Reflections from Dance Practice (Hacer Historia: Reflexiones desde la práctica de la danza)*, ed. I. de Naverán, Barcelona: Mercat de les Flors – Institut del Teatre – A Coruña: Centro Coreográfico Galego.

The present version was updated in 2012 and prepared for the lexicon *Parallel Slalom*.

1 Cf. Kunst 2002, 75–76.

barked on our research project, *A Tiger's Leap into the Past (Evacuated Genealogy)*. It is a part of Asentić's larger artistic-research project *Indigo Dance* (2006–2009), comprising, in addition to *A Tiger's Leap*, an installation / impossible project proposal titled *BalCan-Can Sussie Dance* and *My Private Biopolitics*, a performance-lecture. Each segment of the project deals with a specific aspect of the structure of the local dance scene and its position in the international danceworld. *A Tiger's Leap* in particular deals with the history of contemporary dance in Serbia and here I will focus only on its methodology rather than content.[2]

Our Own Tiger's Leap

The purpose of *A Tiger's Leap into the Past* is to articulate the past of local contemporary dance in historical terms. Its point of departure comprises the following questions: Why isn't there a history of local contemporary dance? Why is it still waiting to be written? How do we actually use the term "contemporary dance"? Is it an umbrella term for every artistic and cultural practice of bodily movement that is current in any way? Are there other names in the local past that might signify the same or similar practices? What might we identify as constituting the history of dance in this region? What did we have *in lieu* of contemporary dance in the past? Why wasn't it called contemporary dance at the time? Can we call it contemporary dance now? Is it entitled to claim contemporaneity? Is it about the state of affairs at any given time or is it about the right to contemporaneity?

Starting with these questions, *A Tiger's Leap* has been produced as a series of video interviews with actors, participants, and witnesses of the local dance and performance scene in different periods of the 20th century.[3] The work is an open long-term research without a predetermined list of in-

2 I used this research work in several theorisations of the local contemporary dance scene and its past, which made ample use of the work's content. Cf. Vujanović 2011.

3 Ending with the '90s, when contemporary dance – first as a form of theatre, and then as an independent artistic discipline – started appearing on the local scene.
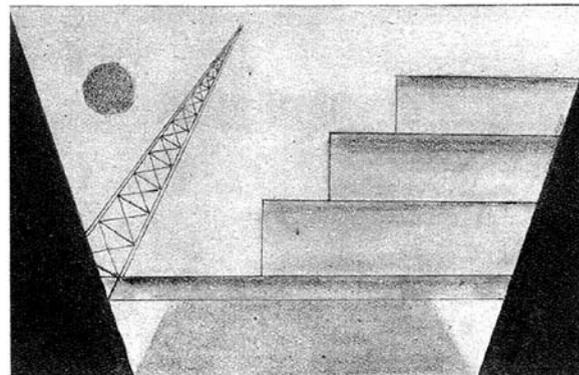
Bogoslav Konjevod, sketches for Dragan Aleksić's dada performance, Belgrade, 1924

Nela Antonović: Free Fall, Bitef Theater, Belgrade, 1995, Photo by: Djordje Tomić

terviewees. We simply started with the biggest figure in local dance history of the early 20th century, Maga Magazinović, and then followed the divergent traces that emerged in the interviews themselves. This way, the work has been constantly self-broadening and self-(re)defining with more and more figures, who formed a web of cross-references of the interviewees. We asked all of them questions grouped around three big issues:

— *conditions of work* – organisational, technical, financial, educational, and infrastructural circumstances of work in the field of dance and performance on the levels of state/local cultural policy making, institutional positioning, and personal relations and experiences;

— *conceptual framework* – the concepts, terms, names, and notions with which the interviewees operated; artistic influences (persons, styles, techniques, and paradigms); references to the history of ballet and dance; and relations to other artistic fields, as well as to the surrounding social and political contexts;

— *public reception of their works* – reviews and critical reflections in mass media, theoretical approaches, reactions from their audiences, and general public opinion.

This rhizomatically-structured history rests on a twofold formula that I borrowed – and modified to a certain extent – from Foucault's new historicism:[4]

ARCHAEOLOGY – a method of researching the facts, names, opinions, experiences, and agencies present in one context and period in the past, without the idea of a big (majoritarian) historical narration, that is, a red thread connecting all the fragments into one coherent story;

+ LINKS THROUGH TIME – which appear from within this self-regulating structure as various indirect links, reread(ing) connections and reversible cause-effect lines;

= GENEALOGY – a provisional and particular result of the links that offers a chronology of the archaeological layers but without the notion of teleological progress clearly leading from one (earlier) layer to another (later) one.

4 Especially from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The History of Sexuality / The Will to Knowledge*.

In this way, we got a vast rhizomatic network of ideas, concepts, images, stories, experiences, and memories for our audiences to interpret, depending on their own historical positioning, contexts, and subjectivities. This also explains why we conducted interviews rather than collect solid historiographic data: we simply do not believe in pure data, objective facts, objects found in the past "as they really were". Instead, we foster subjective perspectives that give meaning to the facts from the position of singular historical subjects; there, the facts (documents, video recordings, etc.) are only so much illustrative or demonstrative material added to a history constructed in this way. This idea is firmly rooted in Walter Benjamin's conception of history, which I proposed as the general politico-theoretical methodology of the work. As it is a more complex and broadly useful issue, I'll explain it later, following some concrete descriptions of our work.

History (of dance) is not given, but must be constructed: In the first round we interviewed Katalin Ladik, Svenka Savić, Dubravka Maletić, Sonja Vukićević, Nela Antonović, Jovan Ćirilov, Vladimir Kopicl, and Boris Kovač, and later also Nada Kokotović, Ljubiša Ristić, and Haris Pašović. We complemented these interviews with a video exploration of *My Life*, an autobiography of Maga Magazinović, written in a style close to (self-)interview (Magazinović 2000). The work was first shown in February 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina in Novi Sad. The video archive had an important interactive element: we placed a big piece of canvas on the wall, inviting the visitors to draw a map of the history of local contemporary dance on it. The invitation read: "History of dance is not given, but must be constructed". This was another way to invite actors on the local scene to construct our own history and for that reason we borrowed Irwin's method of representation from their project *East Art Map* (Irwin 2006) as the highlight of the event.[5] Accordingly, we also included my own self-interview as a live performance in the video exhibition, in which I served as guide and keynote speaker and also as a witness and participant in the cur-

5 Their famous slogan is "History is not given, please help us to construct it". See http://www.eastartmap.org,

rent dance scene. However, my self-interview is not permanently included in the archive, because my name has not been mentioned by the interviewees.

The space of art is not determined only by that which it includes, but also, or even more so, by that which it excludes: For the second stage of the project, we made – together with video artist Marta Popivoda – a cluster of interviews about unrealised dance and performance projects over the past few decades. This connected *A Tiger's Leap* with another work that Marta Popivoda, Bojana Cvejić, and I made in Graz in 2006 (as part of the exhibition *No Space Is Innocent!* at the Steirischer Herbst): *Archiving Performances at the Edge of the Void.* We used the older work's principles – making the invisible visible, including the excluded, affirming the negated – and combined them with the procedures of *A Tiger's Leap* – interview, remembrance, and storytelling. This time we focused on the incubation period and early years (from the 1970s on), when the contemporary dance scene in Serbia emerged and was recognised as such. The work was displayed as a video installation, *Recycle Bin – Archiving Performances at the Edge of the Void*, in March 2008 at the Magacin u Kraljevića Marka in Belgrade. The interviewees were Jovan Ćirilov, Vladimir Kopicl, Sonja Vukićević, Katalin Ladik, Nela Antonović, Miroslav Benka, Bojana Cvejić, Olivera Kovačević-Crnjanski, Dragana Alfirević, and Dušan Murić. This work aims to show the "other scene" of the positive history written by *A Tiger's Leap*. It speaks about the non-existent, erased, rejected, impossible, or unrealised dance and performance projects, pieces, festivals, venues, projects in education, and networks. These "not-to-be-done" works are situated "on the edge of the void" of the current situation in the local danceworld. Since it cannot be decided whether these work proposals truly belong to the local dance scene or not, they convey a concentrated sense of historicity of the current situation.

A Public Domain Net Archive: The third aspect of *A Tiger's Leap* is the creation of a free and open-access online archive.[6]

6 See the archive at http://www.perart.org/savremeni-ples/tigrov-skok-u-istoriju/ (accessed December 2012).

Dragoljub Raša Todosijević: *Was ist Kunst?*, Happy Gallery, SKC, Belgrade, 1976, Authors' archive

Together with the interviews that we have already uploaded, it will contain video recordings, documents, as well as interactive and changeable historical map(s). The aim of the archive is twofold: to share what we, as cultural workers, obtained and made with the public at no charge, and to intervene into those "things" about which many agree, by making the archive as visible as possible.

Walter Benjamin's Political Theory of History

I will conclude this text with some explanations of the politico-historical methodology that informs our work. *A Tiger's Leap into the Past*, including its title, is based on Walter Benjamin's writing, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (Benjamin 1969). Benjamin's text has served to shift our approach from a neutral archiving or objective historicising of the past of the local contemporary dance scene toward a critical illumination of those aspects of the past that were invisible then and are still not visible from the perspective of the globally predominant historicisation of dance. In Benjamin's words:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'. ... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger (Benjamin 1969, 255).

This is why we chose the interview format, to envoice those subjective perspectives that may not retell the past "as it really was". On the contrary, they blast out the past, by wresting it from the continuum of regular history into the present, which they are meant to change, transform, and revolutionise – as a legacy for the future. This is Benjamin's "tiger's leap", which re-orientates history entirely toward the future.

Another important influence that comes from Benjamin's text is his rereading of history as a "memory-scene" (*Gedächtnisszene*), whereby actuality comes to condition our readings of historical images. Thus, what we address and challenge here is, above all, the very actuality to which *A Tiger's Leap* relates as a reality check, staging its political structures, hierarchies of power, and ownership, not only over products and material infrastructures, but also over con-

cepts, names, and paradigms – that is, over history itself. What is crucial for us here is Benjamin's notion of *Eingedenken*, often translated as "remembrance" or "memory". However, as Slavoj Žižek asserts (Žižek 2008, 183), *Eingedenken* cannot be translated simply as remembrance or reminiscence, because in Benjamin, *Eingedenken* denotes a politically interested appropriation of the past by the oppressed and the exploited, for their own political benefit. Positing the local dance practice and discourse in the global history of dance as that oppressed and exploited class, *A Tiger's Leap* constructs its own version of the past mostly by means of its interviewees' singular memories, who "here and now" write the "there and then" in a genealogy that is evacuated from the regular history of the contemporary dance scene. It is about re-actualising the repository of historical knowledge embedded in the memories of the overlooked, the erased, and the forgotten.

The third important influence on our work was Benjamin's theoretical approach to history. According to his "Theses", the tiger's leap is the leap of the present into the past that was already waiting for it, waiting, according to Žižek, in order to be established through it. Žižek notes that Benjamin was a unique Marxist thinker of his time who regarded history as a text, because he maintained that the meaning and historical dimension of events would be decided only later, once they are inscribed into the symbolic network – into the story of history, I would add. This is not about a historical relativism claiming that we can never know the past because our understanding always depends on our current knowledge. In Žižek's view, Benjamin's key theoretical insight is that the present is relativised, not the past, and thus remains open for future rewritings through this procedure. The present is, one hopes, a "retroactive force"; it not only rereads but also writes the past and thus breaks the homogenous continual time of official history.[7]

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7 Here I should point out that my present rereading of Benjamin's tiger was guided by the concerns, time, and context of our own work. Therefore, for the purposes of A Tiger's Leap, I disregarded his widely discussed theological references, challenging of Marxist historical dialectics, the image of the chess-playing automaton, the Angelus Novus, and many other aspects, employing the tiger's leap instead as an action-event

(*In lieu* of a Conclusion):
The Tiger is Leaping Around

At the very end, I would like to take the above-described methodology and procedure of historicisation beyond *A Tiger's Leap into the Past*. For me, *A Tiger's Leap* is but an explicit example, while the method itself may be used in a much wider scope, beyond this work and the specific context of the Eastern European dance scene. I would therefore emphasise the similarities between our work and works and projects such as the following: the already mentioned *East Art Map* by the Slovenian group Irwin, which (re)constructs the history of the visual arts in Eastern Europe after the WWII; *Swedish Dance History* initiated by Mårten Spångberg and based on the following statement: "History must be written, and those who write it define the future";[8] *What's Welsh for Performance?* by Heike Roms, which explores the constructive character of the history of performance art, confronting its history in Wales with the already canonised history;[9] the *East-Dance-Academy* as well as some of its specific projects, such as *Maska*'s platform *ARTCHIVE – Contaminated with History* and a series of re-enactment performances in Ljubljana and Zagreb; and so on. To be sure, there are significant differences between those projects, ranging from their topics to their contexts, but what connects them here is their shared striving to problematise big, smooth, majoritarian histories. That striving is realised through similar political orientations, wherein the tiger's leap appears as a method of intervention

that transforms the present and breaks with the course of history, inviting and writing the past for the sake of the future. It was a Benjaminian gesture par excellence, I would say.

8   See http://www.inpex-universe.org/events/swedish-dance-history-2010, http://theswedishdancehistory.wordpress.com/ (accessed February 2013).

9   See www.performance-wales.org (accessed November 2012): "Traditionally, histories of performance art have tended to concentrate on a well-documented (mostly US-based) canon of works, neglecting local scenes outside of the centres of art production. This project aims to chart the manner in which performance art as an international artistic movement was negotiated in response to the particularities of specific cultural situations during its formative years – here examined in the context of Wales between 1965 and 1979".

DAH Theatre: *The Story of Tea*, Directed by: Dijana Milošević, Belgrade, 2006, Photo by: Jovan Čekić

Katalin Ladik in *Bayer Aspirin*, one-act play, Directed by: Janscó Mikós, Novi Sad Theatre, 1982

by minoritarian subjects, whose concern is to shape a different future. In that sense, the tiger's leap in all of these works should not be mistaken for historical revisionism, but rather understood as a futurist intervention into the present that will become the past of another and different future, a future in which historical univocalism will be replaced by a multiplicity of voices, and no longer indistinguishable noises, that will resonate all around.

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Generations

≈ **Miško Šuvaković**

The problem of identifying, indexing, and classifying "phenomena" in late-20th-century art has been a major problem for critics and historians of art. The issue of style – the dialectics of style writ large, between classicism and romanticism – was forced into retreat around 1900 by the emergence of numerous, concurrent, and mutually competitive movements and tendencies in art. In art history, *style* is a concept/term that denotes a set of artworks with common or at least related properties (in terms of form, composition, topics, genre, and, sometimes, technique) in a given historical period.

During the first 60 years of the 20th century, every artistic movement/direction was based on a specific and short-lived *micro-style*. In order that the activities of a number of artists might become a movement or tendency, apart from extracting and specifying their relations regarding form, composition, topics, genre, and techniques, there also needed to be a dimension of an existential, ethical, political, aes-

thetic, and conceptual shaping of the artworld within which those artists were acting. In modern and postmodern art, a movement or tendency denotes an aesthetic and artistic phenomenon – event – based on a formal, linguistic, political, and existential connection, as well as a connection in terms of values, between a number of authors at a given historical interval. The difference between a tendency and "style" is that the former is a *new phenomenon* in art and expresses the discovery and conception of a new field of artistic work by a number of artists and not the application of an already existing and developed model of expression and presentation. The difference between a movement and a tendency is that the latter is not predicated on solid micro-social, existential, or political connections, which define movements as creative and activist unities in the world of art, culture, and society. A movement strives to create a special existential-artistic situation or platform, whereas in a tendency there is a respect for individual differences and the autonomy of individual work on hybrid and open platforms. The relationship between tendencies, movements, and styles is relative. An artistic phenomenon may develop through a movement that might expand into a tendency and then become a simulacrum of a style, that is, a tendency might become a movement and style by concentrating on a narrow aesthetic, artistic, conceptual, or political area of work and activity.

The 20th century saw the emergence of a large number of concurrent and often mutually competitive phenomena, movements (*isms* and *arts*), and tendencies. Toward the end of the century, there was an increasing fragmentation and plural multiplication of phenomena, movements, and tendencies, which means that each was identified with the practice of a single author/artist with a locally and globally index-atomised position of her/his own. The multiple and countless index-atomised positions of Western artists may no longer be described, explained, or interpreted by means of the epistemological models of styles, movements, phenomena, or tendencies. Due to the globalisation, the "situation" of first-world artists (European and North American artists) is no longer presentable as exclusive or dominant, because

The New York School, 1951

Photo-session with the Members and Friends of Gorgona, 1961
Photo by: Branko Balić

their incomparability emerges opposite or next to that of second-world (real-socialist or post-socialist societies) and third-world artists (colonial and postcolonial societies). That is why some theorists and historians of art, such as Achille Bonito Oliva, Ješa Denegri, and Harald Szeemann, describe late-20th-century art as art at a time of vastness. The concept of "vastness" means that it is no longer possible to derive general formal, aesthetic, or artistic interpretative characterisations of individual artistic practices. There are only individual cases, in their multiplied incomparability and unlinkability. In other words, the discourse of criticism and art history becomes a discourse that locates, identifies, and interprets individual differences between individual cases of art. Still, from the practical need to register *nonetheless* some kind of classification or presentation of "the phenomena of artists", secondary classifications begin to emerge, which are not linked to any artistic, aesthetic, or any other kind of generalising potentialities. Artists are classified according to the geopolitical criteria of their place of birth, living, and working, the decade in which their individual or micro-collective artistic practice emerged, and the generational visibility/phenomenality of certain artistic practices.

The criterion of recognising, identifying, and "linking" artists by generation rests on an entirely culturally oriented stance: that there must be something in common among artists of different practices, that is, that their work is conditioned by the cultural and social moment of its emergence on the art scene. That moment is recognised as a generational event. That means that the characteristics of their emergence in terms of class, race, gender, politics, and style are sidelined for the sake of invoking and reacting to a characteristic "generational" moment of their initial appearance on the artistic, cultural, or social scene. In addition, the concept of "generation" has a threefold use, denoting (1) a group of artists born around the same time; (2) a group of artists who were born at different times, but emerged on the scene around the same time or together; and (3) a group of artists who diverge from the dominant group on the scene and by virtue of their simultaneous and pronounced disparity mark an exceptional moment in the now.
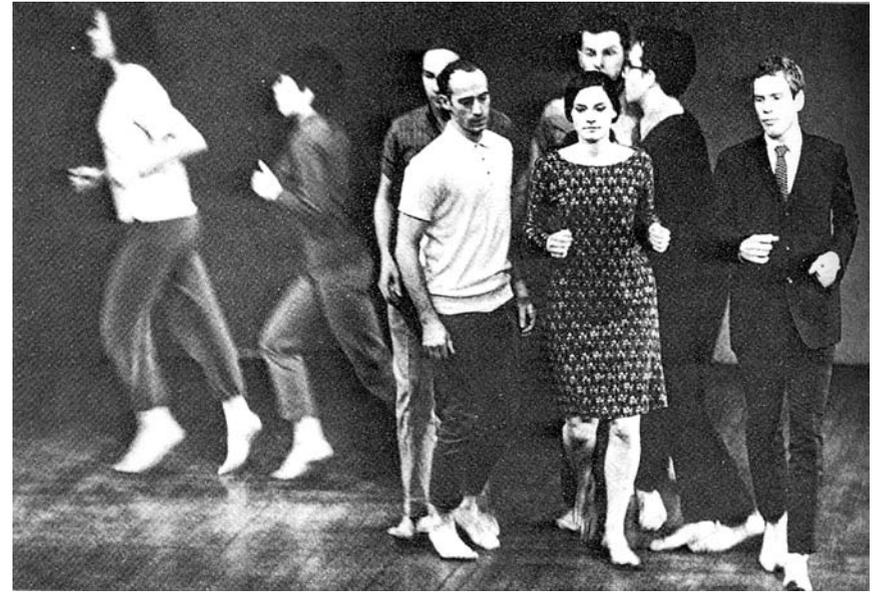
Yvonne Rainer: *We Shall Run*, 1965, Photo by: Peter Moore © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York, NY

OHO-Catalogue Movement, 1968

Classifying late-20th- and early-21st-century artists by generation and decade has enjoyed a typical use in the second Yugoslavia and other real-socialist societies and cultures, in order to signify a relatively neutral search and striving for "new situations" in art and culture. For Yugoslav late-modernist critics and historians of art, such as Ješa Denegri, Marijan Susovski, Davor Matičević, and Jure Mikuž, identifying artistic phenomena by generation meant a kind of liberation from the aesthetic-stylistic criteria of classifying contemporary art. The point was to express the temporal characteristics of the new in art and, certainly, the dialectic of one generational identity's turn into a new generational identity. Generationally identified art is interpreted as a realisation of the dialectic production of the new that expresses its exceptional character with regards to local as well as international art. Entirely disparate artistic and cultural phenomena, as well as individual practices have been signified by terms such as the generation, the new generation, first generation, second generation, different generation, 1960s generation, 1968 generation, 1970s generation, 1980s generation, postmodern generation, 1990s generation, digital generation, Internet generation, transition generation, 21st-century generation, and the like.

The term "new generation" first emerged in interpretations of British sculpture exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1965 (Anthony Caro, Tim Scott, Phillip King, William Tucker) that diverged from the high modernism of Henry Moore. Then, *the new generation* served to label the Yugoslav and Eastern European artistic practices of the 1960s that were oriented toward a reception of Western art, that is, toward catching up with it – for instance, the auteurs of Croatian anti-films (Mihovil Pansini, Ivan Martinac), Serbian critical and experimental films (Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Kokan Rakonjac, Marko Babac), pop-artists (Dušan Otašević), minimalist artists (Juraj Dobrović, Ljerka Šibenik, Radomir Damnjan), Luddite theatrical practices (the Pupilija group), and physical theatre (the Pekarna group). All of these authors engaged in a critique of the bureaucratised and state-supported socialist modernism, in favour of new

Group 143, Conversation about Art, SKC Gallery, Belgrade, 1979

Magnet Group: *FaluSerbia*, Belgrade, April 1996
Photo by: Draško Gagović

and experimental art. Pansini's anti-films promoted exploring the cinematic medium. Dušan Makavejev's short and feature films projected a radical critique of the ruling communist party's conformism, on behalf of the radical left's desire for permanent revolution in everyday life. The Slovenian theatre group Pupilija Ferkeverk arose from Luddite poetry and textual experimentation. It linked its work in theatre with the hippie culture and poetics of experimental physical and site-specific theatre. In a way, the new generation was also a *new sensibility* young generation, in Marcuse's sense of the term, which led its initial historicisations to label it as *the '68 generation*. These were artists born during the late 1930s and early to late 1940s.

In the real-socialist bloc, the generation of the late 1960s and '70s signified those artists who were born during the late 1940s and early '50s and who linked their artistic practices with conceptual and post-conceptual art, that is, with the "new artistic practice", which was the preferred term at the time. This generation was characterised by their plurality of means of expression and nomadism in terms of media. Some critics wrote about *unprecedented artistic practices.* In the USSR, this was the generation of Sots Art critical painting. In Hungary, these were underground post-conceptual and pop-rock productions. Czechoslovakia produced a critical and existentially oriented body art, i.e. conceptual performance. In Slovenia, the OHO group (1965–1971) traversed its own course of development, from concrete poetry and happenings, via conceptual art, to living in a commune outside the world of art. These were artists who saw themselves not only as leaders of new art, but also as artists who were discovering new forms of life in the contemporary world. The Croatian art scene was marked by the critical-conceptualist performance practices of Braco Dimitrijević, Goran Trbuljak, and the Six Authors group, as well as the practice of the Kugla glumište theatre. In Serbia, this was the *epoch* of SKC[1]-based activism and expansion of post-object and post-media artistic productions (Marina Abramović with the Group of Six Artists, Group 143, Goran Đorđević, Nenad Petrović, Zoran Belić), as

1 The Belgrade Students' Cultural Centre – Translator's note.
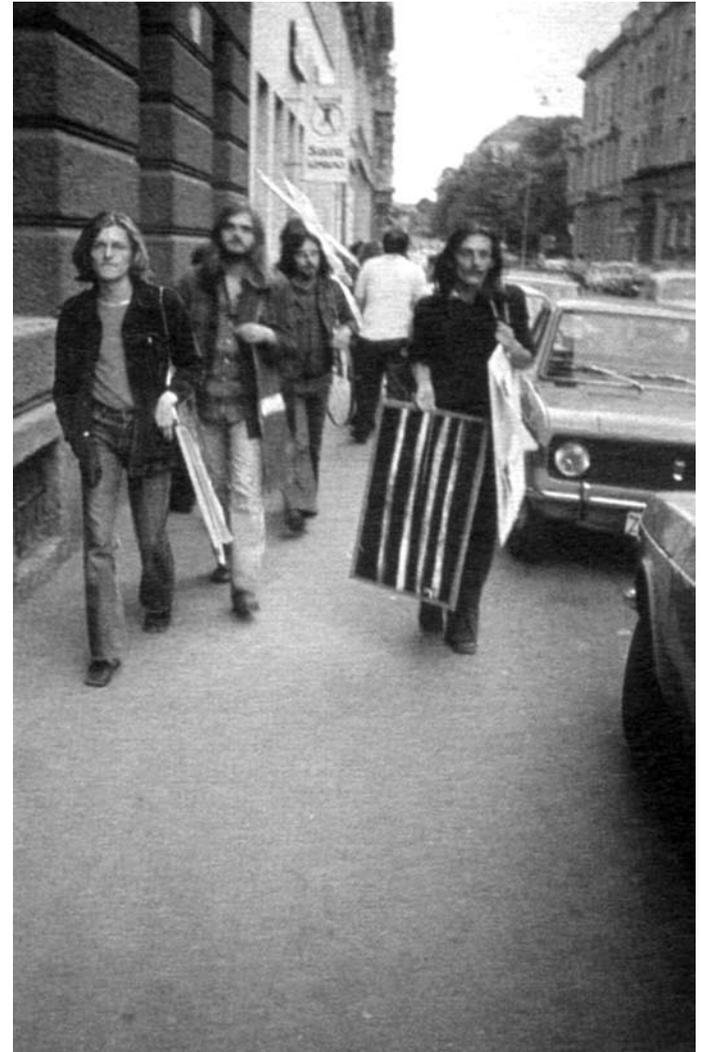
The Group of Six Authors, A Stroll through the City, Zagreb, 1976

opposed to the dominant and party-and-state-supported "socialist modernism", which had been established by the generation of artists who began their work during the 1950s. The Students' Cultural Centre was a research institution that enabled artists to explore the "new" in art, typically in the post-media practices of body art, performance, installations, artists' films, video art, and lecture performance.

The 1980s or postmodern generation signified different phenomena from the late '70s to the mid '80s, which saw the waning of the Cold War division of the world and a desire for a plurality of artistic productions, from the Italian transa-vantgarde and German neo-expressionism, to the Slovenian retro-avant-garde. These were artists born between the mid 1950s and early 1960s. Two prototypical figures of this epoch of eclectic and post-historical pluralism are Belgian artist (painter, director) Jan Fabre and Slovenian director and performer Dragan Živadinov. Both of them redefined theatre as an open hybrid field of post-historical and para-geographic references and simulations of an *incomplete* and *plural* confrontation with the borders of the real. Jan Fabre worked with eclectic transavantgarde theatrical spectacles. Dragan Živadinov collaborated with the Neue slowenische Kunst movement, within which, in co-operation with the music band Laibach, the Irwin group of painters, and the *New Collectivism* group of designers, he developed strategies of postmodern retro-avant-garde.

The 1990s or Internet, digital, post-communist, postcolonial, multicultural, global, or glocal generation has served as a label for artists born between the late 1960s and early 1970s. They are characterised by a fundamental turn away from the "autonomy of art" of late modernism and eclectic postmodernism, in favour of critical post-media, new-media, and performance practices anticipating the artistic productions of critical, subversive, and cultural-activist labour. The borders between art and culture, culture and society, artistic production and cultural interventionism were relativised. It was a period of a paradoxical confrontation between "unsuspected radicalisms" and "covert conservatisms". That paradox of the radical and the conservative may be seen first in

Angels, Nikola Džafo and the duty team of the Art Clinic, 2006
Photomontage by: Filip Dolinaj, Courtesy of: Archive of the Multimedia center Led Art, Novi Sad

so-called New British, i.e. European drama, and then also in other areas of the narrative revival (narrative video, the new narrativity in cinema, the para-narrativity of video games). The term *1990s generation* denoted the emergence of British artists (Damien Hirst, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Sarah Lucas, Tracey Emin) who acted with support of the Saatchi Gallery and marked the apex of the neoliberal alienation of art. The so-called "British new drama" or "In-Yer-Face Theatre" (Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill) was likewise identified with the 1990s generation. The context of Serbia, for instance, was marked by the emergence of directors and performers born in the 1960s. They were active in the context of alternative theatre (Dah teatar, Plavo pozorište, Ister teatar); their performances were, albeit ambivalently, part of Eugenio Barba's theatrical tradition and a critical political theatre aimed against the belligerent policies of Serbia's then president Slobodan Milošević.

The 21st-century generation has been spearheaded by artists born during the 1970s. They are characterised by their critical, subversive, and activist re-examining of the great political paradigms of liberalism, the left, and the right, by way of performing their artistic work in the open, hybrid, and indeterminate space of a globalised and media-totalised everyday contemporaneity. Quite divergent practices may be discerned, from bio-technological and genetic-productivist explorations, via cultural activism i.e. artivism in or over and above all artistic disciplines, to the "phenomenon" or "tendency" of conceptual dance or conceptual choreography as a step out of the last traditionally autonomous art, which was the art of ballet/dance. The early-21st-century generation is also characterised by turning away from the artist *qua* creator or the artist *qua* performer to the artist-curator. In fact, the artist-curator is an artist of post-production practices, which have replaced the work of art with the "project of art" and creating art with "researching art". Slovenian theatre theorist Aldo Milohnić has introduced the term "artivism" to signify that art of the 2000s saw a turn from art to performing, acting, and realising in social reality. Often, social reality itself becomes a means for realising and performing art as such.

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A critical remark: all classifications by generation, decade, tendency, and style feature a similar *cynical* duality: they enable us, with much certainty, to find our way in the vast fields of artistic productions and rest on necessary simplifications, reductions, and cuts. But that is exactly what makes them an epistemological model – a model of generational indexing and mapping – and not the *truth of art*.

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II

The Lapse of Knowledge

Radical Amateurism*

≈ Aldo Milohnić

The Critical Art Ensemble is a collective of American artists founded in 1987. It became known to the general public in 2004, due to the prosecution of its member Steve Kurtz, accused of bio-terrorism. This trial raised doubts that it was an attempt by the government to silence the artist, who was, along with his scientist colleague Robert Ferrell, engaged in projects meant to educate the general population about issues such as genetically modified foods and the interest of capital and the military establishment in subordinating and controlling bio-technical research.[1] Steve Kurtz is a prototype of Claire Pentecost's "public amateur" – one, not necessarily an artist, who

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1 After four years of a legal nightmare, Steve Kurtz was cleared of all charges in 2008. Under the USA PATRIOT Act, the maximum sentence for these charges was increased from five years to twenty years in prison. In a letter to his supporters, Kurtz comes to a bitter conclusion: "What have I learned from my ordeal? I've learned that with tens of thousands of supporters, with hundreds of thousands of dollars, with one of the best legal teams in the US, with a crack media team, with a group of experienced fundraisers, with four years of one's life, and with total innocence, sometimes one can slice off a piece of American justice. Which in the end means: The overwhelming majority of people ain't gettin' justice, and we have to keep fighting until they do". See Kurtz 2008.

"takes the initiative to question something in the province of another discipline, acquire knowledge through unofficial means, and assume the authority to offer interpretations of that knowledge, especially in regard to decisions that affect our lives" (Pentecost 2009).

Due to an absurd accusation, FBI agents confiscated many of Kurtz's personal belongings, among them parts of his and the CAE's art project that was meant to be installed as part of the exhibition *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCa). The exhibition's catalogue included a short contribution by the CAE defining the notion of an amateur:

The word "amateur" is very rarely used in a positive sense. It is a disciplinary term used to discourage hybridity and maintain profitable professional and social separations. For the most part amateurs are second-class citizens in the area of knowledge production. However, in the context of political and cultural intervention, amateurs have a significant and vital role to play. They can have the ability to spot contradictions and rhetorical cover-ups within the dominant paradigms, are freer to recombine elements of paradigms thought dead or unrelated, and can apply everyday life experience to their deliberations with greater ease than specialists can. In this manner amateurs can reconfigure the terms of action within the terrain of a given discipline. (Critical Art Ensemble 2004, 147)

Following the CAE's argument, we might say that artists are amateurs "in the area of knowledge production", in scientific research, or in any kind of highly specialised and "expertised" field of production. On the other hand, the artworld has its own "second-class citizens", i.e. amateur artists. When the CAE say that "amateurs can reconfigure the terms of action within the terrain of a given discipline", they are in a way following an idea of Bertolt Brecht's, namely that its "simplicity of playing" is "the alpha and the omega of proletarian acting" (Brecht 2004, 148). Actors practising "proletarian acting" are, according to Brecht, "the actors of the small working-class theatres that are to be found in all those chief cities of

Europe, Asia and America which have not been struck down by Fascism" and "by no means dilettantes" (Brecht 2004, 148).

It is obvious that Brecht uses these two notions – amateur and dilettante – in mutual opposition. What is the difference between the two? According to Darko Suvin, Brecht wanted to write a complex text on the topic under the title "Six Chronicles on Amateur Theatre" but completed only the first part ("Is It Worth Speaking about Amateur Theatre?") and a concise plan for the remaining five parts. For us, the most interesting is the second part, "Amateur and Dilettante". All we have are five brief sentences from Brecht's manuscripts:

> The difference between an amateur and a dilettante. An amateur in sport is not a dilettante. An amateur can be an artist, indeed, he can be a great artist. Dilettantism means mimicking professionals. An amateur has to find his own art. (Brecht 1979, 92)

Obviously, Brecht regards amateurism (not only in art, but also in sport, etc.) as a positive term, while dilettantism stands for a bad version of amateurism, one that is unable to develop its own way of producing art, in other words, one that cannot rise above a mere mimicking of art professionals. The main characteristic of amateur (or "proletarian") actors is their "simplicity of playing". However, according to the logic of Brecht's argument, the simplicity of their acting has nothing to do with the mimicking routine of dilettante actors. The simplicity of an amateur's acting results from "a specific outlook and a specific concern". "Small working-class theatres often shed a surprising light on the complex and baffling relationships between the people of our time," Brecht writes (Brecht 1994, 149). He then offers a "checklist" of those social relationships:[2]

> Where wars come from, and who fights them and who pays for them; what kind of destruction results from men's oppressiveness towards other men; what the efforts of the many are directed to; what the easy life of the few comes from; whose knowledge

2 Of course, these would be social relations specific for the time when the fragment was written – the beginning of the Second World War and Brecht's exile in Sweden.

What is the Alternative?, Poster, Ljubljana, 1983, Design by: Dušan Mandić

serves whom; who is hurt by whose actions: all this is shown by the small and struggling theatres of the workers. I am not speaking just of the plays but of those who perform them best and with the liveliest concern. (Brecht 1994, 149)

There are certain problems (be they social, cultural, political…) that are visible and perceived as problems almost exclusively from a structural position in society from which they *can* be perceived as such. Those who are most affected or harmed by problems of this kind (i.e. by injustices) are most likely to pose radical questions. This is where the respective structural positions of two kinds of amateurs come together: the artistic amateur (the Brechtian "proletarian actor") and the political amateur (activist).[3] Amateur actors seem strange to the "silent majority", but precisely for that reason they are in a position to ask simple, naïve, and hence important questions. Terry Eagleton has explained the significance of amateur actors and, by analogy, of modern activists, in his essay "Brecht and Rhetoric":

> Amateur actors, like political revolutionaries, are those who find the conventions hard to grasp and perform them badly, having never recovered from their childhood puzzlement. Such puzzlement is perhaps what we call "theory". The child is an incorrigible theoretician, forever urging the most impossibly fundamental questions. [...] The revolutionary questioner sees the world with the astonishment of a child ("Where does capitalism come from, Mummy?") and refuses to be fobbed off by the adults' customary Wittgensteinian justifications of their practices: "This is just what we *do*, dear." [...] Theory begins to take hold once one realizes that the adults don't know their way around either, even if they *act* as though they do. They act as well as they do precisely because they can no longer see, and so question the conventions by which they behave. (Eagleton 1985, 636–637)

There is probably no need to stress that we would miss Eagleton's point if we were to understood the terms "bad acting" and "bad actors" literally, that is to say, as pejorative rath-

3 I call this political and artistic hybrid "artivism" and its proponents "artivists". For more on that, see Milohnić 2005a and Milohnić 2005b.

er than conceptual, i.e. affirmative terms. Actors, performers, activists, theorists, and so on, are "amateurs" because they pose questions about issues that are otherwise not challenged, since they are somehow taken for granted, presumed, exempted, in short, drummed into us. This is what generates the sheer grotesqueness of those spectacular displays of well-trained, uniformed (read: costumed), professionally educated *robocops*, who at political protests defy the amateur "drama workshops" of political activists. These street scenes can be seen when no one else besides "amateur" politicians (i.e. political activists) is still willing to pose "naïve" questions, i.e. those that are never heard in parliament, the home of professional politicians. For both types of amateurs, amateur actors as well as political activists, Brecht's points about the "simplicity of playing" of "proletarian actors" hold true:

> We speak of simplicity when complicated problems are so mastered as to make them easier to deal with and less difficult to grasp. A great number of seemingly self-contradictory facts, a vast and discouraging tangle, is often set in order by science in such a way that a relatively simple truth emerges. This kind of simplicity does not involve poverty. Yet it is this that one finds in the playing of the best proletarian actors, whenever it is a question of portraying men's social life together. (Brecht 1994, 148)

Taking Brecht's idea of a specific "simplicity" of amateur cultural production as my starting point, I would propose the following thesis: namely, that amateur (and not dilettante) art and cultural practices – as part of the neo-avant-garde art practices of the late 1960s and early '70s, as well as 1980s alternative culture in the former Yugoslavia – could be interpreted precisely in opposition to the presupposed professionalism of the then cultural elites. Amateur art (in the Brechtian sense) was not an inferior copy of professional art practices; it was not about mimicking elite culture, which would be the ideological ideal of dilettante actors, musicians, or painters. To the contrary, it was about participating in the spontaneous ideology of immediate radical intervention in cultural, social, and political spheres of Yugoslav society. Its practitioners were *aesthetically unburdened* by forms of ex-

pression and materials used in their works; their preoccupations resided more in the field of political intervention than in the aesthetic sphere of the (primarily bourgeois) project of so-called "autonomous art". This was the affirmative and emancipatory dimension of that kind of radical amateurism. In my understanding of amateurism, "radical" refers precisely to its practitioners' self-identification with the very position of being an amateur – *qua* resistance to the professional elitism of the cultural establishment.

Examples of that kind of amateurism in Yugoslav cultural production between the 1960s and the 1980s might include, for instance, punk music (as opposed to various forms of professional, usually commercial, mass entertainment music, including pop-rock music), experimental 16mm film in the 1960s and '70s as well as alternative video art in the 1980s (as opposed to Yugoslavia's highly subsidised professional film industry), neo-avant-garde theatre and radical performance (as opposed to professional theatres as well as the apologetic dilettantism of theatre groups mimicking the aesthetic patterns of professional theatres), alternative theory (as opposed to mainstream academic philosophy and aesthetic theory in the academic establishment), etc.[4]

To be radically amateurish or unprofessional under such conditions means simply to take seriously the blasphemy of amateurism (amateurs as the artworld's "second-class citizens") and to put it in a positive context, i.e. as opposed to the bare aestheticism of the cultural establishment. This strategy was feasible under the conditions of relative social security maintained by the Yugoslav version of the social welfare state as well as the Fordist mode of production as its economic base.

4 Examples are many and can't be all listed here. Let me mention just one example, which might serve as an illustration. As stated by Dušan Jovanović (theatre director who worked in Slovenia with the amateur actors of the Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre group during the late 1960s), at that time he conceived of a "typical professional" as a sort of "art technician", a neutral and "apolitical humanist", one who does not oppose or question existing social reality. On the other hand, Jovanović says, "despite its artistic imperfection (or maybe just because of it?), the Pupilija group was not irrelevant in the sense that, generally speaking, a great deal of professional theatre is". See Jovanović 2009, 91–92.
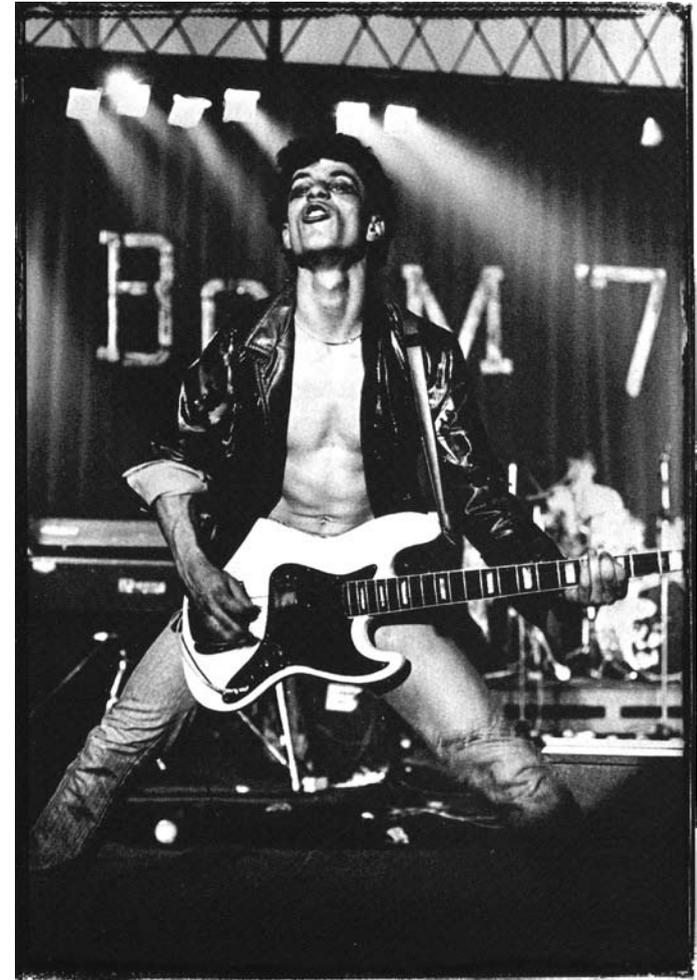
Punk-band Parafi at the Boom Festival, Novi Sad, 1978, Photo by: Dražen Kalenić

That mode of production (including its Yugoslav version) requires a strict division between, on the one hand, paid (working) time and, on the other, non-paid (free) time. Typically, the Fordist worker is non-specialised and may adapt to any kind of mass production. S/he is a kind of lifelong *bricoleur*. The "radical amateur" is located on the "free time" side of the equation, whose cultural production is neither paid (or if it is, the income is rather symbolic) nor recognised as a job or regular work.

In Post-Fordism – the mode of production typical of contemporary postindustrial capitalist economies – the worker is supposed to be specialised, educated, and highly skilled. The Post-Fordist worker is flexible in terms of working hours, unstable conditions of work, precarious types of jobs, etc. In order to be competitive on the labour market, s/he has to be highly professionalised. Another important characteristic of Post-Fordist capitalism is the incorporation of non-work (free) time into productive (paid) time: a manoeuvre that sheds new light on the classical Marxian opposition between productive and unproductive labour.[5] This constellation has important repercussions for the entire system as such – it is a shift which probably compensates for a lack of living labour (in a high-tech mode of production) that is otherwise indispensable in the production of surplus value. On the side of the erstwhile amateur production there is a significant shift as well: the transformation of voluntary (non-paid) work into professional (paid) work, i.e. the process known as the so-called NGOisation of voluntary work. Radical amateurism of the Fordist era is now transforming into a kind of flexible professionalism, typically represented by the NGO cultural sphere. The radical amateurism of old has nowadays become part of the professional production sphere, i.e. the sphere that contributes significantly to the reproduction of Post-Fordist society. The pacification of radical amateurism by means of its professionalisation is a logical turn, if we bear in mind that so-called knowledge society, cognitive worker, and flexible professionalism are precisely the preconditions

5 See Marx 1863. On the transformation of work time and productive time in the Post-Fordist mode of production, see Virno 2004.

that Post-Fordist capitalism must meet if it is to function smoothly. In that constellation, "radical amateurism" is rather an endemic phenomenon; it is more of an excess type of "public amateur" than a massive presence of what was once known as "alternative culture".

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Unlearned, Terminally

≈ **Terminally Unschooled**

Learning in leaps comes at a cost, a cost that is a time differential, a differential of time lost while others kept moving ahead: producing knowledge, producing an infrastructure for reproducing knowledge, producing economies for reproducing the infrastructure to keep moving ahead. Learning takes time! Learning takes ages! Learning takes history!

Making up for time lost in learning presents a challenge to the political economy of knowledge in terms of un-timeliness. It is an operation of temporal confusion in the hierarchies of domination in knowledge. *Überholen ohne einzuholen* – to learn ahead without learning up. Time accumulates in materiality; over time, knowledge accumulates in material resources and a differential of time accumulates in a differential of access, but the unlearned didn't learn to pay heed: No, learning doesn't take time!

And yet, maybe, just maybe, knowledge can leap ahead. Knowledge just may be the kind of currency that can jump over the barriers of access, ignore the differentials of time, and subvert the disciplinary credentials. However, given that this leaping kind of knowledge suspends temporal differentials, it has no way of knowing: it is caught in its own un-timeliness. Given that the leaping kind of knowledge suspends disciplinary credentials, it has no way of knowing: it remains misplaced and un-acknowledgeable. Ultimately, it has no way of knowing whether it's knowledge or stupidity. Or, something in-between – failed, improper knowledge. Learning in leaps comes at a cost: a cost in terms of stupidity.

At first, the aporia of improper knowledge might come off as a performative paradox in the constitution of learning, an untimely deconstructive trick performed by the unlearned to argue their case. But once I make an effort to understand its actual unfolding in contemporary dance, in the contemporary exchanges between the former East and an increasingly former West, the specificity of its position in, and challenge to, the hierarchies of knowledge domination should become clearer.

To understand the historical context of un-learnedness, we need to start with a normative historical periodisation, backtracking the paradigm shifts that have shaped modes of aesthetic production in globalised Western contemporary dance over the last fifty years and more. While that periodisation can only be an abstraction and while actual historical experiences, even in the dominant contexts of contemporary dance production, may diverge widely, it will still help us to discern the hegemonic tendencies in aesthetic formations as they developed side by side with broader transformations in Western societies and grew ever more present across the entire field of artistic production. In some contexts, one tendency or another might have been more prominent, might have come later, or might have been absent altogether. But given the global exchanges in contemporary dance over the period in concern and globalisation as a shared condition of all democratic liberal societies – the kind of societies where contemporary dance can attain its full form – the dominant aesthetic of contemporary dance has been governed by the following sequence: performing the form → performing the

culture → performing the knowledge. The first formation roughly corresponds to the neo-avantgarde concerns with the artwork's formal aspects. Think, for instance, of Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1966) or Trisha Brown's *Accumulation* (1971), in particular their efforts to articulate a formal language that might free choreography from external overdetermination by other socio-cultural codes. The second formation corresponds to the intercultural concerns coming to the fore due to increased migration, postcolonial miscegenation, and globalism in the societies under consideration. Think of the expansion of non-Western choreographic practices such as Butoh, or think of the sedimentation of Schechner, Turner, Brook influenced interculturalism later in the choreographic work of Akram Khan. The third formation corresponds to the concerns that have most recently emerged around the formative role of knowledge and information in art as practice. Think of the rise to prominence of the conceptual and of "dematerialisation" in the work of Jérôme Bel, Xavier le Roy, Martin Nachbar and the like, or of various practices in contemporary dance that supplement or replace the process of performance production and presentation with the process of knowledge production and education, for instance in the work of Bill Forsythe or activities of the project everybodys.

Now, this periodisation of hegemonic formations in contemporary dance roughly coincides with the sequence of transformations in the larger socio-economic system. The first formation – formalised and formalist art practice – corresponds to late modernity, when art was a differentiated social subsystem acting autonomously from the social, political, and economic subsystems, mostly pursuing its own internal differentiations. The second formation – intercultural art practice – corresponds to the globalisation of societies through labour migrations and media integration, when cultural translation and global geographies became an immediate and explicit concern for those societies. The third formation – knowledge-oriented art practice – corresponds to the growing deindustrialisation and dematerialisation of economic production in the societies under consideration, where art practice – and here it is mostly the performing arts

that I have in mind – has turned to conceptualism, the production and sharing of knowledge, scoring, and protocolisation.

If this is the normative historical model of hegemonic transformations in the dominant part of the contemporary dance world, I'm interested in the formations of contemporary dance, their sedimentations in knowledge formations, and their reproduction through knowledge in the peripheral contexts of contemporary dance.

Take Eastern Europe for example, or the former Yugoslavia in particular, where modernisation through industrialisation was itself belated and deficient, where there was no immigration and hence no problems of multiculturalism of that kind, where the country's failure to make a jump into "knowledge economy" ultimately led its society to implode. In contemporary dance, this belatedness is manifest in the fact that there are no institutions of higher learning to enable the reproduction of knowledge, that the insights of modernist neo-avantgardes have not been fully institutionalised or institutionally passed on, that knowledge received from the hegemonic model is second-hand, second-guessed, black-marketed counterfeited... Recently, a number of artistic projects across the former Yugoslavia have tried to account for this belatedness and recuperate knowledge that had failed to register, accumulate, and institutionalise itself in the process of that belatedness: TkH's (Walking Theory) "Knowledge Smuggling" and "Deschooling Classroom"; Janez Janša's reconstructions "Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilčeks", "Monument G2", and "Fake it!"; CDU and Maska's "East-Dance-Academy"; and BADco.'s reconstruction "1 poor and one 0" – all projects by groups and authors deeply invested in challenging the hierarchies of domination in knowledge, transgressing the fault lines between the dominant and the subaltern in contemporary dance, and recuperating a body of knowledge from a seemingly peripheral position, where there seemed to be no proper formation of the art field before, let alone a proper formation of knowledge. These come at a particular moment when two contexts and respective formations of knowledge have come into contact and started to integrate.

What's at stake in all of those projects, therefore, are the inner workings of knowledge formation, relations between hegemony and subalternity in their specific art fields, and the struggle over power relations between two types of knowledge formation: informed, formed, educated, learned knowledge and malformed knowledge, misinformed lack of proper knowledge, malformed stupidity, uneducated guesstimation, unlearned aspiration, unschooledness. Here, the struggle over proper knowledge has been equated with that over temporal differentials in knowledge, itself equated with the struggle over domination. Moreover, the challenge to propriety here comes from a lack thereof, a lack of measure, of educated knowledge, of knowledgeable schooledness that complies with the hierarchies of domination in knowledge; that challenge here turns out to be a struggle over the foundations of the political economy of knowledge – over its iron law: learning takes time. Can knowledge leap ahead after all?

In lieu of concluding, we might ask: is there anything positive to take away from that power struggle, between those struggling with knowledge and those mastering it? First, there's your evidence that self-education is emancipatory. Acquiring knowledge through ignorance of the subject matter, second-guessing, misinformed insight instead of the institutional practice of schooling, teaching down established set of insights are the subject matter of Rancière's seminal work, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, where the acquisition of knowledge is equated with the process of recomposing our common capacity – in Rancière, the cognitive capacity to understand, and in our context, the capacity to question the political economy that lies at the foundations of the reproduction of knowledge. And in Rancière, as here, unless there's an impropriety of measure, a disproportion between the body of knowledge to which we aspire and the present composition of the senses, there's no learning, no subjectivation of learning. Hence, without the powerlessness, there's no impropriety of measure required for subjectivation in learning.

Second, what is the actual composition, morphology of subaltern knowledge that is self-formed and self-informed in

this power struggle? 1) Viewed from the perspective of proper knowledge, misinformed knowledge is improper knowledge, stupidity. 2) As aspiring to and epistemological framing of knowledge, it's an institutional becoming of a weak power. 3) As a process of reflection through power struggle and an emancipatory acquisition of knowledge, it acts as an active historical consciousness.

Learning takes time. Learning takes history. "Takes" not as in "requires". "Takes" as in "re-appropriates". Literally. Improperly.

Second-hand Knowledge*

≈ Ana Vujanović

I t is commonplace or even commonsense that the bulk of knowledge that reaches the periphery is second-hand knowledge. And the periphery—that is us, Serbia, Southeast Europe, Yugoslavia, the Balkans. There is no irony here, for these regions are peripheral, provincial, and marginal with respect to the centres of the First World, Europe, the European Union, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or the Ottoman Empire. For instance, let us briefly consider some prominent examples from Serbian twentieth-century art.[1] Dadaism reached us through Dragan Aleksić, his studies in Prague and connections with the Dadaists circles there. Eurhythmics and Laban's method arrived here by way of the gymnastic dance workout and dance practice of Maga Magazinović, who stud-

ied with Max Reinhardt and Rudolf Steiner. Early conceptual art arrived mostly with Hungarian magazines, thanks to the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina, Serbia's northern province. Still later, *Tanztheater* reached us through the modern ballet of Sonja Vukićević and theatre anthropology of the 1990s through a few local figures who studied with Eugenio Barba at Odin Teatret. And today, we also have our own versions of New British drama and contemporary—especially so-called conceptual—dance as the predominant practices on the contemporary performing arts scene…[2]

Let us retrace the post-war period step by step. During the socialist era, the Yugoslav art scene of the 1950s and '60s was regulated through a system of official (state) mediators between the Eastern and Western scenes. And following this period of "cultural exchange programmes" planned by the state—which included touring big, representative productions by the national theatres—several curated international festivals emerged during the late 1960s and '70s, such as BITEF (Belgrade International Theatre Festival: New Tendencies).[3] These mediators offered occasional flashes of firsthand insight into the international art scene. At BITEF,

1 "Serbian" here refers to art made on the territory of Serbia, but doesn't necessarily mean art made by artists of Serbian nationality.

2 See my historicisation and conceptualisation of those practices in the following articles from *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji: XX vek – Prvi tom: radikalne umetničke prakse* (A History of Art in Serbia: The 20th Century – Volume One: The Radical Artistic Practices), ed. Miško Šuvaković (Belgrade: Orion Art, 2010): "Avangarda i izvođačke umetničke prakse" (The Avant-garde and Performing Arts Practices), pp. 147–156; "Performans umetnost: preko neoavangarde ka konceptualnoj umetnosti" (Performance Art: Via Neo-avant-garde to Conceptual Art), pp. 463–480; "Alternativni teatar i izvođačke umetnosti devedesetih godina" (The Alternative Theatre and Performing Arts of the Nineties), pp. 759–770; "Nova—'postpolitička'—drama" (New—"Post-political"—Drama), pp. 771–778; and "Scena savremenog plesa" (The Contemporary Dance Scene), pp. 895–906.

3 See: http://www.bitef.rs; *BITEF: 40 godina novih pozorišnih tendencija* (BITEF: 40 Years of New Tendencies in Theatre), eds. Olga Latinčić, Branka Branković, and Svetlana Adžić (Belgrade: Istorijski arhiv Beograda, 2008); Georg Schöllhammer, "Ein Ontologe beobachtet: Eine Belgrader Retrospektive ermöglicht erstmals einen Blick auf das Gesamtwerk von Nesa Paripovic" (An Ontologist Observes: For the First Time, a Belgrade Retrospective Offers a Look at Neša Paripović's Complete Works), http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1900&lang=en (30 August 2012); Ana Vujanović, "Nove pozorišne tendencije: BITEF" (New Tendencies in Theatre: BITEF), in *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji*, pp. 375–384.

Yugoslav audiences could see works by Jerzy Grotowski, Robert Wilson, Performance Group, Living Theater, Pina Bausch, La Mamma, Tadeusz Kantor, Susanne Linke, Peter Brook, Wim Vandekeybus, René Pollesch, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, and many others. But was it really so? To clarify the situation, I will mention some additional details, such as the fact that Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker only came to BITEF in 2005 and Meg Stuart in 2008, while the Wooster Group, or Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy, Boris Charmatz, Vera Mantero, and other prominent contemporary dance makers have yet to come. However, this sort of limitation is inevitable, since the role of mediator (selector, programmer, or curator) does not even entail a neutral facilitation of direct insights, but planning, selecting, and representing. Therefore, even that apparent firsthand knowledge was, strictly speaking, second-hand: it was a sort of knowledge where someone else was making the decisions regarding its occurrence, visibility, context, and even availability.

The 1990s brought a new set of problems and second-hand knowledge achieved a special status in our social context. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the ensuing civil wars, along with the impoverishment, isolation, and international sanctions imposed against Serbia and Montenegro, made second-hand knowledge almost the only option in the region. Entire generations of theatre directors, theorists, performers, and choreographers routinely acquired their knowledge of the contemporary international scene from illegally photocopied foreign books, pirated video recordings, and even by updating, imaginarily, art books that had been published in the 1970s and '80s. We used to call that "paper reality".

And today, when I and many of us who were basically educated in this way, take part in the international artistic and theoretical context, it is a good moment to reconsider the notion of second-hand knowledge. Is it really so bad? Does it make me and us weak? Does it keep us behind? Does it make us unreliable? Or not? Or what?

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Epistemologically speaking, second-hand knowledge is a mediated, unempirical type of knowledge, gained without direct insight into the subject. For instance, while researching a topic is a way of gaining firsthand knowledge, hearing or reading someone else's account of the same topic (lecture, report, or presentation) is a way of acquiring second-hand knowledge. Firsthand knowledge is gained through perception and experience; second-hand knowledge by believing what someone else tells us.

In art, we often obtain second-hand knowledge from acknowledged authorities, whether or not they have official authorisation, such as theorists, critics, recognised artists, and professors, or we simply trust them, because they are our peers, well-informed persons, and so on. In many cases—traditionally, in fact—artistic knowledge is transferred as a set of *techné* through the disciples or followers of a particular school, master, or initiator of a paradigm. In addition, perhaps the most common form of second-hand knowledge of art is "knowledge from books", nowadays including electronic formats and web sources as well. It is non-empirical knowledge acquired from written sources depicting, describing, or explaining certain artistic phenomena, works, or events, such as scholarly literature, catalogues, booklets, reviews, etc.

In the domain of religion, second-hand knowledge is typically perceived as basic knowledge. Its validity rests on the fact that in most religions the source is absent and therefore supplanted by an unconditional trust in its mediators: the first disciples, scribes of the holy scriptures, and then priests. An important example, or, rather, an exception that confirms the rule, might be found in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. His internal struggle was driven by the fact that, as a formerly pagan thinker, he could not bear to rely on second-hand knowledge only, as was common in Christianity. He was therefore desperately seeking knowledge at first-hand: to obtain answers on God from God himself. The magnificence of his struggle, from a Christian point of view, lies precisely in the fact that he was struggling against his own disbelief.

In law and jurisprudence, second-hand knowledge plays a major role, but at the same time, its status is highly ambivalent: it is necessary, but its credibility is always subject to doubt. A typical example is testimony. Every testimony constitutes second-hand knowledge, because it is a story told only by a witness, but at the same time, it can acquire the status of a "performative", to which we assign "juridical" power as if it had it in itself.[4] Namely, its illocutionary dimension owes exactly to the protocol and conventional situation in which it is performed and therein lies its power, as well as its weakness. A characteristic situation is the trial, in which a witness's performative testimony gains the status of a statement that is constitutive of the reconstruction of the event, under the obligation to tell the truth, a promise that may or may not be kept. More broadly, one finds this function of testimony in media reports, which are based on the premises of objectivity and credibility of journalism, even though they are increasingly doubted, as well as in everyday communication, whose performativity rests on our voluntary trust in the person telling us about an event, for example, an authority or a friend.[5] Elisabeth Fricker, who has analysed the differences between perception and testimony, conceives of the latter as a paradigm of second-hand knowledge that characterises much of our process of learning:

> One issue concerns the depth and extent of our epistemic dependence on testimony, as we may label this broad epistemic source: Do we have any knowledge at all that is free of epistemic dependence on what we have learned from others? ...
> Conceptually speaking, if not epistemically, we climb up the ladder of testimony, to then throw it away. Mummy saying "red" was how I learned what is called "red". But as I become a master of folk physics and folk psychology, I appreciate that Mummy's saying something is red is one thing, its being so another—even if she is in fact always truthful and accurate.[6]

4 I am referring here to Austin's theory of performative utterances and speech acts. See John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

5 See Elizabeth Fricker, "Second-Hand Knowledge", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 73/3, 2006, pp. 592–618.

6 Fricker, "Second-Hand Knowledge", pp. 592 and 611.

Keeping Fricker's thesis in mind, I would move now to the terrain of everyday speech. There, second-hand knowledge has negative connotations, meaning: unverified knowledge, knowledge that is not based on factual insight, implying a lack of basic understanding of the facts, etc. I would ponder this a little, bearing in mind that common sense is nothing but *doxa*, an internalised pattern of ideologically instilled ways of thinking. In terms of epistemology, these negative connotations indicate our faith in objective, positive knowledge, gained in a direct, empirical way: by perception and factual insight, experience, and analysis. And this is exactly the definition of firsthand knowledge, with its imperatives of objectivity, neutrality, and positivity. From that viewpoint, all interpretation is undesirable, because it distorts the "image of reality" as it really is. However, this everyday use of the term is neither naïve nor simply inaccurate. We should realise that it has been tied firmly to the basic ideology of modern Western epistemology, ever since it gave preference to scientific insight over all other types of knowledge—religious, intuitive, or artistic. On the other side, there is the entire legacy of twentieth-century relativist and constructivist theory in the social sciences and humanities, indicating that all experience or firsthand knowledge is subject to both preexisting social and ideological elaborations of the object of perception and our own interpretations determined by our own positioning, social context, interests, and the ideology operating in our cognitive political unconscious. Such arguments can be traced back even to Marxist theory, followed by the Frankfurt school, then hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and cultural studies. In these theoretical frameworks, second-hand knowledge is both important and necessary, because it enlarges, complements, and transforms our experience, enabling us to gain abundant insight into reality as we know it, even when we are not prepared to acquire it at a given moment.

Given the fact that second-hand knowledge is not based on personal experience or perception but rather communicated to us, one of its essential aspects is the social situation. In his *Second-hand Knowledge*, Patrick Wilson has delineated a social epistemology that centres on the notion of "cognitive

authority".[7] In the context of the information society—characterised by a hyper-production of information—Wilson analyses the generation of cognitive material in an individual and its relationship with expertise in knowledge industry and control of (the content of) information. Although he maintains a dichotomy between first-hand and second-hand knowledge, Wilson at the same time blurs the boundaries between them by locating learning in general within social contexts and processes, of which we are sometimes aware but quite often are not. According to Wilson, cognitive authority is a function that always operates in the process of gaining knowledge in a social situation. In defining it, he tries to distinguish between, on the one hand, cognitive (or epistemic) authority, predicated on a claim to a certain kind of knowledge, such as that of a specialist, an expert on specific matters, and, on the other hand, "performatory" (or administrative) authority, entitled to a position, or authorised to, pass judgement, prescribe, and proscribe, like a judge.[8] However, the boundaries grow unstable when Wilson infers that cognitive authority depends on social perception and recognition. That is to say, there is no cognitive authority *per se*; instead, our recognition and appreciation of an authority relies on such things as its reputation, public opinion, and the performance of the speaker. At that point, a cognitive authority becomes "performatory" as well, so what differentiates cognitive from "performatory" authority may only be the latter's official, administrative entitlement. Therefore, in my understanding, the most important question Wilson asks regarding cognitive authority may be formulated in the following way: given the abundance of "texts" (in the post-structuralist sense) that surround me, that are accessible to me, which one will become the authority as the source of knowledge (for me)? Which one will give me a key and enable me to systematise and understand these complex webs of signifying hyper-production? In the current context of the expansion of the Internet, with digital technologies enabling many other

7 Patrick Wilson, *Second-hand Knowledge: An Inquiry into Cognitive Authority* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).

8 Ibid.

information and communication media, this question becomes ever more urgent and more complex, since the hyper-production of information and knowledge has been accompanied or even substituted by their hyper-exchange to a significant degree. In that situation—where we are overwhelmed by various net portals, platforms, blogs, generators, and aggregators—the source is "normally" lost and exchanging, recombining, editing, and sharing information is turning into knowledge production itself, thereby dismantling the division between first- and second-hand knowledge.

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I hope that the argumentation that I have presented so far offers enough material for an attempt to reinterpret second-hand knowledge as a poetic term for the Yugoslav cultural scene and perhaps also to understand its negative connotations as a habit of everyday speech. On the one hand, as I pointed out above, that habit is rooted in modern Western epistemology, which has already been thoroughly examined and contested, while on the other, it reductively and paradoxically refers to practices of learning that even those who speak of second-hand knowledge as a negative term use regularly. For instance, if one reverses the ideological lens, one can clearly see that illegally shared and photocopied books or pirated VHS tapes, CDs, and DVDs are not restricted to this context of periphery in general, but are used by millions of "ordinary consumers" worldwide, as well as leftist circles in the West and their cultural-artistic scene, from Pirate Cinema Berlin to Pirate Bay and numerous free online libraries, with the purpose of resisting the neoliberal market of art and culture and encouraging the principles of sharing and distributing knowledge in alternative ways.

Although we could not quite conclude from the foregoing deconstruction that second-hand knowledge is somehow superior to firsthand knowledge—nor did I intend merely to invert the binary—we may conclude that, first, second-hand knowledge is not in any way specific to marginal(ised) artistic and cultural contexts, but rather, exists in the East and the

West alike, as a regular and common type of knowledge. And second, following the entire corpus of contemporary theory in the social sciences and humanities from the 1960s on, we can also infer that there is no satisfying epistemic argument for discarding second-hand knowledge as somehow less authentic, objective, and reliable than firsthand knowledge.

When we contest these dichotomies in this way, it seems that the real reason why second-hand knowledge has retained its predominantly negative connotation and substantialising link to cultural peripheries lies elsewhere. In my view, that reason could only be found in social categories, the categories of having opportunities and the privilege to access the real, or perhaps always imaginary, *source,* which—tautologically—itself marks the centre. Thus, whenever we use the term "second-hand knowledge" in this way, we should be aware of, and take responsibility for, its ideological legacy and stake in cognitive colonisation or internalised self-victimisation, which are merely two sides of the same coin. I am making this assertion because what is crucial in social terms is that this hierarchical relationship between firsthand and second-hand knowledge is a symptom that reflects and consolidates the hierarchical order of the centre and the periphery in the global process of knowledge production, distribution, and exchange. Therefore, saying that second-hand knowledge is a form of knowledge that is characteristic of the region of the former Yugoslavia has a negative connotation, because it places the region in a subordinate position with respect to the centre. In fact, it is only in this way that the periphery may be interpellated and become periphery, whereas—and here we can see how the circular logic of that tautology works—only as periphery it comes into the position of importing knowledge (concepts, technologies, information, paradigms, trends, etc.) with smaller or larger distortions and delays.

However, at the very end I would like "to turn the screw of interpretation" once more (paraphrasing Shoshana Felman). It is absolutely untrue that the only knowledge we have had in our context is second-hand knowledge. If you go back to the beginning of this text, you will see that my framework is precise enough: all the while, I have been referring only to knowledge coming from abroad, that is, from the centre to

the periphery. But of course, quite apart from all that, there is also quite a bit of specific, firsthand knowledge that has been produced here. In this regard, for example, I might mention the Zenitist movement and its provocative figure of artistic disobedience called the "Balkan barbaric-genius", in the context of the historical avant-garde; the "verbo-voco-visual" inter-media artistic practice from the 1960s; experiments in connecting workers' self-management and (conceptual) art of the 1970s; and the Praxis School, the Marxist philosophical movement, among many other examples. However, this body of knowledge has almost never entered the global circulation of knowledge. This way, it mostly remains outside the Rancièrean "partition of the sensible" of the international art-world—as invisible images, voices that are not heard, or that are heard only as a bit of noise coming from the East.

And today, even as I try to reopen this question, yet again I must resort to a kind of second-hand knowledge—Western theoretical discourses. I must, because they form my discursive platform when I want it to become widely (that is, "internationally") recognisable. And perhaps that is the only socially possible relationship between centre and periphery, however cynical that may sound. Nevertheless, there may be something "good" in all of that, something that reminds me of the Lacanian master/slave discourse in terms of constructing models of knowledge and social predications of the value assigned to knowledge. From this viewpoint, we could say that the discourse of the master is exactly that which puts the slave's discourse at work, but whose labour will undermine it. Making a big leap here, I would remind us never to forget that the slave must speak both her own and the language of her master in order to survive (in a world mastered by the master), while the master, although his discourse is advantageous in all respects, and perhaps precisely because of that, always remains deprived of understanding the language of his slaves. What is at stake here is not at all the slaves' secret gratification; rather, it is about reminding us of the permanent threat to the master discourse and its hegemonic symbolic matrix of truth, a threat that can neither be erased, nor stopped.

III

Cinematic Modes of Action

Whilst Watching a *Movie*

≈ **Tomislav Gotovac**

I always bear in mind that what I see, what I'm following with my eyes without blinking, is not film. All that literation, well-imagined plots, psychological riddles, politics, philosophy – all of that exists as light and shadow coming from something else. (A film must be watchable and that's why there are events in it, some signs that serve to thicken the plot, and that's usually done by assistants.) Film – if it is a film – is something else: a hidden feeling of the world, expressed in movement. Everything must be a spatio-temporal-mobile image. And no more than that. The image is paramount. It must be felt slowly and gradually, so that you may completely immerse yourself in it and vice versa, so that you two may enrich each other with thousands of meanings and feelings, to capture the entire world in them. Then, such a concept is no longer exclusively yours: it lives in others, too, like a Michelangelo statue, or a canvas by Matisse. And then, of course, comes movement: a structure comes to life, pulsating, seeking and finding its own rhythm,
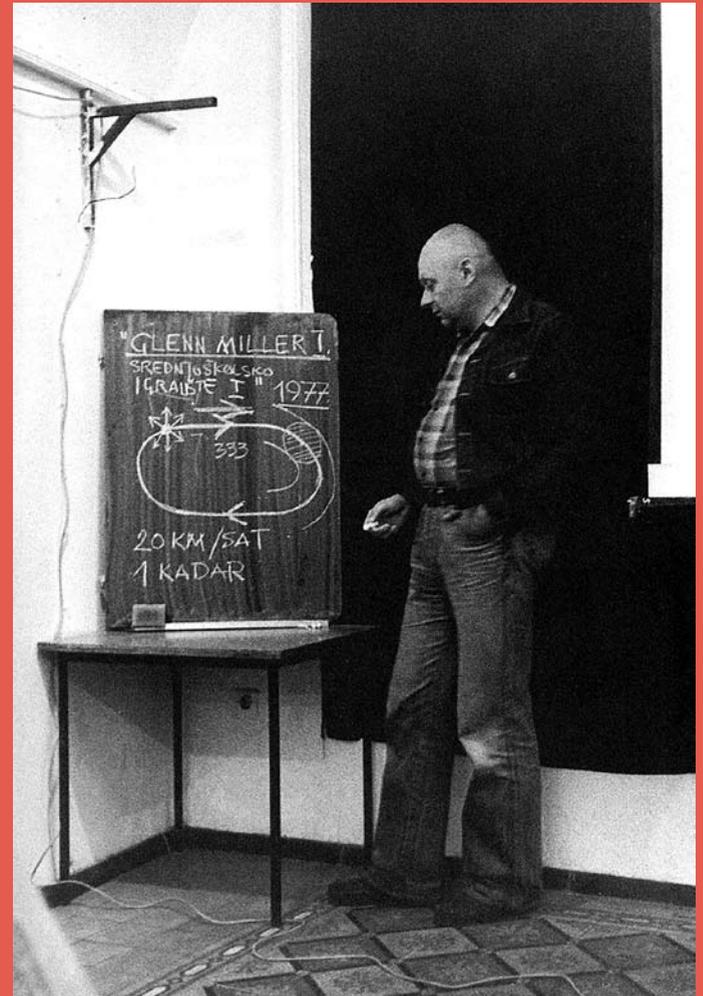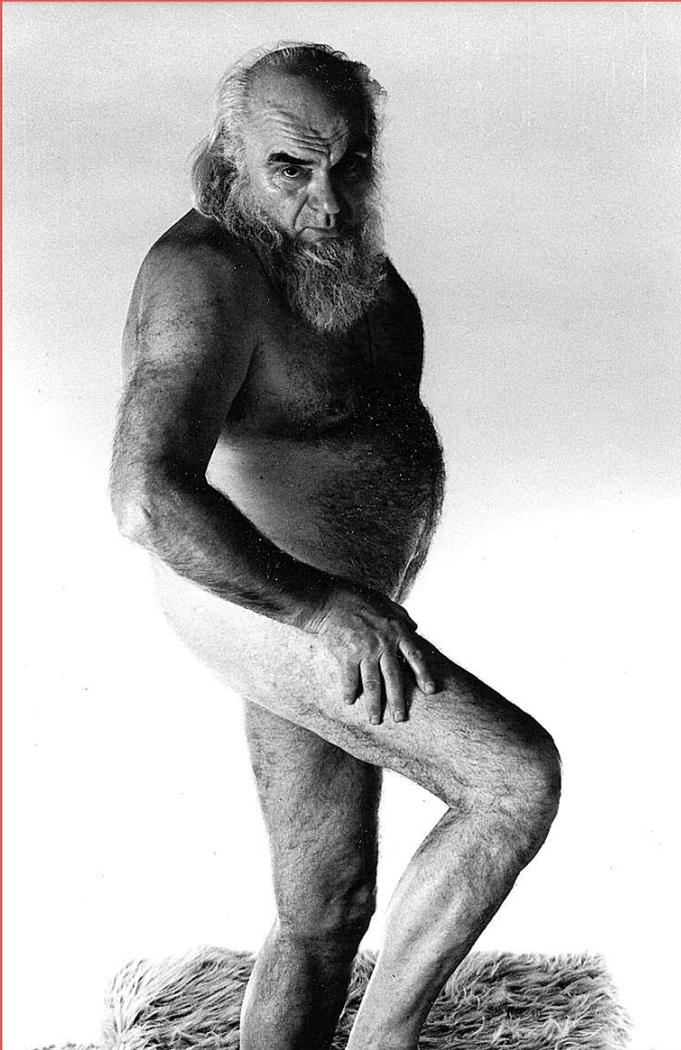
Tomislav Gotovac: Foxy Mister, part of a series of 14 photographs, Zagreb, 2002, photo by: Tomislav Čuveljak, Sarah Gotovac collection, Zagreb, courtesy of: Tomislav Gotovac Institute

freeing, in midflight, its tensions, and carrying the mass that accompanies all of that. The screen and the eye as part of the same organism. The image and movement. That is film. The only genuine and the only possible definition of film is already contained in its name: *motion picture*.

We cannot promise to do anything more than to experiment*

On Yugoslav Experimental Film and Cinema Clubs of the 1960s and '70s**

≈ **Ana Janevski**

The starting point of this essay is experimental film in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in all of its potentiality, a body of works that made an important shift in the dominant film language at the time and proposed new and different paradigms in terms of themes, aesthetics, and production.

For a long time now, experimental film has been mostly excluded from the mainstream and considered within the domain of rather marginalised theories and practices. Also, defining and classifying it have been among the most contested issues. Although this could be a subject for an entire dissertation, it is interesting to note that, beside "experimental" and "avant-garde", this form of cinematic expression has also been called "visionary film" (P. Adams Sitney), "independent cinema" (Emory Menefee), "underground/independent" cinema (Jonas Mekas), not to mention the principles of anti-film and alternative film, elaborated by Yugoslav theory and practice, in Zagreb and Belgrade.

What Jan-Christopher Horak wrote about the US tradition – that "in the earliest phases the American avant-garde movement cannot be separated from the history of amateur film" (Horak 1995, 18) – holds true for Yugoslavia's experimental tradition as well.

More specifically, in the former Yugoslavia, experimental film almost entirely derived from the tradition of so-called amateur film, which was based on the numerous cinema clubs (*kino klubovi*) that developed in every major city of the former federation, especially during the '60s and '70s.

According to the official system – socialist self-management – self-organisation was meant to apply to the field of culture as well. Furthermore, cinema clubs were part of the socialist project to bring culture and technology closer to all citizens of Yugoslavia, and not only the professionals; therefore, forming amateur societies (amateur film, amateur photography, visual amateur groups and "colonies", etc.) was systematically encouraged. In 1946, a special institution was established: *Narodna tehnika* (People's Technology Society), with the aim to organise, sponsor, and promote various amateur activities. Even though they were under the authorities' "political" control and were organised hierarchically, they were mostly left to their own devices as peripheral "reserves of amateurism".

The chance to pursue film was mostly taken up by young people, often students and film buffs, which created an important platform for experimenting and a reassessing the conventional film language of Yugoslav cinematography.

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* The reply from Kôd, a group of visual artists from Novi Sad, Serbia, to Dušan Makavejev when he invited them, as selector of a special programme at the newly established Belgrade Film Festival in 1971, to do something performative.

** This essay is an updated version of a text already published as part of the exhibitions *As Soon as I Open My Eyes, I See a Film: Experiments in Yugoslav art in the '60s and '70s,* curated by Ana Janevski at Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2011 and *This is All Film: Experimental Film in Yugoslavia, 1951–1991,* curated by Bojana Piškur, Ana Janevski, Jurij Meden, and Stevan Vuković at the Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, 2010. It was also previously published in *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Trangressive Moments*, eds. Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić, and Žiga Testen, Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012, p. 46-75

Namely, after World War II, Yugoslav cinematography was nationalised and in each of the six constituent republics much work was being done to develop an infrastructure for Yugoslavia's budding film industry.[1] During the fifties, the war themes – the National Liberation Struggle, the partisans' struggle against fascism, and the revolution – were the most popular sources of inspiration. The regime favoured this form of cinematic expression and this was a time of a growing distance between professionalism and so-called amateurism. Yet the marginalisation of amateurism into the sphere of cinema clubs allowed Yugoslav film amateurs a greater degree of freedom.

When it comes to the creation of new institutional forms in the former Yugoslavia, one must also touch upon the broader political context. Actually, Tito's model of socialism, implemented after the break with Stalin in 1948, tried to profit from both communism and capitalism – it pursued a non aligned foreign policy and, domestically, a new form of socialist economy, officially called self-management. Its theoretical basis was provided by the "Praxis" movement in early Marx's anthropology and by the summer school organised on the island of Korčula, where leading Marxist philosophers from all over the world gathered between 1964 and 1974.

At the same time, Tito's "historic No" to Stalin detached Yugoslav artistic practices from socialist realism and helped open up the country to Western cultural influences by putting it in a position "between the East and the West", introducing more cultural freedom, adopting a modernist paradigm of abstract art as the official art of the state, and showing Hollywood films in cinemas. In addition, the Yugoslav Film Archive (Jugoslovenska kinoteka) was established in 1949 in Belgrade with the aim to look after Yugoslav films and film material and promote film culture and education. In 1951, it became a member of the International Federation of Film Archives and started organising screenings of 1920s

1 One of the best examples is Avala Film, founded in 1945 in Belgrade, the largest film company in the country. The company made its first film in 1947 and went on to produce or co-produce over 400 documentaries, 200 Yugoslav feature films, and 120 international productions. In addition to Avala Film, each republic ran at least one film production company.

and '30s avant-garde films, Hollywood movies, as well as French New Wave and Italian Neorealist films.[2]

Those who went to the screenings at their local cinema club in the former socialist Yugoslavia were also regular at their local cinema, read extensively about films, and possessed a vast knowledge of cinematography; a major impetus also came from the modernist models of other forms of art: the visual arts, literature, and theatre. Yet, film as a medium was becoming more and more widespread; it was the only medium that allowed various art forms to intertwine: the visual arts, literature, music, and film; it also allowed for a variety of subjects and techniques.

Owing to the constant demand for professionalisation in all strata of society, especially in the artworld, from today's perspective it is almost impossible to interpret correctly terms such as "amateur film" and "amateurism" as they related to the film buffs who were active in the cinema clubs during the '60s and early '70s all over socialist Yugoslavia. And yet, members of those clubs were indeed amateurs, but most of them in the sense that Maya Deren used in her 1959 essay "Amateur versus Professional", in particular her consideration of the term's Latin roots. It designates one who practises a pursuit "for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons and necessity" (Deren 1965, 46). Or as Jonas Mekas pointed out in a lecture he gave in 1992, referring to independent filmmakers: "You will make movies, you will record and celebrate life, but you will not make any money" (Mekas 1992).

Regarding the former Yugoslavia, "amateur" mainly designates the conditions of production, whereas "experimental" indicates the procedures, aspirations, and effects of a specific kind of cinematic expression. Thus the boundary

2 "Public programme including the touring of 89 Yugoslavian cities and towns was realised in 1952. It was then that the cinema was opened in Belgrade. The Yugoslav Film Archive was a federal institution, but in 1952 it came under the juridiction of the People's Republic of Serbia, which prompted Yugoslavia's remaining five constituent republics to establish similar institutions of their own. The first of these opened in Zagreb in 1957, and then Sarajevo and Ljubljana followed suit in 1963." (Vuković 2010, 64).

We cannot promise to do anything more than to experiment. On Yugoslav Experimental Film and Cinema Clubs of the 1960s and '70s ≈ Ana Janevski

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separating the two is neither stable nor clear. This creative confusion regarding classification can be partly attributed to those filmmakers whose works we might, in retrospect, describe as experimental. Most of them met one of two destinies: either they soon exchanged amateur filmmaking for professional work in cinema (e.g. Dušan Makavejev) or in the visual arts (e.g. Mladen Stilinović), or they went down in (or out of) history as film amateurs when the mid 1970s brought the decline of cinema clubs.[3]

Serbian filmmaker Lazar Stojanović, writing about American underground film, associates it with freedom and rebellion, rather than with the cinematographic genre of underground film, where "underground" equals amateurism, directness, imperfection and resistance. Moreover, a film director, and especially an independent film director, is supposed to have above all a good knowledge of film and a strong personality. This praise of amateurism, combined with a militant stance on the part of the director, can also be observed, albeit in a more apolitical version, in Mihovil Pansini and his GEFF (Boynik 2008).

> **The main purposes of GEFF are to fight conventional film and especially conventional work in amateur film. To pull our amateur film out of the narrow domain of the amateurish […] we want to erase the border between amateur and professional film. Film is one. […] Someone makes a film as an amateur but works as a professional. On the other hand, even amateur films can be sold. Therefore it is impossible to say what amateur and what professional film is. If we cannot determine this, then there is no point in dividing films into amateur and professional. (Pansini 1967).**

In 1962 and 1963, a group of film amateurs gathered in the Zagreb Cinema Club, founded in 1953, came up with the term "anti-film". To be precise, two members of the cinema club, Mihovil Pansini and Tomislav Kobija, initiated lively discussions on the concept of anti-film, and these conversations spontaneously came to be known as *Anti-film and Us*.[4] The main postulates of anti-film were its rejection of film as a

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3 See Piškur and Meden 2010.

4 Along with Pansini and Kobija, Vladimir Petek, Zlatko Sudović, Kruno Hajdler, Milan Šamec, and a number of other film authors also took part.

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means of expression or communication between the artist and the viewer, in favour of film as an act of disclosure, research, exploration, and reduction. Anti-film called for a reduction in a number of areas: of the author to her/his work, of narrativity, of means of expression in film, of rational metaphor, traditional communication with the viewer, etc.

Almost immediately, the biennial Genre Experimental Film Festival, better known under its acronym GEFF, was established in Zagreb (it was discontinued after 1970), in parallel to the Music Biennial and the New Tendencies.[5] The festival attracted film enthusiasts, from cinema clubs across the former Yugoslavia, and helped spawn formal as well as informal film networks.[6]

As early as the first, 1963 edition of the festival, entitled *Anti-film and New Tendencies in Cinematography*, the festival's desire to connect all human activities was expressed not only in the field of art, but in science and technology as well, overlapping with broader international tendencies and an interest in film as an object of historical and theoretical research.

Therefore, the topics of the following editions of the festival were *Exploring Cinematography and Exploring through Cinematography* (1965), *Cybernetics and Aesthetics* (1967), and *Sexuality as a New Road toward Humanity* (1970).

But what were the novelties in expression that anti-film and cinema-club experimental films introduced, and who participated at GEFF?

> **The GEFF festival, a remarkable affair in which the entire Yugoslav cinema comes together, feature makers, professional animators, dadaist experiments in tfilm, and rank amateurs in 8mm club…**

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5 The first GEFF Book, which documents in detail the so-called five discussions on anti-film, together with the 1967 booklet and the bulletins that accompanied the final edition of the festival, are the only extant documents that testify to the festival's activities. Graphic designer Mihajlo Arsovski designed all of the material.

6 For a comprehensive list of the most prominent organisations and events related to experimental film in the former Yugoslavia, see Piškur et al. 2010.

That is how Paul Adams Sitney described GEFF during his visit to Zagreb in 1967 (Sitney 1967, 257).

The festival also organised discussions of specific issues involving filmmakers, philosophers, and artists, while its main section included retrospectives of avant-garde films from the 1920s and screenings of foreign avant-garde films. The festival's first edition also incorporated a selection of French, German, and American avant-garde features, as well as a set of films by Norman McLaren, shown at the Yugoslav Film Archive in Belgrade. In 1967, the guest of honour was P. Adams Sitney, with a ten-hour programme of the American avant-garde and the Fluxus Anthology, while the final GEFF featured, among others, Paul Morrissey with films from the Warhol Workshop and Carolee Schneemann with her sex-diary films. The screening of those films was an important and fascinating source for experimenting on and deconstructing the traditional structure of film and the established parameters in editing film materials, both in terms of content and form.

The main centres of avant-garde film in Yugoslavia were the cinema clubs of Zagreb, Belgrade, and Split, and from the very beginning, those three assumed different orientations, authorial tendencies, and technical solutions.

The structuralist inclinations of the Zagreb Cinema Club were marked by reflecting on and experimenting with the medium, in combination with the visual arts. The group EXAT 51 had already demonstrated this multidisciplinary tendency, whereas the poetics of the anti-group and anti-magazine *Gorgona*, as well as the New Tendencies biennial exhibitions of kinetic and optical art that took place between 1961 and 1973 and attracted many international artists were an important inspirational model for the emergence and development of anti-film. When it comes to Zagreb in the 1960s, one should mention a number of authors who sought to introduce critical and new-media approaches into the dominant artistic production. They ignored artistic trends, expressed critical views, and employed ironic and subversive strategies seldom used before in the fields of visual and film art. These 1960s artists came close to the nihilistic atmos-

phere of anti-art: witness the foundation of the Gorgona anti-group and the publishing of its anti-magazine; the anti-painting of Julije Knifer, the no-art of Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos, as well as anti-film.[7] These developments eventually resulted in the emergence of the so-called New Art Practice, which began to develop in the 1970s, especially around the students' cultural centres in Yugoslavia's major cities.

Zagreb filmmakers were interested in film for its properties and structure, as well as for the possibility of deliberating on and experimenting via the medium itself. They promoted the values of non-narrative experimentation and innovation, the introduction of chance-related and existential issues, and focused on the medium itself.

Thus we find a range of direct interventions on the film tape itself: from scratching, applying paint to it, and cutting it, to experimenting with negative images, for instance in Vladimir Petek's *Encounters* (1963). The anti-narrative approach may be seen in *Scusa Signorina,* a 1963 film by Mihovil Pansini, a major ideologist of anti-film at the time. The film was shot with the camera facing backwards, without supervision, in order to minimise the role of the author.

Łukasz Ronduda has commented on the use of accident in such films at the time:

> By making use of coincidence and prior decision in their films, they sought to surpass previous humanistic methods of production of meaning and to allow for a different perspective, transcending human imagination and perception, rather than differing from them.

7 Stipančić 2007, n.p.: "According to the dominant disposition of the group, in this context, the prefix 'anti' should be read either as a rejection of all official tendencies in art, or as awareness that their work in art is barely acceptable, if not entirely unacceptable, as art. Likewise, 'anti' can be seen in the context of Gorgona's emphasis on the ideas of anti-art and anti-painting, as well as their affinity for literature of the absurd, anti-drama, and anti-film." When asked in an interview about how he decided on the term "anti-film", Pansini, himself an "adherent" of Gorgona, replied: "Everything was anti back then".

We cannot promise to do anything more than to experiment. On Yugoslav Experimental Film and Cinema Clubs of the 1960s and '70s ≈ Ana Janevski

III · Cinematic Modes of Action

In 1969, visual artist Mladen Stilinović formed Pan69, a student film club. Through the Union of Socialist Youth, they received some funding to buy the necessary equipment and start making films. At first, Pan 69 had six or seven members and, like Yugoslavia's cinema clubs, they were able to make films without writing scripts or seeking approval. This self-organised space (of freedom) allowed them to experiment with cameras and film tape, mainly 8mm and 16mm, as well as to organise public screenings of films. Their first film was shown at GEFF and at a number of (amateur) film festivals.

The Split Cinema Club was formed in 1952 and it "launched" four generations of amateur authors. The films made at the Club were mostly distinguished by their rigid visual and editing structure, strict adherence to the rules of framing, a pronounced absence of narrative, and also by Ivan Martinac's so-called "filming in frame". At the same time, Martinac was one of the central figures who "seduced" many generations of future authors gathered around the Split Cinema Club, to take up film. In narrow alternative circles, there was even talk of a "Split Film School".

> The Faun's structure was programmatic. It was like Jonas Mekas's manifesto on the underground, like the Dada Manifesto... to make something that would be a flag. (Trbuljak and Turnover 1977, n.p.)

Tomislav Gotovac's *The Morning of a Faun* (1963), which won multiple awards at the first GEFF, was a structuralist triptych about the idea of fixing the camera on a tripod.

> The voyeuristically observed movement of vaguely delineated figures on the sun terrace of a hospital is followed by a Wols-like gaze at the texture of a scratched wall and then, with all the erotic overtones of the rhythmic back-and-forth, a zoom onto a tree-lined intersection, with passersby and that consumer fetish of the era, the car. (Schöllhammer 2011, 8)

At the time, the term that would have allowed this work to qualify as a structural film had not even entered into circulation in experimental cinematography.

From his beginnings at the Zagreb Cinema Club, followed by his Belgrade Trilogy of 1964 (*Pravac* / Direction, Stevens-Duke; *Plavi jahač* / Blue Rider, Godard-Art; *Kružnica* / Circle, Jutkevič-Count), to his inauguration of anti-narrative features in contemporary artistic discourse, acting outside of any artistic context, Gotovac also became a predecessor of the 1970s New Art. In 1967, Tomislav Gotovac staged the first happening in Yugoslavia, *Happ Our Happening*, in Zagreb. He was also the country's first streaker, running naked through Belgrade in 1971. With his radical performances and provocative artistic expression he tested the boundaries of public space in the socialist state. Many of his actions consisted of simple but highly charged activities, such as begging, cleaning public areas, shaving and cutting people's hair in public, all of which confronted the public and the socialist petit-bourgeois moral system with his bodily figure.

Nevertheless, film was the driving force of Gotovac's life and artistic philosophy: an object of genuine fascination, his obsession with the cinematic experience formed a connection as well as a red line between his works in media other than film, from collage to photography, and especially in his performances and actions.

As Renata Salecl has pointed out:

> For Gotovac, life is perceived like a movie. He is not only an observer of films, film is also the way he lives his life and looks at life around him. He says: "I do not make a distinction between life and film. I don't know if I can explain this... I am now watching. I am watching a movie..." (Salecl 2011, 44)

The entire output of Tomislav Gotovac can be related to his *cinéphilie* – it is embodied by the experience of the spectator, by the everyday feeling of his films, as well as his filmic way of thinking art. Lacking the means to keep making films, Gotovac made "cinema with other means" (Sretenović 2009); the deconstruction of its constitutive elements became an autonomous part of his artistic experiment. His cinematic way of thinking penetrated far into the private realm and explicitly incorporated private aspects into film. At the same time, he was interested in the composition behind the narra-

tive structure of Hollywood films, created his own system of references and codes, and used the structural means of experimental film to perform his analyses.

Thus *The Morning of a Faun* juxtaposes ambivalent shots of people interacting with an almost abstract detail of a wall and the cityscape. This accumulation of images, registering without interventions, reductions, or repetitiveness, "cataloguing" fragments of reality and finding a system in unexpected, unforeseen circumstances, marks a personal standpoint that resists all narrative.

According to Gilles Deleuze, a key tendency of experimental film is to recreate – and then inhabit – a concentrated shot of pure images in motion. In Deleuze's mind, then, the main point of experimental film is in its tendencies. Indeed, rather than being a specific genre or type of film, experimental film is about taking a stand; it is an orientation that avoids the most standardised function of film – to tell stories – focusing instead on its primary capacity to make things visible, creating building blocks of perception. And then, of course, its concrete results may be poetic or political, expressive or just narrative. Deleuze also argued that experimental film should introduce new formal tendencies and expressions, which would then be accepted and absorbed by the mainstream discourse. While much of this might also be seen in Gotovac, it is much more visible in Belgrade experimental films of the time.

> For me cinema is an operation similar to guerrilla war, declared against all that which is determined, finite, dogmatic and eternal. Such a war should also be fought in cinema. (Makavejev in Klejsa 2006)

In the socialist Yugoslavia, the most political experimental films were made in Belgrade.

As opposed to the anti-narrative and anti-film tendencies of the Split and Zagreb schools, the Belgrade Cinema Club (1951) and Academic Club (1958) produced highly symbolic and expressive films. Under the influence of Russian Expressionism, Polish Black Series, and French New Wave, the first experimental films made in Belgrade in the late

1950s reflected human anxiety in search of the surreal and the absurd. A popular subject among Belgrade filmmakers at the time were variations on the theme of innocence in flight from reality; for instance, films such as *Zid* (The Wall, 1960) by Kokan Rakonjac and *Triptih o materiji i smrti* (A Triptych on Matter and Death, 1960) by Živojin Pavlović focus on existential anxiety and the impossibility of escape, whereas Sava Trifković's *Ruke ljubičastih daljina* (Hands in the Purple Distance, 1962) is about a girl's flight through a desolate and bizarre landscape.

The Belgrade Cinema Club mainly gathered a group of film connoisseurs who organised classes in practice and theory for the members. To become a member, one had to pass an exam and to get the equipment necessary for filming, a member had to get his/her script approved by the Club. The participation of other members in the project was also required.

The first signs of antagonism with the Zagreb circle (in particular) could be seen already at the first GEFF, when Belgrade filmmakers, such as Makavejev, stressed their interest in exploring reality, rather than pure experimentation. Furthermore, the national production companies began to produce their films, switching to 35mm, while Zagreb-based authors were still using 16 and even 8mm film, without getting paid: unable to turn professional, some of them turned to the visual arts, like Stilinović, while others, like Gotovac, developed their own original practices.

Thus the passage, as Stevan Vuković defines it, from the *amateur paradigm* to the *auteur paradigm* (Vuković 2010), began already in the 1960s. The Belgrade Cinema Club gave rise to a new major paradigm in Yugoslav 1960s and '70s cinematography, which later became known as the "New Yugoslav Film". Specifically, their cinema club activities gave professional filmmakers, such as Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar Petrović (and Karpo Godina in Slovenia) a useful framework for their professional productions, which disrupted the flow of amateur films into the mainstream.

For these directors, the cinema club was also a sort of *matériel d'apprentissage*. Žilnik, active in the Novi Sad Cinema

Club, very quickly came to see film as a critical tool, and real-ised the advantages of amateur film:

> Very early on, I was forced to use all methods of amateur film re-garding movement. This amateur film environment enabled me to get out of administrative labyrinths, which were the only way to acquire money to make a film. It was a certain form of free-dom.[8] (Gržinić and Steyerl 2004, 26)

While their Zagreb colleagues were experimenting with the medium of film itself and while Split developed a unique form of film expression of its own, Belgrade amateur film-makers made a step forward and turned toward open criti-cism of the present and the alienation of the modern social-ist man, pointing to the class and social contradictions of so-cialism in contemporary Yugoslavia, violating the sacrosanct boundaries of the state-socialist values.[9] Later, they pointed their finger at a specific phenomenon: the thriving of capital-ism under the guise of a socialist revolution, and depicted the reality of precarious lives, mass unemployment, failed strikes, crises, etc.

As a consequence of an ideological campaign led by the cultural-political establishment, those films become known as the Black Wave. The article that introduced the term was published in the newspaper *Borba* in 1969. The author criti-cised this "black wave" in Yugoslav cinematography as a "sys-tematic distortion of the present, in which everything is viewed through a monochromatic lens. Its themes are ob-scure and present improper visions and images of violence, moral degeneracy, misery, lasciviousness and triviality."

Thus began a process that would result in blacklisting films by Makavejev, Žilnik, and Godina, effectively barring

8 Žilnik's film *Early Years* was realised in 18 days and won the Golden Bear at the 1969 Berlin Film Festival. Many of Yugoslav "Black Wave" films were shown at festivals abroad, most of them at the Oberhausen film festival.

9 Some of the first films suppressed by the authorities between 1958 and 1971 were Makavejev's *Spomenicima ne treba verovati* (Don't Believe Mon-uments, 1958) and *Parada* (The Parade, 1962), whereas Marko Babac, Kokan Rakonjac, and Živojin Pavlović's amateur omnibus *Grad* (The City, 1963) was one of the officially banned films in the history of Yugoslav cinematography.

them from local screenings, whereas Lazar Stojanović even got a prison sentence for his film *Plastični Isus* (Plastic Jesus) with Tomislav Gotovac in the main role.

The New Art Practice

The deliberate use of formal stylistic innovations in experi-mental film, that is, the forging of hitherto overlooked con-nections, links, and interdisciplinary synapses between dif-ferent forms of art, led to analogous innovations in other ar-tistic disciplines, and even to overlapping in the cases of Gorgona, the New Tendencies, and anti-film. This can be seen in 1970s Yugoslav art, videos, and films, as well as in short films made at the cinema clubs.

During the 1970s, Yugoslav art was characterised by a radicalisation in its visual codes and the emergence of new art forms, from video to body art. Also, artists sought to rede-fine their exhibition strategies by increasingly favouring in-terventions in public space and even completely erasing the boundary between life and art. This radicalisation and search for new forms of artistic expression drove film and the visu-al arts into each other's arms. The New Art Practice[10] is an umbrella term for that heterogeneous, critical and radical "new art" that appeared in Yugoslavia after 1968. Various ini-tiatives in this new art emerged and developed quite inde-pendently of each other, though they soon merged around their shared artistic mentality, mainly based on their opposi-tion to traditional and institutionalised forms of art and its presentation. The two focal points were the respective Stu-dents' Cultural Centres in Belgrade and Zagreb.

Generally speaking, film and the visual arts did not come together very often during the 1970s; most artists were more inclined to use video particularly for documentary purposes. Still, there are examples of film *qua* artwork and not as a me-diator, interpreter, or representation of another, visual or

10 The term was introduced by Croatian art critic Marijan Susovski in his eponymous catalogue for the exhibition *The New Art Practice in Yugosla-via, 1966–1978*, organised at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 1978.

performative work of art, establishing in Yugoslav film what Stevan Vuković calls "the conceptual paradigm".

For instance, in his film *NP 1977* (1977), Serbian conceptual artist Neša Paripović walks and runs through the city of Belgrade. His route is not structured by the city`s urban grid, but follows an imaginary trajectory of its own. In his analysis of the film, Miško Šuvaković lists several themes: the mythology of the self-representing artist; the transformation of an ordinary activity into an exceptional act; the reduction of film to the mechanical action of moving; the deconstruction of traditional narrativity; and speculation conveyed by cinematic discourse, concerning questions of action and production (Paripović and Šuvaković 1996).

Zoran Popović introduced film as a medium in new art and made short experimental films such as *Glava/Krug* (Head/Circle, 1969) and managed to capture a diversified flow of information related to artists, exhibitions, and events, thus affirming the importance of documenting actions and works.

Stilinović made around 20 experimental films before moving on to visual art. Already in his films from the early '70s, Stilinović was addressing his future themes, the economy of production and the economy of language, verbal irony and verbal cliché, and speech as a subtle indicator of the social and political regime and the changes that were occurring in it. Thus it is not surprising that one of his first books – *Watchers are Asked* (1974) – consists of a 16mm film broken down frame by frame. This book could be seen as a film using other means, as if a film had been deconstructed into its constitutive elements, becoming an independent work of art.

The phenomenon of Yugoslav cinema clubs and the GEFF peaked in the early 1960s, but was never systematically explored nor valorised within the cultural-artistic framework of the time, beyond the strict discourse of amateur and experimental film, and therefore, never institutionalised into a broader history.[11]

11 Though we should certainly mention Hrvoje Turković`s systematic explorations of Croatian experimental film, which were an important and invaluable source.

New readings of amateur experimental films do not only comprise interpretations of their formal innovations, but also uncover new connections with their original intentions and tendencies. The cinema clubs gave their members an opportunity to engage in avant-garde experimentation, in socialist, self-managed self-organisation, and in a certain form of politics. They spoke about art's relation to power, possibilities and impotence, distancing from structures of dominance and collaborating with them.

The phenomenon of the Black Wave, which the cinema clubs arguably initiated, seems to have been the most radical and critical form of artistic expression in film, capable of revealing the mechanisms and side effects of Titoist socialism, anticipating, in a way, the Yugoslav crisis, and provoking political reactions. Why are these films so interesting today, especially from the post-Yugoslav and post-socialist perspectives?

One of the purposes of this research was to counter simplified and ideological representations of Yugoslavia's (and not just Yugoslavia's) socialist past. The most popular version seems to be the one based on the dichotomy of the brave dissident artist fighting for freedom of expression against a totalitarian regime. This version conflates the entire former Eastern Bloc into a homogenous entity and ignores the singularity of the Yugoslav socialist project. The point of this text is not to promote any kind of Yugo-nostalgia, but a critical reading and researching of the socialist project's common heritage and to position the various art practices of the former Yugoslavia within that socio-political constellation. Thus the goal is not to give an all-encompassing historical overview, but rather, to research concrete artistic practices that can propose new perspectives of acting in contemporary situations and help us to understand the significance of this heritage today.

The point of analysing the former Yugoslavia's cinema clubs as spaces outside of the system, that is, as cultural systems autonomous from official culture, was to demonstrate how an institutional framework may be prone to reconfiguration, reinvention, and adjustment, which, in this case, ena-

bled some paradigmatic shifts in the production of film and art in the former Yugoslavia.

When we look at the GEFF and documents related to it, it becomes clear that there were many controversies in the conversations and different perspectives of Yugoslav film amateurs (later professionals), but almost all of them agreed on the importance of collectivity beyond programme association, on the need to create radically different films and then also other works of art, to be used as a catalyst for change.

> **Amateurs are costless film lovers. This costless love gives them freedom and directs them toward the avant-garde and non-conformity. They can ask forbidden questions and give illicit answers. (Mihovil Pansini)**

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Americanism and Chaplinism

Comedy and Defamiliarisation in Theatre and Film, 1919–27

≈ **Owen Hatherley**

Introduction: Americanism between Ford and Chaplin

Fast cutting was then known as American montage – the slow montage was Russian.
Lev Kuleshov, quoted in Leyda 1983, 172

This observation of Lev Kuleshov's points out the irony inherent in the transmission of technological culture in the 1920s. By the time he observed this in 1929, the reverse was considered to be the case, with the innovations of D. W. Griffith far more developed in the USSR than the USA. The very forms considered to be "Russian" were in fact "American". These ironies abound when investigating this period, and the one Kuleshov points out here is not the least of them. It is interesting, although perhaps not surprising, that dissections of that curious phenomenon of the 1920s – the cult of Americanism, which reached its most extraordinary form in the Soviet Union –

concentrates on that element which is most amenable to the "totalitarianism" thesis. That is, the notion current during the Cold War and given an enthusiastic reinvigoration by Boris Groys in the last couple of decades, that most if not all elements in early Bolshevik culture pointed towards an inevitable expansion of domination and total control over every element of life. Certainly, there are many elements which support this thesis. Taylorism and Fordism – notwithstanding the arguments for their usefulness to the cause of working class advancement in the corpus of Lenin or Gramsci, as a destroyer of the remnants of craft traditions and peasant mentalities – are clearly practices which led to the precise managerial control of the worker. Superficially, their employment as an aestheticised, cultural phenomenon by Constructivists, such as in the Biomechanics of Vsevolod Meyerhold, would seem to involve extending that domination to the sphere of entertainment and contemplation. This in turn apparently links up with Leninist, vanguardist politics to the point where a technocratic theory of total control becomes a Bolshevik *Gesamtkunstwerk*; where culture, like scientific management is imposed upon the worker, with the avant-garde (in the sense of the various collectives of "Left" artists, whether those associated with the Bauhaus and the Ring in Germany or the circles around LEF and October in the Soviet Union) playing at being cultural Leninists, fighting over which one of them gets to dominate the benighted (but ever more valourised) proletariat.

However, the major flaws in this argument are in their tendentious removal or downplaying from the historical record of a major component of (principally Soviet) Americanism as it was formulated by the various (anti-)artistic avant-gardes. The texts of Americanism are often based on a litany of proper names. Lenin, Taylor, Ford, Edison – and more often than not, Griffith, Fairbanks, Pickford, Keaton, and most of all, with references in texts of the periods rivalling perhaps only Taylor in their frequency – Chaplin.[1] Amer-

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1 Of course, Charles Chaplin was not an American. Nonetheless, within a few years of joining Mack Sennett'sgroup in 1914, he was one of, if not the most famous actor and arguably director in Hollywood, so a clear ex-

icanism was a modernity not only of technological advancement, advanced tempos and Taylorist regimentation of the worker's body, but also of an unprecedented engagement on the part of those allegedly representing "high art" – experimental, "leftist" filmmakers, designers, theoreticians – with "popular" forms of art, whether it was the imported "vulgar" comic cinema, the circus, the burlesque, or jazz. There is no major work on the obsession with comedy on the part of the Modernists of the 1920s, and most surprising of all, there is not to my knowledge any serious discussion of not only why Chaplin was such an obsession for the avant-garde – for everyone from Adorno to Brecht, from Meyerhold to Tretiakov – but also what his example or attempts to emulate, adapt or mutate it did to art and aesthetics in the period; not to mention the other American comedians such as Buster Keaton or Harold Lloyd, who can also be found as objects for intense dialectical argument at this point. This coincides with a notable lack of interest in Eccentrism, the most extensive example of Socialist Americanism as comedy – the only publication on the subject in English is an NFT programme published in 1978, the anthology *Futurism-Formalism-FEKS*, edited by Ian Christie and John Gillett. It is absent from even the most intelligent, least Cold War-tainted works which touch on the conjunction of Socialism and Americanism. Richard Stites's *Revolutionary Dreams* has a wealth of hugely important, fascinating information on Americanism as either Taylorism, as Fordism, or as earnest science fiction, but absolutely nothing on Americanism as comedy, either in the sense of popular consumption or avant-garde fixation and adaptation; and Susan Buck-Morss's *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, even while discussing the motif of the Circus in the mass art of the 1930s as a mass ornament common to Busby Berkeley and the Stalinist musicals of Alexandrov, fails to notice the far more disruptive, far more emancipatory (in the sense of being both individualistic and egalitarian) uses of exactly the same form in the early 1920s. Chaplin only fea-

emplar of Americanism: although it is possible that his use of English Music Hall routines, in a morphed, cinematic form made them particularly accessible to Europeans. See Chaplin 2003.

Biomechanical exercises from Meyerhold's studio, early 1920s

A poster by FEKS (The Factory of the Eccentric Actor), 1920s
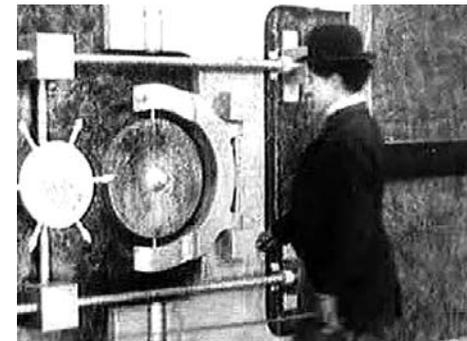
Charlie Chaplin in his film *The Bank*, 1915., Video still

tures as a minor walk-on-part in the biography of Sergei Eisenstein (Buck-Morss 2000, 158–161).

In a sense, this is something rather politically and aesthetically convenient, in that it enables the cultural critic to dismiss or patronise the conjunction of Socialism and Americanism as a merely positivist, technocratic phenomenon, driven by Russian industrial immaturity or a cultural fixation on hygiene and the aestheticisation of technology and, by association, politics. A particularly fine example of this argument can be found in the criticism of Peter Wollen, specifically in the collection *Raiding the Icebox*. The most extensive treatment is in the essay "Modern Times: Cinema/Americanism/The Robot". Wollen is undoubtedly erudite on the subject, referencing Alexei Gastev's Proletkult-Taylorist experiments and the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, so giving at least some attention to the other Americanism. However, it's merely as a cursory mention in a parade of quickly dismissed Fordists, described and then dismissed as bounded by a limited technocratic notion of rationality first ("Gramsci, the Vienna Circle and the Stalinist Productivists"; Wollen 2008b, 40), and later Benjamin and Brecht. The argument runs that Americanism leads to Taylorism, which leads to automation, all of which leads to a fixation on what is not only a superseded form of capitalism, but one which merely extended domination. So Chaplin features only as the anti-Fordist of the 1936 *Modern Times*, but certainly not what we will argue he was to the 1920s avant-garde – a mechanised exemplar of the new forms and new spaces enabled by the new American technologies, and one who promised a liberation that was decidedly machinic in form. Where Wollen does discuss the actual engagement with popular forms on the part of the avant-garde, it somehow still remains technocratic positivism. So, for instance, on jazz, in an essay titled "Into the Future":

> Constructivism was closely linked to the Americanism that swept Europe in the twenties, the so-called jazz age. Jazz was perceived as both stereotypically primitive and ultra-modern, machine-like [...] as Le Corbusier put it, with shameless projection [...] "the popularity of tap-dancers shows that the old rhythmic instinct of the virgin African forest has learned the lesson of

> the machine and that in America the rigour of exactitude is a pleasure" – and the jazz orchestra in Harlem "is the equivalent of a beautiful turbine" playing a music that "echoes the pounding of machines in factories" (!) [...] in this racist vision, black America was taken to be a fascinating synthesis of the "primitive", and the "futuristic", the body and the machine. (Wollen 2008a, 192–193)

So the popular form is inevitably exoticised, patronised, and mythologised when the Constructivists attempt to engage with it. Perhaps it would be better left alone. But irrespective of the patronising hauteur and hint of colonial fantasy in Le Corbusier's argument, he appears to have had a far more insightful take on Black music of the 20th century as actually described by its practitioners than Wollen does. Not only are there innumerable records that describe the jazz, rock & roll, or funk band as a machine (unsurprisingly, most often a train), but there is also James Brown's definitive coinage, which essentially puts Le Corbusier's over-rhetorical prose into two words: "Sex Machine". Many of the most insightful theorists of popular black music have concentrated on precisely this tension, manifested in the consistent combination of rigid yet "loose", sexualised syncopation and technological futurism.[2] The central problem of the dialectical tension between Chaplinism and Fordism, or Eccentrism and Biomechanics, is exactly the one Wollen haughtily considers racist, albeit here it will be class rather than race that is the point of tension. That is: what happens to "popular" forms when they become mechanised? What may be learnt from this, and what may be taken from it? Does it promise a society in which the machine can be reconciled with a pleasure in excitement, movement, and participation, or is it an unsolvable contradiction?

2 In particular, see Shapiro 2002 and Eshun 1997, as well as the very apposite comparisons between Soviet Constructivist architecture and that most determinedly futuristic Black American music – Detroit techno – in Barrett Watten's otherwise tortuous *The Constructivist Moment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Here I will attempt at least to highlight these arguments, questions, and contradictions, giving fair due to the too often expunged elements of Socialist Americanism. There is no unifying theoretical thread running through it, although it frequently returns to the problem, formulated most persistently by Viktor Shklovsky, of defamiliarisation, ideas which would (via Sergei Tretiakov) come to provide the foundation of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. Defamiliarisation – or making strange, *ostranenie* – is commonly thought to be a solely avant-garde technique, one in which the spectator has his (usually political) certainties thrown into confusion and dispute. However, the earliest formulations of this idea by Shklovsky – who had no particular political intent for them – derive precisely from attempts to theorise the popular forms, on which this chapter will concentrate: film, comedy, circus. However, the principal difference between the two versions of making-strange lies in their particular attitude towards what is on the stage, or in the ring. The spectacles of the epic theatre intended to use shock and disjunction in order to make the audience think in ways to which they were not accustomed. The circus, meanwhile, uses shocks, tricks, disjunctions (in size, in species, etc.) for the purposes of – indeed – a total spectacle, one in which the spectator is merely to be awed, no matter how much that awe might be expressed through close attention to detail and veracity. The constant risk of the use of the cinema and the circus by the avant-garde is spectacularisation, in which the audience's role is always delimited by the stage or the screen. In this sense, the making-strange and making-popular could perhaps have been said to serve an anti-socialist purpose, but the diversity and complexity of the strategies employed in the period make any glib dismissal seem driven principally by the smugness of postmodernist, post-historical distance. This chapter will be somewhat disjointed itself, going from a discussion of Chaplin as seen through the eyes of the avant-garde, to a critical examination of American comedy of the late 1910s and early '20s, to readings of the various

attempts at syntheses by (mostly Soviet[3]) theorists, directors, filmmakers, and designers.

Constructing the Chaplin-Machine

> If one considers the dangerous tensions which technology and its consequences have engendered in the masses at large – tendencies which at critical stages take on a psychotic character – one also has to recognise that the same technologisation has created the possibility of psychic immunisation against such psychoses. It does so by means of certain films in which the forced development of sadistic fantasies or masochistic delusions can prevent their natural and dangerous maturation in the masses. Collective laughter is one such preemptive and healing outbreak of mass psychosis. The countless grotesque events consumed in films are a graphic indication of the dangers threatening mankind from the repressions implicit in civilisation. American slapstick comedies and Disney films trigger a therapeutic release of unconscious energies. Their forerunner was the figure of the eccentric. He was the first to inhabit the new fields of action opened up by film – the first occupant of the newly built house. This is the context in which Chaplin takes on historical significance.
> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (Second Version) (Benjamin 2002, 118)

In *Movies for the Millions*, a 1937 study of the popular consumption of cinema, the critic Gilbert Seldes made the observation, in the context of a discussion of the comic film, that there was something uncanny about Charles Chaplin. Several pages after an encomium to Chaplin's genius (as "the universal man of our time") he remarks, almost as an aside, "(W. C.) Fields is human. Chaplin is not". Chaplin's inhuman-

3 Other than Brecht, Erwin Piscator is the main German figure of relevance here, and I hope to have more discussion of both in a later version of this chapter. Certainly Piscator's revues had a similar approach to the montage of attractions, and although he claimed not to have been influenced by Meyerhold, he noted that the emergence of these similar but unconnected methods "would merely prove that this was no superficial game with technical effects, but a new, emergent form of theatre based on the philosophy of historical materialism which we shared" (Piscator 1980, 93).

ity is then defined as a consequence of this universalism, combined with a resemblance to a doll, an automaton.

> He is not (human) because perfection is not human and Chaplin achieves perfection. A French critic has said that in his early works Chaplin presented a marionette and in his later masterpieces endowed that marionette with a soul. That is one way of putting it. It is also true that he created a figure of folklore – and such figures, while they sum up many human attributes, are far beyond humanity themselves. (Seldes 1937, 44)

This provides an interesting contrast with the more familiar idea of Chaplin as a mawkish sentimentalist. "Chaplin" is not a human being, or a realistically depicted subject either – he is both machine and archetype. In this he serves as an obvious paradigm for the avant-garde. In his earlier films (principally those made for the Essanay, Mutual and First National studios in the late 1910s, before the character of the "little Tramp" was finalised, humanised) "Chaplin" is involved, largely, in everyday situations, albeit in dramatic versions. He is a cleaner in a bank, he is a stroller in a park, he is a petty criminal, he is pawning all his possessions. This universal everyday is made strange, through use of the accoutrements of the everyday for purposes other than those intended, and through the peculiarly anti-naturalistic movements of Chaplin's own body.

Chaplin wrote the preface to *Movies for the Millions* (where he uses the opportunity to denounce the Hays code), so we can assume he had no particular problem with being branded inhuman (or sur-human). Yet however odd they might seem in this relatively mainstream study, Seldes's observations were not new. The reception of Chaplin by the Soviet and Weimar avant-garde from the early 1920s onwards[4] hinges on precisely this dialectic of the universal and the machinic. Viktor Shklovsky edited a collection of essays on Chaplin in Berlin in 1922, and in *Literature and Cinematography*, published in the USSR the following year, he devotes a

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4   It is unclear when Chaplin's films were first shown in both countries, but it is likely to have been after 1918. According to Jay Leyda, the first showing in Russia was of *A Dog's Life*, during the Civil War (Leyda 1983, 145).

chapter to Chaplin – in fact, he is the only "cinematographer" mentioned by name in this dual study of literature and film. Shklovsky describes this early use of multiple identities as "a manifestation of the need to create disparities, which compels a fiction writer to turn one of his images into a permanent paragon (a yardstick of comparison) for the entire work of art" (Shklovsky 2008, 64). In this sense, then, Chaplin's universalism would seem to be a means of enabling the other characters, or the events in the film to take place, giving them centre-stage. This doesn't at all tally with the idea of Chaplin as a unique "star", and clearly suggests Shklovsky was only familiar with the short films preceding the feature *The Kid* (1921), where the tramp character emerged fully developed. The remarks that follow, however, are more insightful:

> Chaplin is undoubtedly the most cinematic actor of all. His scripts are not written: they are created during the shooting [...] Chaplin's gestures and films are conceived not in the word, nor in the drawing, but in the flicker of the gray-and-black shadow [...] he works with the cinematic material instead of translating himself from theatrical to film language. (Shklovsky 2008, 65)

Chaplin is immanent to cinema, and this is what makes him interesting for Shklovsky's purposes: formulating a theory unique to film as an art form, disdaining the "psychological, high society film"[5] which merely imposes theatre upon a new, radically different art.

Shklovsky's short discussion of Chaplin has two observations which, as we will see, are common in the avant-garde's reception of his work. First, again, we have Chaplin as machine, something about which Shklovsky is initially rather tentative: "I cannot define right now what makes Chaplin's movement comical – perhaps the fact that it is mechanised" (Shlovsky 2008, 65). Similarly, this movement – mechanised or not – is something which immediately sets him apart from the other protagonists in the films, which marks him out from the ordinary run of humanity. "Chaplin's ensemble moves differently than its leader" (Shlovsky 2008, 66). Shk-

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5   "Let's hope the psychological, high-society film, whose action takes place in a drawing-room, becomes extinct" (Shklovsky 2008, 68).

lovsky also claims that Chaplin is an artist who bares his devices, something that would be picked up over a decade later in Brecht's fragment "V-Effects of Chaplin".[6] More specifically, a baring of the "purely cinematic essence of all the constituents in his films" (Shklovsky 2008, 66) occurs. This is done partly through the avoidance of intertitles (and, he notes, one never sees Chaplin move his lips to simulate speech), and partly through a series of devices physical or technical: "falling down a manhole, knocking down objects, being kicked in the rear" (Shklovsky 67). So, in Shklovsky's brief, early discussion of Chaplin we have three principal elements that are usually ascribed to the avant-garde itself: a sort of impersonal universalism, a human being who isn't a "subject", and an alien element thrown into the everyday; a mechanisation of movement; and the baring of technical devices.

An instructive example of this correspondence being put to use, although not a cinematic one, could be Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*, which shows the influence of these three elements – figures which, as in the *Commedia dell' arte*, are (to put it in Eisenstein's terms) "types", not subjects, a focus on mechanisation (here taken much further, with the costumes seemingly borrowing from the forms of ball-bearings, lathes, spinning tops, and other toys) and an acting style that makes the construction of gesture obvious, rather than concealed. It is unsurprising, then, that Schlemmer can be found making similar remarks about Chaplin. In a Diary entry of September 1922, written whilst formulating the *Triadic Ballet*, he writes of a preference for "aesthetic mummery" as opposed to the "cultic soul dance" of communitarian, ritualistic forms of dance. Schlemmer argues for an aesthetic of artifice and mechanised movement:

> The theatre, the world of appearances, is digging its own grave when it tries for verisimilitude: the same applies to the mime, who forgets that his chief characteristic is his artificiality. The medium of every art is artificial, and every art gains from recog-

6 "Eating the boot (with proper table manners, removing the nail like a chicken bone, the index finger pointing outward). The film's mechanical aids: Chaplin appears to his starving friend as a chicken. Chaplin destroying his rival and at the same time courting him" (Brecht 2000, 10). The scenes are from *The Gold Rush*.

nition and acceptance of its medium. Heinrich Kleist's essay *Über das Marionettentheater* offers a convincing reminder of this artificiality, as do E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Phantasiestücke* (the perfect machinist, the automata). Chaplin performs wonders when he equates complete inhumanity with artistic perfection. (Schlemmer 1990, 126–127)

The automaton, the machine, artifice: Chaplin is seen as a culmination of a Romantic tendency to create strange, uncanny, inhuman machines that *resemble* human beings. Mechanisation is accordingly seen as something linked as much with dance and comedy as with factory work – or more specifically, dance and comedy provide a means of coming to terms with the effects of factory work and the attendant proliferation of machines. Schlemmer continues: "life has become so mechanised, thanks to machines and a technology which our senses cannot possibly ignore, that we are intensely aware of man as a machine and the body as a mechanism" (Schlemmer 1990, 126). Schlemmer claims that this then leads to two only seemingly competing impulses: a search for the "original, primordial impulses" that apparently lie behind artistic creativity on the one hand, and an accentuation of "man as a machine" on the other. By merging the "Dionysian" dance with "Apollonian" geometries, Schlemmer claims the Triadic Ballet will provide some sort of yearned-for synthesis between the two. Although he does not acknowledge this, it is entirely possible that Chaplin's combination of mechanisation and sentiment provides a similar synthesis. Chaplin as the machine that cries.

This has a great deal in common with Walter Benjamin's anatomy of the Chaplin-machine in his notes for a review of *The Circus*, where Chaplin is both an implement and a marionette, noting both that he "greets people by taking off his bowler, and it looks like the lid rising from the kettle when the lid boils over"; and that "the mask of non-involvement turns him into a fairground marionette" (Benjamin 2005, 199–200). However, Benjamin implies something deeper here, that this is a "mask" of sanguine inhumanity, under which something more poignant and sophisticated is at work. An-

other observation of his merges Shklovsky's positing of something immanently cinematic about Chaplin with the notion that his movement is machinic – in fact, his motion is that of the cinema itself. In a 1935 fragment he notes that the film is based on a succession of discontinuous images, in which the assembly line itself is represented. Chaplin incarnates this process.

> He dissects the expressive movements of human beings into a series of minute innervations. Each single movement he makes is composed of a series of staccato bits of movement. Whether it is his walk, the way he handles his cane, or the way he raises his hat – always the same jerky sequence of tiny movements applies the law of the cinematic image sequence to human motorial functions. Now, what is it about such behaviour that is distinctively comic? (Benjamin 2005, 94)

Shklovsky suggests tentatively that it is this machinic movement itself which is comic, that Chaplin is funny precisely because he is mechanised, in which perhaps the audience detect the process at work in the film in the actions onscreen, or perhaps recognise their own increasing integration into an ever-more mechanised capitalism, and are made to laugh at it to dispel resentment and tension. The tension, trite as it may sound, appears to be between machinic movement and personal pathos – whether the pathos itself is machinic is another matter.

Meanwhile, Schlemmer's kind of Romantic-inflected creation of artistic syntheses is entirely absent in another avant-garde celebration of Chaplin: a 1922 cover story for the Constructivist film journal *Kino-Fot*, edited by Alexei Gan. This was a collaboration between Aleksandr Rodchenko (as writer, of a strange prose-poem eulogising the actor-director) and Varvara Stepanova (as illustrator, providing woodcuts interspersed with the text) entitled "Charlot", the name of Chaplin's "character" in France. Here, again, there is a stress on the ordinary and everyday, and Chaplin's universalisation thereof, as well as on technology. However, there is an acknowledgement of the "affecting" nature of the performance, something ascribed to the humility of the Chaplin character, and a certain ingenuousness.

> He pretends to be no-one,
> Never worries at all,
> Rarely changes his costume,
> wears no makeup,
> remains true to himself, never mocks a soul.
> He simply knows how to reveal himself so fully and audaciously that he affects the viewer more than others do (Rodchenko 2005, 147).

Aside from the bizarre failure of Rodchenko to notice the layers of kohl and foundation applied for even the more naturalistic Chaplin performances, this is curious in that it suggests that precisely in his otherness, his strangeness in his context ("his movement contrasts with the movement of his partner", something also noted by Shklovsky 2008, 67), Chaplin becomes more emotionally involving for the viewer. However, this "revealing himself" is not a dropping of the mask for the purpose of pathos – indeed, Rodchenko claims that "he has no pathos". There is a certain smallness to Chaplin in Rodchenko's text. While he avoids the accoutrements of the "psychological, high society film", what Rodchenko calls "the old tinsel of the stage", he also effaces the machine monumentalism of the period ("dynamo, aero, radio station, cranes and so on"). The machine is transferred to a human scale, as "next to a mountain or a dirigible a human being is nothing, but next to a screw and one surface – he is Master". Chaplin then, is something ordinary and alien. The text's conclusion is that "simply nothing – the ordinary – is higher than the pompousness and muddleheadedness of speculative ideologies. Charlot is always himself – the one and only, the ordinary Charlie Chaplin".

Chaplin as everyman and as "master" is conflated, an unstable, and unresolved contradiction. Yet what marks out Rodchenko's Chaplin-machine from Shklovsky or Schlemmer's marionette is a political dimension, something too often overlooked in even the earliest of his films. Nonetheless, Chaplin here takes the place more commonly assigned to Ford or Taylor in terms of providing a bridge between Bolshevism and Americanism.

(Chaplin's) colossal rise is precisely and clearly – the result of a keen sense of the present-day: of war, revolution, Communism.

> Every master-inventor is inspired to invent by new events or demands.
>
> Who is it today?
>
> Lenin and technology.
>
> The one and the other are the foundation of his work.
>
> This is the new man designed – a master of details, that is, the future anyman...
>
> The masters of the masses –
>
> Are Lenin and Edison. (Rodchenko 2005, 148)[7]

This elliptical text offers few clues as to *why* exactly Communism should be one of the foundations of Chaplin's rise – although we will suggest a few possibilities presently – but another element has been added to those of the avant-garde Chaplin – he is a *new man*, and a potentially Socialist one. Stepanova's illustrations, however, have little to do with this extra element. Here, we have a depiction of the Chaplin-machine as montage, in a more casual, rough version of Suprematism, but sharing the alignment of discrete shapes. He is made up of clashing, patterned rectangles and a circle for a head, poised as if about to leap. The only elements about him that aren't drawn from the Suprematist vocabulary are the fetish objects mentioned in Rodchenko's text. The bowler hat, the cane, and (not mentioned in the text, but famously invoked by the Eccentrists), the arse. Her illustration for the cover of the issue of *Kino Fot*, meanwhile, features the famous moustache, in a dynamic, symmetrical composition in which Chaplin swings from his cane toward the spectator, flat feet first. The monochrome palette of the magazine cover is exploited to give Chaplin's legs a sharp stylisation, his pinstripes futuristically thrusting forwards. Stepanova's Chaplin-machine is fiercer than Rodchenko's, it seems. Still a "new man", he has fewer traces of the human scale.

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7 Edison also features in an (unproduced) FEKS scenario: "In Edison's Woman, an agitational film scenario written by FEKS in 1923, Edison creates a robot that comes to Petrograd to "save the the city from the cult of the past, of Petersburg. Once the light of Volkhovstroy (power station) is turned on, the old Petersburg disappears" (Clark 1995, 202).

There is a question, however, of whether or not there is a Chaplinism of practice, rather than of spectatorship. Can only Charlot be the universal man-machine, or can the viewers themselves live in this manner? Is Chaplin the only alien element in the everyday, or could the everyday itself be transformed? A possible answer to this could be found with the Devetsil movement in Czechoslovakia, and more specifically in Poetism, defined in Karel Teige''s 1924 Manifesto. There, Poetism is described as a kind of complement to Constructivism in the plastic arts ("'poetism is the crown of life; constructivism is its basis [...] not only the opposite but the necessary complement of constructivism [...] based on its layout'" (Teige 1999, 66–67), as a kind of practice of life-as-play, rejecting the "'professionalism of art'", "'aesthetic speculation'", "'cathedrals and galleries'" and the other institutions ritually lambasted in the avant-garde manifesto. Poetism is "'not a worldview – for us, this is Marxism – but an ambiance of life [...] it speaks only to those who belong to the new world'". It combines the Constructivism derived no doubt from "Lenin and Edison" with what an "aesthetic scepticism" learnt from "clowns and Dadaists". Those clowns are listed, in what marks an interesting contention given the prevalent received idea of "high" Modernism, or an aloof, puritan avant-garde:

> [I]t is axiomatic that man has invented art, like everything else, for his own pleasure, entertainment and happiness. A work of art that fails to make us happy and to entertain is dead, even if its author were to be Homer himself. Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Burian, a director of fireworks, a champion boxer, an inventive or skilful cook, a record breaking mountain climber – are they not even greater poets?
>
> Poetism is, above all, a way of life. (Teige 1999, 70)

In the Poetist conception, the avant-garde's place for Chaplinism is in life. Americanism in technology, Bolshevism in politics, slapstick, presumably, in everyday life. This puts a rather different spin on the idea of the utopian "new man" of the 1920s – not a Taylorist "trained gorilla" so much as a self-propelling marionette.

Teige expounds on this at length in the (untranslated)

1928 book *Svet, ktery se smeje* (World of Laughter), a text on humour, divided between sections on "Hyperdada" and on "Clowns and Comedians". The Teige-designed cover is dominated by an image of Chaplin in *The Circus*, peering out inscrutably. Although the lack of any translation makes deciphering Teige's arguments very difficult,[8] the images chosen to illustrate the text tell their own story. Interspersed with the text are sharp, strong-lined drawings, either taken from the cultural industry itself (a guffawing Felix the Cat)[9] or from satirical protest (various George Grosz images of the grotesque bourgeoisie) and, unsurprisingly, Fernand Leger's Chaplin sketches for Blaise Cendrars's Chaplinade.[10] Teige's final gallery of glossier photogravure prints follows a Van Doesburg painting, with its bare, precise abstraction, with an image of Josephine Baker, looking sardonically orientalist with her skirt of bananas; circus images by Man Ray and others; and iconic photographs of American comic actor-directors, all of them performing their own specific character. Buster Keaton looks melancholic and effeminate, wanly holding a hand of cards; Harold Lloyd appears as the muscular embodiment of technocratic Americanism, balancing on the girders of a skyscraper's steel frame; and Chaplin, again taken from *The Circus*, by contrast sits looking desperately poor and harried. These images between them situate Chaplin in a context of Modernist reduction (De Stijl), comic over-abundance (Baker) and the abnormal personas of his filmic contemporaries. From the very little published in English about *World of Laughter*, it would seem that the book argues from a

8 Until I find an obliging Czech translator, at least.

9 The edition of *World of Laughter* consulted here is a facsimile reprint of Karel Teige's *Svet, ktery se smehe* (Odeon, 1928), published in Prague in 2004. The 1930 follow-up, *World of Smells*, features a more Dadaist choice of illustrations.

10 Cendrars and Leger's version of Chaplin is remarkably similar in approach to Schlemmer's, quoted earlier: the schematised Chaplin sketches that appear in the *Ballet mécanique* film make the connection between the comedian's movement and that of the products of the second Industrial Revolution. Leger's Chaplin images are not as "iconic", or severely Suprematist as Stepanova's, but have more of a chaotic, urban feel to them, fusing the disconnected parts of the marionette's body with fragments of the post-war city.

similar perspective as the Poetist manifesto published four years earlier – Dada and clowning as a praxis of life, with the technological environment catered for by Constructivism. There is an open, unanswered question in Teige's inclusion of Chaplin as a Poetist, as in Rodchenko's poem's conception of a mass modernity ruled over by technology and mass politics. If Chaplin is "outside" of Constructivism, a phenomenon not part of the faceless mass that is "mastered" by Lenin and Edison, then could he not be actively hostile to it? Could he start breaking Edison's machines, or break ranks with Lenin's politics? Could his own versions of machines and politics promise something different to, or complimentary with, Bolshevism and American technology?

This survey of various exponents of Chaplinism is taken from a wide range of protagonists of the nominally leftist avant-garde. We have Shklovsky's politically non-committed but aesthetically more disruptive conceptions, most notably *ostranenie*, and the bared device; Schlemmer's Germanic, technocratic-Romantic synthesis; Rodchenko's Bolshevised proclamation of the abolition of art; and Teige's ideas of avant-garde praxis. Drawing on all of them, certain almost always present features are noticeable. First of all, the notion of Chaplin as a marionette and a machine, his movement somehow uncanny, and differentiated from that of his co-stars; second, Chaplin as a universal figure, both in his unassuming, faux-humble posture, and in an (early) ability to play all manner of roles, albeit usually as a subordinate figure in a class sense; an employer of avant-garde techniques of estrangement and bared devices; and Chaplin as a product of the age of "Lenin and Edison", responding to the former in his cinematic representation of the (lumpen)proletariat and the latter in his mechanised movement. This can be seen, then, as not purely an idolatry of an ultra-famous icon of the new mass culture, but as a recognition of a fellow traveller *with* the leftist avant-garde.[11] With that in mind, we will digress into an examination of whether this stands up in the case of his films and those of his less valourised, but still

11 Something that would be reciprocated later, with Chaplin's very public advocacy of Vertov and Eisenstein.

highly important contemporaries, and then analyse the various responses (by the Soviet avant-garde in particular) to these works and their techniques.

Comedy and Technics – Chaplin, Lloyd, and Keaton as Modernists

> I love the theatre, and sometimes feel sad because leadership in the art of acting is beginning to be taken over by the movie actors. I won't speak of Chaplin, who by some magic premonition we loved before we even saw him. But remember Buster Keaton! When it comes to subtlety of interpretation, clarity of acting, tactful characterisation, and stylistically unique gesture, he was an absolutely unique phenomenon.
>
> Vsevolod Meyerhold, the mid-1930s (Gladkov 1997, 112)

So before going on to study the particular forms that Chaplinism took in the 1920s work of Kuleshov, FEKS *et al.*, a selection of films from the period will be analysed in terms of the three major obsessions of Soviet Chaplinists as quoted earlier. Firstly, in terms of their presentation of technology as a comic foil, or as a mechanisation of the productions themselves; secondly, in terms of their devices, their particularly filmic, as opposed to theatrical qualities, the way in which they draw attention to the film form itself and, frequently, mock their "high society, psychological" competitors; and thirdly, the class relations in the film – specifically, on whether or not the claims made by Rodchenko that Chaplin's work is in some way brought into being by Communism are in any way tenable. This will be observed through the short films of the period, both because this gives the opportunity for a cross-section of typical works, and because the frequent time lag between the completion of the films and their likely showing in Germany (and even more so, the USSR) makes it likely that it is these works that were those initially seen by Continental Modernists, rather than the more famous features (*City Lights*, *The General*, and so forth).

A fairly typical example that complicates Rodchenko's

contentions is *The Bank*, a short Chaplin directed for Essanay Studios in 1915. In terms of the comic use of technology, Chaplin's films are generally more subtle than those of his two major competitors, and here this is notable in that the gestures, rather than the props themselves, are mechanical, or in this particular instance, bureaucratic. The first few minutes of the film, however, are most interesting for their bitterly ironic satire on class collaboration. Chaplin, in tramp costume, waddles into a bank one morning, spins through the revolving doors several times, then insouciantly follows the complex combination on the doors to the vault, then casually walks in. The assumption that he is going to steal the reserves that are no doubt kept in there is dispelled when the vault is shown to also contain a uniform and a mop and bucket – the tramp puts on the former, picks up his implements, and goes to work, seemingly without noticing that his obviously parlous predicament could be easily solved by means of the vault's other contents. No doubt he is considered too harmless and stupid to be under suspicion. He clearly, however, has some designs on advancing to the level of clerk, at least. In a movement that supports Shklovsky's contentions on Chaplin's mechanised movement very neatly, he treats his janitorial colleague's arse like a desk drawer, neatly sliding it under the table in a precise, parodic moment. A similar moment comes near the end of the film, during a dream sequence where the tramp foils a robbery (again, co-operating with his superiors[12]) – using the moustache-topped mouth of

12 Interestingly, Buster Keaton, usually seen as a less politicised figure than Chaplin, films a far more disruptive and pointed scene set in a bank in *The Haunted House* (1921). As a bank cashier, Keaton accidentally ends up spilling glue over the notes, covering his bourgeois customers in money that they physically can't remove from their bodies, in an impressive making obvious of their pecuniary fixations, a device that could have fitted neatly alongside the stock market sequences in Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*. However, a comparison of two films in which the actor-directors play convicts (Chaplin's *The Adventurer* (1917), Keaton's *Convict 13* (1920)) is instructive. Although the humour in the latter is more mordantly cynical, most notably in a farcical execution scene, Keaton is in prison because of a case of mistaken identity. The tramp of *The Adventurer*, however, actually is an escaped criminal, which makes his subsequent charming of an upper-class woman and humiliation of her father all the more threatening. In this sense, Chaplin's sly "inhumanity" is particular-

a banker as a slot, a receptacle, miming putting paper into it as if it were a postbox. Throughout, the tramp is aggressive to his fellow janitor, who is regularly kicked in the arse and hit with the mop, and seemingly obsequious to the clerks and bosses upstairs. However (as has invariably been pointed out in studies of the violence in Chaplin's films), the mop usually fulfils the role of Charlie's unconscious, "accidentally" hitting the people he is too polite to strike deliberately. It is striking, though, given the relatively benign figure the tramp becomes in the features (from *The Kid* onwards) how malevolent the earlier Chaplin is, even if this malevolence is mostly presented as being accidental.

His New Job gives more justification to Shklovsky's theories on Chaplin, what with its baring of various cinematic conventions and devices. Made earlier in 1915, it similarly shows a much more aggressive, and most notably, *annoyed* figure than the Chaplin of the features, always ready to strike the arses of his adversaries with the ever-present cane. The key element in *His New Job* is a mocking of the theatrical pretensions of (respectable, non-comic) cinema. The plot hinges on the tramp's attempt to become a film actor, which he eventually will, by luck and accident. Another auditioning actor reels off his learned speeches from *Hamlet*, no doubt oblivious to their irrelevance to the silent film, something mocked in a moment where Chaplin with "monocle" mimes a typical thespian. In the feature (which appears to be set in the Napoleonic wars, judging by the costumes, but regardless is clearly an opulent, high-society affair) that is being filmed it becomes obvious that the tramp is unable (despite his best efforts) to remotely convince as a romantic actor. The sword he is given is held in much the same way as the wooden planks he is seen with earlier on, when he is forced to help out the studio's carpenter, resulting in various of the crew being clouted; and he knocks over, and is trapped by, a large Doric column, smashing up the neoclassical stage accoutrements. Finally, he manages to tear a large (and for the time, revealing) strip off the lead actress's dress, which he subsequently

ly remarkable, as he is able to elicit pathos to the point where his crime doesn't even need to be explained.

uses as a handkerchief after he is, inevitably, sacked (although like almost all his co-stars, she appears to find him sexually irresistible). In this short, much of the comedy is aimed directly at the film-as-theatre, the object of a decade of Constructivist scorn. The acting is inappropriate, the décor anachronistic, the carefully simulated period costumes are gleefully desecrated. Meanwhile, the process of film-making itself is shown as being ad hoc, cheap, and riven with petty hierarchies and stratifications. However, a laugh at high culture, even in this attenuated form, is often an easy laugh – and it's notable that the target is the culture of the bourgeois rather than the place they occupy in the social scale.[13]

As an explicit baring of cinematic devices, *His New Job* is far less extensive than Buster Keaton's 1924 *Sherlock Jr.*, a 45-minute-long film somewhere between a short and a feature. It acknowledges the disparities in everyday life that film, as a dreamlike space outside of social reality creates, but does so in a far from schematic manner. Keaton's protagonist is a film projectionist and porter (and a desperately poor one – an early set piece shows him picking through the rubbish left after the spectators have left, finding dollar bills which are invariably then claimed by returning moviegoers) who has daydreams both of courting a woman above his station, and of becoming a detective. After failing miserably in both, he falls asleep, during the projection of another high-toned melodrama set inside a mock-Tudor mansion, with the symptomatic title *Hearts and Pearls*, its soporific, narcotic function neatly signalled by the name of the production company that ap-

13 Some of the films missed out in this section might well give a different picture of Chaplin's politics, if not his techniques: "Looking back over (the Essanay films) we can see clues that would delight a Marxist critic searching for images of exploitation: in *Work*, Charlie is an undersized beast of burden; the drab janitor surrounded by the wealth and glamour of *The Bank* fights back in the only way he can, with incompetence, laziness, and a final pathetic flight into the fantasy that he has some value in the marketplace; in *Shanghaied*, a corrupt businessman wants to blow up the ship to collect the insurance. Contemplating the last of the Essanay films, the Marxist critic would die and go to heaven, for in *Police* Chaplin plays a convict released from the security of the prison where he had been fed, sheltered and protected into a world of hunger, exploitation and danger" (Smith 1986, 31).

pears onscreen: "Veronal Films Ltd". The stars morph into Keaton's previous love interest and her other suitor. Aggrieved, Keaton walks into the film and is promptly thrown back out of it. The film itself then takes revenge on this transgression of boundaries by subjecting him to a life-threatening montage. In a sequence that bares the centrality of fast-cutting and montage to film as a medium, while at the same time providing a (re-mystifying) series of baffling tricks, Keaton is subjected, whilst staying in the same place, to (in rapid succession) a change of scene from the middle of a road, to the edge of a cliff, to a lion's den. Then, a hyperactive detective film with Keaton in the leading role forcibly replaces the previous melodrama on screen, with a panoply of mechanical devices – Keaton traversing practically every kind of motorised vehicle, with a super-Taylorist precision in timing, as in the moment where a broken bridge is linked by two passing trucks just in time for him to get across. Keaton's own movement, as Meyerhold rightly points out, is constantly precise and restrained, letting the machines and the tricks take centre-stage. Here, the mechanical is both revealed and concealed – there is some clear speeding and reversing of the film, alongside actual stunt work. In the film's final sequences, where Keaton, now safely out of the film and his dream, gets the girl, the gulf is still present – he watches the screen studiously to find out exactly what to do with his new love, attempting to simulate their heroic gestures. This is in turn thrown back, when the screen blanks out, only to return with the couple holding young children. The last shot shows Keaton looking distinctly unimpressed. Over the course of *Sherlock Jr.* there is a combination of an assault on (other kinds of) cinematic genre combined with an ambiguous presentation of the social function of cinema (as dream, as educator, as ideologist). which has clear affinities with Modernist film.

Another affinity with the Constructivists is in a shared fixation on, and involvement in, engineering, as a mechanical basis for filmic experiment and as a joy in machines.[14] Like

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14 This is a reversal of the usual order, in Keaton's case. Brought up in a vaudeville family, mechanics was the fantasy of the actor, not vice versa. Edward McPherson quotes his autobiography: "I was so successful as a

Eisenstein, Keaton had a functional ability in civil engineering, something that is most relevant for our purposes in two early shorts, *One Week* (1920), which centres on the prefabrication of housing, and to which we will return in chapter three, and in *The Electric House* (1922). The latter centres on a mix-up of degrees, in which a Buster who is qualified in botany finds himself in possession of a diploma in electrical engineering. He is immediately put to work by the father of the obligatory pretty young woman, in electrifying his entire house. Before the inventions of Edison became prosaic this had far wider implications than light bulbs and sockets, and the film shares a romanticism of electricity with Russian Futurism (cf. the famous formulation of its egalitarian promise "socialism equals Soviet power plus electrification"). So the electric house necessitates every possible area of everyday life being electrified. With an intertitle of "let me show you another device", we are introduced to an automated dining system where food approaches on electrified train tracks, and where the chairs themselves retract from the table mechanically, and cupboards have similar rail systems to get boxes inside and out. The actual engineer, hiding in the generator room, then sets the entire house against the inhabitants, with the gadgets menacing the family to the point where Keaton is eventually flushed out of the house, ending up at the wrong end of the drainage system. Although electricity and engineering are here placed at the service of servility for a decidedly affluent family, its potential is clear both as driver of impossible technologies and as creator of new spaces.

The use of the new space opened up by the technology of the second industrial revolution is the fundamental innovation in the films of Harold Lloyd, who is otherwise ostensibly the most conservative of the three major silent comedians. For instance, *Grandma's Boy* (1923) showcases a character who is the class antipode of Chaplin's shabbily dressed chancer or Keaton's faintly sinister little man. The entire film

child performer that it occurred to no one to ask me if there was something else I would like to do when I grew up. If someone had asked me I would have answered 'civil engineer'". McPherson notes the obvious, that "his engineer's mind would serve him remarkably well in his career as a filmmaker" (McPherson 2004, 16–17).

hinges on the capture of a tramp who is menacing a small town, albeit a less humble tramp than Charlie's. However, there is still the fascination with objects, which seem to revolt against Lloyd, as in a fascinating, brief scene where his grandmother's dresser becomes an obstacle course, with a distorting mirror and a potentially lethal candle, while a central plot device is very uncommon – a false flashback. Nonetheless, this is a tale of a bullied man who triumphs over his tormentors by becoming a better fighter than they are, immediately assuming their worldview. What makes Lloyd relevant for the purposes of this chapter is his use of urban space as a jarring, perilous and fantastical abstraction and absence, in which the skeletal frames of buildings without façades are apt to drop the unwary protagonist into lethally empty space. *Never Weaken* (1921) is the first of two films (the other being the more famous *Safety Last*) in which the space of the American city becomes the star. And here too, there is the same mocking of the theatrical that we find in Keaton and Chaplin ("Shakespeare couldn't have asked for more", notes the opening intertitle, while literary conventions are also mocked in the painstakingly ornate prose of a suicide note). This skyscraper romance, focused on a couple who work on adjoining blocks, ends in a ballet of girders in which Lloyd, after failing in (that seemingly frequent slapstick event) a farcical suicide attempt via a gun wired up to the door of an office is lifted in his Thonet chair onto part of the steel frame of a skeletal skyscraper. Blindfolded, he immediately assumes he has been lifted up to heaven, as when he opens his eyes the first sight is the stone angel carved onto the corner of his office block. The next ten minutes or so are a remarkably abstract play of mechanical parts in which the stunts are the only "human" element – albeit in a particularly superhuman form. By the end, he still thinks he's in this vertiginous girder-space even when he is lifted onto the ground, reaching for a policeman's leg as if it were the next girder along.

Upon this brief assessment, Chaplin's films often seem less mechanically striking than those of his immediate contemporaries, although it is only Chaplin who actually con-

vincingly mimes a machine, taking the machine as a measure of human interaction.[15] Lloyd and Keaton are always fundamentally untouched by their encounters with malevolent technologies. With Chaplin the machine becomes something immanent. In that case, it is telling that he becomes the principal model for the new techniques of film-making and acting introduced in the Soviet Union. Absurd as a Taylorised Chaplin might appear (hence his parody of scientific management in *Modern Times*), it is surely this that makes him more appealing to Soviet Taylorists. In this sense, biomechanics, and related disciplines, can be seen as a merging of Taylor and Chaplin.

Theories of Biomechanics in the Factory and Circus

> I got the chance to see a few other productions, on nights off, and afternoons when I had no matinee. Soviet vaudeville was heavy on acrobats, wire walkers, kozatski dancers, jugglers and trained animals. Actually, the People's Vaudeville was a watered-down stage version of the People's Circus. The circus was by far the most popular form of entertainment.
> Harpo Marx, on a tour of the Soviet Union in 1933 (Marx 1978, 321–322)

> Most people are still unaware that many of the successes of our leftist cinema originate from the circus and acrobatics.
> Sergei Tretiakov, "Our Cinema", 1928 (Tretiakov 2006, 41)

Biomechanics is in a sense the form of a comedy of technology, and hence is a fusion of Taylorism and what Meyerhold himself would later term "Chaplinism". It is, not without reason, the former of those two who has been privileged in readings of biomechanics. Trotsky, for instance, in *Literature and Revolution*, considered this a symptom of the contradictory overreaching of the "Futurists" due to Russia's combined and uneven development, a bizarre creation whereby the deployment of a strictly industrial system in art achieves an "abor-

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15 However, there is a short catalogue of Chaplin's interactions with machines in Andre Bazin's *What is Cinema*?.

tive" effect. Others, while not so harsh, have noted only the Taylorist element of the biomechanical system. Richard Stites's otherwise so comprehensive *Revolutionary Dreams*, for instance, doesn't spot that American comedy was a source of biomechanical ideas, and that slapstick acrobatics were perhaps a greater element than the incipient militarism he notes. Stites does quite rightly note that Meyerhold was a committed Taylorist, and records his membership of the League of Time, one of two quasi-Taylorist groups active in the early Soviet 1920s, and the affinity of his theories with the leader of the other, Alexei Gastev of the NOT/Central Institute of Labour. Similarly, he writes, biomechanics is a regime of "alertness, rhythmic motion, scientific control over the body, exercises and gymnastics, rigorous physical lessons in precision movement and co-ordination" – in short, "organised movement", designed to create the "new high-velocity man" (Stites 1989, 161).

The new high-velocity man could be the Taylorised worker, or he could just as easily be Harold Lloyd. A retrospective argument would help to illuminate the claim that biomechanics is a form of technological comedy. In 1936, Meyerhold wrote a lecture entitled "Chaplin and Chaplinism". This article is overshadowed by the beleaguered director's need to justify himself against the orthodoxies of Socialist Realism, which he does by accepting them in part, and then refusing them with the next argument (an approach which evidently did him no favours). In this essay he compares his own earlier work – the biomechanical productions of the 1920s, from *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (1922) to *The Bed Bug* (1929) to the early silent comedies of Chaplin, in that they both share a particularly mechanical bent. The early films – Meyerhold mentions *His New Job* – were considered to "rely on tricks alone"; and that, like the repentant Meyerhold looking over his shoulder at the NKVD, Chaplin had repudiated such frippery with the pathos of *The Gold Rush*. "He condemned his own formalist period, rather as Meyerhold condemned Meyerholditis." Yet earlier in the same argument he has intimately linked his development of biomechanics with Chaplin's privileging of movement over the inherited devices

of the conservative theatre. After noting that Chaplin began to reject "acrobatics" and "tricks" from around 1916, he writes:

> As a teacher I began by employing many means of expression which had been rejected by the theatre; one of them was acrobatic training, which I revived in the system known as "biomechanics". That is why I so enjoy following the course of Chaplin's career: in discovering the means he employed to develop his monumental art, I find that he, too, realised the necessity for acrobatic training in the actor's education. (Meyerhold 1990, 312–314)

So whilst making a highly ambiguous and guarded repudiation of biomechanics, he essentially defends it by aligning it with the comic acrobatics of the early Chaplin and the Mack Sennett Keystone comedies. This can also be seen in his employment throughout the 1920s of Igor Ilinsky, an actor who Walter Benjamin (in the *Moscow Diary*) considered an extremely poor Chaplin impersonator, as a means of introducing some kind of Chaplinism to the Soviet stage; but there is an implication there, too, in the original theoretical justifications of Biomechanics. In this, and in many other pronouncements on the affinities between comedy and technics, the comic element is mediated through the circus (which as we will see, was regarded by Eisenstein and Tretiakov as a protocinematic form).

This is perhaps encapsulated in the distinction Meyerhold establishes between "ecstasy" and "excitability", with the former standing for all that is mystical, religiose, and of dubious revolutionary value, and the latter standing in for dynamism, movement, comedy. More to the point, his conception of biomechanical labour, both inside and outside the theatre, is actually quite far from Taylorist in its conception, something critically but correctly noted by Ippolit Sokolov, who according to Edward Braun regarded biomechanics as "anti-Taylorist […] rehashed circus clowning".[16] More specifically,

16 Meyerhold 1990, 202. Sokolov's own conception was more straightforwardly machinic, redolent again of Chaplin-theory's ideas of automata and marionettes, here with some faintly eugenic undertones: "the actor on the stage must first of all become a mechanism, an automaton, a machine […] henceforth, painters, doctors, artists, engineers, must study

biomechanics is a complete revaluation of Taylorism to the point where it attains the quality of circus clowning. To illustrate this point, we could compare Meyerhold's conception of work with that of Taylor himself, and of Henry Ford, that great proponent of the Taylor system and Soviet icon.[17] In the 1922 lecture "The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics" Meyerhold clearly regards work as something that has to be completely transformed in a socialist society, eliminating drudgery and fatigue. Rather tellingly, by contrast with Taylor or Ford, his model is the *skilled* worker. This can be seen even in the most seemingly Taylorist statements.

> However, apart from the correct utilisation of rest periods, *it is equally essential to discover those movements in work which facilitate the maximum use of work time*. If we observe a skilled worker in action, we notice the following in his movements: (1) an absence of superfluous, unproductive movements; (2) rhythm; (3) the correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity; (4) stability. Movements based on those principles are distinguished by their dance-like quality: a skilled worker at work invariably reminds one of a dancer; thus work borders on art. This spectacle of a man working efficiently affords positive pleasure. This applies equally to the work of the actor of the future. (Stites 1989, 197–198)

While an American Taylorist might agree with these four points, the use to which they are put, and the aesthetic pleasure that it produces in both the worker and the spectator, would be wholly alien to him.

Taylorism essentially rests in the rationalisation of drudgery, and the implementation of precise rules for unskilled work. This is no doubt why Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* centres on pig-iron handling as its main example, in that it proves that even the most thoughtless work, based purely on brute strength, idiotic work – *especially* this

the human body not from the point of view of anatomy or physiology, but from the point of view of the study of machines. The new Taylorised man who has his own new physiology. Classical man, with his Hellenic gait and his gesticulation, is a beast and savage in comparison with the new Taylorised man". Quoted in Yampolsky 1994, 49.

17 See Stites on "Fordizatsiya", Stites 1989, 148.

kind of work – can be made "scientific", i.e. reduced to a series of sped-up, physically amenable and repetitious movements – that which can be performed by, in Taylor's admirably unromantic phrase, an "intelligent gorilla". Meyerhold argues for the worker as a thinking being, who rationalises his work to the point where his work becomes an aesthetic phenomenon. Taylor and Ford are, quite unashamedly, interested in the unthinking worker.[18] In *My Life and Work* (which went into several Soviet editions in 1925 alone, according to Stites) Ford is candid about his own horror of the labour which takes place on his assembly lines:

> Repetitive labour – the doing of one thing over and over again and always in the same way – is a terrifying prospect to a certain kind of mind. It is terrifying to me. I could not possibly do the same thing day in and day out, but to other minds, perhaps I might say to the majority of minds, repetitive operations hold no terrors. (Ford 2009, 73)

So there are some who are made for the life of the mind, and some for a life of labour – and any attempt to bridge the two is unimaginable, and merely breaks up the worker's otherwise content existence, as with those agitators who "extend quite unwarranted sympathy to the labouring man who day in and day out performs almost exactly the same operation" (Ford 2009, 73). There isn't any attempt to romanticise this pattern of work, however – merely a repeated claim that first, there are people who are "made" for this kind of labour, and second,

18 An example of Taylor's unadorned contempt, which is – like much Taylorist thought – based on the assumption that those "fit" for manual work are wholly distinct from those "fit" for intellectual work, a "natural" theory of the division of labour: "Now one of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental makeup the ox than any other type. The man who is mentally alert and intelligent is for this reason entirely unsuited to what would, for him, be the grinding monotony of work of this character. Therefore the workman who is best suited to handling pig iron is unable to understand the real science of doing this class of work. He is so stupid that the word 'percentage' has no meaning to him, and he must consequently be trained by a man more intelligent than himself into the habit of working in accordance with the laws of this science before he can be successful" (Taylor 1998, 28).

that those who do it have no objection to it (and those who do object can easily be put to work in the more creative areas of the Ford Motor Company). The huge difference between this and Meyerhold's skilled, balletic worker, in perfect control of his mind and body, should be obvious. Ford reiterates that he employs all manner of disabled workers in his factories, because skill is fundamentally irrelevant. "No muscular energy is required, no intelligence is required" (Ford 2009, 75). The "Taylorisation of the theatre" shares with actual Taylorism in the factory a fixation with the precise mapping of movement, the speeding up of that movement, and the elimination of the extraneous – but it comes at this from an entirely opposed position, for all Meyerhold's protestations.

The Circus, however, which is the foundation of the theories of "attractions" developed under Meyerhold's influence by Tretiakov and Eisenstein, is something far closer to the biomechanical theory than Taylorist practice. They are both forms of work based on a remarkably regimented control of the body, and on spectacle. This is after all a theatre based on "physical elements", rejecting both "inspiration" and "the method of 'authentic emotions'". Rather than the Stanislavskian method, we have as potential aids to biomechanical acting "physical culture, acrobatics, dance, rhythmics, boxing and fencing" (Meyerhold 1990, 199–200). All of these forms, like the Circus, or the intricate mesh of engineering and acrobatics that makes up the comedies of Buster Keaton, are based (just as is pre-industrial craftsmanship) on what Shklovsky calls *difficulty,* on physical feats, as much as they are on the regimented, precisely controlled motion of Taylorism. In his discussion of "The Art of the Circus", he notes that "plot" and "beauty" are irrelevant to the circus, and that its particular device is in this difficulty, in the very fact that "it is difficult to lift weights; it is difficult to bend like a snake; it is horrible, that is, also difficult, to put your head in a lion's jaws". So this, again, is skilled work, something that cannot be emulated easily. Its appeal rests on the spectacle of "horrible" feats being performed, and on the veracity of those feats.

> Making it difficult – that is the circus device. Therefore, if in the theatre artificial things – cardboard chains and balls – were rou-

tine, the spectator would be justifiably indignant if it turned out that the weights being lifted by the strong man weighed less than what was written on the poster [...] the Circus is all about difficulty [...] most of all, the circus device is about "difficulty" and "strangeness". (Shklovsky 2005, 87)

This difficulty and strangeness is implied to be similar to the difficulty and strangeness of Futurism, something which is then wholly taken up by Meyerhold's students, Tretiakov and Eisenstein, although the former comes to have doubts about its political efficacy other than as a sort of shaming of the unfit audience who are incapable of undertaking such feats of difficulty. Before investigating their peculiar circus Taylorism, we could note the use of the example of the Circus as a kind of dialectical reversal of reification, or an "anticipatory memory" of a world without reification, in Herbert Marcuse's 1937 essay "The Affirmative Character of Culture".

> [W]hen the body has completely become an object, a beautiful thing, it can foreshadow a new happiness. In suffering the most extreme reification man triumphs over reification. The artistry of the beautiful body, in effortless agility and relaxation, which can be displayed today only in the circus, vaudeville, and burlesque, herald the joy to which man will attain in being liberated from the ideal, once mankind, having become a true subject, succeeds in the mastery of matter. (Marcuse 2009, 86)

This seems closest of all to Meyerhold's conception of machinic movement – the treatment of the body as an object to the point where objectification becomes reversed. This is a tentative, and perhaps unsuccessful, attempt to fuse the apparent industrial rationality of Taylorism with the production of movements based on joy rather than on eight hours of the same movement for the purposes of an unusually high paycheque. However, as much as it remained something based on "circus tricks", despite the organic connection with proletarian culture this might provide,[19] it remained some-

19 Mike O'Mahony notes that the presence of the circus in Bolshevik cultural politics dates from as early as 1918, when "the recently formed International Union of Circus Artists attended the parade to celebrate the first anniversary of the October revolution" (O'Mahony 2008, 31).

thing outside of everyday life, based on spectacle and amazement, at a safe distance. The impossible and utopian implication of biomechanics is that it would make the factory more like the circus and the circus (and the associated popular forms – vaudeville, cinema) more like the factory, thus closing this gap. Work is still the common thread linking the two, despite the possibility that Taylorism could actually *reduce* labour.

The circus elements of biomechanics would be emphasised by Eisenstein in "The Montage of Attractions", a 1923 essay analysed so extensively that any discussion of it here would be fairly superfluous. Eisenstein's ideas were developed in collaboration with Sergei Tretiakov on plays such as *Gasmasks* and *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man* (1923), but Tretiakov's own version of the ideas has not been given anything like the same attention. "The Theatre of Attractions" (1924) has an intense focus on the attraction's utility in the class struggle, noting that "despite the tremendous importance of biomechanics as a new and purposive method of constructing movement, it far from resolves the problem of theatre as an instrument for class influence" (Tretiakov 2006, 21); the response to this appears to be a move away from the Constructivist slapstick of *Magnanimous Cuckold* or the Eisenstein collaborations, in favour of the "precise social tasks" of instilling particular agitational effects in the audience via the attractions. So while montage is derived from "the music hall, the variety show, and the circus program", Tretiakov notes that in that form "there they are directed towards a self-indulgent and aesthetic form of emotion", irrespective of the disjunctive effects of their difficulty and strangeness. The movements in *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man* are "based on acrobatic tricks and stunts and on parodies of canonical theatrical constructions from the circus and the musical". This can provide part of the intended agitational effect, provoking "audience reflexes that are almost entirely objective and that are connected to motor structures that are difficult or unfamiliar for the spectator", while he claims that individual attractions "operate as partial agit-tasks". The flaw, however, appears to be precisely in the audience reaction to the

very difficulty of the attractions, in their inability to perform them, as "expressed in statements such as 'what a shame that I can't control my movements like that', 'if only I could do cartwheels' and so on" (Tretiakov 2006, 25). The result of this is then claimed to be much the same as that produced by a performance of Ibsen's *Brand*, the spectator "depressed from all Brand's thrashing about". Although Tretiakov evidently thinks that the audience will be ruing "their own existing physical shortcomings", he acknowledges that it is precisely the emphasis on the spectacle of difficulty that is the problem with inspiring an *active* response in the audience. For all the defamiliarisation produced by circus Taylorism, the effect is much the same as produced by, for instance, the stunts of Harold Lloyd or Buster Keaton. The world may seem momentarily different, may have been made momentarily deeply strange and exciting, yet the everyday is still untouched, and the mere reaction of thrill or awe is not enough.

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Slideshow*

≈ **Isabel de Naverán**

∞
The Blind Spot
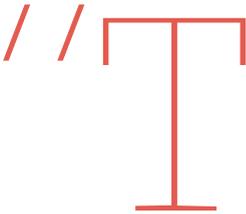
/ / / "The Door to Fantasy" is the suggestive title of the opening chapter of the section on cyberspace in Slavoj Žižek's book on cinema. The Slovenian philosopher begins the chapter with a reference to a story by J. G. Ballard,[1] in which a man whose eyesight has been damaged must sit blindfolded facing the sea, following medical recommendations. For the duration of the treatment, stimulated by the sound of the waves and seagulls, the man fanta-

* This article was previously published in Spanish in the book *El espectador activo* within the frame of MOV-S 2001. published by Mercat de les flors – Centre de les Arts de Moviment (Barcelona). It was translated from Spanish to English by Paula Caspao.

1 Žižek summarises Ballard's story, "The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon", at the beginning of the chapter "Cyberspace, or the Suspension of Authority", in Žižek 2006, 207.

sises about the same scene every day. Sitting there blindfolded, he fantasises about climbing a flight of stairs into a dark sea cave where a beautiful woman wrapped in veils awaits him. Every day, in his fantasy, he climbs to the cave impatiently, but every day he wakes up exactly when the identity of the mysterious woman is about to be revealed.

When his eyesight recovers and the doctor tells him he is healed, his vision of the adventure in the cave vanishes immediately and so does the waiting woman. Desperate, the man decides to stare at the sun until he goes blind, hoping to recover the capacity of evocation that had led him to his strange and disturbing experience by the sea.

Žižek points out that being deprived of sight had not stopped the man from having visions. Moreover, it was probably that deprivation that fired his imagination toward his deepest desires. Žižek opens the chapter with that anecdote in order to evoke Lacan later on and explain that:

> without a *blind spot* in the field of vision, without an elusive point from which the object may return us the gaze, we stop "seeing something", i.e. the field of vision is reduced to a flat surface and "reality itself" can only be perceived as a visual hallucination. (Žižek 2006, n.p.)

∞
The Point of View

In 1998, the English artist Gary Stevens made a radio piece. *Robin Hood: The Stuff* tells the story of a man who describes what he sees whilst walking. He describes everything he sees as if it were a film, frame by frame. Since it is a radio piece, the images are constructed in the listener's mind. At one point, whilst still walking, the man looks at his arms and realises, from his outfit, the bow and arrows on his shoulder, that he must, without a doubt, be Robin Hood. This seemingly small detail is, in fact, quite relevant: the fact that the man himself, hitherto devoid of consciousness, discovers his own role. He is Robin Hood and he is walking in the woods when he makes another discovery. He realises that when he focuses his attention on an object or specific place, he immediate-

ly adopts the vantage point of that object or place. He begins to play with the idea. He decides to try to focus his gaze on the arrow as he fires it. The tip of the arrow, which is now hosts his gaze, runs at full speed. We imagine a blurred high-speed shot with the trees passing one after the other, until the arrow lands in a trunk. The arrow gets stuck in the tree and so does his gaze. The narrator describes how everything is dark in there, because there is no light inside the tree. Robin Hood realises that he cannot change or move his point of view, since he has no object or place to gaze at. That is obviously a problem and he is lost, not knowing what to do. The image is completely black.

∞
The Statement

"We are two strangers, the teacups tell us."
(Pier Paolo Pasolini)

∞
The Image of the Possible

"Attention is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of perceptual behaviour", writes Edward de Bono, the psychology professor known for his concept of "lateral thinking". According de Bono, the purpose of lateral thinking is to break away from our usual patterns of thinking. His studies are partly focused on the development of human thinking skills based on new models of attention. His theoretical orientation ends up revealing art and aesthetics as media that enable choreographies of attention. In his book *I am Right, You are Wrong*, the author mainly distinguishes between two sorts of attention: fluid and directed attention. Fluid attention is based on the importance of the flow of thoughts and knowledge for the sake of a specific development of creativity, whereas directed attention can develop by means of simple behavioural patterns that guide the subject's attention. Certain sentences, for example, will make the observer focus her attention on certain aspects of her experience and bypass the rest. Trans-

posed to the art field, this is interesting because it allows establishing links between the senses and other aspects of mind research. Yet the truth is that generally speaking, this type of scientific and psychological research uses these procedures to produce productive and effective subjects, rather than foster freedom of choice in individuals.

I propose that we consider experimental choreography as a producer of states that might generate a certain degree of perceptive or attentive freedom. Contrary to what it might seem at first, it is not about generating states of individual transformation whereby the spectator would become more productive and efficient; rather, it is about expanding the degree of the spectator's emancipation through a process of self-awareness. Let us consider, for instance, Juan Dominguez's work *Blue (Written in Red)* (2009), which articulates time, space, movement, light, and sound at different levels. These levels of sensation and perception are not logically articulated; rather, they give rise to spatio-temporal units that otherwise might have gone unnoticed or missed by the spectator. During the working process of *Blue (Written in Red)*, Dominguez used de Bono's concept of directed attention when he proposed that the performers utter an action verb aloud, whilst executing a different action with their bodies. This method gave rise to multiple levels of meaning that would definitely transform their modes of inhabiting the stage. At a conference talk dedicated to this work, Dominguez said:

> If I jump and say "I'm going to jump", temporality creates a new moment that takes place neither in the past nor in the future, but in the co-presence of the two. But if I jump and say "if I had run", a space of possibility opens up.[2]

This sort of short circuiting produces a state of bodily and linguistic estrangement. The possibility of rupture brings about other logics and other realities that had hitherto laid dormant. But the short circuiting occurs not only in the performer's body-mind: the spectator's attention is likewise

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2 The conference took place at the Centre Párraga of Murcia during the First International Seminar on New Dramaturgies, directed by José Antonio Sánchez in November 2009.

directed and interrupted, so that she constantly has to readjust to what she sees. This dialectics between reality as such and the observer's perception of it, a crucial issue in quantum mechanics, shapes Dominguez's work. In theatre, the relation with the observer-spectator who shapes what she is seeing turns her into a creator of reality. In the case of *Blue (Written in Red)*, a relational choreography is proposed, where what matters the most are those interstitial spatio-temporal units and the moments immediately preceding and following an event. The bodies onstage are not only those of the performers, but also the devices, light, sound, text, and space. However, this does not mean that people are regarded as objects, but that diverting the spectator's attention makes those bodies acquire a new significance in the spectator's eyes, both as vehicles of her gaze and producers of new spatio-temporal entities. The performers' bodies, their modes of inhabiting the stage, their ways of looking and drawing the spectator's attention, combined with the action of the other "bodies" (the light, the sound), constitute a body articulated at various levels. However, this body is not a closed, finished, useful body, but a body-apparatus that transfigures spectator's predictions regarding the relationship between subject and object, a body that often gives way to humour and nonsense, in order to generate an image of the possible.

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Constellations

The story is narrated in the first person by a photographer, who is at home gazing through his window at the clouds passing above. On the wall, there is a photo of a couple, which he took a few days earlier on Île Saint-Louis, in Paris. The picture, enlarged to life-size, shows the precise moment when the woman looks at the lens with surprise; next to her, a boy looks as if he wanted to flee the scene.

It is a short story by Julio Cortázar, "The Devil's Drool" (1959), the source of inspiration for Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-up* (1966).

It is interesting to note how, throughout the story, the author is having second thoughts about his way of telling the story. He transforms this issue into the purpose of the text, so that at times the reader must doubt the very passage of time, because what seems to have already happened is in fact just about to occur. The key moment is when the main character realises that when looking at a photograph, one adopts the viewpoint of the person who took it. The instant captured and frozen on paper comes to life and the facts develop in most unexpected ways. As in a constellation, the narrator's body reactivates the scene by situating itself in the interstice between the chronological time of the clouds and the past time of the picture, now converted into an unavoidable present. His body, sitting between the window and the wall, works as a vector between us – the readers – and the woman, who approaches the lens until she steps through it.

Now imagine us in that room, looking at the life-size picture on the wall over and over again: the woman walks towards us, the boy disappears in the opposite direction, and the clouds flow outside of our thoughts like the hands of a clock. Everything moves.

It moves and changes, an operation that might be compared to the one promised by the experience of theatre. A proper choreographic operation that definitely troubles the usual way of perceiving a body onstage.

We know that dance cannot be reduced to a body in constant motion. And yet this form of expression has the centrality of the body as its *raison d'être*, a body that begins and ends in itself, a body that in a certain sense also exhausts itself.

But after an operation of this kind, dance appears as a choreographic dislocation of the gaze. And I say choreographic because as a critical practice, choreography proposes a radical displacement. The hierarchies that until very recently promoted understanding the body as an isolated autonomous entity that relates to other entities without the ability to reply have been dismissed thanks to the work of those who conceive of the body as an entity in constant symbiosis with its surroundings. The body is defined by its mode of

relating and in turn, the mode in which it relates redefines it. Or, rather, it redefines the person.

In this "choreography between bodies", the subject works as a vector or motor, diverting our gaze away from ourselves and toward its relations with the devices onstage. And it is thanks to this complex universe activated throughout the present of the stage that we can imagine another world of possible relations. This operation will not leave us unaffected. We are part of it. We are there, sitting, trying to guess where to look, figuring out the consequences of our interpretation, eventually accepting the proposal that invites us to be part of a network of gazes.

After all, it is not that surprising that Cortázar reveals his doubts about how the story should be narrated, about who should tell it, and from what point of view. And perhaps we are all dead, who knows, like the photographer in his story, but just like him, we haven't realised it yet. In any case, it wouldn't be a sterile death; the body does not disappear without a reason. Rather, it moves a few metres away, just enough to disclose the space that will allow a change of direction in the movement of the stars.

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Drifts

How does a body behave when it is not paying attention? Where does perception go and how is memory produced? Where does attention focus, and what are the signs of reality that capture it? How do our experiences, ages, cultures, memories, cravings, and desires interfere with that continuous drift of attention?

In his text "Shifting Attention: 21st-century Poetics", Ric Allsopp proposes that we understand contemporary choreography as a continual shifting of the focus of attention. According to him, the future is always a shift of attention in the present. A shifting attention would therefore be a double reflexive movement suggesting that attentive awareness is both an effect of the choreography we're watching (because it engages us) and a willingness on our side to face the work in-

tellectually. Allsopp's concept of shifting attention and his way of pinpointing the construction of the future is also connected with the idea of open work, or of openness in the work. But I am not going to dwell on this aspect. I am more interested in recasting the idea of attention as redistribution, which does not necessarily correspond to a shift in point of view (understood in purely visual terms). Working on attention entails reframing the parameters anchored to the stage and thus fosters reflection on possible exchanges with the audience. Allsopp argues that it is not the materiality of the dancer, actor, or performer that defines presence but more precisely the shared engagement around the processes of attention, "which takes place in the site of symbolic exchange" (Allsopp 2009, 15):

> The shifts of attention that cut into the present and reveal and produce the future do not perhaps provide us with a singular position from which to move. They do however place the responsibility on us as makers, doers, thinkers, persuading us to become alert "to the liveness of the present and the everyday", the mode of being which for Gertrude Stein constituted "complete living". (Allsopp 2009, 15)

In order to generate a state in which attention will have to examine itself and provoke a shift, certain established parameters in the relationship between the stage and the audience have to be resituated.

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The Frame

Let us now consider *Zidane: A Portrait of the Twenty-first Century* (2006), a video work by video artists Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreño. It is an experimental film based on the idea of making a video portrait of Zinedine Zidane, the retired French footballer, in order to extrapolate a more general portrait of the individual and society in the 21st century. It was filmed with 17 synchronised cameras, throughout the last match that Zidane played with Real Madrid. For the duration of the match, that is, for 90 minutes, all 17 cameras are

focused on the footballer, with medium shots, close-ups, and general views. Zidane thus becomes the only point of reference that the viewers may follow in order to watch the match. Throughout the 90 minutes of the film, the footballer comes in contact with the ball for approximately three minutes in total, which means that what the viewer is allowed to see for most of the time is everything the player does when he is not touching the ball: his strategic attitude of organization of the gaze, waiting for things to happen, his doubts, the stammering of his body, the tension, the mental exercise of planning his moves, everything in the film is displayed through the frame of his body, and mainly by leaving the rest of the field off-screen. The film features an inversion of values: the ball is no longer the protagonist. Varying the axes of watching the game, Parreño and Gordon also destabilise one's sense of time and expand previously unnoticed meaningless spaces by means of mental zooms: what was the body doing whilst away from the ball? Where were the player's thoughts while he was not touching the ball? Where is the ball while we are watching the player idle in his position? Can we transpose this exercise in attention from film to theatre?

This is the question that Goran Sergej Pristaš raised in a lecture he gave in January 2010 on "the choreography of attention", using Parreño and Gordon's *Zidane* as an example.

Pristaš pointed out that the film's diegetic action was not in the frame we could see (Zidane) but elsewhere, in another place. This idea of another place makes us think about what happens onstage when the focus of attention is "elsewhere". But Pristaš went a little farther when he stressed that what mattered about the filmmakers' decision to direct our attention elsewhere was precisely its quality of a cinematographic procedure. The theatrical equivalent of that cinematographic procedure would then consist in "moving things from their places", provoking a shift in the coordinates of attention. And here once again we encounter the choreography of attention: a displacement in the axes of the gaze (understanding the gaze as more than just looking), which is closely linked to individual experiences of time.

The critic Ciryl Neyrat describes Parreño and Gordon's film as a daydream. According to Neyrat, it is not about constructing an image of Zidane, but lending expression to a daydream shared by twenty-first-century generations: a daydream in front of the television or cinema screen.[3] Neyrat's notion of daydreaming here corresponds to the fascination with the idea of "entering the picture". Entering the picture means passing to the other side of the celluloid, becoming a virtual image; becoming part of a time that changes with no continuity solution. Allsopp's notion of shifting attention may have something to do with this conversion. To sustain his idea of daydreaming, Neyrat distinguishes between three different types among the images that make up Parreño and Gordon's film: televisual, inter-spatial, and pictorial images. But he adds that the three types and their different styles are regulated by the soundtrack. The viewer's impression of time whilst watching *Zidane* is in no way similar to the impression she might have whilst watching a conventional TV broadcast of a football match. Coupled with the music, the obstinate framing portraying a man who is working just as obstinately invites the viewer to dive into a kind of reverie that ends up revealing a restless and tired changing body striving to remain focused, trying to block every potential source of distraction (Zidane himself has admitted that the shouts and insults coming from the fans made it difficult for him to concentrate), i.e. an attentive subject who is fully at work, fighting against anything that might detract him from attaining his ultimate purpose. But the reverie also reveals a body that is fragile and vulnerable, unable to differentiate itself from the world surrounding it.

The viewer must choose between various stimuli that are vying for her attention, unless she decides to let go. The film's soundtrack plunges her into Neyrat's reverie, which might be compared to Jonathan Crary's suspension of perception; besides, the images are supplemented with subtitles

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3 Neyrat is here alluding to a purported (but not confirmed) statement by Zidane that Parreño and Gordon used to promote the film, where the footballer explains the fascination with television that he allegedly had as a child, and how he used to run toward the TV set, always wanting to be as close as possible to the screen.

composed of excerpts from an interview with the footballer. Once again, his thoughts appearing on the screen affect the degree of our attention to the images, guiding it. The viewer's attention is thus fully guided, throughout this 90-minute cinematographic layout, in which all we get to see is Zidane doing nothing spectacular. What happens is thereby emptied of its original meaning, or perhaps it is happening elsewhere, as Pristaš maintains.

"Now imagine we decided to look at only one of the actors in a theatre piece; at only one of the elements in a choreography", Pristaš proposed in his lecture.[4] Imagine fixing your gaze to only one of the elements at play. In theatre, distractions are inevitable; our gaze is not directed by the physical frame of the image, as it happens in film. In Parreño and Gordon's film, time is operational. According to Pristaš, operational time is the kind of time we need, as spectators, to create an image of time in our minds. Because it takes place live in front of an audience, experimental choreography may aspire to construct some kind of time image or imageless time.

These are isolated reflections, inspired by stories, anecdotes, and images that have stimulated a closer consideration of the issue of the spectator – the curious spectator, whose attention is constantly shifting between focused and scattered and who shapes her genuine experience precisely in that coming and going.

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4 Pristaš and I were invited to participate in a round table organised in February 2010, as part of the Expert Forum at Performing Arco 2010. In fact, "Choreography of Attention" was the title of the round table (chaired by José A. Sánchez).

The fragmented structure of the essay was inspired by Victoria Pérez Royo's text "On the Margins: Relations between Theory and Practice", published in To be continued: 10 textos en cadena (y unas páginas en blanco)*, Cairon 14. Journal of Dance Studies, University of Alcalá Editions, Madrid, 2011.*

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IV

Passion for Procedures

Eastern European Contextual Art: Approaching, Diagnosing, and Treating the Problems*

≈ *Deschooling Classroom* (o^o)*, Terms* **study group: Milena Bogavac, Dragana Bulut, Bojan Đorđev, Anđela Ćirović, Siniša Ilić, Milan Marković, Katarina Popović, Ljiljana Tasić**

In this text we address the phenomenon of contextual art in Eastern Europe today and its possible predecessors in the socially engaged art of socialist realism. By pursuing a contextual approach to art in Eastern Europe, we confront it with the colonial concept of contextual art, as conceived by Paul Ardenne in the West. From György Lukács's notion of "reflection", via the transitional and post-transitional socially engaged art of the 1990s, our purpose is to assess the present situation and the artistic act as an intervention in the social context. Although our topic is Eastern European contextual art in general, we focus on Serbia and the region of the former Yugoslavia, with relevant examples from the local artistic practice cited in the footnotes.

* This essay was previously published in *BCC Magazine no 7: Performance Art* and on the following website www.antijargon.tkh-generator.net. It was written collectively by the members of the *Terms* study group, as part of the project *Deschooling Classroom (o^o)* with assistance and mentoring from Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić in Belgrade, spring 2010

From the 18th century on, the artistic tradition of modern European (Western) societies was based on an intuitivist approach, derived from the romanticist and expressionist theories of genius, which viewed art as the self-expression of a gifted individual's exceptionality. Giorgio Agamben has addressed the foundations of such a conception of art, pointing out that in the 18th and especially 19th century the philosophical notion of *praxis* underwent a profound transformation (Agamben 1999, esp. 59–68 and 68–94). *Praxis* came to be understood as the "expression of the will" of an individual and art itself was increasingly defined as *praxis* rather than *poïesis*. Such an approach is characteristic of modern, developed, and democratic societies. They are shaped by the respective ideologies of individualism and the relative autonomy of art, whose social function may include a total absence of social function. The self-expression or reflection of a gifted individual's will *per se* becomes a sufficient reason for his actions, that is: it may be the sole purpose of his creative output.

In the latter half of the 20th century, after the Second World War, Europe was divided into the (capitalist) West and (communist/socialist) East, which produced further divergences in the theoretical development of that approach to (and understanding of) art. The capitalist countries kept pursuing the same ideological-theoretical pattern. In capitalism, art is manipulated in the generation of the discursive field that determines the price of an artwork. Therefore, its author's genius is observed as a market value. Thus it is enough to be recognised as a gifted individual; as a genius whose talent translates into specific units that may be quantified, that is, expressed in numeric, monetary terms – as an equivalent to all other values.

It would be erroneous to approach the artistic tradition of Western Europe as a binary opposite to the values of art of the European East. Their "base" is common; their "superstructures" differ, due to the different social orders and socio-political contexts in which, during the latter half of the 20th century, authors from the socialist and communist countries conceived their work.

The Western ideology of individualism opposes collectivism as the key notion associated with societies shaped by socialist ideology. In socialism, a gifted individual operates within a context that is likely to interpret her work through the discourse of "social totality", while the ideal of "socially beneficial" art becomes a criterion of sorts for assessing the significance of artworks. An example of this kind of thinking is György Lukács's "theory of reflection", which repeatedly emphasises the category of *typicality* (Lukács 1979). According to Lukács, typicality is the sum total of the phenomena and relations that predominate at a given time and thus represents an important feature of art, which is meant to reflect the objective reality. Lukács contrasts such art with art that renders images of an individual's own experience of reality in her consciousness. More broadly, in socialist countries, art's mission is to provide a reflection of the society by offering projections of its future (and past).[1] In such contexts, an artist is recognised as gifted if her work makes a powerful social resonance, contributes to the emancipation or education of the masses, or communicates a relevant and straightforward message (instruction) of an ideological nature.

Against this social and conceptual background, Eastern European artists developed a strong sense for structural, as opposed to intuitive and individualistic thought – and thus also a sense for socially engaged art. Structural thinking implied re-examining the position of art and artists in the society and produced socially engaged art at a time when socialist realism was affirming the new social order, as well as excessively, with problematising and critical art that emerged, for instance, with the new artistic practices in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) of the 1970s. Therefore, socialist realism was not the only form of artistic practice in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. For example, in the SFRY, another major paradigm was moderate modernism, largely converging with Western art. However, this is not our present concern.

The end of the Cold War and the relaxation of its division of Europe brought not only the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also, during the 1990s, some radical turns in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The transition from the socialist and communist into the capitalist social order made a profound effect on those countries' dominant ideologies. However, a critical-contextual approach and mode of reflection have remained an important feature of contemporary art in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. During the 1990s, engaged art in Eastern Europe was marked by campaigns for civic freedoms, human rights, and positive democratic values and in the case of Serbia, it was additionally and critically charged against Serbia's nationalist regime.[2] However, since 2000, instead of projections of a democratic future, we have faced the cruel present of the transition – the demise of the communist ideology of collectivism, the privatisation of public property, an "original" accumulation of capital, mass unemployment, etc. – and the artistic practice turned its critical edge to those and related issues.

What characterises the contextual approach is that the artist's motivation does not proceed from within to the outside. It begins on the outside, grows in the subject's consciousness, wherefrom it comes out again, into the streets, society, and reality, from where it came in the first place. The artist's intention is not to express or reveal his individual, inner state to the society – even if the surrounding reality is what caused that state; instead, his aim is to affect the society by pinpointing a common social issue.[3]

While this can be a problem concerning the artist personally, it cannot exclusively be her problem. In other words, the artist is no longer perceived as an individual whose inner,

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1 Note, for example, the large socialist-realist canvases by painter Boža Ilić, or Yugoslav partisan cinema of the 1950s and '70s.

2 During the 1990s, in Eastern Europe and notably in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, artists were additionally encouraged to take such an approach by the Soros Centres for Contemporary Art as the main commissioner and, in Serbia's case, the only infrastructure for the production and "distribution" of contemporary art.

3 Examples of such an approach might include Tanja Ostojić's project *Looking for a Husband with an EU Passport*, Vladimir Nikolić's *Rhythm*, Dušan Murić's *I'm Pro: Spam*, Igor Štromajer and Davide Grassi's *Problemarket*, as well as actions in design by the Škart group, and the like.

"intimate landscapes" are worth exhibiting as such, but as an individual advocating a certain social stance, speaking on its behalf, or claiming its voice. Today, similarly to Lukács's theory of reflection, the object of contextual art is not the personal, but the typical. Individual reflection may figure only as one factor in an equation that is ultimately meant to express the common; the social common, in other words, the collective. The artist is a social subject who intervenes and the purpose of his creativity is not to express himself (his inner depth) but to "change the world", to affect value systems, ideology, and other dominant systems that she might recognise in her creative environment, that is, in the context of her intervention.

The artist is not a lonesome figure, but an alert and conscious individual who grounds his actions in the social reality. In this context, the artist is not a genius. Rather, he is more of an "engineer" and his task is to suggest correct guidelines for constructing a collective future. Art has no autonomy. Artists have no autonomy. Art is a social practice and artists are social subjects.

Such a conception of contextual art is essentially different from the one advocated by Paul Ardenne (Ardenne 2002). Writing on contextual art from the position of a Western-European theorist, Ardenne defines the notion of reality as the "assortment of events lying at the artist's disposal" and, subsequently, as a "terrain to be explored by the contextual artist who wishes to conquer it". In the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, reality is not a terrain that the artist might claim, but the only terrain available to her for setting the rules of the game, the only terrain that might support her very existence. If under socialism the rules of the game were known in advance and determined by the dominant ideology, today they are confusing, new, and unclear: the artist's role is to clarify them or try to redefine and adapt them to the needs of the society that is forced to play on that terrain.[4]

4 Examples of redefining and reclaiming public space might include the TkH Platform's TV performance *SMS Guerrilla*, Danilo Prnjat's projects *Lilly* and *Tempo*, *Raspeani Skopjani* (*Singing Skopjans*), the early performances of Horkeškart, Ana Miljanić's production "Listen, Little Man" as part of the project *Lust for Life* (CZKD), etc.

Ardenne's term for contextual art is *the art of the found world*, whereas the countries of the former Eastern Bloc are still searching for a "world" of their own: a lost world; a world whose reflection was meant to be the future projected by the art of socialist realism, in other words, a world whose future never came to be.

Therefore, in those countries, contextual art should be observed chiefly as an "intra-social practice". The contextual artist acts in the society on its behalf, transgressing the borders between his audience and himself. What determines his position as an artist is his awareness of the social context, in other words, his social consciousness. However, it is important to distinguish between the notion of social consciousness in the art of socialist realism and the same notion in the discourse of contemporary Eastern European contextual art. For, socialist-realist art was always commissioned by the state and thus may be viewed as an "ideological state apparatus", as defined by Louis Althusser (Althusser 1976, 1995, and 1996).

Contrary to this "planned" contextual collectivism, contemporary contextual art adheres to the so-called bottom-up or grassroots principles, in response to the systems of the state, which are pursuing the neo-liberal capitalist order, reaffirming individualism, and thus imposing the principle of competition at all levels of society. In the past, an artist's social consciousness was perceived as a value proclaimed by the dominant ideology and ruling social order, meant to reassert them. Today, this notion is associated with a critical approach, characteristic of the so-called independent, alternative scenes, whose role is, by contrast, to question the social order.[5]

For all of those reasons, one may view the critical-contextual approach as an important characteristic of contemporary Eastern European thinking in art, where the notion of social consciousness has, in a way, undergone a historical

5 Examples of bottom-up initiatives might include Belgrade's "Other Scene", the Zagreb-based "Operacija: grad" (Operation: The City) and "Pravo na grad" (The Right to a City), Nikolina Pristaš and Ivana Ivković's performance *Protest*, and the like.

evolution. During the transition years, it changed, retaining, nevertheless, the basic postulates of its approach to art and art's position in society. In fact, the only thing that changed was the direction of those postulates: the ethical dimension, sense of collectivism, and notion of art as an instrument of social progress have remained, but now criticising rather than representing the dominant regime. The political and social changes that occurred in the societies of Eastern Europe also changed their dominant value systems. Thus, the erstwhile prevailing ideological and aesthetic patterns inherited from the Left changed sides in the face of capitalism's resurgence, becoming thereby the new alternative.

Therefore, on one level, Eastern Europe's contemporary contextual art may be addressed in terms of searching for new forms of collectivism or new aspects of pursuing social justice. For a contextual artist, society is not merely a space for artistic intervention. At the same time, it is the cause of the inner state that calls for an intervention. Therefore, the context is the cause and ground for action. "The personal is the political" and *vice versa*.

In such an order, working in art assumes a (social, political) mission, whose aim is to make an active impact on the context. Such an approach demands a strong sense of the context and structural thinking. It begins by perceiving the problems or deficiencies within the existing context and proceeds by asking what to do and how to react in order to transform it.[6]

To rectify the deficiencies of a context, it is necessary to challenge its basic postulates and (tacit) consensuses. In that sense, a critical-contextual approach always implies a "dissensus" of sorts, allowing for a sharp critique of the context. Nevertheless, critique is only the starting and not the final point in conceiving a contextual-intervening artistic act, because the very need for an intervention indicates a desire, necessity, demand for a new context, or even a clear vision of a

different one. That vision need not necessarily be a vision of something better, but it does always stem from a need for change. It is, therefore, a vision of something different. The artist as a social subject who intervenes is not obliged to know exactly what kind of change he wants, as many artworks based on those principles might demonstrate. His desire to change the context does not have to stem from a programme, a manifesto, or a political proclamation of a new society, because in today's complex social field (no longer held together by the master narrative of the communist ideology) the artist realises that he cannot precisely anticipate the consequences of his intervention. Therefore, a critical-contextual approach to art may retain the form of clear dissent, that is, of stating what one does not want; in other words, it may consist of attempts to suspend the laws, even if only temporarily, in order to test different ones.

A sharp critique of the dominant regime is the starting point of contextual art. It grows on it, until the critique becomes an end in itself. This is where we get to the main problem associated with this approach to art.

It may – and often does – easily become a cynical, pessimistic, and unproductive case of "parasitism on the negative",[7] rendering the intervening subject passive, who then identifies with his detachment from the context and takes perverse pleasure in constant negation and the exclusivity of statelessness.

The opposite of this position is the one assumed by *artivism*. The artivist approach is active and affirmative. It starts by dissenting and critiquing the existing, and focuses on the change that is bound to happen, treating the artistic act as a means to an end. The goal is change, here and now.[8]

We may conclude that a forceful critique of the context, accompanied by a detailed analysis of its mechanisms, power relations and their effects, rests at the base of every

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6 Examples of "systematic" interventions into the cultural-artistic context might include Marina Gržinić's work in theory and art, actions and projects launched by the TkH Platform and Journal, the *Prelom* journal and collective, the *Kontekst* project and gallery, *Per.art*, and the *Indigo Dance* project by Saša Asentić (and Ana Vujanović).

7 Bojana Cvejić's notion may be viewed as an accurate description of one of the problems of our local context and, in turn, as a launch pad for a critical-contextual artistic intervention into that context.

8 Some artivist groups from the region: Žene na delu (Women at Work), Queer Beograd, Stani pani kolektiv, Zluradi paradi, the E8 group, etc.

critical-contextual artistic act. It begins by diagnosing a particular social problem; however, speaking in medical terms, we might add that an accurate diagnosis does not necessarily amount to a successful therapy or, ultimately, a cure. Finding the right diagnosis is important, but not enough. In other words, a clear articulation of the problem is only the starting point in its solving. The problem and a correct definition of it operate as the topic, but not as the concept of an interventionist artistic act. The problem is the trigger, but not the source.

Therefore, when it comes to critical-contextual art, one should distinguish between works that highlight the problem in its context[9] and those that intend to make an active impact on the context. This difference is equivalent to the difference between presenting (which implies that the purpose of an artistic act is to render a certain problem visible) and investing (fr. *l'enjeu*) in the sense outlined by Althusser (Althusser 1976 and 1996). According to Althusser, the intervening subject – viewed from the perspective of post-humanist theories, starting with structuralism and especially in the context of poststructuralist materialist theory, therefore as a product and effect of different texts and their intersections – cannot objectively grasp the totality of a society. But he can invest himself into it, thereby subjecting himself to critique and self-critique, which activates the process of change, directs it, but also demands that the subject take his responsibility for the change.

An artist must be "aware"; her social position is that of a subject aware of the complexity of the situation.

In addition, awareness and alertness demand responsibility, and the notion of responsibility certainly implies an ethical dimension. Therefore, the following question arises: are those who are affected by the problem the only ones who are entitled to address it? … In lieu of answering, we might invoke any of a large number of artists who performed their

9 This approach features in works by Vladan Jeremić; *Gypsies and Dogs* by Zoran Todorović; slam performances by the Drama Mental Studio (Jelena and Milena Bogavac); The Monument Group; the *Janez Janša* project; Ana Miljanić's production *Bordel ratnika* (The Warriors' Brothel) based on the eponymous anthropological study by Ivan Čolović, etc.

interventions in contexts that were never their own. This applies especially to various artistic practices concerned with marginal groups and identities.[10] Although the ethical dimension of these works may be debatable, the artist's right to intervene in any context is not – keeping in mind the premise that context is *public property*.

The context never belongs to an individual, however strongly s/he might identify with it (whether as a victim or as an accomplice). An individual's comfortable neglect to challenge his own position does not necessarily imply obedience, but it does have the same effects as a tacit acceptance of the existing order in a certain context.

This where critical-contextual, interventionist art comes close to the notion of solidarity, suggesting the conclusion that the context is always changing, not due to any one of us in particular, but due to all of us. Every artistic contextual intervention multiplies social confrontations, creating new possibilities for plurality. But this plurality is neither smooth nor unchallenging (like the postmodernist "anything goes"); rather, it raises the criteria, problematises the dominant values, and creates a social climate that will provide discursive space for a multitude of often dissonant voices.

10 For example, artworks and actions concerned with integrating marginalised social groups, such as ethnic, religious, sexual, and other minorities: the poor, orphaned children, victims of violence, medical patients, persons with special needs, etc. Such artistic practices feature in so-called inclusive theatre, forum theatre, and works produced in workshops and education programmes for adults. In addition, this group includes all practices that may be labelled community art and works concerned with the position of marginal groups and identities, rendering their problems visible to the rest of society. Examples also comprise numerous documentary films and videos that explicitly address the socially marginalised strata of the population.

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Artivism*

≈ Aldo Milohnić
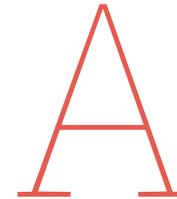
At the beginning of the new millennium, political activism in Slovenia gained strength. Following some smaller actions, in February 2001 a group of activists who gave themselves an ironic and enigmatic name, *Urad za Intervencije* (Intervention Office), usually shortened to UzI, organised a protest in support of refugees. Among the events that followed, especially worthy of mention is a protest staged on the occasion of the meeting between Presidents Bush and Putin in Slovenia, which will be remembered for the enormous number of police officers and technical equipment engaged in securing this gathering. Although UzI later quietly disappeared, the protests continued (e.g. against the war in Iraq, in support of "temporary" refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and so on), only that activist groups now operated under different names. One such

* A longer version of this text was first published in the Slovene performing arts journal *Maska*, Ljubljana, vol. XX, nos. 1–2 (90–91), spring 2005, pp. 15–25.

group (or formation, or platform) was *Dost je!* (It's Enough!), which proved especially successful in organising protests and actions in support of the "erased" residents of Slovenia.[1] In this essay we will take a closer look at two actions related to this issue: one was called *Združeno listje* (United Leaves) and carried out at the ZLSD (the social democrats) party headquarters; the other, called "Erasure" took place outside the main entrance to the Slovenian Parliament.

The direct action "United Leaves" – a "blitzkrieg occupation" of the headquarters of the ZLSD party – took place on October 7, 2003. A group of activists dressed in white overalls managed to persuade the party's front-desk clerk to open the door, and once inside they dispersed throughout the building, littering it with dead autumn leaves. As *Mladina* weekly reported, "since no prominent party members were present at the headquarters at that time, the activists had to read the protest letter to the front-desk lady". The white overalls then left ZLSD premises and issued a press release. In it they announced similar surprise actions for other parties, but then decided to surprise all the (parliamentary) parties at one time. On the next day, 8 October 2003, they staged another action in front of the Parliament building. This time, the activists, again dressed in white overalls and appearing in a group of similar size, occupied the street in front of the building and lied down on the road, arranging their bodies in the shape of the word "erasure". The activists lying on the road were protected from both sides by fellow-activists, who blocked the passage of cars by holding a banner bearing the legend "No stopping" and the message "Drive on! We Don't Exist". Before the activists left the scene they delineated the

1 The "erased" is a term used in Slovenia for almost 30,000 people who lost their status as permanent residents soon after Slovenia gained independence. They were "erased" from the register of permanent residents. The case is considered by many national and international human rights organisations as the most blatant and massive violation of human rights in the short history of Slovenia as an independent state. Although the Constitutional Court has already delivered judgement saying that the permanent residence status has to be returned retroactively to all of them, many of the "erased" are still waiting for the authorities to implement this ruling. For a detailed analysis of this problem, see Dedić, Jalušič, and Zorn 2003.

The Silencing of the Bells of Koper Cathedral, Marko Brecelj, Koper, 2003, Internet archive of Marko Brecelj
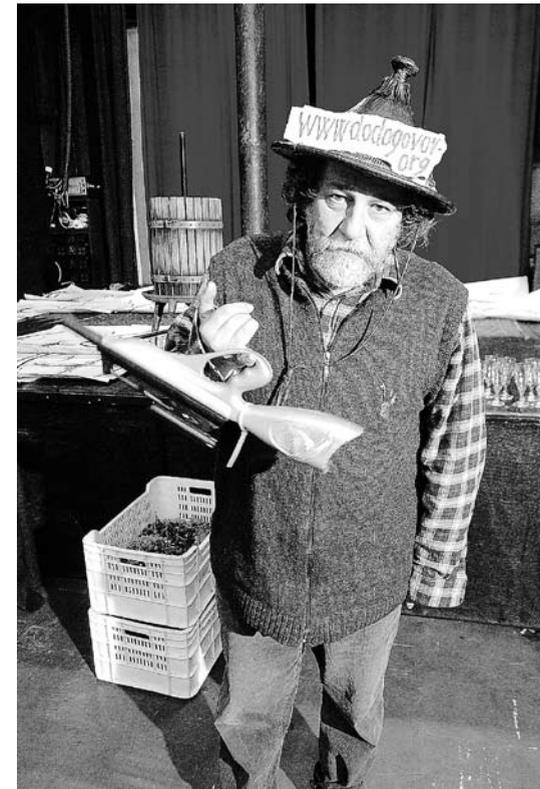
"Soft terrorist" Marko Brecelj, photo by: Denis Sarkić

shapes of their bodies on the asphalt with spray can, so when they dispersed, a vast graffiti on the road continued to attract the attention of passers-by and especially of the deputies to the National Assembly.

The purpose of both actions was explicitly political in nature: to draw attention to the problem of erased residents, to demonstrate solidarity with people whose human rights had been violated, and to increase pressure on the political elite to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the erased residents. In both cases, the political messages were conveyed in the style of the tradition of autonomous movements that stems from the concept of the use of one's own body as a means of direct political action. The activists were dressed in white overalls which, indeed, had a practical function (they protected their bodies from dirt, made the writing more contrasting, and made more difficult the work of the police, should they try to identify the participants on the basis of television or video footage, photos etc.). On the other hand, white overalls were also costumes of a special kind, such as may be attributed meaning depending on the needs dictated by a concrete situation.[2]

In these actions there is a metaphoric/metonymic use of language and concepts that rely on word play. "United leaves" (*združeno listje* in Slovene) echoes "United List" (*Zdužena lista* in Slovene; the full name is The United List of Social Democrats, abbreviated to ZLSD). An important detail one should know is that the then Minister of the Interior, Rado Bohinc, came from the ranks of the ZLSD, meaning that the party was effectively tailoring the strategy for the resolution of the erasure issue. The main requisite used in this action – dead autumn leaves – could be understood as a message to the party saying that its policy was futile (dry, without

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2 For example, in the protests against the war in Iraq, "white overalls symbolised Bush's innocent victims, and the added red colour stood for the blood spilt in the territories of the former Babylon through the use of the sophisticated military technology of the West" (Mladina, 13 October 2003). In the context of the United Leaves action, white overalls symbolised the "void that was created with the erasure of thousands of people, reminding us of a white trace across a drawing left behind by an eraser". The whiteness of their costumes was thus intended to recall people "missing from society" (Delo, 8 October 2003).

growth potential, something discarded), and that it would be blown away from the political stage unless it changed its policy (in the same way the autumn wind blows away dead leaves).

The second action is a unique visual performance of my concept of "gestic performative" (Milohnić 1996 and 1999). In conceptualising this notion, I relied on Quintilian's "textbook of rhetoric", *Institutio oratoria*. In Book 11, Chapter 3 (Delivery, Gesture, and Dress), Quintilian writes:

> **Delivery** [*pronuntiatio*] **is often styled action** [*actio*]. **But the first name is derived from the voice, the second from the gesture** [*gestus*]. **For Cicero in one passage speaks of action as being a form of speech, and in another as being a kind of physical eloquence. Nonetheless, he divides action into two elements, which are the same as the elements of delivery – namely, voice and movement. Therefore, it matters not which term we employ.** (Quintilian 2006)

The "Erasure" was structured as a gestic performative, which inseparably connects gesture and utterance (delivery), or the body and the signifier, into Cicero's and Quinitilian's physical eloquence/elocution.

If the classic (Austin's) definition of performative utterances says that "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (Austin 1976, 6), a gestic performative can be said to represent an attempt to extend the speech act to the domain of the visual, i.e. physical and bodily act, graphic act, gesture etc., in short, non-verbal yet still performative acts. Such a physical act has every appearance of a speech act: through their materiality, the activists' bodies, which originally operate within the area of action (*actio*), now literally *incorporate* (embody) the utterance and thus enter the domain of delivery (*pronuntiatio*), in a non-verbal, but eloquent manner. This activists' *corpography* produces a metaphorical condensation: the performative aspect of the utterance "erasure" is the act of drawing it out, or, to put it differently, the performative erasure is uttered by way of drawing it out. As in the

classic performative, where "utterance is neither truthful nor untruthful", we could extend this assertion by paraphrasing Austin and say that to delineate the erasure (in the appropriate circumstances, i.e. in direct action) is not to *describe* their doing of what they should be said in so delineating to be doing in order to produce a *corpographic* image of the erasure (and thus utter it), but it is to do it. What we actually witness is the delineation of erasure, or better said, we witness **del**(in)**e**(a)**tion**.

The material evidence or, conditionally speaking, the perlocutionary aspect of this *corpographic* (gestic and performative) act was the spraying of the utterance on asphalt, which became visible only when the activists left the scene. The side effect, or the implicit, symbolic effect of the action was thus the secondary, graphic inscription on asphalt, which could be interpreted as a demand for re-entering (or, poetically, re-inscribing) the erased into the register of permanent residents. The absurdity of the situation of the thousands of residents of Slovenia whom bureaucratic reasoning turned into dead souls was ironically depicted by means of a banner urging drivers to drive on without paying attention to what was happening, because the protagonists of the event "do not exist". In other words (in the jargon of contemporary performance theory),[3] by toying with an implicit metaphor about dead souls, the activists were able to denote performance as non-performance (afformance): if the key protagonists of an event "do not exist", then one might say that the event as such does not exist either. Yet, since a characteristic of a performative speech act is that it is neither truthful nor untruthful, we should start from the hypothesis that on the descriptive-perceptive level this does not have direct consequences for the materiality of the act. The statement "we do not exist" on the descriptive level indeed contradicts the coinciding *corpographic* act occurring at the same place (the graphic delineation of the utterance "erasure" using bodies), but the performative nature of this "constructed situation" creates a situation in which the act, by virtue of its existence alone, creates the conditions that enable its own negation, or in other

3 Cf. Hamacher 1994, 340–371 and Lehmann 2001, 459–461.

words, provides the constellation in which a non-event becomes an event. Since this dimension is intuitively perceived, one will ascribe ironic meaning to the utterance "we do not exist", and it will be immediately understood as an intentional contradiction that additionally highlights the absurdity of the situation of the "erased", while simultaneously providing the key to understanding the event.

Crucial for "Erasure" and similar actions is the use of the body, which is no longer representative, but constitutive, to paraphrase Hardt and Negri, and as such it is embedded in modern resistance practices (Hardt and Negri 2000). We have seen similar *corpographic* engagements of the body in the past,[4] especially in performance art and live or action painting, as well as in recent political initiatives.[5] "United Leaves" and "Erasure" are direct actions reminiscent of agit-prop and guerrilla performance. Both methods are part of the history of 20th-century theatre: agitprop theatre is "a form of theatre animation whose goal is to raise awareness of the public about a specific political or social situation", while guerrilla theatre "wants to be militant and engaged in political life or in the struggle for liberation of a nation or a group" (Pavis 1997, 28 and 323). The activists that took part in the "United Leaves" and "Erasure" actions were not trained actors, nor were they dressed in costumes designed especially for this occasion, because the basic motive behind both actions was not to create an aesthetic, but a political effect. The activist who took part in the "Erasure" guerrilla performance is like Brecht's spontaneous "actor" from a street scene, a chance witness to a road accident now explaining to curious individuals and passers-by what has happened. This presenter is not an educated actor, and his reconstruction of the

4 For example, in those variants that, in addition to using the body as "a tool for drawing", i.e. as a substitute for a paint brush (e.g. live paintings by Yves Klein), also use the body as a drawing surface (e.g. living sculptures by Pier Manzoni, Günter Brus's painting of his own body, Marina Abramović's skin incisions of political symbols, etc.).

5 Such as, for example, the project entitled "Baring Witness". The initiators of this project were American artists Donna Sheehan and Paul Reffell, who invited volunteers, and especially women volunteers, to write out various political messages using their mainly naked bodies. See http://www.baringwitness.org (last accessed on 25 October 2004).

road accident is not an artistic event, but despite this, says Brecht, this hypothetical dilettante has a certain creative potential (Brecht 1979, 94 and 99). In short, an activist is not an artist, but s/he is still not without a "knack for art"; an activist is an artist as much as is inevitable, no more and no less; the artisanship is a side effect of a political act. Precisely this constitutes the actor's specific gravity, uniqueness and significance. The absence of concerns about aesthetics and a disrespectful attitude toward grand narratives (political, legal, social, perhaps even philosophical), relegates an activist to the structural place of an amateur actor, that is to say, an actor who appears strange to the "silent majority", but precisely because of this s/he is in a position to pose simple, naïve and hence important questions about issues that are not challenged otherwise, since they are somehow taken for granted.

It seems that guerrilla performances cut deep into a certain convention grounded in the belief that in a state "governed by the rule of law" only (administrative) legal experts are authorised to "give proper names" to complex legal statuses, and propose adequate solutions to political decision makers. However, in the case of the erased residents, the bone of contention was precisely the naming of these people; for some right-wingers, the erasure never really occurred, since, as they argue, these people were only transferred from one (live) to another (dead) register of people. According to this argument, the erasure, in reality, was "self-erasure", because these people were themselves responsible for ending up in the register of "dead souls". Through the use of puns and live action, "United Leaves" and "Erasure" thus draw our attention to the fact that politicians have experienced the "loss of meta-language", to paraphrase Roman Jakobson. In other words, they were no longer capable of naming. They remind one of a patient with aphasia who, when asked to repeat the word "no", replied: "No, I do not know how to do that". As Jakobson says, while he spontaneously used the word in the context, he could not apply the purest form of the predication equation, i.e. tautology a = a, "no is no" (Jakobson 1989, 98 and 101).

The staging of an event such as a guerrilla performance is believed to produce certain effects in the area of the psychopathology of everyday life rather than in the area of aesthetics. Speaking of "United Leaves" and "Erasure", their basic purpose was to help any legal experts (administrative clerks) and politicians, who, because of a simulated or actual language disorder, cannot utter the sentence "It rains" unless they actually see rain falling, as Jakobson put it, visualise the simple predication equation: erased residents are erased residents. The activists notified the media about their plans. The media, that ever-present army of the "society of the spectacle", promptly seized on the opportunity to add some colour to the dull political prose of daily news and in so doing also took the message to those politicians who did not witness the "Erasure" performance in front of the parliament building, the high ranking politicians in the ZLSD party, who, unfortunately, missed the "United Leaves" action on their own premises, and the wide circle of the telematised public. Both actions were covered under "domestic politics" sections, which was a clear message to readers, viewers, and listeners that these were political events in which aesthetics played only a marginal role.

The crucial problem encountered by these and similar direct actions involves the fact that the neo-liberal system is so flexible that it is capable of absorbing, without any obvious difficulty, these types of intrusions of materialised political thinking and thus of pacifying existing "pockets of resistance". The self-defensive mechanism of neo-liberalism is cynicism, which operates smoothly on the macro- and the micro-level alike.

Besides these and many other direct actions, there are some projects that might be called "socio-artistic diversions".[6] Recently, paradigmatic examples of these art projects (or, if we relativise somewhat, projects carried out by artists), were the "soft terrorist" actions of Marko Brecelj, the Burning Cross in Strunjan by Dean Verzel and Goran Bertok, some installations and performances at the *Break* festival, and so

6 A descriptive concept proposed by Tanja Lesničar Pučko; see Lesničar Pučko 2005.

on. One trait shared by all of them is a conspicuous provocation, not only *in potentia* but also in reality, given that all of these events elicited sharp reactions from politicians, the Church, the "lay" public and journalists.

The viewpoint characterising the aesthetic theory of the Frankfurt school ("critical theory of society"), as recapitulated by Zoja Skušek in her foreword to the compendium *Ideologija in estetski učinek* (Ideology and Aesthetic Effect), says that

> today "truthful" is only that art for which the dissolution of subjectivity is not just a "subject" that it aims to present, but this disintegration is inscribed in its form: the art that puts a question mark over itself as art and repeatedly tests its incapacity; in itself, inside its procedure, this art is split between rational constructivism and "blind" anarchism, which directly speaks of the split in its own reality. (Althusser *et al.* 1980, 8)

In the artistic actions that are the subject of our interest in the second part of this essay, this "split" is still inscribed both in the form of expression (one could also say in the "artist's statement") and in the position of the producer of such art, the position of the speaker, one from whom the author speaks as an artist (or as an activist, politically conscious citizen, or the like). In other words, installations are never simply installations, artistic actions are never solely artistic, but they nevertheless produce an obvious aesthetic effect; the authors indeed operate within the institution of art, but at the same time their attitude towards it is careless, and the purity of the genre is not an issue for them; some among them, in Slovenia especially Marko Brecelj, incessantly cross over from one field to another. Another shared trait of these actions is that they rest on a more or less imaginative conceptual basis, and send out strong, sharp, and disconcerting signals.

What is important for this type of artistic actions, which among other things produce the effect of moral panic, is to preserve their relatively autonomous position with respect to the system of art, where the majority of these actions are still domiciled, and with respect to the wider social and polit-
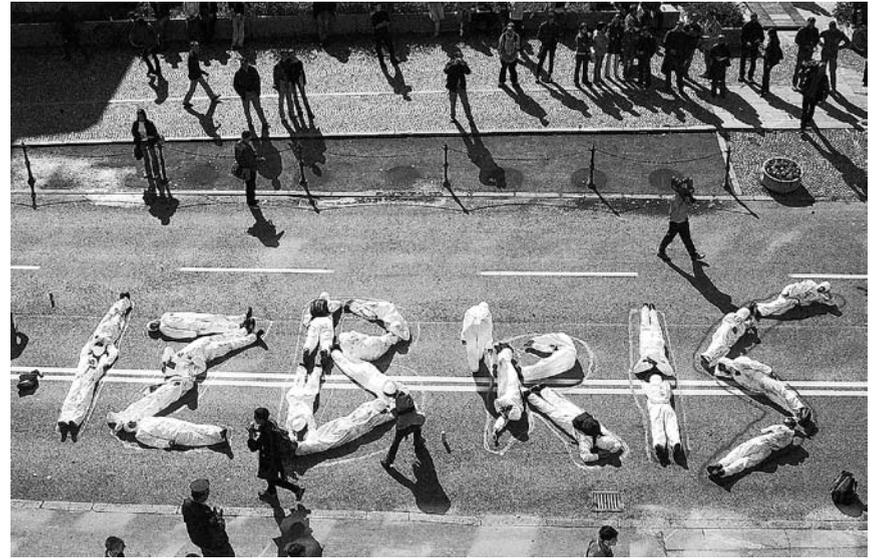
Dost je!: *Erasure*, Action, Ljubljana, 8.10.2003., photo by: Denis Sarkić

ical field. One characteristic of the art system is that it is highly absorbent, or, as Herbert Marcuse once wrote,

> the market, which absorbs equally well (although with often quite sudden fluctuations) art, anti-art, and non-art, all possible conflicting styles, schools, forms, provides a "complacent receptacle, a friendly abyss" in which the radical impact of art, the protest of art against the established reality is swallowed up. (Marcuse 1994, 101)[7]

Therefore, it would be possible to conclude that the contemporary art system and post-Fordian capitalism bear striking resemblances as regards their penchant for cannibalism: both are capable of swallowing criticism and of digesting it without any serious problems.[8] Knowing this, it is simply unimaginable that in any modern democracy it would be possible to stage such an insulting exhibition as "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art), by which the Nazis defamed the German avant-garde in 1937. In this respect, Slovenia has not been an exception (so far): the censorship tendencies of ideological opponents have been channelled, expectedly, one might say, into the two determinants of modern capitalism, i.e. law and economics.

Since Slovenia gained independence in 1991, the most media-covered court proceedings involving artists was the case of Strelnikoff. The two members of this band had to answer before the court because of their remake of the 1814 painting of the Virgin Mary by Leopold Layer, which was reproduced on the sleeve of their *Bitchcraft* CD. The controversial detail that led the young members of the Christian-Democratic party (SKD) to approach the public prosecutor, himself a member of the SKD, was the image of a rat which in Strelnikoff's reproduction replaced the image of the infant Jesus in Layer's painting. Since this case has already been

7 Marcuse cites a book by Edgar Wind, Art and Anarchy, as a source of the image of the art market as "a complacent receptacle, a friendly abyss". The English quotation in this text is taken from the text available at http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/repressivetolerance1965.htm (last accessed on 21 December 2004).

8 Regarding the adaptability of capitalism to social and art criticism, see Boltanski and Chiapello 1999.

treated in detail elsewhere (Bulc 1999), in this essay I will restrict myself to general conclusions regarding the protection of freedom of artistic expression. This freedom is guaranteed by Article 59 of the Slovenian Constitution and by the Penal Code, which in Article 169 stipulates that while insults are punishable by law, art is exempt, provided that expression offensive to another "was not meant to be derogatory". The Constitution prohibits "[a]ny incitement to national, racial, religious or other discrimination, and the inflaming of national, racial, religious, or other hatred and intolerance" as well as "[a]ny incitement to violence and war" (Article 63). The public prosecutor tried to achieve the prohibition of the dissemination of the controversial CD and to punish the author, first citing the article prohibiting derogation, and then the one prohibiting incitement to violence. However, the court dismissed the case on both grounds. Moreover, in explaining its decision, it concluded that "from the content of protests filed by the affected individuals it is possible to infer only hatred towards the defendants."

This was not the only attempt of the Church and its political supporters to restrict the constitutionally protected right to freedom of artistic expression, although all other attempts were carried out with less fervour. Dean Verzel and Goran Bertok, who burnt a cross in Strunjan, were sued for unlawfully damaging an "object of special cultural or historical significance", that is to say, on the basis of Article 223 of the Penal Code.[9] Had the prosecutor succeeded in proving their guilt, they could have been sentenced to up to five years in prison.

Another action that had its epilogue in court involved the silencing (upholstering) of the bells of Koper Cathedral carried out by Marko Brecelj and Aleš Žumer. This case is especially interesting because it may be considered as an act of political censure imposed through refusal of further co-financing of the protagonists of the action. The head-on attack of the ecclesiastical circles and the Christian Democrats seen

9 Protection of cultural heritage is a duty stipulated also by Article 73 of the Constitution: "Everyone is obliged in accordance with the law to protect natural sites of special interest, rarities, and cultural monuments".

in the case of Strelnikoff was substituted in this case with economic sanctions, in which the municipal Council (dominated by the political forces close to the Christian Democrats) unconvincingly cloaked the real, exclusively ideological motives behind its decision.

If artists are ordered to pay compensation because of damage, they are equated with any other citizen: a fine or compensation must be paid, otherwise they go to prison. However, attempts by some influential persons to punish artists by renouncing their right to receive money from public funds for their projects mainly amounted to no more than political pressure. So far, legal actions have been the favourite option of the ecclesiastical circles, the youth wings of Christian-oriented political parties and certain individuals who took it as their mission to legally "protect" Christian symbols from perceived "abuses". Yet, this is not an easy task, given that the Penal Code prohibits the defacing of state symbols, but not of religious symbols.[10] In addition, artists enjoy special immunity as regards the use of symbols for artistic purposes. This immunity is accorded to them by Article 59 of the Constitution ("The freedom of scientific and artistic endeavour shall be guaranteed."). When one remembers that this is supplemented with the provision in Article 39 that guarantees "Freedom of expression of thought, freedom of speech and public appearance, of the press and other forms of public communication and expression" and Article 169 of the Penal Code, which stipulates that insults are actionable, but art is exempt under certain conditions, it becomes clear that in a modern liberal state the institution of art has managed to obtain for itself a unique immunity. Viewed from a sufficiently abstract perspective, it is even comparable to the immunity accorded to the deputies to the National Assembly and judges (Articles 83, 134, and 167 of the Constitution). Without this protection, Marko Brecelj could have ended in court for "obstructing a religious ceremony" (Article 314 of

10 The crucial provisions are found in Articles 174 and 175 of the Penal Code; Article 174 stipulates a fine or a prison sentence of up to one year for publicly defaming the national flag, coat of arms, or anthem, while Article 175 stipulates the same sanctions regarding the symbols of other states.

Dost je!: *United leaves*, Action, Ljubljana, 7.10.2003., photo by: Francisco Ciavaglia

the Penal Code), Dean Verzel and Goran Bertok could have been sued for starting a fire (Article 317 of the Penal Code), and the activists partaking in the "Erasure" action could have ended up in court because by "mounting obstacles on the traffic road" they "endangered people's lives" (Article 327 of the Penal Code). The minimum prison sentence for these offences is one year.

Examples of this kind involve transversal artistic practices or those that problematise the very institution of art and simultaneously produce an added value dubbed the "foreground effect" (*aktualizace*) by the renowned Prague linguistic circle. The Slovenian scene of action art – which is a subject only touched upon in this essay without even mentioning some important practices – introduces that greatly needed freshness and cheerfulness into the melancholy, self-complacent mannerism of art production presented in most of Slovenia's repertoire theatres, galleries, and museums. The transversality of these practices and their hybrid nature enable quick passages from the predominantly artistic into the predominantly political sphere and back. In combination with aestheticised protest events, this creates a kind of post-Fluxus atmosphere of relative emancipation through experimental practice.[11]

Several examples following the protests in Genoa and the 9/11 attacks showed that at certain moments (or even during longer periods), when the system is overwhelmed by "security panic", its absorption potential becomes dangerously reduced, creating conditions for repressive restrictions on artistic freedoms and "expression of thought, freedom of speech and public appearance", to use the language of the Slovenian Constitution. The most recent example of such a hysterical reaction of the government has been the legal action against American artist Steve Kurtz, accused of bio-terrorism. Kurtz is a member of a popular artistic-activist col-

11 "Fluxus is an emancipatory project because it endeavours to achieve individual and social changes that are realised through the aesthetisation of everyday life and de-aesthetisation of art. Fluxus engages artists, non-artists, anti-artists, engaged and apolitical artists, poets writing non-poetry, non-dancers who dance, actors and non-actors, musicians, non-musicians, and anti-musicians" (Šuvaković 2001, 41).

lective, the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE). This process raised suspicions that it was an attempt by the government to silence the artist who was, with his scientist colleague, Robert Ferrell, engaged in projects aimed at educating the general population about issues such as genetically modified foods, and the interest of capital and the military establishment in subordinating and controlling bio-technical research.[12] Another outstanding example was the arrest of the Austrian artistic/activist group with international membership, known as the VolksTheater Karawane. In the histrionic manner of a travelling theatre, this group passed through Hungary and Slovenia on their way to Italy, where it participated in the "alter-globalist" protests in Genoa. After their brutal arrest, the equipment and costumes they carried with them were described by the prosecutor as objects brought in order to be used for terrorist purposes. As a result, and quite incomprehensibly, children's toys were turned into dangerous weapons, protective helmets used in sports were declared military equipment, and a model of the Trojan horse was described as a hiding place for "weapons" and so on (Müller 2003).[13]

Given the general pressure of "security conscious" political forces, who, in the wake of 9/11, have been endeavouring to reduce the existing standards protecting human rights and freedoms, the question that arises is whether art is destined to re-assume the function of an asylum for critical political operations, as it did many times in the history. Will the increasingly widespread *artivism* combined with security delirium eventually bring Western societies to the point at

12 A lecture on this case was delivered by Claire Pentecost and Brian Holmes on 4 September 2004 in Ljubljana. The text by Claire Pentecost is available at http://www.memefest.org/shared/docs/theory/claire_pentecost-selections_from.doc (last accessed on 7 November 2004).

13 An interesting observation was contributed by Jürgen Schmidt, a collaborator of the VolksTheater Karawane group, in which he describes the hybrid, border situation of their group in relation to politics and art: "With its method, the Caravan broke the dichotomy between art and politics; it seemingly took the position between both chairs while it was sceptically observed by both sides. Although within the field of art it was criticized as 'activist autonomist' and within the field of political activism it was presented as 'stupid artists', the Caravan always endeavoured to thwart this dominant logic" (Schmidt 2004, 101).

which there will be a critical mass of madness that would produce demands for the prohibition of the "abuse" of art for political operations? Something similar has occurred with the asylum system that was presumably abused by so-called economic emigrants to gain easier access to the labour markets of developed countries. Will politicians, state administrations, courts, and the police one day speak of "manifestly unfounded artistic projects" as they now speak of "manifestly unfounded asylum applications", a qualification that leads to a prompt refusal to grant asylum? In such a case, the creators of such artistic projects would lose the protection now guaranteed by the mechanisms protecting artistic freedom. In a modern liberal state, art is part of that corpus, so every violation of any human right, and especially the type of violation that is attempted by amending a constitution and legislation, by manipulating referendum mechanisms or the like, is eventually also aimed at artistic creativity. How can artists know that they are not the next in line? And how can they be confident that if this happens there will still be someone left who would be willing to stand up for freedom of artistic expression?

On the other hand, economics and law, already controlling the contemporary political "scene", are gradually taking leading roles on the theatrical stage and in art production in general.[14] Contemporary art finds itself in the hysterical situation of having to worship law as the guarantor of its own "autonomy" in relation to politics (freedom of artistic expression etc.) and to the economy (copyright and the material gains implied thereby), while at the same time always having to fight for "autonomy" in relation to the legal sphere and within the legal sphere itself. Under political pressure and threatened by civil suits, art is running for the patronage of legal regulations, where it can exercise its specific privilege of "artistic freedom". To enjoy this freedom, however, art must pay a certain price.

14 In his article "Politicisation of Law" Jean-Louis Genard states that "the legal system is dominant to the spheres connected with it, but fighting for their autonomy. Because the power relationships are very asymmetrical, these spheres are in danger of getting their own logic suppressed by legal logic" (Šumič Riha 2001, 134). See also Milohnić 2005.

How this price is "fixed" can be seen in the example of "anti-artistic" and "avant-garde" practices, i.e. artistic productions that are directed against the authority of traditional institutions as well as the system of art in general. If art is to be radical, it must not only be critical of "society", but also of its own ontological predispositions, bringing it to a point where it has to cross the boundary between art and non-art. In this situation, the subject must choose between two alternative strategies. One can say: what I am doing is not art, but this is not an important distinctive feature, as the non-artistic nature of the product is only a by-product of my "libertarian", "emancipatory" decision to distance myself from my own position of "artist"; and one can then move (in an anti-manner) from this position of radical otherness to a holy war against the oppressive art system. Or, one can choose differently and derive from the avant-garde tradition of equating art with life and vice-versa: what I do is art, but this is not a pertinent distinctive feature, because everything is art anyway, so I'm fighting "from within" – as an artist against the closed, exclusive art system. What are the legal consequences of one or the other decision for the artist and the anti- (or no-longer) artist? In the first case, the institutions of relative artistic immunity and author's rights will be abolished – since both terms are tied to a legally acceptable definition of art. In the second, artists will keep their legally recognised rights, but at the same time will have to take a risk to be accused by art critics, or at least moralists among them, of vanity and hypocrisy.

At this point it would seem that any choice is split in an internal paradox, that it contradicts itself. The dilemma is an old one, known since the antiquity. More recently, it was addressed by Moses I. Finley, who tried to shed some light on the paradox of Athenian democracy: "Aristophanes and the other comic poets were free with irreverent jokes about the gods in a way that, in the mouth of philosophers or Sophists, could lead to an indictment for impiety" (Finley 1985, 136). And from today's perspective it seems inconceivable for Socrates to have been killed for something that is – again from our own perspective – a lesser offence in comparison to Aris-

tophanes's open and merciless scoffing at everything he could think of.[15] We simply cannot avoid pondering these dilemmas, because as Finley says: "the Athenian problem remains our problem".

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15 "Comedy in particular was a phenomenon without parallel to my knowledge: at major public religious festivals, managed and financed by the state, the playwrights were expected to ridicule and abuse ordinary Athenians and their leaders, the war effort and any piece of legislation that came to mind, as well as to treat the gods with an irreverence that few Sophists would have risked" (Finley 1985, 171).

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Proceduralism[*]

≈ **Bojana Cvejić**

I n his book *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (2005), Andrew Hewitt, a literary scholar from the provenance of critical theory, privileges "social choreography" as a prominent form of what he calls the "aesthetic operation of ideology". In this essay, I look at what I will call "proceduralism" as a contemporary form of social choreography. I will first unpack Hewitt's thesis of social choreography.

Taking a genealogical cue from three sources – a passage in a letter from 1793 in which Friedrich Schiller describes an English ballroom dance as an aesthetic *qua* social ideal of a harmonious play of individual dancers' movements mounting and dismantling images of the social whole,[1] Sieg-

fried Kracauer's apparatus of "mass ornament",[2] and Jameson's thesis of the political unconscious[3] – Hewitt examines social choreography as a medium for producing and rehearsing the social order. In the period of the rise and development of bourgeois society from the late 18th century, throughout the 19th century and into the 1920s, he observes how the social order is both reflected in and shaped by aesthetic concerns and how it operates directly at the level of the body. What makes social choreography an *aesthetic* ideology is, Hewitt argues, its aesthetic operation at the level of the base, contrary to the classical Marxist model of edifice, where the aesthetic, as part of the superstructure, is conditioned by and so reflects the (economic) base. Hewitt's conception of aesthetic ideology posits the relations between material production and ideological reproduction of the social and aesthetic orders as mutually conditioning and reversible.

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* This text has been adapted from chapter four, "Social Choreography," in Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović, *Public Sphere by Performance* (Berlin: Bbooks, 2012), pp. 55–76.

1 "I can think of no more fitting image for the ideal of social conduct than an English dance, composed of many complicated figures and perfectly

executed. A spectator in the gallery sees innumerable movements intersecting in the most chaotic fashion, changing direction swiftly and without rhyme or reason, yet never colliding. Everything is so ordered that the one has already yielded his place when the other arises; it is all so skilfully, and yet so artlessly, integrated into a form, that each seems only to be following his own inclination, yet without ever getting in the way of anybody else. It is the most perfectly appropriate symbol of the assertion of one's won freedom and regard for the freedom of others." Schiller quoted in Hewitt 2005, 2.

2 What links the two distinct types of dancing, mass dancing in the stadium and the chorus line, is the rationalization of capitalist production, where ornament is a form of irrational, fetishistic mythologization that implies both the alienation of the individual and of the community. See Kracauer, 1995.

3 The political unconscious in Jameson is the contradiction that is compensated, displaced, or repressed in a text, or the object of critical analysis, because the text doesn't manage to resolve it. This is why Jameson proposes the historical contextual analysis where history is treated as the absent cause that needs to be produced into a narrative so that it can explain the relationships from which the political unconscious arises. Jameson claims that the hierarchical two-level model that Althusser retains from Marx (albeit by weakening its economic determinism) should be spread out into a horizontal structure of mutual relationships in which the economic and technological mode of production is immediately related to culture, ideology, the juridical, the political, etc. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 20–21.

The main claim of Hewitt's social choreography rests on the assumption that there exists an aesthetic continuum in bodily articulation that spans from everyday movement to dance. This continuous aesthetic spectrum is framed on the one end by the (conscious or unconscious) sensory experience of daily movements, gestures, postures, and relations between bodies in time and space, and on the other by "the aesthetic' in the more limited sense as a socially endorsed framing of the sensual" (Hewitt 2005, 79). Since Hewitt narrativises social choreography as a form of cultural hegemony through which the rising bourgeoisie from the end of the eighteenth century could practice ideas that as yet couldn't be actualised politically, embodiment figures as a chief mode of ideology's functioning. If, as he claims, "ideology has a history that is not merely the history of its successive forms, but of its functions and functioning" (Hewitt 2005, 211), then we might ask ourselves if the body today still is the site of contemporary forms of social choreography. From the perspective of the practice and performance of the individual in everyday life, the body is a fetishised instrument of technology of the private self. But from the viewpoint of the performance of the public sphere, the procedure of functioning might be more relevant than embodiment. If we are to continue Slavoj Žižek's conjugation of the notorious Marxist formula about ideology, the shift from false consciousness ("they do not know it, but they are doing it") to cynical, enlightened consciousness in Peter Sloterdijk's account ("they know very well what they are doing, yet they are doing it"), social choreography today might require a third, pragmatist twist I suggest here: *because they are doing it, they believe it.*[4]

4 This formula is derived from Žižek's twist on Marx in which he explains how instrumental reason operates in the current form of liberal capitalism. It cynically disguises itself as truth, like, for instance, when a Western intervention in a Third World country is motivated and legitimated by human rights infringement. The intervention might improve the human rights record in that country, yet its real motivations are elsewhere, in economic interests, for example. Therefore the truth conceals the relation of domination which is established ideologically. A step further in this logic of instrumentality results in the automatism of procedures whose instrumentality is no longer questioned. Žižek takes Blaise Pascal to explain the mechanism of self-referential causality through which the procedure, supposed to be an effect of belief, becomes the cause of belief.

The display of sheer functioning as a performance of embodied, or not, ritual generates its ideological foundation without belief. This could be observed in different historical moments where ideology shifts from a system of belief to a system of deferral that keeps *disbelief* in motion, and becomes a self-sustaining and self-legitimating social function in mere motion. The images from the 1982 Youth Day parade in former Yugoslavia at the end of Tito's reign yield an op-art mechanism of motion, no longer a mass ornament nor a dramatic spectacle, but a pure aesthetic proceduralist functioning of social choreography.

The question I'd like to answer here – whether "proceduralism" is the contemporary form of social choreography operating both in dance and elsewhere in the public sphere of the social in a broad sense – was prompted by reading a peculiar document: *Choreography: Webster's Timeline History 1710–2007*, a book of less than a hundred pages, thin for the century-long time scope it is supposed to cover. The edition is software-generated, and according to the full signature on the book cover, its editorial authorship is attributed to Professor Philip M. Parker, Ph.D., Chaired Professor of Management Science at INSEAD (Singapore and Fontainebleau, France). The book traces all published uses of the word "choreography" in print or news media, and my interest was to extract those recent uses of the word (since 2000) that would be the remotest from dance and performance. I registered three fields where choreography serves as a technical term: molecular biology, information technology, and diplomacy, as the following examples will illustrate:

"Chromosome *choreography*: the meiotic ballet" appears in Science written by S. L. Page and R. S. Hawley. Published on August 8, 2003

Shirmer S. G., "Quantum *choreography*: making molecules dance to technology's tune?" published by *Philosophical Transactions: Series A, Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences*, vol. 364, no. 1849, on December 15, 2006.

Thus he suggests that Pascal's "Kneel down and you will believe!" should be read as "Kneel down and you will believe that you knelt down because you believed!" See Žižek 1995, 6.

"Patterns: serial and parallel processes for process *choreography* and workflow." Publisher: IBM International Technical Support Organization (Research Triangle Park, NC). Published in 2004 Iran News, February 22, 2005, headline: "Bush says Notion of Attack on Iran 'Ridiculous': 'Despite the careful *choreography*, the new tone and the desire on both sides to turn the page, some European officials are still wondering if Mr. Bush means what he says.'"

Olympics in Sidney – News, August 2004: "Unprecedented Security Measures in Place Ahead of Olympics Opening Ceremony": "This is a massively complex security operation involving, of course, a huge array of countries, all of which are coming with their own security details, but, also, specific countries and NATO have been engaged to provide security. So, yes, there is some diplomacy. There's a lot of security, but, again, it's the Greeks doing the *choreography*. Greece is in charge. This is absolutely a Greek lead and a Greek security operation."

The currency that "performance" as a technical term had in the 1990s seems to be rivalled today by "choreography". Comparing the two tropes, we can infer that performance denotes competence, ability to execute, and achievement, while choreography designates dynamic patterns of the complicated yet seamless organization of many heterogeneous elements in motion. Choreography stresses the design of procedures that regulate a process – chemical, physical, algorithmic, political, and diplomatic in the examples above. This resonates with choreographers' and performance-makers' current theoretical, self-reflective obsession with working methods, procedures, formats, and performance scores. Three statements amidst a plethora of interviews, manifestos, and other types of writings in contemporary dance are eloquent here. Choreographer Eleanor Bauer writes:

What do you do when you get in the studio? There's nothing to do there! The empty room gives us nothing, nothing but space and time. A sterile luxury. Advantages of having methods we are aware of using are that we have things to do when we get into the studio and that the work is stronger than the constant shifting of our interest, confidence, and motivation. (Cvejić 2008, 29)

The choreographer Andros Zins-Browne remarks that "most good pieces are the writing of a methodology in their production" (Cvejić 2008, 29). The third is a score hyperbolically documenting a process of making a choreography by Mette Ingvartsen, titled "Procedure for overproduction":

you make something
you make something out of the something you have just made
you make something which cannot be bought
you make a gift
you make something which is the opposite of what you have just made
you make fake money and you sell it for real
you make a little note inviting people to invite other people
you make a meeting about what other people are making
you make communication
you make a trailer for a movie somebody else once made
you make a performance for webcam that no one will watch
you make an animation
you make yourself into an animation figure who can make other things than you can, so
you make an album
you make voice expressions that no one can read but everyone can understand
you make something which has no physical existence
you make thoughts make other thoughts
you make a lecture performance
you make a text out of the lecture and publish it on the net
you make a video registration which is so long that no one will ever look at all of it
you make a compressed version so they might anyhow
you make sure not to make compromises....
(Ingvartsen 2007, 34)

References to choreography in the samples above give rise to the following question:: should it be rethought from the perspective of a dramaturgy of procedures, as a kind of operative reason? The relation between choreography and proceduralism rests on two premises. Firstly: that the expanded practice of choreography entails a shift from the bias of the body

and embodiment to procedures, or how processes are structured and operated in time. Secondly: that procedures aren't just instruments of governance; by and large, they define actions and attitudes in general, which allows us to treat them as a logic, a thinking model, an ideological apparatus. This calls for investigating "procedurality" in various terms within which it circulates: "procedural knowledge" as that which artists are taught in art education, "democratic proceduralism" as a concept of political legitimacy, "procedural rhetorics" as the widely acclaimed and controversial videogame theory. Unpacking the abovementioned registers of procedurality may help us to understand what choreography means when it is used outside the strictly artistic aesthetic realm of dance/performance.

According to the extreme position in liberal democracy—the normative definition of democratic legitimacy—democracy is said to be a procedure. Fabienne Peter, who specializes in political and moral philosophy, defines it as follows: "Democratic decisions are legitimate as long as they are the result of an appropriately constrained process of democratic decision-making" (Peter 2010). The legitimacy of the outcomes of a (political) process depends only on the fairness of the decision-making process, not on the quality of the outcomes it produces. This view is justified by the claim that there is no shared standard for assessing the quality of the outcomes, and deep disagreement about reasons for and against proposals will always remain.[5] The neoliberal version

5 This view is slightly modified in the so-called deliberative rational account of epistemic proceduralism (Jürgen Habermas), where the legitimacy of democratic decisions doesn't only depend on procedural values but also on the so-called substantive quality of the outcomes generated by the procedures. Habermas argues for deliberative politics on the basis of his ideal of rational discussion: "Deliberative politics acquires its legitimating force from the discursive structure of an opinion . . . because citizens expect its results to have a reasonable quality." Jürgen Habermas 1996, 304. Deliberative decision-making processes, if appropriately shaped, are uniquely able to reach rationally justified decisions that everyone has reasons to endorse. But we should understand what deliberation means: it is less a matter of settling disputes over the cognitive validity of competing proposals than a matter of developing legal frameworks within which citizens can continue to cooperate despite disagreements about what is right or good.

of the same arguments is, as usual, more compellingly instrumentalist than the liberalist tradition. To paraphrase Stephen Chilton (Chilton 2001), intercourses need to be regulated even through imperfect norms, because the journey is to serve a practical need. An infinite journey, which is a collective process of creation or any kind of decision-making, however enjoyable, still does not "get us to our destination." There's much to approve in all this, argues Chilton, because proceduralism ensures decisions. It prevents participants from employing the strategy of infinite delay, and it avoids having "energies consumed" by infinitely long discussions of an infinite variety of issues. "Outcomes are by their nature open to dispute, but processes need not be" (Chilton 2001).

The relation between process and procedure re-emerges in another register of "procedurality", in a videogame theory conceived by Ian Bogost that is based on the following thesis:

> **Procedurality refers to a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes. And processes define the way things work: the methods, techniques, and logics that drive the operation of systems, from mechanical systems like engines to organizational systems like high schools to conceptual systems like religious faith. Rhetoric refers to effective and persuasive expression. Procedural rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively.**

Procedural rhetoric has purchase beyond the ontology of games, where a critical debate has been raised.[6] The Whiteheadian philosopher and cultural theorist Steven Shaviro raises a philosophical objection of ontological priority: "All procedures are in fact processes, but not all processes are procedures" (Shaviro 2011). While Whiteheadian process philoso-

6 Miguel Sicart's ludological defense of playfulness, the agency of player and the act and experience of the game as a play, against rule-determinism, which centers game on its design, is weak because it tends to redeem itself morally through the same, in fact epistemically proceduralist, arguments that hold that games are played in interaction through the negotiation, appropriation, and self-expression of the player, a claim which he draws from critical theory perspectives as well as from Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, and Eugen Fink. See Sicart 2011.

phy invests in a metaphysical notion of process, Bogost's emphasis on procedures is illuminating when used as a tool of ideological analysis suitable for neoliberalism, where it belongs. It asserts procedurality as the logic by which something works.

Social choreography, then, implies a knowledge of procedures (and tools to apply them) which comprehends a complex design of elements to be organized, as Webster's index shows. Proceduralism forces us, like neoliberalism, to ask if there is any material production that can't be subsumed under procedures. What happens when procedures are lacking? Can we think social choreography without emphasis on procedures? Do we need to crack open social choreography in order to do a proper critique of procedurality?

Two critiques from adversary ideological camps are interesting here. In *Living in the End Times*, Žižek targets procedurality as an ideology which prevents any revolt against capitalism. He claims that our "political consciousness" might be shackled by proceduralist questions that form the legal framework of an empty liberal idea: Does a country have free elections? Are its judges independent? Is its press free from hidden pressures? Does it respect human rights? Žižek's would be the Marxist answer that the key to actual freedom resides in the "apolitical" network of social relations, from the market to the family, which can be transformed not by any political procedure, but rather by class struggle:

> We do not vote on who owns what, or about relations in the factory, and so on—such matters remain outside the sphere of the political, and it is illusory to expect that one will effectively change things by "extending" democracy into the economic sphere. . . Radical changes in this domain need to be made outside the sphere of legal "rights" (Žižek 2011).

The sociologist Bruno Latour conducts a similar critique of proceduralism when he focuses on epistemological and political mechanisms in the public sphere. In an interview he gave to Ana Vujanović, Marta Popivoda and myself, Latour drew on John Dewey's reversal of the private and the public, when he argued that the private "is everything that is format-

ted, and has known consequences of action [...] An issue becomes public when there is no knowledge of what to do, so the issue is dealt without knowledge, like groping in the dark, fumbling blind: *tâtonner...*" (Cvejić, Popivoda and Vujanović 2012) In other words, without instruments and procedures. As the director of the famous school for political sciences in Paris, Sciences Po, Latour contends that

> political science teaches politicians procedures, how to do everything to avoid politics, forget politics and get good management: fight against corruption, rankings, standardizations, procedures, the masses of European good practices (Cvejić, Popivoda and Vujanović 2012).

It might be difficult, even impossible, to disentangle choreography from procedurality entirely. But it is possible to distinguish three operations in social choreography by which it can be transformed from a normative practice into a critical model. The first is the recognition of regulatory procedures by which social choreography is normative. The second is deregulation, where the procedural knowledge of a social choreography is instrumentalised for another goal or process. The third is intervention, or the rupture of procedures, from which something else should arise. In the wake of recent protests and riots against social injustice held by students, Indignados, the Occupy movement, or the London mob from summer 2011, another kind of social choreography arose, a messy, uncontrolled choreography that breaks the law protecting private property or norms that regulate movement in public space. It doesn't proffer a political ideology in its conscious manifestation, but it does disrupt normative procedures. Perhaps the rise of this public would be better described as an instantaneous, tactical composition process based less on readymade procedures, which are easier to agree upon and operate by, than as a social choreography animated by ideological principles. The value of principles like free education or public or common good is clear, yet the aesthetic form in which these principles should be expressed is undetermined and requires inefficiently long ideological debates in the collective imagination to turn into concrete political demands. Contra-

ry to principles that incite passions and disagreements, procedures maintain the smooth operation of a social choreography whose ideology has been conflated with a mode of functioning, a sheer performance. I will close this text with a speculative remark: what if the main handicap in public as political life lies in the fact that we have substituted procedures for principles in the hope of dispelling ideology as the remains of irrational or dogmatic passions?

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V

Tactical Poetics

Prvi broj (The First issue) / Acting Without Publicising / Delayed Audience

≈ Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača
   (DeLVe | Institute for Duration, Location, and Variables)

Artists preparing the first exhibition in Podroom—*For Art in the Mind*
May 1978, Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Non/Publicising

At a time of publicising without acting, how to think acting without publicising? The corporate discourse of "public relations" has become an integral part of every self-respected project in culture and the arts. We might conclude, paraphrasing Goran Trbuljak, that the fact that your project has been announced on an international emailing list or in a widely distributed journal is more important than whether or not you will realise it at all.[1] The struggle for authorship over ideas on the frontline of symbolic capital, in the cramped domain of hyper-production and hyper-communication in culture and the arts, goes hand in hand with the financial pressure that demands of

1 Cf. Goran Trbuljak's work "Činjenica da je nekome dana mogućnost da napravi izložbu važnija je od onoga što će na toj izložbi biti pokazano" (The Fact that Someone Was Given an Opportunity to Make an Exhibition is More Important than What Might Be Shown at That Exhibition, 1973).

Discussion with the Canadian artist group CEAC in Podroom
June 1978, Courtesy of: Dalibor Martinis

artists and cultural workers to adopt the discourse of entrepreneurship and scientify and quantify their artistic ideas for potential donors, in order to prove their feasibility. An important factor in that calculus is a sort of "audience body-count": the quantitative and qualitative classification of the "target" audience and public to whom the project will be communicated.

Delayed Audience

In such a situation, should we not consider "missing" rather than targeting the audience/public, as a postulate of a type of intellectual and artistic action that would at least remove itself, if not entirely escape from, the hegemonic, competitive, and, after all, exhausting mechanisms of cultural and intellectual production? Should we not, also, expand our conception of the public and audience, so as to include not only the direct, contemporary public/audience of an event, but also that which emerges only secondarily or *post festum* and constitutes what we would call its *delayed audience*: an audience that forms in its fidelity to an erstwhile almost invisible event from the past, an event in which, with the certainty of an archaeologist, it finds anchorage and empowerment, more readily than in any synchronous eventness?[2]

Searching as a Form of Action

But how does one consciously delay one's audience? How to act in invisibility, but still become an event that might invoke fidelity? The potential of this notion of acting without publicising lies precisely in the impossibility of prescribing it, in its regular unfolding as searching and experimenting without committing. This approach informed the 1960s and 1970s

2   In our project *Izvađeni iz gomile (Removed from the Crowd)*, which began in 2008, the concept of "delayed audience" is a key lens through which we observe the art practices of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as our own work in curating, research, performance, and art history. See Bago and Majača 2011. A segment of the project was presented in Bago and Majača 2010. Of course, the concept of being faithful to an event is a reference to Alain Badiou.

practices of artists' associations such as, in Croatia, Gorgona (1959–1966), the Group of Six Authors (1975–1979), and the Podroom[3] Working Community of Artists (1978–1980). On an earlier occasion, we described it as an approach that "gives priority to the quest for possibilities", facilitating "the necessary escape from the traps of dichotomy, between thought and action, between participating and dropping out, between resistance and its neutralisation, between the artist and the institution" (Bago and Majača 2011, 271). We might also add between in/action and non/publicising and between invisibility and prominence. It is a radical departure made all the more necessary by its growing less and less conceivable in today's condition of precarity. In fact, it constitutes a luxury, transforming the very searching into acting, but a notion of acting that does not translate into the language of goals and results, which the Europeanising and civilising bureaucracy is trying to instil in us. To conclude, this time paraphrasing Mladen Stilinović, an art that cannot speak the Euro-cratic language of goals and results is no art; it will never attract "partners" or become a "project", born out of a fruitful "collaboration".[4] Thankfully.

Non-action

Let us therefore view non-publicising not in terms of quitting but a radical readiness for searching beyond the perimeter of charted goals and safe results, taking our cue from the postulates of Zagreb-based group Gorgona, including inaction, "outcomelessness", playing with impossibilities, stepping out into the void, silence, and paradox. Notwithstanding those seemingly nihilist and self-referential positions, Gorgona did not advocate abandoning or abolishing art but on the contrary, searching for art or, more precisely, its becoming. (Bago and Majača 2011, 268). Accordingly, when its members

3   Radna zajednica umjetnika Podroom, a playfully anglicised spelling of the Croatian word podrum (basement); the prefix pod- translates as "under" or "sub" – Translator's note.

4   Cf. Mladen Stilinović's work "An Artist who Cannot Speak English is no Artist", 1992.

sent invitations to fifty or so addresses that merely said "You are kindly invited to attend" without specifying what, where, or when, they were not just mocking the conventional systems of circulation within the institution of art, as it is often emphasised; it was also "an invitation to 'unusualness' [...] to stepping into the void in order to start the quest for something one *could* attend." (Bago and Majača 2011, 268)

Moved. Impossible Addressee

You are kindly invited to attend. Your attendance and presence are sought at every step, and that step becomes increasingly harder to make in the quagmire of printed and electronic invitations, leaflets, circular and personal emails, announcements, and Facebook "events", all of which are meticulously documented in reports to the EU Commission, as evidence of a lively and progressive PR activity, while your presence will be defined and fixed in a boldly rounded up number of targeted and reached audience. In a desperate gesture to prove that not everything is just business, bureaucracy, and illusion, Marina Abramović spent three months sitting at the most renowned of museum corporations, arguing in favour of the still sacred presence of art, the artist, and the living materiality of those roughly quantified bodies of museum pilgrims. The artist was present, maybe, but Elvis and art had already left the building, escaping, perhaps, into a mimicry of non-acting, into acting without publicising it.

Publicness beyond Clarity and Expansion

Acting without publicising is not non-public non/acting. However, its publicity is not measured by the scope of its echo, but by the intensity of potentials that are outlined precisely through "being together", in terms of occupying or inhabiting a common mental and social space, but without abandoning one's "singularity". It is an intermediate space, which is public because it is no longer oriented exclusively to individual "truths", but at the same time it also rejects the collective ones. It is, however, not (necessarily) loud or speak-

Prvi broj (The First Issue), catalogue-journal of the Working Community of Artists Podroom
Cover page with the photo of Podroom's entrance and the transcript of the discussion of Podroom members
February 1980
Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

ing to a specific addressee — it is neither, in terms of the contemporary understanding of "public relations," clear nor directed at the "public" (Bago and Majača 2010, 108).

Acting without publicising redefines the very concept of the public and wrests it away from the Euro-cratic rhetoric of the right to publicity and transparency, which hides the carefully guarded sanctity of the institution of state, military, and business secrets.

The Magazine as a Form of Temporary Community

Acting without publicising includes – but not paradoxically – publishing samizdat publications and magazines, initiated, edited, and published by artists themselves. The age-old domination of the printed medium had equated publishing with the publishing industry, which has made independent artistic and intellectual publishing into a key medium for resisting the hegemonic publishing production and distribution of knowledge and information. The printed medium grew especially important for art during the 1960s and 1970s, when the practice and aesthetics of copy and mail art merged with the wider idea of dematerialising and democratising the work of art, whereby having privileged access to artworks in the environment of galleries and museums was no longer a precondition for communicating one's work or acquiring knowledge and exchanging ideas about contemporary art. It was precisely art magazines that materialised the idea of sharing through mutual temporary recognition and companionship. Their editorial policies are often open and fluctuating and their pages are in fact an extended venue for "presenting" individual and joint contributions and reflections, rather than a place for issuing bold collective manifestoes and programmes, as was the case with the "historical avant-gardes".

Magazines at the Time of Gorgona and Post-Gorgona

During this period, which came to be known as "the new art practice" in the former Yugoslavia, Zagreb saw the founding of several magazines that were closely connected to certain artistic initiatives and groups. For example, they included the following: the *Gorgona* anti-magazine, edited during the early 1960s by the eponymous artistic group (which had "a second life" during the 1980s, in the *Postgorgona* and *Post Scriptum* magazines edited by Josip Vaništa, a member and co-founder of Gorgona); the *Maj 75*, initiated in 1978 by the so-called Group of Six Authors, and *Prvi broj* (The First Issue), the significantly less well known catalogue-magazine of the Podroom Working Community of Artists, which was never followed up by a "second issue". In the early 1980s, Galerija proširenih medija (Extended Media Gallery) published several issues of its magazine *Proširene novine* (Extended Magazine), continuing this link between artist-led exhibition spaces and publishing.

A characteristic shared by all of these magazines is that they were not meant to "inform". They were not intended to reach a wide readership, not even the experts, or to promote ideas, artworks, or groups that published them. They did not transmit any manifestoes or announced radical or revolutionary changes in art or society. Rather, these magazines emerged as part of wider artistic activities, as magazines that appeared and lived with the groups that founded them (*Gorgona*); that became alternative exhibition spaces (*Maj 75*); that sought to reflect rather than document their group's previous or past activities (*Prvi broj; Postgorgona, Post Scriptum*); that advocated change and an active social engagement of artists in the field of cultural policies and society (*Prvi broj*).

Prvi broj and Its Delayed Audience

Prvi broj (1980) – which we include in this lexicon entry both as an example and paradigm – summarises all of the characteristics described above, even though, paradoxically, one

could not really describe it as a magazine, since it was a one-off and unique publication by a group of artists gathered around the artist-led Podroom Working Community of Artists. The publication's task was twofold: on the one hand, to "memorise" and look back on the work of this artistic initiative and, on the other, to provide a roadmap for future activities, followed by further editions of the magazine. However, *Prvi broj* also marked the end of Podroom, characterised by numerous conceptual and ideological differences in its search for an independent and common space of living and acting in art.[5] What we find particularly interesting regarding *Prvi broj* is the fact that we are – and the way in which we are – its delayed audience. Today, this forgotten single issue of a stillborn magazine published by a group of artists may be read not only as paradigmatic of an entire period, but also as a kind of paleo-futurologic note of our own present condition. Published in the early 1980s, when the trends of so-called "new painting" were already becoming dominant, in a certain way it can also be read as a reflection on the entire period of the "new art practice", summarising its artistic preoccupations and tensions between its desire for a both autonomous *and* engaged art, the inevitability of participating in the system of the arts and the desire to act independently and outside of institutions, between constantly re-examining its own work and promoting and mediating it, between resisting commercialisation and the need for a market and/or social valorisation of their artistic work.

"The title itself points to a series of issues, that is, to the idea of editing this publication continuously." (*Prvi broj*, p. 3)

But the first issue remained the only issue. The "uniqueness" that stems from that fact, as well as from its unique contents, has failed to secure it a special status among docu-

5 For more on the history and demise of Podroom as an example of a "search for autonomous and non-servile spaces – for art, work, and life", in the context of Yugoslav self-management and through a comparative reading with the activities of Ida Biard's Gallery of Tenants, see Bago 2012.

Prvi broj (The First Issue), catalogue-journal of the Working Community of Artists Podroom
Final page of the transcript of the discussion of Podroom members with the photo of the sink as "evidence" of Podroom as a living, and not only exhibition space
February 1980
Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

ments that testify about the phenomenon of the "new art practice" in the former Yugoslavia. On the contrary, even those (rare) texts that are exclusively concerned with Podroom mention it only in passing and it does not come up in surveys of artistic magazines and independent publishing. We have decided to include *Prvi broj* in this lexicon entry not to "rescue it from oblivion" or to add something new to existing narratives of the history of contemporary art, but because the fifteen or so pages of this "magazine-catalogue" suggest some of the fundamental issues, motivations, contradictions, and aspirations of contemporary art, initiated during the 1960s, that are still relevant today.

Prvi broj stands as a testament and promise, balancing on a slippery terrain where, under the banner of the past, it constructs a question for the future. *Prvi* (the first) – as the inauguration or announcement of a future transformation. *Broj* (issue, number) – not in order to quantify, but number as a theoretical and political issue of a singular-plural community and solidarity.

We look at *Prvi broj* here as a repository of frozen questions that had, at the moment when they were posed, already lost their addressee; accordingly, the need to seek and find answers to them was likewise forgotten. We also see it as a template for questions that, following a period of returning to creative individualism and in the wake of the globalised triumph of the art market, we must pose again: questions regarding art's resistance to and complicity with today's state of affairs; the need to come together and transcend individual work and contributions; at a time yet again, and perhaps more than ever, faced with an obligation to look, though with much uncertainty, into the future, having just left the certainty of obsessing about the past and rereading the "emancipatory" art practices of the 1960s and 1970s; at a time when it seems that the "issue number one", i.e. intense (self-)reflection on the possibilities and potential futures of the conditions of producing art, knowledge, labour, and (co-)existence, is almost the only possibility to act.

Toward the end of this text, we bring fragments from *Prvi broj* as authentic and living contributions toward problematising the questions that preoccupied the artists gathered around Podroom and that are still relevant today, at a time when the art of the so-called historical conceptualism seems incredibly close. (The reasons for that certainly include the refocusing on social relations and networks and away from the aesthetic act and object, the proliferation of critical re-examinations of art concerning its role and "efficacy", and, above all, the market transformation and economic relations in which exchanging and inscribing values occurs at the level of knowledge and experience, rather than in terms of exchanging objectified goods.)

Finally, we see *Prvi broj* as a manifestation of searching for new models of community, of being together, as a space for re-examining the possibilities of acting without publicising it – of the need to reflect, of the success or failure of such a notion of acting where being and working together does not rest on economic gain or essentialist categories. Today, all of these questions that *Prvi broj* posed in 1980 seem crucial in imagining our own future. This is our attempt, as *Prvi broj*'s "delayed audience", to find guidelines in it; and in its "failure" we read a potentiality that obliges us to keep reflecting on our own roles and responsibilities.

The fragments from *Prvi broj* – in which we intervened by selecting them and adding subheadings – are preceded by introductory remarks on the Podroom Working Community of Artsts and excerpts from "Removed from the Crowd", DeLVe's contribution to the project *Političke prakse (post)jugoslovenske umetnosti* (The Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art).[6]

6 With some revisions and additions, the following excerpts on Podroom were taken from Bago and Majača 2010. Under the auspices of the same project, DeLVe and BADco. staged a performative conversation between members of BADco., other participants, and the audience, on the basis of the transcript of a conversation between members of Podroom, published in *Prvi broj*. In their project *BADroom*, BADco. later continued their exploration of *Prvi broj*'s relevance today.

Podroom – The Working Community of Artists as a Form of Action

The Podroom Working Community of Artists, which published *Prvi broj*, was active in Zagreb between 1978 and 1980, using the atelier of Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis, which they converted into an exhibition space, as well as a space where members of the group spent much of their time, worked, socialised, debated, and construed it as a public space and "their own" at once. The Working Community had no fixed membership or programme; on the one hand, we may read its full official name as an irony directed at Yugoslavia's socialist bureaucracy and on the other, as a tactical gesture of speaking in a language that the state apparatus could understand, in order to secure an impression of institutional relevance.[7] Podroom gathered almost the entire progressive current of the late 1970s Zagreb artistic community, and even if it had sought to popularise its work, there was barely a "target" audience for their programmes or methods of work, so any insistence on greater visibility would have been a misguided undertaking in itself.

"The Podroom Working Community of Artists is not a gallery but a form of artistic action" (*Prvi broj*, p. 3)

The transcript of a conversation from one of the group's working sessions published in *Prvi broj* shows that the group held differing views of the functioning and role of such an artist-led space and thus also regarding publicising and documenting its activities, etc. Besides striving to transcend the confines of Podroom itself, by actively and concretely ad-

7 Podroom was inaugurated with the exhibition *Za umjetnost u umu (For Art in the Mind)*, the title of which was suggested by artist and art historian Josip Stošić; the artists who participated in the exhibition formed the core of Podroom's fluctuating membership: Boris Demur, Vladimir Dodig, Ivan Dorogi, Ladislav Galeta, Tomislav Gotovac, Vladimir Gudac, Sanja Iveković, Željko Jerman, Željko Kipke, Antun Maračić, Vlado Martek, Dalibor Martinis, Marijan Molnar, Goran Petercol, Rajko Radovanović, Mladen Stilinović, Sven Stilinović, Josip Stošić, Goran Trbuljak, and Fedor Vučemilović.
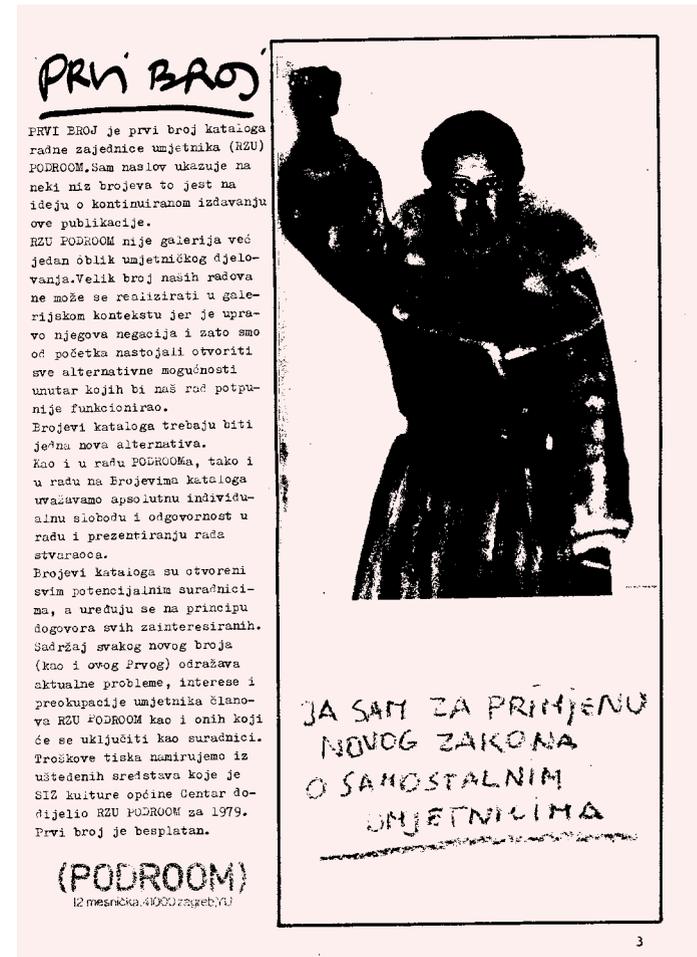
Prvi broj (The First Issue), catalogue-journal of the Working Community of Artists Podroom
Page with intro text and the photo of a woman with raised fist advocating the "application of the new legislation on independent artists", a design by Sanja Iveković, February 1980
Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

vocating for the rights of artists and the autonomy of artistic work and by directly intervening into the dominant cultural policies (e.g. by drafting a "Contract" that would regulate the relationship between artists and galleries), *Prvi broj* was also an attempt to define and indicate some specific differences that Podroom represented or could represent in relation to the activities of Zagreb's local institutions; also, the published conversation precisely reveals the group's unease regarding the uncertainty of articulating the manner of such a radical departure from institutional cultural practices. Furthermore, inside the group itself, there were different ideas regarding their programmes and the operation and role of such an artist-led space on the local arts scene, in terms of the need for, on the one hand, a space of open dialogue and critical examining of the local context through a relatively free, informal, and anarchic acting and, on the other, for a space that might act both as a link to the international art scene while clearly positioning itself locally, on the frontline in the struggle to improve the social and economic status of artists.

We may therefore view the entire existence of Podroom and *Prvi broj* as another quest for "interspaces", programmes, and forms of actions, whereas the fact that the group had a certain space as a concrete location of companionship – as Sanja Iveković stated in the conversation published in the – did not at all help them to concentrate on their "concept of action – on programme". In this conversation, distinguishing Podroom from other existing art institutions and conventional exhibition spaces was thus pursued in many ways: by recognising its uniqueness in the fact that active discussions took place there, that artists simply stayed there, that there was direct contact between them and the public, that the place was informally geared to be a "form of action", and finally, at the end of the conversation, by recognising it as a living space on the basis of the existence and active usage of a "sink", a "photo-portrait" of which, complete with unwashed coffee mugs, *Prvi broj* featured on one of its closing pages.

The Enemies of the "New" Art

The art of the "new artistic practice" was in many ways really new, but still above all obsessed with its own self:

> Despite the critical investigation of actual socio-political phenomena and the social "atmosphere", present in the work of some rare artists [...] most of the New Artistic Practice in Yugoslavia, the same as in the West, was engaged primarily with itself, with the quest for its own identity and for some "autonomous", uncontaminated space. Its greatest enemy was neither the state nor injustice, neither capitalism nor communism, but – another type of art. Sometimes these were the petrified modernist forms and conventions, or even Art itself, when New Artistic Practice sought to abandon and break the framework of art and "become" something else. (Bago and Majača 2011, 301).

Or, as Sanja Iveković puts it in that Podroom conversation, something "more".

The Contents of the Catalogue-magazine *Prvi broj* of the Podroom Working Community of Artists (1980)

In their unpublished "Letter to the Members of the Podroom Working Community of Artists", now kept in the archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis proposed starting a journal as an "additional form of action", envisaging their own participation in the conception and realisation of *Prvi broj*, whose editorial team comprised Sanja Iveković, Mladen Stilinović, and Goran Petercol. Apart from a transcript of a conversation between the members of the group and a list of its exhibitions and programmes compiled by Branka Stipančić, the magazine comprises a list of works, as well as visual and textual contributions by other members of the Working Community: Željko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Marijan Molnar, Antun Maračić, Goran Trbuljak, Ivan Dorogi, and Boris Demur. Marijan Molnar's text focuses on artists' own systemic complicity and individual, particular interests, which ultimately

always makes them dependent on the status quo. Mladen Stilinović wrote about his experiences with censorship and the media and institutions' neglect of the New Art Practice. Stilinović used handwriting as a political statement and tool of authorial control over the form and content of the text. Vlado Martek wrote about the domain of poetry, evoking the question of an autonomous space. Željko Jerman listed his revenues from art over the past five years, deriving an absurdly low average per month. Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis proposed a "Contract" to regulate the relationship between artistic labour and the institutions, based on the idea of the value of artistic labour as a public good.

The Value of Dematerialised Artistic Labour

On the one hand, *Prvi broj* is, in the local context, the first written trace of a group of artists' reflecting together on ways of associating around a specific purpose regarding the institutional context and cultural policies, while, on the other, it problematises their economic status on the labour and production "market". The dematerialisation of the art object and the (imagined) impossibility of reducing the product of artistic labour to a commodity that might produce a surplus of value/capital generate an additional need to valorise artistic labour as an idea, above all institutionally and socially. In the context of the socialist project, led by the idea of the common good and the abolition of private property, it is precisely ideas (art) that must fight for their material status and prove their (social) value. However, ideas in art are still usually signed by individuals and thus perpetuate the notion of private property.[8]

8   The critical juncture for the Podroom Working Community of Artists –
    just as it was for the Gallery of Tenants, initiated by Ida Biard – was the
    tension around the questions of individual and collective signature, i.e.
    the Contract. See Bago 2012.
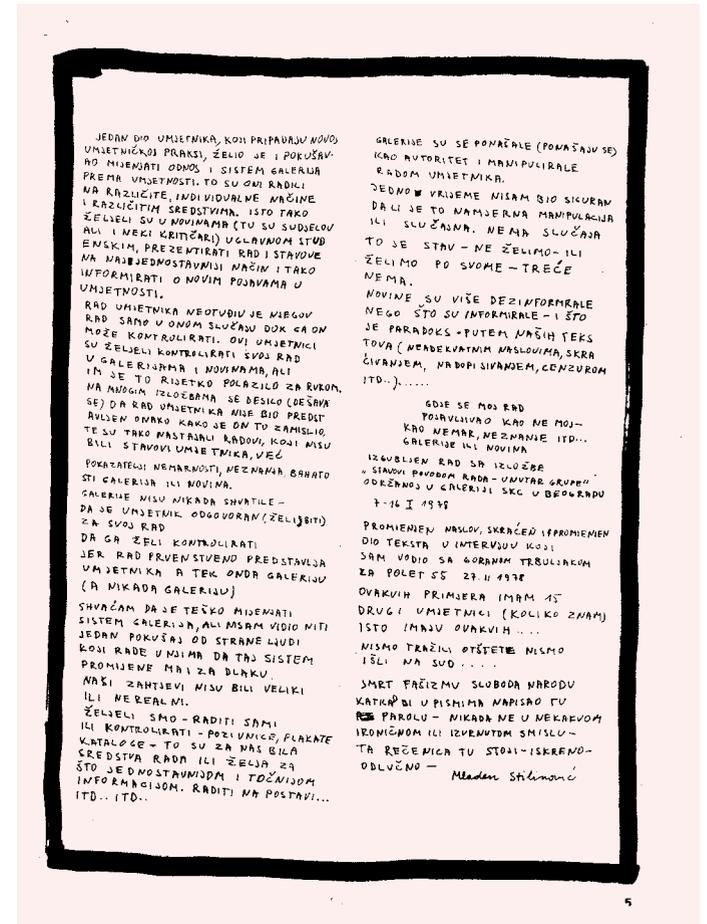
Prvi broj (The First Issue)
Contribution by Mladen Stilinović about censorship and the irresponsibility towards the work of artists on behalf of the media and institutions
Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Fragments of the Conversation Transcript and Other Pieces published in the Catalogue-magazine *Prvi broj*, 1980

COMMUNITY – modes of association/recognition

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: So, as long as the artist exists and works on his own, everything's fine, but as soon as he joins a collective, things start falling apart. This is in line with that most traditional view of artists, who are supposed to be exceptional "individuals" and therefore unable to co-operate. And here, as it turns out, this view is still alive and well.

GORAN PETERCOL: [...] The thing is, we are not a group; that was the basic point of departure: we don't have a single ideology, I mean, we've come together on the principle of a specific departure from the traditional. There is a way of evaluating, selecting each other, based on having trust in the work of the people who are gathered here. (*Prvi broj*, p. 1)

One should distinguish between two basic types of association among the artists of the Working Community [...] according to their mode of operation: 1) Productive – producing aesthetic art objects; 2) Non-productive – exploring the domain of art without producing aesthetic art objects; both of those positions may come together on the same basis, i.e. may form a Working Community of Artists. [...] Remunerating the former type of artistic labour is not questioned [...] but that is impossible when it comes to the latter type [...] disregarding these two fundamental distinctions of artistic labour causes only one of them to be encouraged, which hampers a complete realisation of a pluralist conception of our relationship with art. The economy-culture-art (artist) combination is subject to an unavoidable and continual revalorisation of the basis of its own content [...] (Demur 1980).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: [...] Of course, as it turned out, it was terribly difficult to harmonise our positions, even though more or less all of us belonged to the same generation, the nature of our work was the same, and our experiences with the institutions in this city were the same, etc. [...] although it may have been a negative experience for some, I think it was good at the time that we insisted on establishing a common policy before we started working in this space. Because, at the time, it didn't seem enough that there was this space where we could present our works, produce catalogues, etc. And that this space was inherently different from a gallery. After all, because the character of our work has changed, too, and because the awareness of the role of artists today has changed, we have, in a way, ceased to be just "artists", and are turning into something more than that...

MLADEN STILINOVIĆ: Less.

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: More or less, in my opinion – more, because when I say "more", I mean you're no longer interested only in how you're going to make your work, but you're also aware that you're acting in a context and that as an artist, you are a kind of cultural factor, and therefore you're entitled to take a critical view of it and then also to create a sort of cultural politics... (*Prvi broj*, p. 1)

(ABOLISH) THE SITE OF THE EVENT

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: I often thought that in a way, this space was, I think, the weak point of the whole thing...

IVAN DOROGI: The weak point, yeah, when you really think about it...

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: I mean, maybe it was precisely the fact that there was this space that prevented people from concentrating on generating a single concept of action, a programme. Maybe the space should've been closed, or forgotten, and then maybe...

IVAN DOROGI: The space between working on a project and presenting it is too big and entirely divided, whereas we should basically strive not just to diminish that space, but to bring it together… (*Prvi broj*, p. 2)

EXTENDED ACTION / SELF-ORGANISATION

Issues of the catalogue should be a new alternative. (*Prvi broj*, p. 3)

The Podroom Working Community of Artists is not a gallery but a form of artistic action. Many of our works could not be realised in the context of a gallery because they are precisely a rejection of that context and therefore we tried right from the start to open up every possible alternative, in which our work might function more fully. (*Prvi broj*, p. 3)

INSTITUTIONALISATION / POWER

DALIBOR MARTINIS: That this is called a basement [Podroom] and not, say, a gallery of modern art or a modern gallery, is no guarantee that all of that won't happen here as well. That this place doesn't look like a typical gallery at the moment and hasn't got an usher tearing tickets at the door doesn't mean that in a couple of years, as it's happened before, it won't be injected, along with the works, into the system and nicely establish itself in it.

GORAN PETERCOL: […] We still behave like a gallery to the artists we invite. Or rather, I think we're sort of coming close to the gallery model, except that in this case, it's not a single curator running things, but a group of individuals… I think there's been a certain accumulation of power here, predicated on the past; that is, on the fact, or our merit, that two years ago, a year and a half ago, we founded Podroom… plus that we have a space, that is, that we happened to get this space. That way we've got into a closed situation […] that should be transcended. It's a matter of principle. In fact, I think we don't really trust the artists we invite here […] (*Prvi broj*, p. 2)
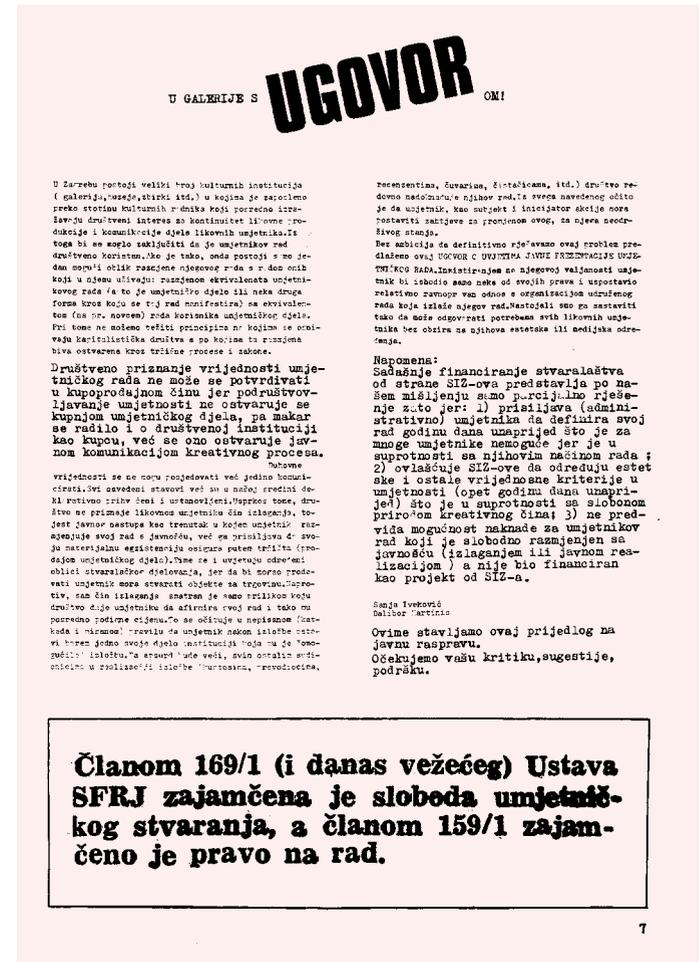
Prvi broj (First Issue)
Contribution by Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis *With the Contract to the Galleries*
Courtesy of: Archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb

MLADEN STILINOVIĆ: Why do I work in the Basement [Podroom]? I work in the Basement because I'm responsible for my work. When we act through other galleries or magazines, they (and not I) think that they are responsible for my work. That bothers me and can't be true. Besides, I like my work to be presented in full, i.e. the way I conceived it, from the poster to the catalogue, including the duration of the exhibition and the preservation of the exhibits [...] There's a maxim by Aretino that I really love: "To live means not going to the court". When I go to other institutions, I'm going to the court, that's how I feel (getting the cigarettes). When I go to the Basement, I go to the Basement. (*Prvi broj*, p. 1)

ISOLATION / SOLITUDE / AUDIENCE

MLADEN STILINOVIĆ: The people who work at the institutions think that culture is at their place of work and nowhere else [...] Responding to Mr. Depolo's[9] statement that the avant-garde has retreated into isolation, I state the following: It is not that we have retreated into isolation, it is you who put us in isolation (which is, on the one hand, rather difficult in economic terms and specifically – I know what the press, radio, and television mean to the public, as well as to you) [...] But I'm not interested in that isolation, it is a social phenomenon that requires a different and more detailed analysis [...]

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ: [...] Right from the beginning of our activities in the Basement, we emphasised the need that every author who does anything here be here at all times.

DALIBOR MARTINIS: One needs to be quiet in galleries, right?

MLADEN STILINOVIĆ: Right, one needs to be quiet in galleries. (*Prvi broj*, p. 2)

9 An art critic at the time.

Over the past few days, the Cultural Centre of the People's University of the City of Zagreb organised, at Zagrebačka banka, the first advisory conference on culture, with much success. At the conference, which started on Friday and ended yesterday, it was emphasised that advancing cultural activities and encouraging workers' cultural-artistic creativity at work organisations and local communities exerts a favourable impact on their productivity. (A press clipping, *Prvi broj*, p. 10).

There are a great number of cultural institutions in Zagreb [...] employing over a hundred cultural workers, who have indirectly expressed the society's interest for continued production in the visual arts [...] This suggests that artistic labour is socially useful. If so, then there is only one possible form of exchanging artistic labour with the labour of those who enjoy art: exchanging the equivalent of the artist's labour (and that is artworks or some other manifestation of that labour) with the equivalent (e.g. money) of the labour of the consumers of artworks. That said, we cannot aspire toward the principles of capitalist societies, whereby that exchange occurs through market processes and laws. The value of artistic labour may not be socially recognised by means of buying and selling, because art is not socialised by being sold, not even to a public institution, but by means of communicating its creative processes to the public. Spiritual values cannot be owned, but only communicated. Our society already accepts and affirms, if only publicly, all of these positions. And yet, it does not recognise the artistic act of exhibiting, that is, presenting in public, as the moment in which the artist exchanges his labour with the public, but forces him to secure his material existence on the market. (Iveković and Martinis 1980, 7)

Galleries are still acting as privileged institutions that monopolise social power in the hands of a group of gallery bureaucrats, separated and alienated from society

and above all from artists themselves. This applies even to those galleries that present works belonging to the New Art Practice, even those works that try to challenge their operating system. Indeed, they even manage to incorporate these works into their own system, thereby neutralising their potentially subversive potential [...] Individualism and particularity of interests on the part of artists is another factor that has kept this system going. (Molnar 1980, 4)

BORIS DEMUR: We've already accomplished some concrete things and I think that each one of us has a mechanism to guide him/her. We've also broached that completely economic issue, for example, this contract we're working on. If we agree about that and act with consistency, then this will be another successful co-ordination in a new sphere. And I think this used to be viewed in romantic terms, I mean culture, whereas the point is to penetrate the gallery system as an economic structure. (*Prvi broj*, p. 2)

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Why Do We Produce Ourselves, Promote Ourselves, Distribute Ourselves, Explain Ourselves and Why Are We "As Well" Around?*

≈ **Goran Sergej Pristaš**

Starting from the experience of being the editor-in-chief of the performing arts magazine *Frakcija* for ten years now, I'd like to emphasise the fact that most Eastern European performing arts journals (*Maska*, *TkH*, *Frakcija*) came out not only because of some scholars' interest in performance reflection and theory specifically, but also because of the clash of the laws of the art market and the "law of energies and interest" (Diderot). Reflecting on this experience, I realise that each issue of the magazine we published was an event for us; and it never engaged theorists only, but mainly artists, who are always in the situation or need to produce, promote, distribute, and explain themselves. At the same time, I realise that we've been seriously considered in the performing arts circuit mainly because of our writing

* This text was presented in 2005 at the conference *Inventur: Dance and Performance* held at Tanzquartier Wien and published in *It Takes Place When It Doesn't: On Dance and Performance since 1989*, eds. Martina Hochmuth, Krassimira Kruschkova, and Georg Schölhammer (Vienna: Springerin, Frakcija & Revolver, 2006, pp. 165-168).

Cover of TkH, Journal for Performing Arts Theory, no.20, *Art and the Public Good*, Edited by: Bojana Cvejić and Marko Kostanić, Layout and photo by: Katarina Popović

V · **Tactical Poetics**

on brand jokers, which was not the case in circles not related to the performing arts. The *Frakcija* has attracted interest internationally after we started writing on artists who were already in the focus of interest. Why are the pages on Eastern European artists still blank pages in our magazines? Why are those texts not referential at all? Is it because the overall interest and existing energies do not produce a pregnant moment? And are we simply too ego-Eastic?

It seems to me that Eastern European artists spent a long time striving to make a transfer from being regionally and contextually defined into being whatever they *want.*

But the basic transfer was made from the so-called transitional identity (transition meaning that we are becoming the same, just more redistributed and actualised) into a disorientalised exemplarity. Most of the Eastern European artists present on the scene of redefinition in the performing arts figure as exemplary; those who are paradigmatic, shown alongside, purely linguistic beings, those who take part in the language, who are there as well, their own neighbours, over-identified with themselves. They are being-called, they communicate in the empty space of the example, without being tied by any common property. As Agamben would describe examples, they "appropriate belonging itself, tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons, but exemplars of coming community" (*The Coming Community*).

So, what is wrong there? I would say: nothing.

Taking the place of their own presentation, "and also"[1] the neighbours' place, or the place of "as well", those artists are taking the place of existence, but they also have the power of not being and the power of not-not-being at their disposal. Or, the power to be subject to their own will. Taking the place of an artist on the market, "as well" as the places of producers, promoters, distributors, publishers and critics, they do take part in the game, they are a part of the problem, but they also invest their own will in multiple common space, being by their own will, being actually non-representable.

1 A quotation from the call for papers for the conference *Inventur: Dance and Performance*: "In many western and also eastern European cities young scenes and independent projects have emerged".

Cover of Maska, Performing Arts Journal, no.60-61, *Eroticism*, Edited by: Janez Janša, Layout by: Martin Bricelj

Cover of Maska, Performing Arts Journal, no.82-83, *Dance and Politics*, Edited by: Bojana Kunst, Layout by: Martin Bricelj

Cover of Maska, Performing Arts Journal, no.98-99, *Subversive Affirmation*, Edited by: Inke Arns & Sylvia Sasse, Layout by: Martin Mistrik

Cover of Maska, Performing Arts Journal, no.121-122, *Re-projecting Radical Futures*, Edited by: Gene Ray and Katja Praznik, Layout by: Martin Mistrik

That might be the reason why we will find one of the most interesting artistic strategies in the work of artists who operate in the volatile field of dramaturgy: who knows the difference between Bojana (Kunst) and Bojana (Cvejić), are they pronounced as Bozhana or Bodžana, Tsveik or Kviich, are they philosophers, performers, editors, cultural politicians, do they deal with music or body art? But everybody knows who Kunst is. I don't want to enter now the enumeration of "they are not this" or "they are not that", which would serve me to express something ineffable, because those "nots" are deprived of all representative functions, in order to point to something which is beyond representation, which would then be some new Eastern European mysticism. It would be too ego-Eastic.

Instead, I would stay on course of Boris Groys, who says that at a time of a drying up of affirmative, legitimising discourse, the chance of Eastern European artists lies in the production of discursive value. Or as Badiou would say, to fight the easy language, the language of journalism, the expression of hatred, of any inventive and delivered naming. Instead of repeating the question "Did I choose the wrong language?", we have to understand that the production of discourse value brings up a new paradox: the confrontation of discourse and capital manifests itself in the fact that capital is also a legitimising force – that's the way capitalism regulates discourse.

The paradox of the contemporary artist is that s/he is in a mimetic relation to capital, s/he is like a capitalist, especially the conceptual artist – s/he is the appropriator, s/he selects, combines, transports, resituates.

The paradoxical situation of Eastern European artists is that they are most often the capitalists with a positive *ressentiment* especially toward the commercialisation of lifestyle and the commodification of discourse. But they still re-qualify, they are mobile, regularly change jobs and combine differing fields of work. If there is the thesis that East = West, then the theorem of exchangeability would say that East = East – which is not the case because the East is always old-fashioned, and West always equals West. And does West =

Cover of Frakcija, Performing Arts Magazine, no.14, *disOrientation: EASTERN EUROPE,* Layout by: Igor Masnjak
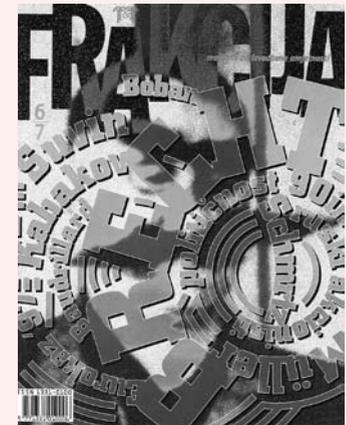
Cover of Frakcija, Performing Arts Magazine, no.6-7, *Politics of the nineties; Brecht – 100 years; Russian Actionism,* Layout by: Igor Masnjak

Cover of Frakcija, Performing Arts Magazine, no.51-52, *What to Affirm? What to Perform?,* Edited by: Goran Sergej Pristaš, Ivana Ivković, Layout by: Laboratorium
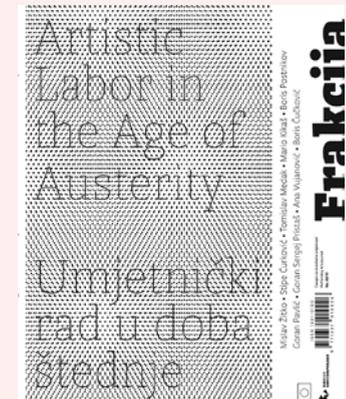
Cover of Frakcija, Performing Arts Magazine, no.60-61, *Artistic Labor in the Age of Austerity,* Edited by: Marko Kostanić, Layout by: Ruta

East hold true? Even in such a discourse of equivalence, we still find at least a field of possible but non-representable differences. One of them is the difference of where something takes the place, the basic difference that Groys makes between Eastern European and Western art – Eastern European art comes from Eastern Europe, it's always seen as information on the state of society of its origin.

The best example of an artistic project with *ressentiment* that would be seen totally differently if it were done by Western artists might be the East Art Map by Irwin.

But what happens to Eastern European artists who are on the blank pages of our magazines? They are examples, they are purely linguistic beings. How come? If we try to think what Eastern European Art is, we will look for its taking place. But the paradox is that its taking place, its act of will, its property is defined only linguistically in the word *East*, because Eastern Europe exists only as being-called. The class of Eastern European art is therefore defined only as a variable, in its "illegitimate totality", as Bertrand Russell would say. Therefore the name=being is amorphous and offers the lifestyle of constant inactuality – which is one of the properties very often annotated to Eastern European art. So, the blank pages are the point of contact, in Agamben's words, with an external space that must remain empty, they belong to an illegitimate class. Our contributors' practices of being whatever, being editors by their own will, artists, producers, curators of their own performances at their own festivals, cultural politicians, is always the event of an outside coming out into the open, "as well" with Western artists. But the blank pages, being on the outside, are the face of European arts just as Eastern Europe is the face, the threshold, the passage of Europe, the exteriority that gives it access. The experience of the two Bojanas, of the editors of magazines who also are editors in at least two other magazines, of Emil Hrvatin who is from Croatia or Slovenia, or is he Jan Fabre, Janez Janša or Janus (or is it only Maska?), directors who perform but are actually dramaturges, they are transformers, the collectives which are their own tactical networks, cultural capitals that are *das Kapital*, all of that is an experience of the

limit itself, being on the outside.. Their political engagement is to spread their fullness of exteriority that communicates only itself into a badly mediated representation of Eastern Europe. The act of discursive self-legitimisation is not an act of solution in order to overcome limits, but to legitimate the *outside* as a strategy of both appearance and disappearance. The act of going and the act of staying.

Notes on Spaces and Intervals*

≈ **Goran Sergej Pristaš**

I

Diderot's dream of the theatre as a Plato's cave ended with his awakening – he dreamed that he was sitting with his arms and legs tied, one among many, his face turned towards the depths of the cave, which had a huge projection screen extended from side to side. Most men, women and children were eating, drinking, laughing, and singing. Behind the audience, small colourful figures were projected onto the screen with the help of some sort of magic lantern, while assistants behind the screen were lending them voices, creating a terribly convincing illusion of actuality. Those who were doing the projecting were kings, ministers, priests, doctors, apostles, prophets, theologians, politicians, villains, charlatans, illusionists, and other merchants selling hopes and fears (Diderot 1960, 188–198). Plato's allegory of theatrical illusion was condensed into Diderot's parable of cinematic viewing. From his dream, we awaken into the outset of the modern period, the present time, where we know that our viewing is always cinematic, that our dreams are always edited, and that the joy of an emancipated spectator is always the result of an illusion created by reasserting rules and instructions. However, Diderot's dream leaves open the possibility of another participant, the one who escaped from the cave, came back, and – kept silent!

II

That is the institutional distribution of places. The relations are set and petrified. But how is it viewed and to whom is it shown? Does the charlatan project it for the spectator or for the king? Someone once said that art was not meant neither for the spectator nor for the artist, but rather for a third party!? In football, as we know, the situation is far more complex. Is the match meant for the spectators? There are two groups of spectators in football. It can even be played without the spectators, since it becomes official when it is universalised by the referee. The role of the spectator at the stadium is affective, since he or she increases the intensity on the pitch through sound, as Massumi would say (Massumi 2002, 71–82). However, what is interesting is the role of the spectator at home. Media transfer domesticates the event and brings it home, turning the television set into an inductor – an object that provokes new affective reactions: joy, disappointment, aggression...

One may ask whether Diderot's rebellious and runaway spectator would have returned to the cave had he had the option of seeing the screened projections at home. History of the media will convince us that it is not so; cable television, home cinema, digital video rentals, mobile telephones, etc. prove precisely the opposite, namely that home is where the cinema is. To be sure, the role of the cinema is different from that of football, and although watching football and seeing a film are both affective acts, one may say that cinema also educates the senses, since it

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* This text was originally commisioned in 2008 for the book 25, *An Anthology for the 25th Anniversary of BIT Teatergarasjen,* edited by Marie Nerland

assist

trains the spectator to watch, turning it into a form of work. We may eat, drink, laugh and sing at the cinema, but with all the images of daily life in motion, the cinematic mode of production orchestrates the mise-en-scène for the production of consciousness and the consciousness of production. We cut, edit, produce, and direct; we watch, we process, we wait. You think all those movements, all that time, is your own consciousness, even though what plays on the screen in your theater comes somehow from beyond you. (Beller 2006, 80)

III

A theatre in Zagreb advertised its programme for season 2007 with the following slogan: "Feel like at home." In 2008 they changed to: "There are other worlds – in the theatre." Come to our theatre, it is another world, like at home.

IV

Faced with a choice, do both.
Oblique Strategies

In Diderot's dream, the spectator returns to the cave with the experience of another space. His return to the cave does not mean leaving home for a place of difference, but rather coming back from another world to the cave in which he feels at home. Diderot advises him to keep silent about what he has seen outside. What he sees inside is theatre, although not a cinema that shows projected images, but rather a theatre that shows cinematic production; his theatre is a film set, a series of stage sceneries that show all possible elements of the world on one side and their construction on another. While some people are watching the show, he is watching the theatre; while they are watching the projection, he sees the construction. His spaces overlap – neither the theatre *as if* it were home, nor home *as if* it were the theatre. He has a choice and he chooses both. His theatre is *as not* rather than being *as if*.

Nikolina Pristaš and Ivana Ivković: *Protest,* Performance, Urban Festival, Flower Square, Zagreb, 09.09.2006., Photo by: Tor Lindstrand

V

Emotional crack-ups, mental canyons, slices of Manhattan – all of these are instances of the re-territorialisation of gaps in consciousness such as those in the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald, an Industrial Age author. Today we know that the industry of images produces not only conscious-ness, but also psychoanalysis, for it is impossible not to read these spatial metaphors of consciousness in relation to montage gaps, intervals between frames (Vertov), inter-stitions (Godard/Deleuze), spaces that make it seem as if the neighbouring ones had no end or beginning, spaces that are incised into continuity. "The test of a first-rate in-telligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to func-tion", as Fitzgerald wrote in his short story "The Crack-Up". It is, of course, all about analogical, plural spaces, spaces that are defined by correspondences rather than relations, by domestications and neighbourhoods rather than differences.

VI

That gap or interstition should be sought between spaces that are not *compossible* or commonly possible, yet their *in-compossibility* does not limit their *contemporability* – which is contemporaneity but also full intensity in time.

In order to articulate such a space, we must first dare to de-mand that it should be an operation in time, while time should always be presented in terms of space. Such a space would be a diagram of complex relations of movement, space and time, adequate for the plasticity that Noël Burch has described as a "rigorous development through such de-vices as rhythmic alteration, recapitulation, retrogression, gradual elimination, cyclical repetition and serial varia-tion" (Burch 1981, 14).

BADco.: *The League of Time*, Rijeka, 2009, Photo by: Lovro Rumiha

VII

Danny the Street is probably the strangest superhero in the (DC) Universe. He was created by Grant Morrison and is featured in the *Doom Patrol* series.

Danny is an actual street. A sentient stretch of roadway, he has long served as a home and haven for the strange and dispossessed. A super hero of sorts, Danny does possess several super powers, the most notable being teleportation. He is also able to integrate himself into a city's geography without causing any damage or disturbance; roads and buildings simply make room for him. He does this mostly at night, when no one is looking. [...] Danny is an unusually flamboyant personality. In spite of the fact that most streets are genderless, Danny is male and a transvestite. His sidewalks are lined with various hyper-masculine stores – gun shops and sporting goods, mostly – which are decorated with frilly pink curtains and lace. While Danny cannot speak in any normal sense of the term, he communicates with his residents via such means as signs in windows, type-written messages and letters formed out of manhole vapors or broken glass shards. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danny_the_street)

In one of the episodes, owing to some disorder that happened in the DC Universe, Danny the Street inhabits a new space and becomes Danny the World.

VIII

In order to think about the relations between spaces that are *incompossible*, one should believe in the reality of these relations, one should think and perform the act of relating itself as an object. Complex structures of space, intersected by complex lines of flight from actual physical space do not seek to make the performance site-specific; instead, the domestication of performance will create a specific site between spaces, in intervals, on analogies. The reality of intervals is duplicated as the reality of layers, but such layers between which the core is floating rather than centred. The

BADco.: *The League of Time*, Rijeka, 2009, Photo by: Dražen Šokčević

BADco.: *The League of Time*, Skegness, 2009, Photo by: Tomislav Medak

usual elements of spatial structure – the royal box, the place for the fool, the backstage (*skene*), the vanishing point, the container, the apron, the wings, the horizon, the projection screen – are all specific sites, the functionality of which has been supplemented by specificity. These sites not only serve their functions, but they also represent their functions. Thus, space has become a space of action, while its relations have become locational and even infrastructural. Nevertheless, it is not a space of manipulation or a space to be conquered. It is a space with objectivity that surpasses the framework of its thingness. The lines of the ruler's perspective turn into the curtain, the backstage into the arena, the apron into the backdrop, the wings into the auditorium... While bodies were always entering the space from behind or from the side, here the only direction with a past, an origin, a "before" and a "thence", is the front. That entry breaks no barrier and is not related to the boundary that we cross; it causes no break with the space from which we are coming. We drift into the gap and then we wander around. Quickly getting in and out again even more quickly, but in place.

IX

We can open up another option: the same space, only reiterated. How can we make a space identical to itself, but at the same time freed from the automatism of perception? In an action called "Time/Space Definition of the Psycho-physical Activity of Matter" (1968), the Slovakian artist Julius Koller redrew the lines of a tennis court. No gap and no insertion. The space is named after itself, its definitions and rules. Moving in that space is also an action that is identical to itself. But such a procedure opens up the possibility of a new existence for the same space as a space of theory, a space that becomes a notional, a conceptual operation.
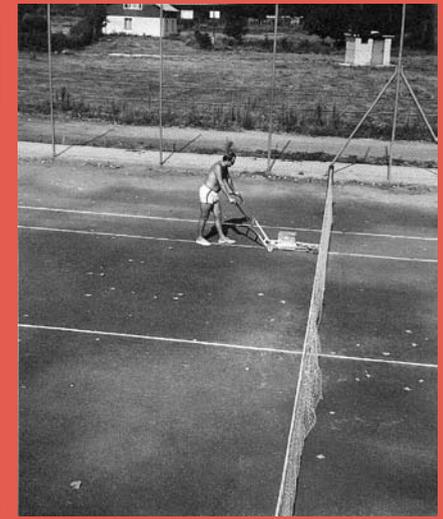
Július Koller: Time/Space Definition of the Psycho-physical Activity of Matter, Antihappening, 1968, Courtesy of: Galerie Martin Janda

BADco.: *memories are made of this... performance notes,* Photo by: Tor Lindstrand

X

Forty years later. Ivana Ivković and Nikolina Pristaš enact a one-time performance called "Protest" at the Flower Square in Zagreb. It is Saturday noon and the square is full of people and packed with stalls: political parties collecting signatures for the upcoming elections, non-governmental organisations with their petitions, a car manufacturer with a humanitarian action... The two of them place themselves on the most frequented spot and start reading out a text from the bunch of papers they are holding in their hands. The text is printed in the form of slogans, in fragments, notes, a few lines at a time or a few words on a page. Each page they finish is thrown away into the wind. Even though it is impossible to hear what they are saying because of the racket, or to gather all the texts into a line, the small performance machine begins to produce another one – a protest machine. The anxiety caused by the inability to understand produces individual outbursts of anger and opens up space for the protest. People join in and begin shouting their own protests. The space of the square as a site of public communication gets re-actualised through an infra-event.

XI

Non-linear dramaturgical thinking is a precondition for formulating parallel spatial logics in the performance. It is not only about two flows of information or meaning that alternate, intertwine, or permeate each other. It is about establishing two or more systems or system procedures that open up different modes of realisation. The quarantine, on the one hand, is a community of enclosed people, a situation of enforced socialisation. On the other hand, it enables a whole new way of producing the universality, which is parallel and non-linear – the life of viruses in bodies multiplied by viruses. A similar thing happens with reconstructed spaces that presuppose historical awareness, or with film sets that integrate cinematic viewing...

A typology of intense spaces:
    reconstructed spaces
    spaces in which we move with our eyes closed
    caves, canyons, Manhattan – spaces that are interiors and exteriors at the same time
    folded spaces
    machines
    surveyed spaces
    deaf chambers
    deserts
    sterilised spaces
    shared spaces
    spaces at 90°
    film sets
    notebook pages

XIII

I am the Cine-Eye. I construct things.
I have planted you, who were created by me, in a most remarkable room that never existed before and that I also created.
In this room are twelve walls filmed by me in different parts of the world.
In combining the shots of the walls and of the details with one another I managed to put them in order that will please you and to construct a Cinematic phrase, that is the room, correctly in intervals..
I am the Cine-Eye. I create a man more perfect than Adam was created. I create thousands of different people according to different preliminary sketches and schemes.
Dziga Vertov in "The Cine-Eyes. A Revolution"

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Protocol

≈ **Ivana Ivković**

I

Every day, precisely at noon, a cannon goes off in the old town of Zagreb, from the top of a historical tower. At noon on 12th May 1979 a performance commenced with this blast. Like a starting pistol, the cannon's shot marked the beginning of an auditory performative action by 100+1.

A divided square measuring ten by ten meters, a raster not unlike those scanned by electron beams on the television screens of the time, a data structure composed of a grid of cells, the groups of cells representing at first glance undecipherable alphanumerical values – the attributes of the script.

During the first part of the action, Tomislav Gotovac orchestrated the movement and use of whistles by 100 young men and women provided to him by the Music Biennale, the event that framed the action. Gotovac, dressed in a leisure suit, wearing a yellow sports cap and sunglasses, armed with

a megaphone, coordinated the action that resulted in a deafening scream of 100 whistles.

In the second part a reversal takes place, as the 100 now direct Gotovac, who, having gained notoriety before, on another occasion, as Yugoslavia's first streaker, strips and continues the action nude, whistling and treading the raster. In an interview made almost 30 years later, Gotovac acknowledged this as "his first anarcho-action in Zagreb".[1]

Gotovac, a film author, among other vocations, may be well known for his endless provocations using nudity and references to porn, but it is his recurrent problematising of aspects of feature film structure – the meter, the cut, the framing, all present in the action's script – that interests me in the case of this event.

On 30th May 2009, 30 years later, the Tanzquartier Wien[2] curated *A Re-enactment of the Performance STO*, titled *100+1=1+100*, with theatre director Oliver Frljić standing in for Gotovac and working according to the script that the author had sent him.

As in 1979, the raster's cells contained data, simple letters, and numbers. And there was a written script to be executed. For example, whenever Frljić called out B4, all participants standing in cells marked B4, whistled away. The sound moved through the space as in a dynamic soundscape. A very simple idea resulted thereby in a complex sonic image. Groupings may have seemed random, but were not. There was an underlying alphanumerical protocol running the performance.

Unlike Gotovac, who got carried away by his audience's rearranging of the script in real time, Frljić remained fully clothed – in fact, the stripping was never in the script to begin with, not to mention that public nudity would hardly have the same impact in 2008 Vienna as it did in 1979 on Za-

1   Interview with Tomislav Gotovac in *Nacional* magazine, No. 634, 7. January 2008, http://www.nacional.hr/clanak/41499/tomislav-gotovac-zivotno-priznanje-sokantnom-performeru.

2   The action was staged at the Tanzquartier Wien, as part of "Instruktionen verraten" (Giving (Up) Instructions), a part of "What to Affirm? What to Perform?", a two-year joint project of the Centre for Drama Art (Zagreb), National Dance Center (Bucharest), Maska (Ljubljana), Tanzquartier (Vienna), and Allianz Kulturstiftung.

Tomislav Gotovac: *Action 100*, Republic Square, Zagreb, 12.5.1979., performed as part of the 10th Music Biennale Zagreb, Photo by: Siniša Knaflec, Sarah Gotovac collection, Zagreb, Courtesy of: Tomislav Gotovac Institute

Oliver Frljić: *100*, Reconstruction of the *Action 100* by Tomislav Gotovac Zagreb, 10.12.2009., Photo by: Lovro Rumiha

greb's main square and just days after Josip Broz Tito was admitted to the hospital where he would die less than a year later. On the cusp of hyperventilating and fainting, Frljić stuck to the written script and performed the seventeen-minute one-man whistle concert of Part Two.

Frljić's reconstruction sought to reclaim visibility for the decision-making procedures of *100*, as well as their performative representation and the (social) space where it was "possible to structure creatively the desire for a decentralized model of decision making" (Frljić 2009, 9).

II

Since 1998, and well into the 2000's, Dalibor Martinis worked on his *Binary Series*. All works in the series are based on a clear binary principle, similar to the binary code that defines the world of digital computing.[3]

A highly unreadable, sophisticated code (information translated into zeros and ones) plays out in the low-tech media of church bells ringing, cars being parked, bicycles on a rack. In all of the works the meaning of the message, although it defines the forms of the work, remains a hidden causal series for the viewer/listener to decode.

A high note of the bell thus signifies a one and a low signifies a zero. The disposition of thirteen bicycles on the rack at the lost and found office at the police station in Slavonski Brod (2002) spells out a message in binary code: 01010011 – 01001111 – 01010011 (a message more familiar to us from its Morse code version: S-O-S).

Fifty silver and black Volkswagen Golf cars are parked on a pedestrian square in Rosenheim, Germany, in 2000. This time, the message is also subversive: "No Parking – Sometimes it's Nice, Though".

One may conclude that just as some technical foreknowledge is necessary to read these encoded messages, in contemporary art, too, one must be familiar with its information system to understand it. Or at least to position herself as its consumer.

3 For more on Martinis's *Binary Series*, see Kalčić 2002.

Dalibor Martinis: *S.O.S. S.B.*, Action, Binary Series, Slavonski Brod, 2002, Photo by: Danijel Soldo

BADco.: *Deleted Messages,* Ljubljana, 2004, Photo by: Ivana Ivković

In a public park outside Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, converted from a hospital in 2002, Martinis put up an audio installation in a tree – passers-by had a chance to experience the poetic and even charming chirping of a songbird. But again, it was another "camouflaged" piece of binary code revealing itself only to the "trained" ear: the bird, in this case, swears; the installation's title is *A Garden of the Most Obscure Curses*.

Of course, this series thematises comprehension, the structure of language, the value of signs. But the underlying protocol of deciphering is what distinguishes it. The linguistic and visual messages are actualisations of specific codes, which further presupposes that they bear the features of a sign, or, in other words, that their function and appearance as a group of signs, sounds, and visual elements, are a mere representation of something else, another message or the structure of a message itself – a protocol.

Cars, bicycles, church bells, and in other cases, cans, edited films, and documentary video records transmit messages on behalf of Martinis. For their recipients, the overall comprehension process becomes questionable. Owing to this complex protocol of understanding, reading and decoding of such pieces, most observers are taken only by their visual and auditory fascination with the works.

From the perspective of the eager spectator-participant in the work, artistic creation is thus only an act of translation sifted through the sieve of motivation to yield an objectified synthesis.

<p style="text-align:center">**III**</p>

BADco.'s *Deleted Messages* (2004), a theatre performance for six performers and a scorekeeper, aims to translate the organisational aspect of the generative principles of the performance into the realm of the audiences' self-organisation inside a controlled (via surveillance) but "soft" space of a quarantine. The layout as well as the composition of the performance as a whole is directed by the audience's behaviour, who are free to move about, swarming in a space devoid of chairs or any other seating apart from the cloth-covered floor

of, usually, an abandoned industrial building, without a distinguishable border between the 6+1 and the rest.

The performers are not self-contained. There is no clear distinction between individual performers and the performance environment as an actor. The strategy of marking the territory and delineating hierarchical structures of performance through nonlinear dramaturgy and spam storytelling dispenses with the notion of a single possible narrative in favour of a complex system of singularities. The capability of generating emergent properties arises not so much from the inbuilt rules of individual behaviour as from the complexity of the performers' interactions – among themselves and within the mass of bodies in the space.

The audience is invited to move freely around the performance space. Interaction between the performers and the space may be provoked only by making the behaviour of the audience a component of the performance strategy, thus making the space responsive and the plasticity of the environment apparent. The audience is invited to interact, not through the hard subjectivation of intervention, but through the soft subjectivation of responding to movement. The performance space offers no fixed rules to the audience either – its elements are lines of demarcation, rather than physical barriers – making the audience devise their own protocols of conduct.

There is no control other than soft control. And what is left is a decoding of the protocol's regulative structure. The code in these three examples is parsed (in the sense of syntactic analysis), compiled, procedural, or object-oriented (Galloway 2004, xiii), defined by its protocol – a type of controlling logic that operates on behalf of the social and institutional context, nonlinear dramaturgy, or a scripted performance strategy.

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A Shift of Attention*

≈ Ric Allsopp

Beginning to read the question of the future of performance through Marjorie Perloff's 2002 manifesto of a "new poetics", which she calls "21st-century modernism" (Perloff 2002), I note that the modernist American writer Gertrude Stein wrote in her discussion of poetry and grammar that "Successions of words are so agreeable. A sentence means there is a future" (Perloff 2002, 44). Stein's approach to language might serve here as a model for my main point – that the future is only ever a shift of attention in the present. Stein's poetics (her way of using language) involved the accumulation of material through processes of repetition, a gradual bringing of existing materials into new relationships, an attention to a language of the ordinary, a rejection of names and naming (as descriptive function) in favour of the conditions whereby "things" and relationships are brought to our attention. Take the example of *Tender Buttons*, her 1914 collection of portraits of objects, food, and rooms (Stein 1997): her approach was not a decisive break with the past, but a shift of attention – an openness to futurity – which might be aligned with the term "assemblage" as a continual process of making and unmaking, of materials, energies, and circulations coming together and moving apart.

If the future of performance is not a decisive break with the present, then the means by which shifts of attention come about in the present is where our thought must be focused.

An attention to the present – to the presence of performance – has occupied the thought of many writers, artists, and performance theorists. William Burroughs famously said (in his inimitable voice) in the "Origin and Theory of the Tape Cut-Ups" that "when you cut into the present the future leaks out" (Burroughs 2001), thereby staking out the present as a form of precognition, that when cut open reveals the future. In his essay "The Fall of Art'" Burroughs responds to Jasper Johns's question "What is writing about?". He replies that "[t]he purpose of writing is to make it happen. What we call 'art' – painting, sculpture, writing, dance, music – is magical in origin" and later in the essay he further notes that "what survives the literalisation of art is the timeless ever-changing world of magic caught in the painter's brush, or the writer's words, bits of vivid and vanishing detail" (Burroughs 1985, 61-62). Writing in this sense is no longer concerned with the "aboutness" of Jasper Johns's confrontational question with its reference to the literal and descriptive elsewhere, but with enacting the present, the magical operation of writing – and of art in general – that forms a continuous thread through experimental and avant-garde thinking and practice: the enactment of the present, the moment of encounter and participation in the emergence of the work itself.

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In a different register this links to Peggy Phelan's analysis of the ontology of performance: that "[p]erformance's only life is in the present" (Phelan 2005, 146) that is discloses or opens itself only in the moment of its performance, and in so doing shifts our attention to the present through forms of return or repetition in Stein's sense of the word where recurrence is not equivalent to sameness, and therefore disrupts the inclination to "isolate, identify and limit the burden of meaning given to an event" (Hejinian 1985).

In the context of "open work" this "attentive awareness" (as Stein calls it) helps to identify in the present moment of performance a radical coherence; a way of holding together that doesn't rely on established means of form, or ready intelligibility, or integrity. It may be further described as a "confidence in lack" – to use Allen Fisher's phrase – or a negative capability that "turn[s] meanings loose, leaving contexts open so that the materials of performance are more like fluid and moving points of connectivity than components of a structure" (Hejinian 1985).

We encounter the future through our participation in performance, not by asking "what is the future of performance" but by asking how we can effectively participate in the present – the point of intersection or elision, of collision or confrontation, of betweenness – in ways that challenge or resist the deadening effect of imposed forms and fixities, through what Perloff calls "reading constructively rather than consecutively". The work occurs in our encounter with it and opens to what is outside the work – its effect on the contexts, the social, pragmatic environment that it exists within.

If the future is "a shift of attention in the present", then what do I mean by "a shift of attention"? It is a double, a reflexive movement suggesting that attentive awareness is both an effect of the work encountered – it engages us; and that it is a disposition on the part of the spectator or participant, a point of departure toward the work. The "shift of attention" depends then on an idea of the open as an integral part of any work. Xavier Le Roy, responding to a general question in the journal *Maska* of what open work might be, asked simply:

"Open to what?" and thus pointed to an underlying problematic of openness (and by extension futurity) insofar as open work only has meaning in relation to existing structures and forms, and to the supposed autonomy of the artwork (Le Roy 2005). Le Roy's question also leads us to Derrida's observation that the "open" is always a part of the system, and is that which enables the movement of culture to take place, locating the artwork as that which remains open to the contingent, the unpredictable, the monstrous. He writes:

> A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would already be predictable, calculable and programmable tomorrow. All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant,* to welcome it, that is to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household [economy] and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture. (Derrida 2004, 387)

Openness is always ghosted by form. Like the hinges of the door or "the opening of the field" (to use the poet Robert Duncan's term), it requires form to lead us to that which is beyond itself, and to effect its subsequent domestication. The absorption or domestication of any complex artwork or form is here seen as part of the movement of culture, the opening toward the future. The implications of, for example, the work of Jérôme Bel, are not at the level of stylistics, but at the level of a shift of attention to what constitutes the work, which Una Bauer has theorised as "the movement of embodied thought" (Bauer 2008), rather than an accumulation or array of movement phrases, whether drawn from bodily or non-bodily movement.

To take two examples from the historical avant-garde of what I see as shifts of attention that offer the possibility of a future. Firstly from Perloff's discussion of Gertrude Stein's "description" (or, rather, enactment of) a box in *Tender Buttons*.[1] As an object of intense concentration, Stein's "box" can-

1 "A Box – Out of kindness comes redness and out of rudeness comes rapid same question, out of an eye comes research, out of selection comes

not be visualised, yet "boxness" is immediately established. The writing, in its insistence on the play of composition, syntax, and parataxis, both shifts attention to the object in question in terms of the medium it uses and breaks with our conventional habits of reading, forcing the reader to shift attention to the way in which language constructs or re-constructs our encounters with the everyday. It shifts attention away from the descriptive and nominal to the activity of relations that constitute the object. By analogy, this could be extended to the field of conceptual choreography where "dance" as such is not visualised or actualised (literalised), but established through an attention shifted from the conventional or normative terms of its reading. The indeterminacy of boxes – as a means of breaking with the linear sequencing of books (or in Stein's case the conventions of syntax and grammar) and thus providing the possibility of a random reading with a frame – was attractive to Marcel Duchamp, who invested considerable energy in reproducing his work and his handwritten notes in boxed forms. In "The Green Box" in particular, the visualisation of a process of thought opens itself to paratactical strategies of reading – constructive rather than consecutive reading – a shift of attention from what Perloff describes as the form of language to what is being said – or as Samuel Beckett put it, "how it is what it is".

A detail in "The Green Box" – Duchamp's formulation of "'delay" in terms of "The Large Glass" – provides the second example (Perloff 2002, 87–8; Duchamp 1973). Duchamp articulates what he calls a "delay in glass" in negative terms: "A delay in glass does not mean a picture on glass". The notion of "delay" also speaks to a type of futurity – the postponement of the yet-to-come, the stilling of movement, the slowing or refraction of our attentions and perceptions. Duchamp understood delay as being "merely a way of succeeding in no longer thinking that the thing in question is a picture". And, of course, by analogy such a "'delay" or shift of attention

painful cattle. So then the order is that a white way of being round is something suggesting a pin and is it disappointing, it is not, it is so rudimentary to be analyzed and see a fine substance strangely, it is so earnest to have a green point not to red but to point again", Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*, quoted in Perloff 2002, 78–79.

enables us to "no longer think" that the work in question can only be encountered within the familiar frameworks of dance or performance. It opens the possibility of encountering the work in other terms, using other criteria – terms that engage us in the present moment of production rather than in the passive consumption of the work. Duchamp's central question of 1913 – "Can one make works which are not works of art?" – implies the set up of a future, a new set of possibilities that dissolves the boundaries of artwork and other forms of work.

Discussing the shifting relationship between "'art" and "work", Jacques Rancière concludes that "whatever might be the specific type of economic circumstances they lie within, artistic practices are not 'exceptions' to other practices. They represent and reconfigure the distribution of these activities" (Rancière 2004, 45). A shift of attention – a redistribution of attention that is not analogous with a shift in point of view in visual terms – might perhaps also be the result of what is generated by an interrogative, questioning or reflective approach to arts practice – questioning the nature and contexts of art and its relation to other practices. In her discussion of the movement of embodied thought in the work of Jérôme Bel mentioned earlier, Una Bauer points to a move from statement to question that is at the centre of the choreographic effect of the work:

> But it is the more open form, that is the focus of [Bel's] interest, not a statement, but a question, a question that inspires a dialogue: a question that asks not what choreography is and what it is not but what are the processes of its construction and understanding as choreography, how is choreography constructed? And a proposal is framed: choreography is not constructed through the successful staging of particular representations, or through the impossibility of their staging […] but through the movement of embodied thought which refuses to fix itself in particular recognizable types of oppositional discourses, or oppositional response structures. (Bauer 2008, 41)

I want to mention here one exemplary piece of recent performance work that seems to me to engage in various ways

of shifting attention in the present and opening up possibilities for the future.

Rita Roberto's *Right at Presence* (Berlin, *Tanz im August*, 2008) consists of 35 minutes of near-stillness and silence by a single performer in a theatre space. The repetitive sequences of movement, including a ten minute fade from light to near darkness in which the performer, directly facing the audience, almost imperceptibly turns her head by 180 degrees and back, explores ideas and images of the "care of the self" (the classical concept of *parrhesia*), the space between thoughts and body "observing their cooperation towards a care of the self – the self as being something that relies precisely on this cooperation". It also compels the audience to shift their collective attention to the presence of what is happening, which in turn creates a space of mediation and contemplation that begins to invent a "sensible form" for the yet-to-come. Rita Roberto writes:

> I don't become the things that I touch, I touch them. I take the air and give it back. I would not *be* anymore if the air hadn't been inside me, but the air *was not me* at any moment. There is this constant cooperation of things in touch […] but to touch is also *to be at* the border that separates me from the things that I am not. It is, in fact, this separation that makes touch possible. The touch becomes the border. (Unpublished performance notes)

It is not the materiality of the performer that defines presence but the shared engagement of attention that takes place in the site of symbolic exchange. This site or space is perhaps the equivalent of the textual blank – the white space between words – which acts as a border or demarcation which reveals the process of integration that creates systems of meaning. Textuality – here the inscription of movement or choreography – is a social condition, a site of communicative exchange. Meaning is no longer a certainty but a potential – a possible outcome of the unfolding event.

There is also a distance inherent in the performance itself, as it stands as a spectacle between the idea of artist and the feeling and interpretation of the spectator. The spectacle is a third thing, to which both the parts can refer but which

prevents any kind of "equal" or "undistorted" transmission. It is a mediation between them – crucial in the process of intellectual emancipation. (Rancière 2009, 14)

The shifts of attention that cut into the present and reveal and produce the future do not perhaps provide us with a singular position from which to move. They do, however, place the responsibility on us as makers, doers, thinkers, persuading us to become alert "to the liveliness of the present and the everyday", the mode of being which for Gertrude Stein constituted "complete living".

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Notes on Temporary Zones, Shelters, and Project Spaces

≈ **Ric Allsopp**

Some years ago, I was writing about theatre and performance as a series of temporary zones or "shelters" responding to the gradual breakdown and transformation of the spatial and environmental boundaries of performance. These temporary zones and shelters were imagined as a unifying space-time where people could come together to engage in a shared economy of attention and physical presence.[1] There, the emphasis was on the temporary nature of such zones and shelters – which at that time would have included a diverse array of forms operating outside established and located theatre and performance space – as a means of producing certain forms of identity and community that might differ from more normative and sustained versions of performance space. The ongoing revolution over the last decade in the use of and access to networked communication technologies has shifted and enhanced not only our ability to retrieve and access historical performance materials, but also our ability to realise forms of theatre and performance that no longer rely on the structures and implications of the located event and its "unified" audience, whatever its temporal duration.

An example here might be *Linked* (2003) by British artist and musician Graeme Miller: a durational installation of 20 concealed transmitters along a three-mile route in London where the M11 link road had both displaced and replaced 400 homes in 1999. The transmitters "continually broadcast hidden voices, recorded testimonies and rekindled memories of those who once lived and worked where the motorway now runs evoking a cross-section of East London life".[2] The economy of attention that is created and implemented by such a work also displaces the common conception and dispositif of the performance event as the centre of undivided, unconditional attention that typically utilises strategies that maximise audience immersion and concentration. Such an example of durational, located work is one among many, and provides an example of how both trans-disciplinary (or possibly post-disciplinary) and technological strategies are shifting notions of what constitutes "attention" in relation to performance, and allowing access to types of performance work that are not predicated on the singular unified moment of performance in

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1 For example, see my discussion of temporary zones in "The Location & Dislocation of Theatre": "The idea of 'ambient theatre' as proposed by Edgar Jager in 'Datum' (1997) provides a very different model where the attempt to find a place to live, a place to present the 'human body' in artificial surroundings, a redefining of values, results not in a reclusivness, but in an ambient theatre, the idea of creating shelters or temporary zones in which people can meet. This is not the shutting out of the world, the closing of the doors to provide the conditions for artwork, but an opening up to the world, a world seen as ephemeral – a constant redefinition of what is at stake, the understanding of a fluid language of theatre, a nomadic view where a temporary zone, a temporary shelter can be constructed outside the bastions of the institutions, an aesthetics of the marginal, of the barrio" (Allsopp 2000, 1–8).

2 "Commissioned by the Museum of London, Graeme Miller's ongoing *Linked* project opened in July 2003 as a massive semi-permanent sound work and off-site exhibition of the contemporary collection of the Museum of London. Stretching across from Hackney Marshes to Redbridge, the M11 Link Road was completed in 1999 after the demolition of 400 homes, including Miller's own, amid dramatic and passionate protest. [...] Day and night, voices and music were broadcast along the length of the route" (http://www.linkedM11.net/).

classical terms – the structuring of the vision of a passive audience – and the type of "community" that that might produce.

In his work on attention, spectacle and modern culture, Jonathan Crary argues that the late 19th century saw the "emergence of attention as a model of how a subject maintains a coherent and practical sense of the world, a model that is not primarily optical or even veridical" – that is, does not coincide with reality. He notes that "[w]hat is important to institutional power [...] is simply that perception function in a way that insures a subject is productive, manageable, and predictable, and is able to be socially integrated and adaptive", and relates this to the "collapse of classical models of vision and of the stable, punctual subject these models presupposed" (Crary 2001, 4). The emphasis here shifts from performance as a unifying and integrative form of temporary shelter to the transitory architectures of power created by specific and particular performance forms and the ways in which such architectures are increasingly distributed in terms of their duration, location, and access. The temporary zone of the traditional theatre space is a spatial construct that demands and produces a certain type of attention, at least in its physical as opposed to its "libidinal" manifestations.[3] It is perhaps now imagined as a limitation of theatre; a limitation that incapacitates both theatre and its participants. Such incapacity, or at least limitation of capacity, is also linked to the question of participation in performance that, as Kai van Eikels has noted, "is not simply to be identified with participating in an event". The framing of performance events is then brought into question: What borders do they propose? How do such temporary zones take place? What is the extent of "project space"?

3 "According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, it would be a mistake to attribute to the scenographic model of representation a distinct historical identity that has somehow been superseded. He maintains that the figure of the cube, the theatre, the volumetric closure of representation has an enduring function within the economy of instinctual life. This cube or box can emerge anywhere, anytime, as a result of a particular (reactive) configuration of libidinal energy, or of a particular immobilization and objectification of the body" (Crary 2001, 218).

This underlying uneasiness about theatre and the performance event as a space of unification, of community, as a space of shared (as opposed to individual) attention, finds its origin in part in the modernist tradition as well as in the historical avant-garde. Writing in the margins of his 1910 manuscript "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge" Rainer Maria Rilke identifies precisely the problem of unified attention and echoes (or rather confirms) the beginning of a new economy of attention when he notes:

> Let us be honest about it: we do not have a theatre, any more than we have a God. That would require true community, whereas each individual one of us has his own ideas and anxieties, and allows others to see as much of them as suits his purposes. We are forever watering down our understanding, stretching it to go round, instead of wailing at the wall of our common distress, behind which that which passeth understanding would have time to gather its forces.

The shift of attention from performance space to what can be called "project space", from the event as a means of attempting to produce a focused attention to other forms of participation and engagement with the work/labour of art, is a means whereby constructions of the common can be attempted. The common is not necessarily a located, temporal event but an involvement in the making of temporary zones or project spaces in which forms of living together, of negotiation, critique and transformation might be tried out. I am not referring here to the production of "virtual" spaces for interaction (such as Second Life), but to the development of project spaces in and through which other engagements with performance can be carried out and which utilise and enable public access in ways that previous "temporary zones" – for example, laboratory theatre, extended installations, or durational performance – were unable to do. The use of "virtual" here probably resonates more with Susanne Langer's notion of virtual space as "intangible image" than with digitally generated worlds (which of course produce their own virtual spaces in Langer's terms).[4]

4 See Langer's discussion of semblance, virtual space and perceptual form.

These temporary, temporal, and possibly temperate zones – a different focusing of attentions through time as opposed to a unified space of attention – are perhaps the equivalent, in a digital rather than analogue environment, of Rauschenberg's surfaces and combines, flatbeds and transfer works which, as Johanna Drucker observed, "montage the heterogeneity of [his] experience into a space irreducible to any unity of value or meaning" (Drucker 1998, 56); in other words, a temporary zone that resists a singular concentrated attention (the focus and unification of a civic public reflecting itself as value) and becomes a dispersed space or project space – the product of a distributed and dispersed/disseminated attention. No longer the ideal civic public of the theatre – but a multiple participatory audience proposing and realising multiple forms of access and participation in shifting and transforming project spaces.

This sense of project space as a virtual space for exploring the dynamics of "living together" as opposed to being a "period of co-presence" during which the "relation of living together and its implicit laws" implied by theatre is suspended, is exemplified in Ligna's *Radio Ballet* (2002). "Performed" at the Hauptbahnhofs of Hamburg and Leipzig and subtitled "Exercise in lingering not according to the rules" (*Übung in nichtbestimmungsgemäßem Verweilen*), *Radio Ballet* is a "radio play produced for collective reception in certain public places. It gives the dispersed radio listeners the opportunity to subvert the regulations of the space".[5] In an attempt to re-

(Langer 1979, 45ff). Whilst her assertion that virtual space is an "entirely independent" and "self-contained, total system'" will seem rather dated, I think her point that virtual space is neither a simulation, nor a "local area in actual space" provides a resonance that might be helpful in this context.

5 See http://ligna.blogspot.com/2009/12/radio-ballet.html as well Eikels 2008. "The Radio Ballet 'Übung in nichtbestimmungsgemäßem Verweilen' took place in the main station of Leipzig, Germany, a former public space that is under private control of the German railway company (Deutsche Bahn – DB) and its associates since the mid-nineties. Like every bigger train station in Germany it is controlled by a panoptic regime of surveillance cameras, security guards and an architecture, that avoids any dark and 'dangerous' corners. The system of control is designed to keep out every kind of deviant behaviour. People, who sit down on the floor or start to beg are detected immediately and instantly expelled. [...]

claim pubic space as a space that can include deviant and unorthodox behaviours, *Radio Ballet* (in the words of their website):

> brought back these excluded gestures of deviant behavior into the main station. Around 500 participants – usual radio listeners, no dancers or actors – were invited to enter the station, equipped with cheap, portable radios and earphones. By means of these devices they could listen to a radio program consisting of a choreography suggesting permitted and forbidden gestures (to beg, to sit or lie down on the floor etc.). These suggestions were interrupted by reflections on the public space and on the Radio ballet itself. The Radio Ballet was not a demonstration (that could have been forbidden by the DB) but a "Zerstreuung" (a German term with different meanings: dispersion, distraction, distribution and, as well: entertainment). It also was not a mass ornament: The participants could act where they wanted to, on the platforms, on the stairs or the escalators or in the "Promenade" (the shopping mall in the station). They acted as a free association, which transformed the coincidental constellation of radio reception into a political intervention.

These two brief examples point directly to the type of project spaces that I see developing and that involve a different but not dissimilar focussing of attentions through and across time and space and as such disrupt notions of unified space/time associated with theatre. Both examples create project spaces that propose and/or enact, form and/or record, a temporary and resistant community as a "dispersion" or "distribution" across a temporary zone.

The exploration of "living together/ participation" is defined by artistic practices as much as by other social performances. The new temporary zones and shelters of participation are not particular spaces but types of interaction

> The first *Radio Ballet* took place in May 2002 in the main station in Hamburg. In both cases – Hamburg and Leipzig – the German Railway company tried to forbid the intervention before it took place. In Hamburg they even brought it before court – where we won: The court followed our argumentation, that the *Ballet* is not a gathering, that is forbidden by the regulations of the space, but a dispersion of radio listeners, that cannot be forbidden anywhere."

which produce different types of "virtual space" from actual spaces in Langer's sense. The temporary zones of project space no longer form the civil public of theatre, but a multiple public, interacting in different ways in "project" space – multiple, specific, and potentially resistant and innovative forms of living together.

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VI

Dramaturgies of the Non-aligned

Problems that Aesthetically "Unburden" Us*

≈ **Bojana Cvejić**
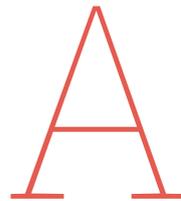
A s soon as we—theorists, dramaturgs, choreographers or performers—consider engaging with the question of the "political" today—we face an aesthetic burden and political challenge. We, in contemporary dance in Europe, ought to concede that we are "politically challenged" in so far as we are "aesthetically burdened."

Aesthetically burdened, politically challenged

The attribute "aesthetic" is reserved for a specific usage here: with "aesthetic burden" I refer to an inherent aestheticism dating from Western modern dance as the persistence of the modernist quest of choreography and dance to reassert its disciplinary specificity, exclusiveness and autonomy in aesthetic categories. Aestheticism in Western theatrical dance is rooted in the oral and mimetic practice of transmission of movement, the "show and copy" model that rests upon the

image and imaginability of movement. Regardless of the operation a work of contemporary dance may entail, it is more often than not presented, received, judged, historically recognized, referenced, or transmitted in the image of the body and movement.[1] While in dance it relies on the oral mimetic logic of producing a self-identical aesthetic object by reproduction, the predominance of the visual in framing the sensorial of dance is not unique for dance, but a result of the condition of circulating any work as a commodity. What is specific about the arrest of a dance work in image is its reductiveness in so far as the imaging gives no access to other parameters that might be more crucial for the work of dance than the description of the body or of the form of movement by way of image. The inquiry into the operation of a choreography—in less imageable matters of context, structure, problems, non-present time—is thus often hampered by aestheticist demands, such as what kind of body or movement is produced. Works of dance that are not communicable by way of body/movement images are deemed difficult on the grounds that they are hard to see, or they yield nothing recognizable or novel to perceive. They pose problems to reception and in doing so shift attention away from the aesthetic object to a problem, and to a thought which arises from the difficulty in perceiving or recognizing a moving body as the main focus of the work.

Earlier attempts to qualify the disregard for the centrality of the moving body as "conceptualist" seem equally reductive in the binary argument (concept vs. experience, cognitive vs. affective, etc.).[2] I suggest here to approach the dissolution of the body-movement image instead as a way to disencumber the contemporary dance of aestheticism. The articulation of "aesthetic burden" has a peculiar genealogy: it comes

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1 Projects of reconstruction and reenactment of dance often suffer from the aesthetic burden in the sense that the formal aspects of the choreography are foregrounded in the presentation, while the historical and contextual aspects are insufficiently tackled.

2 Bojana Cvejic, Xavier Le Roy, and Gerald Siegmund, "To end with judgment by way of clarification," in ed. Martina Hochmuth, Krassimira Kruschkova and Georg Schöllhammer, *It takes place when it doesn't: On dance and performance since 1999* (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006), 49–56.

from grappling with the failure of accounting for experimental art practices in former Yugoslavia in the aesthetic categories of Western modernity.[3] These practices are de-linked from Western art traditions in that they are aesthetically "unburdened": they neglect formalist, craft-oriented and aestheticizing aspects of a work in favor of context, structure, minor stories, non-presence, etc. Interpretation in aesthetic terms misrecognizes them by dismissing them as eclectic, nonspecific, nondescript or old-fashioned, for it doesn't accept that the aesthetic aspects are secondary, instrumental, not a matter of invention but of use. For instance, the Croatian collective BADco. is often interrogated on the account of the kind of dance movement it produces. The comparison of the dance in their performances with an existing style—as in the often pronounced judgment, "yes, but this is like Forsythe, and it's not a reference"—bars any insight into what and how the choreography might operate. The limitation of the aesthetic burden could be considered a political handicap which calls for various new prostheses, all the discursive production which constitutes contemporary dance beyond the body-movement image. The prostheses are ontologically constitutive, for it is the choreographers themselves who invest work in methodological concerns, obsession with procedures, poetic and post-hoc dramaturgies, in a proliferation of books, films, conceptual and technological tools that sometimes even substitute for the performance event. Being "politically challenged" hereby means accepting the handicap of aesthetic burden, the historical hegemonic arrest of dance in an aestheticizing image, which demands discursive efforts to disencumber itself. [4] Questions like "why do you dance?" and "why do you dance this" or "like this" often addressed to

BADco. imply that "this" be read as a style, an authorial signature, a movement idiom on which to hook a meaning or conceptual determination of any kind. But how to account for a movement that "adequates" an idea, where adequation isn't the same as translate or exemplify, it poses a problem. Such an approach to choreography and dance is instrumental, as Nikolina Pristaš would argue, because it bypasses the self-reflection of the dance medium to use dance on a par with other expressions—text, architecture, or computer software, for instance—in order to pose a problem that wouldn't be specific to dance, but would implicate dance differently through text, architecture, software etc.

Instrumentalisation here presupposes that choreography be dissociated from a certain modernist notion of Western theatrical dance. I have argued this dissociation elsewhere as a disjunction between the body and movement.[5] In short, I mean here a rupture with two ideological operations in the Western legacy by which movement has been bound up with the body: self-expression which ontologises movement with a natural urge to move and the body as a minimal resting place of noncompromisable subjectivity, and objectivation that reduces movement to a physical articulation, or the object of dance whose meaning lies tautologically in itself. Contemporary dance is still often stitched between these two ideological seams: it either persuades by performing a/the necessity of self-expression or it displays the indifference and self-containment of an object; in deliberately rough schematic terms, it says: "believe in the truth of my body that doesn't lie" or "observe the task." Nikolina Pristaš would say it more congenially: "why is it that we always see movement falling between gesture and noise."[6]

3 Cf. the project of Irwin East Art Map and Marina Grzinic, "Mind the Gap! A Conceptual and Political Map," ed. V. Darian, M. Grzinic, and G. Heeg, Mind the Map! History is not Given (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006), 18–19.

4 This rhetoric owes some inspiration to Bruno Latour's take on the crisis of political representation in democracy. Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitic to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," ed. B. Latour and P. Weibel, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Karlsruhe/Cambridge MA/London: ZKM & The MIT Press, 2005), 14–41.

5 This thesis comes from my doctoral dissertation, "Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance", presented at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, London, 2013.

6 From a conversation with Nikolina Pristaš at *TenDaysOneUnity* in Zagreb, October 2010.

In order to instrumentalise choreography beyond dance, should then the self-identity of movement pursued either in self-expression or self-referentiality be undermined? And how will that disturb the harmony of faculties by which a performance should bring spectators together in *sensus communis*, namely, in recognition and self-actualisation? I will observe three choreographies that have earned the reputation of being difficult exactly for posing these problems. Difficulty, as a non-category, similar to barred or unclassified, here implies not only a deficit of public in order for these performances to be shown and seen, but also that they are barely visible, and therefore, aesthetically challenging in a literal sense, hard to watch.

Invisible, indiscernable or opaque

How to construct movement that can be sensed and experienced without seeing how it is being done? The point of departure of *Nvsbl*, a choreography by Eszter Salamon made in 2006, is the false dilemma between belief in what is seen and tautological vision; or what I see is what I see. The problem the choreographer poses here is how to disrupt the hierarchical regime of senses in movement's perception, and shift its perceptibility from vision to kinesthetic and proprioceptive sensibility. The solution was to obscure movement's visibility by making it excessively slow—an eighty-minute-long journey of five and a half meters from periphery to center-stage, where the departure and the end point are just instants like a great many other instants between these ends, different and not identical to each other. This wish could have been addressed as a negative, "fascistic" task of eliminating space, form and size of movement, fundamental parameters that measure movement's fluency as corporal freedom. Instead, the choreographer sought to affirm slowness in a range of qualities, or—in her own words—how to dee-jay the thousand movements and rhythms in the body. To do that, she had to create a "positive project" for the performers and resource a body system that would reorient them towards their own body. The choice of Body-Mind Centering was less new-

age than pragmatic. To invoke a sensation from which to initiate a movement in those places in the body, the awareness of which we don't have, requires a lengthy labor of imagination. Sensation is thus the product of a will to imagine, engage metaphors, in order to construct a relation with the imaginary place in the body. One could say that the dancers are fumbling in the dark, in a form of inadequate knowledge, feigning sensations for voluntary action. They produce an attachment of thought to movement which is scientifically dubious, irrational but empowering, as it helps them develop a relentless division and *partitioning* of the body for an ever more precise and specific quality.

This technique breaks the mimetic regime, as it shifts focus from the image of the movement-effect to the imaginary cause of it. This striving is what takes time and heterogenises the duration so as to hinder the image of movement, or everything from being given all at once. The motion expresses itself as a tendency, before being the effect of a cause; and the cause, being the process of invoking sensation, remains inaccessible to the spectator. Indeed, what happens to the spectator when her gaze is deprived of the control of the body's source of movement? Disbelief might have led one to a test of looking away and looking back to verify change. At first, the movement can't be seen in the course of its production, but can be registered as a change once it has occurred, in retrospect. To attend duration can only be an event of attunement, of making one's glance coextensive with the time-image of the duration-bodies, of absorption in the slow perception of change.

The reason why I am dwelling on the process the performers engage in here is because of its inaccessibility. Inaccessibility brings into question the sense of community and communication in gathering. The choreography that gathers bodies here necessarily divides them, not only between the two facing sides of performing and attending, but along a multiplicity of different attachments that spectators and performers make among themselves. *Nvsbl* might be just an extreme case of differentiating the ideas and temporalities between performing and attending. It strives beyond the

subtraction inherent in habitual perception by yielding movement registered as if with a nonhuman eye—at the limit of sensibility. Partitioning sensations in the internal space of the performer's body adequates the focalisation of the spectator's gaze as a close-up. In both processes nothing is being communicated; the performers and spectators are alone, disentangled and separated from each other; each attunes her own perceptual apparatus and thus perceives a micromovement by extending it.

If the choreography of *Nvsbl* partitions sensations, movements and bodies in noncommunication, the next story is about a choreography that gives rise to a community that will override it. The performance is called *Untitled*, and dates from 2005, when the author deliberately remained anonymous. The decision to not-sign and not-title was an unprecedented intervention into the representational logic of performance. It was meant to disable its major register, that is, judgment in the nominal framework that allows audiences to attribute their reception to an author. Now they were confronted with a void, both a symbolical and a literal one. Although this act of resistance might resemble yet another form of institutional critique, Xavier Le Roy's refusal to "sign" and title the piece was meant to reinforce the work's facticity: performance being all there is. A short description will clarify why.

As they entered the auditorium, spectators were given small battery powered lamps to find their seats, just like latecomers ushered into a performance or a film that had already begun. However, it soon became clear that the stage itself would remain dark. From their seats, spectators began to inspect the stage, searching for the action. As they adjusted their vision to diminished visibility, they began to see indiscernible objects emerging from obscurity, but they could barely determine whether these shapes were puppets or live (human) bodies disguised as puppets. While the spectators shone their lights on the void of the stage, a white fog slowly covered the space, reflecting the light rays of the torches. There was little to observe unless the spectator was prepared to search for it, and to try and discern movement from the

stillness and figures in the background. The act of not-seeing was just as significant as the action that was occurring on stage, and performance dismantled its object into a situation with changing stakes. It was easier for the spectators to see each other than to watch the performers. As a consequence, the power was redirected from the stage to the audience.

All the while, the dancers, disguised in and enmeshed with puppets, were busy manipulating puppets by direct contact with hands, by intermediate contact using strings of the puppet and by body-to-puppet contact where the mass of one's movement would make the other move; or their presence was suspected as they fumbled in the dark. As Le Roy explained to me, he was interested in exploring the prosthetic relationship of the body with an inanimate human-like object, an adjunct that would give the body a different weight, elasticity, and fluency. In terms of a dance experiment, Le Roy observed the interdependency of the environment and the body whereby the body is regarded as an extension of the environment, or how a body in contact with an object makes another entity with specific ways of moving and being. He worked with eyes closed so that their actions would be done in the dark, and what the spectators could see wouldn't be what the stage illuminated but what the audience themselves illuminated. Hence, the problem of dispensing with the form of movement, which, no matter how unfixed, transformative and evanescent, still enables us to recognize a subject or object, was solved by indiscernability. Choreography was an instrument for disorienting the sensorium of the event, in which the indiscernability of bodies, objects and movements interfered with the capacity to feel, understand and judge. In the course of the evening, the behavior of the audience, now louder and more visible than the on-stage action, hijacked the event and became the focus of the spectacle. In the ending part, staged as the talk after the performance in which one of the performers stepped out of his puppet costume and took on the role of spokesperson talking to the audience, the audience repeatedly protested as if they had been hoaxed. Their outrage about the anonymity and lack of title prevented them from engaging with the situation. They refused to attend it.

Comparable to *Nvsbl*, *Untitled* makes the performance seem independent of the spectators, not by the as-if clause of the illusionist representation with the fourth wall, but by being inaccessible to the audience, hardly perceivable (*Untitled*). However, it doesn't reject the presence of the audience. Instead, it demonstrates that the spectators can't remain in their role without constructing a conjunction. This entails an activity that I call "wiring," which means to establish a connection that makes the body or the action of the spectator coterminus with the action of performing. A wired attender doesn't take over the role of the performer—she doesn't become an actor *in lieu* of a missing one. The attender actively assembles herself with the other heterogeneous parts of the assembling—objects, live or phantom bodies, lights and sounds in this case. As if she connects to an electrical circuit that epitomises the event, her "wiring" is plugging vision and voice into the performance which sensorially shapes the event. This activity is a matter of constructing an encounter that captures heterogeneous forces of expression of this assembling.

My third and last story continues somewhere in between the closure of the visible and the exposure of visual and kinetic noise. The choreography is called *Changes* (2006) by Nikolina Pristaš and BADco. and entails a transformation of environments of limited visibility that the audience is part of. Being physically part of it—like in the homogeneous purple light block, which recalls UV-lit protective hospital environments—means being physically implicated in the problem that this performance poses: being in the relationship between parasites and environment. According to Michel Serres, for a parasite to seize control it has to clear the space from other parasites; it needs to eradicate noise for the message to pass through silence. Serres's "parasite" is a trope for Pristaš to first pose a specifically choreographic problem, but in such a way that it then immediately transmutes a political concern. The problem addresses the double articulation of noise and message, or more specifically, referent to dance, noise and gesture in movement. Dancing in this choreography develops in constant fluctuation between gestures and

noise, or those other movements that tend to obscure the channel of communication. As Pristaš describes, at one point dance is just humming in the space (the word "noise" in Serbo-Croatian isn't just the antonym of "sound," the way Cage puts it; it also means "humming"). Figures merge with the environment, constituting a shimmering background in magenta light. Dancers spin in pirouettes for 4 minutes, 33 seconds. Movements as noise don't produce cognitive meaning, but maintain an intensity. They don't communicate anything, but are not superfluously decorative either. Instead they expire in time, in a kind of work without any purpose.

Parallel to dancing, a voice-over delivers a stream of text, a verbal channel through which various anecdotes and observations spin around the fable about the ant and the cricket, labour and leisure, work and laziness. These stories diagrammatically expand as the fable-parasite devours them, one of which is the anti-May-1968 speech by the leader of the French ants (clearly an allusion to the French president Nicolas Sarkozy). While the voice-over runs as a smooth message, dance physically labors in the space. At a certain moment, a dancer speaks the following text:

> I am not a charismatic person. I am a hard worker, a pragmatic and a good ant. I beat all my competitors with work, love and kindness. My message to my rivals is that they can fight against me only with more work, love and kindness. All those poor fellows cannot knock down what I can build. The ant tried to persuade the cricket: I am the humblest ant in the world. There are not many like that. You show me another one in the ant hill who works as much as I do and who is willing to sacrifice 16 hours a day and 363 days a year like me. I don't think there are many like that. You tell me if you know one if you are claiming that there is such an ant. Inside me emotions are not dead, I am not crude, pragmatic and a politician, sterile and castrated. I am still an ant.[7]

7 Transcribed from a demo recording of *Changes* by Badco., performed at the 2007 Tanz im August in Berlin.

Beyond the image of thought

This touching portrait of the dancer as a hardworking ant echoes Andrew Hewitt's warning in his theory of "social choreography"—the dark side of the ideology of freedom in early modern dance, or how the modern dance subject who experiences her truth in her own body becomes the best workforce always ready for exploitation under the banner of experience (Hewitt 2005). But something else, more specific to the conundrum of political handicap and aesthetic labor in contemporary dance, is striking here. What was referred to as "conceptual dance", accused of being "non-dance" a decade ago, in fact should better be explained by a technical redistribution of labor: a wish to minimize dancing as physical in favor of mental labor, or thought (Cvejić and Vujanović 2010). However, in the substitution of corporal and affective labour by intellectual labour, an aesthetic ideal of dance may still subsist—lightness as effortlessness—now transferred from the body to thought. Effortlessness in thought here means efficiency of conceptual operation, message cleared from noise. In a list of misnomers for conceptualizing tendencies in dance in the end of the 1990s was "think-performance" or "think-dance", which became synonymous with "smart" and eloquent performances which delegate themselves to think for the spectators, reducing spectators' thought to a confirmation of understanding and opinion. This clarifies the difficulty of choreographies such as *Nvsbl*, *Untitled* and *Changes*, which aren't conceptualist think-performances thinking the thought of the spectator away, but are difficult to perceive and understand because their movement doesn't explain anything or express anyone. The strategies of invisibility, indiscernability and opacity in *Nvsbl*, *Untitled* and *Changes* are directed against the aesthetic mimetic logic, and through reaching the limit of sensibility they force thought from its impossibility, or from non-understanding. The disturbance of viewing on the basic level compels the spectators to construct a position in the situation of the performance. Yet these works aren't based on the withdrawal of the perceptual in favor of a cerebral frame of reception: they

begin by problematizing the very perception of movement and change, the agency of movement, the figure and its presence, relationship between the figure and the environment, the meaning and movement. This involves dismantling the aestheticist concerns which envelope form, gesture and expression of the self. By aestheticist I specifically mean a legitimized mimetic repertoire of registers, from the form, style, representational meaning to signature, manner, idiosyncrasy. This implies that the function of choreography shifts from producing an aesthetic object to a problem. The production of a problem doesn't begin with possibilities—they are a matter of knowledge that we account for as the limits to be pushed. Stating a problem isn't about uncovering an already existing question or concern, something that was certain to emerge sooner or later. Nor is a problem a rhetorical question that can't be answered. On the contrary, to raise a problem implies constructing terms in which it will be stated and conditions under which it will be solved. Being unburdened with aestheticism in Western dance demands the right of dance to denaturalize. This calls for many points of resistance: resistance to the natural, free and creative, to fluency and effortlessness, to entertaining a necessary relation to form, to the self-actualisation of the dancer, but also the self-actualisation of her community of spectators. All these could perhaps be subsumed under the mimetic logic of image, vision and visibility, as well as clarity, understanding, and judgment. There are many ways of gathering, and choreography can explore conditions for spectators to construct their positions and perspectives in the situation. As little or as much as it may seem, this begins with the conditions of viewing that the three choreographies attempt to produce.

It's time to test whether choreography can be an instrument for thinking rather than showing and reflecting thought. This requires that movement be granted a double articulation as gesture and noise at the same time. In theater it involves creating situations in which the hindrance of recognition and understanding of movement would be taken as a productive problem, a positive constraint and difficulty for the spectator from which thought begins.

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In Praise of Laziness

≈ Mladen Stilinović

As an artist, I have learnt both from the East (socialism) and the West (capitalism). Of course, now that the borders and political systems have changed, such an experience will no longer be possible. But what I have learnt from that dialogue has stayed with me. My observation and knowledge of Western art has lately led me to conclude that art cannot exist... in the West anymore. This is not to say that there isn't any. Why cannot art exist in the West anymore? The answer is simple. Western artists are not lazy. Eastern artists are; whether they will remain lazy now that they are no longer Eastern artists, remains to be seen.

Laziness is the absence of movement and thought, dumb time – total amnesia. It is also indifference, staring at nothing, inactivity, impotence. It is sheer stupidity, a time of pain, futile concentration. Those virtues of laziness are important factors in art. Knowing about laziness is not enough – laziness must be practised and perfected. Artists

in the West are not lazy; therefore, they are not really artists but producers of things… Their involvement with matters of no importance, such as production, promotion, the gallery system, the museum system, the competition system (who's number one), their preoccupation with objects, all that drives them away from laziness, from art. Just as money is only paper, so a gallery is only a room.

Artists from the East were lazy and poor because in the East, that entire system of insignificant factors did not exist. Therefore, they had enough time to concentrate on art and laziness. Even when they did produce art, they knew it was in vain, it was nothing.

Artists from the West could learn about laziness, but they didn't. There were two major 20th-century artists who treated the question of laziness, in both practical and theoretical terms: Duchamp and Malevich.

Duchamp never really discussed laziness, but he did discuss indifference and non-work. When Pierre Cabanne asked him what satisfied him the most, looking back over his entire life, Duchamp said: "First, having been lucky. Because basically I've never worked for a living. I consider working for a living slightly imbecilic from an economic point of view. I hope that some day we'll be able to live without being obliged to work. Thanks to my luck, I was able to manage without getting wet".

In 1921, Malevich wrote a text entitled "Laziness: The Real Truth of Mankind". In it he criticised capitalism because it enabled only a small number of capitalists to be lazy, as well as socialism, because the entire movement was based on work instead of laziness. In his own words: "People are scared of laziness and persecute those who accept it, and it always happens because no one realizes laziness is the truth; it has been branded as the mother of all vices, but it is in fact the mother of life. Socialism brings liberation in the unconscious, it scorns laziness without realizing it was laziness that gave birth to it; in his folly, the son scorns his mother as a mother of all vices and would not remove the brand; in this brief note I want to remove the brand of shame from laziness and to pronounce it not the
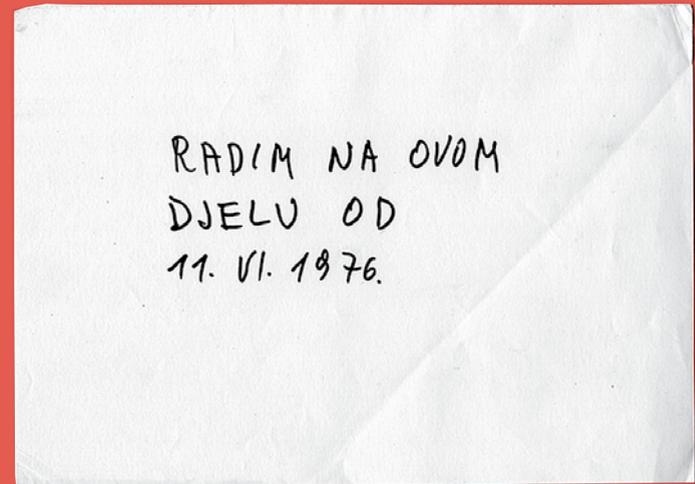
Mladen Stilinović: *I have been working on this work since 11/6/1976*, Text written from 1976 to 1980
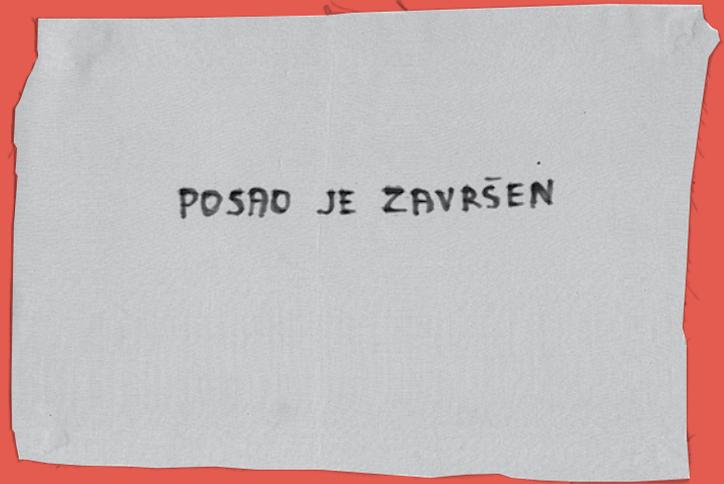
Mladen Stilinović: *The work is finished*, 1977

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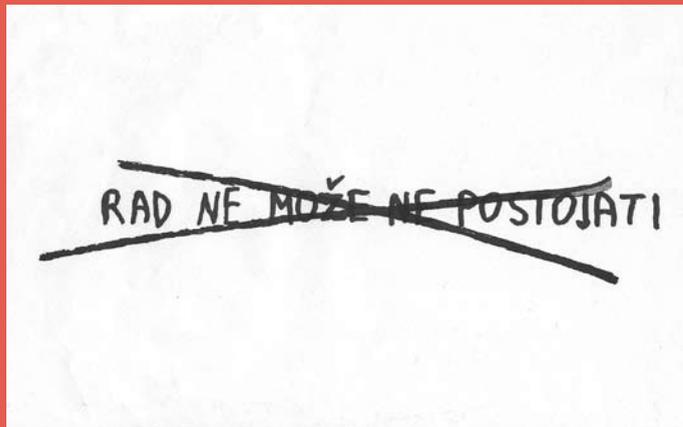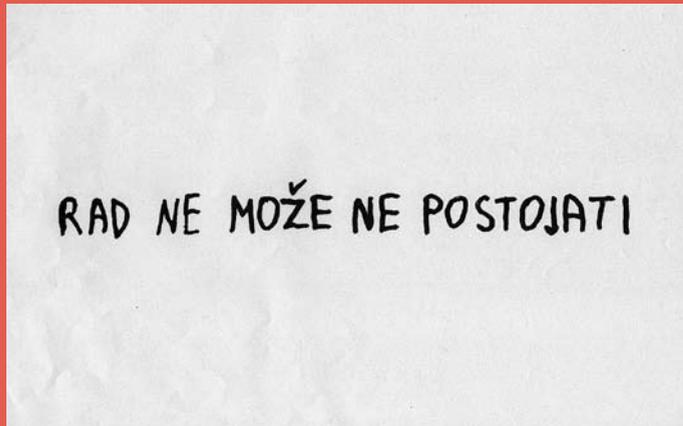
Mladen Stilinović: *Work cannot not exist*, Two serigraphies, 1976

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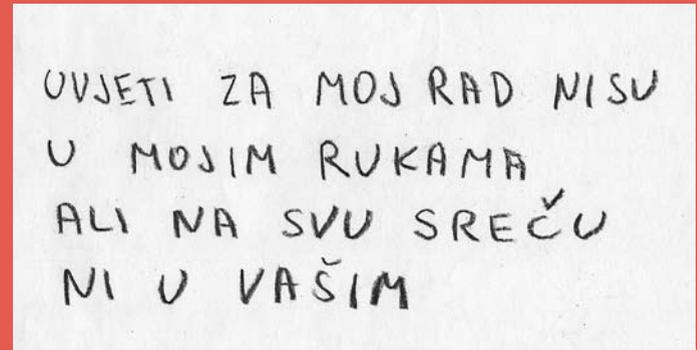
Mladen Stilinović: *The conditions for my work are not in my hands but fortunately they are not in yours either*, Text, 1979
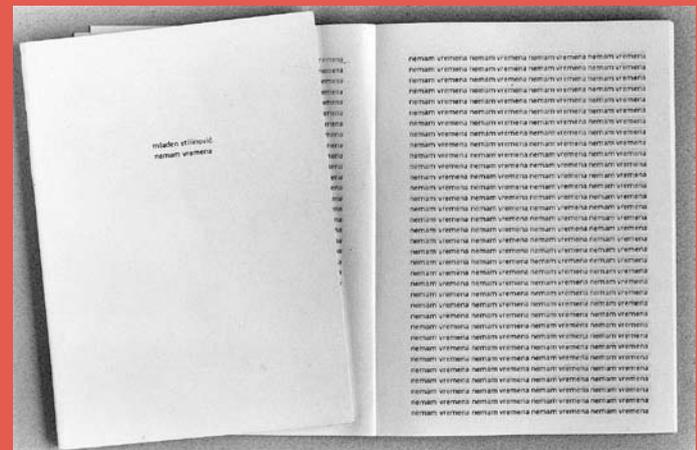
Mladen Stilinović: *I have no time*, Book, 1979

mother of all vices, but the mother of perfection". Finally, to be lazy and conclude: there is no art without laziness.

Work is a disease – Karl Marx.

Work is a shame – Vlado Martek.

Politics of Affection and Uneasiness*

≈ Bojana Kunst

I n his essay "Musealization of the East", Boris Groys lucidly detects a basic problem in Eastern Europe's (the former communist states of Europe) attitude towards the visual arts. He claims that it is not the excessive exoticism of Eastern European art that has prevented its musealisation in the West, because things perceived as foreign and exotic are successfully included in the Western museum environment. The reason it cannot be understood as art in the West lies in the formal and aesthetic similarity between Eastern "non-art" (the Western perception) and Western "art". The decisive difference, however, is that of the use of art, not that of form and aesthetic style. If we apply Groys's insight to the performing arts, we are immediately faced with many interesting questions. Despite the belief in a basic aesthetic difference, which should characterise the art of Eastern Europe, it also holds for the performing arts that, from the formal and aesthetic perspective, its oeuvre is in some way homogeneous (Groys 2003).

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Therefore, in trying to detect an actual difference, we should not look for it in aesthetic or formal procedures. What we should point out is a radical difference in the politics of performing; in this text, the politics of performing is understood as the "use" of the performing arts. In the West, the performing arts have understood performance politics primarily as an intervention into the form of representation and filled it with a basic skepticism that entirely shatters the ontology of the theatrical event. In the East, however, politics has taken an entirely different course. Every performance policy was developed in relation to the total model of socialist society, which constantly performed itself as the most authentic and at the same time, the most utopian (fictitious) of all. Therefore, in the East, this situation led to a basic inflexibility in the theatrical event, however subversive and radical it may have been (e.g. experimental and oppositional groups in the 1960s and '70s). It could never fully develop its performance politics or, in other words, confront the emptiness of representation and *a priori* beliefs with a certain ideology of the theatrical event. Thus, at the moment when a single legitimate and all-encompassing representation has been established, any attempt at a different sort of performance politics is not only reduced to an ideological function, but collapses into itself and its own madness. The only gesture that seemed workable in the East was that of radical authenticity, which used similar aesthetic and formal procedures as those of Western theatre. It was precisely the belief in authenticity that most stunned the Westerner's searching gaze. Not because the history of Western theatre was not familiar with such authentic gestures, but because this belief participated in the same aesthetic and formal procedures with which "non-authentic" performance politics is believed to be invested. In the East, this kind of situation led to a basic inflexibility of the theatrical event; subversive and radical as it may be (such as that of e.g. experimental and oppositional groups in the 1960s and '70s), it could never develop a performance politics of its own – in other words, confront the emptiness of representation, which seemed to be a fundamental trait of modern interventions. If we generalise a little, this is the rea-

son why even today, Eastern European theatre does not work in the West as exotic, strange, or incomprehensible – but, in many cases, as banal, amateurish, and *déjà vu*. It appears to disclose and repeat naïvely the very framework of the aesthetic and formal procedures that, in the West, already have its discursive corpus. Furthermore, these procedures are settled in the pathetic body of the Easterner, who still obsessively repeats his own authentic gestures and, in addition, participates in our most privileged closeness.

It is this feeling that generally overcame Western producers, who sought fresh creations in the East, despairing time and time again over the scarcity of dishes on the menu that they could offer their audiences, who were hungry for new things. Of course, exceptions could be found, but they were either presented in the artistic market as devoid of identity, or their exceptional status led to their being understood as exceptions that proved the rule. The disappointment of the producers was all the greater because they, humanistically, believed in a "quick bridging of aesthetic differences". As a result, they found themselves facing the worst of scenarios: there was actually nothing to bridge, nothing exotic to confront, nothing that could acquire an interpretational frame and be placed within festival or production contexts – there were no production discoveries in the right sense of the word. Performances were aesthetically so similar that it is not really surprising that not only a majority of these works, but the entire cultural territory of Eastern Europe, seemed like a great, all-encompassing *déjà vu* – a repetition in time, with the past performed in such a way that it unexpectedly hit us as pure present.

Talking about a real *déjà vu* effect, however, is quite inaccurate. In the case of a real *déjà vu*, the moment would be brought to a traumatic halt for its surprise and fill us with a strong sense of unease. In a single moment, our coherent chronology would be shattered. In the case of a true *déjà vu*, the traumatic confrontation with the "already seen" deeply interferes with our perception of reality, which suddenly proves artificial, leaving us dislocated.

Due to its aesthetic similarity (or cultural parallels), however, the confrontation with the Eastern "already seen" did not have any radical consequences upon the recognition of both sides, but was more like the uneasiness that a spectator feels at a very bad moment of a theatre performance. This intriguing feeling is, of course, a consequence of the event passing the sensitive point at which constant tension between representation and the authentic gesture is no longer possible, causing the event to fall into banal transparency. The confrontation with the "already seen" fails to enable a recognition; but it awkwardly reveals the naked reality of the procedures used by a certain politics of performance. The most banal authenticity has come to the surface from under its elaborate theatrical disguise.

Why is this feeling interesting to me at this point? The reason is that it is not only a cultural uneasiness but an essential part of political uneasiness that overcame both sides after the first transition period and the first enthusiasm over one another. This is very accurately described by Slavoj Žižek:

> The disappointment was mutual: the West, which began by idolising the Eastern dissident movement as the reinvention of its own tired democracy, disappointedly dismisses the present post-socialist regimes as a mixture of corrupt ex-communist oligarchy and/or ethnic and religious fundamentalists. [...]
> The East, which began by idolising the West as the model of affluent democracy, finds itself in the whirlpool of ruthless commercialisation and economic colonisation. (Žižek 1999, 40)

It is about nothing so much as the politics of affection and uneasiness, in which the same procedures and madness of both sides is revealed. At a certain moment, the West and the East both somehow performed themselves to each other as political futures, soon to meet in mutual disappointment. The interesting part of this political theatre, of course, is that the madness revealed is not the authentic gesture of the one performing, but that of the one watching. The intriguing feature of this feeling of uneasiness is that it so directly and mundanely reveals the function of the spectator. The specta-

tors are disgraced precisely because they have been so banally and directly revealed: they see something that they know they should not have seen in order to be spectators in the first place. Consequently, we can say that within the political dimension of the meeting, the contemporary and problematic nature of democratic ideals and procedures is revealed. At a certain point, the procedure that established both partners as spectators revealed their brutal (corrupting or economic) nature, a drained authentic gesture, which suddenly revealed itself from beneath its many disguises.

The dimension of political uneasiness can help us understand how, in the cultural meetings of the European East and West, the recognition of this aesthetic kinship can hold up a mirror to both sides. This madness can be even more accurately detected by means of another notion connected with the feeling of uneasiness and the "already seen" in many ways. It is banal, and yet it is used by all of us: we very often say that something is old-fashioned. With its history revealed as that of topical practices, the art of the East was perceived by the West as generally old-fashioned. This expression is interesting because, under its apparent banality, there hides an intriguing slyness within which various politics of performance can be read. Perhaps it is precisely this kernel that – in Groys's terms – represents the utmost banal dividing line between things recognised as art today and those that are not. At a time when alien cultural environments are decreasing and familiar ones increasing, it is this banal term that is becoming the principal bizarre feeling, that omnipresent attitude toward one's own centralised locality, and the consequently marginal locality of another, as if, in all of the contemporary homogeneity of space, only this bizarre time difference, this sly chronological hierarchy remained to judge.

Anything labelled as "old-fashioned" can only be something that is similar to, if not the same, as ourselves, and yet dislocated to such a degree that we can recognise it with an affection that produces uneasiness at the same time. We can say that the notion of the old-fashioned is a reflection of cultural hegemony in which we do not acknowledge the authentic gesture of the other. We literally claim the notion of

contemporaneity as exclusively our own. This hegemonic position works precisely as discussed by André Lepecki in an article on the genealogy of the perception of Portuguese dance in Europe: "synchronicity is here the exclusive matter of Western dramaturgy, and chronology a matter of geography" (Lepecki 2000). The recognition of the hegemonic background of the notion of old-fashioned and the emphasis of the difference instead is not the end of the problem. Having favoured the difference and the different, we will have to deal with the dilemma of the multicultural position that always becomes very problematic when practically confronted with a different authentic gesture. It has inevitably failed on all occasions, solidifying differences even more. We can say that the multicultural approach cannot go beyond its "aesthetic" preferences; the other may always be visible (represented), but not in its madness.

What I would like to do now is to present a concrete example in which we could clearly observe that the question of physicality is not an easy one and that it is always connected with ways of performing the body. The example is from contemporary dance, more precisely from the "reunion" of Western and "Eastern" dance that occurred after the fall of communism (but could also be generally connected to performing the bodies of the "Other" in today's world of spectacular commodities). As we know, in almost all communist states contemporary dance was relegated to the territory of amateurism, with no continuity in its development, and limited to various individual attempts. We could say that, in the East, the dancing body was really expelled to the pure zero degree: with its amateur *nature* not at all recognisable as *culture*. But how was this difference really articulated at the beginning of the 1990s, when the East was first "discovered"?

At first glance, the difference was seen primarily in the institutional status of contemporary dance in the West and the East. On the one hand, it had been recognised by institutions and history for quite a few decades, thus developing its own institutional, pedagogical, and production network. On the other hand, it had also been marginal for decades, condemned to non-existence or fighting for survival, without a

basic structure that would insure its development, outside of its dialogue with institutions, and a critique, attempting this for all intents and purposes only over the last decade, with the rise and struggle for a basic infrastructure. But it is only at first glance that the opening of the East to the West and vice-versa could be understood as the somehow *natural* need for professionalisation and institutionalisation, the exchange of models and knowledge, and the urgent need to bridge the differences.

What is interesting here is to observe how this institutional difference discloses the privilege of contemporary dance, how it was reinterpreted as a deep aesthetic difference. Contemporary dance in its institutionalised form somehow paradoxically became a token of modernity, urbanity, freedom, democracy, and so on. By means of pedagogical and other more-or-less developed infrastructural production networks, the Western body is trained and exploited to the maximum, with a number of techniques at its disposal, always disclosing to us its own physicality, which must always be somehow "in time" and present. What is very significant for this Western institutionalisation of contemporary dance is an almost representative and exclusive relation to the present. The way the body of the West-East reunion was represented somehow paradoxically disclosed different physicalities to us. On the one hand, the Western dancing body was completely equipped for the present. On the other hand, the Eastern unarticulated body – with its old-fashioned, dark, and incomprehensible attraction to the past – could not communicate with the Western gaze without having a strong local meaning whenever it was articulated. Note how this difference is interpreted as an aesthetic one, when it should be found precisely in the different ways of "use" and performing. On one side there is a Western dancing body, which has somehow turned the potential and autonomy of the body – this discovering of the body in-between – into a specific and exclusive privilege; on the other, there is an Eastern body with its "old-fashioned nature" and belief in authenticity. Both sides could be understood as problematic faces of a certain politics of institutionalisation.

The problem here is that due to the ruthless dictates of the present, a position that is almost monumental in contemporary dance, we feel uncomfortable whenever we are faced with a difference, with the "physicality of the 'Other'". To put it differently, the Western gaze remains hesitant when it comes to attributing the autonomy and potential of the body to the "Other" and instead, it perceives it as un-articulated, "still not there", confused, somehow clumsy, too bodily, too romantic, narrative, not really present, and a delayed physicality that is always reduced to a special context (political, traditional, ethnic, local, etc.). Western contemporary dance somehow institutionalised an exclusive right to modernity, urbanity, autonomy, and – what is even more important – universality. Contemporary dance that is not part of the Western institutionalisation of "physicality" is not recognised as the same legitimate and original search for the modes in-between, for the potential and presence of the body, with its own privileged relationship to modernity and universality.

No matter how much it may seem to refer to aesthetic procedures, the notion of the old-fashioned therefore primarily relates to political issues – or ways of producing, representing, and structuring a certain politics of performance. It belongs to the sphere that Groys defines as that of "use". This notion of old-fashioned is the direct result of the hierarchical attitudes of certain cultural contexts over others. It is a very ambiguous attitude, because it always disguises itself as an aesthetic difference. We very often hear, for example, that the art from countries that are not part of the developed West is still not there, or that it is naïve, merely recycling approaches that are already in use in the West, or that it has to be understood in a specific context, which is usually a patronising form of respect. It is interesting to see what is really happening in this relation. In the contemporary globalised world, which seems at first sight so connected, certain contemporarities are visible and others are not. In fact, they do not have the right to be contemporary, to be "in time", as "we" in the west are. They must always be, paradoxically, connected with the past, which is also presented as our past, not theirs

(like the idea that much artistic work from non-Eestern countries is still recycling 1960s modernism). This attitude is a way of giving the West the privilege of "being in time" and perceiving the other through a deviation in time. So old-fashioned is disguised as an aesthetic difference, when it is mainly merely the result of markets and politics, becoming one of the main criteria with which products from the performing arts will be launched in the market, presented at festivals, and co-produced. This criterion also determines important aspects like grants, state support, the shaping of cultural policies, etc. It tells us why this attitude is always about how certain politics decide when and in what way a certain field will be "in time" or not. This kind of visibility regulation is extremely important, because it is only those who are "in time" that may develop a whole structure with a very clear dividing line between the present and the past. Most fields whose history is discussed and represented mainly by others are frozen at first in some kind of aesthetically obsolete archive, in which their visibility will always be established in relation to someone else's privilege of modernity.

Even more important, however, is the fact that this notion reveals the genesis of the uneasy feeling of the spectator, which is actually present on both sides. Both, in this case the East and the West, are mundanely revealed in the function that should not be seen in order for their meeting to take place at all. Let us thus set out an unusual hypothesis, which we will not prove here, but only indicate. We have to overcome the fruitless understanding of this meeting as that of the hegemonic West and the helpless and chaotic East, where every successful contact can only go in the direction of some aesthetic "evolution". Getting to know each other, both partners discover a similar authentic gesture (realised, however, in two different ways). This gesture, in which the gaze sees what should not be seen for it to feel comfortable, is a unique institutionalisation of modernity. This fact very frequently reduces the entire field of the performing arts to a commercial and market spectacle, in which everyone is framed and interpreted within a certain context. Any deviation from the centre seems disabled in advance; the essence of contemporary

cultural politics is that the centre knows very well where the guerrilla is the entire time. However, this situation dangerously conceals the execution of much more important and penetrative strategies, which develop their minority, tactical politics of performance, parallel to the centre. The uneasiness appears precisely because the meeting of the East and the West is very rarely used as a tactical advantage that does not participate in the privileging of modernity and the exhausting search for aesthetic similarities, but instead seeks to re-contextualise these aspects of performance politics. Here, tactical advantage means that there are parallel modernities that could be combined, where the difference in the politics of performance is not perceived as a crack in time, but as the possibility of different articulations, parallel resistances, and reactions to contemporary reality.

Indeed, the opacity of certain transitional societies can be viewed as a tactical advantage. Their production models are different; on the one hand, they can be more dispersed, using different channels than a highly structured society. This could be exploited as a tactical advantage for co-operation. These structures could also be oppositional to the spectacular demands of the market and may be a chance to find opportunities that are not part of the general spectacular way of presenting the other. Not only familiar models are used and reshaped, but also recombinant situations are created, which construct their politics of performance in a different economic, structural, cultural, and political environment. This could be the common utopian moment – that of finding a parallel strategic subversion so that the obsession of both sides finally comes to an end. What I have in mind is different politics, paths, emotions, and personal interventions, which would not be interested in the privilege of time, but primarily in that of action. With this privilege, both sides can identify themselves and realise that their manoeuvres can only be put into practice by means of a basic loss. This common utopian matching seems to be the first prerequisite for visibility. Without it, every territory (be it political, spatial, artistic, or that of love) will be lost in the stylistic and uneasy crack in time: the old-fashioned – the privilege of modernity,

which allows us to keep nothing and makes every future even more fabricated.

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Delay

≈ **Bojana Kunst**

Delay in the sense of taking time, delaying productivity, delaying effect. Delay as a continuous resistance to accumulation. The delayed one is not the one who is being lazy (however, due to his or her resistance to accumulation, it is often wrongly perceived as such). Delay is a specific working attitude which doesn't subjugate the working processes to the acceleration of time. It is a working attitude which resists creating and inventing under the commodification and privatisation of time. Delay is modulated by the persistent and turbulent materiality of the working process.

In that sense delay enables a specific constellation of "always being too late". When we say that somebody or something is too late (in the political or aesthetical sense), we usually imply that the fact of being too late is an effect of the progressivity of time. A good example is the notion of transition in Eastern Europe. The transition has its mythological start in 1989, and from that moment on it fol-

lows the narrative of progressivity towards the "bright" political future and the exclusion of the ones who are too late. Latecoming is, from that perspective, always recognised and defined according to the ruling narrative of transition toward the capitalist appropriation of life and work. Latecoming is understood as a kind of lack of actualisation, of not being contemporary yet. However, delay has nothing to do with the lack of actualisation (political or aesthetical), with the failure to arrive, with not being able to, with not managing to, with not actualising the potential. Delay is tightly related to the potentiality of time, with what has yet to come. In this sense delay anticipates future events without any given scenario; it discloses the potentiality of event without a timetable. Only in that way is it possible to relate to the materiality of the actual cultural and political practice, which, rather than moving toward anything actually enables the potentiality of the real. In that sense delay becomes a productively disturbing practice, which, because it resists the accumulation of goods, knowledge, and things (finally to arrive, to come "there"), must constantly invent its own forms of organisation and continuously modulate modes of working. Delay is constant activity; however, even if it never stops, such an activity is not an exhausting one. It can, for example, take time because it cannot arrive there where it is supposed to arrive. Delay in this sense is an "investment which is only amortised later in an unknown point in time" (Manfred Fullsack). Delay is, for example, related to the invention of what might happen, so the process of coming somewhere is always disturbed, always delayed because of the potentially unknown direction.

The Festival as a "Microphysics of Power" (Foucault) in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia*

≈ *Descooling Classroom (o^o)*, *Terms* study group:
Ivana Vaseva, Elena Veljanovska, Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski

The original meaning of the word "festival" is "celebration". At the same time, festivals are substitutes for socialisation. The word is polysemic and incorporates the ideas of community, liminal/liminoid, temporality, excess, production, real time, emancipation, present-absent, transformation, transfiguration, intertextuality, local, national, regional, international, hypertext, ideology, margin, centre, power, anti-utopia, otherness, meaning, sign, deterritorialisation, transnational, transitivity, fractalisation, (de)construction, relaxation, new, punctuation, network…

In this text we seek to elaborate on the word/term festival(s), i.e. we analyse its origins, development, and functions in the specific regional context of the former Yugoslavia. We trace its development, that is, its use and function in the practice of a particular environment, in order to assess its position with

regards to the socio-political and economical conditions of our society. Today, the word/term may gain additional meanings, if used in a particular direction, i.e. in a format that considers and contemplates new production models, practice, tactics, and mechanisms, models by which it might be possible to intervene in the context and point out the needs of contemporary art and the system in which it functions.

Our purpose is to establish a relation to what festivals as a format of socio-cultural events offer and to point out the opportunities they provide; how to change them and make them develop different functions that might change themselves and acquire different meanings in the current social context. In our research, we specifically focused on art festivals in Macedonia and Serbia.

We hold that the festival as a format or model may be used to designate those artistic, cultural, and social practices that are deemed "excessive" in relation to the current dominant culture.

Both modern and postmodern art is characterised by tendencies that, at a particular moment, become dominant and come to satisfy the general needs of culture in its current condition. Festivals, in terms of programming as well as organisation, by virtue of their contents and inner structure, harbour a potentiality[1] that enables them to constitute themselves as a "retreat", as persistent vigilance, as "excessiveness" and, at a specific moment, as a critical reaction to the dominant culture. In a way, they may serve as a corrective to the current socio-cultural moment and, with their contents and formats, promote new directions.

The festival may also be viewed as a performance. It performs identities, models, transformations, as well as collectivities, communities, overall social atmospheres, territories, and genres. At the same time, one must also bear the consequences – because festivals are very responsible "actions", which generate the total value of a particular period in one or more spaces. A festival may either summarise and affirm current tendencies, or inaugurate new paradigms. Therefore, whoever wishes to partake in such a "celebration", must take

1 For more, see Kunst 2010.

the responsibility for all the risks and consequences that may arise.[2]

We are witnessing that the festival is increasingly understood as a compromise and conformist summarising and acquiescing, rather than establishing new practices and models. This kind of thinking poses a constant threat to the festival, risking turning it into a centred, authoritarian, homogeneous, self-sufficient, autonomous, and self-centred segment of society. By contrast, however, festivals could also develop entirely different functions. They could be permanently open for "textual fragments" of various synchronic and diachronic origins, for representing indices of current and historical styles, forms of expression and presentation. They could engage in a permanent "game" with a variety of cultural codes. They could offer a "retreat" from the norms of contemporary society, a temporary free space for examining and exploring new mechanisms, protocols of work, and formats of production, which would turn them into a space for democracy, for examining and producing innovations. Establishing more of these "excesses", "retreats", and temporary free spaces could affect the context(s) and change its/their contents.

Defining the Festival in General Terms, as a Need and Phenomenon

There is a growing interest today in analysing and contemplating the functions of the festival format and its development under new political, economic, social, and theoretical conditions. These conditions increase the need for new models of practice, organisation, and production, which should enable functionally applicable experimentation.

We are focusing on art festivals in order to analyse, synthesise, and (re)define, diachronically and synchronically, their current functions. We perceive this "act" dialogically and polemically, because we think that festivals are essentially valuable in terms of communicating and necessarily im-

plying a polemical outlook on their own postulates, as well as context, time, space, genre, and the theoretical paradigms to which they refer.

In this way, we may detect a key distinction present in the phenomenon itself: whether festivals are a format of representation that propagates and summarises elite culture and exclusivity (in line with the prevailing understanding of *culture* in post-transitional "traumatised"[3] societies), that is, whether they are supposed to review or "parade" contemporary art, mainly with a decorative role, or whether we may expect them to be dialectical performances and points of development that might communicate to and criticise present models of art practices, promoting a new and different role for them in a given context.

We are in favour of the latter perspective and our key purpose is to suggest that the festival can, in fact, function as an intervening practice and even approximate the parameters of activism.

A Few Points

The history of the festival is very long, going back to ancient times, more precisely to 534 BC, when the first recorded celebration honouring the god Dionysus took place in Athens. In medieval times, the festival was usually a religious celebration and its purpose was to bring the community together on a religious basis. The first secular festivals occurred in the 18th century. They were dedicated to the arts; for instance, *La Comédie française* was established in Paris in 1690 and in 1769 actor David Garrick organised his Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon to honour the bicentenary of the poet's birthday (although Shakespeare was born in 1564). The next to emerge were festivals dedicated to specific artists or artistic forms. Most national and state festivals were established in the 20th century (Klaić 1989 and other sources).

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2 In *Perform or Else*, Jon McKenzie addresses the normative function of cultural performance today, calling it a liminoid rather than a liminal practice; see McKenzie 2001, 62-65p.

3 As Milena Dragićević Šešić explains, the Balkan countries are not societies in transition anymore, but "traumatised" societies, where politics is conducted in traumatic or post-traumatic states as a result of the events of the 1990s and beyond; see Dragićević Šešić 2010.

These festivals promote a model related to the practice of one figure, or seek to represent the achievements of the nation/state in the field of culture (e.g. the Macedonian Theatre Festival "Vojdan Chernodrinski", which is supposed to be Macedonia's national theatre festival, honouring its national theatre tradition; the Venice Biennial, which presents individual countries; the May Opera Evenings festival in Skopje, etc.).

We may conclude that throughout history, festivals, "celebrations" and "festivities", as a vital form of the urge of humans to summarise and symbolically present their needs, wishes, and visions have been organised around several points:

— presenting and celebrating the gods in ancient Greece;
— religious celebrations in medieval times;
— presenting a particular idea – ranging from the revolution to a specific artistic form;
— celebrating particular people;
— representing the achievements of the state/nation in the field of culture.

A broader interpretation of the etymology of the word "festival", as well as historical experience suggest that festivals signify periodical celebrations that typically occur on a yearly basis (usually with a fixed date) and celebrate a particular human pursuit or creative achievement. Festivals are public events; they are always meant for an audience and rest on the fundamental need of people to celebrate achievements they consider valuable. Festivals are typically based on a particular programme and concept.

The Festival Format: A Paradigm for Artistic and Social Tendencies

The festival (and its contents in cultural and artistic terms) has been forming and reforming for centuries; it has become one of the most readily used formats for presenting culture. From the perspective of cultural politics, we see that festivals serve to articulate and organise various trends and forces in

culture, visible and subversive alike. That is why the festival is also a sort of "icon" of current as well as future tendencies, not only artistic, but also social ones. As a cultural and, in some discursive registers, a pop-cultural phenomenon, the festival operates as a screen that shows the hidden social references of power, the present and the absent.

Although there have been attempts to classify festivals, none of those classifications appear to offer a generally valid model and an adequate intellectual paradigm. Dragan Klaić has noted an explosion of festivals in Europe after the Cold War; their exact total number is unknown, perhaps two or even three thousand. Klaić further notes that due to this proliferation of festivals it is impossible to come up with a universal concept or profile of festivals today or find real parameters that might help us distinguish between them.

The region of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is, its festivals, offers a special example.

In the federal Yugoslavia, festivals were established in order to attract international attention and point out that the state was building a system – a socialist system – which was supposed to be a perfect fit for the people of Yugoslavia. In other words, Yugoslavia's "soft socialism" (see Cvejić 2001) was meant to portray the country as a tolerant and friendly self-managed socialist society that never stifled, but, on the contrary, fostered a climate where one could re-examine and experiment on anything. In line with that policy, a number of festivals, such as BITEF, MOT, Eurokaz, MESS, and Ex ponto, were created in order to provide a "free" space, free of censorship; according to Jovan Ćirilov, co-founder and programme director of BITEF, the only thing they were not allowed to do was "to throw dirt on the person and work of Josip Broz" (Vujanović 2010, 377).

The founding of such international festivals was supposed to convey the political message that Yugoslavia was a country open to the West, free to deviate from the communist doctrine and totalitarian regimes of the Eastern Bloc. Yugoslavia pursued a path of its own and these festivals were venues where one could verify that – self-management and freedom of expression, a free society where social reality

could be freely re-examined. One might even say that these festivals were paradigmatic of a well-planned political strategy: to communicate, present, and emphasise Yugoslavia's "new look" before the Western world, whilst, on the other hand, hiding other kinds of repression and weaknesses in the country.

With their "state-commissioned freedom", in Ana Vujanović's words, these festival formats are an excellent example of Louis Althusser's thesis that art, as a "relatively autonomous practice", is an "ideological state apparatus" (Vujanović 2010, 377).

Some of these examples of Althusser's "ideological state apparatuses" had a significant role in the development of particular artistic practices, that is, alternative expression and experimentation in Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s. From its founding in 1967 until the 1980s, BITEF supported and generated new tendencies in theatre and generated space for problematising art and culture, rejecting both real socialism and capitalistic consumerism (Vujanović 2010, 376). In fact, BITEF was a paradigmatic example of a festival promoting proactivity, development, intervention, and criticism. Actually, this is the way we need to "read" the festival if we seek to promote, upgrade, and practise it as a segment of cultural policies. A bottom-up, as it were, conception of the festival, starting from the need for an alternative contemplation of the dominant practices, is inherent to the phenomenon, at this time of dissensus around defining culture (national culture, pop culture, non-culture, subculture, quality in culture, etc.).

Today, more and more festivals are being established in the region; albeit with different purposes, some of them do follow the bottom-up concept (e.g. Action/Fraction, Kondenz, LocoMotion, Dispatch, Ring Ring, Perforations, City of Women…). By means of their programming practices, bottom-up festivals can pursue policies of diversity, decentralisation (in terms of organisation and programming), solidarity, and the politics of memory and remembrance (Dragićević Šešić 2010); also, they may be based on processes of self-organisation and thereby provoke breaking new space for a critical contempla-

tion of the context of contemporary art. Some of them are developing in the context of neoliberal capitalism, seeking to approximate or simulate it, and that applies even to some of the early festivals of socialist Yugoslavia, such as BITEF, MOT, etc.

Some of those festivals that were established in the former Yugoslavia and even some that private individuals and groups founded in the 1990s and 2000s have been adopted by the state and presented as examples of "good policy making" in terms of power and governing structures, supporting the development of so-called creative industries in the region (e.g. Skopje Jazz Festival, BITEF, BELEF, the Macedonian Youth Music Festival, etc.). Many of those festivals that have succumbed to the creative industries have begun to accept their parameters and become or are striving to become profit- or market-oriented. By joining that milieu, they erase or minimise the space for problematising and contemplating their own functions.

Since 1990, the Balkans has been dominated by government policies that recognise and use festivals to promote national identity, which has been a priority for the Balkan countries since the breakup of Yugoslavia. Other examples suggest the influence of different government policies, but pursuing the same goal – to minimise space for problematising, developing, and reflecting on the dominant policies. A Cold War-era example of that has been discussed by Maaike van Geijn: Western European policies toward Eastern and Central Europe and Western Europe's treatment of Eastern and Central European art.[4] Van Geijn argues that Western European audiences were interested in performances from "behind the Iron Curtain" out of mere sensationalist curiosity, as a "window into the world"; in other words, they were not interested in the artistic value of those performances, but only in the political ideals and processes they seemed to reflect.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western audiences and the media lost interest in these performances. Suddenly, they

4 Maaike van Geijn author, Dragan Klaić (ed), *Future Of Festival Formulae*, Theater Instituut Nederland, 2000

were rejected, interpreted and labelled as old-fashioned and ordinary, *déjà vu*, Van Geijn writes, and points out the significance of the context in which any performance is given.

However, our question is whether festivals may also problematise the context, rather than merely re-affirm it. Shouldn't festivals also be venues where the socio-political and economic context might be re-examined and reconfigured? Again, we may turn to Van Geijn, who provides the contrary example of festivals that foster bourgeois consumerism by means of sensationalist presentations and politically diluted mottoes, which shows that bourgeois consumerism is a consequence of outsourcing and shaping culture from top to bottom – a policy that passivises the audience.

This example shows that the condition of the binary-divided world of the Cold War was not dissimilar from ours: art was a "relatively autonomous social practice" and an "ideological state apparatus", whereas the policy of imposing and shaping culture from the top down supported and fostered bourgeois consumerism by means of exotics, exclusivity, sensationalism, and prestige. The question is why festivals as a format still support that.

Today, in addition to national or government policies, there are also policies on the supra-national level, those of the European Union, which have defined and determined new parameters for assessing development in culture.

The Festival as a Factory of New Politico-critical Parameters

It is on the supra-national level of EU policy-making that priorities are set for cultural development, setting the principles and conditions of work and communication and guiding the construction of the system whereby art, culture, and festival programming policies are established. One of the leading policies is the one that defines festivals as events that should educate and entertain (*dolce et utile*). For a long time, this idea, expounded by Horace in his *Ars poetica,* has been used mostly in theatre, but today, one may recognise it in the programming policies of a large number of festivals (Schechner 2003, 38)

The festival may also be seen as an institution and model that produces new forms of knowledge production. In that sense, a festival should offer an emancipatory concept to its participants and audience alike, as well as ideas about education (by means of new approaches and programmes), helping to fulfil the cultural needs of various social groups and providing an impetus for social growth. This emancipatory aspect of festivals could be affirmed by means of educational formats that the contents of festivals could incorporate by, above all, transforming their central components or by borrowing the concept of self-discipline, i.e. lifelong learning, from the academia, although lately the meaning of that concept has expanded beyond the confines of higher education. As Gerald Raunig explains, this concept is no longer emancipatory, having morphed into a lifelong (self-)obligation, as an imperative and lifelong imprisonment of continuous education. Festivals are thus mutating into factories of knowledge, a form of social domination or subordination, in this case, of their audiences as well as participants (Raunig 2009). Transforming this component into a venue for contemplating and problematising contexts, for exploring and experimenting on new models and production forms, for examining potentiality by means of transversality, including the festival as a format and offering a permanent relation of exchanging elements is a function that might reform the festival into a venue for intervention.

Another priority of EU policy-making that affects festivals is "networking". On the one hand, "networking" serves to upgrade the "shared", while, on the other, it underscores its transience as well as its own. It gives rise to new communities, whose functions are transient and one-off, although basically, it is a question of forming new social networks.

Today, however, the "shared" carries a different and constantly changing meaning, and that which it connects is based on different parameters, i.e. those of the neoliberal market-based discourse. It is those parameters that dictate the programming of most festivals, aiming to satisfy not the needs of the multitude, but the broad needs of the majority. The transience and short-term character of most festivals

prevent their participants from taking part in the shaping of the cultural scene, whether their own or that of the festival that is hosting them for a few days. The short-term character gives them too little time to reflect on the contexts and cultural policies of their own country as well as of the country they are visiting (Vujanović 2009).

The audience is not an equal participant in these new "communities" and associations in social, i.e. festival networks. Thus at most festivals communicating with the audience becomes secondary and networking with other "active participants" primary. The aim is to promote the priorities and principles of the European Union: mobility, creativity, cooperation, networking, exchange of experiences, and other such (seasonal) "buzzwords" that are becoming more and more bereft of any meaning whatsoever; principles that promote the European policy of a free flow of "products", that is, neoliberal market principles. This focusing on building systems within festivals themselves in order to create, connect, and merge transient communities of "active participants" minimises the need for discovering new methods of communicating with the audience, who then become more and more of a "passive participant".

By contrast, festivals should develop models of communicating with the audience that will enable it to become a more active participant. A festival should use its timeframe, its "temporality", to emphasise its openness and excessiveness, in order to establish new unities, based on new practices that might reshape its local context. It should contemplate ways, formats, and new contents that might minimise the gap between the creators and the audience; or, rather, it should become oblivious to that gap, or to the traditional distribution of the places, positions, because acknowledging it only makes it wider and, by consequence, more difficult to bridge (Rancière 2009, 23). On the one hand, exchanging experiences, networking, and mobility provide an opportunity to transform, gradually, some rather xenophobic contexts, by means of offering short-term experiences with "others"; on the other hand, though, that mobility only further consolidates the short-term character and marks the shallowness of

the system, by withholding space and time, which in turn thwarts any deeper contemplation and re-examination, that is, opening of new spaces for problematic/critical thinking. This unfortunately dominant kind of top-down festival policy can spawn a specific type of individuals (above all, curators and artists who travel from one festival to the next, hoping to make contact with some of the "programmers"), whose life itself turns into a festival of sorts, as Rok Vevar remarked in one of his lectures. Using self-irony, he describes a specific profile of cultural workers and what they turn into as time goes by. He notes several characteristics of festival systems and ironically lists them as follows: "Performing a Professional", "Selfpromotion", "Performing Smartness", "Competition about References", etc. (Vevar 2009). Festivals foster temporality, transience, and may be even called heterotopias.[5] In his fourth principle Foucault explains:

> Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time (Foucault 1967).

Furthermore, he explains, there are different types of heterotopias:

> [t]here are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal; they are rather absolutely temporal [*chroniques*] (Foucault 1967).[6]

At this point we may well ask about the meaning of the postwar proliferation of festivals. Are they supposed to be factories producing new policies meant to effect temporality, tran-

5 Foucault 1967: "real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted".

6 Although the concept of heterotopia is used in a different context here, it was our inspiration to read Foucault's text, which introduces and explains some of the relations that we are trying to elaborate.

sience, superficiality, numbers, and systems of distributing money, profit, and parameters of work that are propagated by the neoliberal market? Or are festivals emerging as a result of the need to use temporality and space outside of time to generate continuous excess that might open up, always mindful of its context, space not only for reflecting, but also for changing that context from within?

This text asks questions, reveals and emphasises conditions, affirms a particular need for reforming the formats and practices of festivals, but does not pretend to answer the questions it poses. With this text, we would like to stimulate thinking about how mechanisms and policies may be redirected toward generating free spaces for "action" – efficiency, reflecting, correcting. We would like to assert that the festival as a format contains a potential for intervening, which ought to be much more thoroughly examined and implemented. This text seeks to affirm such a perspective, which might give an entirely different meaning to the term "festival".

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18 Paragraphs for a Metaphysics of Movement*

≈ Mårten Spångberg

1. Movement is. It or they exist and is equally in the world as any other objects may that be a battery, a horse, a piece of soap, some smoke, springtime or a romantic comedy. However movement's participation in this equality is not equal to the participation of for example that of a battery, a horse, a piece of soap, some smoke, springtime, a romantic comedy or humans.

2. Movement, singular or plural remain and disappears neither more more nor less than snow, a Ford Model T, meatballs, eternity, a grandmother, a financial crisis or a magical trick.

3. Movement must be saved from memory, presence, absence, trace and, especially metaphor, from the condescending position that the postmodern predicament forced upon it in collaboration with psychoanalysis and identity politics, and must instead be considered as something that exists equally in the past, the present and the future.

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Movement as such is an indivisible monster, definitely not a divided monstrosity inspired by psychoanalysis and is never, never ever, a ghost. Movement is everything else than a spectre. Movement fucks hauntology and is materialist and *weird*.
Movement in respect of epistemology might be subject to certain volatilities and even disappearance but ontologically movement remains however engaged in a constant process of withdrawal.
Movement is an object, and movements are a disconnected assemblage of objects. Only a movement that exists carry the possibility of "avenir".

4. From the perspective of consciousness movement as anything else is metaphoric. Over the last many hundred years movement has been abused by and through metaphor. From the perspective of movement metaphor, however is not the case or in charge, from the perspective of movement, movement is movement. The task of the moving is to contest the forced enslavement of movement to consciousness (metaphor), in favor of movement that is itself and as such. Our responsibility as moving, independent of subjectivity, is to free movement not our selves. The first rule of the moving is to give itself up, to really move implies to betray one's belonging, one's own identity.

5. Movement knows nothing of Euclidean geometry, Fibonacci or Da Vinci and thank God for that. Any kind of geometry is a construction in and through consciousness. Geometry implies a more or less complex representation of reality, but it is always a representation, and of reality. Geometry is a finite consistency that provides a sustainable perspective, something that confirms identity and subjectivity. Movement obeys its own geometries, geometries to which human consciousness, or epistemology have no access. Those geometries are contingently familiar or not with diagonals, triangles and 360 degrees. Movement doesn't

care about choreographic structures, it minds its own business and isn't listed or reachable.

6. Movement is in the world as much as any other entity, animate or inanimate. Hence movement is equally aware of its being in the world. Movement has subjectivity but that is a subjectivity that is incompatible to ours' or others'.

7. Movement is not more or less complex than a boy, an airplane, a wetsuit or graphic design, but its complexity is incompatible with the complexity and others.

8. Movement is in the world although it is engaged in a constant process of withdrawal. Movement withdraws from processes of subjectification in order to preserves its autonomy, to remaining movement. It withdraws from the desire of other subjectivities to locate it spatio-temporally – to subjectify it.
Engaged in a process of withdrawal, movement resides in a dynamic realm between existence and potentiality. A movement that is given to withdraw is a dark-precursor.

9. Movement does not form semiotic consistencies. It is other subjectivities that strive to import movement into contained semiotic systematics. If, which is contingent, movement is implicated in semiotic coagulations those are further contingently compatible to semiotic systems acknowledged by human and other forms of subjectivity. Movement inscribed in semiotic consistencies can be subject to translation, a process that as such disarms, or robs movement of its possible potentiality. Being faithful to movement implies to insist on its untranslatability. Movement can and must be categorised and inscribed into consciousness but that does not mean that it becomes identical to signification or meaning production. Movement is language as much or as little as a stone, a café, fucking or you and me.

10. Human subjectivity cannot access movement, nor can movement access human subjectivity. What a human subject can access is a certain consciousness's relation to movement. Movement, singular or plural, cannot and will never be understood in itself, what can be inscribed in or located by knowledge is always only the subject's relation to movement. Movement doesn't need us.

11. Movement in itself is in no respect identical with its representations. This is neither good nor bad, but needs to be acknowledged, addressed and engaged with.

12. Movement in respect of representation is by definition probabilistic. Movement in itself and as such, on the contrary, is contingent to representation.

13. Movement vis-à-vis representation is always general and special, which implies the possibility of participation in the circulation of property. Movement in itself and as such is by necessity generic and specific, which makes it incompatible with such circulation, because as generic it assumes an endless supply and as specific it can only be interchanged with itself, and thus is rendered useless in respect of any market.

14. Movement as we know it, through whatever forms of knowledge – cognition, emotion, sensation, physicality or intuition - is always local, contextual, measurable and the expression of a determined perspective, Movement in itself and as such on the other hand is always universal, non-contextual, immeasurable or indivisible and the non-expression of an open, full-circle horizon.

15. Movement escapes any known structural consistencies and obeys only its own, for subjectivity inaccessible, organizational capacities.

16. If an architect is an individual who fears disorder and devotes life to the structuring and to the stabilization of space. Choreographer is the name of somebody that fears movement.

A dancer is also fear ridden, but most often does not know he fears movement, a dancer experiences pure fear.

Improvisation is largely a denial, a denial of movement, or a liberal conception that always negotiates and preserves and never produces. Improvisation cherishes difference and renounces the emergency of anything different. Contrary to its self-conception, improvisation paradoxically consolidates already established relations between consciousness and movement. Improvisation is itself a defence mechanism, a way of obfuscating the actual withdrawal of movement, of not taking movement seriously. The true target of the improviser, thus is not the liberation of movement from consciousness or semiotics, but his own non-belief in movement.

A serious approach to movement by necessity entails an engagement with fear, engagement with the very process of withdrawal, a process that contests or endangers subjectivity. A serious engagement with movement, the dark-precursor implies an engagement with the risk of losing everything.

The problem with improvisation is not that it is improvisation, but that it isn't improvisation enough, in other words not that it is free but that it is not free enough. True improvisation, a serious relation to movement ready to betray all sides, must necessarily consist of a systematic imagination (choreography), whose foundational three components are: the readiness to forsake one's life for the sake of movement, the bringing of creativity and readiness to take risk, and to find in the engagement in movement, in withdrawal, an innocent joy in the activity, and hence clear all traces of self-sacrifice.

In other words choreography is the necessary prime mover in the pursuit of a movement that is itself and as such.

17. As dark-precursor movement engages with the world through forms of excessive sensuality. Movement in itself is not reflexive, divisible or economical, it engages with the world through specific kinds of orgasmic oscillation. It is consciousness.

18. To dance does not imply to engage with something, to form relations, to merge. On the contrary to dance, with its relation to choreography, is like writing, or rather like dictating a love letter to someone one knows one can never have. To really dance implies to acknowledge and celebrate that movement is and must remain radically alien.

Better Group Sex Better Life*

≈ **Mårten Spångberg**

I wish I leaned toward group sex. I don't!

Of course a negligible episode in my late teens, but the session stretched only as far as two couples fornicating in the same room. A tiny space, but still public enough not to challenge the order or sexual conduct, and thus not contesting notions of success. It was still one on one, and triumph was measured in coming or not coming, making her come or not, making her come twice or not, the action slavishly following an Aristotelian climactic dramaturgy.

I. Group sex is mystical rather than rational. It leaps to conclusions that logic cannot reach.

I didn't visit the therapist afterward, but the experience must have been traumatic because ever since I have without exception practiced with one partner at a time. Experimenting a little. Cultivating a need to at least feel experimental (*No no, I promise nothing like that*), making an effort to further liberate

* This text was previously published on martenspangerg.org

sexuality: mine, hers and the world's in general. Night after night, day after day I have pronounced myself guilty for not being free enough, competing with the world for successful action using orgasm as a grand narrative to save myself from disappearing in multiculturalism when identity politics turned into a commercial "I Want To Be A Millionaire".

II. Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.

The point with group sex is not the phantasy of the abundance of pussy, cock, mouths and ass holes. One in every hole, two in every mouth, three, four, five. On the contrary, in today's society group sex becomes counterproductive to capitalism exactly because the availability of flesh, limbs, members, landing strips and balls is made redundant. What late capitalism offers is always already free and unrestricted access to licking, sucking and fucking in whatever way you can want to like it, but such access deploys direction and allocates time. It coordinates freedom of choice and feeds on asymmetrical dependencies. The currency of neo liberal capitalism is not $€¥, it's freedom.

III. Illogical judgments lead to new experience.

But seriously, I'm not interested anymore, and don't even think of offering me something else. Stop it, there are no catchy phrases left, not even for the neoliberal perversion par excellence: masochism. I don't need more freedom! Don't want to become ever more liberated. In fact freedom is the one thing that I have too much of, so much that decision has been made indifferent, so completely redundant, that ideology has faded into a few hundred views on YouTube.

IV. Conventional sex (one on one) is essentially rational. Group sex is essentially illogical.

If there is no ideology, what am I supposed to do with my freedom? If the premise of the world is maximum smoothness, the possession of freedom is dead weight, or a support

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for the proliferation of its previous opposite. The abundance of freedom and consequently endless opportunities of navigation and choice opens for the proliferation of a politics functional through affect, i.e. based on irritations to the body rather than discernible and distinct arguments. If "sub specie aeternitatis", and with Spinoza's addition "there is nor good or bad" once had relevance, it has today transformed into a watchword for neoliberal governance. There is nothing good or bad, there are only irritations to the body, only a suspended decision generated by our utmost fear: the loss of freedom.

And what could be a more obvious defense than to search for and produce autonomy, even though it is an equally superfluous project, and in any case is reproducing borders precisely in order not to change the concept of freedom but rather contain the subject anew.

> **V. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.**

If autonomy *is*, i.e. comprises a form of authorship, it must exist in relation to something established and hence always consolidate coordination. Instead we must search behind us. No, don't turn around; let's search backwards towards an inautonomous life. If autonomy *is*, i.e. comprises some authorship—taking off alone; its desire must be organized as lack, fulfilling psychoanalytical protocols. Instead let's turn around and bring a friend. No, don't decide—you don't need to, everybody can come. Non-autonomous desire is configured through opportunity, through abundance. Let's stop being things and engage in our selves as machines.

> **VII. Group sex's motivation is secondary to the process it imitates from idea to completion. It's willfulness may only be subjectivity.**

Group sex as experimental practice is concerned with forms of organization, modes of distribution of power, strategies and criteria for quality assessment. It is not an expression of

experimental sex: activities that aim to deterritorialize the body and its thresholds, frequently accompanied by ideological subtexts that regularly tend towards the consolidation of sexual identities rather than the estimated, and marketed, production of new or alternative subjectivities. Group sex is not a matter of each individual being responsible for his or her satisfaction, that's what happens in swinger clubs. Group sex is a matter of giving up one's own immediate satisfaction, which always has a happy ending and is a tragedy in favor of a pleasure that bypasses identity and hence proposes a different (in kind) practice of ownership.

> **VIII. When words such as display and scenario are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on group sex that would be reluctant to display and scenarios that go beyond those limitations.**

If, following e.g. Gilles Deleuze and Slavoj Žižek, perversion is fundamentally based on repetition (satisfaction not through intercourse but through the perfection of a scripted operation), then group sex cannot be a form of perversion, but is on the contrary a celebration of sexuality as activity, as forms of practice. It's transformative capacity is contained in those and similar terms: activity, practice or rehearsal, and this is where group sex's subversive potentiality is positioned.

The transformative intensity of sexual activity is not first of all whether boys spend the night together, whether girls forget to fall asleep because they are so busy through the night, or whether indeed we make out in zigzag. No, the threat carried through and in sexuality is how, to what extent, under what circumstances, etc., it produces—possibly alternative—forms of life. You and your partner can use your imagination all the way until the sunset, using any and all kinds of tools, outfits and so on—it doesn't matter. You can fuck each other down to the basement, and it will mean nothing compared to a waterproof conventional group sex session. Group sex is a way of conducting life through a different ethics than the

prevailing neoliberal paradigm, which is characterized by "public opinion" and the organization and modulation of a permanent state of exception.

> **X. Ideas alone can be group sex; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. Group sex need not be made physical.**

Value, and with that appreciation in all its forms, exists in and as a constant flow or flux, but underneath there is a system, a grid of values that constitute the world and its actions, that act as an alibi for all other flows and fluxes and produce a necessary stability for modes of navigation.

> **XI. Group sex does not necessarily proceed in logical order. It may set one off in unexpected directions but group sex must necessarily be completed in the mind before it is formed.**

If we today—at the zenith of recession, on the one hand, and global climate change, on the other—desire not just to postpone the moment of impact, or simply close our eyes and wait for a future that will definitely arrive, it is those fundamental values that must be contested.
No, they cannot be questioned or critiqued in a conventional sense, precisely because these values constitute the very existence of such modes of operation. In this case there is no face-to-face, neither back stabbing nor taking from behind, nor any possibility of the elaboration of alternative approaches.

If sexuality wants to be something more than sympathetic ornamentations on capitalism or shopping mall Q-time, it can only take place through jeopardizing its own positions, through strategies that consist of superimposed incompatibilities whose outcome cannot be calculated. We have no choice but to admit it: We are fucked! But we can decide if we want to be just fucked or insist on fucking as a group.

Marquis de Sade once said that nothing needs order more than an orgy. But fuck that, if order can be identified,
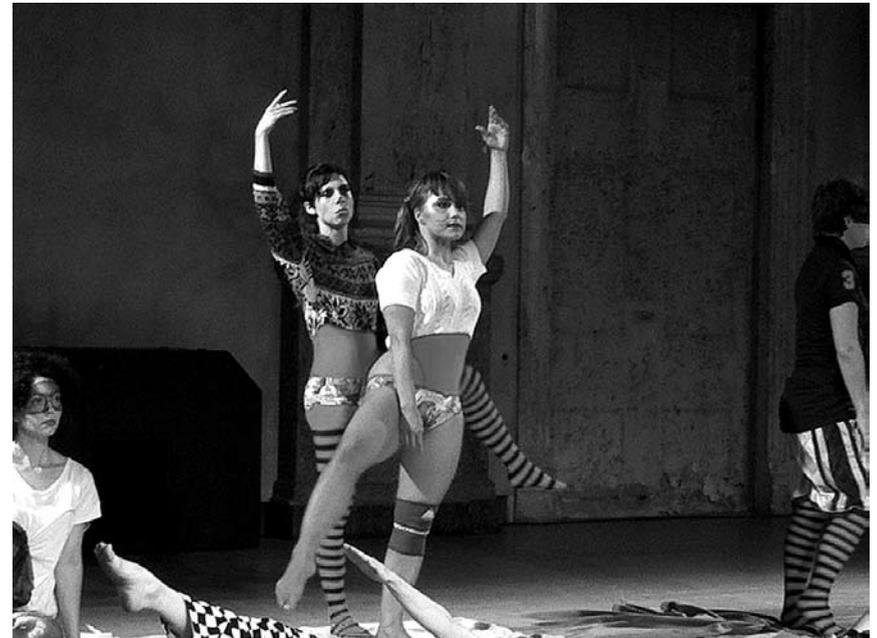
Mårten Spångberg: *The Beach...*, Vienna, 2012, Photo by: Mårten Spångberg

there is certainly no orgy. Group sex provides circumstances to contest order as we know it. Orgy and group sex should not be confused. Group sex is not about excess or subversive actions; nor is it concerned with the efficiency or eruptive intensities of spectacle, but rather in an activity known to produce a different being together.

> XII. For each group sex event that becomes physical, there are many variations that do not.

> XV. Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, a group sex event may use any form from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physical reality, equally.

Attempts to transform values that are formulated from within late capitalism in particular often tend to have the opposite effect, consolidating established values due to the binary tendencies of western discursive order.

Throughout modernity experimentation and alternative sexual practices have been understood as a context where actual transformation could be produced and embedded in society, something that today appears as a naïve attempt to escape the ubiquitous intensities of the global market economy. Those practices can, however, be regarded as fields where protocols for possible transformation can be developed, tested and researched. Such protocols are not first of all statement-like, but aim at producing agency, thus functioning as a kind of shape-shifter that, although embedded in established fields of knowledge and economy, can escape localization and recognition. These shape-shifters need to keep floating evasively through the meshes of markets, social structures and demographic layers. Making the effort to elude identity and location is sometimes precisely to engage in it, since to deviate from already accepted values might be to create another, perhaps even keener desire.

> XVI. If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about group sex, then they are (part of) the group sex event and not literature. Numbers are not mathematics.

Paradoxically, the shape-shifter must both fight established values to understand them and at the same time come to resemble these values in order to keep them at bay, not to fall into the trap of production of "the new" or sink into the abyss of "progress". Group sex is such a shape-shifter.

> XVII. All ideas are group sex if they are concerned with group sex and fall within the conventions of group sex.

Considering the vast transformations at stake in the world today, with an economical system collapsing, the neoliberal regime on its way out and alternative epistemes (modes of knowledge and life) growing stronger, it appears impossible to engage in sexuality in the sense of solidifying or directional practices. Group sex, the shape-shifter, intensifies opportunities of eluding formations of measurable and finite entities, narratives and scenario, and will instead engage in the sexual practices understood as open-ended, non-directional, discontinuous, smooth and immeasurable. Sexuality as we know it in western society is organized around climax and hence necessarily finite, whereas the group sex with all its layers carries a promise, a promise of the everyday, the fleeting and lived. In other words, sex is always already guilty, whereas group sex and its activational textures is a suspect, a suspect in the sense of suspending the accuracy or permanence of the law or language.

> XVIII. One usually understands group sex events of the past by applying the conventions of the present, thus misunderstanding the group sex of the past.

Conventional sexual activity is fundamentally Aristotelian, just a step away from any action movie, the poetic elegance of Shakespeare where "uhhhh" is largely absent, or the control of the path in an IKEA store. Already in advance we know who's gonna come out on top, as everybody knows sex is better before, just like cinema is best when the lady with the torch comes towards us. When Bruce Willis shows up on the screen it can only get worse, and I know my cum will not be

double espresso sized, and she will only wake up the closest neighbor, never the whole house. Or why did we only fuck on the kitchen table during the first four, I mean two, months. Sex, however we think we are so different and original, must, since it is analogous to these examples, be understood as capitalist expression. Success is measurable and the job description not more than: Come in time! Never too early, never not at all. Sex, with you and me, is formed on the anvil of post-Fordism, and we have no choice but crescendo and after the good deed is done to lay back on the bed catching our breath. No, we have no choice, it's mandatory for success, independent of whether we have read our J.L. Austin or not. This performativity is as normative as the tennis player making sounds when he hits the ball. We don't need to but have to, and every time.

> **XX. Successful group sex changes our understanding of the conventions by altering our perceptions.**

In June 2009 the international tennis federation considers changing the rules with respect to what sounds the players are allowed to produce. It is the young Portuguese player Michelle Larcher De Brito that has stirred turbulence. Not only is she loud. 109 dB has been measured which is 1 dB less than a chainsaw (the comparison made by the international press). Her sounds are also long, very long. A French journalist pondered if it is possible to experience 300 orgasms during a single tennis game, referring to the player saying: "Nobody can make me stop, this is me." Long live authenticity and the *petit mort* of the tennis court.

The heterosexual one to one sexual encounter produces norms for all other sexual practices. Any other practice is an alternative, an instead-of or hybrid. Whether we want or not, as long as we are two we must be haunted by the heterosexual norm. Group sex does not question those norms and conventions (as long as sexual experimentation takes place in the domestic sphere, they are not dubious, obscene or perverse), but is instead not occupied with them. Group sex doesn't need to subvert those norms; it is indifferent to them; it's aims are simply not compatible with such critique.

Mårten Spångberg: *The Beach...*, Vienna, 2012, Photo by: Mårten Spångberg

XXII. Group sex cannot be imagined, and cannot be perceived until it is complete.

Group sex is about resolving notions of success, the measurability of sexual ability, criteria for "was it good for you…"—and indeed to change the world. How is group sex successful: not because I come, not because we all come, not even at the same time. Group sex issues another modality of success that requires other means of assessment: what is the name of those criteria? What matters is not the individual but the success or well-being of the assemblage, both as a plane of consistency and as a series of interdependent individuals whose only concern is the plane.

This implies that the individual can estimate different positions, different modes of activation, possibly changing during a single session in order to stimulate the plane, which in itself is a shifting and fluctuating entity. Conventional one-to-one sexual activity is measurable with respect to signs; group sex in contrast can only be evaluated with respect to productive intensity, some sort of volume whose composition, conditions and attributes continuously shift and therefore force the engaged to produce autonomous capacities for identification, coordination, classification.

XXV. Group sex may not necessarily understand its own expression. Its perception is neither better nor worse than others.

It is our responsibility, and opportunity, to take on such practices, which indeed is self-jeopardizing and a departure from consensual and universal notions of sexuality and its relationship to individuality and protocols for identity production, group sex thus being closer to engineering than consolidation. An engineering of abstraction defined as equipment, both tools and lure, linking material and semiotic elements, from non-discursive, un-namable, un-repeatable sets of entry-points, in order to construct political, economic and aesthetic devices where existential transformation can be tested.

XXVII. The concept of a group sex event may involve the matter of group sex or the process in which it is made.

Each individual case of group sex proposes a tangible threshold to, or forces us to think and create through, a "bad will" as opposed to good will, which, however joyful and affirmative, will allow for consensual production.

Group sex's initial ambition is to honor what forces us to escape good will, consensual thought, and instead insist on bad will, the fundamental concern of which is to examine the reliability of claim, in favor of an open speculative operability that empowers us to venture all the way along the question that gave power to oblige us to think: how can incoherence be produced where coherence rules. Group sex, in other words, is a matter of proposing one, or many other, sexualities, whose collective ambition is the invention of sexualities outside, or detached, from the organic.

Group sex implies that the participant has to give him/her self up. This production is not just concerned with the self but with one self as human. Group sex invites the participant to become non-human, a process which offers, or rather forces, the participant to invent new kinds of sexuality detached from heterosexual protocols, or from anthropomorphic sexuality in its entirety—an abstract sex independent of Oedipal pleasure, functioning instead through joy and affective contagion.

XXIX. The process of a group sex event is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.

In neoliberal economies freedom is something one consumes; freedom has turned into a product in an economy based on cognition and knowledge. Manufacturing is past-tense, or somebody else will take care of it, and instead opportunities for transformation are produced. If capital has penetrated life into its core and equally holds maturity in the stocks for experience and transformation, economy has become one with life. We don't need to consume anymore, life is the production of consumption, the production of the pro-

duction of economy, it is A life economical, where the strive towards and the manifestation of freedom is equally a means of consumption and production. The freer I am the more attractive to current economical life, and this freedom has a color, direction, flavor, ecological profile and packaging.

XXX. There are many elements involved in a group sex event. The most important are the most obvious.

A new kind of urban individual has appeared over the last few years. In Stockholm they are known as DINKs: Double Income No Children, but perhaps they could also be called freedom suckers. They are the free people in our society and they would never—it is in fact incompatible with their notion of freedom—to engage in group sex, and I would argue that neoliberal life in general cannot engage in group sex since sexual contact is founded on the idea of minimal interventions / maximum revenue.

XXXI. If a group sex event uses the same form for a series of events, and changes the content, one would assume that the group sex event's concept involved content.

I have a stone—a small one—and a yellow scarf sitting on my night table. When I can't sleep I fantasize about the scarf and the stone having sex, making love or whatever it is called when stones and scarves engage in erotic pleasure. I'm slightly ashamed that it's only the two of them. Are they also a couple? Maybe they are, maybe not, perhaps a scarf is already a multiple identity or perhaps stones share identities with other stones nearby. In any case it is good to have them because, you know, it's pretty hard to imagine how stones and scarves make life beautiful, especially if you insist on avoiding to anthropomorphize either entity while letting them make love specifically.

XXXII. Banal group sex cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.

In *Star Wars* at some critical moment where the universe is just seconds from total implosion, Luke together with Han Solo arrives in a mobster-ridden space city to negotiate the future's existence. The negotiation takes place in something that looks like a teepee, but is a nightclub. Han sits down with Scarface from a galaxy far far away while Luke hangs out in the bar. He turns around and there, in order to heighten the party atmosphere, George Lukas introduces a small group of aliens engaged in the rhythmical transposition of their bodies. They dance, or we think so. I like to imagine that it is not at all a dance, but what we are looking at is a city. A city with millions of inhabitants, they are just not using a city in the ways we are used to. Can those ways be explored? Can they be mapped without the assistance of Hollywood?

XXXIII. It is difficult to bungle a good group sex.

Group sex is epic, and it welcomes alienation effects. Isn't it so that one-to-one sexuality is measured on the basis of keeping the illusion intact and active? Group sex does not follow cinematic protocols; it doesn't support dramaturgy like a CD—with a strong beginning, middle and end. Group sex is more like downloading separate tracks and listening to them with iTunes on shuffle. No, group sex is not about sex; is it about practicing different kinds of coagulations of decision making, models that necessarily shift, considering that there can be no division between life and economy.
Group sex plays the role of that which defies and can as a result only be named negatively by power, communally in favor of neutralizing group sex as a weapon of subjection. Group sex contests what is known through established institutions and their forms of representation, and invents and imposes new rights, encouraging new relationships to time, wealth, democracy. Group sex can be brought back into the institutional conflict, which has already been standardized; or do we seize the opportunity to develop struggles for identities, modes of life and coordination still in the making?

Different modes of behavior and expression are represented in group sex, and as they spread, which they necessar-

ily must, they produce skills or collective bodies of expertise. Those bodies, these skills, as soon as they are in operation, trigger, instead of a hoped-for climax and its aftermath, a proliferation of problems, desires and responses.

Group sex, as an alternative action of coordination, may extend to experimentation with political procedures, and in their play of production of expertise invent new ones which, however, also take thorough care to encourage the meeting of singularities, the arrangement being of different communities, lives and epistemologies.

XXXIV. When group sex learns its circumstances and conditions too well, it makes it slick group sex.

Group sex is not a vertical and hierarchical organization, nor is it a network based on models of patchwork that allows individuals and groups to operate in a more flexible and responsible way. It is yet a different organization which is modulating or amorphous on the level of form and structural consistency; i.e., it does not operate due to structure, discipline, and is not long term, but is instead organized due to flows and fluxes. It is a coagulation of decisions rather than a skeleton that simplifies decision-making.

XXXV. These sentences comment on group sex but are not group sex.

On the other hand, group sex is not an organism (it is not hierarchical) and is not a swarm—that would be too sad. It is not atomic, and it is not a multitude. It is, instead, not a metaphor, but it is a landscape—however, the metaphor does not continue. It is a landscape on the level of formation, but on the level of the individual it is strongly stabilized. On the level of expression the individual and the group must proceed very carefully, and there are even certain formal responsibilities to consider. Group sex transposes difference, from different in degree but not in kind to different in kind but not in degree.

On the level of expression, group sex is long-term, striated and non-dynamic. Group sex with respect to organization is changing direction—in this situation, it is not the organization that works for the individual, but the individual working for the organization. Group sex is not an organization but a coagulation without a center or skeleton. It is an abstract machine in relation to a particular set of behaviors forming an ethics through concrete rules.

Group sex in this respect is not counterproductive to given and established politics. It does not oppose given systematics, but formulates a "no" to given modes of engagement. Group sex is not something else but an incompatible addition. Group sex does not arrest its position to be either pacified or to be given a position as outside which both would consolidate the given. Instead group sex functions as an irritation to the body of organization. It is a post-identitairian practice that carries the potentiality of a different life.

XXXVI. Better group sex better life.

Digitality and the Shattering of Tradition

≈ Jonathan Beller

This paper explores the continuance of capitalism by other means, along with the continuing importance of a theory of value that refuses the immeasurability theories of the autonomists. By examining mediatic shifts (the crisis of representation, the rise of visuality and informatics), developing new thoughts on capital (the forms of labour, value, accumulation, attention, the wage), along with a noting transformations in the character and role of affect and utterance, we may pose a set of metrics opposed to those imposed by capital.

My first image, one of digitality, is a handout I passed around in an *edition of 100 at Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, a conference held at The New School in November, 2009.

By all appearances, it is an ordinary one-dollar bill with a red-ink stamp of the word "Distributed" on it and a handwritten # indicating its number in the series. However, one might legitimately ask: Is the handout a performance, an image, or software? Was it an icon of, or an occasion for, what is being called Distributed Creativity? No doubt it is an image of images, but one cannot decide here if the medium is paper or money? Maybe it was once paper, but... Oh, what a strange conversion! The handout, which the audience were invited to accept (as payment for their attention, as an ironic critique of their intentions) or reject (as a perverse outing of relations that ought to remain implicit, as an act of disidentification with those relations), gives new resonance to this still significant formulation: the medium is the message. Some accepted it, some took several copies, some asked for them to be signed, others left them in small piles like so much garbage. But what exactly is the medium? The various inks on the paper raise numerous questions along the line of the following series: Writing/Photography as Inscription as Image as Money as Capital.

The understanding that emerges from a consideration of this series – that capital informs not only writing and image, but also their reception – ultimately becomes fully convincing in the contemporary, when digital technologies underpin the world-media system and when so-called cognitive capitalism reigns. However, given this outcome we might consider that the substitution of Quantity for Quality (or perhaps the reconfiguration of quality by quantity), which has been on the rise since the beginnings of capital, informed the first as well as this, our penultimate Digital Culture. (Optimism of the will, of course, requires that we consider our current digital culture the penultimate one – a precursor to what Christian Fuchs suggests is the historical necessity of the digital computer for the long-sought arrival of communism.)

The role of digitisation and its relation to the money form is a central question in our period. In his brief but nonetheless monumental work on photography, Vilém Flusser asserts that the photograph is a technical – and therefore abstract image – the mechanics of which derive from the oper-

ation of written concepts. One could obviously trace the overlap between Flusser's idea of the apparatus and Norbert Weiner's understanding of cybernetics in *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* – characterised by what I think of as the welding of a set of encoded intentions to future attention through calculated metrics – (a principal that, we might note, already inheres in writing). I want to dwell, however, on Flusser's understanding of photography and its *relation* to writing. For here one can observe the consequences of the technical image for writing as well as the digitisation of images (and thus discourse) already in the 19th century. Flusser asserts that the photograph, "the first post-industrial image", is a "technical image" – and therefore an abstract image – whose internal mechanics derive from the operation of written concepts. Thus, the photograph is a form of programming. We might add, so also is money/capital. The rise to social pre-eminence of the general equivalent, that is, money, alongside the organisation of production in accord with the split register of the commodity form (use-value / exchange-value), is a transformation whose ultimate consequences have yet to be drawn. As Fredric Jameson, among others, has said, the emergence of the commodity form, the ability to compare, quantitatively and thus abstractly, specific and otherwise incomparable qualities is similar in historical import to the Neolithic revolution.

Today, we must keep reminding ourselves, the so-called vanishing mediator is the computational underpinning of images, thought, information, and form itself; indeed, it is a necessary precondition of modern "humanity". As can be readily observed by an even superficial examination of the contemporary world reveals that where there is no money, one finds no humanity. At a philosophically deeper but no less tragic level of enquiry, one can show (and indeed it has been shown) that the very idea of the human, at least as put into practice by the West, depends upon violent racist and nationalist exclusions of discursively and physically produced others, non-, in-, and sub-humans, whose images in Western eyes formed in and through the historical practices of colonialism and imperialism should be understood as

nothing less (if perhaps much more) than technologies of capitalist expansion.[1] Ideologies in an older idiom, software in a more contemporary one – Foucault's idea of a *techne* for both the making of certain subjects and the disappearance of others - produce capitalism's many Others vis-à-vis the objectifying calculus of profit. Whatever the case, if we allow ourselves to be guided by Marx's dictum that "[h]uman anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape" (Marx 1858), we will find ourselves confronted by the following paradox: retroactively, the ur-medium of "humanity" is capital.

If, say, for political reasons, one wanted a counter to all the celebratory hoopla and evangelical hand-rubbing by dwelling on the negatives of digitality, one could look at some of the classic critiques of media clustered around the global '60s (decolonisation, world-revolution), more specifically, McLuhan, Enzensberger, and Baudrillard.

The still underappreciated McLuhan argued in 1964 that new media technologies alter the sense ratios and that the macro-effects of such alteration cannot be easily or quickly appreciated. Indeed, only with the rise of electronic media do we grasp the significance of the Gutenberg press. McLuhan drops blazing one-liners such as the following: "Print created individualism and nationalism in the 16th century", which, of course, implies that all of our fundamental categories for thinking agency, history, and geopolitics miss the mark. With the famous, but perhaps not famous enough, example of the light bulb as a medium without content, McLuhan argues that "[t]he medium is the message".

In 1970 Hans Mangus Enzensberger could have been writing about this, our current moment:

> Anyone who expects to be emancipated by technological hardware or by a system of hardware however structured, is the victim of an obscure belief in progress. Anyone who imagines that freedom for the media will be established if only everyone is busy transmitting and receiving is the dupe of a liberalism which,

1 See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001). Of course the evidence of the price of modern humanity is everywhere to be found – although those who are paying the most rarely if ever control the means for the representation of how they survive the consequences of their paying.

decked out in contemporary colors merely peddles the faded concepts of a preordained harmony of social interests. (Enzensberger 2003, 267)[2]

Cleaving to the belief that content, distribution, and access to the means of production matter, Enzensberger dismisses "the charlatan" McLuhan's formulation that the medium is the message:

> The sentence [...] tells us that the bourgeoisie does indeed have all possible means at its disposal to communicate something to us, but that it has nothing more to say. It is ideologically sterile. Its intention is to hold on to the control of the means of production at any price while being incapable of making the socially necessary use of them is here expressed with complete frankness in the superstructure. It wants the media *as such* and *to no purpose*. (Enzensberger 2003, 271)

Enzensberger also dismisses (as bourgeois)

> the symbolical expression by an artistic avant-garde whose program logically admits only the alternative of negative signals and amorphous noise. Example: the already outdated "literature of silence", Warhol's films in which everything can happen at once or nothing at all, and John Cage's forty-five-minute-long *Lecture on Nothing*. (Enzensberger 2003, 271)

Interestingly, for us theorists of cinema, cut 'n' mix, and mash-up, he identifies the partisan character of montage: "Cutting, editing, dubbing – these are techniques for conscious manipulation" (Enzensberger 2003, 271). He describes these techniques as "work processes" and calls the results "proto-types", presumably of fabricating reality. In contrast to traditional works of art, he writes: "the media do not produce such objects, they create programs" (Enzensberger 2003, 271).

In his 1972 "Requiem for the Media" (a title shot through with unrequited wish-fulfilment), the much maligned Jean

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2 Originally published as Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of Media", New Left Review 64, 1970, pp. 13–36 and reprinted in The New Media Reader.

Baudrillard (who can't help being French, but I suppose that is not an excuse) explains that "the media are not *co-efficients*, but *effectors* of ideology". Ideology is not "some Imaginary floating in the wake of exchange value: it is the very operation of exchange value" (Baudrillard 2003, 280). This thesis is brilliantly elaborated in what is – for me, anyway – his most significant work: *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. In "Requiem", referring to the mass-media response to, and thus containment of, Paris '68, Baudrillard asserts that the mass media are anti-mediatory and intransitive. They fabricate non-communication [...] they are what always prevents response, making all processes of exchange impossible (except the various forms of response simulation [...] the revolution *tout court* – lies in restoring this possibility of response. (Baudrillard 2003, 280–281)

The media's power to prevent response, its irresponsibility, ultimately lies in what he calls "the terrorism of the code". The invariable organisation of the code by the Encoder-Message-Decoder algorithm, which we must assume is the result of the history of practical applications of the code and therefore the historical achievement of "communication" as "the code" itself, means that one can only transmit or receive but never do both and that both ambiguity and genuine reciprocity are excluded. Against Enzensberger, Baudrillard writes: "Reversibility has nothing to do with reciprocity" and concludes that the code institutes "decentralized totalitarianism" (Baudrillard 2003, 286).

Thus, a summary of these late-60s media negatrons might read as follows: for McLuhan, failing to recognise the mediatic basis of society leads to a gross mis-categorisation of agency and to historical (and therefore political) error. For Enzensberger, the bourgeois organised media is liquidated of socialist content/programme and therefore counter-revolutionary in its current incarnation. For Baudrillard, the code itself negates the production of non-capitalist values – one must "smash the code".

These critiques should be linked to the more contemporary extrapolation and development of media f'd-uppedness, along with the analysis thereof. In his *Media Manifestos,* Regis

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Debray, theorist of the *foco* movements, volunteers the mnemonic "Submission rhymes with Transmission" and suggests, in effect, that the history of sign function is organised by what we might now think of as media platforms. We see from this brilliant text that in addition to whatever else it may be, sign-function is clearly extra-semiotic – in other words, practical-material. Debray allows us to consider more concretely the role of the apparatus proper in the organisation of what Althusser called "Ideological State Apparatuses". In "Language, Images, and the Postmodern Predicament", an important essay, Wlad Godzich charts the increasing alienation of the subject of language over the long *durée* of European modernism, linking it to the decreasing purchase of language on reality, orchestrated by the rise of mechanically reproducible images. (By the time of existentialism, modern subjects had experienced an alienation so complete, as to be unimaginable by their predecessors.) Nicholas Mirzoeff finds that the term "visuality" is first employed by Thomas Carlyle in "On Heroes and Hero Worship", to describe the perspective of the conservative hero who will save his republic from the rising power of the hordes. The suggestion is that the techno-mediated perceptions that are at once unavoidable and constitutive – perceptions that we now identify under the rubric of "visuality" – continue to be tinged with this reactionary perceptual modality. Put another way, we could say that the contemporary formation of "visuality" conspires against the progressive forces of history – even if it's emergence is also driven by them. Here I would want to include my own work on the cinematic mode of production, in which the cinema marks the emergence of a technology for the industrialisation of visual perception and the transformation of the form of both work and the wage.

In light of these critical and let's say pessimistic takes on media history (and therefore on history in general), it may be worth revisiting in thumbnail my own brief history of visuality, which understands the intellectual history of the long 20th century as a symptom.

The history of the human sciences should be read as an indexical phenomenologicon of sign function: together, they offer a periodisation of verbal sign effects in relation to the technologically mediated recession of the Real. Very briefly then, linguistics and structuralism announce an inaugural and henceforth unrecoverable split between signifier and signified – the sign shadows the Real and vice versa. One might say that the Saussurian shift from philology to linguistics registers the media-ecological demotion of language to being one medium among many, one record of accounts in a world that may now offer competing versions of itself in other media. Psychoanalysis and semiotics propose that the world beyond the purview of language churns in accord with logics beyond those of daytime rationality and bring the whole Marxian notion of depth hermeneutics and the symptom to language itself. The advent of cinema in 1895 provides a convenient date to mark both the breakdown of language and the beginning of linguistic strategies to accommodate its newly precipitated dysfunction. Parapraxis, a pronounced breakdown in language, emerges with the unconscious and requires the discourse that will be psychoanalysis to explain it. Language notices and endeavours to accommodate its own displacement by the rising tide of the visual. As I have tried to show elsewhere (Beller 2006), the onslaught of the visual and the penetration of the life-world by visual technologies can be thought of as the unconscious of the unconscious – the repressed media history that provides (or at least provided) the template for the new insights into "human nature" that emerged out of both psychoanalysis and studies of sign-function. Likewise semiotics, with its attention to visual texts, as well as its meditations on the meaning of meaning that in one branch culminated in the analysis of the structure of myth as a second-order signifying system (Barthes), has shown the ways in which signs could be deployed (and therefore denatured and recoded) by what we would today recognise as a programme. Post-structuralism and deconstruction, despite the latter's strong emphasis on textuality, powerfully included an elaboration of Lacanian aphanisis (the fading of the subject) and extended this fade to being itself, which was then duly placed under erasure. One could say that in a visual becoming digital culture the traditional

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forms of writing and *its* subjects were driven to the brink of extinction. Linearity, temporality, history, presence – erstwhile essential elements not only of human nature, but also, purportedly, of nature itself – have been exposed as discursive formations and formations that were crumbling. One could find the light of images pouring through language's cracks. With postmodernism in full swing and the emergence of virtuality and simulation from the void of the Real, along with the resultant waning of historicity and what I would call the transformation of affect, we enter a world in which not only language has been functionalised by the great political-economic machines of the imagination known as, but not limited to, computer-driven screens, but also the role and possibilities of language have been forever transformed. And, almost incidentally, so too have the role of philosophy and, for what (little) it matters, the definition of our species. The human drama may never have been cosmic in scope, even if it was emplotted as such. As it turns out, infinite existentialism, when combined with infinite irony, produces simulation as the *sine qua non* of knowledge.

These discursive frames, borrowed from intellectual history for the staging of the exit of the Real from representation, should be correlated with the intensifying penetration of the life-world by technologies of the visual. They may also be correlated with the parametric instrumentalisation of the signifier in various capitalist endeavours spanning that not so wide gamut that runs from advertising to torture, both of which exist to create, theatrically, for their audience/victims an existential crisis that shatters the personality, so that it may be re-signified by the domain of power that encloses it.

It was Marx himself who showed that the modern subject emerges as the subject of exchange within the framework imposed by capitalism and Althusser who showed how the subject had then become the other side of the state-form of capital – effectively foreclosed from any breaching with ideology. The lessons here are formal as well as political: certain modalities of subjectification and discursive practices are, if not dead ends, then severely limited. The subsequent

pulverising of the subject, the transformed role of discourse (along with the fading of ideology and the onset of simulation), and the reconstruction of state governance as Empire must be closely linked to an understanding of the increasing intimacy, one might even risk saying (for polemical purposes) the *convergence*, of media forms and the logistics of capitalism. In considering that the terrain of, let's just say "our", struggle involves refusing the commandeering of all mediations for the purposes of capitalist production and reproduction, the following points may be somewhat helpful:

1) To the movement from the steam engine to the computer belongs the history of capitalism and of media. These are no longer to be thought separately. This imperative, which today derives from the crises of the expropriation of the linguistic commons, restores to the urgency of the dialectic and foregrounds the concept of mediation. Before, money was known as the vanishing mediator; now mediation itself should be understood as the vanishing mediator, with money as only one of its moments. Media 2.0 implies a rethinking of the value-form and all other moments of political economy from the ground up.

2) Media history has everything to do with history in general. Media history includes the history of language, linguistics, and language theory (including psychoanalysis and post-structuralism), as well as the emergence of other platforms that not only preserved language (the printing press, etc.), but also "overcame the bottleneck of the signifier", to use Kittler's phrase (Kittler 1999, 4): in other words, platforms for phonography, photography and digital computation. Indeed, the radical marginalisation of language depends on the development of these other channels of signal transmission – channels whose speed, modes of perception, and bandwidths exceed the immediate capacities of language.

3) Shifts in temporality, the paradigm of history, and the emergence of brilliant if troubling notions such as Flusser's "post-history" should be understood in rela-

tion to shifts in dominant media platforms, or, in more theoretical terms, to shifts in mediation-production (see Flusser 2000). The non-narrative, non-ideological dynamics of the database, the extra-linguistic force of the programme that is the photographic and now digital image, along with the sheer violence that search and retrieve as well as the algorithm do to prior modes of linear inscription are central components of the historical narrative that culminates in the non-narratological, "post-historical" situation of our species. We must add to this aporetic intimation the emergence of a heightened sense of the moment and the event. Rather than looking to the past or the future, the emphasis rests on *the now*, as, for instance, in *The Coming Insurrection* by The Invisible Committee (Invisible Committee 2009) and Bifo's *After the Future* (Berardi 2011).

4) The convergence of media in/as the digital suggests something that analyses of cognitive capitalism (and media theory, though to a lesser degree) often overlook: that the aural and the visual are also imbricated in the social struggle (the affective, the visceral, the proprioceptive). The corollary here (following McLuhan, actually) is that much of this adequation takes place beyond the immediate purview of the subject form as in, for example, corporeal adjustment and incorporation, attitudes, modes of reception, expression, phrasing, spectatorship, regard – all of what was once anthropocentrically christened "the unconscious". A mediatic approach would restore the technical and economic components of affective dispensations: not subjects and nations as the authors of history, but platforms and the life-energy ("us" again) that sustains them.

5) Media platforms are not merely technologies in the sense of being objects or machines or practices that have an objective character; rather, they are social formations and more particularly gender and racial formations. For example, the geo-political emergence and role of photography during the violent racialisation processes of slavery and colonialism tells us not simply about racial for-

mations but about the *co-evolution* of two ostensibly separate technologies for graphing people(s) by their external appearance. Which is to say that as surely as "the camera" and "the photograph" have played a role in the transmission and productive (for capital) development of various racisms, *intrinsic* to "the camera" and "the photograph" is the history of racial exploitation.

6) Just as an interest in labour should force us to rethink the logistics of media platforms and see them as technologies formed in the struggle between labour and capital and thus by and for the expropriation of labour, we ought to understand that human flesh, if you will, is now the surface of inscription, the medium in the last instance, for all transmissions. Which is to say that for the two billion who live on two dollars or less per day, it is their labour of survival that bears the burden of messages considered worthy of transmission.[3]

7) The Politics of the utterance. Is it really possible to talk anymore as if the issues of race, class, nation, and gender had been surpassed? Even though it is fair to say that the meaning of these terms has shifted, they remain at the very least the names for technologies of violence and expropriation that are brought to bear in full force upon the masses, to use that old-fashioned term. The fragmentary character of "the multitudes", such that each of us has a multitude within, and the monadic character of geopolitics, such that each of us bears the signature of the global-political *Jetztzeit*, cannot license the emergence of a purportedly value-neutral, degree-zero, commonsensical, highly civilised speaking subject who a/effects a deafness to the call of the enslaved, the savaged, the raped, and the expropriated, even as s/he claims to be listening. If the enormity of the crimes that make us what "we" are, if the unspeakable violence and unendurable pain of history does not haunt "our" words, "we" have said too much and not enough. This invocation of the myriad agonies (past and present) against an apt presentation of the logic of capital (cynically or iron-

3 For more on this, see Beller 2007.

ically self-conscious, or not) is not a mere poetic gesture, but an informing call, to which liberatory work must be offered in response. Answering this spectral calling would reanimate all of the sedimented dead labour that is the condition of possibility for the living labour of this day's utterances; as the eternal return of the repressed, these calls are the very principle of organisation that might inform our cognitive-linguistic labour such that it is not merely the productive reproduction of yesterday's unheralded violence.

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Authors

Dr Ric Allsopp is co-founder and joint editor of *Performance Research,* a quarterly international journal of contemporary performance (London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis). His research interests include contemporary performance practices, the poetics and histories of "open work", the choreographic image, and relations between writing and physical movement. He is currently Head of Dance & Choreography at Falmouth University, UK.

Jonathan Beller is a Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Director of the Graduate Programme in Media Studies at Pratt Institute. His books include *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Dartmouth/UPNE, 2006) and *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle, and the World-Media System* (Ateneo University Press, 2006). His current book projects are *The Rain of Images* and *Wagers Within the Image*. He serves on the editorial collectives of *tripleC* and *Social Text* and recently edited *Feminist Media Theory: Iterations of Social Difference,* a special issue of *The Scholar and Feminist Online.*

Bojana Cvejić holds a Ph.D. in philosophy (CRMEP, London) and an M.A. and B.A. in musicology (University of Arts, Belgrade). She is a lecturer at Utrecht University and P.A.R.T.S. and SNDO (both contemporary dance schools based in Brussels and Amsterdam, respectively). As an author, dramaturge, and/or performer, Cvejić has collaborated with various artists, including Jan Ritsema, Eszter Salamon, Mette Ingvartsen, and Christine De Smedt, in a number of theatre and dance works. As a founding member of the Belgrade-based TkH editorial collective, she has recently participated in "How to do Things by Theory", a research project conducted at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers (2010–2012). She has published in *Maska, Frakcija,* the *TkH Journal, Etcetera, Performance Research,* etc. Her recent books include *A Choreographer's Score:* Fase, Rosas Danst Rosas, Elena's Aria, Bartók (co-authored with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker; Brussels, 2012), *Public Sphere by Performance* (co-authored with Ana Vujanović; Berlin, 2012), *En Atendant & Cesena: A Choreographer's Score* (co-authored with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Brussels, forthcoming).

DeLVe | Institute for Duration, Location and Variables (founded by **Ivana Bago** & **Antonia Majača**) engages in research, exhibition and publishing projects, occupying a space between the "academia" and the sphere of the production of contemporary art, thus allowing for innovative, interdisciplinary, and emancipated modes of research and knowledge production, with the vision of being free from rules, deadlines, and performance pressures. DeLVe shuns the immediate visibility of curatorial work and mounting exhibitions, in order to delve into a curatorial/artistic/intellectual practice informed by in-depth research, close-reading, performative writing, and close exchange between various actors gathered around specific endeavours.

Tomislav Gotovac a.k.a. Antonio Gotovac Lauer was born in Sombor, Serbia, in 1937 and died in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2010. He was a film maker, photographer, visual artists, and performer. He studied at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb and graduated from the film directing programme at the Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade. His artistic career began in 1960 with a series of photographs (*Heads 1960*), which were soon followed by other photographs focusing on his body as their main subject. He made his first experimental film in 1962; his experimental-documentary films won several prizes at various film festivals. He produced his first performance piece, *Our Happ*, in Zagreb in 1967. In most cases, his provocative actions, such as *Streaking* (1971), were unannounced and performed in front of wide audiences; in *Streaking*, he ran naked through the streets of Belgrade. In 2005, he changed his name to Antonio Gotovac Lauer as an act of dedication to his mother Elizabeta Lauer. His cultic status is based on his creative and existential persistence in identifying art with his life, encapsulated in the following statement: "When I open my eyes in the morning, I see a movie".

Owen Hatherley was born in Southampton, England, in 1981. His doctoral thesis, "The Political Aesthetics of Americanism in Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union, 1919–1934", was accepted at Birkbeck College, London, in 2011. He works as a freelance writer on architecture and cultural politics and is the author of four books: *Militant Modernism* (Zero, 2009), *A Guide to the New Ruins*

of Great Britain (Verso, 2010), *Uncommon: An Essay on Pulp* (Zero, 2011), *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys through Urban Britain* (Verso 2012), and an e-book on squares in Eastern Europe, *Across the Plaza* (Strelka, 2012).

Ivana Ivković holds an M.A. from the Department of Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Frakcija Performing Arts Magazine* and has published in several other periodicals (e.g. *Maska*, *The Drama Review*, *TkH*…). Since 2004, as a member of the performing arts collective BADco., she has co-authored a series of artistic projects, including *Responsibility for Things Seen: Tales in Negative Space* presented at the 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2011.

Ana Janevski currently works as an Associate Curator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. From 2007 to 2011 she held the position of curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland, where she curated, among many other projects, *As Soon As I Open My Eyes I See a Film*, a large-scale exhibition on the topic of Yugoslav experimental film and art from the 1960s and 1970s. She also edited a book with the same title. With Pierre Bal-Blanc, Janevski also co-curated *The Living Currency*, a performance exhibition, and the first extensive show about experimental film in Yugoslavia, *This is All Film! Experimental Film in Former Yugoslavia 1951–1991*, at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 2010.

Janez Janša is an artist, writer, performer, and director of interdisciplinary performances as well as conceptual and visual artworks. His work contains a strong critical and political dimension and focuses on the relation of art and social and political context. He authored *Jan Fabre: La Discipline du chaos, le chaos de la discipline* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1994) and was editor-in-chief of the *Maska* performing arts journal from 1999 to 2006. Currently, he directs the Maska institute for publishing, production, and education based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Marko Kostanić (1984, Zagreb) is a Marxist theorist, dramaturge, and publicist. He is active at the Centre for Drama Art and co-founder of the Centre for Labour Studies. He is editor-in-chief of the *Frakcija* performing arts magazine. As a dramaturge, he collaborates with theatre and contemporary dance productions and writes articles about the material conditions of cultural production, European integration processes, and the restoration of capitalism in the post-socialist periphery, the ideology of left liberal "creative lumpen middle class", socialist political epistemology, and the condition of the left.

Bojana Kunst is a philosopher, dramaturge, and performance theorist. She is a professor at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies of Justus Liebig University, Giessen, where she leads the Choreography and Performance international master's programme. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Maska* magazine, *Amfiteater*, and *Performance Research*. Her essays have appeared in numerous journals and publications and she has taught and lectured extensively at various European universities. She has published several books, including *Nemogoče telo* (The Impossible Body; Ljubljana 1999), *Nevarne povezave: telo, filozofija in razmerje do umetnega* (Liaisons Dangereux: The Body, Philosophy, and the Relation with the Artificial; Ljubljana, 2004), *Procesi dela in sodelovanja v sodobnih scenskih umetnostih* (Work and Collaboration Processes within Contemporary Performing Arts; Ljubljana: Akademija za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo and Maska, 2010), *Artist at Work* (Ljubljana: Maska, 2012), *Performance and Labour*, *Performance Research* 18.1 (co-edited with Gabriele Klein; forthcoming in 2013).

Aldo Milohnić holds a Ph.D. in sociology of culture. He works as a researcher at The Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies in Ljubljana, where he conducts research projects in the fields of sociology of culture and cultural policy. He edits the *Politike* book series and special issues of a number of cultural journals; also, he has co-edited several anthologies of texts and authored *Theories of Contemporary Theatre and Performance*, a book-length study.

Isabel de Naverán is an independent performing arts researcher and theorist based in the Basque Country. She is a member of Bulegoa Zenbaki Barik, an office for art and knowledge located in Bilbao, and ARTEA, a Madrid-based association dedicated to fostering relations between academic research and art practices. Her work focuses on stimulating contexts that deal with so-called expanded choreography. At present, she coordinates, together with ARTEA's team, the Master's programme in Performing Arts Practices and Visual Culture at the UAH – Museum Reina Sofía in Madrid.

Goran Sergej Pristaš is a dramaturge and Associate Professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art of the University of Zagreb. He is a co-founder and member of BADco., performing arts collective. Between 1995 and 2007, he was programme coordinator at the Centre for Drama Art (CDU). In 1996 he initiated *Frakcija*, magazine form performing arts, where he stayed as an editor-in-chief till 2007. He was one of the initiators of the project "Zagreb – Cultural Capital of Europe 3000. With his projects and collaborations (with BADco. and Frakcija), he participated at the 2011 Venice Biennale, the 2012 Documenta, ARCO, and many other festivals and conferences.

Mårten Spångberg is a choreographer living and working in Stockholm. His interests concern expanded choreography, which he has pursued through various experimental practices and creative processes in a multiplicity of formats and expressions. He has been active onstage as a performer and creator since 1994; since 1999, he has created his own choreographies, ranging from solos to larger works, and presented them abroad. Under the label of the International Festival, he has collaborated with architect Tor Lindstrand and engaged in social and expanded choreography. From 1996 to 2005, Spångberg organised and curated festivals in Sweden and abroad. In 2006, he initiated INPEX, a network organisation. Spångberg has a rich experience in teaching both theory and practice and was director of the M.A. programme in choreography at the University of Dance in Stockholm between 2008 and 2012. In 2011, he published his first book, *Spangbergianism*.

Mladen Stilinović was born in Belgrade 1947 and now lives and works in Zagreb. Stilinović is one of the most important and internationally renowned Croatian conceptual artists. His artistic career began in the early 1970s when he was a member of The Group of Six Authors. Besides his work in art, Stilinović was also one of the co-founders of the first art collective and exhibition space managed by artists – Radna zajednica umjetnika (Artists' Working Community) and Galerija Podroom (The Basement Gallery, 1978–1980). He was also a co-founder and director of the Galerija proširenih medija (The Extended Media Gallery) from 1981 until 1991. His solo exhibitions include: *Sing!*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2011), *Artist's Books*, E-Flux, New York (2010), *The Cynicism of the Poor*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2001). His group exhibitions include: *Ostalgia*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2011), *The Promises of the Past*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2010), 11th Istanbul Biennale (2009), *Documenta 12*, Kassel (2007), and the 50th Biennale di Venezia (2003).

Miško Šuvaković is a professor of aesthetics and art theory at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. At the Interdisciplinary Studies programme of the University of Arts in Belgrade he also teaches art and new media theory. His books have been published in Serbian, English, Croatian, and Slovene. His latest books include *Impossible Histories* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003, 2006), *Epistemology of Art* (Belgrade: TkH, 2007), and *Pojmovnik teorije umetnosti* (*Lexicon of Art Theory*; Belgrade: Orion Art, 2012).

Terms (anti-jargon) is an interdisciplinary research group from Belgrade and Skopje. The group explores the origins, epistemology, and politics of various terms from art theory and practice, aiming to create a non-implied, non-colloquial – anti-jargon platform. By "jargon" we mean fast, specialised – and empty communication: instead of meaning, jargon terms represent only an affiliation to the now, to a profession, to an ideology. Our anti-jargon position is not a result of an idealistic search for an "authentic", "original" meaning of words. On the contrary, in our research, we strive to establish terms and the politicality of their use in the contextual, historical-materialist sense. The group

was formed as part of the *Deschooling Classroom* project conducted by TkH Walking Theory, Belgrade and Kontrapunkt, Skopje.
www.antijargon.tkh-generator.net

Ana Vujanović (Berlin / Belgrade) is a theorist, cultural worker, and dramaturge in contemporary performing arts and culture. She holds a Ph.D. in theatre studies. She is a co-founder and member of the editorial collective of the TkH (Walking Theory) platform, Belgrade. Currently, she works as an international visiting professor at the Department for Human Movement / Performance Studies of the University of Hamburg.
www.anavujanovic.info