

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST. PLACE OF ENCOUNTER

Fifth CEI Venice Forum
for Contemporary Art Curators



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BREAKFAST

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edited by Giuliana Carbi



Trieste Contemporanea 2011

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Being an occasion to update the debate on the new curatorial practices of the CEE professionals and, as usual directed, in collaboration with the UNESCO office in Venice, to commissioners of national pavilions of the Venice Biennale, curators and experts of contemporary art, the CEI Venice Forum discusses in 2011 the concept of Public Art.

People have more and more gotten used to this particular working practice in contemporary art, with implications of site specificity, community involvement and collaboration. How is this term now used by specialists? How is it now related to the concepts of Memory and Monument? What are the best practices to be used when art is publicly committed?

When museums and public institutions' policy in addressing general public is suffering, why has Public Art now taken such a wide (and unspecific/all-embracing) meaning? To investigate that, even if controversial, is useful in discussing how contemporary art can today be able to address public with social significance, in particular involving intercommunication and mutual understanding principles?

Dealing with publicly commissioned art, the discussion is intended also to tackle pressing issues of policymaking in the cultural field: in the very critical moment of actual deep financial cuts to culture, issues of appropriate uses of public funds, spaces, and resources for culture have to be addressed; budgeting for artworks in new buildings and Percent for Art policy have to be discussed; as well as more general issues of sustainability of Public Art.





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Her main interest concerns modern and contemporary Russian, Eastern and Central European art, gender issues, public art, conceptual art and art theory in the time of transition in the post-socialist countries. She has published numerous essays on these topics as well as she has participated in different international conferences. Her recent book entitled *Cultural Cross Dressing. Art in the Ruins of Socialism*, Argumentum, Budapest, 2009 (in Hungarian). She is editor of the anthology *Transitland. Video art from the Central and Eastern Europe 1989-2009*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, 2009.

With the construction of the European Union, a process of denationalization began in the region of the former East bloc. However, this unification process is interwoven with opposing tendencies of raising nationalisms, escalating right wing populism and/or religious fundamentalism all over the region. We have to keep in mind that, of the 27 post-communist states, 22 are new states that came into being after the collapse of the Socialist system and they experience problems of state-building and nation-building. These nations are still, or are even more so, obsessed with their national, ethnic, and religious distinctiveness and homogeneity; thus, ethnic conflicts and violence sweep over the region. Distorting, mythologizing, or glorifying the past so that they serve the present political needs is very much part of the landscape.

In recent years, the mythic, idealized past is frequently mobilized against memories of different groups whose memories are not considered to be part of the homogeneous, self-contained, and exclusive conception of nation and culture. Therefore, memory sites are constant terrains of political fights.

Toppling monuments has been almost an obligatory concomitant phenomenon of every political change in the course of history. The downfall of statues was the very first sign of the upcoming changes in 1989.¹ The new democratic countries were keen to “clean up” the ideologically polluted public sphere. A process of “de-Sovietization” got started by demolishing statues, removing icons of the former Socialist culture, renaming

streets, squares, etc. The former totalitarian space was reclaimed and was being transformed again into public spaces of open negotiation.

Under the guise of erasing the remnants of Socialism and being busy with blocking and gate-keeping memories of the Socialist past, the state, the extreme nationalist forces, and the church have made an aggressive claim of the now-emptied public space in different countries; the discredited symbols of Socialism have been replaced by national, religious, or irredentist monuments. As opposed to Western-type nationalism in which mass migration is the main trigger,² in the post-socialist countries, old pathologies return in new forms.

The fight over public space is also very much part of the symbolic politics of the neighboring countries in Central Europe with large transborder Diasporas as the state borders and demographic borders are not identical. In Hungary, statues dedicated to Saint Stephen, the first king of Hungary who converted the country to Christianity, mushroomed in the emptied out public space in the 90s. The Hungarian nationalistic "statue mania" extended even outside of its border and enjoyed state support for raising statues in towns with vast Hungarian population in neighboring countries, as in Komarno, Slovakia. The planned ceremony of unveiling the Saint Stephen statue in Komarno to be performed by the Hungarian president, László Sólyom, was obstructed, as the "gesture" was perceived, and rightly so, as a provocation and as an interventionist aggression in the internal affairs of another country.³ As a response of

Slovakian nationalism the neuralgic question of the site of Cyril and Method in Komarno was brushed up. Jan Slota and Anna Belousova, extreme right wing politicians wreathed the statue on the balcony of Slovenska Matica. As they commented on the action, they were to manage it in unworthy conditions "threatening their own lives" in the wind up on the ladder. The dramatized ritual intended to stir up the Slovakian nation and to gain control over public spaces, and placing the authority for raising statues into the hands of the government instead of the city council. In the summer of 2010, the statue was literally torn off from the facade of Slovenska Matica, leaving a black hole in the place of the statue [fig. 1], and it was relocated to a roundabout with heavy traffic.

In the process of invading public spaces in order to gain political legitimacy, the next highly controversial step made was the erection of the statue of Svatopluk in the courtyard of the castle in Bratislava. The statue was given as a gift to the Slovakian Republic by Ján Kulich, a celebrated sculptor of the Socialist time, the creator of many propaganda statues. In the efforts of repositioning himself in the contemporary art scene, he converted his socialist experience into nationalist and religious practice. Overcompensating for his previous role in Socialism and endeavoring to make his new post-socialist audience believe in his true commitment, he went so far as to carve a double cross with equal legs on the shield of Svatopluk, a symbol originally used as the swastika by the Hlinka Guard, a fascist organization from 1938 in Slovakia. As a result of the opposition of the national

media and the demonstration of young artists “against tastelessness in and political use of the public space,” the artist had to clear away the extreme right symbol, but the statue still remained.

In all these cases, public monuments were abused and put into the service of opposing political interests, and, thus, public space became a field of political struggle, against which socially conscious artists stood up. A public art project with participation of Slovakian and Hungarian artists named “Transart communication” parallel in Komarom/Hungary and Komarno/Slovakia in 2010, aimed to bring to light the hatred and unrest heated up by the political and ideological appropriation of public space. National rhetoric from both sides is contradicted by a long history of cross-cultural exchange in the diverse communities at these multicultural and multiethnic border zones. The artists not only reflected on the clashes and conflicts, but they persuaded us that borders with mixed ethnicity should be genuinely trans-national rather than demarcation lines driven by the consciousness of realities of heterogeneity of populations of border zones.

Bálint Szombathy, as a sandwich man [fig. 2], walked along the streets of the cities on two parts of the Danube, with attributes of the flags of disintegrated states like Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, and with a call to remember written on them in Hungarian, Slovakian and Serbian. Michal Moravčík and Jaro Varga wished to subvert the procedure of erasure; Moravčík literally turned back the pedestals of statues taken away in 1945 from the Office of Labor [fig.

3] and thus made visible the names of the dislocated figures erased from history. Varga blurred the thin line between history believed to be true and authentic and pure imagination when he created historical traces onto the wall with the text, "The cultural heritage is not the same as identity."

Ilona Németh, one of the organizers of the event kept a packed, headless statue (the head would be changed according to the situation) dangling from a crane, thereby making a comment on the exhausting war on statues.

Other artists functioned as mediators, seeking to smooth out the uptight relationship between the neighbors and directing attention on the absurdity of the situation and offering some symbolic solution for reconciliation. Ágnes Eperjesi arranged a symbolic wedding ceremony of a man and a woman, authors of the Slovakian-Hungarian dictionary, and the Hungarian-Slovakian, conducted by a professional public servant [fig. 4]. R. József Juhász, changed the march heard from the clock tower of the city hall to the signature music of the evening tales in the Hungarian and in the Slovakian television making fun of the artificially generated separation, and leading the way to easing up. János Sugár turned an unused movie theatre into a Shop of Empathy with his and his student's work, János Borsos's National kneel in 2009, was a gesture of asking for pardon for racism, and humiliation against different minorities in his public performance in front of the Hungarian Parliament.

Critical art practices and artworks proposed by agents of reconciliation between different groups of the population

and between the nations in the Carpathian basin, are constantly damaged, ruined, or cursed. János Sugár's serial public art works, bilingual (Hungarian-Romanian, Hungarian-Slovakian, Hungarian-Gipsy) signposts holding just one innocent word, "sorry," without even being specific about who says it to whom, generated anger and were professionally taken down by unknown intruders while he exhibited the Hungarian-Slovakian version outside of Budapest Kunsthalle.⁴

The aggressive Hungarian nationalism claims the virtual public space as well by launching a restrictive and controlling media law provoking international protest, as well as by making impossible the operation of critical journalism, and, most of all, by its desire to establish a totally centralized and controlled cultural field. As an adequate response, and initiating a new form of political artistic activity, a young radical Hungarian artist, Tibor Horváth regularly posts to his Facebook space razor-sharp drawings commenting on the absurdity of the everyday political measures, keeping our alertness alive to the gradual limitation of the post/Socialist public space, whether physical or virtual.

[fig. 1]

[fig. 2]

[fig. 3]

[fig. 4]

¹ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, New York 1999, p. 5.

² Boris Buden, *Why not: Art and Contemporary Nationalism?* in *Contemporary Art and Nationalism. Critical reader*, Prishtine, Pristine Institute for Art "Exit", 2007.

³ More detailed: Edit András, *Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, in "Ars. Journal of the Institute of Art History of Slovak Academy of Sciences" (43), 2010, 1, pp. 39-50.

⁴ More detailed about the project: Pelesek Dóra, *Beszéd/tett. Gondolatok Sugár János 'elnézést' projektjéről*. [Dóra Pelesek, *Speech/Action. Thoughts about János Sugár's 'sorry' project.*] http://balkon.c3.hu/2010/2010_02/2010_02.html.





Iara Boubnova was born in Moscow and lives in Sofia. Her curatorial projects explore art, politics and society, identities and the self-empowerment of art scenes. She curated and co-curated exhibitions and biennials in Moscow, Frankfurt, Istanbul, London, Lille, Venice, etc.

Luchezar Boyadjiev (1957) is an artist living and working in Sofia. His work deals with urban environments, audience construction and personal interpretation of public processes.

MANAGEMENT OF “MEMORY” AS PROMOTION OF “AMNESIA”

History in “present tense” is a phenomenon of lasting amnesia, which is turning into a permanent state of non-historical and a-cultural treatment of both the past and the present. The current situation in Bulgaria is marked by a boom in museum building on the level of governmental programming. Largely triggered by available EU funding, the program under the heading of reconstructing the whole museum sector of the country, is meant to have 3 new art museums in Sofia within the next 6 months to 1 year. Without any dialogue with either the public or the experts in the field, without any prospective programming, concept for exposition or ideas for collection building the program is in fact a smoke screen to mask the nationalistic, populist and conservative agenda of a government not able to deal with overwhelming economic difficulties at a time when the possibilities for large scale corruption are still available only in the field of culture.

The following images and comments relate to the opening of two of the new “museums” that are museums in name only – the SAMSI (Sofia Arsenal Museum of Contemporary Art) with one floor officially opened in June 2011 at the renovated building of the city’s Arsenal, a small and inadequate barracks from the first half of the 20 c.; and the Museum for Socialist Art, which opened in late September 2011 at a former school house in the outskirts of the city after the initial concept calling for a “museum of totalitarianism” turned out to

be impossible to realize due to the lack of a clear concept for what might be housed in such a collection... At the same time the concept for what is “contemporary” and the vision for contemporaneity that is needed in order to have a viable museum for contemporary art, turned out to be suspiciously past-oriented and centered on art practices (read that as plain conservative and bad sculpture) from the 1970-80ies. Not only that but often art works by the same artists (actually sculptors, just like the current Bulgarian minister of culture Vezhdi Rashidov who is the main government operative pushing along the “reform”) are “published” simultaneously within the collections of: a/ the SAMSI project; b/ the Museum for Socialist Art; and c/ park-like arrangements on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria within the hotel property of some questionable new capitalists who not only destroy the environment but also demand recognition for supposedly preserving the “spiritual” heritage of the country.

[fig. 1] The staircase to the inner yard and the sculpture garden of the Museum for Socialist Art, Sofia, September 2011; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 2] The lineup of officials for the opening – note the presence of Eastern Orthodox priests who are just about to perform a (religious) ritual of pouring consecrated water onto the opening path of the “museum”; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 3] The two young ladies in typical folk costumes are stretching and holding the ribbon that is to be symbolically cut up by the officials, which will constitute

the ceremonial opening of the “museum”; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 4] The official lineup for cutting the ribbon of inauguration... From left to right: Tzvetan Tzvetanov (Minister of Interior Affairs), Boiko Borisov (Prime Minister), Simeon Dyankov (Minister of Finance), Vezhdi Rashidov (Minister of Culture). This image brings back nostalgic memories of national pride from the highest level of accomplishments of Bulgarian athletes at Olympic, World, and European Championships. The sport of Rhythmic Gymnastics, a discipline for female athletes, was dominated in the 1980ies by the Bulgarian national squad under the leadership of Coach Neshka Robeva. At that time that squad of beautiful young women athletes was given the endearing nickname of the “Golden Girls of Neshka”. They were competing in the sub-disciplines of individual and team combinations using the ribbon, the hoop, the bat, and the ground mat. They were the ultimate pride of Bulgaria.

Against this background one might interpret all Bulgarian governments after 1989 as a variation of the “combinations” (read speculations) used by the Golden Girls... there were governments famous for collaborating with organized crime in team “combinations” with bats (the baseball bat is the ultimate weapon, attribute and symbol of the new mafia in post-socialist Bulgaria that is involved with extortion, blackmail, kidnapping and all sorts of violent crime); or with land (ground) – there were governments famous for swapping prime areas of real estate property owned by the state in the cities, the mountains or at the sea coast for completely useless

terrains in exchange of bribes, kickbacks, etc.; or with hoop – there were governments famous for having their own circles of preferred companies and corporations who were awarded state commissions and privileges in exchange for financial support for election campaigns and so on. The current government of Bulgaria is famous for inaugurating all kinds of things – from roads to kindergarten, while emphasizing the public ritual of “cutting the ribbon” over the substance and the quality of the inaugurated project, let alone the public debate. In the context of the so called museum reform the results are at the same time PR success and cultural disaster; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 5] The sculpture garden of the Museum for Socialist Art. For many artists, whose works are displayed within the collection of this “museum”, it remains a total mystery why their art is branded as “socialist” instead of, for instance, the much less problematic label of “art from the period of socialism”. The collection includes obvious samples of official propaganda art from the period between 1944 and 1989 as well as works that have a very complex potential for interpretation...; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 6] The crowd at the opening... In the background is the red pentacle star that used to be positioned at the top of the building of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in downtown Sofia until it was dismantled sometime in 1990. Its dubious status of a beautifully crafted artifact of monumental decorative art as well as of a much hated (at the time) symbol of

the oppressive regime in the country is manifesting the confusing message of this museum – is it a celebration of the past; or is it a critical re-evaluation; or is it just a sample of targeted amnesia aimed at leveling the past into a source of political capital; photograph: Maria Vassileva.

[fig. 7] These are the popular with tourist and fisherman rocks at the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria just south of the ancient city of Sozopol. This photograph from the fall of 2004 is at the beginning of the period of heavy investment in the tourist industry of the country. This is just prior to the membership in the EU. The rocks had been like this for millennia; photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

[fig. 8] This is the same location photographed in 2009. The new Anel Hotel complex has just been constructed there – the rocks are covered with landmass and artificial grass, the grounds are dotted with newly planted palm trees and strange sculptural artifacts – here in the background a cross and a Jesus on it; photograph: Kalin Serapionov.

[fig. 9] ...the same location. Note the bronze horseman sculpture in the foreground. It is by the renowned artist Emil Popov who became famous in the early 1980ies for his “spiritual” treatment of the human form. We will not discuss here neither his engagement with the new wealth nor the way his artwork “interacts” with the environment for all this is quite obvious; photograph: Kalin Serapionov.

[fig. 10] This is the entry area of the new SAMSI museum in Sofia during the opening in June 2011. Note in the foreground the bronze horseman sculpture... It is by the renowned artist Emil Popov who became famous in the early 1980ies for his "spiritual" treatment of the human form. We will not discuss here the vision for either contemporaneity or the status and the mission of contemporary art thus manifested in the SAMSI museum for it is quite obviously related to issues we are strongly opposed to – conservatism, commercialism, collaborationism, conformism, retrograde form and message, etc.; photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

[fig. 11] Same location, same "museum", same vision, same mission, different artists... The sculpture in the background is by the current Minister of Culture of Bulgaria Vezhdi Rashidov; photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

[fig. 12] The welcoming stone signs for the SAMSI museum in Sofia are nothing short of the great tradition of Bulgarian tombstones one can find in any cemetery around the country... We think that these two objects compliment magnificently the "vision" for contemporaneity manifested by the whole museum reform, let alone contemporary art; photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

[fig. 13] Scene from the official opening. The sculptural group in the foreground is by the artist Pavel Koitchev. It used to be located in front of the National Gallery for Foreign Art (no comment on the name...) which

is a central museum in downtown Sofia. In order to compensate the artist for this obvious downgrading of his work Pavel Koitchev was nominated to take part in the Bulgarian national pavilion in Venice 2011 (which is a completely different story...); photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

[fig. 14] The interior of the SAMSI museum at the moment of inauguration. We do hope the direction of this institution will become more relevant and up-to-date but we doubt it...; photograph: Luchezar Boyadjiev.

As it stands now both SAMSI and the Museum for Socialist Art are not legally recognized structures under the law of the land. In fact both are merely branches of the National Art Gallery in Sofia... That is why any relevant reform will have to start with elevating their legal status and upgrading their staff and programs.

ARTISTIC STREET SMARTS AS AN ART OF URBAN INTERVENTION

The new artistic trend, which we are promoting in Sofia, is to have low budget but high efficiency artistic interventions in the public space. This attitude is considered to be the alternative to the recent practice of inaugurating both confused museums and neo-liberal "wild style" monuments with unclear messages that are usually erected without public debate. The practice of spending public money without restrained or transparent procedures is countered (in a modest yet effective

manner) through hit-and-run tactics that aim to focus the attention on the dysfunctional aspects of urban space and public life 20 years after 1989.

The five young artists that were invited to take part in the project in the Spring of 2011 were given 250 Euro and 2 weeks each to come up with an idea, to realize it and to bring back photographic, video or sound documentation of their intervention. They were discouraged from anti-social or destructive acts; they were given logistical support (if needed). The full scope of the material thus collected will be presented in a group show at the ICA-Sofia Gallery in the late fall of 2011.

Here is a list of the most memorable interventions.

[fig. 15-17] Vikenti Komitski. *Corrected Nationalistic Graffiti and Public Cup-holder Project*, 2011.

Various locations; Spray paint; plastic cup-holders fastened to urban details; streets of Sofia.

During the past 20 years Sofia has become a user-unfriendly city... Only recently more attention is paid to the numerous city parks and their upkeep and safety. The streets however are a different matter. The artist suggested a simple but rather helpful way to accommodate the life of many Sofia dwellers who not only work on the streets, or look for temporary employment on the streets but also spend many hours in between other activities that are only partially related to either work or recreation.

[fig. 18-20] Veronika Tzekova. *Space Appropriators*, 2011.

Various locations; chalk drawings; various gadgets; streets of Sofia.

The shared spaces in Sofia – sidewalks, inner yards, spaces between the apartment blocks, neighborhood parks and playgrounds, are traditionally the space for young kids. In the past this was unquestionably so. In the present they are heavily contested by people and parked cars; by businesses and restaurant terraces; by adults and other adults... There is little safety or room for the children to organize playful activities that used to be popular and safe. The practice has nearly disappeared which leads to changed patterns of neighborhood life, the most visible aspect of community life in the city in the past. The artist is trying to re-invest and re-construct such practices for at least a short while and for at least her young daughter.

[fig. 21-23] Kiril Kuzmanov. *3 seconds later*, 2011.

Sound intervention into the urban environment of Sofia.

The artist constructed an elaborate machine in order to eavesdrop on the city life on the streets of Sofia.

The machine involves the interaction of microphones and umbrellas; laptop and external hard disks; a couple of powerful car batteries; a large speaker; and even a bicycle... While riding on the bicycle thus modified, the artist is picking up city sounds and people's conversations that are then broadcasted back at them with a 3 seconds delay (but relatively speaking – in real time). Although neither the intention nor the connotations of the work are overtly political, still it is a comment on the ever more problematic use of public space in the country. In reference to the media landscape of Bulgaria as well as

to its political life, the work sends an ironical message to people to be aware of being the puppet of power (with internet, telephone and media spying on citizens being one of the currently hot issues of public life in the country).

[fig. 24-26] Miroslav Hristov and the Plus Group. *Sleeping City*, 2011.

Interventions in various locations around the city of Sofia. A group of young people under the leadership of Miroslav Hristov, a graduate of the Department for Cultural Studies at the Sofia State University, made an extensive cycle of interventions within the living environment of Sofia in order to suggest that the urban space deserves a break from human abuse. By positioning the "Do Not Disturb" sign, usually found in hotels, next to people reading newspapers (or to the thousands of abandoned old cars in the city) the artist(s) are stalking the components of urban life at their most vulnerable – when they are actually NOT participating. At the same time with the act of positioning sleeping pillows, cleverly and totally convincingly, as additions to city sculptures and famous monuments from the past the group is revealing how the urban environment is in need of debate.

[fig. 27-29] Samyuil Stoyanov. *Temporary Alteration*, 2011.

Installation; 40 garbage bags, 40 fastening bands; street lamps; city of Dobritch, Bulgaria.

This project was realized on May 20th 2011 in the city of Dobrich in northern Bulgaria. That was the official

Museum Night in the spring that was respected by all museums and galleries in the country. The clever visual and material transformation of the city lights in the center of town into garbage heaps hanging in the air was a scandalous comment on the lack of human dimension in public space; very often that is also a lack of elemental concern for beauty and rational simplicity. The "masking" of the street lamps at day and their magical transformation at night was a metaphorical comment on just how easy, in fact, might be to think of alternatives to official concepts and practices, especially in this case, the practice of the so called museum reform. Of course, the project has other connotations and sheer beauty. However, in the current climate of the country it acquired additional political aura.

The practice of contemporary art in Bulgaria at the moment seems to be suspended between the hapless official policies for culture and the individual or group art initiatives... This in fact is a statement we might have used 10 years ago just as well. The opposite sides however seem now to be getting more aware of their own status and profile. That may or may not lead to a confrontation. Certainly it leads to more consciously alternative artistic practices.



[1-3]



[4-6]



[7-9]



[10-12]



[13-14]





[15-17]



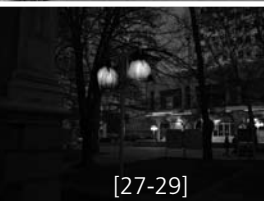
[18-20]



[21-23]



[24-26]



[27-29]







Professor of Phenomenology of Contemporary Art at the Academy of Fine Arts of Venice, he is the curator of the Pavilion of Albania at the 2011 Venice Biennial.

In the major *Making Things Public* book edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, and published a few years ago for the exhibition of the same name at the ZKM in Karlsruhe, among the many items of interest there was also a brief essay by a legal historian, Barbara Dölemeyer, who invited some profound reflection about "Thing site, Tie, Ting Place", an explicit reference to the High German term, "Thing". A term used to indicate the place in small villages around which decisions concerning communal life would be decided. A sort of meeting place that might be indicated by a majestic tree, covered arbour, village green or stone seats around a stone table. All of which were references to the elements of a community life dating back to the early Middle Ages, from which period also date the rare finds and traces that still exist. In substance, these were primitive forms of organisation to discuss and resolve disputes and aspects associated with common law justice. But apart from offering a fascinating reflection on the primitive form of a certain "organisation" of the world, the point of the essay and its consequent inclusion in the volume, was not so much or only its analysis of surviving juridical aspects, as the dizzying and well-known argument by Heidegger about the nature of the thing: *das Ding*, in German, whence the title of the essay of the same name in the volume, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1954).

Taking inspiration from "any" object (a pitcher) and taking it as an example of the reflection around what constitutes the way of being of the thing in general, and without losing sight of the material nature of the specific function of that object (pouring, offering), step after step we are led from an everyday dimension

towards the place around which mortals and gods, heaven and earth, gather and meet. The shift is made possible not only by the nature of the object chosen, which in itself implies an offering addressed to others and hence a gathering, but also by the etymology of the word: *Ding* refers to the High German *Thing*. But it is no longer an everyday object (a pitcher), but instead the place of gathering for mulling over the questions of community life. The etymological roller-coaster does not stop here, because the very verb "to think" harks back to the root of the word for *thing* (*Ding*) in both English and German (*denken*), and is at the same time indicative of the meeting place (*Thing* in High German). What Heidegger was interested in was reflecting about what could constitute a dimension of the *res publica* today, conceived not as "State", but as a moment for collective reflection and discussion. It is perhaps useful to recall that the philosopher's text derives from a conference held in 1950 at the Munich Fine Arts Academy.

The point of a reflection that is today careful to stress the public role of the arts cannot but also concern the question of what constitutes the place around which to gather, recognise each other and rethink together the meaning of our communal life. This passage is not simple and not obvious, because it seems that we may accord the arts the possibility of reconstituting a sense of the commonplace, a sense that is not resolved in the mere political dimension of state recognisability. The dimension of the local specificity in the planning of the arts, and hence their capacity to link up with the sphere of individual and collective memory (including any monumental function they may have), implies

a repositioning of the same arts at the “centre” of community life. Indeed, even the possibility that (only?) through the arts might the sense of a centre of community life be reconsidered. Can the critical and “de-constructive” motion towards the reality from which many of today’s artistic experiences – involved in highlighting the contradictions of the public sphere and power (the problem of the *fight specific* rather than *site specific* as mentioned by artist Bert Theis) – take their starting point also play the role of *pars costruens*? I do not believe there can be a general answer but instead many possibilities of articulating, in the concreteness of one’s actions (as artist, as curator and more generally, I might add, as cultural operator), a series of actions and projects aiming at a form of balance between critical capacity and the building of a different way of conceiving the relationship with others thanks to what the arts can offer. One might object that this vision sounds overly “optimistic”, especially in consideration of the times in which one is working, marked by a progressive reduction in public financing of this sector. And that as a consequence, whoever works in this area of contemporary research has to concentrate his efforts on a complex relational architecture between bodies of a different nature (private and public, local and non-local). And here one needs to ask oneself whether it is optimism or a vocation for “resistance” that makes one prepare the defences along the lines of what can still be called *res publica*. As far as I am concerned, namely as regards the local specificity of an action inherent to the problems to which we have referred, I cannot but note an area of particular beauty in the Venetian hinterland, in which

many aspects seem to settle. From the conservation of fine buildings to the recovery for new functions on the basis of sustainable principles, from the safeguarding of an environmental feature (which is also a place marking the history memory of the city), to the possibility of inserting into it creative productions compatible with public use.

Forte Marghera is an extraordinary star-shaped fortification, built between the lagoon and the Venetian hinterland and dating from between the end of the 18th and the start of the 19th century. It was thus built during the Napoleonic and Hapsburg occupations. The entire complex, covering 48 hectares, remained in military hands until a few years ago, when it passed to the city council. A broad public debate then arose as to the possible uses of the area. By accepting the inclusion of major private body able to take on the costs of refurbishing Forte Marghera, investing sums that the public authorities could in no way justify? Or by maintaining and consolidating the current situation, based on activities "from bottom up" involving associations, art, crafts and recreation? Certainly, this is a "local" condition, but at the same time it falls within a more general reflection, around what a common asset, a public "thing" means today, and which institutions can be invited around a table to discuss it.





TASWIR, HADITH, MNEMOSYNE - LINES OF FLIGHT IN EXHIBITION MAKING /
ALMÜT SHULAMIT ÇORUH

She is a philosopher and a director of *ha'atelier – platform for philosophy and art*; curator of the TASWIR Exhibition at Martin-Gropius-Bau Berlin 2009-2010; co-director of *Jewish and Islamic Hermeneutics as Cultural Critique* at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Berlin 2002-2005; various professor- and lectureships in philosophy and visual theory in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Jerusalem.

When performing the Mnemosyne, it is essential to start with the decomposition process, that is to say, with the mechanistic proliferations of the linear system.

Aby Warburg, 1929

[fig. 1] In Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman-Turkish, TASWIR means "to form an impression", "to depict", "to represent", "to portray", "to photograph", and, according to another root of the word, TAZWIR, means "phantasmagoria", "illusion", "counterfeit". The TASWIR project, its assemblages, its interweaving and associating pictorial, textual and sonic elements, was initially not meant as an art project, but rather provided a possible way out of an aporia and an institutional deadlock, tantamount to the confession of institutional failure. A couple of years ago, the German-Iranian author Navid Kermani and I wanted to counteract the shallowness of the public discourse on "Islam" in European venues, the discussion of headscarves and honor killings, democracy, Sharī'a and Qur'ān. In 2001 we initiated a project on repressed, forgotten and withdrawn literary sources of classical Arabic and Jewish origin and invited scholars from all over the world to discuss classical Islamic and Jewish texts together at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin.¹ After three years of intense work, we noticed, however, that even within the most liberal groups of scholars, such discussions were in danger of foundering on the "question of truth", because collectively transmitted texts are not only subject to a territorial logic, but also defended with territorial passion. Even within our own project, the inspiration radiating from the polyphonic readings of traditional

texts was mingled with the voice of well-meaning liberal apologist arguing for a concept of humanity quite exclusively rooted within their own respective literary tradition. Limits of texts thus became tantamount to limits of collective truth claims. It seemed to me that paradoxically there was no way to safeguard the indeterminacy of the text and its resistance to unanimous interpretations when restricting oneself to the realm of mere text study. From then on I began to explore a-linear orders of beginnings in the vicinity of artifacts, objects of art, literature, music, dance and choreography, architecture, urban planning and so forth. I started developing questions that emerge from the materiality of the objects, interrupting, diverting and sidetracking the linear ways of historical narratives attached to them in the former West. The objects in the TASWIR project seem dislocated from their traditional contexts “with meticulous precision”, as Max Ernst says, they are placed in unexpected and thought-provoking relations, undoing foundations, and setting an agenda of “unlearning” – to use the term employed by Okwui Enwezor and Sarat Maharaj, an agenda of “unlearning” whose future remains still to be explored.²

TASWIR – A PICTORIAL ATLAS OF MODERNITY AND ISLAM THE IDEA OF AN EXHIBITION AND ITS GENESIS

The more at random the elements which come together, the more likely the sparks of poetry will ignite and bring about a reinterpretation of things.

Max Ernst

In order to illuminate the connection between the TASWIR project, certain aspects of rabbinic and Islamic hermeneutics, and Aby Warburg's *Menemosyne Atlas*, I wish to share some information about the genesis of the TASWIR project, its initial form as an exhibition format. The TASWIR exhibition was an initiative by *ha'atelier* shown by the Berliner Festspiele from November 2009 till January 2010 in the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. The TASWIR exhibition presented a contemporary view of classical artifacts generally labeled as Islamic art with the participation of over sixty artists, scholars, poets, musicians, filmmakers, curators and other creative agents from around the world.³ The TASWIR exhibition mingled classical Islamic art with modern and contemporary graphics, drawing and painting, photography, video-art, installations, sound and sculpture in a thematic *parcours* of poetic associations.

As integral part of the TASWIR exhibition, a workshop series – *Madrasa* - was held in the atrium of the Martin-Gropius-Bau Museum. In this "public house of learning", various themes of the exhibition *parcours* were engaged and commented upon by international artists and scholars alike. What emerged was a track of commentaries and further works on the exhibition, like a margin on text pulled outside/in to the inner atrium of the museum, a kind of "exhibition within the exhibition" whose contents were and continue to be documented in a portable visual atlas that the TASWIR project presently develops.⁴ Documenting the traces of its own activities, the TASWIR project creates a material archive which behaves like a palimpsest of traditional commentary,

overwriting and rearranging its contents according to ever differing forthcoming configurations. [fig. 2]

The TASWIR exhibition re-addresses and resurrects ⁵ certain a-linear ways of reading traditional texts and commentaries in rabbinic and Islamic contexts and *transforms these hermeneutical strategies into a curatorial, spatial, architectural order of a kindred spirit*. The TASWIR exhibition / project invites contemporary artistic/intellectual positions to circle around and meander between various objects like a margin circles and meanders between lines and letters of a text and nestles in its empty spaces.

HOMAGE TO ABY WARBURG

[fig. 3] By interweaving fragmentary and heterotopous interventions from East and West into the exhibition *parcours*, the TASWIR exhibition interrupted homogeneous presentations of contemporary “Middle Eastern art” that became prominent in recent exhibitions on “Islamic art”.⁶ This process of assembling and poetically associating a vast variety of material into the TASWIR project is in part inspired by Aby Warburg’s *Bildatlas*, his Mnemosyne project of pictorial mappings in the “Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek” in Hamburg in the 1920s.⁷ Aby Warburg, together with philosophers and cultural theorists in the renowned Hamburg Library of Cultural Sciences, devised their Mnemosyne Atlas as an associative juxtaposition of visual forms, of emotional expressions, a research project across

disciplines, constructing European modernity by invoking gestures of pathos predominantly but not exclusively from the Renaissance and Hellenistic antiquity.⁸ By juxtaposing forms of emotional expression in different artistic processes, Warburg developed an ephemeral and associative pictorial atlas that allowed him to establish diachronic and heterogeneous interrelations between objects of different periods and cultures.⁹

[fig. 4] The TASWIR project engages Aby Warburg's pictorial mappings in a twofold way: Firstly, the TASWIR exhibition playfully relocates the axis of European Modernity, which in Warburg's Mnemosyne is generally seen as an extension of the Renaissance and of classical antiquity, and positions classical exhibits and topics from Islamic and Jewish traditions as constituents of a contemporary order of things that can no longer be called Western. The principles of assembly, montage, a-linear interpretation and multi-layered documentation in the TASWIR projects reverberate rather deeply with the surface structure of the objects and exhibits that make up a great part of the artistic material of TASWIR and that seem to be repressed in European memory. Like in the classical traditions of Hadith, Talmud and Midrash, the TASWIR project arranges seemingly accidental clusters of material according to latent and subcutaneous semantic, visual, and sonic correspondences. *The chains of associations clustering in TASWIR's exhibition, its Madrasa and its ongoing digital documentation are brought about by processes of displacement, dissociation, inversions of meanings, veiling and unveiling, showing and not-showing similarly as in methods of free association in*

*psychoanalysis and the literary montage developed in Walter Benjamin's "Arcades Project": "Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say only to show."*¹⁰ The TASWIR exhibition, however, and this is the second variation that it offers to the Warburg project, simulates Warburg's "displacement of the display walls" – *das Schieben der Gestelle* – and advances it as an *architectural* and *nomadic* gesture, the gesture of publically reconfiguring the order of knowledge and the order of things, beginning with objects displaced, and the artist's / thinker's commentary on objects displaced. TASWIR carries the epistemic movement with which Aby Warburg kept extending, relocating and regrouping the pictures and images of his Mnemosyne Atlas into the public space of artistic production and its continuous documentation.¹¹

[fig. 5] TASWIR thus relies upon an epistemology of shifting – an epistemology Warburg might have referred to as "Schlitterlogik" – a logic of "slipping" or "slithering" – an "iconology of the in-between space."¹² The project documents this material process, this shifting of spatial and temporal relations, in its own atlas, TASWIR.ORG. In this atlas, TASWIR keeps a kind of "surface-record" of its own doings, a digital palimpsest, overwriting its own history with continuous, yet ephemeral, visual, sonic, philosophical configurations.

[fig. 6] The TASWIR project demands an initiation into a semiotic game that the rabbinic masters and the masters of the Hadith excelled in, a way of reading in which matters revealed stand in for matters concealed

and in which the things presented transport a question or matter obscured. It is this technique of substitution and veiling, reminiscent of the Talmudic process and of Freud's reading of dreams and the psyche, which the TASWIR project turns into an architectural principle. We envision a public space in which distinctions between representation and production are being undermined and in which the traditional European institutions of the academy, the university and the museum are intertwined by the productivity of scholars, curators and artists, sharing questions and strategies of reading irrespective of institutional, facultative, or national belongings.

LOUD NOISE: THE *LEHRHAUS* / MADRASA

The TASWIR exhibition took the aesthetic (and hermeneutical) ways of interlinear commentary seriously as *formal* criteria for the poetic associations of its exhibition parcours. In its first and last room, TASWIR explored the infinity of an interpretive process *whose open future seems to correspond to a bottomless text*. TASWIR thus explored a specific *logique du récit* in the transmission of texts, memory and things, which cannot be interpreted by one reader alone, and which cannot be studied in a linear way. The interpretative setting of such texts rather demands a noisy and simultaneous exploration in a setting of two or many. In a beautiful etymological explanation, the philologist and profound scholar of the German Jewish *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Dieter Adelmann, explains the German verb "lehren" – to teach - from "löhren" – "to make a loud

noise".¹³ – "Teaching" – "lehren" would imply then to explore a text together in a loud voice.¹⁴

[fig. 7] The kinetic and visual form of a Hadith page and the bodily movement it evokes, gives rise to the kind of multi-vocal narrativity that interests me here. The Hadith page – just as a page of Talmud or Midrash – provokes an association process that was refined within Muslim and Jewish traditional communities over centuries.

"MIRACULOUS BEGINNINGS": TURNING THINGS INSIDE OUT

It is an old Sufi and Kabbalist tradition that became prominent in post-structuralist phenomenology, semiotics and deconstruction – that any transmission and creation of meaning takes its point of departure, its root and eternal return in the blank spaces in between letters, words, lines and margins. The Hadith tradition of the 9th century depicted in this essay deals with forbidden sexual relations and marriage laws. The simultaneity of diachronic references in the margins of the document is created by a process of interpretation that originates in a recurrent, a-linear way from within the blank spots in between letters and words, resulting in a movement from margin to center, creating a translucent palimpsest, the layering of many voices on display on a single page.¹⁵

Reading from within the gaps of Scripture, evoking splinters of "forgotten" texts produces an ever recurrent simultaneity, in which diachronic references become

concurrent, linear paths of Scripture get dissolved. Scripture itself becomes spatial. It becomes a scene of writing, a future archive, as Derrida demonstrates in *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*. [fig. 8]

THE MADRASA: MUSEOLOGY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

[fig. 9] The TASWIR exhibition took the act of taking root in the no-thing in-between, seriously as a curatorial method and turned the form of textual commentary quite physically inside out: The "text" was laid out in an associative *parcours* of eighteen rooms fixed unto the architectural circumference of the museum, and the "margin" of commentary transfigured into the space of public learning inside the museum's court, a place of artistic commentary and production.

[fig. 10] What was new about TASWIR was to turn this particular scene of writing and its subsequent ways of reading into an architectural order, to transform it into a way of associating material objects in an exhibition, mingling contemporary and classical works, including works from international collections of Islamic Art. It was the inclusion of classical artifacts from Islamic art collections, in particular, into the synchronic moment of an exhibition lay out, that so outraged the conservative critics from the museums. It was the leap into the no-thing of origin, the a-linearity of narration and the undoing and unlearning of chronologies that disturbed the still colonial agenda of the museum's set up. It is an unspoken and still unchanged colonial agreement

firmly in place in all conservative art institutions that the classical objects of "other cultures" are to be preserved in their "own time", contextualized at most in their "own" social or political horizon, but frozen in an exotic distance. In the museums of Islamic art, in particular, the simultaneity of the classified object must not ever transpire. It has been an amazing discovery for me to find a page of a Hadith commentary in the midst of Timothy Mitchell's book "Colonising Egypt", with Mitchell claiming that it was indeed this kind of "chaotic" traditional production of knowledge with its unforeseeable results that posed a major threat to the French colonial powers. "Colonising Egypt" connects the secret of the empty, dirty, cloudy gap between things indeed with the traditional form of legal and other commentaries in Jewish and Islamic culture.

[fig. 11] The book gives a detailed account of the Arabic and Hebrew alphabet, and diagnoses the "absence of the vowel" and the indeterminacy of commentary ensuing from this absence as a threat to the politics of the French who counteracted this way of learning with the introduction of their own school system, monolithic disciplinary structures, formal education, military recruitment, and so forth. The abolition of the traditional public house of learning was among the most immediate disciplinary measure after military recruitment. Within the context of TASWIR, the migration of the Madrasa to the Martin-Gropius-Bau was among the most disputed issues taken up by the critics deeply disturbed by the contemporaneity of the classical Islamic object.

“TAKING THINGS OUT OF CONTEXT”

The critics were right in saying the exhibition was “taking things out of context”. But they were wrong in relating its deconstructive associations to a particular agenda of the so-called West. They were also wrong in sensing something “exotic” in this manner. The critics were confused. They certainly did not connect “Islamic”, Sufi, Shi’ite, rabbinic, Talmudic, midrashic traditions with a Freudian, Dadaist, deconstructionist or post-dramatic contemporary agenda that we all know.

When the artist Fred Wilson presented 18th century precious silver vessels together with brass shackles of African slaves in one single show case in his intervention “Mining the Museum” in the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, 1992, he got the visitors outraged. They did not want to see the “precious objects” and the beauty of exotic culture mingled with the ugliness of instruments revealing torture practices testifying to colonial power. The same outrage hit the Dada artist Hannah Höch when she presented her series “From an Ethnographic Museum” in the Ullstein Magazines between 1916 and 1926, a series of photomontages associating bits and pieces of ethnographic photographs with dissociated parts of women bodies from contemporary pop-magazines and journals. The agenda of the ethnographic museum in many places still seems to dictate a strict temporal distance between the curator / scholar / writer to the analyzed object belonging to the colonized culture. Johann Fabian in his *Time and the Other* describes how the temporal relationship between the “contemporary” Western analyzing eye and its various

“historical” objects insists upon an oppositional and fixed relationship between “here” and “there”, “now” and “then”. He interprets this mono-chronic time scheme as a technique of keeping an evolutionary distance between subject and object, mirroring the colonial distance between the West and the “rest”. The curatorial strategy typically interdicts and denies the simultaneity of objects and the intermingling of time frames – “by that I mean a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.”¹⁶ Curators of European museums accordingly “freeze society at the time of observation”.¹⁷ The objects are displayed, classified, protected, mythologized, framed, etc., and at most they are contextualized according to social, political or “ritual” functions “in their own time”, but rarely are they “taken out of context”, taken out of the context of “their” time.

The provocation of TASWIR was not its breaking out of this evolutionary program – curators more experienced than I have done this brilliantly with exhibitions reflecting a post-colonial sensitivity and consciousness throughout the last fifty years. But it seems to me that after the public hysteria of the “9/11” debate and its blatant islamo-phobic rhetoric, the TASWIR project uniquely touches upon a sensitive spot, taking objects of “classical Islamic art” out of context into an open horizon of questions shared by artists, curators, and scholars alike, creating a simultaneity, uncanny and unsettling closeness, a necessary closeness, if we wish to develop a European cultural scene that ventures beyond the neo-colonial attitudes that again become prevalent in the current debates.

[fig. 1, Parastou Forouhar, *Schriftraum*, 2006 / Courtesy Parastou Forouhar]

[fig. 2, *Hadith* (Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari 810-870) dated 1398]

[fig. 3, TASWIR / Room *Human Writes* / Performance Installation William Forsythe & Kendall Thomas, 2005 / Photo Di Mackey / Courtesy ha'atelier]

[fig. 4, Aby M. Warburg, *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, Board A, Nr.32 and 33, 1926]

[fig. 5, www.TASWIR.ORG / *Digital Atlas* - Front Page / Design Benjamin Metz ha'atelier ©]

[fig. 6, www.TASWIR.ORG / *Digital Atlas* - Open Page / Design Benjamin Metz ha'atelier ©]

[fig. 7, *Yemenite Chavrutha* / *Studying Talmud*. Jerusalem 1920s / Anonymous Photographer]

[fig. 8, *Madrasa Roundtable TASWIR* / January 2010 Martin-Gropius-Bau / Photo Di Mackey / Courtesy ha'atelier]

[fig. 9, *Schematic Representation of the TASWIR project* / Design Benjamin Metz]

[fig. 10, *Madrasa TASWIR* / *Martin-Gropius-Bau*, Berlin 2010. Artist Sherif El-Azma a.o. / Commentaries on the Room "Polis" / Photo Di Mackey / Courtesy ha'atelier]

[fig. 11, *Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 1988*]

¹ "Islamic and Jewish Hermeneutics as Cultural Criticism," Research Project of the Working Group "Modernity and Islam" at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin 2002-2005, cf. <http://www.wiko-berlin.de/index>

² Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu (ed.), *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, Bologna: Damiani, 2009, 14-17; also Hal Foster, Rosalind E. Krauss, a.o., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 531; and Sarat Maharaj, "Know-how and No-How: stopgap notes on 'method' in visual art as knowledge production", in: *Art & Research. A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 2009.

³ The following artist, thinkers, curators, and scholars were participants in the TASWIR exhibition and madrasa: Jumana Emil Abboud, Arwa Abouon, Etel Adnan, Maliheh Afnan, Abdul-Rahim Al-Shaikh, Buthayna Ali, Khaled Amine, Chant Avedisian, Samer Barkoui, Taysir Batniji, Joshua Borkovsky, Gabriele Brandstetter, Sidney Corbett, Graham Day, Song Dong, Sherif El-Azma, Shahram Entekhabi, Orhan Esen, Parastou Forouhar, William Forsythe, Ilse und Pierre Garnier, Abdunnasser Gharem, Sakir Gökcebag, Erik Göngrich, Maria Golia, Oleg Grabar s. A., Dirk Hartwig, Mona Hatoum, Susan Hefuna, Rebecca Horn, Rami Abdul Jabbar, Ali Kaaf, Hayv Kahraman, Ik-Joong Kang, Hüseyin Karagöz, Navid Kermani, Idris Khan, Yayoi Kusama,

Wolfgang Laib, Beral Madra, Sarat Maharaj, Nja Mahdaoui, Nalini Malani, Yang Maoyuan, Marwan, Murat Morova, Rabih Mroué, Moataz Nasr, Timo Nasser, Melanie Nazmy-Ghandchi, Shady El Noshokaty, Alexander Polzin, Walid Raad, Amnon Raz-Krokotzkin, Seifollah Samadian, Joachim Sartorius, Oliver Schneller, Maria Magdalena Schwaegermann, SEMA, Joseph Semah, Avinoam Shalem, Raqib Shaw, Shahzia Sikander, Walid Siti, Bettina Springer, Staatskapelle Berlin, Anneh Mohammed Tatari, Hale Tenger, Sadegh Tirafkan, Sençer Vardarman, Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, Sobhi al-Zobaidi, a.o. The reader is invited to see the video clip of the opening by video artist Merit Fakler clips of TASWIR at <http://www.taswir.org/video/video05.html>

⁴ www.taswir.org

⁵ In the strict sense of the term introduced by Jalal Toufic in his *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*, <http://www.jalaltoufic.com/publications.htm>

⁶ See for example "The Future of Tradition – The Tradition of Future," 2010 – 2011, Haus der Kunst, Munich, in which contemporary Middle Eastern artists framed classical works of Islamic art presented at the famous 1910 Munich exhibition "Masterpieces of Mohammedan Art".

⁷ The programmatic claim that Aby Warburg's work should be used as a yardstick for the Cultural Sciences at large has repeatedly been made. See, for instance, Cornelia Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern. Symbol und dialektisches Bild in Aby Warburgs Mnemosyne-Atlas und Walter Benjamins Passagen-Werk*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004. See also Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante – Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2002.

⁸ Aby Warburg, *Der Bildatlas MNEMOSYNE*, eds. Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink, *Aby Warburg Gesammelte Schriften* Vol II, 1, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003. It has been a rare privilege and haunting experience for me to present the TASWIR project in the rooms of Aby Warburg's library at the occasion of project name.

⁹ Cornelia Zumbusch puts Aby Warburg's discontinuous and a-linear scheme of history in his visual atlas in context with Walter

Benjamin's Arcades Project, *ibid.*, p. 3. See also Susan Buck-Moss, *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, Gesammelte Schriften, V, 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982, p. 1030.

¹¹ *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, eds. Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass, Aby Warburg Gesammelte Schriften Vol VII, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001.

¹² Aby Warburg, *Werke in einem Band*, *ibid.*, p. 642 and 643

¹³ Unpublished e-mail from Dieter Adelman to Pierfrancesco Fiorato, with reference to Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch hochdeutscher Mundart*, Leipzig 1793, Bd. 2, S. 1986; it says there: "Lehren," to teach, "in the first and proper sense of the word, [means] to make a racket, start an uproar, especially to scream, as a neuter, and simultaneously denotes a sensual imitation of clamour and racket. In High German, this meaning has become obsolete. Only in the colloquial language, "lören" or "lehren" are still used for "screaming, wailing", etc. See "Lärm" (noise, racket, uproar) and "Plerren" (to blare, whine, whinge), which also belong to the family of this word." Dieter Adelman adds: "Therefore, and this is Benjamin's conclusion: future philosophy will take on the form of "sadly making noise" (*traurig Krach machen*).

¹⁴ In their latest performance in Vienna called *Entrevue*, on the 12th of June within the Wiener Festwochen 2010, Walid Raad and Jalal Toufic literally re-embodied the classical form of running commentary on a "holy text", transposing this practice to the realm of artistic performance when staging Jalal Toufic's *The Withdrawal of Tradition past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009) with running commentary. Walid Raad – in an ever recurrent act of reading and rereading the lines and in-between-the-lines of Toufic's text out loud – re-enacted the a-linear structure of interpretation that forms the structural basis for the TASWIR exhibition as an artistic installation. For a description of the interruptive and a-linear dynamic of the process of "chavrutha"

in rabbinic tradition, cf. Almut Sh. Bruckstein, *Die Maske des Moses. Studien zur jüdischen Hermeneutik*, Berlin: Philo, 2001, 84-92. See also the video 2011 in Vienna. Contemporary settings of performance such as Hannah Hurtzig's "Black Market" seem to resonate with these traditions that have long been dismissed from the curricula of modern Western learning: its simultaneity of overlapping discourse, the visual impression and the specific sound of the bet *midrash / madrasa* with its couples paired up and talking all at once, loudly in a room with many. And surely the mobility of these discussions, its nomadic movement without boundaries, crystallizing in the Talmud as the ubiquitous embodiment of a "mobile academy" with its literary record of encyclopedic dimensions. Hannah Hurtzig announced her Black Market in Berlin as follows: what emerges is a mobile encyclopaedia from Berlin, in which the issue of mobility is split-up and hallucinated, producing a mirror-imaging effect. Black Market presents protagonists who at regular intervals transcend national boundaries, who cross territories and leave them behind, courageously eluding the governmental desire for order and locatability. A whole plethora of patterns, figures, types and phenomena of mobility is included in the narrated encyclopaedia of that night.

It is interesting to see, however, how the "chaotic" tropes of traditional public learning are absent even from "Black Market" and its agenda of a mobile academy for "useful knowledge and non-knowledge" – "replaced" by hierarchies, specialists, procedures of registration, announcement of specific times and places. I thank Maria Magdalena Schwaegermann for drawing my attention to the Black Market of Hannah Hurtzig whose embodiment of a future archive of transient knowledge and art production provides an inspiring parallel setting to the ones here exposed.

¹⁵ In his attempt to delineate the phenomenon of contemporaneity within the context of contemporary art and culture, Terry Smith engages the concepts of a recurrent "instantaneity" and "the experience of multiplicitous complexity" in order to outline

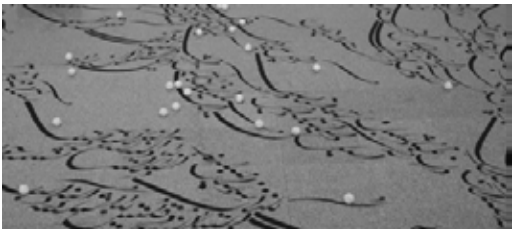
a temporality that differs from the linear conception which the European idea of modernity as progress is based upon. "Contemporaneity," he says, "consists precisely in the acceleration, ubiquity, and constancy of radical disjuncture of perception, (...) in the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, (...) all thrown together in ways that highlight the fast-growing inequalities within and between them." Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee (eds.), *Antinomies of Art and Culture. Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 8-9. Okwui Enwezor refers to this definition when outlining an assessment of "Contemporary African Art since 1980" that escapes essentialist, geo-political as well as geo-social territorial definitions, in favor of the multitude "of things and practices all occurring at the same time in multiple locations, cf. Okwui Enwezor, Chika Okeke-Agulu (eds.), *Contemporary Africa Art Since 1980*, Richmond: Damiani, 2009, p. 24.

What the TASWIR project does is to point to the crystallization of such a dynamic in the juridical documents of classical Islamic (and Jewish) provenience, trying to convert the structure of overlapping temporalities and regions that we find within the margins of *tafsir* (commentary) into an architectural model for the making of an exhibition. Such a layout would of course prove to be itself an ephemeral one, as it would have to be continuously expanded upon by new production, provoking not a "text within a text", but an "exhibition within the exhibition", an emerging palimpsest whose material traces cannot be held within one space.

¹⁶ This term is coined by the artist Walid Raad. The TASWIR project is very much *indebted* to the eminent work of Elliot R. Wolfson exposing the dynamics of veiling and unveiling at the bottomless ground of Torah and Holy Qur'an, holy texts that hold the promise of a ubiquitous homecoming for those hopelessly displaced.

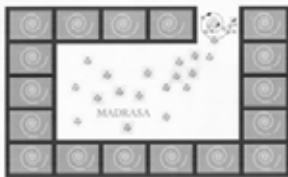
¹⁷ Johann Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Objects*, New York, 1983, 80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 81.









Abbas, Khalid, Fawz Association (Gleichzeitigkeit
des Strukturiers, Abstrahierens, Materialisierens)
Kontextualisierung, Materialisierung (Objektivierung) Öffnen
Abbas, Kham, Pahlavan, Subkhani, "Kham"



Reconstruction

The madrasa is a complex of buildings, including a central courtyard, a library, a lecture hall, and a dormitory. The architecture is a blend of traditional Islamic and modern styles. The madrasa is a place of learning and research, where students and faculty members work together to advance the study of Islam and the world.

The Madrasa of the Future

The madrasa of the future will be a place of learning and research, where students and faculty members work together to advance the study of Islam and the world. It will be a place where the traditional and the modern meet, and where the best of both worlds are brought together.

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Reconstruction



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Filmmakers and visual artists based in Berlin and Visiting Professors at the Sapporo City University. Their work focuses on the exploration of architecture and transitional spaces in terms of identity, history and memory. Places that have become more or less temporarily blind spots in contemporary society. They bring them back to our consciousness again in their altered, mystified phases: not utopian anymore, not obsolete, but rather not yet redefined.

Several places that were once hallmarks, centers of political culture, avant-garde art, and social developments, have become more or less temporally blind spots in contemporary society. With our work we want to bring them back to today's consciousness in their altered, mystified phases: not utopian anymore, not obsolete, but rather not yet redefined.

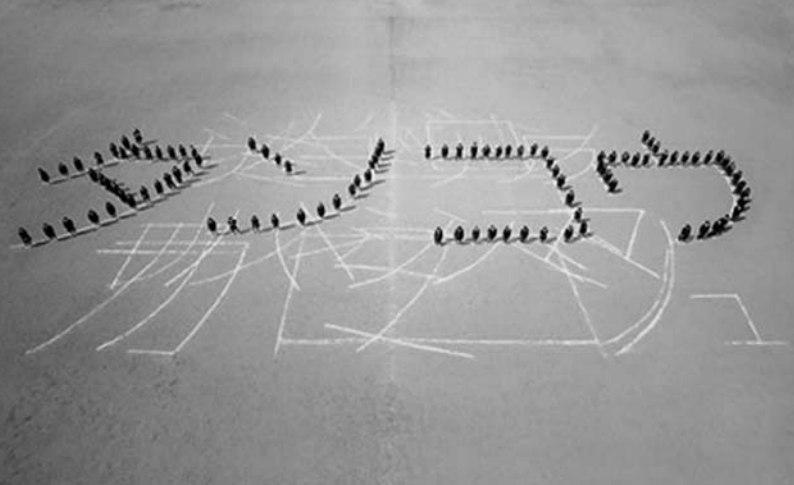
Our film project *Spelling Dystopia* focuses on the public perception of the uninhabited island Hashima near Nagasaki, which has a vivid history. Like in our previous works, we are interested in the aspect of collective memory and the insecurities of evocation and transmission of memories.

Hashima has been an important location for Japanese coal-mining until 1974. It is a man-made artificial island, based on the use of concrete which was a newly discovered construction material in 1916, when the construction started. During the World War II it was a work camp for war prisoners from Korea and China, later in the 60s it became the most dense place on earth. With a size of only 160 x 450 m the island was inhabited by over 5000 people in its best times, working in the Mitsubishi-owned coalmine. The density of the population was higher than in Tokyo's most crowded parts today. From 1974 the island was abandoned because the resources were exploited. Today the island is uninhabited and the concrete-architecture is left to natural erosion. In the year 2000 it became the film location of a science fiction blockbuster *Battle Royale*, and came back into the Japanese consciousness, with a different connotation. The younger generation started to

know the place mostly from movies, mangas and video games, as an abandoned ghost island.

In *Spelling Dystopia*, we combine the memories of a former inhabitant of the island - the son of a coal miner, who lived on Gunkanjima until 1974, and who is leading an organisation today, with the aim of preserving Gunkanjima as a world heritage site - with the narration of two high school students who recall fragments of the movie *Battle Royale*. Thereby, the island appears almost as their fantasy, an imaginary playground for their games, where various images and layers of reality and fiction already got in a state on mingling.

[fig. 1-2, *Spelling Dystopia*, 2008. 2-channel video installation, 16mm/HD transferred to hard disk, 16:9, colour, stereo, 17.16 min., 2008/2009]









Lorenzo Fusi studied art history at the Siena University. His research and professional career range from medieval and Renaissance art to applied arts, from architecture to contemporary art. Following a long experience as curator in Palazzo delle Papesse in Siena (now sms contemporanea), he is currently working at the Liverpool Biennial.

I am totally uninterested at this moment in time in analyzing the notion of Public Art, since its definition (as it is commonly intended) seems to imply that art that is not public exists, and I do not think this is the case. An artistic statement, that is not publicly shared, lives in the realm of unexpressed potentialities and as such it does not verbalize or articulate any translatable experience. Art that does not surface beyond the subjectivity of its author is a purely Onanistic exercise. Unless it enters a communal sphere (a space we might or not define as "public"), the intellectual, emotional and sensorial enhancement art is meant to provide hardly allows any exchange. Without this "public" transaction, to my eyes art does not exist.

The definition of Public Art, in my understanding, more than declining an artistic practice or methodological approach to art-making or thinking, classifies certain modalities of fruition. It defines the geo-political space where the aforementioned transaction allegedly happens. But by using the *locus* where art is presented as a parameter for its evaluation, "good" art is often disempowered (as if it could not survive outside the physical, political and metaphorical dimension wherein it occasionally manifests) and otherwise rather irrelevant commentary is validated.

Consequently, it is crucial to clarify what are the spaces that enable art to become "public" and if these places have effectively the power to radically transform art into something other-than-that it already is.

The notion of public space has been repeatedly questioned in recent years: it is an economical and political construction that (besides having no correspondence in *Realpolitik*, particularly in the West) only addresses a space that is not mine nor clearly ascribable to someone else. This does not mean that it is public as such. For as occult ownership of space might be, there is always a landlord to be taken into account. The fact this might be a public agency, it does not make the ownership of that space any more public. Furthermore, as Walter Lippmann suggested in his 1925 seminal book *The Phantom Public*, in a society whose members are continuously subjugated and reduced to a state of bystanders and where it is always ever more difficult to be agents (that is to say someone who can act “executively” on the basis of his own opinions to address the substance of an issue), what is the space that the adjectivation of “public” anyhow defines?

Given that we are currently living in an extensively privatized, controlled and monitored space, what is left for us to occupy is the public sphere, that is to say a realm wherein we move publicly.

It has been said that, within neo-con liberalist societies, an official and a counter-public sphere coexist. In art-related terms, the first is instrumental in order to perpetuate (quoting artist Mel Jordan from the collective Freee) “a rhetoric of inclusion through publicly funded art in a claim that there were opportunities for marginalized communities to contribute and develop as citizens through participating in public and community art

projects". "This type of participation (argues Jordan) is managed and constructed in order to arrive at consensus and therefore control."¹ The latter is the realm where opportunities for "dissensus" are created: it is here that dissent finds and articulates its voice. This is the place, concludes the artist, where to "instill courage and hope in those that have given up dreaming".

Andy Hewitt (another member of the Free collective) in the same publication considers the development of cultural policy as part of New Labour's Third Way governance in the UK and identifies three rhetorics of state-funded art (namely, art as a form of cultural democracy; art as an economic driver; and art providing solutions for social amelioration). Notwithstanding the governmental positivist claims for publicly-supported art as producing social transformation, the author maintains, state-funded art (commissioned as part of culture-led regeneration) has been instrumental and complicit with an agenda of privatization and marketization that has favored only an economical élite.

Unquestionably, public art is experiencing a troublesome moment in its fairly short existence. Firstly, because art as such is public in any case therefore the definition fails in grasping a particular essence of its making. Then, because, the economical and political space for which it was intentionally devised is clearly not public but an expression of hegemonic interests and, ultimately, because it might be interpreted as a collusive tool in the processes of further privatization of spaces (and spheres, for what that matters) conventionally addressed as public.

Tentatively, we can instead adopt the category of communal sphere in this instance as informed by the Italian term *comune*. Thinkers such as Antonio Negri, Giorgio Agamben, Paolo Virno and, at a lesser extent, Roberto Esposito have diversely contributed to its theoretical framing and definition. Summarizing some of their positions, in post-Fordist societies the *general intellect* (as declined by Karl Marx in *Fragment on Machines, Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, 1885, pp. 690-712) does not live any longer in the machines but in the body, and brain, of the people. Since this actively-working and thinking body expresses itself and produces (also meaning) by means of linguistic skills, language is the minimum communal denominator that correlates the system of subjectivities constructing knowledge and contributing to productivity in socio-political terms.

The communality of these subjectivities is an intricate and conflicting realm: whilst it opposes the declination/definition of the notions of community and individualities that power sets up on its behalf, also struggles in embracing the indeterminateness that a de-subjectivated *comune* signifies. Virno, in particular, suggests that communal intellect and language alongside political action might contribute in envisioning a “public sphere that is not stalized” (Paolo Virno, *Mondanità, manifestolibri*, Roma 1994, p. 70). It is this the dimension wherein public art might find its new locus: arguably, this is a place where forms of counter-power radically antagonize the stability and codification that the so-called biopower defines for ourselves. It is also a place of precarity (where revolutionary thinking and radicalism

of actions take central stage). It is, conclusively, a place where the notion of public (as we knew it) is replaced by a system of subjectivities whose actions are centered on a communal language they create for themselves.

¹ Mel Jordan, *Volunteering for Dissent*, in "Art & Public Sphere", vol. 1 - n. 1, 2011.





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from the PPT presentation

Besides the fact that the first public art regulations were introduced in the USA and France early in the fourth decade of the 20th century, the real history of public art began at the end of the sixties. Sixties were marked by a series of important events in the field of contemporary art as well as in political and social domains. Some of these events were connected with the developments specific to the art, especially in the domain of sculpture, and others depended on new approaches to city planning. From this period advocacy for the public art was based on its ability to correct urban design problems, and to animate public spaces and make them more appealing for a general population. It was recognized as a good way to revitalize decaying central parts of the cities, which were under the burden of poverty and increasing social problems. In the reality, besides these social reasons there were also important economical reasons. From the urban economy standpoint the public art was just one of the means for attracting capital investments and for bringing back upper and middle class population, living mostly in the suburbs, to live and spend money in the city. In a way this situation was similar to that of one century before when there was also an introduction of new urban plans and when the city beautification was considered as one of the solutions for economical and social crises in the cities. In this PPT presentation I provide an analysis of the main reasons for the governmental support for public art projects. It is interesting to notice that during the last seventy years those reasons shifted from the mainly social in the thirties to the economical during the eighties and recently again to social. Some recent reports indicated that public art

programs based on flagship projects could not generate expected economical results so a lot of cities decided to abolish this kind of projects and to focus on smaller and community oriented projects.

Besides the relation between the public art and the public and urban policy I also present existing legal and financial mechanisms, such as the percent for art regulations as well as examples of the special public commission programs and projects supported through the public-private partnerships.

1. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

- To identify reasons for governmental support for public art projects
- To identify different ways of incorporation of public art projects in urban redevelopment plans
- To identify and present legal and financial public art policy instruments and their modifications

2. PUBLIC ART DEFINITION

Public Art is Art installed by public agencies in public places and at public expense, Heine, 1996

Public Art is art :

In Public [place accessible to the public]

In Public interest [concerned with (or affecting) community or individuals]

Public Space [maintained or used by the community or individuals]

Publicly funded [paid for by the public]

(Cartiere & Willis, 2008)

3. REASONS BEHIND GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT TO PUBLIC ART

3.1. ECONOMICAL REASONS

- Promotion of the city as a good place to live, work and invest
- Beautification of urban environment
- Physical and economical regeneration of decaying urban areas
- Promotion of tourism
- Employment for artists

3.2. SOCIAL REASONS

- Social regeneration of decaying urban areas
- Community integration
- Change of neighborhood's image
- The increase of sense of ownerships

4. PUBLIC ART AND URBAN REGENERATION PROGRAMS

Two different models of the incorporation of the Public Art in urban development plans (Evans, 2005) are:

4.1. CULTURE-LED REGENERATION APPROACH

[based on economical reasons]

- High profile cultural activities
- Physical renovation - city centers, waterfronts
- Flagship projects

4.2. CULTURAL REGENERATION APPROACH

[based on social reasons]

- Art projects in neighborhoods

- Citizens' participation
- Small scale public / community art projects

5. PUBLIC ART FINANCING MECHANISMS

- Percent for Art Regulations
- Project supported through the public funds
- Project supported through the public-private partnerships

5.1. PERCENT FOR ART

5.1.1. REGULATION

- definition:

Percent for Art is regulation (first time introduced during 30s) that requires that 1% of all public buildings constructions costs should be spent on public art

- history:

Norway - 1937 on local level introduced 2% for art regulation (from 1966 scheme on local and central level administered by Cultural Council

Sweden - scheme emerged during the 30s and administered by the Cultural Council (which provides 0.5% of funds and the other half is required from the builders)

Germany - scheme Kunst am Bau introduced 1949

5.1.2. PERCENT FOR ART IN FRANCE

Centralized Percent For Art

- Introduced in 1936 by Ministry of education (law invoiced in 1951)

- From 1972 to 1981 all ministries adopted 1% policy

Decentralized Percentage For Art

- Introduced in 1983 with the decentralization law (art. 59)

- Administered by local communities

5.1.3. PERCENT FOR ART IN USA

- 1934 Treasury Department (Painting and Sculpture section) introduced Public Works of Art Program - PWAP
- 1963 General Service Administration (GSA) Art in Architecture Program (mandatory 0.5 % for art)
- In 1959 City of Philadelphia introduced first percent for art ordinance on local level

5.1.4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PERCENT FOR ART PROGRAMS - PROBLEMS

- Selection and application procedure
- Precise definitions of public art
- Specification of the eligible source of funds
- Definition of the administrative responsibilities
- Consideration of the long term care of the art and community education

5.1.5. PERCENT FOR ART IN FRANCE (RECENT CHANGES)

1993 - 2006 Ministry of Culture attempts to harmonize and improve 1% application procedures

- 1% mandatory
- new selection process
- introduction of the community into selection process
- encouragement of the early involvement of artists
- collaboration between artists and architects

5.1.6. MODIFICATIONS OF THE TYPICAL PERCENT FOR ART PROGRAM IN USA

- Seattle Public Art program

Flexibility of funding sources - percent for art regulations were enlarged to all public renovation projects; all capital improvements connected with the city utilities organizations (city light etc)

- Washington State Art Commission

Polling the funds model - funds generated by one site can be used on the other site which could not generate enough funds

5.2. PROJECT SUPPORTED THROUGH THE PUBLIC FUNDS

5.2.1. USA

1965 -1991 National Endowments for Arts Art in Public Space

Objective:

to give the public access to the best art of our times outside museum walls (democratization of arts)

Selection criteria:

- 60s artistic merit (curatorial approach)
- 70s site specificity
- 80s community involvement and project addressing social situation

5.2.2. FRANCE

1983 introduced Commande Publique program

- National procedure administered by Centre national des artes `plastiques
- Decentralized procedure (local communities)

Objectives:

- Urban spaces animation
- Promotion of contemporary art in urban spaces
- Support to artistic production

5.2.3. UNITED KINGDOM

- National Lottery programme for Good Causes (administered by Art Councils) introduced in 1994

- Collaborative programs - different kind of development (public) agencies support public art projects as a part of national strategy for better quality of built environment

5.3. PROJECT SUPPORTED THROUGH THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

5.3.1. USA

- Zoning Regulations
- Urban Redevelopment projects

Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/ LA) Public

Art policy

Private developers obliged to set aside 1% of constructions costs for public art for that specific site or to deposit that amount in the

Cultural Trust Fund

Cultural Trust Fund supports:

- Public art projects
- Cultural programming
- Construction of cultural facilities in LA area

5.3.2. UNITED KINGDOM

Section 106 Planning Agreement

Voluntary and legally binding agreement between a developer and local planning authority in order to secure financial contributions towards local infrastructure demands (including public art)

EL VENICE
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AL SESSION
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Director of Photon Association and of Photonic Moments Festival, Ljubljana. Finished Art History and Sociology of Culture at the University in Ljubljana. In 2003 established Photon Association and in 2005 Photonic Moments Festival.

Discussions on the topic of "public art" are quite popular recently in both Slovenian and international arena, but typically do not include the medium of photography, which is due to its prevalence in public area at least unusual. Therefore I want to briefly describe the basic characteristics, which in my opinion, define photography as a public art in terms of different contexts and different discourses in which it appears. In addition to the traditional concept of "art in public space" (eg. a statue in a durable material) we talk about "public art" in terms of the specific field of contemporary art, originating in seventies, when it starts to be used more frequently in the context of new artistic practices especially in the U.S. and Western Europe. Categories and the relationships between "artwork", "space" and "audience" began to mix and the term and concept of "public art" happened to redefine. Such an understanding of "public art" might be presented with a series of Braco Dimitrijević *Casual Passer-By*, which makes him one of the first "artists using photography", as well as one of the pioneers of the "relational aesthetics". The project was conceived as spontaneous "shooting" of people on the streets, and later dismantling giant portraits of anonymous individuals on the facades and billboards at prominent locations in European and American cities. Such projects link photography with performance, as artists often develop projects specifically for the camera. In this intermediate field nowadays we could find artists such as Erwin Wurm, Oleg Kulik, Gillian Wearing, Philip-Lorca di Corcia and others. Some of their projects have flared up the debate on the borders between art, the right to privacy and voyeurism.

Photography had a public art dimension already at its birth, as it was inaugurated as a visual attraction for the masses. Reproducibility of the photography played very important role in this; for the first time a visual medium has emerged, which allowed accurate replication of the world as we see it. In addition to the technical aspect, the social significance of photography was also necessary to consider. Photography has been related to some significant projects of social change during the "Great Depression". In times before television, documentary photography explained the world much better than contemporary painting. The poster with the photographic image in the public sphere remains one of the most powerful tools of persuasion. We should not ignore the role of photography in a time when newspapers and magazines were the most relevant opinion leaders. Documentary-reporting feature long remains the most important characteristics/function of the media, and only recently, some decades ago, it got access to galleries and museums becoming important part of contemporary art. In this way, the "internal diversification" of the medium was made in those decades, which had the implications in terms of its status and value. In particular, it is about a distinction between utilitarian and artistic part of medium.

Historically, we can follow the slow shift in the area of presentability of the public space from the sculptural to the photographic, from the space to the surface image. First half of the 20th century was still dominated by the sculpture in relation to architecture, then, this was replaced by the link between image and architecture.

In the cities we have an abundance of analog imagery such as posters, however more and more replaced by electronic /digital imagery, so that all corners of the public, urban space is slowly populated by images... In fact, architecture already includes visual elements that are flat and belong to the medium of photography as, for example, displays, projection surfaces, screens etc.

Many of the European cities have formed surfaces for the external public presentations of photography in recent years. Such are, for example, places in London near V&A Museum or in Ljubljana Jakopičeva promenade, which has become a permanent space for major photographic projects. However, the fragile materiality of analog photography seems inappropriate for the long-term integration or as permanent public art in the monumental form. Formal characteristics define the status of such presented works to be materially different from those in collections, museums or galleries. For the presentation of art projects, photographers can use the “advertising channels” such as advertising billboards, advertisements in magazines, web sites etc. Since 1970, a number of artistic initiatives had explored different aspects of presentations in urban areas – from il/legal advertising, use of public vehicles, mobile communication devices etc. By redirecting communication strategies and appropriating advertising space and tools, contemporary photography occasionally offers opportunities in the saturated urban environment for different production and perception of images. Photography could be present in a public space through its physical presence, with images transmitted digitally,

or ever more through omnipresent cameras, non-stop recording events and people in urban centers. While 'snapshotting' everything we see with mobile phones and digital cameras, we insist on the right to privacy. We are the most photographed and recorded civilization; CCTV systems, Google Street View, security, satellite and other cameras, accompany us at every step, which means that we are also the most visually monitored populations of all time. On one hand, it is our desire to catch visual fractions of everyday life, on the other more and more photo&video surveillance. These trends are basically contradictory, paradoxical. Photography in the public sphere is becoming an extremely controversial area, where the collective fears of terrorism, pedophilia, invasion of privacy, control, etc. converge. In this respect, legal issues have risen, primarily concerned with restrictions on use of photography in public places. We've lost the "innocence of photography"; whenever we raise a camera in public, someone would give us a scared view, which is a reflection of paranoia in a time of ascendancy of surveillance technology. Photographing in the public thus also means taking social responsibility, especially with the contradictory desires to record everything at one side and to keep privacy on the other side.

An area that deserves attention in the context of this exercise, combining a specific manner of public and urban, and connecting artistic approach to the documentary one, is the so-called "street photography". The best street photography has always been one that has maintained a balance between invasion of privacy

and the dispassionate recording of surroundings and people. This genre had probably reached its highlight in the sixties and seventies, when photographers such as Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander or, later, Joel Meyerowitz cruised the streets of Manhattan. In the formation of the genre of "urban, social landscape," they were inspired by the work of Robert Frank (eg, *The Americans*) and Walker Evans. He in particular significantly moved the boundaries of legitimate, when he photographed people in the New York subway with a hidden camera. In 1966 he published a monograph entitled *Many are Called*, with a series of provocative photos, which triggered a large-scale, never closed debate on privacy, documentarism and voyeurism. Controversies from the sixties got additional spin with the emergence of paparazzi photography, but this no longer had anything to do with the positive tradition of "street photography". "Standard" approach of street photography with a longer observation or "stalking" the motif, with a desire to unnoticeness, "waiting in ambush" and similar; in short, the whole set of approaches and techniques that constitute the *raison d'être* of street photography have recently become more suspicious and the genre is becoming endangered.

With the advent of digital photography new possibilities for a versatile practice of photography as public art has opened up. Photographic image has ideally 'clogged up' with the new computer-based technology, allowing even more diverse opportunities for public interaction. Internet has become the most important platform for exchange and publication of photographic images, structures are

generating new connections, where images are shared with other users, always getting new functions according to different contexts. Digital technology and internet allows photographers to engage in projects of different communities and to share the files – the information directly to the target groups. Digital photography is certainly redefining our understanding of what is “photography in a public space”.





She is an art historian from Zagreb. She is Co-founder and President of the Institute for Contemporary Art Zagreb. She was Assistant Director and Director of Soros Center for Contemporary Art Zagreb; President of CIP, Croatian Independent Publishers; Director of ZGRAF 10; Vice-President of Academia Moderna. She is author of numerous contributions on contemporary visual arts in Croatia and abroad.

This presentation has been conceived by a mistake. As instead of getting ready for making my presentation for Trieste Contemporanea's CEI Forum I have taken an old book, everyone, me included has read ages ago, as I wished to reread it again on that sunny afternoon. The book was 1975 Tom Wolfe's *The Painted Word* where I didn't expect to find anything inspiring for our topic of art in public spaces nor related to memory. But very soon, already in a 2nd chapter titled "The public is not invited (and never has been)" I was, as so often, proven wrong.

The diagnosis that chapter described could be found in this excerpt: Public? The public plays no part in the process whatsoever. The public is not invited (it gets a printed announcement later). ...Le monde, the culturati, are no more a part of "the public", the mob, the middle classes, than the artists are. If it were possible to make one of those marvellous sociometric diagrams...we would see that it is made up of (in addition to artists) about 750 culturati in Rome, 500 in Milan, 1,750 in Paris, 1,250 in London, 2,000 in Berlin, Munich and Düsseldorf, 3,000 in New York and about 1,000 scattered about the rest of the known world. That is the art world, approximately 10,000 souls – a mere hamlet! – restricted to *les beaux mondes* of eight cities.

...The notion that the public accepts or rejects anything in Modern Art, the notion that the public scorns, ignores, fails to comprehend, allows to whiter, crushes the spirit, or commits any other crime against Art or any individual artist is merely a romantic fiction, a bittersweet trilby sentiment. The game is completed and the trophies distributed long before public knows what has

happened. ...The public is presented with a *fait accompli* and the aforementioned printed announcement....

With due respect to the time that has passed since publishing of this book, few numbers has changes and a geographical territory of now called Contemporary Art slightly expanded due to the fertile ground for the *biennali*, but the symptoms of the sickness are more or less still the same.

And they apply to the art exhibited in the spaces where public moves even more.

Public is often unhappily blackmailed with the presence of art in those spaces. And some of those works are often not likable, or they are potentially dangerous, or just polluting the environment, just being bad art. They are tolerated only because democracy, when it works, it works in order to protect minorities, and those mere 10,000 souls or maybe more is a minority in every corner of the globe. Of course, occasionally, there are some beautiful art works appearing too, and for them the whole process is worth to try.

So I brought here with me an example from Zagreb in which public has built an object in so called public space, namely the street, and which as it turned out was an authentic war memorial, an outcry, a protest, built in spite and in hope, all according to the most distinguished Croatian museologist, dr. Ivo Maroveić (1937-2007) in his book *War and heritage in the space of Croatia* (1995).

That object was called *The Wall of Pain* and it was a

memorial for people killed or disappeared during the war in Croatia (1991-95) [fig. 1-2]. The building of The Wall was started in 1993 mainly by mothers and relatives of killed and missing soldiers and civilians (upon the initiative of Mrs. Zdenka Farkaš) and was placed around the building where The UN Peace Mission to Croatia Headquarters was seated. As reported by the media and the builders themselves, it has been built as an appeal for humanity and human rights addressed to UN. The Wall of Pain at the time has consisted of 13,650 red and black bricks. Relatives wrote the names of missing people on the red ones, and the black ones symbolised the deads. The wall became a place of gathering, visitation, rituals, memorials; it became a communal object and got integrated within all segments of the society.

And then, everything what possibly could go wrong, went wrong.

Full 10 years after the wall was built in 2003, the communal authorities of Zagreb have decided that it should be removed from its location due to construction works for the new Ministry of Justice and translated into a more pompous object. To perform this translation they have opened a competition in order to gain an artist-made memorial and moved the location of memorial from the street to the cemetery. That decision already provoked protests, but the voices were unheard.

The competition, said to be anonymous, was won by the artist who gained his fortune during communist times, and after many protests again, arguments and quasi-clarifications, two years later, the wall disappeared. On November 5th, 2005, early in the morning at 5.30 AM, it was ruined in complete secrecy and the bricks moved

to the Zagreb cemetery. The protests repeated, politicians got included in order to gain on their own popularity, and of course nothing helped.

So, a new monument, was built a mighty memorial, in black granite, conceived by an unquestionable monument authority, Dušan Džamonja, at that time accused that he has sent the same monument sketch to a New York competition for a memorial to 9/11 victims, slightly altered [fig. 3].

New monumental memorial 5m high, supposedly being a symbolic altar, with all victims' names inscribed, contains for some reason 7,000 selected bricks from the old Wall, deposited in subterranean containers covered with marble and glass roofs. Church authorities protested that the cross was missing or was not sufficiently visible, and the priests boycotted the inauguration. Rumour says that they were unsatisfied with the location of the monument, as they have wished to keep it not in a public space, i.e. cemetery, but on their own ground of the Military Ordinariate.

But the mess got really huge when the execution of the memorial became visible to the public. The names of the deads and missing people have been written carelessly and wrong [fig. 4]. The name of the author, of course, was engraved perfectly correct, and placed, nicely and symmetrically... [fig. 5].

All of this has happened in translation from an object built by the public to an object built by an artist, removed from the street as a public place to the cemetery as a public space, by a public competition, and for a value of approximately 2.000,000 US Dollars, not to mention, of public money.

And to postpone this unhappy end, let's just turn back to where we have started, to the fact that public is not invited (and never has been), even when public is a sole creator of an object. In front of the politics, as in front of the art world, the public is presented with a *fait accompli*.

[fig. 1, photograph: Boris Cvetanović]

[fig. 2, photograph: Boris Cvetanović]

[fig. 3]

[fig. 4]

[fig. 5]

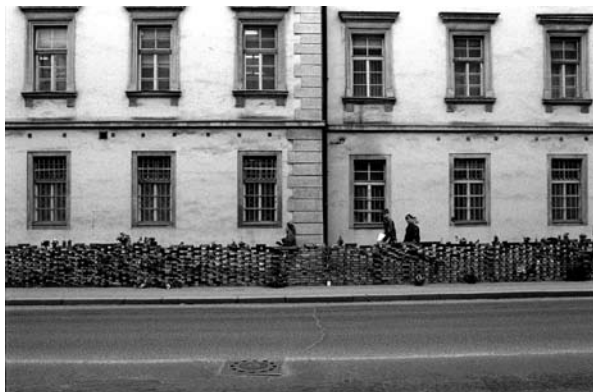
Literature and photos:

<http://hart.hr/uploads/documents/315.pdf>

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TROVIĆ DRAGO PE
TROVIĆ DRAGO PE
TROVIĆ ĐURO PE
TROVIĆ IVICA PE
TROVIĆ IVO PETRO
VIĆ JERKO PETRO
VIĆ JOSIP PETROVIĆ

AUTOR
DUŠAN DŽAMONJA
2003-06





ARCIPELAGO BALKANI. REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY THROUGH ALTERNATIVE CULTURAL MAPS AND SUSTAINABLE ITINERARIES IN THE PUBLIC SPACE / CLAUDIA ZANFI

She is an art historian, curator and cultural promoter. She is interested in emerging cultures, geo-politics and new forms of sustainability in the Mediterranean area. She is a contributor to cultural magazines and has authored texts in many group and monographic publications. In 2000 she founded the cultural agency aMAZElab Art&Cultures (www.amaze.it) and directs MAST (Museo di Arte Sociale e Territoriale). She conceived a range of artistic and editorial projects, with a particular emphasis on socio-territorial and geopolitical topics, including *Going Public* and *Green Island*.

Extract from: *Going Public. Arcipelago Balkani, an alternative map*, Silvana Ed, Milano 2011.

The existential “function” of the act of creation leads to the affirmation and the creation of a territory, a group, a singularity, a meaning. But it is only possible to articulate the meaning of a situation in relation to an action undertaken to transform it. To situate oneself somewhere, to create a territory or new modes of subjectification and articulation, is both a political and an existential question. And this concerns social practices as much as artistic practices.
Maurizio Lazzarato, from *Art and Work*

Over the last 10 years, we have witnessed the strengthening of artistic practices in public spaces (through the reworking of concepts that first came to light in the 1970s), such as actions in a highly specific social, relational or community context. Yet in this sense, public art may now be understood no longer as art in public spaces, but as art for the public sphere, and it is here that the situation becomes a lot more complex.

To re-think an art program for the public space, is doesn't mean to create a display for “out door” installations, but to move – for example – to places of mobility (stations) and culture (public libraries). Let's take the concept of *Social Sculpture* conceived by Joseph Beuys to refer to creative acts that would engage with the community and affect the world around them. Beuys understood the formation of society as a never-ending process in which every single individual takes part by acting like an artist. The concept of “social sculpture” helps ideas to keep ecology, sustainable development, archetypal studies, imagination and intuition as legitimate modes

of apprehension and thought. Therefore my suggestion is to open a debate connected with urgent subjects such as sustainability for territories and communities, for democratic process, transformative art practice and an ecological social development. The cultural program Arcipelago Balkani is thus a good exemple.

The night of 25th June 1991: the war in the Balkans breaks out. 20 years later, the project ARCIPELAGO BALKANI sets out to provide an itinerary aimed no longer at the past – the era of wars and destruction – but rather at the future of this huge and youthful territorial laboratory which the Balkan area today represents.

To set off on a journey towards the “New Balkans” means to analyse the territory through new eyes of artists, students, writers. An intense program, entailing two years of research, of exchange and reflection, starting out from the situation to be found in three case-study cities: Skopje (Macedonia), Tirana (Albania), and Sarajevo (Bosnia). The project therefore examines the mutual contamination that takes place between contemporary art, urban development and social phenomena.

Arcipelago Balkani is initiated by a series of alternative journeys and itineraries (“eco-tours” by bus, ship, train, bicycle) undertaken to discover the natural, architectural and cultural aspect of the Balkans, and to get to know the territories and the communities more closely.

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

The term “Balkans” describes the geographic area of the peninsula that stretches from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and refers specifically to the mountain range that stands in Bulgaria. The most familiar context in which the word “Balkans” is used however is that of war, with the ensuing stereotypes and prejudice.

At the start of 2000, there was an increase interest in the art and culture of South-Eastern Europe, probably in the wake of geopolitical shifts which were altering the entire asset of Europe and its enlargement towards the Eastern Bloc.

Over just one year, no less than three major exhibitions held by international institutions showcased “emerging” Balkan art: *In Search of Balkania* (Graz, 2002); *Blood and Honey. The Future is in the Balkans* (Wien, 2003); and *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (Kassel, 2003). All three of these exhibitions set out to underline the cultural complexity of the Balkans and to break down Western preconceptions. Again in 2000, *Manifesta* – a travelling biennial event dedicated to up-and-coming contemporary art – opted for Ljubljana, in Slovenia, to host its exhibitions. In 2001 the first edition of the Tirana Biennial was held, under the direction of Edi Muka: the first and only international biennial in the region.

In the same period (March 2002) *No Man’s Land* won the best foreign film Oscar, with the harshly ironic tale by the young Bosnian director screenplay writer Danis Tanović, today the founder of a new liberal political party, *Nasca*

Stranka (Our Party). Following the worldwide success of the film, the already famous Sarajevo Festival of Cinema came to host more than 100,000 visitors from all over the world.

Neither must we forget a bestseller like *Sarajevo Marlboro*, the short story collection by Miljenko Jergović, highlighting the continuing public/private relationships even during the wartime.

More recently, the collective project *Lost Highway Expedition* was undertaken: a journey in many stages along the European corridors towards the East. The itinerary snakes between the cities of Ljubljana, Zagreb, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Skopje, Prishtina, Tirana, Podgorica, coming to an end in Sarajevo. Designed by the Korean architect Kyong Park (now resident in Rotterdam), in collaboration with a network of Balkans artists (including Marietjca Potrč) and with the School of Missing Studies of Belgrade, the project undertakes a reflection on the future geography of Europe.

CARTOGRAPHY

The sociologist Predrag Matvejević states: *I was born in a country without borders; then the borders were set up.* In actual fact, passing through the various borders that now divide the ex-Yugoslavian region, there is no end to the villages set around minarets, with old peasants dressed in white, fond of a glass of *rakija* (the local spirit), confirming the fact that in such a mix the “imposed”

borders make sense only on political maps. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek believes that *The only possible salvation for the future of humanity is to accept differences for a "planetary" coexistence.*

Cartography is thus the result of geography. Geography is not only a place on a map, but also knowledge, relationships and meetings. Much of the research work carried out by Giorgio Agamben is based on the concept of "extra-territoriality": a continuous space which does not create distinctions between those who are inside and those who are outside a given territory.

Therefore, experiencing that which goes beyond the mere cartography, through a series of actions, a sort of "territorial performance", in order to gather non-traditional information, that which is not usually shown on normal maps, it could be defined as an act of "counter-cartography": an artistic practice critical of official cartography and power, a practice which enhances the personal experience of the traveller, and which redefines cartography in more dynamic and creative terms.

ISLANDS

An *archipelago* is a group of islands, relatively close to each other, which makes it possible to affirm that a geographical space is not necessarily continuous, although it is characterised by a sense of cohesion.

The Adriatic is the sea of intimacy, states Matvejević. As a matter of fact one moves across a space – between the west and east coast – in which the cities have striking similarities, from the churches to the apple trees. But the archipelago is not just broken up by water but also by land: today in fact the greatest differences are to be found between rural and urban culture, between the city and the countryside.

The idea of the passage, of mobility from one island to the next, leads the onlooker to become a “traveller” himself. The project *Arcipelago Balkani* redefines the journey as both a personal experience and as a “political act”. A sort of “geo-sophia”: philosophical geography, following in the footsteps of the scholar J.K. Wright, in whose work territorial knowledge is analysed through new orientations and a wide range of approaches: from the vision of the peasant, to that of the botanist, of the traveller, of the artist etc. The Balkans are therefore looked upon as a “new frontier”, a dynamic place to be discovered and nurtured throughout its process of rebirth, following alternative and sustainable itineraries.

URBAN MAPS

Urban space withholds political, social and cultural maps. A complex system of relationships and structures. The identity of Skopje, Tirana and Sarajevo has undergone radical transformations over recent years. In the face of this exponential growth, the city becomes the point of greatest pressure in terms of flows of people, capitals

and cultural interchanges.

Arcipelago Balkani, by deploying a reformulation of the haze, highlights contemporary living and the new use of public space. In other words, it analyses the city in terms of the public sphere.

The project sets out to investigate the new cultural landscape through collective narratives that establish an ever-changing relationship between the city and its memory, between urban policy and public practices. Skopje, Tirana and Sarajevo thus constitute the “territorial laboratory” par excellence of urban interventions which strengthen the relationship between people and the public space.

OPEN CITIES

Throughout its journey, *Arcipelago Balkani* set out to identify the city as an open space, a place of exchange and encounter, of freedom and equality, a crossroads of cultures and dialogues. The interdisciplinary, intercultural and intergenerational work presented on this occasion, during local symposia and workshops, looked at the city, retracing its historical context and placing it face to face with the current situation, without giving way to mere nostalgia.

Albania is the youngest country in Europe, with great ambitions. Tirana is a chaotic city: dusty, without a regulatory plan, in which eight cars out of 10 are

Mercedes-Benz, and the roads are a mass of pot-holes. Yet it is also extremely lively both culturally and socially, with a plan for aesthetic renewal which is quite unique: the previous mayor Edi Rama, together with local artists, has transformed the facades of the grey buildings of the nomenclature into a kaleidoscope of colour. While individual citizens, driven by their fantastical and somewhat kitsch imaginations, have begun to built "castles". Most of them the work of immigrants who have returned home, the castles are bizarre, eclectic constructions, probably created to substitute the thousands of Chinese bunkers strewn across the country by the ex-dictator Enver Hoxha in the '60s.

Macedonia is the most ancient region in the Balkan peninsula. Its borders have changed considerably over the course of time. Inhabited by Greeks, Albanians, Wallachian, Serbs, Bulgarians, Jews and Turks, today it is a frontier region where different cultures come face to face, and where the largest Rom settlement in Europe may be found. Skopje is a great town-planning "experiment". Designed almost entirely by Kenzo Tange following the earthquake of '62, it features a modernist, brutalist style of architecture as well as citing from the neo-classical. A moot point with the intellectuals of the city is the government's new plan for *Skopje 2014*, which sets out to rebuild most of the public places and the main square in town with neo-classical architectural elements: a sort of re-appraisal of Ancient Greek symbolism.

Bosnia Herzegovina is going through a highly complex state of affairs. Isolated by high mountains, the territory

is divided into two halves, maintained by economic aid, watched over by the constant presence of foreign militaries, it has been very difficult for it to heal the wounds left by the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. Sarajevo, once defined as the “Jerusalem of the Balkans” due to its multiple languages, religions and cultures, has shown a unique strength and liveliness, and even during the war cultural activity did not come to a halt. The contemporary arts scene in the country is mainly focused around the cities of Banja Luka and Sarajevo, both artistic hubs in a continuous state of ferment. Artists have played an active role in the slow recovery of Bosnia, and today the cultural reconstruction of the country is more tangible than ever.

Ultimately, the most deep-seated changes in the Balkans concern what Godard defines as the “mobile units” of a place, namely its inhabitants, who today find themselves sharing a space full of rich historical, cultural and anthropic layers.





DIMENSIONS OF THE COUNTER-MONUMENT AS AN ANTI-MONUMENTAL AND ANTI-MEMORIAL STATEMENT / NADJA ZGONIK

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We declared the loss of memory as a dominant attitude in contemporary society. As we are talking about the art in a public sphere, my starting point will be the public monument. As a bearer of the memory, it was till the beginning of the 20th century in the center of its attention. At that turning point, with modern art, it became a suspicious specimen and has been declared as an essentially totalitarian form of art. But we have to acknowledge that there still exists very strong need for remembering certain facts from the past, or better saying, to clarify different attitudes, which burdens our memories on past actions. How to deal with collective memory in a way, relevant for contemporary society? The most important contribution to the debates on contemporary monument was coined with the concept of the "counter-monument". James E. Young, professor of English and Judaic Studies, who was the first to use this term in the 1990s, connected it to holocaust memorials. Searching for the right form to memorialise the Holocaust, the counter-monument was particularly widely developed in Germany. The conceptualization of it seemed, as Richard Crownhaw in the book *The German Counter-monument: Conceptual Indeterminacies and the Retheorisation of the Arts of Vicarious Memory* put it, as the appropriate form, given its self-disruptive dynamic and inability to impose a monumental version of the past. The new artistic production was a conscious departure from the traditional iconography of monuments in many aspects. By staging the "disappearance" of monumental form of art and by marking destruction with destruction the "historical revisionist potential" entered in the debate. The concept of counter-monument, as it was

useful for the new definition of art works in a public space as transmitters of marginalized, suppressed or even lost memory, soon developed in a broader context.

Let us look at few examples. Horst Hoheisel's *Aschrott Fountain* in Kassel was commissioned during documenta 8 in 1986 and inaugurated the next year. In the place of the old fountain, funded in 1908 by successful Jewish businessman Sigmund Aschrott and destroyed, since it was a gift from a Jew, by the National Socialist in April 1939, Hoheisel designed a monument as an inverted form. He recreated the original fountain and built it into the ground instead of above it. The concept of monument as a negative form, the possibility to walk on its foundation and looking at it underneath instead of being confronted with concrete form, encouraged the discomfort of unpleasant memory. "The visitor is the monument," Hoheisel commented his "negative" image of the destroyed construction. He proposed to remember an absence by reproducing it in a quite literally way. The negative space of the absent monument now constitute its phantom shape in the ground.

The same author participated in the artistic competition for the *Memorial for The Murdered Jews of Europe* (Berlin 1995) and proposed a simple, provocative solution; to blow up the Brandenburger Tor, grind its stone into dust, sprinkle the remains over its former site, then cover the entire memorial area with granite plates, and suggesting that destroyed monument is the best way to remember a destroyed people.

In 1983, Jochen Gerz with Esther Shalev Gerz made *Monument against Fascism* in Hamburg-Harburg in a form of 120 meters tall column of galvanized steel, with

lead coating, underground shaft and viewing window, depth 14 m, and with two steel styluses for signing the surface. The object was at first sight distantly reminiscent of a traditional monument on account of its column-like character. However, the artists invited passers-by to write personal or political remarks on the surface. The monument was successively lowered in the course of the following years, in 1993 it disappeared from the surface entirely and can now only be seen through a window. The empty spaces of these negative-form monuments by Hoheisel and Gerz not only refer to historical breaks and losses, but also delegate the task of remembering and taking morally-founded action straight back to the visitor.

Working with negative space, declaring inversion of values and glorifying emptiness instead massiveness and heaviness of the building material, was used in 1982 by Maya Lin in *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Washington, D.C.

Rachel Whiteread's strategy to invert inner hollowness to the monumental form culminated in her Holocaust Memorial in Judenplatz (Vienna, 2000). With her Forth Plint Commission in 2001, she encouraged controversy of an empty form as she created a "monument", a clear resin mirror image of the previously empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square in London.

Jenny Holzer in her *Black Garden* (Nordhorn 1994), commissioned as a memorial to the fallen of Germany's three previous wars, including World War II, used transitorial nature of the material, of nature itself.

Flowers and trees due to changing of seasons are transformed in colours and forms. Natural decay is a basic message of this monument.

With recontextualisation of the term counter-monument, broader possibilities has opened to it. Mirko Bratuša, sculptor, who was represented in Slovenia pavilion at the 54th International Exhibition of Art in Venice in 2011, has isolated the concept of a disappearing sculptural form in a galleristic space. He applied the term and named his sculpture *Counter-Monument*. For the installation in 1998 at the Gallery Miklova hiša, Ribnica, he used fireproof clay moulds, burnt salt and stainless vessel. Dispersion of salt and the humid air contributed to the process of electrolysis, which eroded solid construction of sculptures. The transitory matter of sculpture material accentuated the fluidity of the media itself.

Some other contributions to counter-monumentalistic attitude were made in Slovenia. One of the first institutionally supported projects, devoted to the general concept of art in the urban context was organized by the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts – Ljubljana. *Urbanaria* was its first annual exhibition, which ran in Ljubljana from February 1994 to November 1997. One of the performances happened on the portico roof of the Slovene National Opera Theater house on October 13th 1995. *Street Fighter and His Limits* was an action of Alexander Brener with which he, boxing the windows and breaking glasses of the “temple of the Slovenian theatre”, attacked values, traditionally connected with the conservative concept of the national culture.

In 1997 Peter Weibel was invited by Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana to curate the 2nd *U3, Triennial of Slovenian Art*. He organized the exhibition in various sections, one of them was Sculpture in Social Space. For this section, Marija Mojca Pungerčar prepared the installation in public space *Mannequens – Dressed for Life Project*, 1997. She dressed various sculptures in Ljubljana streets in fashionable clothes to become more vivid and present for Ljubljana citizens. She regarded monuments, no matter what was their meaning or message. Without making any difference in treating monuments from socialistic realism epoch to others, she expressed indifference to socio-political historical values. But that was not what reaction to her intervention was. Costume was immediately removed from the monument of the first president of the Slovenian socialist government, Boris Kidrič. The rest of monuments of artists remained dressed and "invisible", as they were before. Different reactions point to the fact that monuments in a post-socialist society are not regarded only as neutral historical documents and are still very provoking.

In Nova Gorica, city on Slovenian-Italian border, which was built as a twin city to Italian Gorizia after WWII as a response to the new political division, Mirko Bratuša made the intervention at Erjavčeva Street, which links centers of both cities. It's an alley of important men, where herms with bronze heads of Slovene poets and writers, partisans and national-liberation movement fighters are lined in a row with benches, electric distribution boxes and cables. Mirko Bratuša's intervened

into alley with *Monument to N. G.*, which means *Monument to Nova Gorica*, in 1999, with multi-headed monster, made out of bronze. He used the same material as is in other busts, and he only multiplied the pre-existed form. Nevertheless, with his "correct" attitude toward a street-scape, he provoked a strong opposition among citizens.

Fluidity and transitory nature of history has an equivalent in a materialistic nature of art. Rethinking the monument as the eldest concept of the artwork in a public space in a new context, in relationship with a political history and history of art, means trying to explain the concept of a public art in a dimension of sustainability.

Are there important or small differences in the European languages with regard to the definition of selected words, or about the relations between them and about the ideas which they express? And if yes, what does that mean?

In accordance with the Continental Breakfast mission and in order to find inferences with regard to the contemporary state of European society, the CB Words Room Project aims to compare how some particular concepts dealing with art and culture are defined in the European dictionaries – according to their specific significations in each country and its historical development.

The Words Room Project puts in its 2011 agenda, as a starting exploring term, the keyword memory, and the chain of related ideas/words that the different languages and cultures associate to it (memorial – monument – public – public space, etc.).





Marija Mitrović (1941) is a full professor for South Slavic Literature at the University of Trieste. Graduated at Belgrade University, she got her master and PhD diploma at the same University, focusing her research on the contacts between major Yugoslav cultures (Serbian, Croat and Slovene). She was teaching Slovene literature at Belgrade University, and from 1993 she is teaching Serbian and Croat literature at the University of Trieste. Here there are some of her publications: *Ivan Cankar i književna kritika*, Beograd 1976; *Pregled slovenske književnosti*, Novi Sad 1995; *Geschichte der Slowenischen Literatur*, Wien-Klagenfurt-Ljubljana 2000; she edited: *Sul mare brillavano vasti silenzi* (Immagine di Trieste nella letteratura serba), Trieste 2004; *Svetlosti i senke. Kultura Srba u Trstu*, Clio, Belgrade, 2007; Ivo Andrić, *La storia maledetta*, Racconti triestini, Mondadori, Milano 2007; *Cultura serba a Trieste*, Argo, Lecce 2009.

from Serbian to English translated by Ksenija Todorović

When I gladly accepted the invitation from Giuliana Carbi to take part in the comparative study project of two particular terms in a number of European languages, I was primarily looking forward to learning more about a horizontal section of a micro–cell of the body of language. I did not anticipate that in my own language I would find an opulence of synonyms for both Latin terms: *memoria/memini* and *monumentum*.

Let us begin with verbs, more numerous in Slavic than in Germanic or Romance languages, particularly because in Slavic languages the nuances of the continuity of an action are marked by different morphological forms of a verbal word (and not only by the grammatical tenses): when I say *spomenuti* (remember) then it means that the action denoted by the verb is limited: *spomenula sam njegovu ime* – I remembered his name only once. The dictionary would list not one, but two verbs: *spomenuti* and *spominjati*. Not even the entire basis is the same: *spomen/spomin*). One morpheme is changed; the inflections also differ: –ati/uti, provoking further vocal changes/modifications where **n** becomes **nj**. Two nouns are derived from the same root of the verb: *spomen* – remembrance, recollection, but also commemoration – and *spomenik* – monument, tombstone, gravestone, but also manuscript or document. *Spomenik* is a masculine gender noun, its basis is the same as in the perfective verb *spomen–uti*, but the meaning of this noun is monument, therefore not something mentioned only once but (1) something mentioned continuously, remembrance of a person who is no longer alive. The same noun *spomenik* is used also for (2) material remains

from past times, serving as testimonies of the material and cultural life of that period. That same word denotes (3) artworks of lasting value. However, in that function (under 3) one also uses *monument*, but this form of the word with Latin root seemingly enhances the value of the work of art denoted by it. Therefore, *spomenik* is an architectural or sculptural work dedicated to the memory of great individuals or events (the synonyms are also *memorijal* (memorial) and *memorijalni kompleks* (memorial complex or compound)). *Spomenik* is a material remnant from ancient times and an artwork of lasting value as well as a tomb – or grave stone. The noun *pomenik*, on the other hand, is used for written biographies of important individuals or a books/ documents containing the list of church or monastery benefactors. There is also a diminutive form of the noun *spomen* – *spomenak*: “*ni spomenka nije bilo*” (there was not even a mention...), as recorded in Vuk’s Dictionary of the Serbian Language (1852). The same diminutive form denotes a well-known plant – forget-me-not. *Spomenar* is a memory book with autographs or poems, mementos for someone who would keep the book or album as a memory of one’s youth or friendships. The noun *spomenica* is used for medals, decorations, recognitions: recipients of *Spomenica* were those who joined the resistance movement in Yugoslavia 1941, those who fought in the battle of Thessalonica in the First World War were awarded *Solunska spomenica*, and those who marched across Albania in the Great War were decorated with *Albanska spomenica*. The same noun is also used for books or other documents made purposefully to commemorate a great event or person (*Spomenica Danila*

Kiša – a collection of texts from the symposium organized in honour of the late author Danilo Kiš). There are other compounds, such as – *spomen-dan*, the day dedicated to the memory of someone or something (Matoš: “*Razni licemjerni apeli na spomen-dan Neznamom junaku*” / There were various hypocritical appeals on the memorial day of the Unknown soldier...), or – *spomen-dar*, a gift as a memento (Bogdanović: “*Otelov je to prvi spomen-dar*” / It was Othello’s first memorial gift...). There is also *spomen-knjiga*, memory book kept in an institution, museum or gallery; *spomen-kosturnica*, the memorial charnel-house and the common tomb of the killed soldiers who fought for the liberation of their people. Further on, there is *spomen-ploča*, memorial plaque on the house where an important personality lived, worked or died, or where a significant historic event had taken place; *spomen-slovo*, a speech or address delivered over one’s grave; or *In memoriam* newspaper column where somebody’s memorial address or obituary is published.

Beside the verbal pair *spomenuti/spominjati* there is another pair of verbs – *pomenuti/pominjati* – essentially synonymous to the former pair, but translated into the English as “mention” or sometimes “remind”. The noun standing in the basis of this verb is *pomen*. Since its primary meaning is the memorial service or mass for the dead, requiem, commemoration, as well as any kind of prayer or commemorative activity to celebrate the deceased, then the verb *pomenuti/pominjati* also has a somewhat more solemn (or abstract) meaning than the verbal pair *spomenuti/spominjati*. The noun *pomen* has a number of synonyms of Slavic (*daća, sedmina, opelo,*

beseda...) or Greek origin (*parastos*). As confirmed by the nineteen pages of examples in the Dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language (*Riječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*, 1866–1976) the words derived from the root (*s*)*pomen* are more numerous in the culture of the Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin peoples. However, there is no mention of the female name *Spomenka* (the one who keeps the memory or remembers well), relatively new but very common among the South Slavs. There is no masculine form of the same name – grammatically informed as *Spomenik* – because that noun exists and denotes a monument.

The list of verbs and nouns from the same nest of commemoration or memory of something that has been is not exhausted with this. The first, original word for Latin verb *memini* would be *s(j)etiti se / s(j)ećati se*, also translated into the English language as remember. This verb does not mean only recall or remind but also bring back to memory, evoke something or someone. The noun derived from that verb is *s(j)ećanje*, used in the meaning of a manifestation during which one remembers something or someone, such as “*Ostao mi je u dobrom (dugom) s(j)ećanju*” / I remember him well (often).

In the Serbian/Croatian language there is yet another verbal pair – *upamtiti/pamtiti (zapamtiti)* – translated into the English as remember, memorize, commit to memory or have memory of. The verbal noun derived from this verb is – *pamćenje* – translated into the English as memory: on ima *dobro/loše pamćenje* (he has good/bad memory) or *izdalo ga je pamćenje* (his memory gave out).

However, in the eastern, Serbian variant of the language, the Latin root word would be more frequently used: *memorija* – on ima *dobru/lošu memoriju*.

In the aforementioned Dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language, with first volume published in 1866, but also in the Dictionary prepared by Matica Srpska in 1976, there is a number of derivatives from the Latin root *memini*: *memento* (memento), *memoir* (memoir), *memoari* (memoirs), *memorabilan* (memorable), *memorabilije* (memorabilia), *memorija* (memory), *memorirati* (memorize), *memorijalni kompleks* (memorial complex/compound) even *memorandum* (memorandum), but not as a diplomatic note, petition or an important document. This additional meaning of *memorandum* is letter-head, the paper used in official correspondence of an institution. Also, the language uses a number of derivatives from the Latin word *monumentum*, and a significant memorial would be called *monument*, or an important undertaking would be described as *monumentalno*.

I believe that a comparative analysis of different European languages related to the verb *memini* and the noun *monumentum* could prove or disprove my hypothesis: that this word in the Serbian/Croatian language has evolved in such a complex way because these peoples still cherish not only the cult of the past, but the cult of the dead, the ancestors who must be remembered. Such a culture contributed to the opulence and complexity of all the words and derivatives that remind one of the past, of personalities and events from the past.





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Within the Words Room Project, “memory” and related words were supposed to be translated from local languages into a common one, English. Instead of directly looking into the content of the word “memory” and related terms, as defined in the standard Hungarian dictionary, I look into the frame, the place where the word is included. In a different context, in connection with testimony and diary – which are highly appreciated genres of history because they apparently render over the naked facts of the Holocaust – Ernst van Alphen writes: “the experience of history depends on cultural and narrative frames. Such frames do not distort history; instead, they allow history to be experienced or witnessed.”¹ So in this case the frame of the word “memory” is the dictionary and how the dictionary is interpreted. This frame helps us to understand how memory and remembrance work in this special context. In my example it is the frame of the Hungarian dictionary that allows us to experience how memory works.

When translating the word “memory” and using the most respected Hungarian dictionary ² published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, I found out that since its first publication in 1972, although several editions have been published, its content has not been changed significantly. Of course, other dictionaries have been published since 1989; however, this one is the most distinguished and commonly used academic dictionary. The “revised” editions preserved the old examples, and the content of the explanations has not changed since 1972. Under the item “memory”, thus, we can read exemplifying sentences that evoke socialist times,

such as “The [memory] of our shared struggle.” or, “[memory] medal [noun] 1. Artistic [medal] A medal made to commemorate a significant person or event. 2. A medal given to honor public or military distinction.” This dictionary is a source of memorial remnants, and it preserves the past in the form of historically anachronistic examples. It is a dictionary of received ideas of past vintage. The traces of memory in the dictionary are one level of how remembering takes place.

If I consider the dictionary as an abstract public space, remnants and hardly visible traces of the socialist past can be detected there. Almost like in Freud’s mystic writing pad, the imprint of the past has remained even after the surface has been pulled away and seemingly erased. But then the question is whether dictionary can be considered a public space, to what degree, and in what sense?

Albena Hranova, in connection with Bulgarian textbooks, quoting Matt K. Matsuda, calls this place “the site of the printed page”.³ The site of the printed page is one of the most important sites for committing communism to memory and/or forgetting it. “The printed page finds itself in between visual monuments and archives. Visual monuments are particularly challenging because they are a significant presence in the everyday environment and on the horizon of the human eye.”⁴ “Contrary to monuments, archives seem invisible. They are perceived as hidden in darkness, stolen, manipulated, and containing great secrets and unknown truth. Their importance emanates from their public invisibility.”⁶ Does

the dictionary share the social and semiotic functions of either monument or archives? While literature is quite visible in its role as a media of publicness, the printed site of the page of the dictionary is not. Unlike the textbooks, the dictionary was not in the focus of political debates, and hence it was not a target to be depoliticized. It was not important enough to be in the focus of debates. Why?

After the political transition in 1989 there were huge debates and rewritings of textbooks, first of all history textbooks. Maria Todorova's book, *Remembering Communism* ⁶ devotes a section to how textbooks "remember". No similar thing happened to the dictionary. One reason can be the assumed neutral or "objective" tone of the descriptions of the words of a language. And truth should be told, the examples of the dictionary that I examine, are not extremely laden by communist ideology. The dictionary of the Kádár era in Hungary was not extremely ideological, and consequently, neither was it too important later to be rewritten. Even though we are aware of how inextricable language is from thinking, life, politics, memory, etc., that is, language is not just a mediator. Another reason can be the change of the status of the printed, book-format dictionary in the age of the internet. Today the printed page of the dictionary is a public space, yet not one which is "contested".⁷ The page of the dictionary cannot be compared to the site of the internet. For explanations, these days, people go to – the always changing, always in the process of being updated site of the – internet instead of the book-format dictionary.

However and no matter how much the status of the dictionary has changed, it has ever renewed published, printed editions. This is a sign that it is still needed, used, that it still has a certain relevance.

The dictionary, compared to the textbook, is a less important public space. The dictionary was not important enough to be the subject of rewriting, to be the subject of symbolical change. I am tempted to consider this a metaphor of the situation of remembering, of memory in Hungary. The soft phase of the existing socialism in the Kádár era was not so painful that it has to be completely eradicated, erased, or cathartically worked through. The dictionary of this era, in accordance of the same spirit, did not bring up extremely ideology-laden, politically unbearable examples. Seen the other way round, neither was the change so all permanent/pervasive. Consequently the dictionary bears an almost invisible trace of the past and for the same reason characterizes the present.

But again, still it is reprinted. Unlike sculptures in public spaces, the dictionary does not stir up emotions, so no real urgent need is felt to “cleanse” it of its compromised past. In Hungary, I would suggest, the political transition of 1989 has not yet occurred in the dictionary. The Hungarian dictionary is an unintentional, virtually indiscernible and intangible *lieu de mémoire* – or, as I have already suggested, almost a Freudian mystical writing pad where traces of the past remain inscribed below the surface of erasure. Or still further, following Carlo Ginzburg⁸, one might say that here

the past can be detected only following the method of Giovanni Morelli: seeking it by looking away from the main picture, searching for it in the most unexpected, supposedly unimportant places at the margins of our ordinary awareness.

So, the dictionary is an almost invisible space today. To its opposite extreme, monuments and public sculptures are the most visible, physically present public spaces. After the political changes in 1989 in Budapest, there were close to 500 streets and squares that were renamed. The renamed public spaces, the new plates, are visible signs but not as much as public monuments, or the emptiness left behind by pulled down monuments. The renaming process of streets and public places is somewhere between monuments and the dictionary.

As professor Michael Shafir has argued, unlike history, memory can only be eradicated by another memory, that is to say by another mobilizing myth.⁹ This is visually present in the renaming of streets, squares, following political transformations. Following 1989, hundreds of new names were proposed. The "City map of Budapest" of the latest edition contains 7820 street names. Approximately 1250 of them have been designated since 1989. 425 names are not really new, but previous ones restored."¹⁰ The renamings had different periods in the history of the Hungarian capitol.¹¹

It was the fifth period (1919-1944), when street names of political origin appeared and spread. After First World War many streets were renamed and got personal

names after historical personalities, kings, princes or contemporary political leaders etc. Present *Bartók Béla Avenue* was named *Horthy Miklós Avenue* (after Governor of Hungary) in 1920 (earlier called *Fehérvári Avenue*). *Oktogon* became *Mussolini Square* in 1936, *Körönd* (now *Kodály Körönd / Circus*) was named after Hitler in 1938. Due to the serious territorial loss suffered by Hungary from Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920 was 'compensated' mentally also by renaming public places after historical Hungarian landscapes and settlements beyond the new state borders (e.g. *Pozsony, Zsolna, Arad, Beregszász, Nagyszalonta, Csík*). Most of these designations survive up to the present day."¹² One of the most extreme example of how many changes happened with one single street in the course of hardly more than a 100 year, is *Andrássy út*; (~ now) from 1990: *Népköztársaság [People's Republic] útja* 1957: *Magyar Ifjúság [Hungarian Youths'] útja* 1956: *Sztálin út* 1950: *Andrássy út* 1886: *Sugár út / Radial Gasse* 1883.

Without going into details, renaming after 1989 met the wish of most of the people. Name changes, according to Magda Somogyi T. carried out using two methods, restitution (giving back the old name) and designation (a brand new name). "A decree referring to the necessity of changing certain street names in Budapest was issued in 1989. It regulated the practice and range of changes. There was a double objective: to preserve traditional names and to choose prominent persons who really deserved naming a street after him/her within the territory of the Hungarian capital. These two criteria must have had to be balanced. Of course, the first task was

the elimination of the 'ideologically harmful' names, but occasionally district councils have replaced 'ideologically neutral' street names by those of great importance in the history of Budapest." ¹³

After 20 years, in 2011, once again, there is renaming process going on right now in Budapest. Effective as of May 5 this year, there are several changes in Budapest street names. The new Mayor of Budapest proposed to name a little square on the Buda side of Margarete bridge after Elvis Presley, a bigger square earlier called Köztársaság (Republic) has become Pope John Paul II, Moscow square got back its earlier name, Széll Kálmán ¹⁴, and the square in front of the Academy of Sciences earlier named after Theodor Roosevelt is now called Széchenyi Square.

As in the times following 1989, are there still conflicting memories in present-day Hungary? Conflicts between whom? These are rhetoric questions, for the answer is clearly yes and the lines of conflict are often in evidence. However, the new names or the new old names speak not so much about memory, and memory of different selected parts of the past. The new renaming wave is not so much about memory or conflicting memory, but rather about the use of public space, having power over public space, "seizing" power over the right to give a name thus to own the name and what the name stands for. Renaming manifests and exhibits symbolic power, a symbolic beginning of a new era by a new government. How this renaming process visually is present at the moment in Budapest has three different aspects.

Köztársaság (Republic) Square, located in a run-down neighborhood with predominantly Roma ethnic minority people living there, has a new name, but the street signs have not been replaced yet, and hence the symbolic renaming remains virtual. In the new constitution of Hungary, the name of the country is not the Republic of Hungary, but just Hungary. One can ponder on this erasure of the word “republic” – since the declaration of a republic in 1918 was the key victory in the emergence of an independent, modern Hungarian nation. Republic Square itself is where the seat of the Hungarian Socialist Party was located, and which was one of the bloodiest sites of the revolution in 1956. Köztársaság tér, Republic Square has almost become a metonymy for the 1956 revolution. To mention Köztársaság square is to mention 1956. Erasing the name is a symbolic revenge on the heritage party that succeeded the communist party, and it is also a purification of the memory of 1956.¹⁵ Moscow Square, a busy transit junction in Buda, but a rather run-down place in town, is renamed after Kálmán Széll, an aristocratic turn-of-the-century politician under the Hapsburg domination. The street plates have been replaced, so well that no plate with the older name of the square has been left. “Moscow Square” has simply gotten erased. (The legal rule in 1989 yet was to leave the old name of the street in its place, crossed out but still signaling the old name to avoid confusion. Actually, street plates were changed; however the subway station is still signed as Moscow Square.¹⁶) In downtown Budapest, close to the most expensive hotel in Budapest, The Four Seasons, the plate signaling Roosevelt Square is crossed over, and under the old there is the new,

Szechenyi Square plate, celebrating a founding figure of modern Hungary. Power over public spaces and how it is represented are different in different neighborhoods. Probably this is not an intentional, well-planned strategy, but its symbolic, semi-conscious resonances are nonetheless discernable.

To conclude, the two spaces, dictionary and street, represent two different types of public spaces. One bears unintentional traces of the past, the other represents conscious rewriting, renaming, and the visually presented power hovering over and controlling public space. Both are telling examples of the ambiguity of the memory of the unwanted past in Hungary.

¹ Alphen, Ernst van, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, California: 1997. p. 25.

² *Magyar értelmező kéziszótár*. Akadémiai Kiadó: Budapest: 2003. Example: **Memory** [noun] 1. the mental contents preserved in the faculty or activity of remembrance. *The ~ of our shared struggle*. | Elevated style: *The ~ of somebody*, the

preserved image of an individual (deceased) figure and his deeds. *His ~ will live.* | *To the ~ of something*: as a sign or token of its remembrance. **2.** outmoded usage, The sum of memorial images, posterity. **3.** Memento. | *as a memento ~ of someone or something; something by which to remember him (or it)*: to remind or warn somebody of something in the past. He gives something as a memento. | Memorial: *He leaves a memorial to his enduring legacy.* Also in an abstract sense: he does something that preserves his name for posterity. **4.** Some thing or piece of information preserved from the (remote) past. *An architectural, linguistic ~ (remnant).* **~material**, [noun] *History.* The sum of objects worthy of preservation, writings of archival value, etc. **~stamp** [noun] A stamp issued on and referring to the occasion of a significant historical event or anniversary. *Petőfi*^{2~}. **~talk** [noun] *Literary* A commemorative talk delivered on the occasion of the death or anniversary event of a significant person. **~committee** [noun] A public committee charged with preparing the anniversary commemoration of a significant historical event or person. **~medal** [noun] 1. *Artistic* A medal made to commemorate a significant person or event. 2. A medal given to honor public or military distinction. **~evening** [noun] A celebratory evening program organized in commemoration of somebody or something. *Ady*^{2~}.

³ Hranova, Albena, *Textbook Memorializing: Literature Textbooks in Bulgaria*. In Todorova, Maria (ed.), *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*. Social Science Research Council: New York: 2010. p. 317.

⁴ Hranova, *op. cit.* pp. 317–318.

⁵ Hranova, *op. cit.* p. 318.

⁶ In Todorova, Maria (ed.), *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*. Social Science Research Council: New York: 2010.

⁷ Here I express that I am grateful to my colleague, art historian Nikolett Eröss for our inspiring conversation on the topic.

⁸ Ginzburg, Carlo, *Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method*. "History Workshop", 9 (1980: Spring)

⁹ Public lecture by Michael Shafir (Babes-Bolyai University) at the Central European University, Budapest, May 19, 2011. *Competitive Martirology in Post-communist States: The Holocaust-Gulag competition*. "The clash between the competitive martirologies is primarily one between memory and counter-memory. Unlike history, memory can only be eradicated by another memory, that is to say by another mobilizing myth. This is precisely what post-communist societies have been lacking and the 'democratizing myth' as a mobilizational one is partly undermined by the 'legendary' aspect of the same myth, the more so as post EU and NATO accessions have hardly delivered the 'goods'."

¹⁰ T. Somogyi, *Magda, New street names in Budapest*. Manuscript.

<http://mnytud.arts.unideb.hu/nevtan/informaciok/pisa/tsm-a.pdf>
Accessed 28 May, 2011.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Széll, Kálmán (1843–1915) politician, prime minister, minister of finances, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁵ The contradictory and complex event in 1956, during the revolution in the square was a lynch by an unidentified mob. Communist party members barricaded themselves in the party house, the building was seized, and then those who were forced out from the building were shot, the house allegedly had a secret under earth prison system, which proved to be false. The communists became victims of a violent lynching in the course of the revolution. This is an uncomfortable historic event, its complexity makes it difficult to interpret it in black-and-white, clear-cut terms. Renaming, is a symbolic erasure of an uncomfortable historic event. Erasure of a memory place.

¹⁶ Moscow Square evidently evokes the capitol of the Soviet Union. This renaming in this case also has political, historic meaning. Although the square could keep its name after 1989, in 2011 it could not escape renaming.

Planning to create a non-academic collaborative platform for research in contemporary art history, Trieste Contemporanea launches this year, as a special section of the 2011 Venice Forum, a seminar on the ways scientific literature about contemporary art meets the requirements of the young generation of critics and curators.

The Seminar took place in Trieste under the supervision of an international team of professors and was directed at 7 European students and young researchers of contemporary art not over age 35 selected through a call for paper.

[Topics: Forms of public art from World War 2 to our time. Historical evolutions in monumental art; social implications, identity expectations and communicative functions in the production of site specific art; new models of commissioned art with collective involvement.]

166 **SITE-SPECIFIC WORK OF ART IN A CORPORATE CONTEXT: AN EXPLORATORY
GUIDELINE FOR CRITICAL ARTISTS / SUKI DE BOER**

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MUSEUM FOR THE WORKPLACE AND A PROJECT IN TWO PHASES

In 1995 two separate site-specific works of art were installed in corporate headquarters for which these had been commissioned. The first, *Museum for the Workplace: Portrait of a Working Community* (1995) by American artists duo Clegg & Guttmann, depicts personal objects of employees. It exists of four large photos and is hung in a main corridor inside the office building of the former DG BANK, nowadays DZ BANK, in Frankfurt am Main.¹

In realizing this project the artists collaborated with the employees and asked them to give private possessions on loan which they as workers considered in the broadest sense of the word as art and would like to see exhibited in their work environment. Subsequently these different objects ranging from sculptures, postcards, drawings, posters, a children's shoe, a T-shirt, and even a beer case, were installed in the respective departments from which their owners came. Eventually these items were photographed by Clegg & Guttmann and enlarged to life-size and put on display in the hallways of the bank. The other work, *A Project in Two Phases* (1994-1995) by American artist Andrea Fraser, was specially made for the opening of the museum-like gallery space of the financial services company EA-Generali Group Austria in Vienna, which today is spelled without the prefix *Erste Allgemeine*. Until then the acquired works of art by the EA-Generali had been on display in the company's headquarters at the Bauernmarkt in Vienna. According to Sabine Breitwieser, then curator of the

EA-Generali Foundation, Fraser's project [...] offered to investigate the role of art within the company in general and to help gain insight into the background and dynamics of the conflicts arising from the staff's confrontation with contemporary art.² As the name presumes the project exists on the one side of a book titled *Report. The EA-Generali Foundation* (1995) in which interviews reflect these conflicts, and on the other side of a, what Fraser called, "negative" installation.³ Here she took away all formerly exhibited works of art in the corporate headquarters and exhibited these in EA-Generali's newly opened art venue at the Wiedner Hauptstrasse 15. Next she photographed the art-stripped empty offices in the headquarters in black-and-white and depicted these in her *Report* (1995).

EXPLORATORY GUIDELINE

In DG BANK's publication about *Museum for the Workplace* Martin Guttmann refers to Hans Haacke's argument that art in relation to a corporate context always faces the danger of being instrumentalized for economic private ends.⁴ In their book *Free Exchange* (1995) on corporate sponsorship of public museums, originally published in French in 1994, Hans Haacke and Pierre Bourdieu have criticized the system of exchange between the museum and the corporation. They hold the contention that through corporate sponsorship a commodification of art takes place. Many artists who intend to critically examine the institutions of art might yet be well-aware of the fact that producing work for

corporations thus entails a certain complexity.⁵ At first sight it might seem as if the works by Clegg & Guttman and Fraser criticize the managerial in- and exclusion mechanisms of both the respective company, as well as of its corporate art practices.

However, the main question is to what extent art, which is commissioned by companies and apparently intends to critically address its own context, is able to resist a certain form of corporate instrumentality? Because in the end the expectation is that such art will be literally and figuratively speaking "incorporated" again by a business enterprise. From the background of being a critical artist myself dealing with institutions of art, this essay therefore just takes but a modest step in the direction of serving as an exploratory guideline for upcoming artists who are commissioned by a corporation to make work of art.⁶ However, any concrete strategies will remain absent. Rather by means of analyzing the art projects of Fraser and Clegg & Guttman this essay will mainly concentrate on the possible pitfalls of entering into a willful collaboration with the corporate actors and actants in question in order to unsettle these.

CORPORATE ART IN A SHIFTING CONTEXT

A great deal of business enterprises around the world has established internal decoration programmes for the lobby and office spaces in their corporate headquarters. Corporations have tended to argue that art in office spaces would enhance the work environment and employee morale.⁷ In Europe since the 1990s many

of these private programmes have developed into professionalized corporate art institutions which are accommodating their own art collections.⁸ The opening of the EA-Generali Foundation in 1995 illustrates this trend. Such corporate art venues now open to a large public have been successfully operating within an international network of affiliated institutions of art. Generali's exhibition is separated from the company's headquarters and space spans about 1.000 square meters. It is situated on the former site of the Habig hat-factory which was built in 1882. The building was renovated by architects Christian Jabornegg and András Pálffy and is located close to the Secession, the Albertina Museum, and the Museums Quarter. Fraser's *A Project in Two Phases* particularly deals with the collection move from the corporate headquarters to the specially installed corporate art venue. It is to suggest that the conflicting interests caused by art in the work environment of employees may diminish when art is showcased in a separate museum-like gallery space. This raises the question to which extent site-specific work can maintain its supposed criticality when it is relocated from its site of origin to another place?

Long after the completion of Clegg & Guttman's project the DG BANK, which because of its merger with the GZ BANK had been renamed DZ BANK in 2001, also opened its own exhibition space in 2006 entitled DZ BANK ART FOYER.⁹ This corporate art venue of 300 square meters is located in the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt, but has its own entrance on street level for visitors which is separated from the main entrance for the bank employees.¹⁰

According to Christoph Behnke's *Corporate Art Collecting. A Survey of German-Speaking Companies* (2007) corporations have established such art venues in order to endorse the romantic notion that works of art are devoid of any commercial interests: *The view of art as autonomous is often connected to art collecting because collections exclude collected objects from economic circuits and allocate them to specific locations.*¹¹ The supposed cut off ties of art with business thus seem to be in the advantage of the corporation's outside appearance.

In this respect one can refer to the article *Hans Haacke, or the Museum as Degenerate Utopia* (2007) in which Travis English reflects on corporate sponsorship of public museums. He maintains that [...] *the museum visitor only sees what the hegemonic ideology wants them to see, that the museum is a pure institution and that the corporation is a politically and economically disinterested patron.*¹² Additionally it is to argue that since the 1990s the business interference with art evolved beyond mere sponsorship and fully completed the fusion between the corporation and the public museum in the form of the publicly accessible corporate art venue.

CORPORATE INSTRUMENTALITY OF ART

In *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships* (2002) Mark Rectanus holds the contention that corporate art has an alibi function which conceals one of the most significant features of corporate cultural politics. With corporate cultural politics are meant the

particular strategies which companies have developed with the sole purpose to preserve and to enlarge their legitimacy given by the stakeholders in society.¹³ A stakeholder is the collective name for a person, group, organization or system whose interests affect or can be affected by an organization's actions.¹⁴

For instance, the importance of corporate cultural politics is stressed in 1988 by George Weissman, the former CEO of cigarette company Philip Morris: *Obviously, innovative approaches were needed to run our businesses, to develop new kinds of ties with the community [...] to make secure our democratic, capitalistic way of life. We are dealing here with basic, rock-bottom self-interest.*¹⁵

For the outside world companies often cloak their corporate cultural politics in terms of corporate social or cultural responsibility and thereby aim to seek a broader legitimacy in society. To this end collecting and exhibiting art is frequently applied – or perhaps with a more negative connotation, instrumentalized.

From Fraser's Report (1995) it can be concluded that the EA-Generali also instrumentalizes art: *The obligation of a company of a certain size to sponsor culture can be found both in the Core Corporate Strategy and in the new advertising campaign [...] We are not concerning ourselves with medieval art, but with contemporary art. We want to suggest to people that EA-Generali is not concerning itself with the past, but with the present and the future [...].*¹⁶ And by doing, following Rectanus, corporations conceal one of the most significant features of corporate cultural politics, and that is [...] *the corporation's unwillingness or inability to critically interrogate its own participation in the construction and*

*representation of culture, for example, in terms of the social functions of the products and images it produces.*¹⁷ In his book *First as Tragedy then as Farce* (2009) Slavoj Žižek emphasizes that in today's cultural capitalism, companies have been echoing their mantra of corporate social responsibility in every corner of our society. On a selective basis companies might do good things, however, they are still done within the structures of what Žižek labels as a bad system. Because according to him cultural capitalism has painstakingly proved its deficit as an economic system: *If the 2008 financial meltdown has a historical meaning then, it is as a sign of the end of the economic face of Fukuyama's dream.*¹⁸ Žižek maintains that Francis Fukuyama's utopia the "end of history" meant the belief that [...] *liberal democracy had, in principle, won out, and that the advent of a global liberal community was hovering just around the corner, and that the obstacles to this Hollywood-style ending were merely empirical and contingent.*¹⁹ In a lecture regarding his book Žižek refers to a quote by Oscar Wilde in which he says that the worst slave owners were those who were kind to their slaves.²⁰ On that account, one can suggest to replace slave owners with companies and slaves with art, in the sense that the two entities ideally should not be treated as if they intrinsically belong to each other – although this seems highly inevitable. Nonetheless, besides the corporate instrumentality of art in order to gain more social legitimacy of stakeholders, Chin-Tao Wu stresses in her *Privatising Culture. Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (2002) that art is also utilized in the corporate headquarters for a more immediate practical implementation, that is to [...]

*reinforce the corporate hierarchy; the higher one is on the corporate ladder, the more expensive pieces one gets in one's office, except for more public areas such as the reception lobby where the choicest pictures are naturally hung.*²¹

Additionally Rectanus argues that the subversive responses to art in corporate headquarters, although these are not widespread, to a limited extent represent the mediated expressions of resistance of employees, [...] *not against art per se but against the power structures within the corporation that impose it.*²² However Rectanus and Wu did not take into account the arrival of the corporate curators who already had been working as art professionals in the public institutional field of art. These curators have institutionalized the internal decoration programmes and have turned these into museum-like venues.

CORPORATE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ART

As stated earlier, the DZ BANK ART FOYER and the Generali Foundation are two examples of such corporate art venues. The cunning corporate cultural politics behind the latter one became clear for the outside world in 2007 when it was announced that in 2008 the Generali Foundation had to merge with the BAWAG Foundation, which is the art institution of the Austrian BAWAG Bank.²³ In the 2007 article *Oh, Vienna (Redux)* Jörg Heiser qualified the merger between the Generali Foundation and the BAWAG Foundation as conspicuous as [...] *it seems strange that Generali, a company not at all in a*

*crisis of BAWAG's type, is willing to let its foundation be compromised in this radical manner, dictated by real estate management rather than the spatial requirements for showing contemporary art.*²⁴

The decision for the merger was taken from above at corporate board room level, and was a result of the Generali buying a majority stake in the insolvent BAWAG bank in 2007.²⁵ Because of cost-reducing measures it was decided that the Generali Foundation had to share its own exhibition space with the BAWAG Foundation. The underlying reason of this merger was based on the nearly bankruptcy of the BAWAG bank due to fraudulent business operations of its top executives in the board of management.²⁶

Eventually some of the BAWAG directors, such as Helmut Elsner, Johann Zwettler and Wolfgang Flöttl were sentenced to jail because they were connected to the bankruptcy of the American financial services company Refco, for which its CEO, Philip Bennett, was also penalized due to his illegal financial activities.²⁷ For that matter this led to the dissolution of the Refco Collection of Contemporary Photography. Auction house Christie's conducted three sales of Refco's collection between April and May 2006 which raised more than 9.7 million US Dollar and closed the story of this renowned collection.²⁸ The merger between the Generali Foundation and BAWAG Foundation resulted in the fact that Generali's curator Sabine Breitwieser resigned. Because she claimed that the merger would mean a "worst case scenario" and raised the fear that her exhibition program, with its emphasis on conceptual art, would quickly be subjected to "the pressure for successful mass appeal."²⁹ For it

would be answerable to the directors of marketing, of both the Generali as well as the BAWAG company. Nonetheless it can be argued that Breitwieser might have overestimated her influence and indispensability at the Generali Foundation. Because after her resignation it has been making the same sort of exhibitions of conceptual art as it did before. For instance in 2008 it mounted the show *UN COUP DE DÉS. Writing Turned Image. An Alphabet of Pensive Language*.³⁰ And in 2009 it showcased *MODERNISM AS A RUIN. An Archaeology of the Present*.³¹ Finally in 2010 the BAWAG Foundation permanently left the exhibition grounds of the Generali Foundation and opened its own corporate art venue again.³²

It appeared that both the Generali company as well as the Generali Foundation in the person of Breitwieser, were thoroughly taking the autonomy of the Generali Foundation into consideration. However, Breitwieser, and with her the art scene, maintained that the merger with BAWAG Foundation would jeopardize this autonomy, whereas the Generali company emphasized that it was safeguarded. Regardless of whom of the two is right, one should not forget that the autonomy of an art institution itself has already been put to the test by Hans Haacke; resulting in the arguable fact that it cannot be autonomous.

Moreover, in *The Return of the Real* (1996) Hal Foster already pointed to the implication which the exceeding culture industry brings about on the role of the curator: *[...] The institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator*

becomes the star.³³ Thus in a Bourdieuan terminology the institutionalization of corporate art practices appears to function as cultural capital which gives status to both members of the board, as well as to the corporate curator.

PITFALLS OF QUASI-ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARTIST INTERVENTIONS

It seems that through their collaborations with employees and the staff of the DG BANK and the EA-Generali, Clegg & Guttman and Fraser *avant la lettre* have anticipated on such fore-mentioned critiques. By means of asking the community of workers to give their personal objects on loan for the *Museum for the Workplace* the artists apparently reversed the top-down idea of art being imposed on the workers by the policymakers from above. The same can be argued for Fraser's project in which she used the statements of the diverse corporate departments for trying to map the conflicting interests with regard to art on the shop floor. For instance, not only the EA-Generali's "Advisory Board", which included Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Ute Meta Bauer who were presented to embody the independent art professionals, gave its view. But also the Board of Directors, the Foundation Representatives including the corporate curator and the Staff Council had their share.³⁴ Because of this bottom-up way of working it might appear as if a democratic voice, although of temporary nature and even so mediated by the hand of the artists, has been given to the employees and staff

with which they could express their opinions about art in the corporate headquarters.

However, the interviews which were conducted a month after the realization of *Museum for the Workplace* reveal that the employees had ambivalent responses to the project.³⁵ Some of them were honoured that their personal possessions had been immortalized by the artists, but others also felt that because of the installation of the large photos in the busy hallway of the bank their private belongings appeared to them as depersonalized and displaced. Nevertheless in the light of previous projects by Clegg & Guttman, in which they had also used personal artefacts, these reactions may not sound very surprising. It can even be argued that to a certain extent these were to be expected.

Because in 1993 the artists made with the help of a local community, likewise their work for the DG BANK, a site-specific installation entitled *The Open Music Library - Project Unité, Firminy, re-contextualized - A Community Portrait* (1993) for the Project Unité.³⁶ From June till September in that year a number of artist were involved in this project to create work of art for the social housing complex Unité d'Habitation by architect Le Corbusier in Firminy France. For their project Clegg & Guttman asked the predominantly immigrant residents of the housing complex to donate music cassettes for a discotheque. The ones who collaborated were subsequently photographed by the artists in front of the covers of their cassette. Finally all the tapes were placed in a slot of the wooden miniature replica of the housing complex (134 x 239,5 x 67 cm) consistent with the location of the apartment from which these came. Although the names of the

donators did not appear on the cassettes, it seemed that the artists wanted to emerge the residents' individuality by means of their musical preferences.

However, in *The Return of the Real* (1996) Hal Foster criticizes Clegg & Guttman's project by saying that precisely through the agency of the artists the tapes merely degenerated into being quasi-anthropological exhibits of immigrants, which ultimately served nothing but the artists' fame: *And the artists did not question the ethnographic authority, indeed the sociological condescension, involved in this facilitated self-representation. [...] Almost naturally the project strays from collaboration to self-fashioning, from a decentering of the artist as cultural authority to a remaking of the other in neo-primitivist guise.*³⁷

Foster thus argues that the danger of making site-specific works of art in which local communities are asked for their assistance lies in the fact that they can be exploited by the artist for making non-spaces, that means sites without a specific problematic meaning, particular locations again. Moreover, Foster detects that Clegg & Guttman do not seem to examine their own authority as organizers of such exhibits: *[...] The quasi-anthropological role set up for the artist can promote a presuming as much as a questioning of ethnographic authority, an evasion as often as an extension of institutional critique.*³⁸

In *One Place After Another. Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002) Miwon Kwon elucidates this critique by saying that Foster not only denounces the easy translation by artists of everyday materials and experiences into quasi-anthropological exhibits, but also

denounces the omission to question their own power as exhibit-makers.³⁹ On that account it is to argue that in the case of the *Museum for the Workplace* the interactive collaboration with the bank employees at second glance now seem to have a less critical function. Indeed, some workers expressed their discontent as they felt provoked by the artists' instrumentality of their personal belongings.

Thus professionalized corporate art practices, which for instance sadomasochistically have welcomed the intervention of supposedly critical artists, may not always result in a better understanding of contemporary art at the side of the employees. It could lead to what Stewart Martin in his *Critique of Relational Aesthetics* (2007) has called [...] *a naive mimesis or aestheticisation of novel forms of capitalist exploitation*.⁴⁰ In this sense also Fraser's *A Project in Two Phases* can now be interpreted as a project which lacks the ability to be truly disruptive. Because like in a role-play through the *Report. The EA-Generali Foundation* it merely mirrors the insurer's *modus operandi* whilst reporting, discussing and inventing new business strategies.

RELOCATION OF SITE-SPECIFIC CRITICAL ART

Additionally it can be argued that the relocation of site-specific art projects results in the situation that their supposed criticality becomes even less intense. In a 2006 discussion of Hans Haacke's work Benjamin Seibel argues that taking a site-specific Haacke out of its context can at best function when it is presented as a documentary

of itself.⁴¹ Seibel holds the contention that if such work is presented in a museum as part of a retrospective, the uniqueness of the original polemical intention to a large extent will almost disappear. Because then the work is radiating rather more an aura of just being created by the artist Hans Haacke, instead of making a particular statement on its own.

Furthermore, Seibel points to the fact that in their *Free Exchange* (1995) Haacke and Bourdieu have argued that a critical work can benefit from the symbolic capital of the museum as institution. However he objects this viewpoint and instead raises the critical issue if not the opposite is happening: *By being defined primarily as works of art, their potential to criticize is neutralized, while at the same time, the romantic idea of the autonomous artist and the authorship are emphasized – which are some of the concepts that Haacke once tried to challenge.*⁴² Thus if the site-specific projects by Clegg & Guttmann and Fraser are to be relocated out of their corporate contexts, then these will be deprived of their once made direct statements. Eventually these become commodities like any other works ready to be sold on the art market.

MODEST SELF-CRITICAL POST-ALTERNATIVES IN COPYRIGHT AND ENGAGED AUTONOMY?

To conclude, nowadays culture has been extensively commodified and the economy has been fully culturalized; thus cultural capitalism as Žižek would say appears to be inevitable. So what room leaves this for

a critical approach in the field of art anyway? Can a work of art ultimately turn into something more than what the curator Charles Esche has called the [...] *effete, ironic parody or hopeless frustration* [...]?⁴³ In his 2001 discussion with other curators Lisette Smits and Franck Larcade he wrestles with the same problems addressed in this essay from a curatorial point of view.

Esche talks about a so-called “engaged autonomy” of the curator, which means for him to [...] *find a somewhat detached or ironic relationship to our work as curators or organizers and also an awareness that an institution has its own agenda, which isn’t necessarily one’s own – however close it feels.*⁴⁴ In a similar way this could also be applied to the side of the artist, as Foster already warned that neglecting to question the own authority as cultural producer is one of the most serious pitfalls for the artist. Larcade supports Esche by arguing that invention and copyrights could be strategies for artists to interfere, alter, modify, [...] *and maybe even revolutionize the way both new capitalism and the art market are organized.*⁴⁵

But before getting bogged down in an endless range of perhaps well-intended tentative suggestions which artists and curators might come up with, one may finally also refer to Walter Grasskamp’s *Kunst und Geld. Szenen einer Mischehe* (1998). Here Grasskamp nevertheless nuances the urge to be critical on any corporate instrumentality of art. As he soberly argues that its critics might overestimate the effects of corporate art and sponsorship in the same way as their protagonists do.⁴⁶ Thus, how the next generation of artists should further deal with corporations which commission them

to make work of art eventually still keeps for all that an open end.

¹ The publication which evolved after the project was called *Alltägliches: Kunst am Arbeitsplatz. Museum for the Workplace*. Clegg & Guttmann (ed. Luminita Sabau, 1998).

² Postscript by Sabine Breitwieser in Fraser's Report. *The EA-Generali Foundation* (1995).

³ Alexander Alberro (ed), *Museum Highlights, the Writings of Andrea Fraser*. Cambridge (MA) 2005, pp. 162-167.

⁴ Luminita Sabau (ed.), *Alltägliches: Kunst am Arbeitsplatz. Museum for the Workplace*. Clegg & Guttmann, 1998, p. 11.

⁵ For example in 1995 Ward Fraser has pointed to a range of works by Haacke, including *A Breed Apart* (1978), *The Chocolate Master* (1981), *Voici Alcan* (1983), *MetroMobiltan* (1985), and *Les must de Rembrandt* (1986), which present images of those people to whom the interests of art's corporate benefactors has caused harm. See: Ward Fraser, 'The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity', in: *October*, Vol. 73 (Summer, 1995), pp. 71-89.

⁶ As a freelance para-performative artist-historian (as the *Art & Language* group would call it), under the pseudonym of L.C. von Sukmeister, my installation work mainly deals with questioning the institutions of art, for example by intervening into the spatial sites of museums and galleries, but also into the less tangible sites of art historical texts and references. For instance my *Friendly Video Graffiti Project* (2009 - until now) provocatively explores the formal characteristics of video art in relation to the multiple open ends of the "black box" in exhibition spaces. This project was on display during the group exhibition *Virtual Authenticity* at the SMart Multimedia Arts Festival in Grand Rapids (MI), United States of America, 4-17 April 2011 and was in operation during the group exhibition *Flesh* at the OK.Video 5th Jakarta International Video Festival organized by ruangrupa in Jakarta, Indonesia, 6-17 October 2011.

⁷ See for instance, File cat. Daimler Art Collection, *Targets, Tasks, Projects, Concepts* (ed. Renate Wiehager), Stuttgart 2007, p.11; File cat. Dexia bank Kunstcollectie, *Naar de top van de Belgische kunst. Rendez-Vous au sommet de l'art Belge* (ed. Patricia Jaspers), Brussels 2009, p. 10; File cat. *Art at Swiss Re, Art at Swiss Re Catalogue* (ed. Brigitte Ulmer), Zurich 2008, p. 7.

⁸ Mark W. Rectanus, *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships*, Minneapolis 2002, pp. 22-25.

⁹ Het Financieele Dagblad, 'DUITSE BANKEN BEKIJKEN FUSIE IN HYPOTHEKEN', in *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 25 June 2001.

¹⁰ See website DZ Bank Kunstsammlung <http://www.dzbank-kunstsammlung.de/de/art-foyer/information-zum-art-foyer/ueber-das-art-foyer/>, consulted on 11.02.23

¹¹ Christoph Behnke, 'Corporate Art Collecting. A Survey of German-Speaking Companies', in *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, 37:3, 3, 2007, p. 226.

¹² Travis English, 'Hans Haacke, or the Museum as Degenerate Utopia', in *Kritikos. An International and Interdisciplinary Journal of Postmodern Cultural Sound, Text and Image*, volume 4, March 2007, ISSN 1552-5112. <http://intertheory.org/english.htm> website, consulted 11.06.11.

¹³ Rectanus 2002, p. 50.

¹⁴ Hans Hoeken & Lenneke Ruikes, 'Art for Art's Sake. An Exploratory Study of the Possibility to Align Works of Art with an Organization's Identity', in *Journal of Business Communication*, 42:3, 2005, pp. 233-246.

¹⁵ Rectanus 2002, p. 26. Weissman playfully suggested the term "artnership" for the relationship between the corporations and the arts. George Weissman, 'Artnerships: Business and Arts Together', *Management Review*, 74:6, June 1985, pp. 57-61.

¹⁶ Fraser 1995, p. 12 & p. 15.

¹⁷ Rectanus 2002, p. 50. For example Rectanus places German companies such as Daimler in the historical context of National Socialism. During the Second World War Daimler manufactured aircraft, tank, and submarine engines, and was also producing parts for fire arms, most notably barrels for the Mauser rifle of the Nazis.

¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, London 2009, p. 5.

¹⁹ Žižek 2009, p. 3.

²⁰ See *RSA Animate – First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, on YouTube at 6:31 min. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpAMbpQ8J7g> website, consulted 11.06.11.

²¹ Chin-Tao Wu, *Privatising Culture. Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s*, London 2002, p. 247.

²² Rectanus 2002, p. 49.

²³ Press release Generali Foundation, *BAWAG FOUNDATION und GENERALI FOUNDATION künftig an einem Standort*, 12 September 2007, <http://www.generali.at/>__

C1256A6F0044EA06.nsf/ie/FD8E4F097F2997DCC125735400517663?OpenDocument, website consulted 11.05.10.

²⁴ Jörg Heiser, 'Oh Vienna (Redux)', in *Frieze Magazine*, 13 July 2007, http://www.frieze.com/comment/article/oh_vienna/, website consulted 10.12.10

²⁵ Christian Höller, 'Cerberus entwirrt Bawag-Geflecht; US-Investor erhofft sich von Beteiligungsverkäufen 800 Mio. Euro · Lotterieanteil gilt als Filetstück', *Financial Times Deutschland*, 6 February 2007.

²⁶ Compare James Swift, 'Austria; Crim Outlook', in *The Lawyer*, 28 March 2011, p. 33; *The Association Press*, 'Austrian bank fraud case to see retrial', in *The Association Press*, Thursday 23 December 2010.

²⁷ Reuters. 'Another One Bites the Dust.' In: *The New York Times*, section 4, column 1, Sunday 16 October 2005, Sunday Late Edition, p. 11.

²⁸ John, Dizard, 'Hot picks Not Stock Pics', in *Financial Times*, USA Edition 1, Tuesday 16 May 2006, p. 10.

²⁹ Sabine Breitwieser, 'Statement: Vom Anfang und vom Ende, warum ich gehe', in *Texte zur Kunst*, Issue 68, December 2007, pp. 256-257.

³⁰ Website Generali Foundation, consulted 10.05.09 <http://foundation.generali.at> with works by Robert Barry, Lothar Baumgarten, Marcel Broodthaers, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Rodney Graham, Ulrike Grossarth, Jaroslaw Kozlowski, David Lamelas, Ewa Partum, Gerhard Rühm, Klaus Scherübel, Dominik Steiger, Ana Torfs, Peter Tscherkassky, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, and Ian Wallace

³¹ Website Generali Foundation, consulted 10.05.09 <http://foundation.generali.at> with works by Yona Friedman, Giuseppe Gabellone, Cyprien Gaillard, Isa Genzken, Dan Graham, Gordon Matta-Clark, Florian Pumhösl, Jeroen de Rijke / Willem de Rooij, Robert Smithson, Rob Voerman, and Stephen Willats.

³² Compare Addendum January 2010, website Generali Foundation, consulted 10.12.10 <http://foundation.generali.at/index.php?id=foundation&L=1>; Website BAWAG Foundation,

consulted 10.05.09 <http://www.bawag-foundation.at/index.php?id=96>

³³ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, MIT Press 1996, pp 196.

³⁴ Fraser 1995, pp. 6-7. For instance, in the back of the exhibition cat. *White Cube/Black Box* Benjamin Buchloh is presented as art critic, co-editor of the magazine *October* and professor of art history at Barnard College/Columbia University in New York. Ute Meta Bauer is introduced as independent curator and visiting professor at the Institut für Gegenwartskunst of the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna. EA-Generali Foundation, *White Cube/Black Box* (ed. Sabine Breitwieser), Vienna 1996, p. 395.

³⁵ Sabau 1998, pp. 48-79.

³⁶ Joshua Decker & Olivier Zahm, 'Back to Babel', in *Artforum* vol. 32 (1993), 3, pp. 91-94. The project was curated by Yves Apetitalot.

³⁷ Foster, pp. 196-197.

³⁸ Foster 1996, p. 197.

³⁹ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another. Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press 2002, p. 138.

⁴⁰ Stewart Martin, 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics', in *Third Text*, 21:4, 2007, pp. 371.

⁴¹ Benjamin Seibel, *Hans Haacke – Really. Works 1959 – 2006*, speech given at the Deichtorhallen Hamburg 17.11.06 <http://transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1168433356#redir>, website consulted 11.09.10.

⁴² Seibel 2006.

⁴³ *Metropolis M*, special edition, summer 2001, POST-ALTERNATIVES, CRITICAL STRATEGIES, Lisette Smits in conversation with Charles Esche & Franck Larcade www.cascoprojects.org/data/word/over_casco4_en.doc, website consulted 11.09.10

⁴⁴ *Metropolis M*, special edition, summer 2001

⁴⁵ *Metropolis M*, special edition, summer 2001

⁴⁶ Walter Grasskamp, *Kunst und Geld. Szenen einer Mischehe*, Munich 1998, p. 34.

**WALLS AND SPACES. DECLINATIONS OF THE DISTANCE - TWO PHOTOGRAPHIC
WORKS IN THE RUT OF RELATIONAL AND SITE SPECIFIC ART / GABRIELE NAIA**

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Ca' Foscari University, Venice, 2009; Bachelor of
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The fragile pedestal, as title of this set of lessons focused on public and site specific art, immediately underlines an historical junction occurred in the rut of these artistic practices.

As a matter of fact, starting from the late Sixties there has been a progressive shift of the concept of “public”, as well as a gradual review of the meaning of “site”. From an idea of public art conceived as huge sculpture functional to give prestige to certain urban areas (the so called Plunk Art), during the decades artists moved towards a kind of art that longs to a specific relation with spaces and people.¹

Along this way, started with Minimalism and Land Art and drew into Suzanne Lacy’s so called New Genre Public Art and, similarly, relational art theorized by Nicolas Bourriaud, the term “public” at a certain point stops to be intended as common dimension and begins to be used in the sense of “audience”.²

For this reason the pedestal, as traditional support of the sculpture that according to Rosalind Krauss’ interpretation originally had to connect the work to the ground – and that in its modernist fetishization instead isolated the sculpture into a atemporal and aspatial universe – has lost solidity just because it is the traditional sculpture model itself that, from the Seventies on, has gradually lost incisiveness in the public context.³

If the current critical debate around these topics essentially questions the social role of the artist and the relations between artist-commissioners-users, in this case I would rather like to move the attention to the ways trough which a specific medium, the photographic one, can enter into these artistic genres – in order to

understand if and how this encounter between normally distant spheres can generate a reflection about the statute of photography itself and its role in contemporary society.

Despite the fact that photography, regardless of the genre it refers to or it fits in, is almost always used as a documentation instrument, there are many examples in which aims and purposes are really close to the ones traceable in public, site specific and relational works.

I think it can be interesting to search of a possible connection, since public art is more and more focused on social and communicational dimensions, and since photography occupies every day more a fundamental role at these junctures.

Leaving aside a historical path – surely useful to delineate the growth of photographic medium inside contemporary art, but at the same time inadequate for this text – I would briefly alight on two specific works: *Strangers* by Shizuka Yokomizo (1998-2000) and *The Garage-Kids Resurrection* by Botto & Bruno (2007).

FARAWAY, SO CLOSE. STRANGERS

Dear Stranger, I am an artist working on a photographic project which involves people I do not know... I would like to take a photograph of you standing in your front room from the street in the evening. A camera will be set outside the window on the street. If you do not mind being photographed, please stand in the room and look into the camera through the window for 10 minutes on __-__-__ (date and time)... I will take your picture and then leave...

we will remain strangers to each other... If you do not want to get involved, please simply draw your curtains to show your refusal... I really hope to see you from the window.

This is a part of the letter that Shizuka Yokomizo (1966) sent to anonymous people living in London. As a contemporary flâneur, Yokomizo walks around the city streets, peeks at the apartments from the outside, lurks facing the windows and waits, with her camera ready to shoot. At the prearranged time, who accepted to join the project exhibits him or herself through the window glass and allows that stranger to take a photograph. When the shot is taken, the artist moves away and the tenant switches the lights off or draws the curtains, regaining his or her daily routine from the point he or she had left it some moments before. To bind these two people, that never spoke and looked at each other and never will, there is just the photographic shot.

The project lies on a slightly paradoxical dynamic. As a matter of fact, the photographic sign is an *index*, a *sign that signifies its object only by virtue of the fact that it is truly in connection with it*.⁴

This signic statute characterizes the ontology of photography, because it makes the image produced by the camera a concrete evidence, physic-chemical, of the occurred contact between subject and photographer. In the case of *Strangers*, the photographed subjects voluntarily take part to the shot but, despite that, they do not establish any contact with the artist. There is a relationship, but this lies as sediment just over the exposed negative, it remains in other words bridled into the mechanical medium. All the more Yokomizo, in a

part of the letter that is not reported here, expressly asks to the future subjects not to seek her and not to try to get in contact with her; if this happened, she would destroy the photograph taken.

In the well known essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin detects in the photographic portrait the last example of the cultural value – though inside an artistic practice based on a technically reproducible medium. This because, according to Benjamin, in the photographic portrait still subsists an intersubjectively relationship between photographer and subject, a relationship based on an empathic dimension set up by the coexistence of both in the same time-space.⁵ In Yokomizo's work all these aspects disappear because, even if the photographic medium still proves a connection between the two figures, this happens in two different spaces: the public and the private one, where paradoxically it is the first to remain hidden in the dark, and the second one to be exposed by the photographic image – later spread as art work in the galleries and institutional circuit. Photographic portrait stops to be based on empathy and direct link and turns into a relationship between voyeur and exhibitionist, achieved only inside the photographic device.

Yokomizo's series becomes much more interesting because it foresees of some years the debates around the role of photography in interpersonal relations, in the age of social networks like Facebook. Reflections on the statute of the images and their role in our experience of the world are not new for sure, but it is rather obvious that digital revolution and Internet diffusion have put them in the limelight again.⁶

In this sense, *Strangers* is absolutely a mirror for the contemporaneity, where everything – *in primis* personal relationships – is experienced through images, and where the boundaries between public and private space are every day more problematic (in sociological terms, as well as political).⁷

Although in a negative form (after all, the series is somehow “anti-relational”), this work can be read in the rut of relational art, since the people engagement strategy is almost more important than the photographs themselves, and since this engagement aims to reflect on the role of social spaces inside the city, on interpersonal exchanges, on the role of photography and art.

OPPOSITES ATTRACT EACH OTHER. THE GARAGE-KIDS RESURRECTION

*Photography [...] deletes national frontiers and cultural boundaries.*⁸

Marshall McLuhan

In 2007 the Chinese Room of Florian Café, a historical venetian café opened in 1720, is entirely covered by PVC sheets pasted on the walls. The sheets are in fact huge photographs that reproduce, in 1:1 scale, a metropolitan suburbs landscape. Bumpy and washed out walls, graffiti that hymn new wave bands like The Cure, iron bars and beaten up rolling shutters. From opulent little room reserved to tourists and wealthy locals, this space is transformed into an anonymous garage. Outside the café the orchestra, that usually plays classical pieces for the

clients, covers garage-rock songs originally composed by the two artists' music band, The Botto & Bruno and the Backing Band.

Botto & Bruno (Gianfranco Botto, 1963 and Roberta Bruno, 1966) create in this way a contradictory and intermittent space-temporal dimension. The opulent context of the café, sited underneath the Saint Mark Square arcades, get blended with a metropolitan reality of an off-center and degraded Turin. While a typical underground music genre, characterized by raw and scanty sounds, is filtered and translated by piano, clarinet and cello. Thus, the installation puts in relation two different socio-cultural universes, often adjacent but never completely superimposed: the old town of a famous art city and the anonymous metropolitan suburbs, the classic culture and the pop one.

This operation gains further interest thanks to the particular socio-economical fabric in which it inserts in. As a matter of fact, Venice is characterized everyday more by an economy almost totally based on tourism, that monopolizes infrastructures, services, cultural initiatives, working rhythms, commercial activities. All that, combined with a very high cost of living and the uneases that an island brings with, made during the time a lot of people move to terra firma, especially to Mestre and Marghera, the latest one of the most important industrial hub of the country – well known for its huge pollution rate and its suburbs ares. Opposite to the sparkling and tourist-scale city, there is the off-center shored up by ring roads and factories; opposite to the history and tradition carrying place, there is the anonymous and gray space, without significant traces

of the past. The garage that Botto & Bruno introduce in the Florian Café sums up the terra firma daily reality, separated from Venice by a bridge of less than 2,5 miles but perceived as something far away and that can not be assimilated. In this sense, the full-scale photographs (describing in fact a disused factory sited in Turin and photographed years before) create a mix that goals in the difficult purpose of putting in communication these two split urban areas.⁹

For what regards the use of the medium, we immediately note that in this case photography is not conceived as an autonomous and separated fragment of reality, framed and hung on the wall, but rather as a “parallel” reality able to get concretely into the “real” world, merging itself with it and playing with the optical illusion that would want it actual part of the landscape. Thanks to the great image definition, to the extremely exact calculation of the sizes, Botto & Bruno make the photography *mise-en-scène* short-circuited: usually a transposition of a tridimensional space into a two-dimensional one, the medium here turns down longing to tridimensionality again. As well as the fragile pedestal that titles this seminar, and that in public art practices has gradually lost importance up to its disappearance (creating new strategies aimed at concrete interaction inside the urban space), the frame here steps out, signifying much more than a mere exhibiting choice: it is the sign that testifies a kind of photography that radically changes its perspectives, towards a reflection on socio-cultural realities through a discourse that starts from the interaction with the physical space – and its creative manipulation.

Thus, *The Garage-Kids Resurrection* is a work that originally rethinks photography ways of expression, revising the documentary and urban landscapes genres, but also linking itself to the methods of public art, conceived as art grounded on social space – in the rut of Rosalyn Deutsche's theories, according with the concept of *public substitutes the public art definition as work that occupies or designs physical spaces*.¹⁰

Shizuka Yokomizo and Botto & Bruno's works here analyzed are just two among the many examples that could be probably taken from the contemporary photography panorama. However, they can be considered as well as starting points for a further study which aim is to spot out, inside photography production, elements of originality able to push photography to its own boundaries, near territories only apparently far away from it.

¹ See Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004)

² See Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain. New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998) e Id., *Post Production* (Dijon, Les presses du réel, 2002)

³ See Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985) and Id, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981)

⁴ See Charles Sanders Pierce, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958), Vol.3, 361.40

⁵ See Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), 28

⁶ It would be even interesting to analyze, in this context, the meaning of the window, especially in relation to a well-known exhibition curated by John Szarkowski at MoMA, in 1978. The exhibition, significantly called *Mirrors and Windows*, drew a reconnaissance over photography landscape, operating a distinction between photographers looking at themselves, adopting a kind of diaristic approach (mirror photography), and photographers instead looking at the outside, searching for objective descriptions of the world (window photography). But in Yokomizo's work, what is the window real function? With no light outside and the room lit up, the window becomes much more a mirror the reflects the subject trying to look outside – rather than an opening to the world.

⁷ See: *open – Cahier on Art and the Public Domain*, 2010/No.19, "Beyond Privacy" (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2010)

⁸ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 210

⁹ See Botto & Bruno, *The Garage-Kids Resurrection* (Venice: Caffè Florian, 2007)

¹⁰ See Lorenza Perelli, *Public Art* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006),

FUTURE ANTERIOR: THE POSTHUMOUS ATTITUDE OF CONTEMPORARY MONUMENTS / CLARISSA RICCI

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INTRODUCTION

Anti-monument.¹ Counter-monument.² Unmonumental.³ These are some of the words we often run into when reading about monuments created by artists today. It seems there is no other way to speak about these artworks than through the negation of what they actually are (anti-monuments, counter-monuments) or through the lack of what a "monument" is connoted by (un-monumental). This paper will try to show that the reason why this negation takes place is because monuments are conceived in a different way, engaging acts of becoming and calling into play a diverse perceptive "temporal mode", which I shall describe as the posthumous nature of the Future Anterior.

Where the Future Anterior is the temporal mode⁴ through which monuments present themselves and posthumous *is relation with death, with "the after", that each artwork which aspires to become a monument, stipulates.*⁵

The physical and moral wound inflicted by World War II, by the discovery of concentration camps and many other types of atrocities against the human race, brought into the arts a belief that it would have been impossible to build monuments again.⁶

However 1989 brought a fundamental change: the renewed European political situation infused the younger generations with a new vitality and we assist at the proliferation of monuments (of a new sort) like no other time before in this century. The oddity of such a situation is evident considering that artists often declared the obsolescence of monuments⁷ as a genre, sidelining it

with a contestation of the role of the museum: the very last monument of art.

Although the construction of new monuments follows and accompanies the demolition of many others. What we see in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Communist Regime in many Central and Eastern Countries in Europe is something that can be considered an iconoclastic gesture ⁸ (destruction of monuments) which turns into a founding act, allowing a construction site to come through.

The pedestals left empty by the disruptive gesture instead of recalling loss and destruction open up towards new possibilities acting as a platform, literally taken, as space for political confrontation, as a base of a new civic understanding.

TEMPORALITY'S CHANGED PARADIGM: THE POSTHUMOUS OF THE FUTURE ANTERIOR

Since the first examples of statues, which Jean-Pierre Vernant in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (1965) identifies in the *kolossòs* ⁹, there is a tight relation between sculpture and temporality. But when at the beginning of the 1900 spatial elaboration ¹⁰ becomes central to art, a change in the tight relation with temporality, whose redefinition started mainly with the experience of Land Art, occurs. ¹¹

If in traditional sculpture the time to think and realize the art work are part of the final stage of the object, with Land Art and the experimentations of the sixties, time for

thinking and doing becomes as important as the finished artwork. To understand this clearly we just need to think at the *Verb List*¹² (1972) which Richard Serra compiles in order to define what is sculpture: not an object with specific characteristics, but actions done in the present tense, which last as much as the work itself. Taken to its extremes, this procedure gives life to artworks which exist only in the making, while they're being produced. A sublime example of this are the traces in the sand made by Richard Long, which exist only for few seconds until the desert wind will blow them away.

Nowadays this heritage's visible in the altars, kiosks and monuments by Thomas Hirshhorn. Made mostly out of waste, cardboard, wood and tape this works aren't intended to last, conceived the way they are, as independent from the museum and from the art system. Such monuments are usually devoted to the community of the specific area where the work will then be realized, and ask for a close participation of the viewer; these artworks are such until they are kept alive by the viewers participating in it. *My monuments are temporary, they are not made to be looked at, you can understand them only if you use them. For me sculpture is an event, an experience, not a spectacle.*¹³ If Hirshhorn's monuments are experiences, which don't last much in time, how can they hand down the memory of the thinkers and poets they are dedicated to?

To better understand this we probably need to shift our point of view from the idea of History towards that of "temporal mode" as Koselleck introduces it in *Future Pasts* showing that, *with the advent of modernity, the*

past and the future are "relocated" in relation to each other.

The perspective that opens up in front of an historical subject is doubled by the perception of the site occupied by the subject, one characterized by a conjunction of heterogeneous dimensions of the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous.¹⁴

This type of experience can be lived in *Monument to a lost glove*, of Illya and Emilia Kabakov. First realized in Lion in 1996, then replicated in New York in 1997, it's visible today in Basel near the Monument of Modern Art. A red glove is abandoned on the street. Around it there are, arranged in a semicircle, 9 bookstands on which the history of a woman, who could be the owner of the glove, is written, in poetic form, in different languages. Every bookstand tells a different story. So there are 9 different stories, 9 different versions, 9 different characters and biographies.

Even if the installation was placed at an intersection on very busy street, people would tend to stop and wonder why 9 bookstands were in the middle of such street. Once it was understood it had nothing to do with a commercial strategy, people would slow down, change pace and read some of the stories. In the very fast dynamics of a big city this installation would for a moment change the rhythm of a given space, allowing the viewer to experience, in the middle of a busy day, the "library effect" of passing from a text to another in total intimacy.¹⁵

In this work the text becomes the constitutive element: it not only explains the nature of the installation, but also

adds fantasies, dreams and stories about the possibility of the work. At the same time the title "Monument to..." reminds us of traditional monuments.

Although does this piece of the Kabakovs really commemorate a lost glove?

The glove, if lost, couldn't be "there" anymore. As we can see, the glove is lost for the owner who passed by where the viewer's now standing, it belongs to someone they have never met. The monument is such because of what's left behind. It's as if we arrived just a second after the glove fell out of the lady's bag. But we weren't there when it happened. We couldn't call the lady back to return the glove; we got there late, after it all happened. We're left only with something to wonder about.

The work, in this case, comes alive only after the loss of the glove. The event, which makes our imagination wonder, exists after its end. The only actuality we perceive is made of what's left, what comes after. Remembering Walter Benjamin statement ¹⁶ we come to realize that the only actuality we perceive is made of what's left, what comes after.

Gilles Deleuze, rethinking Foucault in *What is Philosophy?* enunciates: *the actual isn't what we are but what we'll become, what we are becoming, the Other, our becoming other (becoming something-else). The present, instead, is what we are, and for this reason is what we stop being.*¹⁷ As a result who views *Monument to a lost glove* becomes something else, becomes "the Other" in every story he reads on the bookstand, in every story he imagines in his fantasy, where one finds many other single gloves in order to loose them again and start a new story.

In an other monument, *The Weakening voice* (1998), posed by Illya and Emilia Kabakov on a slope near the city walls of Colle Val d'Elsa (Italy), the protagonist is exactly this "becoming". The Glove is here replaced by a Ruin, almost with the intent of alluding to the Ruin of Sculpture. A column is buried for half in the ground, allowing it to also act as a pedestal. This condition empathises the most important part of the installation, which is posed on top: an inscription. In Kabakov's work the pedestal incorporates its ostension declaring simultaneously the end of the pedestal itself. In fact, instead of suggesting a person or event to commemorate, it carries an inscription, a *memento mori* of itself and of what, of the column-pedestal, we can't see anymore: *with my height I supported the temple/time has been cruel and nothing is left but half of me/ the years will race away and I will be completely buried by earth/ and you, walking on top of me, won't even notice me.*¹⁸

The inscription is about the column's future end, which will take place but we can't see yet. While reading such words the viewer realizes that he is reading something on the top of a column. This allows us to immediately experience the time that has passed, already burring half of the column.

The peculiarity of this sculpture is given by the fact that it appears to belong to two periods very distant in time. Because of its shape and material, the column appears to be a ruin from the classical era, like one of those semi-columns that we can see at an archaeological site. At the same time, because of the style of the text, the sculpture seems originally from the romantic era. The poem could

easily be a composition written by some Russian or German poet during his tour of the Italian ruins. However the site of the installation could've never been one of a Roman or Greek temple, making the authenticity of what the text says un-plausible.

The result is that the column doesn't belong to any period; it has a double temporal facies but it acts in an anachronistic way in either period. This, which would be perceived as a falsification, can be seen as a possibility of time to contain more times.

It's down George Didi-Huberman through the work of Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin and Carl Einstein ¹⁹ to reconsider and reverse the anachronistic paradigm. Time isn't then identified without wastes with history: it's a plural time, an assembling of different temporalities, time lags and heterogeneous rhythms. In order to sustain this anachronism the columns lacks a clear recognizable paternity.

It become clear this way that the Kabakovs work is anchored in space but fluctuates in time. The centre, the present, is given by the viewer who reads the text, allowing him to move forward in time until the end of the column's life and jump back, with his imagination, to when it was totally out of the ground.

So the perception of time and its relation with History is realized in a conscience of the instant, in the actuality which George Kubler called "the inter-chronic pause when nothing is happening".²⁰ The conscience of being in the actual time produces a time lag, an un-timeliness determined by our position, which makes us look ahead and behind in time while perceiving our position as outdated. The work is already a posthumous ²¹ one, in

which we can see only what remains while glimpsing what will be. The work is a *sarà stato, it will-been*, it's a future anterior: vestiges of the time to come instead of the past. In the past there is an unrealized and anachronistic potentiality, which will take place somewhere else, which leads out of given forms, given meanings; out of those peculiarities through which it seemed realized. Just like the lost glove, there for us but not for the lady who used to wear it, the monument has been realized with what's left (or apparently lost), through it's memory, with it's double, a part of the whole (the lost glove, the half column).

The present materiality of these works belong both to the future, as they address to it, and to the past, which is where they come from, and the viewer who stages the present tense can relate to it only in a "becoming mode", continuously connecting the "past" and the "future", which become "before" and "after".

This attitude of the posthumous is what determines the Future Anterior of these works and is what allows monuments to survive their descent from the pedestal into the fissures of time.

It could be argued that these can't be considered as "true" monuments.

In the first case it seems that the word 'monument' has been emptied of meaning and monumentality, while in the second case the aspect of a ruin and the localization of the artwork on the outskirts of the city doesn't involve a full "publicness" of monuments.

Nevertheless, these two examples rhetorically use an important tool of monuments: pedestals.

And is on this specific deictic device that paradoxically we can imagine a new understanding of the meaning and use of monuments. The examination of a sculpture by Rachel Whiteread will help us along this path.

WHAT MONUMENT? THE EMPTY PEDESTAL

In 2001 the British artist installed *Monument* on one of the four plinths in Trafalgar Square, which remained vacant over the years because of a lack of funds.²²

The work, which follows *Ecce Homo* (1999) of Mark Wallinger and *Regardless History* (2000) of Bill Woodrow, was part of *The Fourth Plinth*²³ project promoted by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). It devotes ones attention to reflect on and understand the conceptual obsolescence of the monument as an art form.

A person passing by in the famous square would have looked at an enormous transparent and translucent pedestal, turned upside down and placed on a granite pedestal similar in size and shape. Made out of resin²⁴ *Monument* is in fact the copy, or better, the cast of the one supporting it underneath; it's a pedestal, placed on a pedestal.

Could we then say that Whiteread's sculpture is the "monument" to the pedestal?

To find a plausible answer we probably need to step back and better understand what a pedestal is and what it represents.

Normally when we are in front of a monument, or in front of a statue on a base, we hardly notice the pedestal. Nevertheless pedestals have always played an important role in experiencing sculptures: these are the architectural elements normally used for the display of an artwork. Their function is to raise the work from the ground in order to call our attention, inviting the viewer to a contemplation of the work on the pedestal. In this way the plinth activates two different approaches between the work and the viewer, which are physical and moral all at once: the work becomes easier to view when raised and at the same time, in such a position, it poses a distance in between the viewer and the work itself. We can't touch it, it's out of reach. Therefore, when raised, the artwork is elevated above the legibility of common objects.

For this reason in 1961 Piero Manzoni called his work, in the shape of a pedestal, *Magic Base*.²⁵ He was aware that the space above it's very much charged with power, so he ironically was inviting people to stand on it; for this purpose he attached footprints that, when matched by the feet of the person standing on the pedestal, would make the person assume a posture recalling the one of the statue of an hero.

In monuments, pedestals usually tend to be huge and high, often decorated or inscribed with epitaphs, generating a real change in scale. Without moving from our spot in London, a good example of this is provided by a glance at the pedestal underneath admiral Horatio Nelson's feet in Trafalgar Square: in order to be able to look at the statue posed on top of a column 145 meters

high, we need to stay at a certain distance from it, to fully embrace it and avoid a neck ache.

The French understood the pedestal's great importance by, in the mid 1700, regulating its shape, size, color, material and decoration in *Course d'Architecture*²⁶ (1738). The canon set the form and dimension of the plinth that had to stage the statue of a hero, of a king, of a woman or child. But why worry about an element that seems only a functional one? Because the pedestal is a deictic device, it obliges the viewer to look in a certain direction. The pedestal says out loud "look there"! Not only: it also tells us "how" to look and to also take into consideration what we are staring at. This is particularly true when talking about monuments, which celebrate events or people; in the latter case the raised position is also metaphorical; it implies that these are *supra homines*. What's on the pedestal has an instant *mise en valeur*; it's not a coincidence that the word monument is etymologically related to "remembrance" (lat. monére) from which derives "make people know"²⁷ (see Italian: *monito*).

However, in Whiteread's *Monument*, more is prompted by the pedestal's shape. In comparison to the base made of durable and heavy granite, *Monument* looks like a fragile and light object. The peculiar resin out of which it's made of makes the artwork permeable to the eye while at the same time the surface, reacting to the change of light during the day, changes its features: at midday the zenith light of a clear day will make it look like a crystal clear block, while during a typically

dull London day the surface will look like a grey facade mirroring the square, the other monuments and the city life. Contrary to the transparent meaning of “traditional” monuments, which clearly show commemoration, *Monument*, regardless of its transparency, never reaches a stabilized view and a clear meaning.

Many times this work has been compared to *Socle du Monde* (1961), but even if this famous pedestal is turned upside down, it rests on the ground as if to suggest socle is the pedestal of the entire world; of reality. So the fact that there is another plinth underneath Whiteread’s “socle” changes the relation between the statue-sculpture and the pedestal. *Monument*, in fact, reveals that there is no monument, it “pierces the veil of Maia” and shows that what makes the monument a “monument” is the plinth.

Rachel Whiteread is known for her “procedure of solidification”, of giving to the absence a presence in a way that we perceive it as an absence²⁸, as in *Ghost* (1990) or *Book Corridors* (1997-1998). Although in the case of *Monument*. In *Monument*, while displaying the meta-linguistic unveiling of the exhibition device, the artist questions what can be put on a pedestal and how we can relate to such “magical” space.

The meta-linguistic answer of *Monument* to the empty plinth is the constant celebration of power through a device. In front of Rachel Whiteread’s work we recognize that the canonic pedestal-work relationship is reversed. Instead of offering something new to put on the pedestal, the artwork mirrors the capacity of its support

in showing, showing itself, showing that what's going on is a show, showing how to reflect on its own show.

CONCLUSION: ON TOP OF AN EMPTY PEDESTAL

Contemporary sculpture is mainly understood as a descent from the pedestal. After Krauss influential essay ²⁹ we are used to state that statues conquered the ground of modernity, stepping down from the pedestal to encounter the viewer directly. At the same time the still-images from Eisenstein's film *October. Ten Days that Shocked the World* (1927) used by Krauss ichnographically ³⁰ suggest that the modernity of sculpture is accompanied by its own destruction.

In an analogous way, our visual memory is full of images of statues being pulled down and monuments being destroyed, images related to the suppression of a certain political power or regime. Although in this case statues are literally pulled down from the pedestal causing the estranging situation of having many empty pedestals.

The outputting situation of monuments pulled down leaving an empty pedestal is that the only way to localize the present tense is the position of the viewer, who is constantly in the situation of feeling outdated, feeling as too late, after something, in a perpetual aftermath . As in front of Whiteread's *Monument*, the viewer is someone who knows that statues have been pulled down, that ideologies have ended, that we can only reflect on what is left, on what is happening now,

reflected on the surface or on what's going on in the square.

If the sculpture descending the pedestal makes its way into the common objects, the pedestal left empty can be recognized as such, without disappearing under the sculpture on top.

The events of 1989 together with the cultural change which blew after postmodernism brought to a situation where there isn't the need to fill the space of the pedestal but to understand this highly power-charged area and use it as a place open to changes. More and more often, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, empty pedestals turn into venue sites³¹ devoted to the construction of the civic society, platforms for under-construction democracies.

¹ Gérard Wajcman, *L'anti-monument* (Acted Sud, 2002)

² Silvia Bignami, "Counter-monuments: memoria e rappresentazione tra Austria e Germania", in *Rappresentare la Shoah*, ed. Alessandro Costazza, 473-481, (Milano: Cisalpino, 2005).

³ Laura Hoptman "UNMONUMENTAL. Going to Pieces in the 21st Century" in *Unmonumental. The Object in 21st Century New Museum of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Flood, 138 (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007).

⁴ Cf. Reinhart Koselleck *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁵ Cf. Giulio Ferroni, *Dopo la Fine. Sulla condizione postuma della letteratura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986). Cf. also Giulio Ferroni *Dopo*

la Fine. Una letteratura possibile (Torino: Einaudi, 2010)

⁶ The most quoted author regarding the stillness generated after World War II in the art is Theodor W. Adorno “to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” in *Prisms* (1949) trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967). It’s not a coincidence that monuments of the Holocaust are generally characterized by emptiness, silence and absence, almost as if pronouncing the word art has become impossible.

⁷ Robert Smithson, 1966a, “Entropy and the New Monuments”, in *Robert Smithson. The collected writings*, ed. Flam Jack, (University of California Berkeley [1st ed. in *Artforum*, June 1966])

⁸ Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press; London, England: Reaktion Books, August 1997)

⁹ A *kolossòs* was a stone statue roughly carved posed in the tomb instead of the dead body; Vernant explain this could happen when the body couldn’t be buried, not found, or because the man died far away from home. Cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, (1965) *Mito e pensiero presso i Greci*, 348 (Torino: Einaudi 1978).

¹⁰ Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, (Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹¹ Cf. Andrew Causey, *Sculpture since 1945*, 178-180 (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹² Serra Richard, “Verb List, 1967/1968”, in Grégoire Muller, *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies*, (New York: Praeger, 1972).

¹³ interview with Buchloh Benjamin, in ed. Benjamin Buchloh, Alison Gingeras and Carlos Basualdo, *Thomas Hirschhorn*, (London – New York: Phaidon, 2004).

¹⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, xvii (Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Cf. Ilya Kabakov, *Public Projects or the Spirit of a Place*, Vettese Angela, ed. (Milano: Charta, 2001).

¹⁶ *la storia si scrive a partire dai rifiuti stessi della storia* (history is written starting from history's very own refusals - author translation) Benjamin Walter, *Parigi Capitale del XIX secolo*, Agamben Giorgio, ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 1983).

¹⁷ *L'attuale non è ciò che noi siamo, ma piuttosto ciò che diveniamo, ciò che stiamo diventando, l'Altro, il nostro divenir-altro. Il presente, al contrario, è ciò che siamo e proprio per questo, ciò che già cessiamo di essere.* Deleuze Gilles and Guattari Félix, (1991) *Che cos'è la filosofia?*, Angela De Lorenzis, ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 1996).

¹⁸ *Ho sostenuto il tempio con la mia altezza/il tempo è stato crudele e non resta di me che metà/gli anni fuggiranno via e sarò totalmente coperta dalla terra/ e tu, camminandomi sopra, non ti accorgerai neppure di me.*

¹⁹ George Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps: Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2000).

²⁰ George Kubler, like Ad Reinhardt, seems concerned with "weak signals" from "the void". Beginnings and endings are projected into the present as hazy planes of "actuality". In *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, Kubler says, *Actuality is ... the inter-chronic pause when nothing is happening. It is the void between events. ... The future criss-crosses the past in an unobtainable present. Time vanishes into a perpetual sameness.* - Robert Smithson, "Quasi-Infinities and the Waning of Space", *Arts Magazine*, (November 1966), 28.

²¹ Posthumous is what Giulio Ferroni described as *relation with death, with "the after", that each artwork which aspires to become a monument, stipulates* so is different from "afterwardness" (Laplace); 'Posthistorical' (Fukuyama); "Deferred" (Freud) and others.

²² The fourth plinth, realized in 1841 had to host the statue of William IV (1765-1873), but he didn't leave enough money to realize it.

²³ Cf. Sue Malvern "The Fourth Plinth of the Vicissitudes of Public Sculpture" in Gerstein Alexandra, ed., *Display and Displacement. Sculpture and the Pedestal from Renaissance*

to *Post-Modern*, 130-150 (Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum: Paul Holberton Pub., London 2007).

²⁴ The material in which the artwork is made created a great attention from the Media because a resin, Crystal Clear 207, was specially invented for *Monument*. Cf. Chris Townsend "Lesson from what's poor" in *The Art of Rachel Whiteread*, (London 2004).

²⁵ Cf. John Thompson "Piero Manzoni: Out of Time and Place" in Germano Celant, *Piero Manzoni*, (Milan, 1983).

²⁶ A.-C. d'Aviler, *Cours d'Architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, (Paris: nlle éd., 1750, pl. 94). Cf. Etienne Jollet "Objet d'attention. L'intérêt pour le support en France à l'époque moderne" in Gerstein Alexandra, ed., *Display and Displacement. Sculpture and the Pedestal from Renaissance to Post-Modern*, 33-61 (Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum: Paul Holberton Pub., London 2007).

²⁷ "Monumento" = lat. monumētum = monimētum (gr. mne-ma, mnomeion) from mōnere, (see *monito* in Italian) and -mentum.

²⁸ Cf. Chris Townsend, *The Art of Rachel Whiteread* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004); Uros Cvoro "The Present Body, the Absent Body, and the Formless" in *Art Journal*, vol.61, No.4, p.73 (Winter 2002).

²⁹ Krauss Rosalind, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press, 1977).

³⁰ Gioni Massimiliano states that the disappearance of the monument generated a secular monumentality maintaining the monumental ambition even with a changed artistic grammar. (Cf. Massimiliano Gioni "Ask the Dust" in *Unmonumental. The Object in 21st Century New Museum of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Flood, 64 (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007).

³¹ The increasing use of the suffix "post" when trying to determine a characteristic of nowadays is an immediate detector of this situation.

³² Cf. Edith Adràs lecture at the first Trieste Contemporanea Seminar on Art History.

TRIESTE CONTEMPORANEA
DIALOGUES WITH THE ART
OF CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE 2011

**CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
PLACE OF ENCOUNTER 2011**
FIFTH CEI VENICE FORUM
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART CURATORS

VENICE, Palazzo Zorzi, Castello 4930, JUNE 1st, 2011
TRIESTE, Studio Tommaseo, via del Monte 2/1, JUNE
3rd-4th, 2011

a CEI Feature Event
a Continental Breakfast project
an event under the patronage of Mrs Androulla Vassiliou,
Member of the European Commission

The Forum is conceived and organised by the Trieste Contemporanea Committee, in collaboration with the UNESCO Office in Venice, under the patronage of the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Regione del Veneto, the Provincia di Venezia, the Provincia di Trieste, the Comune di Venezia Assessorato alle Attività Culturali, the Comune di Trieste and the University of Trieste. It is supported by the CEI, the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Provincia di Trieste and the BEBA Foundation of Venice.

**PLACE OF ENCOUNTER / FIFTH VENICE FORUM FOR
CURATORS FROM CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE / VENICE**

WELCOME SPEECHES

ENGELBERT RUOSS, director of the UNESCO Office in Venice

GERHARD PFANZELTER, secretary general of the Central European Initiative, Trieste

TIZIANA AGOSTINI, Councillor for Cultural Activities, Comune di Venezia

GIULIANA CARBI, president of the Trieste Contemporanea Committee

FIRST SESSION

Public Art or the Art in Public Spaces? / ANDA ROTTENBERG / POLAND / freelance curator and writer

Art Policy and Post-industrial City / SLAVICA RADIŠIĆ / SERBIA / cultural policies researcher, Belgrade

From contemplation to participation. Relational practices versus drop sculptures in Italy today / RICCARDO CALDURA / ITALY / curator of the Pavilion of Albania

Dimensions of the counter-monument as an anti-monumental and anti-memorial statement / NADJA ZGONIK / SLOVENIA / commissioner of the Pavilion of Slovenia

The culture industry of Istanbul and 'Istanbul 2010' / BERAL MADRA / TURKEY / (session chair) director BM Contemporary Art Centre, Istanbul

Taswir, or: New Forms of Public Art: On the Order of Things / ALMÚT SHULAMIT ÇORUH / GERMANY / direc-

tor ha'atelier, Berlin

Going public. A project for the Public Sphere / CLAUDIA ZANFI / ITALY / director aMAZELab Art&Cultures

Politics of Memory / ANDRIS BRINKMANIS / LATVIA / commissioner of the Pavilion of Central Asia

What kind of Public Art do we need in Eastern Europe? /

MIRAN MOHAR / SLOVENIA / artist IRWIN Group

Urban and Other Visions / JAROSLAV ANDEL / CZECH REPUBLIC / artistic director DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague

Photonic Moments. The role of the contemporary photo art festival focused on CEE / DEJAN SLUGA / SLOVENIA / director Photon Association, Ljubiana

Whose Public Space? / LORENZO FUSI / ITALY / curator Liverpool Biennial

DISCUSSION 1

SECOND SESSION

The Endless School / BRED A BEBAN / UNITED KINGDOM/ CROATIA / artist and curator

Public Art as compromise / DUŠICA DRAŽIĆ / SERBIA / artist and curator

Artistic street smarts as an Art of Urban Intervention / LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV and IARA BOUBNOVA / BULGARIA / artist and curator

Critical Museum / PIOTR PIOTROVSKI / POLAND / Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan

Nationalism claiming the public space / EDIT ANDRÁS / HUNGARY / (session chair) Research Institute for Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest
Monument in translation / JANKA VUKMIR / CROATIA / president Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

The dictionary remembers / HEDVIG TURAI / HUNGARY
/ Ludwig Museum - Museum of Contemporary Art,
Budapest

Remembrance, Memory and the Cult of Ancestors /
MARIJA MITROVIĆ / SERBIA / University of Trieste
Management of "memory" as promotion of "amnesia"
/ IARA BOUBNOVA and LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV / BUL-
GARIA / curator and artist

Spelling dystopia / NINA FISCHER and MAROAN EL SANI /
GERMANY / artists

DISCUSSION 2 and CONCLUSIONS drawn by ANTHONY
KRAUSE / Head of Culture unit, UNESCO Venice Office

THE FRAGILE PEDESTAL / FIRST TRIESTE CONTEMPORANEA SEMINAR ON ART HISTORY / TRIESTE

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FIRST SESSION

Site-Specific Art in a Shifting Corporate Context: For or Before Corporate Employees? / SUKI DE BOER / THE NETHERLANDS

East European Situationism? On the Contemporary Art Scene in Slovenia / MARCO HOMPES / GERMANY

Public art and empty factory: two versions / MAROS KRIVY / SLOVAK REPUBLIC

SECOND SESSION

The Public Camp Art in Poland / ANNA KWIATKOWSKA / ENGLAND/POLAND

Topography of Terror / CLAUDIO LEONI / SWITZERLAND

PUBLIC LECTURES by the supervisors

Public monuments in changing societies / EDIT ANDRÁS
New museums of contemporary art in post-communist Europe / PIOTR PIOTROWSKI

PUBLIC SCREENING of The Giant Buddah, a film by
CHRISTIAN FREI (Switzerland, 2005) and debate with the
director

THIRD SESSION

Walls and Spaces. Declinations of the Distance / GABRI-
ELE NAIA / ITALY

Future Anterior as the Temporal Mode of Contemporary
Monuments / CLARISSA RICCI / ITALY

CLOSING DISCUSSION

Curator and editor / GIULIANA CARBI
Curator of the Trieste Seminar / ERMANNA PANIZON
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Being an occasion to update the debate on the new curatorial practices of the CEE professionals and, as usual directed, in collaboration with the UNESCO Office in Venice, to commissioners of national pavilions of the Venice Biennale, curators and experts of contemporary art, the CEI VENICE FORUM discusses in 2011 the concept of Public Art. THE FRAGILE PEDESTAL SEMINAR OF ART HISTORY and the CB WORDS ROOM PROJECT are special sessions included.