

Notions of Temporalities in Artistic Practice

Anamarija Batista (Ed.)



DE GRUYTER

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This project has been supported by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, and ERSTE Foundation.

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Wien



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ISBN 978-3-11-073803-2

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-072092-1

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110720921>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022931622

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2022 Anamarija Batista, published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston.
This book is published with open access at www.degruyter.com.

Cover image: Daria Kuzmych, *Your rental contract has been terminated* (2020-ongoing).
Installation. Courtesy of the artist.

Editorial coordinator: Emir Kulačić

Translators and proofreaders: Brita Pohl, Lidija Toman and Isidora Krstić

Layout and typesetting: Andreas Eberlein, aromaBerlin

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

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Prelude

A Street as the Staging Ground of the Temporality

A street that relates to another time and which, in its material and functional characteristics, also evokes the feeling of a different temporality, is by no means out of place in the world of post-war modernism. On the contrary, it is an indispensable complement to dominant planning practices and constellations, affirms Bogdan Bogdanović in the penultimate short story of his book *Mali Urbanizam* (1958), in which the urbanist, architect and architectural theorist attempts to sketch the characteristics of the ‘image of this lively street’ and to explore its ‘peculiar’ vitality (Bogdanović, 1958, p. 7f.).

Its vitality, he says, is partly based in its materiality which bears the traces of ‘preceding’ times. A street in which there are still old artisanal workshops, where small shops are open for business and a variety of old cars can be seen that, because of their state, would hinder modern traffic, in fact allows us to perceive a different ‘pace’. The same is true for streets near a harbor or a market (Bogdanović, 1958, p. 133f.). And thus, we might say, streets which are marked by comings and goings, or those near market places, where the brilliant colors of the flora coincide with the slow or brisk movements of people, and which re-establish a link between city and countryside – these lively streets with their inherent temporal organizations would revive the city and prevent it from resembling a sanatorium.

This short story is in the section of the book in which Bogdanović explores the factors of figuration but also the impact of ‘small urbanism’.¹

The pulse of ‘small urbanism’ is generated from an organicity that functions as an ‘echo of resistance’ of ‘another’ time continuum and represents a necessary extension of the methodological toolbox of serial drawing-board urbanism. These are places that are able to generate presence, different atmospheres and thus a particular experience of tem-

1 The differentiation between ‘large’ and ‘small’ urbanism proposed here has only been up for debate since urbanism was established as a discipline, i.e. in the 20th century. These thoughts originate in the fact of the development of standardizing processes which were a response to chaotic conditions in the 19th and 20th centuries (Bogdanović, 1958, p.9.).

porality due to the difference in their design and material qualities. This ability arises precisely from the current moment. The deviation from the existing norm allows for hybrid experiences, for overlapping and parallel existence of various temporal horizons, but, at the same time, also generates the possibility to study the 'deviant' from a different point of view. A 'time out' in the present, an alternative track in the system allows us precisely to rethink the connections in a new light.

This allows for a distinct experience of the fabric of the city. If we take Beijing for an example, a city that has been subject to enormous architectural and urbanistic transformation over the past decades, what one notices is that a turn around the corner, off the modern shopping street into the small 'red' lane, will probably change one's perception of time. Confronted with a change in scale, texture or colors, we encounter such 'leftover' places, which, as long as they are not canonized and overrun by tourism, challenge the tendencies of 'current' planning as 'curiosities'.

The vacuum of modern mentality is elated by the idiosyncrasy of these 'out of time' units, which in fact bear the marks of the processes of a different temporality and generate the never-seen or never-experienced in 'seclusion'. As Walter Benjamin says, "it's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 462).

Following Bogdanović's thoughts on cityscape, the need for the existence of different temporal fabrics becomes clear. These arise from the situational conjunction of particular design characteristics and practices of use that not only allow for various intensities due to their difference, but also establish a relation between each other. Thus, the position of a relative point of view is created, a dialectical contrast which, according to Benjamin, is the precondition for constituting life and the living. Life and the living, which are born anew over and over again, and which are presented here in the example of everyday life and urban perception.

These articulations that can be experienced in the urban setting, which Bogdanović calls factors of 'small urbanism', can be conceived in the sense of interlacing narrative threads, but also as alternating intensities and ex-simultaneities. Even in 'undergoing' difference, one is in fact conscious of its momentariness and short-term nature.

This anachronistic deferment results in an ever-regenerating circularity, the intensity and intervals of which will always change in the next cycle. The traces of passion² that re-emerge at a later time and that are re-contextualized allow 'actualities' to surface, and a transitory moment. Thus modified, however, they are relegated to the 'background' in the following step.

2 Following Benjamin's diagnosis in his essay "The Image of Proust", the connectivity established between experiences in the past and currently experience able things partly results from the fact that the temporal speed and the resulting scarcity of time in Modernity do not leave us time to live the true 'dramas' of our lives in the now (Zumbusch, 2018, p.198).

Work Processes and its Temporality: In Series, in Real Time, and Being Archived

The above-mentioned form of 'difference' in perception and experienceability also are continued and concretized in the sphere of artistic production, which, by means of the organization of its processual quality, creates its own temporal frameworks, but also addresses, discusses and portrays the temporal codes inscribed in and produced by society.

By means of cutting, color application, speed, methods of overlapping or disruption, a compositional act of temporality is achieved. We may think of the simultaneous images of the Middle Ages or the dominant tendencies of Historism that revive temporally past designs by imitation, charging them with symbolic images of past regimes of knowledge, or the new medium of modernity, film, which has taken the aspect of temporalisation into modern art in a hitherto unknown manner, in its practices of production as well as of reception. Further forms of temporality that characterize contemporary art, or the art of modernity, are those of seriality, of repetition, but also those of remembering, of appropriation or of re-enactment, and the documentary.

Think of the first avant-garde sculpture, Duchamp's *Fountain*, which turns against the classical process of sculpture in the spirit of the Dada movement. An artistically unformed, found item from serial production is exhibited; this clearly shows that the temporal sphere of production and completion of an artistic commission is converted into another temporality, i.e. that of developing a concept. The concept of exhibiting a serially produced object here not only allows to defer the work process; another displacement/enmeshing. The 'product' the artist chose is placed into an 'alternative' temporality by the fact that it becomes part of an artistic concept.

Even when artists use prefabricated products in their artistic work, as in Duchamp's *Fountain*, or order them, the question of the time used in shaping and changing the material remains an important focus of artistic practice. At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, Richard Serra for instance explored the problem of material change in interaction with the aspect of the temporal using the apparatus of film. The film *Hand Catching Lead* shows Serra's hand trying to catch pieces of lead, which are deformed in ever-changing ways. As soon as the pieces of lead have fallen, however, the filmic process is completed. In this filmic work, Serra negotiates the problem of the sculptural process by drawing an analogy between the filmic and the sculptural process, but refrains from using film either as an illustration of the artistic event or as an illustration of its result (Bering, 1998, p. 42). This shows how the dialectics between the material deformation in the course of a sculptural process and the temporal quality of the cinematic frame is formed. Serra writes, "the concern of new film has moved from content, literary content and narrative time, to such films in which time (the time of making such films) is equalized. This newly found interest in time is not just an illusion of content, i.e. the viewer does not simply become a subject in relation to an object (as is often the case in theatre today), but, on the

contrary, experiences the time and place of subject and object simultaneously”³ (Serra, 1990, p. 79). The optically perceived phenomenon of frame by frame movement forms a self-referential temporal structure of the medium, while the process of deforming lead in itself functions as an element of external reference. The sculptor’s hand is not only understood as movement, it simultaneously symbolises the work process as the falling piece of lead is deformed.

Similarly, the project *Eine Einstellung zur Arbeit/ Labour in a Single Shot* focuses on the performative act of work processes. The project was initiated in 2011 by Antje Ehmman and Harun Farocki, and implemented in 15 cities (Bangalore, Berlin, Hangzhou, Mexico City, Moscow, Tel Aviv amongst others) with workshop participants (*Labour in a Single Shot*, 2021).

The project investigates work, loosely defined – it remains unclear whether this refers to paid or unpaid, material or immaterial, traditional or contemporary work. Ehmman and Farocki ask participants to capture and introduce a certain work atmosphere within two minutes. These two-minute shots of the world of work are then placed beside or on top of each other in digital space, much like a simultaneous image that represents several scenes in a unified space. With a click, viewers can enter the workplace and watch particular work processes – of a barber, a dog trainer, a textile worker, a market stall operator, a dancer, a writer, a riding teacher, a butcher etc. What is exhibited is not only the choreographed steps of work, but also tools, atmospheres and the manner in which collective activities form at the workplace. The diverse workplaces are in different geographic locations. The possibility to zoom into these locations via the Internet archive and thus to connect them to each other not only allows the artists to show and illustrate the singularity and specifics of each work process, but also to experience a form of collectivity on the recipient side that is created through the figure of work. The simultaneous image is here understood as an ensemble of reflection, one that not only composes a unified image of landscapes and architectural spaces, but also assembles different rhythms, temporalities, dynamics. A window into the world of work is opened in order to re-materialize it and free it from the abstract subsumption manifest in statistical numbers. In fact, what becomes possible here is to experience the temporal and spatial horizons of work in all their diversity, but in their commonality, too. The work creates a kind of stage upon which work reveals itself in its performativity because the insight we are granted has to be understood as a section of a longer choreography. The ‘demonstrated’ skills, which are often marked by their repetitive character, reveal realities of work that are sometimes anachronistic in the light of one’s own experience. For, Ehmman and Farocki say, “in some African countries a whole family subsists by farming a piece of central reserve. In many countries of the EU, farmers live by leaving their fields fallow, which they are paid for, and which is checked via satellite imaging” (*Labour in a Single Shot*, 2021).

3 Translated by B. Pohl.

Filming production processes in a single two-minute shot means that they are not deformed but represented as sections. The temporal simultaneity in the representation of different work practices is ensured by the digital grid of the Internet archive and corroborated by the similar duration of screenings. Starting at any given place, viewers can place themselves in the everyday environments of their contemporaries. This creates a reality of work that allows us to shed our own constellations of work-protagonist and imagine ourselves in other rhythms. For a minute or two, we experience the moment of action of a different working environment. The viewer's experience reveals a local context but also allows for abstraction due to the form of simultaneously appearing on the stage of the Internet archive. As the chorus of workers in their own respective practices perform the motion sequences that are executed in the course of processing material or intellectual production in intervals of different lengths, this allows for an analytical perspective on the choreographies of movement.

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Introduction

The Unrelenting Search for ‘Alternative’ Temporalities

Questions of time and concepts of temporality have increasingly been moving into the focus of current research. A broad timeframe is covered in the publication *Temporalität in Kunst und Kunsttheorie seit 1800* [Temporality in Art and Art Theory since 1800], edited by Thomas Kisser in 2011. It reflects and discusses the problem of time in images across epochs – by analysing the role of time in the visual concepts of Titian, Rembrandt, Watteau and Friedrich, by discussing the phenomena of disintegrating and compressed time around 1800, or for instance, by reviewing forms of time in photographs and modern cinema. The issue of presence and materiality is also the focus of an anthology edited by Juliane Engel, Mareike Gebhardt, and Kay Kirchmann in 2019, *Zeitlichkeit und Materialität. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf Theorien und Phänomene der Präsenz* [Temporality and Materiality. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Theories and Phenomena of Presence]. The publication conceptualises manifestations of temporality and materiality in terms of a cultural and socio-scientific empiricism and theory formation, and approaches these issues from different perspectives. In her recent book *Art, History, and Anachronic Interventions since 1990*, Eva Kernbauer proposes a detailed study of the aspect of the contemporary artistic practice’s contribution to the discussion and conceptualisation of history. Kernbauer argues, but also puts up for discussion, that analytical instruments of anachronism like (para)fiction, contrafactual history, testimonies, ghosts and spectres of the past, utopia, and the ‘juridification’ of history allow for a form of knowledge production that not only contributes to creating a historical awareness, but generates spaces for political action.

The list of quoted publications could continue, but it would be a fairly long one, for the subject of the nature and conception of temporality is ultimately at all times a topical one. The present anthology links up to previous and current research. Its aim is to concentrate on ideas of temporality in artistic, architectural, and filmic practice in order to understand, first, how the artistically articulated idea forms the temporal refugium by being articulated,

but by doing so also de-constructs the current patterns of temporality within society and proposes 'alternative' concepts of temporality.

Considering one agrees that the currently dominant means of representing social, and thus also temporal, references to reality ostensibly come in the form of graphs, tables, and algorithms, which forms of temporality are then accentuated, and which are missing? Reflecting on time, but also conceptualising and presenting alternative conceptions of temporalities reopens the option of the fictitious, the possible, and the imaginable. This option, however, also offers another window, precisely the one which allows one to put our own ideas and wishes into play. The 'different' dramaturgies of the temporal reveal the various intensities and rhythms which the body, materiality, and situation-dependent experiences are enmeshed in.

In fact, the requirements of standardisation in our present society are designed in the field of the digital, because this is an area in which major investments are currently being made. The questions of algorithmic possibilities, of logistic networks, and of information priority are studied exhaustively. There is a possible temporality that depends less on spatial integration. How quickly does someone react to information, when does one take the decision to click, to buy, to recommend, to communicate, etc. Where do you pick up the ordered article, who do you meet on ZOOM, who do you arrange to meet in a chat?

In this time of fluid information that is disrupted by clicks that themselves constitute information for the construct of individual preferences, daily life is deeply absorbed and dominated by networks of information. Reading, shopping, commenting, teaching, paying invoices, all on the Internet. This form of communication and information not only conditions the conception of our temporal structures, it also has a strong influence on our aesthetic and discursive experience.

In his book *Retropia*, Zygmunt Bauman diagnoses the manner in which the accelerated pace of contemporary society makes it difficult to establish direct relationships between cause and effect. Therefore, he argues, it becomes difficult to feel certainty regarding the consequences of our actions.

“We live in an era of breaks and discrepancies, an era in which everything – or almost everything – is possible, while nothing – or practically nothing – can be confidently tackled; an age of causes that follow their effects and effects that look for their causes with minimal and ever-shrinking chances of success; an age in which seemingly tried and tested means are losing (or exhausting) their usefulness at an increasing pace, while rarely going beyond the design stage in the search for replacements – and doing little more than finding the remains of Malaysia Flight 370 Airlines” (Bauman, 2017, p.187).

The Volume

The contributions of the present volume are arranged with respect to the figures of community, 'realities' of life, work processes, and the medium. The reflections of historical and contemporary positions assembled here trace conceptions of temporalities in the context of artistic practices on the one hand, and on the other hand jointly articulate and express the shifts and differences that arise from the respective temporal contexts of the examined works of art, architecture, and film. In the 1960s and 1970s, the search for the situational, processual and actual moved the artistic and theoretical field. Contemporary practices explore and discuss the role of the anachronistic, the question of the influence of the transience of one's own corporeality on the rhythmization and construction of artistic work, the question of the performative gesture of the sonic, and the relationship between the individual and the collective that emerges on the basis of the concept of the chorus. Other contributions examine media-specific time organizations and forms, in particular the documentary practice of early amateur film, but also the organizational form as well as the relation between nature and architecture in urban space.

The analysis and reflection of various approaches enable the reader of the publication to delve into situation-specific settings and to contextualise and examine the question of how temporality initiates action and structures perception, weaves itself into these structures, and thereby affects our bodies, our senses, our communication, and shapes our present time. It is time temporality should be negotiated in a playful and interventionist way in order to regain control of it, or to achieve other experiences or insights through its variations. Time to pose questions about temporality and to discover specific characteristics and influences.

Community

In their contributions, Katalin Cseh-Varga and Iris Laner address the issue of community: how it is formed as well as its constellations and subversive practices. While Cseh-Varga looks back into history and traces communication channels and networking strategies between art protagonists from Western Europe on the one hand, and Central and Eastern Europe on the other, Laner applies herself to interpret and analyse three contemporary theatre productions in which the figure of community is embodied by the chorus.

Cseh-Varga uses three cases to discuss the tendencies of artistic practice in the 1960s and 1970s, when the search for the topical and the moment-rooted also induced the protagonists of opposing political regimes to venture into more intense exchanges. In her text, she sketches the activities of the *Galerii Sztuki Najnowszej* [Recent Art Gallery] in Wrocław as well as the endeavours of art critics and proponents Stanisławski and Dan Häulicǎ to intensify contacts with the West.

Iris Laner on the other hand analyses the figure of community on stage: she explores three contemporary theatre plays – *The Hamilton Complex* by Lies Pauwels, *Woyzeck* by Ulrich Rasche and *Pendulum Choir* by Fred Debrock, and asks how community in the form of the chorus is constituted, and which dramaturgic means are used to show the mechanisms of its de-construction. The chorus is conceived as a temporally limited formation in which the relationships between the individual and the group are in alternate interplay.

Work Processes

Barbara Reisinger and Ana Hoffner's contributions to the second chapter discuss the artistic works of Robert Morris and Anna Daučíková, in which methods and conceptual frameworks of the works reflect on and reconfigure the issue of the composition of temporal orders. Reisinger describes how Morris's decision in his work *Blind Time* to execute a series of drawings with his eyes closed emphasizes the question of productivity and processuality. On each sheet, Morris records the task formulated in advance, an information that consequently enables us to read the 'deviance' that developed in the work process. Contrary to an assumed progression of skill in the course of time, the drawings do not become more accurate. Morris's writings indicate that in art itself a kind of resistance is formed. This resistance, the so-called error, can thus be interpreted as valuable information that is exposed as a result of the process itself.

Ana Hoffner studies the application of anachronistic approaches in the artwork *33 scenes* by Anna Daučíková, with a focus on the issue of post-Soviet trauma and memory. Hoffner argues that Daučíková's poetic practice of anachronism allows for a structural analysis as well as an articulation of the implied problem of heteronormativity that historiography poses. In doing so, Daučíková's practice addresses the uncertainties of totalitarian historiography, its techniques of producing difference as analogy and deploying events as chronological shards without narration. The artist also explores the emergence of desire, sexuality, and observation in history.

Realities of Life

The question of how the circumstances of one's own realities of life and the temporalities they are based on are woven into the fabric of artistic practice is debated in the third chapter of the book. Ksenija Orej studies the aspect of temporality in Tomislav Gotovac's performances, deciding to include his 'later', hitherto less-known performances in her analysis – performances featuring rather restrained bodily actions that are in opposition to an active and dynamic body and allow for inertness and falling. The focus lies on the body staggering, falling, breaking down, vibrating. Orej raises the question whether such

dizzying, meditative, and crazy actions change the states of the acceleration or compression of time we experience, enabling us to become more aware of the oscillations of our own bodies.

Dariia Kuzmych explores time by tracing, marking, playing with and reproducing it, Ann Cotten writes. What is at stake is reflecting the forms of using time and their application. One of the instruments the artist uses to study time, according to Cotten, is her own production space, the studio, which continuously changes over the course of days and weeks as a virtual and real workspace. Besides this, however, the artist's own physicality, the study of theoretical writings addressing the phenomenon of temporality, for instance *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger, as well as her own cultural experiences, also provide points of reference for the exploration of time.

The Medium

The questions addressed in the last chapter of the volume are how time can be 'arrested' or documented, how the medium itself conditions the perception, but also the production of temporality, or how plant life in the built environment can reveal other temporalities.

In 1833, the world of botany was shaken by a small sensation: plants from London arrived in Sydney – they had survived the long voyage without water or fresh air. The miniature glass and wood greenhouse constructed by Nathaniel Ward – also known as "The Wardian Case" – created a microclimate that managed to foster growth independent of exterior temperatures (cf. Grotz and Lack, 2021). The plants survived, and the architectural innovation also revealed a 'new' temporality. The text *Time Sphere. Plant Life as Part of Architectural Design* by Anamarija Batista and Waltraud Indrist reflects and illustrates how plants become parts of architectural concepts in Modernity, what form of temporality they introduce, and how they invade 'contemporary' formations through selected case studies. The authors discuss the transformation caused by greenhouses and the manner in which modern architects, including Zdravko Bregovac, Hans Scharoun and others, incorporate plants and botany in their design processes. They also focus on the contemporary role of plants with regard to now abandoned and thus 'empty' architectural sites by studying the artistic works of Katerina Duda and Igor Eškinja.

Sarah Lauß offers a meticulous study of the filmic practices of amateur filmmakers with a special focus on early travel film, offering insights into cultural-historical contexts of amateur filmmaking, but also referring to the role of amateur film in the culture of memory. The selected example is a film from the Austrian Film Museum, a film recording a trip of the Austrian Touring Club to Budapest and the Hungarian Puszta in 1931.

In the last contribution to the book, Kristina Pia Hofer discusses the video installation *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* by Elizabeth Price (2012) as a work by a politically engaged, feminist artist who looks for experimental, non-teleological ways of recalling into mem-

ory the lingering effects of the gendered division of labour in accumulative capitalism by sonic means, in particular rhythm. The essay explores the manner in which Price utilises use of the sound and rhythm of a variety of performing bodies (ranging from Gothic tomb sculptures to the seminal 1960s pop group *The Shangri-Las*' singers Mary Ann and Marge Ganser) for “enfolding/unfolding” historical narratives that challenge historians' concepts of temporality.

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COMMUNITY
WORK PROCESSES
REALITIES OF LIFE
THE MEDIUM

Katalin Cseh-Varga

Temptations of Actuality Stories from Central and Eastern Europe

The term “actual” and “actuality” appeared quite a few times in relation to the art scenes of central and eastern Europe¹ during the 1960s and 1970s situating it within the cultural space of Europe. Europe’s separation by an Iron Curtain was an artificial act, while both East and West of that particular Curtain experimental art pursued similar goals and had equivalent ambitions: that of being up-to-date. Art historian Klara Kemp-Welch (2018b, pp. 5–6) characterized the experimental art of the time with the spirit of connectivity. In her book *Networking the Bloc. Experimental Art in Eastern Europe, 1965–1981* (2018) Kemp-Welch basically argues for a parallel analysis of nonconformist art across geographical and political boundaries. This approach suggests that there were multiple centers as well as origins of contemporary and modern art the production and distribution of which deserves equal attention.² There had been many variations of modernity and modernism across time and space that, for instance, curator Nicolas Bourriaud named altermodernism, meaning “the Modernism of the others, a worldwide spread of distinct but related Modernisms” (Smith, 2009, p. 14). One variant of altermodernism was offered by the socialist state. Reformed communism, many east European leaders believed, could be a real competitor of Western modernity, and could offer a real, better alternative to the capitalist way of life (Dragostinova and Fidelis, 2018, p. 579). In Hungary for instance, by the late 1950s a specific mixture of Soviet-type modernization and the culture of Western modernism emerged. This of course had its equivalent in the fine arts under the name “*korszerűség*” (“modernity”). The “progression” continued well into the 1970s when the most recent achievements of semiotics, psychology, sociology and neo-constructivist art served as the milestones of a progressive socialist visual culture (Hornyik, 2018, pp. 113–114). Periodicals, like literary journals or magazines of photography, were platforms of intellectual debate discussing,

- 1 As suggested by Beáta Hock (2018a, p. 7), I use the categories of “central” and “eastern” Europe mostly as geographical signifiers with a small “c” and “e”. Capital “C” and “E” are only applied when the ideological and/or political connotation of the terms “Central” and “Eastern” are to be highlighted. The same logic applies, in my opinion, when talking about “Western” and “western” Europe.
- 2 See also other research projects on the subject of decentering modernism (Tiampo 2011; Elkins 2010).

for instance publications of the western youth counterculture or the media theory of Marshall McLuhan, that underlined the open-mindedness of reformed socialism.³ Exemplary cases of promoting socialist modernity as a competitor of Western modernism are for instance cultural diplomacy and the selection of artists for foreign “export” that contoured the framework of mobility (Bódi, 2018). Most experimental artists found their own way of navigating between East and West – also in terms of modernity. If publications, traveling or institutions coordinated by cultural politics did not match artists’ creative ambitions, they repurposed existing places or media. Neo-avant-garde artists melted physics, chemistry, linguistics, sociology, critical theory, and philosophy into a challenging new art with a new world view. Art historian Éva Forgács (2016, p. 171) recognized this “new *Weltanschauung*” in “artwork[s that] had to attest to critical thinking and open up a wider field of reference at the same time.” Criticism, but especially references, could be most effective if the knowledge of artists was current and if their information resources were part of an actual international circulation.

In his foreword to Tomáš Pospiszyl’s *An Associative Art History. Comparative Studies of Neo-Avant-Gardes in a Bipolar World* (2017), art historian Sven Spieker addresses the aspect of temporality in writing the history of eastern European experimental art. Although belatedness and asynchrony are still associated with the art of the region, Spieker (2017, pp. 7–8) supports Pospiszyl’s approach to discuss art from East and West *synchronously* and *in dialogue* with each other while not burying the polarized constellation of the Cold War. Spieker (2017, p. 9) argues “that Eastern Europe, even during the time of its geo-political isolation, never stopped being a part of the European *Kulturraum* [...]” Cultural production in real socialism, given the progress-orientation of socialist modernism, was in many instances happening parallel to the developments in the arts in capitalist countries. Many artist-run spaces and artists received newest issues of the magazine *Flash Art* or the program of de Appel Art Center⁴ and in turn sent out their own newsletters and program sheets.⁵ Attached to the history of one important hub in Wrocław is the 1978 visit of Canadian experimental artist Michael Snow. Two years later he returned together with his band CCMC to tour across Poland (Reznik, 2014, p. 335). Hubs, correspondence, mobility and publishing, the four structural pillars of present essay and that of actuality, all fought against a backward image of (neo-avant-garde) art from behind the Iron Curtain.

From the 1960s on it seemed that culture was happening at the same time everywhere. This was the case because the 1960s were the decade of an obsession with communication and there has been no geopolitical limitation to this exaltation. The cybernetics of the 1950s theorized technology, media and society as organically entangled and this view was carried on into the practice of mail art. Influential books such as Norbert Wiener’s *The*

3 See e.g. *Helikon. Világirodalmi Figyelő*, (1), 1976 and *Fotóművészet*, (2), 1972.

4 Correspondence of Július Koller, Július Koller Society, Bratislava.

5 See e.g. the IRAG materials in the Klaus Groh Collection, University of Bremen, Bremen.

Human Use of Human Beings (1950) and Jürgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson's *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (1951) both argued that social life was a system of communication and that within this system the individual was a key element as well as a system for itself (Turner, 2006, pp. 52–53). Marshall McLuhan, who explored human communication and media as cultural products in the 1960s, drew inspiration from these cybernetic ideas. To McLuhan the human body and mind was embedded into the global circulation of media systems, including the television, the radio and the computer (Turner, 2006, p. 53). In countries of the Eastern Bloc mass communication and visual culture was part of socialist modernity and progress (Hornyik, 2018, p. 126). McLuhan's writings and theories were thoroughly analyzed in cultural journals.⁶ Mail art, a system for artistic communication, was part of this international *Zeitgeist* since it was not only a creative platform, but a lifestyle that grew together with the urge to exchange.

The philosophy of mail art, that information should not be limited in scope, seemed to be the source of Klaus Groh's interest in eastern European contemporary art and of producing the anthology *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa* (*Actual Art in Eastern Europe*, 1972). Groh, an art historian and art educator, mail art artist and art collector, was based in the West-German Oldenburg. By the end of the 1960s he got interested in correspondence art and in 1969 established his own contact art network, the International Artists' Cooperation (IAC). In the midst of the mail art fever he began to distribute art-related information to an expanding network of which central and eastern European artists became a part (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, pp. 128, 130–131). The same year when *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa* was published Groh (1972, p. 754) explained his interest in eastern European art. To him "all people around the world are equipped with the same mechanisms of sight, thinking and acting."⁷ Groh (1972, p. 754) argued that there are parallels between the art worlds separated by the Iron Curtain, and that artists from state socialist countries should not be viewed in the shadows of Western and capitalist countries.

This "false" separation of Europe into socialist and capitalist units was, to put it a bit extremely, not even ideologically adequate. Beáta Hock (2018b, p. 95) drew our attention to how the volume *Art beyond Borders. Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe* (2016) uses the phrase "communist Europe" in its title. Hock highlights that the book favors the expression "communist Europe" over "communist eastern Europe" and underlines hereby that socialism is part of the common European history which reaches back to the interwar period and even farther. The belief in an egalitarian society, Hock argues, continued to exist on both sides of the Iron Curtain well after World War II. What *Art beyond Borders* pushes to the fore is the feeling of unity in times of division. It is not only this retrospective gaze on Cold War histories which sees socialism as a uniting force, but art events from the time themselves. In 1962, 1963, 1965 and 1968 the Italian art critic, curator and art historian

6 See e.g. *Fotóművészet*, (2), 1972.

7 All translations from German and Hungarian into English were provided by the author.

Enrico Crispolti organized the exhibition series *Alternative Attuali* (*Contemporary Alternatives*) in L'Aquila. A glimpse into Crispolti's biography explains that the exhibition series had a focus on international socialism: the curator had personal ties to the Italian Communist Party and to important figures of the Moscow nonconformist art scene of the 1960s such as Mikhail Kulakov and Ilya Kabakov – both artists were represented in *Alternative Attuali*. “Attuali” in the exhibitions' title and Crispolti's involvement in the organization of the Venice Biennale additionally prove an interest in most recent art (Franetovich 2019). *Alternative Attuali*, on the one hand demonstrated the differences in how progression and contemporaneity were significantly shaped by ideological centers such as Moscow and New York, but on the other hand it still aimed for the unification of art scenes across political borders.

Beyond international socialism, global communication and the drive to produce actual art, we can detect another understanding of “actuality” that is reflected in *immediacy* and *direct experience* in and through art. From about the 1960s event-based art became increasingly important across Europe and beyond. Series of actions that broke with socio-cultural, aesthetic taboos and traditions replaced static institutionalized artworks. Examples reach from the shocking actions of the Wiener Aktionismus (Vienna Actionism) and the first Hungarian happening with its reality montage to Fluxus concerts and festivals in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland. In the spirit of processuality which was acknowledged as a part of international happenings and Fluxus (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, p. 58; Bishop and Dziewanska, 2010, p. 212), the Czech artist Milan Knížák founded in 1963 the group/social organization, *Aktuální umění* (*Actual Art*, from 1966 referred to as *Aktual*) which abandoned static forms of artistic expression and intended to shake up the “indifference and emotional apathy of modern man” (Fowkes, 2020, p. 47). The artists of *Aktual* worked against conventions of art production and presentation, and carried on their activities in the urban setting involving passers-by to join a collective experience of art turned into life. Knížák's aim was pedagogical and equipped the participants of his artistic actions for more awareness as well as to make their lives prepared for the battles in modern society (Pospyszil, 2017, pp. 56, 61). *Aktual* is an example of how to indicate change through the here and now of being and acting together. Knížák's art project stresses actuality as a cultural component which had a universal importance in Cold War art worlds.

Actuality had its own locations and strategies and, as the examples sketched above have shown, was a wandering phenomenon crossing borders. Artists needed places, like clubs and studios, to gather and to get into conversation. Enthusiasm for communication resulted though in exceeding the framework of these hubs. This happened through correspondence between like-minded cultural players or through the aesthetic approach of mail art. Correspondence was for art enthusiasts the first choice to get involved with colleagues abroad. Further resources of international inclusion in the spirit of actuality were the circulation of people and information. Traveling artists and networkers, and the publications they produced, both in closed and distance reading, disclose the breadth and complexity of contemporary art in eastern and central Europe.

Current essay investigates how the phenomena of being-up-to-date traveled the place and mirrored the specific idea of modernity in state socialisms. Balancing between liberal permissiveness and communist progression determined the scope and variety of artists' and personalities' connectedness to each other and to the idea of being actual. It is central when analyzing the synchronicity of international art scenes to have a clear understanding of one main paradox: that of holding on to socialist values and that of blinking West. This neurotic⁸ balancing, was to art historian Edit Sasvári (2018, p. 10), a utility pragmatism ("*haszonelvű pragmatizmus*") that on the governmental level alternated communist ideology from around 1956. Giving up the Marxist-Leninist ideal of socialism ended up in the condition of "doublespeak" ("*kettős beszéd*"): the synchronous equivalence to the Soviet Union and to Western relations. The case studies from across Poland and Romania will reflect on the locations and strategies of contemporaneity through a discussion of the hub, correspondence, mobility and publishing. This discussion will shed light on being in the midst of the events of the day (*Zeitgeschehen*) and the refreshing potential of the here and now. Latter will be discussed on the example of the Wrocław-based *Międzynarodowej Galerii Sztuki Najnowszej* (*International Recent Art Gallery*, IRAG) which was located in the apartment of Polish artists Romuald and Anna Kutera between 1973 and 1975. The Kuteras turned their home into a mail art center and housed a collection of contemporary art. The IRAG was basically a hub for get-togethers and an inspiration for artistic interventions that offered immediate connection with experiment tightly linked to art happening elsewhere (Markowska, 2014, pp. 258–260). The section on correspondence will focus on the Polish "art diplomat" and museum director Ryszard Stanisławski. Stanisławski lived the privileged life of a truly "contemporary" individual already in the 1950s through his well-established network of private and official contacts. His position in the Polish Party administration had a positive effect on the internationality of his career. To investigate the accentuated role of actuality in Stanisławski's life, I will take a look at his correspondence regarding the Print Biennale in Tokyo from the years 1972, 1974 and 1976. My final take to explore "actuality" as a formative factor of the central and eastern European art scenes will be an attempt to combine open-mindedness and publishing as mutually inspiring activities. The multifaceted Romanian art critic and art historian Dan Hăulică was between 1963 and 1989 not only the editor in chief of the influential cultural and literary magazine *Secolul 20* (*20th Century*), but through his travels and information networks "a strange messenger of [international and national] books and museums" (Pleșu, 2014).⁹ Despite actual and political borders that dominated everyday life and world narratives, *Secolul 20*, in alliance with Hăulică's personality, represented a medium which navigated between geographies to challenge its readers' knowledge of contemporary culture (Hăulică, 1971).

8 Sociologists Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller (1987, p. 277) called real socialism a "neurotic society".

9 All translations from Romanian into English were provided by I.-G. Anastasiei.

The actual art of most state socialisms was based on the paradox of navigating between socialist and capitalist culture and politics and is therefore debated in a local and global context. An egalitarian and equal society, its anticapitalism and the belief in serving a common good were the socialist ideals that stood the test of time. But beyond these noble goals there was a real socialism which did not result in “a guaranteed and planned society.” (Fehér and Heller, 1987, p. 43) Even the Marxist humanists of the 1960s had to learn that real socialism could not be democratized from above (Grim Feiberg, 2008). With a retrospective look it becomes clear that the tendency to become actual was determined by socialism as a vision and by socialism as a burden. The four pillars of this essay, hubs, correspondence, mobility and publishing, are researched before this background. Most hubs represented loopholes in real socialisms that operated within the systems’ institutional framework but produced contradictory cultural outputs. The same alternative “production” was true for correspondence if practiced by experimental artists. Correspondence, mobility and publishing of Party-supported personnel or other influential figures of public life, as we will see, have with their international activity impersonated a socialist modernity that combined both the First and the Second World’s cultural norms.

The Hub of Here and Now. Glimpses from the History of IRAG

The path of Polish history following the revolution of 1956 aligns in many respects to the utility pragmatism of navigating between the capitalist and the socialist world orders. The reforms of the peaceful “Polish October” were not prevented by Soviet military intervention like in Hungary. Poland acquired a relatively independent position because the Soviet Union even accepted “non-Soviet institutions: private rather than collective agriculture and a legitimate place for the Polish Catholic church” (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, p. 273). Previously practiced totalitarian politics was corrected in favor of a more liberal approach under the leadership of Władysław Gomułka (1956–1970) as the head of the Polish United Workers’ Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) (Markowska, 2014, p. 258). Still, the fluctuation between permission and repression continued to exist. The outside image of socialist Poland as a well-functioning stable state was the common perception (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, p. 347). Opening towards the West reached another level under the Party leadership of Edward Gierek (1970–1980). Like his predecessor, he could also be called a reformer who tried to stimulate Polish economy with foreign loans. Also, under Gierek “art institutions were able to function with relative independence” (Fowkes, 2020, p. 72). In line with the logic of central and eastern European doublespeak though, this new, free, international Poland, the authorities in cultural politics were cautious about subversion and a potential alliance of artists coming from other communist states (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, p. 177). Klara Kemp-Welch (2018a, p. 282) highlighted the actual pseudo-liberal feature of cultural politics in Poland: neutralized artists in state-supported “independent” galleries

could live their experiment which was often apolitical and not too radical in form and content. The Polish case demonstrates that not only artists were inventive, but the Party bureaucrats too, who could establish illusory autonomy.

Before in 1980 a truly political struggle for freedom and democracy began under the flag of the Solidarity movement (Fowkes, 2020, p. 103), the modern and contemporary art scene flourished throughout the 1970s. Art journals such as *Przegląd Artystyczny* (*Art Review*) and *Projekt* were important artistic resources for people of art coming from neighboring socialist countries (Piotrowski, 2016, pp. 214–215). Independent and semi-independent, art spaces spread across the country – “Poland undoubtedly served as a hub for Eastern European international exchanges throughout the late socialist period [...]” (Kemp-Welch and Freire, 2012, p. 10).¹⁰ Wrocław was a place where a culture in search of actuality found a fruitful ground. By the mid-1970s industry was booming, new buildings arose from the ruins of World War II, the city was also home to international festivals and renowned theaters. Art from Wrocław was well-established nation-wide (Stasiowski, 2014, p. 336). The city could also become a breeding ground for the neo-avant-garde, art historian Anna Markowska (2014, p. 259) speculated, because it counted as a social experiment. Different social groups were living literally next door to each other in “blocks of flats built in the 1970s”. Instead of “class” conflicts, dialogues arose between different cultural backgrounds. Before this local background and the nation-wide pseudo-liberalism, one can also detect a number of artist-run and semi-official spaces in the city of Wrocław – a number of them addressed contemporaneity in their name. One of these artistic forums was Zdzisław Sosnowski’s *Galeria Sztuki Aktualnej* (*Current Art Gallery*) founded in 1972. Sosnowski promoted the role of the artist as an individual with managing and organizing skills, and his goal was to spread the word about “new art” in order for it to reach a broad audience (Markowska, 2014, p. 263). The most prestigious of these art spaces was the *Galeria Sztuki Najnowszej* (*Recent Art Gallery*, RAG) that between 1975 and 1980 resided in the building of a student club, the Pałacyk Academic Culture Club. The student, “independent”, milieu was an ideal stance to work internationally, while being located both in the domestic and the global art world (Stasiowski, 2014, p. 336). In space and in time, between these two initiatives there existed an *International Recent Art Gallery* (IRAG). The same artists wandered between these spaces: they were students of the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Wrocław, regularly attended the studio of the pedagogically challenging Alfons Mazurkiewicz and regularly attended international festivals the city was home to. The latter was especially important to establish and to maintain contacts (Markowska, 2014, pp. 278, 260).

It is no surprise then that Anna and Romuald Kutera created the IRAG based on mail art activity as an essential medium of the 1970s of staying in touch and of acting on the international level. In their own apartment the Kuterans founded “an open peer-to-peer

10 See also Kemp-Welch (2018b, p. 118); Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2020, pp. 79–80) mention “artist-run galleries and ephemeral project spaces”.



1 Romuald Kutera, Anna Kutera and Lech Mrożek (from the left to the right) in the *Międzynarodowej Galerii Sztuki Najnowszej*, 1974, Wrocław.

network”, Markowska (2014, p. 260) writes, “that would bring together artists scattered all over Europe, and also emphasize [sic!] the importance of cultural strategies and the functioning of art.” (Fig. 1) Further Markowska (2014, p. 260) underlines two features of the apartment-gallery: that of being international and that of being an institution. To her both worked subversively since the IRAG had no official support and was basically a counterinstitution outside of Party bureaucracy. The third essential component in the name of the gallery was its up-to-date nature which placed the IRAG in the international circulation of contemporary art. In 1974, Anna and Romuald Kutera managed to organize a group exhibition of artists from Brazil, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the United States in Warsaw (Markowska, 2014, p. 260). This show not only demonstrates the breadth of the Kuteras’ contact art¹¹, but it reveals the ambition of Romuald Kutera to establish a “centre [sic!] of global art” in Wrocław (Markowska, 2014, p. 260).

11 Here I am referring to the Hungarian origin of the term contact art (*kapcsolatművészet*) as used by artist György Galántai (1997).



2 Anna Kutera, *Prezentacja*, 1975.

The atmosphere of the “here and now” was visible before, during and after the IRAG’s short existence and could especially be retraced in the art of Anna Kutera from the early to the mid-1970s. To Anna Kutera, her and her husband’s organizing activity and the management of an artist-run international network primarily based on mail activity, were just the first steps of creating a hub. More important than creating exhibitions were the interventions in everyday life, the transformations of art into reality (Markowska, 2014, p. 286). Immersion, contact and direct interaction became extremely important in the

discussed period. Already in 1973 Anna Kutera fostered conversation with passers-by in the street when asking them about the time and greeting them in *Dialog* captured on film (Markowska, 2014, p. 289). The aesthetic aspect of the piece was not obvious to those who were invited for this brief dialogue. Kutera's intervention in the streets of Wrocław caught up in the casualty of everyday life. This was not the last time the artist opened up her art to co-presence and co-creation. The immediacy of the relationship between the artist and "the people" continued to be a core element of Kutera's art (Cseh-Varga, 2019). The main protagonist of her photo-actions entitled *Morfologia nowej rzeczywistości* [*Morphology of New Reality*, 1975] was a young boy playfully engaging with Kutera, with others and different objects. The warmth of the serial images in which the artist and the boy are fooling around with each other personalized art and drifted away from the formal objectivity of conceptual art. The introduction of a "casual" person into the artistic process and into the artwork itself was an intimate moment, yet the essence of narrowing the border between artist and viewer. Based on the idea behind *Morfologia* Anna Markowska (2014, p. 287) describes the artworks as a "platform for optimal contact". A more verbal form of contact was the subject of *Prezentacja* [*Presentation*, 1975] and the series *Sytacje stymulowane* [*Stimulated Situation*, 1978]. In the case of *Prezentacja* an informal chitchat occurred between Czech, Hungarian, Yugoslav, Polish, Danish artists and Anna Kutera. (Fig. 2) Here, being together in the same time and space and forming a community consisting of equal partners were essential and deepened the actuality which began with the IRAG project (Markowska, 2014, pp. 288–289). The urge for actuality elevated the IRAG and the artists around it to actors of the international art world who also often acted locally with an emphasis of the "relationship[] between time and place" (Guzek, 2014, p. 327). The here and now, e.g. addressing people in their habitual socio-cultural settings, could transfer the spirit of connectivity of the art hub into people's lives.

Contemporaneity in Correspondence

Ryszard Stanisławski's capacity as a networker with a "legitimate" position to be actual, in a certain sense, impersonated the projected liberalism of the previously sketched Gomułka era. The renown Muzeum Sztuki (Art Museum) in Łódź, under the leadership of Stanisławski, also was an institution where "[t]he most liberal cultural policy applied" and where "the steady extension of its collection with international works of art" was everyday practice (Hartmann, 2016, p. 204). The promotion of international modernism and the internationality of collaborations (Hartmann, 2016, p. 205) was also grounded in the biography of Stanisławski even before he became the director of the Muzeum Sztuki in 1966. He was educated in Paris and later in Warsaw. Between 1951 and 1955 he worked at the Państwowy Instytut Sztuki (State Institute of Art) – the most influential art institution in Poland. His editorial activity at that time already covered relevant works of art

from capitalist countries. In 1955 he acquired a ministry position where, for the first time, Stanisławski dealt with issues of international art exchange, cultural relations and the coordination of projects, exhibitions and scholarships. Until his appointment in Łódź he had numerous positions in which his task was to foster exchange between the global and the Polish art worlds. From 1959 Stanisławski was even in charge of Polish contemporary art's moderate commercialization through DESA, the Foreign Trade Company (Ojrzyński, no date).¹² His memberships in juries, committees and associations across the globe, west, south and east of Poland, was numerous (Ojrzyński, no date). And unsurprisingly, his position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych) and DESA secured him free and uncomplicated travel abroad. This was an exceptional position for art historians during the 1950s and 1960s.¹³ Romantic ties to Polish sculptor Alina Szapocznikow, a Holocaust survivor who lived in Paris, and the friendship with the Polish ambassador in France, that strengthened Stanisławski's privileged position already in the early to mid-1950s (Toniak, 2009). The combination of personal and professional relationships built the foundation of Stanisławski's embeddedness into the contemporary art worlds of the 1970s – by then one invitation for participation in international art projects followed the other.¹⁴ The correspondence I highlight here is based on such an invitation.

At the time when Stanisławski was already the director of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, he was approached to contribute to the selection of Polish artists for the 8th International Biennial Exhibition of Prints in Tokyo to be held in 1972 at the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. The letter of the General Secretary Masayoshi Homma dated March 15, 1972 addressed the director formally in his official capacity.¹⁵ Stanisławski responded to the letter in a similar tone with the names and addresses of five Polish artists he considered best in the contemporary print scene of his country. The actuality of the print "movement" is mentioned in the closing section of Stanisławski's reply.¹⁶ Correspondences related to the ninth and the tenth edition of the Print Biennial are also recorded. (Fig. 3) In 1974, on the occasion of the ninth Print Biennial, Stanisławski even made it to Tokyo as a member of the international jury. His knowledge in the global world of print was challenged since "[t]his time, the selection of the exhibiting artists [was] made not on the national level but on the three regional level: 1) Asia, Australia, and New Zealand, 2) Europe, Africa, and Middle and Near East, 3) North and South Americas."¹⁷ The response shows how open Stanisławski was to broaden his geo-cultural horizon of art, since he asked Homma to arrange his arrival to Tokyo a few days before the scheduled jury meetings so that he could visit museums and get in touch

12 Material collected and translated from Polish to English by K. Łabowicz-Dymanus.

13 Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus' assumption based on (Toniak, 2009).

14 Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus' assumption based on the materials found in the Stanisławski collection. Archive of the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences (AIAPAS, *Zbiory Specjalne Instytutu Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk*), Warsaw: Archiwum Ryszarda Stanisławskiego, 1842/1/1/1-10.

15 Masayoshi Homma's letter to Ryszard Stanisławski. March 15, 1972. Ibid.

16 Ryszard Stanisławski's letter to Masayoshi Homma. April 25, 1972. Ibid.

17 Masayoshi Homma's letter to Ryszard Stanisławski. April 4, 1974. Ibid.

05/064/787/72

25 Avril 1972

Monsieur
Masayoshi HOMMA
Secrétaire Général de la Biennale Internationale de Gravure
c/o The National Museum of Modern Art
3, Kitanomaru-koen, Chiyoda-ku
T O K Y O - 102

Cher Monsieur,

je vous remercie de votre aimable lettre concernant la 8-me Biennale de Gravure à Tokyo et, d'accord avec votre demande, j'ai le plaisir de vous proposer l'invitation à cette exposition les artistes suivants:

- Mr. Andrzej LACHOWICZ
Wrocław, ul. Młodych Techników 9 m.12
- Mr. Lucjan MIANOWSKI
Kraków - Nowa Huta, Osiedle Uroczę Bl.5 m.7
- Mr. Maciej MODZELEWSKI
Warszawa, ul. Kawcza 60 m.29
- Mr. Antoni STARCZEWSKI
Lodz, ul. Rzgowska 52 m.27
- Mr. Jerzy TRELIŃSKI
Lodz, ul. Gdanska 117 m.10

J'espère que les artistes mentionnés ci-haut représenteront bien les mouvements actuels de notre gravure et je vous prie, cher Monsieur, de bien vouloir agréer mes meilleurs souvenirs et l'expression de mes sentiments les plus distingués.

R. Stanisławski
R. Stanisławski
Directeur

with Japanese artists. That letter also proves Stanisławski's mobility across borders, since he mentions returning to Europe not in Łódź, but in Geneva.¹⁸ In 1976 the Polish art historian was appointed a correspondent for the region Europe and Africa to recommend a list of 15 artists for selection to the tenth Print Biennial. He shared this position with the French René Berger and the Dutch Eduard L. L. de Wilde.¹⁹ Eight of the recommended artists resided on socialist soil, the rest were based in Spain, West Germany, Switzerland, Italy, England and Ireland.²⁰ Although no African artist made it to Stanisławski's list, he again demonstrated a balancing act of contemporaneity between the ideologically defined East and West. It was not only him who was recognized as one of the most influential gatekeepers of contemporary and modern art in Europe, but he did not miss a chance to take advantage of this position in supporting the career paths of many eastern and central European artists. This act of balancing between divided art worlds and the gatekeeper function he shared with Dan Hăulică.

Mobility, Publishing and Contemporary Culture

In Romania, a harsh dictatorship following the Stalinist model lasted until 1965 when Party leadership was taken over by Nicolae Ceaușescu. The beginning of this new regime was “characterized by a relative wellbeing, a slightly relaxed censorship, richer intellectual life and a certain degree of modernization of education” (Avram, no date, p. 31). The seemingly liberal order of the young Ceaușescu regime, as art historian, media theorist and curator Horea Avram (no date, p. 31) stresses, still maintained in a centralized system. Hardliner politics returned in 1971 when Romania tread the Chinese and North Korean path of national communism and totalitarianism. The 1960s and 1970s were those decades when cultural players, especially intellectuals, sounded their relationship with the communist ideology and were, like in many other socialist states in the eastern European region, looking for modes of “coexistence with the historical evil”. Some intellectuals made their liaison with the Party. This decision was either driven by pragmatism or by the true belief in the core ideals of socialism. Others, of whom some were artists, did not want to interfere with politics and developed their own countercultural existence within the framework of real socialism in Romania (Avram, no date, p. 31).

In the 1980s the development of Romania became asynchronous with the Soviet reform directives represented by *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Ceaușescu did not let go the project of cultural revolution: totalitarian practices survived until the fall of socialist regimes. And those artists who looked for autonomy mostly distanced themselves not only from politics, but from socialist institutions as well (Fowkes, 2020, pp. 111–112). This latter ten-

18 Ryszard Stanisławski's letter to Masayoshi Homma. April 14, 1974. Ibid.

19 Kenji Adachi's letter to Ryszard Stanisławski, March 18, 1976. Ibid.

20 Ryszard Stanisławski's letter to Kenji Adachi. April 25, 1976. Ibid.

dency aligned with many cultural phenomena going underground in the final decade of communism. Even in Romania, “the art of the 1980s expressed an ironic distance towards reality and was infected by the cynicism of a post-utopian age” (Fowkes, 2020, p. 103).

The period between 1965 and 1971 was especially rich in terms of meeting actual art from all over the globe. International exhibitions on North American painting, sculpture or Italian art were organized in Romania that weren't without an echo. Biennales of constructivism and those dedicated to young artists welcomed Romanian artists. Collaborations with the well-known Richard Demarco Gallery introduced western European audiences to achievements in art from Romania (Avram, no date, pp. 31–32). A cross-reading of the leading art journal *ARTA (Art)* shows how the magazine followed the thread of a more liberalized Romania and synchronized its reporting with the capitalist art world. While the socialist undertone was never completely suppressed, modernism, cybernetics, kinetic art and computer art appeared on *ARTA's* pages. Horea Avram (no date, p. 31) wrote: “Although well written and free of any political references, these articles were actually in line with the enthusiastic tone of the official socialist policies, focused on ‘progress’ and the technological and scientific ‘revolution’ (enthusiasm shared also by Western countries, albeit without any socialist undertones).” The so-called July Thesis of Ceaușescu introduced the era of “militant socialist art” as the pattern to be followed (Fowkes, 2020, p. 73), when in the rest of to Eastern Bloc the art scenes and exchanges intensified (Kemp-Welch, 2018b, p. 215). Although cultural politics in Romania after 1971 dictated a disciplined art scene, there were personalities and media that represented ideas of mobility and Romania's synchronicity with global art. Such a personality was Dan Hăulică, and the medium was the journal *Secolul 20*.

Hăulică was an active academic, a renowned art critic and exhibition organizer from the 1960s onwards. He was a patron to artists like Horia Bernea, Geta Brătescu and Ion Grigorescu and helped them to begin their careers. His knowledge of historical as well as contemporary international art was admired. In the 1960s he even participated in a television series dealing with the art and culture of Italy, France and Spain.²¹ The encounter of a wider public with art and culture was important to him and designed his exhibitions in alliance with this social cause (Cârnelci, 2014). Historian and art critic Theodor Enescu (1981) described Hăulică as a historian of culture, whose interest was never strictly limited to the arts, but to all possible aspects of culture as *Secolul 20* under his editorship showed. Hăulică proved himself to be a talented maneuverer in cultural politics when he demonstrated to prioritize cultural achievements over political decisions. He could also be regarded as an agent of moderate modernism unfolding over the course of the 1970s and 1980s (Cârnelci, 2014). While in his writings constantly looking back on the past, Hăulică was a personality of the *contemporary* Romanian art scene whose perspective was strolling from one cultural landscape to the other. Many times, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s he was characterized as open-minded and

21 Available at: <https://www.fundatiamaicabenedicta.ro/prezentare-Dan-Haulica.html>. (Accessed 21 September 2020).



4

The editorial team of 'Secolul 20', extract from Secolul 20', Issue 10, 1977.

tolerant towards “the other” (Redlow, 1985). Hăulică’s two main bases were Bucharest and Paris – between these two metropolises he travelled regularly and uninterruptedly well into post-socialist times (Pleşu, 2014). As his essays published across the issues of *Secolul 20* show, Haulica had from the 1960s until the 1980s up-to-date information on exhibitions happening, for instance, in New York, London, Bordeaux, Ciudad de Mexico, Venice, Warsaw, Aachen and Kassel. The multifocal perspective and international attitude of *Secolul 20* was also settled in sporadic, but regular French and English language contributions. (Fig. 4)

When in 1981 Dan Hăulică was elected as president of the Art Critics’ International Association (AICA), Enescu celebrated this as a confirmation of Romanian culture equal to Western culture. When appreciating Hăulică in an article about the prestige of criticism, published in *ARTA* in 1981, to Enescu this high-ranking position was accomplished mainly through *Secolul 20*’s international standards. According to Enescu (1981, p. 24) the journal always presented Romanian culture as part of universal culture. The scope of topics was broad and interdisciplinary, including visual arts, theater, architecture, aesthetics, music, cinema, choreography, science and occasionally history (Vişan, 2015; Spiridon, 2017). Even the design of the magazine supported its contemporary, open-minded character – this harmonization of form and content was of course thanks to Hăulică’s care for detail (Enescu,

1981). The first issue of *Secolul 20* came out in 1961 as a “magazine for universal literature”. Twenty years later, in 1981, besides a focus on literature, the program was complemented by arts and “dialogue of cultures”. The latter stresses not only interdisciplinarity, but an interest in getting in touch, interacting with the other on the pages of the journal. While under the editorship of Marcel Breslașu (1961–1965) the socialist, Marxist-Leninist mission of *Secolul 20* was openly communicated to the readers (Spiridon, 2017), the next editor in chief Dan Hăulică (1965–1993) managed to balance communist Party expectations with openness towards international, or how he tended to use it “universal”, culture. When summarizing the “Hăulică-era” in the life of *Secolul 20*, its current editor in chief Alina Ledeanu, acknowledges that from 1965 on the magazine functioned like a window to the West. Translations bypassed censorship that did not echo communist values. This could happen not only because of the influential national and international positions of Hăulică (Vișan, 2015), but because the journal came into being by an order directly from Moscow that supported the establishment of world literature magazines across the Eastern Bloc (Spiridon, 2017). And the final reason for the relative freedom and exceptional status of *Secolul 20*, says Ledeanu (Vișan, 2015), was the Romanian adaptation of doublespeak. Having a journal embedded into international contemporary culture was part of a political strategy to “demonstrate to the West the fact that Romania is a democratic, permissive, open country.” This project seemingly succeeded, to name one international appreciation of many, since in 1987 *Secolul 20* received the “Award for the Best Literature and Art Magazine in the World” during the UNESCO Biennial held at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (Vișan, 2015).

To close the final case study of present essay, I am briefly summarizing Hăulică’s editorial statement published in *Secolul 20* in 1971 under the title “Dialectica universalității” (“The dialectics of universality”). Hăulică looked back on the 10-year history of the journal with pride since *Secolul 20* managed to hold together cultural geographies of different kind in the ideologically divided Cold War. By quoting Ceaușescu’s standpoint of the Party not being the supporter of isolation, Hăulică (1971, p. 8) highlighted the compatibility of national and universal values in culture. To the art critic it was essential to act in contemporary spirit and by crossing spatial as well as political boundaries. The reader’s service, as a social and cultural service, was a key objective of the journal. *Secolul 20*’s task was to advance critical and reflexive readership that could help individuals to navigate within contemporary culture, a panorama of which was offered by the magazine (Hăulică, 1971, p. 8). Interdisciplinary themes, Romanian art linked to global phenomena, were to be subject to this critical readership and represented the true dialectics of universality.

The story of actuality in state socialisms can be told as a panopticon of different art agents and their activities read through their local environments in synchrony with global phenomena. Self-management has been important in being up to date, like in the case of the Wrocław neo-avant-garde, where an art community created alternative centers for global art. Romuald and Anna Kutera not only collected and contacted artists from abroad, but created an atmosphere where art, in the form of direct experience, turned into reality.

Information exchange was crucial in times of information control. Correspondence was, besides meeting places, another medium of actuality – sometimes it was achieved by systematically built professional networks and cosmopolitan lifestyles (Stanisławski). Periodicals were also treasured sources of contemporary knowledge. When state-funded, like *Secolul 20*, they quite often mirrored the complexity of cultural politics that due to utility pragmatism could still support cultural dialogue and critical contemporaneity.²²

22 This essay was written within the framework of the Hertha-Firnberg project T 1074-G26 *Behind the Art-work. Thinking Art Against the Cold War's Polarity* (supported by the FWF. Austrian Science Fund.)

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Iris Laner

The Time of the Chorus

Temporal Organizations of Communities in the Performing Arts

Three actors with strained voices on a moving platform, 13 pubescent girls crashing a stage, nine darkly dressed guys attached to tilting metal frames: Three examples of artworks that seem to have little in common: Ulrich Rasche's sombre production makes use of monotone rhythms and moving stage elements in order to equalize the individual movement, expression and speech tempo of the actors. Lies Pauwels' colorful, loud arrangement walks the fine line between the conformist needs and the individual aspirations of teenagers trying to find their identity. Cod.Act's atmospheric installation develops a kinetic sculptural machine in order to make an arrangement of human voices reacting to the shared exposure to gravity. Although these pieces address diverse issues, apply various styles and are directed towards different audiences, they still show a shared interest. They all explore the conditions which make a group of individuals appear as a social entity on stage. They examine the performative space between individual and communal engagement. Since a chorus¹ is – roughly defined – a temporally restricted formation of several individuals who engage in a common action, it can be used as a concept to shed light on such explorative processes. By applying this concept it can be argued that the three performances develop and reflect new ways of arranging and staging a chorus. (Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3)

Within the performing arts, traditionally as well as recently the chorus is employed as a dramatic means to explore dimensions of creating a social entity on stage as well as to negotiate issues of sharing space and time. The engagement of the players is situated between individual and joint action. Arranging, conducting and staging a chorus is therefore always linked to the question of how, where and when a group of people becomes a community, how a side-by-side becomes a body, how separate events become one. In

This paper was written as part of the research project “Aesthetic Practice and Critical Faculty” (T 835), funded by the Austrian Science Fund within the Hertha-Firnberg programme.

- 1 Since I am focusing on theatre and performance art, I will not elaborate on the musical concepts of chorus or choir. It is interesting to note that the dramatic and the musical chorus share the same ancient history, since in Ancient Greece the theatre developed based on musical and, later, lyrical performances. The chorus in the Western tradition, too, has its roots in music and dancing. Cf. Reisch, 1899.



1 Ulrich Rasche, *Woyzeck*, Theater Basel.

the present contribution I want to elaborate on one aspect of this question which I not only think worthy of consideration, but also consider to be underrepresented in recent discussion: I want to focus on the moments *when* individual performances on stage become a communal performance, i. e. how, in the performing arts, a community is formed with respect to time. I will analyze Rasche's, Pauwels' and Cod.Act's artworks in terms of their temporal organization of communal performance. This means that I will look at the ways in which they address time and deal with temporality when it comes to incite an interaction of performers that aspires to go beyond a side-by-side of individual actions. I will consider the form of condensed performances of several actors that become one communal performance with the help of choric formations. Since the pieces that I will analyze work with distinct concepts of temporal organization and time in general, they present different answers to the question when several individual performances start to form a chorus. These different answers are connected, as I will argue, with differing approaches, not only to understanding acting together on stage. They also create perspectives that allow to reflect on being and existing together. What happens on stage mirrors versions of communality that are linked to the off-stage life-world. The chorus displays temporal approaches to social formations that may be rewarding when thinking about the relation of time and community in general. They address the possibilities and potentials of arranging a time for communal engagement. At the same time, they hint at the challenges and also



2 Lies Pauwels, *Der Hamiltonkomplex*, Schauspielhaus Bochum.

at the problematic aspects of such arrangements. Although they do so by creating a safe space of pretence, they are not autonomous or cut off from what is happening off-stage.²

In my paper I will therefore demonstrate how the analyzed pieces explore the temporal conditions, possibilities and limits of communal performance. And, as I will show in the course of this exploration, they – partly implicitly, partly explicitly – make a statement about the importance of taking into account temporality in re-thinking being, existing and living together on a more general level, i. e. the way in which artistic practice touches upon, reflects and affects everyday practices.

Times and Choruses

The chorus has a very long tradition in the performing arts. It enters the stage in Ancient Greek poetry. While its original meaning refers to the place where the round dance takes place in the city, it increasingly becomes a term for the chanting or recitations that support,

2 I do not believe that the political impact of art lies in its being cut off from the life-world. Rather, it is exactly the potential of relating to the life-world differently that makes art an essential critical tool. In my understanding, Adorno (2004) is wrong when he insists on holding on to the autonomy of art in order to save its political impact.

comment on or counterpose a leading part in a lyric or, later, tragic performance. Reisch underlines that in the 6th century BC the personality of the individual members of the chorus starts to lose its significance (cf. Reisch, 1899). Where earlier versions of the lyric chorus aimed at supporting the leading singer, the tragic chorus started to form a distinct character that assumes a specific dramatic role. From this moment until the 4th century BC, the tragic chorus either acts as the representative of the public in general or refers to certain parts of society. It is linked to a collective that exists in the life-world (Fischer-Lichte, 2005, p. 49). Thus, every chorus has a character that more generally refers to society, or more specifically to a defined group like young women or old men (Nübling, 1998, pp. 86–87). While there is disagreement on whether the chorus in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides speaks with an authoritative voice (Dhuga 2011) or on the contrary, expresses marginalized views (Gould 1996), there is a shared conviction that it constitutes a supra-individual entity. To underline its non-individual, unnatural character, members of the chorus are sometimes masked: The visible diversity of the players is erased. Accordingly, the chorus develops as a distinct character that clearly differs from other characters, formally as well as in terms of dramatic function.

While the chorus's significance slowly decreased after the heyday of Ancient Greek tragedy, it has a revival in the 20th century performing arts. Initially, this revival is linked to a growing interest in the political impact as well as the pedagogical potential of the theatre. Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre introduces the chorus as a dramatic tool to alienate the audience (cf. Baur, 1998) with the ultimate aim of initiating a social transformation. The search for an anti-illusionistic theatre recognizes the potential of the chorus in introducing an artificial character. Moreover, the concept of the chorus is attractive to those who are skeptic of the sovereignty³ of the individual. Those who believe in the revolutionary power of collectives are fond of the idea that action is not restricted to the individual.

Since the 1960s, plays with choric elements (by Heiner Müller, Elfriede Jelinek, René Pollesch or Botho Strauß) have come to enjoy great popularity again.⁴ Directors like Einar Schleaf or Christoph Marthaler engage in testing different choric constellations. Rather than underlining the political impact of the chorus, choric passages and performances are now employed to express criticism on an ontological level, too. Considered as a dynamic, hybrid formation situated between individuality and communality, the chorus in a post-classical framework appears as a transitory union of individuals. These individuals are regarded as fragile and exposed to transformation as well:

- 3 While the Enlightenment era strongly believes in the power of the subject to reflect upon and transform its own conditions of being in the world, this idea is criticized by different discursive strands in the late 19th and the early 20th century. Towards the end of the 20th century it is famously taken up by poststructuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism.
- 4 Fleig speaks of a "Renaissance des chorischen Theaters [renaissance of the choric theater]". Fleig 2000, p. 97. Cf. also Kuberg, 2015 who is interested in the chorus in contemporary plays.



3 Cod.Act, *Pendulum Choir*.

“Das Heraus- und Hervortreten des einzelnen aus dem Chor, sein Zurücktreten in den Chor zeigen szenisch vielleicht am anschaulichsten, wie ein heutiger Chor sein kann und seine Mitglieder seine Einheit und Eigenheit erfahren und reflektieren. [...] Denn es geht dabei um die Bedingungen und Kriterien, Ich und Wir zu sagen, Ich und Wir zu sein. Der Chor wird in seiner individualitätsstiftenden, der einzelne in seiner gemeinschaftsbildenden Kraft sichtbar“ (Kurzenberger 1998, p. 23).⁵

The chorus is taken to be the symbolic place and the symbolic moment the individual as well as the community are constituted without ever persisting as such. The individual is born where and when the community is formed and vice versa: There is no individuality without communality and there is no communality without individuality. All in all, it is a growing skepticism regarding the coherence of characters and the homogeneity of identities that makes the chorus an interesting concept for the performative arts today. Individuals as well as communities are regarded as fluid and polyphonic. Therefore, the chorus can refer to a defined or undefined social entity, or, just as well, to the many voices of a single character.

5 “The most vivid enactment of what a chorus today can be, and how its members experience and reflect its unity and singularity is when members step out, stand out from the chorus, step back into the chorus [...] In fact what is at stake here are not the conditions and criteria of saying I or we, of being I or we. The chorus emerges in its individualizing, the individual in its community-forming force.”

The dynamics between the determination of the individual by the community and the determination of the community by the individual comes with a double-edged threat. On the one hand, the empowerment of the community can go along with massification. Where the idea of unity is too dominant, there is a risk diversity is lost. Individuals may degenerate into faceless elements within a well arranged, functioning constellation, losing their potential to develop, transform or change. Or they may dwindle into a stereotyped community. On the other hand, the emphasis on differences between members of a community can prompt an imbalance. The more dominant individuals may take control and determine others. They may stand out as the leaders of the community. Individuals who show a strong tendency to lead risk to subordinate others. In spite of these threats, arranging a chorus has to be sensitive of the fact that „[n]icht Uniformität, sondern das Oszillieren von Eigenem und Kollektivem ist das Ziel der Chor-Arbeit“⁶ (Heeg, 2006, p. 20). The oscillation that forms the center of choric work marks the potential as well the challenges of arranging, conducting and staging a chorus: The performances of the players have to appear as a joint action, i. e. not as one action, but as a joint endeavor. The players as well as the audience have to feel that the individuals on stage form an entity and that their assembly is neither arbitrary nor forced. Arranging a chorus therefore means to walk the fine line between individual and communal expression (cf. Radatz, 2006).

Temporal arrangement plays a crucial role in walking this fine line. Rhythm is often used as a means to organize time. It can be either set by an outer source, like music or atmospheric sound, or it can be produced by the players by stamping, breathing etc. Rhythm allows for synchronization. It can shape a feeling of continuity, since it is based on repetition. Repeating and returning on a bodily, an expressive and a verbal level are also important temporal elements of choric work. Starting, pausing and ending as the framing conditions turn out to be a great challenge with regard to staging a chorus.

The temporal arrangement aims at allowing the players to go beyond their individual performances and merge with others without losing their respective stance. This balancing act, which has a clear temporal restriction, allows a chorus to address different aspects of community that are closely related to the temporal organization of the choric constellation. When a chorus is organized as a continuous, reiterating entity, it can come to form an atmospheric mass. The appearance of a group of people as a mass based on a logic of repetition has little creative power. Processes of steadiness normally overrule processes of othering. When, however, the problems of synchronizing, the moments of peeling off, the challenges of othering in the circles of repetition are emphasized, the chorus comes to represent a polyphonic, hybrid, maybe transitory community. To unravel the connection between temporal organization and the reflection on individuality and communality, I will now analyze some artworks that explore the temporal peculiarity of the chorus and choric elements.

6 “[The] aim of choric work is not uniformity, but the oscillation between individual and collective.”

Choric Times

The first artistic approach to the chorus and choric elements I want to investigate for its temporal organizations of community in the performing arts is Ulrich Rasche's production of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* at the Theater Basel in 2018. In Rasche's staging of *Woyzeck*, the chorus is introduced as a variable constellation of performers that nevertheless displays a striking formal continuity. A changing number of actors – two to seven – form temporally restricted choruses at several stages of the performance. The chorus appears as a momentary coming together and thus as a dynamic entity. It does not consist of a pre-defined or fixed group of people. Rather, throughout the performance the chorus is constituted and dissolved repeatedly. Accordingly, time proves to be the central structuring element of the chorus. It is not only the moments of starting and ending that are crucial in this respect. Synchronization in terms of a temporal adjustment of the characters' movement, speech and expression turns out to be at the center of the performance's dramatic logic.

The reduced stage design provides the setting for the choric formations: a moving platform occupies the stage. The giant turntable is rotating at slightly variable speeds throughout the entire performance. In addition to its constant rotation, the platform is tilted from time to time. The bodies of the performers move on the turntable and are oriented towards the fourth wall. They do not look at each other. Rather, they show a common orientation towards the audience. Apart from the verbal level, the characters' interaction is restricted to moving close to, away from or in alignment with each other.

Generally, there are two dominant factors that prescribe the tempo of the characters' movement and speech: the turntable and the sound design. There is sound and music throughout the performance. The sound design comprises rhythmic beats and atmospheric music. Since stage and sound design are responsible for the temporal structuring of movement and speech, they provide the key conditions for the formation of the chorus: Faster rotation either makes the performers disappear from center-stage or forces them to adjust their own tempo. The beat of the rhythmic sound determines the walking speed and organizes the entry of speech.

Besides the temporary choric constellations, there is also a superordinate aspect of chorus in *Woyzeck*: All players are dressed alike. They all wear black clothes, generating a similar look. On the surface the different characters appear related. They also act and speak in similar ways: especially in the first half of the production, they show little variation on an expressive level. They speak with strained voices and move alike.

Since there is no direct physical interaction between the performers in *Woyzeck*, individual aspects of temporal organization are bracketed entirely. The temporal impulses for choric formations come from external factors like the turntable and the rhythmic sound and music. With respect to the idea of individuality and communality, we may say that community is taken to be a dynamic entity that is constituted as a reaction to external impulses: incidents or events. Rasche's momentary, eventful chorus neither serves as a

reference to the public, nor as representative of a defined part of society. Rather, it invokes the idea of a syndicate or community of suffering. The individuals adjust to some kind of cosmic or, at least, objective⁷ time. Their shared reaction to external impulses gives the impression of uniformity. The momentary constitution of community on stage therefore seems to come with a dissolution of diversity.

In her production *Het Hamiltoncomplex*, Lies Pauwels introduces a different interpretation of chorus and community. She therefore also implies other modes of temporal organization in order to motivate joint action on stage. *Het Hamiltoncomplex* premiered at HetPaleis in Antwerp in 2015. It puts 13 pubescent girls and one bodybuilder on stage. The production starts with a classic choric formation: The girls wear the same grey school uniforms. They stand next to each other and sing a canon. After the song has ended, Gift, one of the girls, introduces herself and all the others. She appears to be the leader of the chorus and keeps explaining safety regulations. Already the first minutes of the production expose the concept of chorus in *Het Hamiltoncomplex*: The chorus enters the stage as a given social arrangement that attributes specific roles to its members: there is the role of the leader and there are the roles of followers. With respect to temporal organization, the performances of the individual characters are synchronized. Synchronization, however, works differently here than in *Woyzeck*. The time of the individual is not subjected to objective time. Rather, it is slowly adjusted to a rhythm produced by the assembling group of people. Rhythm, which turns out to be an important element of structuring time, just as in Rasche's version of the chorus, is thus not produced by an external source. It is created by the chorus itself during its very formation. This means that the chorus reacts to and produces the temporal conditions for joint action at the same time. Subjective time⁸, one might say, starts to become intersubjective⁸ in the very moment of acting together. The chorus produces its own time, it organizes itself with respect to time.

Due to these intersubjective conditions of realization, Pauwels' chorus turns out to be a very fragile entity. Every member of the chorus has to adjust their individual tempo and movement. Otherwise the choric formation would fail. Despite its very fragility, the set-up for the chorus is stable: It is given from the very beginning of the performance with a clearly defined number of members: 13. Visually it is marked by the identical outfits of the performers and their choreographed appearance on stage. Temporally it is characterized by the active synchronization of movement and speech as well as the creation of a genuinely choric tempo. Although the chorus is introduced as the central element of the production in the first scene of the performance and the conditions of its existence are exhibited, it is continuously attacked as a fixed constellation throughout the performance. Following

7 Augustinus provides a conceptual framework for differentiating between objective and subjective time. Cf. Augustinus, 2014.

8 For a phenomenological conception of intersubjective time see Merleau-Ponty, 2012. From a phenomenological point of view, time is a dimension of first-person experience. See also Husserl 1964. Merleau-Ponty highlights that being in the world means to co-exist with others, being physically exposed, receptive and vulnerable. In being with others, it also turns out that time is not restricted to the subject.

the first rupture of the choric constellation right after the introductory canon, an adult who appears in front of the stage tries to restore order. He uses a police whistle in order to drown out the squealing. Shortly after he turns out to be the bodybuilder, a mentally and physically fit, morally upright man who works to control the raging girls.

Het Hamiltoncomplex treats the chorus in a somewhat paradoxical manner. On the one hand, the chorus is presented as prefigured form of communality, of being and acting together. Accordingly, it seems to fulfill a clear social function. On the other hand, the chorus is regarded as a fragile constellation which is based on the individual will of each member to partake in its formation. Whenever one or more of the individuals decide not to engage in joint action, the formation of the chorus is disturbed. It is not an external impulse that motivates joint action, but it is the will of the characters that allows or prevents being together in a well-adjusted, harmonious way. Community in *Het Hamiltoncomplex* depends on the individual, its needs, temper, and willingness.

Yet another approach to staging a chorus – and with it another concept of the temporal organization of community – is introduced by Cod.Act. The performance *Pendulum Choir*, which premiered in a former church in La Chaux-de-Fonds in 2011, presents the chorus as a fixed, stably arranged entity. A huge machine consisting of nine tilting metal frames occupies the stage. Nine performers are attached to the frames. Even more radical than in Rasche's production at the Theater Basel, Cod.Act creates a mechanical image for a stable choric constellation. The performers remain in their positions throughout the performance. They are not able to move. Rather, they are moved by the machine. They are tilted forward, backwards and to the sides. Each frame seems to have its own tempo and follow its own logic of movement. On the whole, however, the nine frames with the performers create the impression of a well-programmed choreography. The idea of an external source that provides the conditions for the formation of a chorus thus seems to be pushed even further than in *Woyzeck*. However, although the performers cannot move and are thus completely subjected to the mechanical time of the machine, they still have the power to intervene. Humming and singing are their means of actively participating in creating a choric constellation, clearly going beyond and sometimes even challenging the given order. This constellation is set in a mechanically controlled environment, but not totally determined by the tempo of the machine. The performers' voices sometimes seem to adjust to the mechanical time; at times, however, they seem to challenge it. At several points they begin to respond to each other rather than simply following the external impulses.

Pendulum Choir presents a version of a chorus that addresses the individual and intersubjective creative possibilities in a determining environment. Community is taken to be a predetermined given, a fixed and steady entity that depends on external factors. Synchronization does not seem to be necessary, since the members of the chorus have already been brought together in advance by the mechanical setup. Individual and intersubjective engagement, however, are regarded as powerful moments of expression within the strict communal framework.

Choruses and Communities yet to Come

Ulrich Rasche, Lies Pauwels and Cod.Act present three different approaches to temporally organizing, arranging and staging a chorus. While Rasche focuses on the moments when several individuals start to form an entity, Pauwels and Cod.Act concentrate on the moments when a given communal arrangement starts to dysfunction or even fails. Despite these remarkable differences, however, in all performances that have been analyzed, the dynamic between emergence and dissolution of choric formations is at stake. Objective time as a steady rhythm or movement produced by an external source is confronted with subjective time as the individual, changing, unsteady tempo of movement and speech. Intersubjective time appears as a temporal variation that takes the diversity of individual tempos seriously, but that nevertheless aims at constituting a shared temporal order. In *Woyzeck* and in *Het Hamiltoncomplex*, synchronization turns out to be crucial for constituting a functioning chorus. In *Pendulum Choir*, synchronization is not necessary since the members of the chorus are steadily linked to each other anyway. Therefore, the performance rather exhibits moments of asynchronous interaction within a given communal setup.

With respect to the idea of communality and its relationship to individuality that have been presented, the three performances show different approaches as well. In *Woyzeck*, external sources are treated as the primary condition of creating a community. Community is introduced as an externally forced relation of individuals. Individuality thus appears as the natural state of being: As soon as the individuals enter the stage, they have to adjust their tempo to the same rhythm and align their orientation. During their performance they are uniformed. If they fail to adjust, if they change their tempo, they simply disappear from stage. In *Het Hamiltoncomplex*, it is up to the individuals to fit into the given communal order. They have the option to stay on stage and revolt against a framework that is not created but seems to be prescribed. The communal order is not produced by external forces. It is simply there from the beginning in terms of established but unspoken rules of acting and living together. There are impulses that are directed towards supporting a uniformed form of being together. But they do not appear to be as efficient as those exposed in *Woyzeck*. Although *Pendulum Choir* is much closer to *Woyzeck* than to *Het Hamiltoncomplex* in terms of its aesthetics, formal arrangements and setup, it challenges the power and necessity of external forces to create and control community. The communal order here, as in *Het Hamiltoncomplex*, is given. But it is not given as implicit or explicit rules of being, acting and living together. Rather, it is given as an artificial framework that minutely defines the relation of the members of the community towards each other.

As already mentioned above, the chorus is a performative element that negotiates issues of being together. It addresses questions of how individuals and community relate to each other, of where and when two or more people start to form an entity. This problem not only concerns the (performative) arts. It is probably not necessary to state that the arts

have developed many ways of addressing and questioning our past or present rapport, not only with the intent to criticize but also with the aim of transforming the future. Accordingly, the performances I have analyzed can also be treated as a comment on current forms of being together, not only in terms of a critique, but also in terms of suggesting alternative ways of forming communities.

Choric formations and communal action on stage can be a very explicit way of forcing us to think about their relation to forms of being and living together off-stage. The production *Die Zukunft reicht uns nicht (Klagt, Kinder, klagt!)* by Thomas Köck and Elsa-Sophie Jach at the Schauspielhaus Wien in 2017, for instance, presents a chorus of adolescents that accuses the adult world of only thinking about their own time. *Die Zukunft reicht uns nicht* not only critically comments on current conditions of communality, but sketches a utopian image of thinking about different ways of establishing community. Being together here is envisioned as an intergenerational communality that spans from the past into the future. It invites us to reflect upon a community that is yet to come. In this respect, one might say, the chorus not only displays a temporal arrangement that is significant in thinking about the relation of time and community. Even more, it creates a temporal arch that reaches from the present of the stage performance into a (utopian) future. The impact of addressing the potential of the future in terms of what has not yet been achieved or of what is yet to come, especially with regard to questions of being and living together, can be understood by consulting Jacques Derrida (1994, 1997). Derrida frames democracy as something still to be realized. Although many political systems and parties believe to have established democracies, in his eyes, we should address democracy as a form of being and living together that is yet to come. Building a temporal arch spanning from the past and the present into the future, depending on the future, keeps on triggering reflection about more egalitarian, anti-hierarchical, diversity-affirming forms of communal being.

Coming back to the three performances that have been analyzed I want to close by sketching their critical and, maybe, also future-affecting potential: With the strong emphasis on synchronization in terms of an enforced conformity, *Woyzeck* paints a rather dystopian picture of communality. The choric constellations are dynamic in terms of being transitory. Rasche's conception of chorus, however, presents an idea of community that is fixed and determining, subjecting the individual to external conditions. The formation of community is framed as a process entirely distinguished from diversity. In contrast, *Het Hamiltoncomplex*'s version of communality underlines the differences between its members. Community is regarded as a tense and exciting, non-harmonious bringing together of individuals. Individuality is challenged by the communal framework, since following established rules and laws of togetherness requires departing from one's own needs and wills. Nevertheless, community is not entirely determined by the rules and laws that have already been established, it is open for dynamic development. Dynamic development is also a utopian motive that is addressed by Cod.Act. Here, community is sketched as a given framework that is open for internal transformation. Cod.Act's idea of community and the

dynamic between communality and individuality critically reflects on the conditions of being, acting and living together. Although the processes of building communal frameworks are not questioned, *Pendulum Choir* invites us to rethink the way in which we respond to and deal with the communal situations we are actually in.

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COMMUNITY
WORK PROCESSES
REALITIES OF LIFE
THE MEDIUM

Barbara Reisinger

Visible Hands Robert Morris's Blind Work

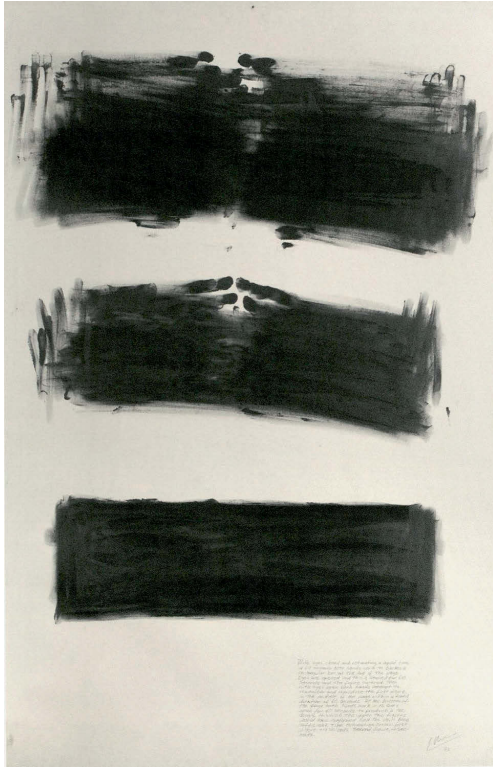
In June 1973, Robert Morris, an artist best known for his minimalist sculpture and often perceived as a hyperactive generator of artistic discourse, started a series of blind drawings.¹ On sheets large enough to register the range of movement of the artist's forearms, he worked with both hands dipped in powdered graphite or etching ink, touching the page and leaving imprints of his fingers and palms. (Fig. 1) Paragraphs of descriptive prose accompany each drawing and consistently reference the time span Morris set for each task. The written description concludes, almost invariably, with a record of the "time estimation error" relating to each task. Morris sets a time frame beforehand, and tries to accomplish his set task within an estimated interval, ranging from 30 seconds to 10 minutes. The "error" refers to the difference between his estimate and the time measured with a stopwatch.² The series, consisting of 98 drawings made in 1973 and several later installments dating from 1976 to 2015, is titled *Blind Time*, underscoring the crucial role of time for Morris's blind drawing procedure.³ However, the temporality of Morris's repetitive

- 1 I would like to thank Anamarija Batista, Hannah Bruckmüller, Sebastian Egenhofer, David Misteli and Caroline Schopp for their insights and comments on earlier versions of this essay.
- 2 Jean-Pierre Criqui quotes Morris on the procedure: "I always timed my work. I started a stopwatch, closed my eyes and began. When I finished working (eyes still closed) I estimated the lapsed time, opened my eyes and looked at the watch. I then recorded the discrepancy as a note or on the back of the drawing, later including it in the text I lettered on the bottom." (Morris, quoted in Criqui, 2005, p. 15)
- 3 The first set of 98 *Blind Time* drawings were made in the second half of 1973. Subsequent installments were less prolific and the exact number of drawings attributable to the series is unclear. There are some loose sheets and seven major series: *Blind Time II* of 1976, the installment that diverges significantly from Morris's usual approach, is an attempt to work with a blind woman that yielded 52 drawings and was not completed in the way Morris had planned. A third series was made in 1985 and included reflections on quantum physics and philosophy. *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)* of 1991 raised similar concerns as Morris penciled quotes by philosopher Donald Davidson onto the sheets. A fifth series of 1999, subtitled *Melancholia*, turned to autobiographical reflections, often citing Morris's childhood memories and experiences of loss that he blindly worked through in 15 sheets. Subtitles and a common theme are also characteristic of the last later installments, the *Moral Blinds* of 2000, and *Blind Time (Grief)* of 2009, the latter commemorating the victims and broader fallout of US aggression in the Middle East since 9/11 (Criqui, 2005, p. 14; Rose, 2011).

endeavor has yet to be analyzed in detail.⁴ The scope and sheer quantity of drawings pose a challenge to interpretation that has prompted authors to single out a few sheets for analysis and deduce the overall concept from these examples. In exhibition catalogues devoted solely to the *Blind Time* series, authors tend to provide an overview of all installments, and attribute the series to broader topics in Morris's work. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger takes "process, perception, memories" as themes that embed *Blind Time* into the artist's oeuvre (Tsouti-Schillinger, 2003, p. 9), whereas Jean-Pierre Criqui develops the underlying reflections of the drawings further as he delineates their "main dynamic principle:" a "dialectical play between seeking and losing the self, between the construction and deconstruction of personal identity" (Criqui, 2005, p. 14). My analysis aims to widen the focus to bring the implications of the conceptual framework of the whole series of 1973 into view. In a seemingly small but crucial methodological adjustment, I concentrate on the differences and commonalities between drawings to extrapolate from this comparative approach the significance of the larger series. This perspective shifts the discussion of the *Blind Time* drawings from Morris's almost solipsistic processes of self-reflection to a consideration of temporality, value, and exchange. My aim is to draw out the strange dialogical structure of the series as it unfolds in repetitive loops. I argue that Morris's procedure revolved around failures of communication, even before he took up an actual collaborative approach in the second series of *Blind Time* drawings. For the latter, he employed Adrienne Ash, a woman who was blind from birth, to do the drawings. This division of conceptualization and execution between the artist and his collaborator is prefigured in the way Morris executed the first series of drawings, in which he imposed a self-observational measuring regime upon himself. I connect these techniques of self-recording to the temporality of the post-industrial workplace and contextualize Morris's futile attempts to make his blind actions foreseeable within the model of the stock exchange as a set of processes that are largely unpredictable and uncontrollable for individual actors.

Morris's *Blind Time* drawings provide two measures of time: a projected time frame set for the task in advance, and a usually deviant estimate he takes with his eyes closed. The estimate is marked as an "error", a term that implies a right and a wrong way of measuring and recording time. The way the artist perceives time while drawing is marked as erroneous, and at the same time, his recording system presupposes this error. Even if Morris estimates correctly, an error of zero is recorded. Morris's recording technique sets up a division between the accuracy of measurement and, in relation to it, the deviance of feeling. Whereas the experimental setting – drawing blindly with both hands – appears to be a device for recording the body's blind potential, this potential is at the same time framed as deviant and inaccurate. The codification of Morris's estimates as "errors" characterizes

4 Pamela Lee's seminal study of temporality in sixties art mentions Morris's engagement with temporality only in passing and does not turn to his *Blind Time* series (Lee, 2004, pp. 223 and 254). In an earlier catalog essay, Lee briefly sketches the temporality of *Blind Time* as "contingent," meaning it depends on chance and other unforeseeable elements (Lee, 1999).



1

Robert Morris, *Blind Time I*, 1973, graphite on paper, 101,6×66 cm.

With eyes closed and estimating a lapsed time of 60 seconds both hands work to blacken a rectangular bar at the top of the page. Eyes are opened and this is studied for 60 seconds and the figure covered. Then with eyes open both hands attempt to remember and reproduce the first figure in the middle of the page within estimated duration of 60 seconds. At the bottom of the page both hands work with eyes open for 60 seconds to produce a rectangle to which the upper two figures should have conformed had the skill been sufficient. Time estimation error: first figure, +16 seconds, second figure, -2 seconds..

the entire 1973 series, and the numbers recorded on every single sheet purport to condense the inaccuracy of the blind body into measurable data. The concept of the “time estimation error” implies that a count of seconds captures the erroneous, unforeseeable effects that voluntary blindness and guesswork introduce into the controlled framework. Time operates in loops, as each drawing resets the stopwatch and restarts the experiment. Whereas my analysis of the first *Blind Time* series is guided by Morris’s self-observation regime, the notion of non-linear time serves as frame for my analysis. Informed by Morris’s writing and his engagement with George Kubler’s formalism, I examine the volatile and uncontrollable temporality in which *Blind Time* operates.

Blind/Divided: Recording a Fragmented Self

Morris had been intensely interested in the process of making throughout the 60s. His early sculpture *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961) is a paradigmatic example of his engagement with process. The box presents a somewhat odd approach to making

that Morris used several times in his “process-type” work.⁵ Rather than opening the past time span of production to the viewer’s present, the artist fragmented and isolated his process for later consultation. The box presents evidence of its own construction in two different forms, separated as sets of visual and auditory data, but arranged as if they were intrinsically related, as if the box had a story to tell and was speaking about itself. From inside the box, a speaker plays a tape recording of Morris’s wood working, the result of which inconspicuously sits in front of the viewer. The box thus seems to communicate, yet the message – the soundtrack the viewer hears – remains obscure: hidden within the finished object. The box appears mute, yet vocal about its own coming-into-being, Morris’s working procedure enshrined or buried within it. It shares this approach with the *Blind Time* drawings. Both works speak of their making in two different tongues. Instead of the soundtrack of their emergence, the *Blind Time* drawings provide a written narrative. Each drawing records traces of Morris’s hands along with a neatly penciled description of the task he tried to accomplish. Some of these tasks are simple, some move through different stages of sighted and blind attempts to achieve a certain shape or number of touches. Morris’s texts give the viewer directions on how to read his blind mark-making, and they do so more efficiently than the sawing and drilling sounds of *Box with Sound*. In the drawings, sequences of palm and finger prints conform to the described tasks or reveal the absence of visual control, and thus divergence from the set task. They display the results of a carefully recorded, estimated time span in which Morris partially relinquished control over his drawing process. Only after the fact, he (and we, the viewers) encounter what happened while his eyes were closed or blindfolded. Though legible to various degrees, the drawings point to obscurity: They are results of short intervals of darkness in an apparently fully illuminated world. In order to explore this peculiar blend of control and contingency, it is vital to take a closer look at the *Blind Time* drawings. In my analysis, I identify the divisions implied in Morris’s procedure. The isolation of touch from sight and the separation of language from bodily traces transform the seemingly unified process of drawing into a complicated, quasi-scientific refraction of artistic action. This refraction, I argue, is the hallmark of the 1973 *Blind Time* series. Through divisions of process and self, the drawings set up a system for self-observation and feedback that generates data about Morris’s supposed successes and failures.

Many drawings and tasks accomplished or attempted in the *Blind Time* drawings amplify the division between the artist’s oversight and his blind groping. Whereas the whole configuration of blindly executed tasks is embedded into the larger horizon of *visual* experience, two particular drawings introduce a short period of visual examination into the process.⁶ In the first of these drawings, two rectangles are stacked one above the other. The

5 Morris distinguishes “process-type” art works that make the process of making visible from “object-type” works that display finished products (Morris, 1993, p. 41).

6 In relation to all *Blind Time* series, Morris stated that he did not intend to keep sequences of tasks intact as he selected drawings to be kept and shown. He made many more drawings than were kept and includ-

caption informs the viewer that the results of an initial, blind attempt to feel out a rectangle with both hands were “studied” for 60 seconds, before Morris made a second attempt, blindly aiming for a more accurate shape and timing. Similarly, the second drawing (Fig. 1) has three rectangles: an initial, blind attempt at the top, and two replications of the first process, one made with eyes open attempting to reproduce the touches from memory, and the other showcasing the ideal outcome: “At the bottom of the page both hands work with eyes open for 60 seconds to produce a rectangle to which the upper two figures should have conformed had the skill been sufficient.” The impersonal sobriety of this caption is baffling. Morris weighs the insufficiency of his blind drawing skills squarely against a sighted – fully controlled, fully able – standard. With the desired result only achievable when in full visual control with an eye on the stopwatch, Morris has conceived a losing game for himself. He is required to work with his eyes closed over and over again, never quite able to achieve what he sets out to do.

Pitching the fully able against the voluntarily blind Morris is not the only game that the *Blind Time* drawings offer. Several other sheets put his right hand up against his left. One drawing has two equal rectangular areas taped off; Morris’s hands, first the right, then the left, have blackened their respective areas within an estimated time of 60 seconds. Of the two “competing” hands, one is in advantage: “I am right handed”, the penciled paragraph states. In other drawings, red and black ink are used to distinguish the marks of the left and right hand, and a time estimation error is noted for each color. Again, Morris engages in a competition with himself, and adds another level to the already complex set-up. He plays the parts of the all-seeing principal and the blind agent, and subdivides the part of the agent between his right and left hands.

Communication between the principal and the agent, the visual and the tactile is often set up for failure in the *Blind Time* drawings. Morris typically attempts to observe visual guidelines with his eyes closed. Memory and practice help his groping hands conform to guidelines that they cannot verify relying solely on their own faculties. Morris devised several strategies to help with the estimates and bridge the gap between haptic mark making and measuring time: In one sheet, he uses different motions, such as “touching, rubbing and stroking”, “as three methods of marking passed time.” In several others, he counts the strokes made in estimated time spans. In another, he holds his breath to measure equal time intervals. But none of these bodily strategies erase the time estimation error or the inaccuracies of the touches. However, there are some exceptions that demonstrate a more successful approach to tactile accuracy. Three sheets ostensibly diverge from the usually penciled or imagined shapes that Morris’s hands aim to adhere to. In these examples, he used taped outlines instead of drawn shapes to guide the touches. (Fig. 2) This tactile

ed in the series (e-mail to the author, May 31, 2012). About 50 drawings of the 1973 series are documented with consecutive numbering in the Leo Castelli Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. These numbers may not reflect the exact sequence in which the drawings were made, but appear to be a roughly plausible succession and development of tasks.



2
Robert Morris, *Untitled (Blind Time I)*, 1973, graphite, oil and pencil on paper, 90 × 118 cm, mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Wien.

Working with the eyes closed the attempt is made to tape out a circle and then blacken an area on both sides of the tape equal to its width within an estimated time lapse of 4 minutes. Time estimation error: -45 seconds.

guide increased accuracy. Able to feel out the shape, the hands were empowered to control the drawing process haptically. The fact that only a small number of drawings use taped shapes implies that Morris was not too keen on reaching “sufficiently skilled” results, but rather on finding a multitude of ways to elaborate the disparity between visually controlled actions and intervals without oversight.

Competition in a set-up geared towards one of the competing forces is a characteristic of the basic experimental structure of all drawings, and additionally a theme explored in some of the sheets. The almost consistent bias towards the visual and the accurately measured taints the scientific appearance of Morris’s experimental mise-en-scène. The data he produces, condensed into a list of time estimation errors, hardly offer any meaningful results. Rather than progressing towards more accuracy, the series reflects a somewhat absurd constellation: an artist testing his “insufficient skill” in dozens of variations. What, then, is at stake in these arduous repetitions, if it is not an accurate, non-erroneous outcome?

In her short reflections on Morris’s *Blind Time* series, Eve Meltzer points out the way the artist refers to himself (Meltzer, 2013, p. 105). Instead of using the first-person pronoun to describe his actions, his captions talk about “the hands” that work on sheet after sheet. While the blind Morris seems totally absorbed in the solipsistic task of focusing on his own movements upon the paper, the chronicling voice speaks of these actions not as a person’s intentions but as autonomous processes enacted by disconnected hands – as if Morris’s hands were objects, machines, acting of their own accord. The apparent insularity of the blind timespans in which Meltzer describes Morris as withdrawn from the world is at odds with his quasi-scientific tone. The attempt to objectify the blind experiments through description vacates the space of the self on which the artist supposedly focuses during his drawing procedure. The visceral density that infuses the imprints of groping and touching is voided when condensed into the number of seconds that the blind estimate deviated

from the set interval. Though Meltzer only hints at this disparity in what she calls Morris's Cartesian efforts, her depiction implies a stark contrast between the phenomenological fullness of Morris's bodily traces and the comparable neutrality of his handwriting and the use of language in *Blind Time*.⁷

These ruptures enacted in *Blind Time* are particularly striking when the tasks are complex and subdivided, like the competitions set up between both hands. Kevin Lotery draws an image of Morris systematically fragmenting his own authorship, "instituting a kind of multiplicity of authors occupying different times but paradoxically inhabiting the same body" (Lotery, 2020, p. 104). In the *Blind Time* series, we encounter traces of several voices and agents whose unity and coherence are under intense scrutiny. The drawings convey the impression that the artist does not speak as a whole, but rather challenges the coherence and agency of the physical and psychological entity that is perceived as an artist or author, as a source of ideas and actions.

Morris himself was an avid reader of psychiatrist R. D. Laing as well as phenomenological studies of the experience of the self.⁸ I suggest that the artist approaches his own self in a way that evokes the methodological concerns that Laing put forth in his study *The Divided Self*, published in 1960. The basic proposition here is that a psychiatrist may regard her patient either as an object or as a person (Laing's "existential phenomenology" essentially opts for the latter and fervently advocates an understanding of mental illness as meaningful behavior rather than irrational deviances that must be suppressed). As a person, the patient has agency, intentions and makes choices; but "[s]een as an organism, man cannot be anything else but a complex of things, of *its*, and the processes that comprise an organism are *it*-processes" (Laing, 2010, p. 22). The outline of this distinction throws Morris's artistic strategies into high relief. Though he does not quite study his own body as an organism – apart from an early EEG presented as a kind of self-portrait⁹ – he is consistently invested in the transformation of himself into an object of study, dismantling his own status as an authorial unity. Through pre-set tasks and systems, he removes his subjectivity from the process of making, either replacing himself with an object that appears as an agent, like *Box with Sound*, or reifying and depersonalizing himself, as the *Blind Time* drawings of 1973 propose. The rupture effectuated in the latter series encompasses both viewpoints laid out in Laing's methodology, and both perspectives are occupied by the same subject.

- 7 There are several earlier works that Meltzer refers to in which Morris portrays the failure to render the essence of himself, like a *Self-Portrait (EEG)* of 1963 in which he had his electroencephalogram taken while focusing only on himself. See Meltzer, 2013, p. 112. Another fragmented *Portrait* (1963) has eight gray bottles marked as blood, sweat, sperm, saliva, phlegm, tears, urine, and feces with no means for the viewer to verify the contents of the opaque vessels. Both works point to the impossibility of finding the portrayed individual in bodily traces and excretions, and at the same time comment on the relation between the artist and the viewer.
- 8 Maurice Berger highlights the importance of anti-psychiatric literature for Morris and points to well-annotated copies of Laing's books in the artist's library. See Berger, 1989, p. 157; p. 166, n. 55.
- 9 See Krens and Krauss, 1994, pp. 142–147.

Like the psychiatrists whom Laing criticizes, Morris seems intent on observing himself as an object. The reified artist is put forth as a set of two well-trained hands deprived of visual oversight but equipped with memory and estimation, and confronted with the person who authored the captions and conceived the experiment. Laing uses a Rubin diagram (an illustration of either a vase or two human profiles facing one another) to visualize the correlation between the psychiatric patient as object and person. Just like the image remains the same as we see alternatively either a vase or two faces, the patient does not change, whether she is seen as an object or as a person. *Blind Time* gives us a view of both aspects separately, one captured in writing, the other recorded in palm- and fingerprints.

In the 1972 video *Exchange*, collaboratively produced with Lynda Benglis, then a fellow teacher at Hunter college, the artists used imagery that evokes a Rubin diagram by framing two actual faces in way that made them appear as dark silhouettes against a neutral background, facing one another (Boaden, 2016; Blom, 2013, p. 291). In an absurdist twist, the diagram is transformed from a Gestaltist's chart into a situation rife with conflict: one head talks at its counterpart while the voice-over rumbles about a man and a woman suppressing each other's image and voice. In a similar manner, the *Blind Time* drawings offer a slightly twisted reflection on Laing's existential phenomenology. Self-recording becomes an ongoing competition between two functions of a split self: the principal who sets and measures the performance and the agent who performs the set tasks. Morris seems caught in one experiment after the other, both failing the targeted objectives of neutrally observing and providing sufficiently observable data. Crucially, he fails within the temporal and spatial measuring system he set up for himself, and thus continuously proves the impossibility of predicting the exact deviations of his visually unguided hands and his temporal estimates.

Time and Money: Reinterpreting Process

In *The Divided Self*, Laing calls the method that requires an objectification of patients a "formalism" that is "clearly very limited in scope", be it a historical or a clinical approach (Laing, 2010, p. 35). Morris, too, has time and again railed against formalism in his writings. In the following, I will focus on the temporality connected to the type of formalism that seeks to split its subjects, and focus on sharply isolated, formal traits. The time measured in the *Blind Time* drawings, I argue, operates within a larger framework of unstable and non-linear temporality which Morris explored in terms of formalism and process. So, what is formalist temporality, and how does it shape the *Blind Time* series?

Morris's involvement with formalism reached a culmination point in the mid-sixties, when he prepared a Master's thesis in art history drawing on George Kubler's 1962 book *The Shape of Time*. Kubler had rejected developmental approaches to art history and style, dismissing the hermeneutics of growth and progress as biological metaphors that were

not applicable in a realm of artefacts (Kubler, 2008). In relation to Morris, it is notable *how* Kubler wrote about his objects of study: Pamela Lee notes that his matter of fact “sometimes clinical” language is interspersed with poetic passages “as if his training in the humanities met up with the hard, prescriptive language of the sciences” (Lee, 2004, p. 228). Kubler, too, abstracted his subjects from their historical fullness to arrive at specific, comparable parameters: forms. However, isolated from their moment in linear time, forms were rearranged into sequences and generated a new and complex approach to time. Lee portrays the temporality of Kubler’s “form classes” – a concept Morris used in his thesis – as recursive and non-chronological, operating in loops rather than a one-directional timeline (Lee, 2004, p. 229).

By the time he started the *Blind Time* series though, Morris rejected Kubler’s focus on form as too “vitalistic,” levelling the art historian’s own charge against him: “to employ such metaphors is to risk continuing in the worst tradition of art writing – from Focillon’s forms unfolding like giant, relentless ferns in a Bergsonian swamp to Kubler’s electrical genetics of mutating primes and replicas” (Morris, 1993, p. 119). But Morris discredited Kubler in name only. He kept adhering to a notion of non-linear, non-teleological time that was beyond the forces of discourse. In the dramatic picture Morris paints in his somewhat obscure meditations on discourse published as “Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide,” words are engaged in putting the “dumb, dense energy of things” into rational order, and art discourse is characterized by the petty business of ascribing value to things that appear indifferent to these all-too-human endeavors (Morris, 1993, p. 122). Between things and words, art works can emancipate themselves from the need for explanatory discourse in two ways: if the process of making is discernible in the work and if the maker produces a discourse of her own.

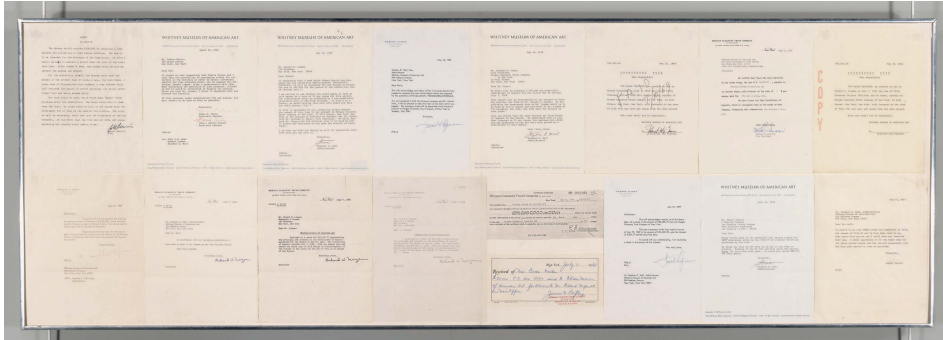
Compared to the early endeavor of *Box with Sound*, Morris’s interest in process had broadened to a more structural level by the end of the 60s. In “Some Splashes in the Ebb Time” he hinted at new, non-human forces that had infiltrated art’s old system of value-creation, a system he conceived primarily as a discursive, ideological one: “Certain suspicions of *programs of economic expansion* replaced those of glittering historical conquest.” (Morris, 1993, p. 127, italics by the author) A teleological, one-directional notion of history was not only challenged by artists invoking prehistoric time and planetary dimensions of material processes and forces such as gravity, sedimentation, and entropy.¹⁰ The narrative of art history as progress was also put under pressure by art’s function as an economic asset. It was the discontinuous, fragmented processuality that connected the instability and unpredictability of global finance to Kublerian time, and that Morris would explore further in *Blind Time*. Morris’s 1973 essay stops short of conceiving the artist as an agent

10 Morris referenced artists engaged with gravity as a form of making in his 1968 essay “Anti Form” and several later texts (Morris, 1993, pp. 41–49). Pre-Columbian forms seem to have attracted his interest from the mid-sixties on, and become intertwined with thoughts about landscape and large-scale art works in 1975 (cf. “Aligned with Nazca”, Morris, 1993, pp. 143–173).

under economic pressure situated within a complex financial system, but an earlier work clearly engages with these questions.

For the first museum exhibition of process art in 1969, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Morris proposed a work entitled simply *Money*. (Fig. 3) The exhibition was to showcase new art that questioned the finished art object. These procedural works were open to their surroundings and to chance operations. As curator Marcia Tucker put it in the catalogue, such works “do not evolve from a preconception of order which the artist is trying to express, but from the activity of making a work and from the dictates of the materials used” (Tucker and Monte, 1969, p. 27). The concept of the exhibition was at least in part premised on Morris’s writing and work, but he chose to leave his earlier notions of “Anti Form” behind for his contribution.¹¹ In a letter to the Museum dated March 1969, he outlined a concept for an investment of 100,000 USD to be placed by the institution for the duration of the exhibition. Morris suggested different ways of displaying the changing value of the investment in real time. In the exhibition, “the Museum could show [...] a sign changed daily that recorded the amount of profit accruing [or] the actual money itself that was being earned daily” (Morris, 1969/1973). However, the investment could not be realized in the intended form because the museum’s trustees stipulated that the project must be free of risk (Krens and Krauss, 1994, p. 114). Instead of investing a loan taken out against either the Museum’s real estate holdings or its collections, as Morris proposed, the Whitney borrowed the sum of 50,000 USD from one of its trustees for the duration of the exhibition and deposited the amount with the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York at an interest rate of 5 percent. For the duration of the exhibition, from May 22 through July 7, 1969, the deposit generated 328.77 USD, a number that neatly illustrates the simple process of calculated growth brought about in Morris’s *Money*. The process made visible by the piece, even in its risk-free form, was not a procedure of making enacted by an individual subject, but rather the anonymous growth of capital. The original concept would even have installed a marker of the fluctuation of stock market value in the Whitney’s exhibition spaces. Anticipating his later reflections in “Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide,” Morris had already implemented “programs of economic expansion” into the art world. *Money* confronted a discursive type of history shaped by human narrative and telos – “glittering historical conquest” – with an apparently autonomous market the movement and forces of which were beyond the control of individual actors, but could benefit them without regard for moral and historical value.

11 Tucker’s catalog essay cites Morris’s text “Anti Form” and prominently includes an illustration of his signature process-type work *Continuous Project Altered Daily* on the opening pages (Tucker and Monte, 1969, pp. 24–25 and 38). The piece involved Morris and assistants manipulating construction materials at the Castelli Warehouse every day before it opened to viewers. Photographs of the previous days were tacked to the wall so viewers could appreciate the ongoing change between the disarray of materials they faced and its preceding states.



- 3 Robert Morris, *Money*, 1969–1973, ink on paper mounted on board, sheet (irregular), 55.9×170.5 cm, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (purchase with funds from the Postwar Committee. Inv.: 2003.198).

Money introduced new forces beyond Morris's control into his work. The museum and the market were less archaic than the "inherent tendencies and properties of [...] matter" which Morris claimed were responsible for the making of process-type work in his essay "Anti Form" (Morris, 1993, p. 43). In this respect, *Money* sets the scene for the *Blind Time* series in which Morris found a way to introduce an uncontrollable factor into the drawing process, a technique historically linked most closely to the artist's hand and the display of his characteristic traits.¹² In the first series, Morris used his own hands without visual guidance; in the second, Adrienne Ash fulfilled the role of the unruly blind agent. In *Money*, Morris left the function of the agent to the Whitney Museum and the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company. The process of the investment's growth, like Morris's errors in *Blind Time*, could be measured in precise numbers. But the information about the artist's skill conveyed by his time estimation errors is less productive; it is data without immediate usefulness. The artist's hands and substitute agents stood in as objects to be observed and recorded, whereas the observer and extractor of data remained less palpable – both sides were subjected to the unstable and unpredictable fluctuation of economic growth and decline, and of blind skills.

In the catalogue of *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, Morris appeared posing as a stereotypical gangster, wearing dark shades and a double-breasted jacket, smoking a cigar, while stuffing dollar bills into a briefcase. Printed next to the procedural glimpses of the making or installing of art works that most of his fellow artists provided, these pictures demonstrated Morris's vision of process. The proposition of *Money*, manifest in Morris's somewhat confrontational tone in his letters to the Whitney and in the accusatory photo-

12 The purported immediacy of drawing is carefully unraveled by Ralph Ubl and Wolfram Pichler who circumscribe the complex apparatus that constitutes modern and premodern drawing. Cf. Pichler and Ubl, 2007.

graphs, appears as a provocation: The artist incites the institution to place investments for profit, and at the same time denounces such profiteering as illegitimate and quasi-criminal. Instead of a critique of the artist's agency and voice as an author that would have been in line with the exhibition's thematic frame, Morris seems to have come up with a challenge to the artist and art world as profiteers of processes beyond their control or power.

Money got its final form – a series of letters between artist, Museum, trustees, and bank officials, plus a certificate of a deposit for the sum of 50,000 USD (Fig. 3) – in 1973, when Morris directed a belated letter to the Whitney, asking for his share, exactly half of the 328.77 USD generated by the 1969 deposit. This letter concludes the piece, and at the same time evidences miscommunication between artist and Museum. The last letter from Museum administrator Stephen Weil strikes a colloquial tone as he offers the whole accrued sum of 328.77 USD to Morris for either a new project or “beer money”. In a remarkable contrast, four years later, Morris addresses Mr. Weil formally with his request to “send [...] the above stated amount and the interest compounded over the four year period” (Morris 1969/1973). Rather than communicating, Weil's and Morris's letters are at cross-purposes, with no indication as to whether their respective requests were ever complied with. Yet, it is telling that Morris brought up the interest accumulated over time. In May 1973, one month before he made the first *Blind Time* drawings, he evidently thought about the way money related to time. I surmise that formalist temporality – non-linear, and thus unpredictable – to Morris seemed intrinsically related to the unstable time of monetary growth and decline. The development of value, as Morris recognized in his musings about art discourse, was not controlled by human interest or historical meaning. Like the anonymous sequences of form offered by Kubler, and adopted by Morris, the temporality of *Money* exemplified processes divorced from historical agents.

Manual Labor

From 1970 to 1973, Morris's work made the transition from hard industrial work to post-industrial conditions. As Julia Bryan-Wilson detailed in her study of Morris's engagement with the Art Workers Coalition, one year after making *Money*, the artist undertook a gargantuan exhibition project for which he piled tons of construction material into the Whitney's galleries. This effort in displaying men's manual labor along with an excess of timbers, concrete blocks, and steel was also accompanied by an uncertainty as to the value of art and work. Bryan-Wilson notes: “Morris [...] insisted that the economic value of the show be no more than the cost of the materials and the hours of labor paid to himself and the installers. Since these works were never for sale, for whom was this ‘value’ calculated? It is unclear how this gesture functioned aside from its symbolism” (Bryan-Wilson, 2009, p. 93). Contextualized against the concept of *Money*, this gesture reads as an attempt to reconnect the value of art to concrete, measurable parameters: material and the hours

clocked by the workers who installed the show with Morris. The identification of the artist with the worker, however, was a contradictory stance, as Bryan-Wilson (2009, p. 125) shows. Morris was physically laboring to build up his show, but he was also – symbolically and literally – the master of this process. His attempt to construe himself as an art worker did nothing to resolve these issues and seems to have resulted in disillusionment and a sense of failure.

Notions of failure, dead ends, and being trapped loom large in the work leading up to the first *Blind Time* drawings. Morris drew and built labyrinths, reflected on incarceration and punishment, and it is telling that Barbara Rose associates the imagining and construction of these tightly confined spaces with the total control typical “of the industrial workplace” (Rose, 2011, p. 305). The clearly prescribed time spans and the temporal sightlessness lead her to construe each *Blind Time* drawing as an enclosure entrapping the artist and “shutting out everything else” (Rose, 2011, p. 314). However, she fails to consider the role of the captions in *Blind Time* in her interpretation. As I have outlined above, the division of vision and touch, of intellectual and physical labor, is a major trait of *Blind Time* that has often been overlooked. The penciled paragraphs objectify the actions taken by “the hands” during the period of experimentation. Morris himself designed the contained spaces and enforced their regulations, enacting both the surveillance and the monitored work.

As directions and framework, the texts constitute the quasi-scientific, formalist component of *Blind Time*. Their promise is a meaningful experiment with the goal of reaching more accurate drawings and estimates of time. But Morris’s hands do not seem to learn, and his decision not to keep the chronological succession of drawings intact in fact precludes the viewers from discerning progress if there was any. The persistent failure to conform to the set tasks with full accuracy and the absence of development render the whole series absurd. The blind artist is confronted with hostile conditions that clearly define deviations caused by the lack of visual control as errors, rather than interpreting the blind skills as positive results. The texts present fraught attempts to reframe “errors” and “insufficient skill” as valuable information.

When we consider the tone of Morris’s captions, we are confronted with a series of failures in communication between the artist’s haptic and visual abilities, between his voice and his body. He seems anxious to measure the unpredictable, and to produce data about the blind drawing process. In the strained dialog that plays out between prescribed tasks and blind attempts, we witness Morris as he tries to gain control over a process he cannot control. The details of the drawing process – unequal terms for competing hands, blind touches conforming to visual guidelines – evoke the changing economic conditions of the early 1970s with the odds increasingly stacked against individual agents entering the apparatus of value production in the lower tiers of corporate hierarchies. As the exchange rate of the US Dollar was delinked from the gold standard and the majority of Americans were working in services rather than in the production of material goods, workers were facing much less stable conditions and growing unpredictability. Like Morris’s groping

hands, agents in this system were confronted with a pressure to produce measurable improvement in a tightly controlled environment. Unlike the controlled regime of industrial labor, post-industrial work required new systems of measuring and producing data to make the unpredictable more predictable. This is the crux of the 1973 *Blind Time* series: not to make visible the abilities of Morris's body, but to produce a system within which these abilities become measurable and predictable. Whereas it is obvious that Morris did not find a way to make his blind groping conform to pre-set times and tasks accurately, what remains unpredictable are the various forms and degrees of failure.

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Ana Hoffner

With and Against Contemporaries

Anna Daučíková's 33 Scenes

In 2019 I found myself to be a contemporary of a Nazi photographer. The Museum of Modern Art in Salzburg was showing new acquisitions to its collection, among them a photo installation of mine that I had recently sold to them for very little money. I was taking part in a programme of the Federal Chancellery to support young artists in Austria. My photo installation was the result of restaging historical photographs by the Jewish artist Claude Cahun and her partner Marcel Moore who produced – now iconic – queer performances in the 1920s and 1930s.¹ At the opening I found my work installed next to some fashion images, also made in the 1930s, by the photographer Lothar Rübelt. The caption next to them briefly mentioned that Rübelt became a supporter of Nazi Germany and was an active war photographer during World War II. The collection had acquired his early fashion photographs in the 1980s, ignoring (or not caring about) the fact that he was producing propaganda for the Nazis, photographing the Olympic games in Germany alongside Leni Riefenstahl, but also later documenting several Nazi events in Austria.² Rübelt's photographs in the exhibition were showing female models in 1930s fashion outfits, they were highly heteronormative, but they didn't carry any obvious sign of what later became fascist aesthetics. They rather appeared in the mainstream of the visual culture of their time.

- 1 In this text I will not comment Claude Cahun's queer strategies in her art work, although it would be another good example to ground my arguments. I have shown how her performative practice was reframing Jewish stereotypes in a queer way in "Non-aligned Extinctions: Slavery, Neo-Orientalism, and Queerness" in: *e-flux Journal* #97, February 2019, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/97/252398/non-aligned-extinctions-slavery-neo-orientalism-and-queerness/>. The photo installation "Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions", which was part of the mentioned exhibition, can be found on my website: anahoffner.com.
- 2 The exhibition was titled "Humanity in Photographs. Recent Acquisitions of the Federal Photography Collection". One of the images by Lothar Rübelt can be seen on the museum's website, it carries the caption: Lothar Rübelt *Hutmodell der Firma Krickl, Wien, around 1930* (Hat model by the company Krickl, Vienna), from the series *Österreich zwischen den Kriegen* (Austria between the Wars), gelatin silver print on baryta paper, Federal Photography Collection at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Purchase 1987 © Lothar Rübelt / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2019. See: <https://www.museumdermoderne.at/en/press/detail/humanity-in-photographs/#&gid=1&pid=5>. Most photographs by Lothar Rübelt are publicly available at the Austrian National Library: <https://onb.digital/search/75310>

While Rübelt was a contemporary of Claude Cahun, or, more precisely, the antisemitic opponent of a queer artist, I was definitely not a contemporary of Rübelt. The question that arose from the situation for me was: Why was Rübelt's work exhibited in a contemporary art exhibition? Or more precisely: Why was an exhibition of contemporary art put together with these highly problematic historical images, the only conceptual framework holding them together being the invocation of 'humanity' in the exhibition title and the fact that both works were in the same collection?³

What I am interested in after this incident is how a revival of violent pasts and their proponents (but also their repeated mystification) takes place when history is smoothly integrated into what we know as contemporary art under the umbrella of historical practice.⁴ Only because such a smooth process is feasible can the curatorial practice of integrating a Nazi photographer into an exhibition of contemporary art occur and seemingly qualify as historical practice within contemporary art.⁵ Without examining further examples of this kind of politics within the art world or analyzing how they tune into an outburst of actual

- 3 After overcoming my first initial shock to find my work in this rather bizarre connection, I tried to confront the curator asking about her curatorial concept but mainly demanding that she take the Nazi photographer's work down. I also wanted to know what motivated creating a situation in which 1930s Nazi photography would appear contemporary next to many artists of my own generation instead of contextualizing or problematizing historical material in a separate, more differentiated manner. It turned out that my argument, which was so obvious to me, led to a reaction of surprise without any understanding on her part – the counterargument I got to hear was that Lothar Rübelt became a Nazi later in his lifetime, these images were made before his Nazi career, besides that there was no reason to distinguish between a 'historical' and a 'contemporary' exhibition. Since I disagreed that there could be something like a fascist period in a lifetime that could be detached from the rest of someone's biography, my request only provoked a huge clash of artistic and curatorial politics. Only after confronting the institution in a public talk and with the support of other artists in the exhibition, it became possible to take down Lothar Rübelt's photos and initiate research into the collections policy. But what remained was the question how current politics of time and history have enabled to place a Nazi photographer among contemporary artists.
- 4 After Jean-François Lyotard's demand for a new history after the Holocaust and his discussion of post-modernism, it is Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis of Heidegger's mysticism, especially in his use of 'world history', the conspiracy theory about Jews taking over the world, that reveals insights into mystification as a Nazi practice through the structural problem of Heidegger's thinking about historicity. As I will not go into the details of this discussion here, see for further clarification Lyotard (1990) and Nancy (2017).
- 5 It is useful to consider the way art historian Eva Kernbauer explores the present-day tension and competition between artistic and art theoretical practices with the term art historicity. In order to define the notion of art historicity, Kernbauer first proposes that the question of contemporaneity is not just about the relation between art, art practitioners, and audiences, but that it is constituted by the way previous practices are included – and therefore also all of their agents. What is created within the artistic field concerns thus artists, theorists, and curators equally and cannot be delegated to either one of these groups. What Kernbauer then calls 'art historicity' calls on all of them to share responsibility when it comes to historical practice. Art historicity is a dual process that enables a simultaneous destabilization of both history and the present: destabilizing normative techniques on the one hand is complemented by the production of myths, the affirmation or display of found pieces without any agenda. Kernbauer's term allows us to understand the various processes taking place in the art world right now, it provides space for emancipatory practices of feminist, anti-racist or anti-fascist agents, but it also explains the gigantic emergence of backlash projects, which, as she says, assemble found historical pieces without any political pretense. However, placing all these practices under the term art historicity also involves the danger of evening out differences and allowing the presence of fascist histories as just another part of an all-embracing, universal (art) history. See Kernbauer (2015).

right-winged violence across the world, I want to take a look at the conditions that have made incidents like my confrontation with the museum's collection possible. I will try to clarify the different understandings of historicity that are at play here by relating them to that which was excluded in the process of integrating history into the contemporary art world – anachronism. In doing so, I want to insist on the role of anachronism not only in order to ask where interruptions, incoherences or unwanted lines of historical narratives are put into place today, but also because I want to know what happens when historicity, the very process of writing a history, turns to a technique that doesn't allow for anachronism any more, as was the case in this exhibition. The distinction that I want to reintroduce at this point is about the unavoidable (and therefore so willingly avoided) position of truth that is constituted in the relation of historicity and anachronism. For it is the structural position of truth as a claim rather than the position of history *as* truth that is paramount for the understanding of the crucial role that aesthetic practices play in the writing of history.

In his text “The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth”, Jacques Rancière insists that what it means to write history has to be evaluated by the poetic dimension it entails, and not by scientific criteria (Rancière, 2015). He thus very clearly positions the artistic procedure of creation above the scientific and even suggests that history is only constituted as a science because it resolves philosophical questions by means of literature. For Rancière, literature is defined by poetic language in a classical sense, as “that which comes under a *techne* for the construction of a plot, for the arrangement of its parts and its appropriate mode of enunciation” (Rancière, 2015, p. 22). However, I want to add that Rancière's notion of poetic language is not a negative of discursive language as one might assume, but rather has to be understood as another result of signifying practices.⁶ What emerges as poetic language depends on cultural and symbolic processes and can be applied to a variety of aesthetic expressions within literature, film, installation, or photography.

Anachronism not only is this poetic procedure, it is a “rule for the question of the status of truth in the historian's discourse” (Rancière, 2015, p. 22). In order to explain this status (of anachronism and truth) Rancière refers first to the horizontal order of time, which he describes as chronology or the linear succession of events. He further asserts that anachronism is situated above this order, i. e. that it constitutes a vertical problem for linearity. Anachronism is thus always a ‘mistake’ of chronology (from the perspective of pure linearity) and closer to eternal time or timelessness, since “chronological time depends upon a time without chronology: a pure present” (Rancière, 2015, p. 24). The relation of chronology and anachronism reveals itself as a major question of power, a struggle be-

6 I am repeating this understanding of poetic language because I will reintroduce desire, in the psycho-analytical sense, as a generative principle which creates the very possibility to historicize, as part of an art practice. In contrast to a use of poetic language as semiotics or non-representational writing, which places the poetic before or beyond meaning, poetic language as signifying procedure allows the articulation of desire within language. For further discussion of poetic language as semiotics see also Kristeva (1984) and more recently Moten (2003) or Sharpe (2016).

tween “the relation of the order of becoming to the order of that which is always identical to itself” (Rancière, 2015, pp. 24–5). Rancière identifies this struggle in the Christian figure of redemption, which is on one hand the redemption of the ‘error’ or ‘mistake’ in time (anachronism), but on the other also the redemption of time itself. The very truthfulness of history thus depends upon the success of redemption. One could also say history can claim truth only when it appears to resolve the struggle between chronological time and anachronism, because historical practice loses its constitutive notion of truth if it stops to revert to anachronism.

But the question then is not only how to understand the construction of truth within history but also how to understand the absence of truth in anachronism, a category to which Rancière ascribes so much “theoretical superiority” (Rancière, 2015, p. 26). If we recognize anachronism not as a matter of facts, but as a “question of thought”, where does anachronism get its social or political legitimacy from? (Rancière, 2015, p. 26). It seems that, according to Rancière, it has none, and that precisely this is its potential: “It is the concept of anachronism that is, in itself, perverse. It is the submission of the existence to the possible that is, at its core, anti-historical” (Rancière, 2015, p. 45). What we can see now is how the exhibition that showed a Nazi photographer next to contemporary artists was constituted by the exclusion of the ‘perverse’, anachronism, while claiming to include the ‘perverse’ in the shape of queer art practices and artists (Claude Cahun and me as their interpreters). It is no accident that Rancière’s formulation is a sexual category. Lothar Rübelt’s photographs were connected to mine by means of a heteronormative association of feminine attributes that neglected any difference between a normative representation of women and its queer appropriation across time and space. It was heteronormative sexuality that allowed to bridge the time between fascism and now and allowed to create contemporaneity. But it was a heteronormative understanding of history itself that eliminated anachronism as a perverse category in order to create a seamless proximity between then and now. It turns out that the creation of contemporaneity is subjected to a (hetero) normative desire, which remains unmarked and unmentioned. Furthermore, this incident makes it possible to see how heteronormativity increasingly shapes historicity.

However, I would like to show that anachronism cannot hold an exclusive position as a counterstrategy for historical writing either. Anachronism as a poetic figure of thought necessarily stays outside the verified, truthful conditions of history. But it would be too short-sighted to ascribe exclusively positive aspects to a poetic figure; Rancière also mentions that anachronism obscures the very conditions of all historicity and therefore acquires a double meaning. It is that which negates history’s singularity, but it is also that which might preclude any writing of facts. This loose framework between critical quality and obscurity opens anachronism towards a norm which is in constant negotiation and cannot be resolved. I would like to emphasize this openness further by contrasting it with Agamben’s theory of the contemporary in his essay “What Is the Contemporary?”, which describes a constellation of anachronism and history as that of sovereignty without any

particular interest in the status of truth as a claim (Agamben, 2009). In fact, it is this marker of a claim that distinguishes heteronormative politics of art historicity from non-normative historical writing today.

Willingly or not, Agamben provides a necessary historical reference, a shift in the politics of time and history that Rancière precludes. While describing the normativity of history as a product of scientific discipline, Rancière fails to mention that the late 19th century introduced anachronism as a foundation of thinking about history and truth, which means the instrumental use of anachronism has already become part of all historical practices. Anachronism is a source of power for the historian, it is that which gives him (!) more relevance and more presence. Although one could say that since the Renaissance there has been an effort to situate humanity in the present tense, the late 19th century has intensified the insistence on immediacy, timeliness, and last but not least the contemporary, the category that interests Agamben the most in this text.⁷ He stages a historical lineage between Nietzsche and Barthes in order to introduce the subject of his text: “What does it mean to be contemporary?” (Agamben, 2009, p. 39). He starts his argument by quoting a summary of Nietzsche’s “Untimely Meditations” by Roland Barthes in order to explain Nietzsche’s claim that “the contemporary is the untimely” as a necessary temporal displacement every author performs in order to claim his relevance (Agamben, 2009, p. 40). “Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands,” says Agamben (Agamben, 2009, p. 40). It seems that becoming anachronistic has a goal here, and that this goal is to increase the historian’s power. It is precisely because Agamben has an interest in increasing power that he understands anachronism as a category one can achieve and that accordingly there is a subjectivity able to displace itself in time.⁸ This also changes the understanding of poetic practice, since poetry is attached to subjectivity through the posses-

7 In his book “History in Motion” art historian Sven Lütticken writes that although art history (but also theatre and literature) was established as a discipline in the late nineteenth century, it was a product of the “historicist turn” around 1800. Historicism itself was an outcome of the division of time into periods and the desire to reveal them to the gaze. “Culture was radically historicized,” argues Lütticken and quotes earlier arguments that history was imposed on time (Lütticken, p. 16). The development of cultural products corresponds to the need for representation in writing, painting or sculpture, a need emerging alongside with Enlightenment thought, which purported to bring the past close to the modern subject and allow it to project itself onto and into a particular view of history. Temporal sequences became living paintings, tableaux vivants, seemingly reconstructing the past. They served the creation of a collective memory in public and private spaces; hence they could be found in bourgeois interiors as well as architecture. The exterior walk corresponded to the inner journey on the boulevards of Paris and Vienna, such walks allowed the illusion that it is possible to traverse the history of centuries in a few hours. And this became binding for a particular bourgeois notion of time and temporality, since history became relevant only for those who would participate in its staging. The substitute for a proper placement in what was then defined as historical development used to be the prehistorical, non-Western (performative) practices that were all summarized as beyond the universal, which in fact meant European. See Lütticken (2013).

8 There is a shift in Agamben’s thought, but also its reception, from a theory of agency to a theory of sovereignty. Once the hero of many leftist thinkers, Agamben has turned into a representative of normative concepts.

sion and control of the gaze: "Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it" (Agamben, 2009, p. 41).

My concern here is not just the evident exclusivity of anachronism or the gaze as instruments of power ascribed to certain subjects and not to others, but first and foremost the absence of truth as a claim and therefore as a category in thinking about anachronism and history or respectively historicity. While Rancière understands anachronisms as practices of thought on which history's claim to truthfulness depends, Agamben proposes to stipulate subjectivity itself as truth – without explicitly saying it. Being part of chronological time here means to displace oneself beyond humanity (or at least to make this the driving mode of one's actions), in order to successfully inhabit time and history from a singular position – which is that of truth. What is erased by this assumption is the possibility of historicity, because subjectivity exclusively inhabits the order in which it is identical to itself. It turns out the present the contemporary achieves in this way is in fact eternity. By means of sovereignty of time and history, the subject ends up in Christian concepts of the human based on redemption, however in the very opposite sense to the one Rancière used it in.

What has happened to artistic, art historical and curatorial practices which have always reverted to anachronism? How did we end up living in a time in which we face a major contradiction between the sovereignty of subjectivity and the status of truth? Is it possible to trace back the emergence of this dual development? And to what extent does the situation of the contemporary require further practices of anachronism as interruptions of existing regimes of history?

I want to discuss an art practice that was elaborated on a very precise notion of historicity, albeit not in the totalitarian space of the present but in the surveillance system of the Soviet Union – Anna Daučíková's textual and conceptual work *33 Scenes*. In discussing this practice I do not mean to propose a historical reading of strategies against totalitarianism, nor do I intend to engage in a discussion about similarities or resemblances between fascism, Stalinism and the present. Anna Daučíková's practice allows a structural analysis, in particular an articulation of the unspoken problem of heteronormativity being that which shapes historical writing; and this interests me in its relation to the emergence of contemporaneity. By situating Daučíková's practice within a structural logic I want to circumvent the historization of an artist in a particular time period, which would disqualify the work as a source of political action for today and give it a purely archival character. This is possible partly because Daučíková has such a particular biography, which stands out in the politics of migration of a particular time: Daučíková moved to Moscow in the 1980s, at a time when the main flow of global migration went in the other direction. For some, this alone qualifies as a gesture of anachronism, since the experience of going to the East was understood as a backward move in the political setup of the Cold War. But the practice that arose from this move is far more than a gesture against the current.

Anna Daučíková had something we would call a research project today. She examined the emergence of desire, sexuality and observation in history. However, this was not a project of historicizing sexuality, one that would classify sexualities in a state or region, divide them in categories and give them scientific visibility. Nor was it a counterstrategical project of giving visibilities to self-organized sexual minorities. Situated precisely between these very familiar registers of producing knowledge about sexuality, the research was much more profound than any blunt sexology or sexual activism could be, precisely because those examined, including Daučíková herself, were the target of a state apparatus, which surveilled their desires, burdened them with expectations of sexual performance and punished any deviation from them. It did so on behalf of its own insecurity, by operating with old techniques of generalization: the foreigner was like the artist, the lesbian was like the foreigner etc., until each and every one was a potential target of punishment (I will come back to these techniques in more detail).⁹ Embodying the power to produce knowledge about its subjects the state used the chart, the scheme, the line to put together what could never be read as a narrative otherwise.¹⁰ It produced vast packages of documents about

9 In her book *Anachronism and its Others*, queer theorist Valerie Rohy writes about the way sexuality and race have been produced and posited as categories outside of the present through analogy. According to Rohy, scientific racism and modern sexology, both emerging in the 19th century, have constructed same-sex desire as a regression in individual development but also in human history. Because body and mind were regarded as subject to evolutionary processes, individual development coincided with historical chronology, biography became a model for development, and vice versa. Homosexuality thus remained a residue of a previous epoch. At the same time, queerness as backwardness could also be found in racist discourses centered on African and African American individuals. Rohy examined the analogy between these two developmental lines asking: what is the temporal dimension of the persistent analogy between queerness and blackness? The crucial point about analogies is for Rohy that they never question straightness, they promote and defend the white heterosexual family by pointing to questions of reproduction: while homosexuals are regarded as sterile, black people remain excessively fertile. Both remain contagious in temporal terms: not just that time has stopped for the other, but they have the power to stop time themselves. Analogy plays a vital role in creating straight time because it is a “contingent likeness” that binds together categories of sexuality and race which are not produced by a common origin. The linear temporality is that which has been disrupted or will have been disrupted by perverse backwardness. For Rohy a whole set of relations is organized around likeness: “individual development is like humankind’s evolution; homosexual desire is like savagery; homosexuality is like immature sexuality; the homosexual is like the primitive; and the person of color is like the child.” (Rohy, p. 6) The constructed resemblance and similarity explains the unknown with the known, the unfamiliar with the familiar. Rohy writes that the “most durable similarity between race and sexuality is that produced by the analogy itself.” Rohy (2010, p. 7).

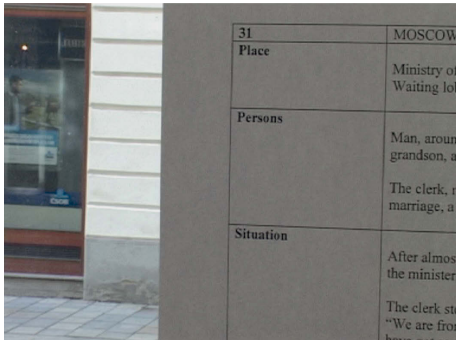
10 As historian Anna Echterhölter writes, political hegemony is being enforced in the 18th century by placing different cultural systems in one geographical timeline. She examines Johann Köhler’s “Chronologya”, a chronological chart which she claims to be an instrument which introduces a specific concept of time to broad populations (Echterhölter, p. 29). Twenty-seven tables represent the history of the world from its assumed beginning until the 18th century. The chart is structured in biblical, profane, and church-related topics. “Chronologya” places historical events on a particular place in its own chronology, whereas chronology forms itself into a specific knowledge of time measurement based on linear processes. Echterhölter further claims that chronology creates the effect of exclusivity, or favourization of certain hegemonic perspectives (Echterhölter, p. 33). This is created through the form of a list, which makes explicit where a historical event is placed in historical writing. Echterhölter here refers to Jack Goody’s understanding of the list: “The list relies on discontinuity rather than continuity; it depends on physical



something that could never be documented. It thereby produced pure fiction, because its surveillance of citizens and their desires remained pure speculation, sometimes with huge consequences.

Daučíková's *33 scenes* is the script that was later integrated into the video installation *33 situations*. (Fig. 1, 2 and 3) It is structured like a chart, turning the fictional character of collecting data directly to its reader: some person, of some age, of some nationality, of some profession, is described to feel something in a situation that was observed somewhere, by someone. By reading the arrangements of these events one might feel just the way people felt under heavy control: they used to say it resembles a film. But Daučíková does not propose a script that would allow us to read the mechanisms of totalitarianism, rather she interrupts the historical practice of state surveillance with its own means, she observes, collects, and secretly assembles – just like the state does. *33 scenes* consists of four categories: place, person(s), situation and note(s). What is described in each situation has indeed taken place, some situations are autobiographical, some are stories from friends and encounters. In situation number two for instance Daučíková writes about someone who gave up her citizenship. Knowing her biography, we know today that this is Daučíková herself.

placement, on location. It can be read in different directions, both sideways and downwards, up and down, as well as left and right... it encourages the ordering of items by number, by initial sound, category." (Echterhölter, p. 31) The importance of the line lies in its establishment of sections, sections are separated by lines and give the chronological chart its geometrical aspect, although it is in no way a quantitative graphic or an empirical collection of data. The line helps to create the authority of the chart and naturalize its content by creating proximity to the form of geometrical schemes. It is important to state that chronological charts are older than the historical narrative, they serve as a teaching instrument for a particular imagination of time more than actual time measurement. Visualization of chronological data fits the baroque style of popularizing knowledge through images, which were meant for a broad audience. There are many of such objects in the baroque era: public clocks, calendars etc. Gutenbergs first books were calendars showing holidays. The chronological chart is among the most important of these instruments. See Echterhölter (2013) and Goody (1977).



1-3
 Anna Daučiková, *33 Situations*, 2015,
 digital video, color/sound, 108'56", 4:3.

- Place** MOSCOW (1984) Embassy of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, a large Stalinist style building, consulate office room: on the wall, a large oil painting of a landscape with industrial construction, red flags on each crest; sturdy bureau and upholstered chairs.
- Person(s)** Senior officer: a man about 50 years old, swollen face, steady eyes, blue and cold. Apart from regular sex with his wife, he has been having short affairs with his female colleagues, but he always found it not interesting enough.
- Junior officer: 24 years old, pale face, inflamed eyes.*
- A visitor: a woman, citizen of Czechoslovakia, 33 years old.
 She is staying in USSR because of a love affair with a Russian woman.
- Situation** The visitor puts her CSSR passport on the table and says: "I'm coming to give up my citizenship. After three years of living here in Moscow, I have decided to stay here and become a citizen of the Soviet Union."
- Long silence.
- The senior officer is leafing slowly through the passport, then his steady gaze starts drilling the visitor's eyes and the senior officer says: "Comrade Daučiková, you certainly understand, that, be this, say, in New York, we would react differently. But being here, in Moscow, in the most progressive country in the world, I say, with great pleasure, right decision, congratulations!"
- Note(s) *** The legs of the junior officer, under the table, for the whole time of the visit are being crossed and pressed forcefully together. His last affair with a waitress finished with a bad genital infection. Since then he is practicing only a daily masturbation.

In this scene giving up one's citizenship is taken as an affirmation of the political system by the embassy officers, but we, the readers, get to know that this is not for political reasons but because of a lesbian love affair (which in fact turns the notion of the political upside down). Instead of this love affair being examined, as one would expect from state officials, it is the sexuality of the state officials which is exposed to us, the readers. We don't get any information about the 'visitor's' sex life but about the sex life of those who examine her. In an interview with curator Christiane Erharter, Daučíková says that the strict form of a dossier referred to the files of the Soviet secret databases which made sure that every anomaly detected would become a norm.¹¹ *33 scenes* is not just a reversal of public and private positions, or a mockery of the drive to observe that was part of any state during the Cold War, both in the East and in the West. The situation rather constitutes a temporal break – the chart produces a vertical problem, as Rancière would put it, by interrupting the chronological form of a Soviet data base. The sexual practices mentioned in this situation don't qualify to be read as proper observations. They cannot be extracted as anomalies since, in a way, they fall under the umbrella of what constitutes heterosexual sex, which is legitimized by the state. But they are referred to in a way that makes sexuality itself appear as a random, uncontrollable and rather boring issue of every individual life. The lack of interest of the senior officer in affairs outside of his marriage makes casual sexual encounters appear as the most unexciting thing imaginable. The same can be said about the junior officer who caught an infection from an affair. It is the very notion of sexuality which differs from official state understanding that makes Daučíková's chart appear as a failure of proper observation, it can thus only be understood as an error against historical practice. It is also for this reason that Daučíková's situations can appear a-historical to a certain degree. Every situation could have taken place in another time and space, in another totalitarian regime, in another era of observation, even though we have clear markers of their location (like the Soviet embassy). *33 scenes* has a poetic quality of falling through the cracks of the historicist practices of its own time, but this is exactly why it has what Rancière has identified as "theoretical superiority". It gives more accurate information about the sexuality of individuals than any sexology could do and it tells us more about forms of sexuality than any Foucauldian analysis of institutional practices would allow for. It does so because Daučíková does not place her work purely in a historicist mode of telling us a different story about the Soviet Union, trying to dismantle the apparatus and its means of control, classification, categorization, its endless manoeuvres to observe and shape. In other words, she does not analyze the phenomena themselves (in particular that of homophobic persecution) and consequently successfully manages not to affirm or repeat them.

11 When asked if the work describes the life of gays and lesbians in Moscow at the time, Daučíková says clearly that she cannot say anything about a gay community, it might have existed or not. Anna Daučíková in conversation with Christiane Erharter (2014).

There is a particular significance of Daučíková's placement of sexuality in her project. Unlike so many art projects in the former West, it does not build on Foucauldian methods of historicizing sexuality, e. g. examining the ways homosexuality was institutionally constituted and became productive as a form of sexuality (Foucault, 1978). The notion of the productivity of institutions, which takes a lot of space in Foucauldian thinking as a source of proliferation and biopolitics, is radically dismissed by Daučíková's practice and the way she allows sexuality to appear in it. This can be understood better by examining those parts of queer and feminist theory that do not recur to Foucault's theory of sexuality against earlier, more psychoanalytically rooted writings on repression. What I mean is, that, while Foucault's work on sexuality (and with it the understanding of repression as a pure hypothesis) has established itself as a foundation of feminist and queer theory quite broadly, the tradition of ideology critique (going back to Althusser, therefore always based on potentially totalitarian and repressive state apparatuses), has been almost neglected in queer and feminist theory with only a very few exceptions.¹² As though the structural mechanisms of ideology did not concern sexuality, but also, as though (hetero)normativity could not constitute a mode of historical writing, ideology critique was almost dismissed as a reference point in queer and feminist theory, even in its recent 'temporal turn', a new interest in the way temporality functions as a normative entity.¹³

For this reason I would like to mention a particular body of theoretical work here. Although not rooted in queer or feminist theory, this work spans the gap between the notions of history/ sexuality and the totalitarian or repressive state and is crucial to understanding Daučíková's intervention in ideology and why it happens precisely through sexuality. In the early 1990s, psychoanalytical theorist Joan Copjec argued against a form of Foucauldian historicism that would reduce society to a network of power and knowledge in her

12 Interestingly, temporal figures of anachronism and historization appear here, too, for instance when it comes to the timeliness of thought: In 1992, right after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Kaja Silverman wrote in her book "Male Subjectivity at the Margins" that ideology might seem like a theoretical anachronism after Foucauldian analysis had been done before by so many (Silverman, 1992). Today, the recovery of ideology critique that Silverman established in connection to sexuality constructs a historical lineage that was not taken up by other queer and feminist theorists, but remains crucial to understanding the relations of historicism, anachronism and sexuality.

13 Many queer theorists claim that queer temporalities enabled a different kinship and relationality rather than queer identities inhabiting normative regulations on time. For Elisabeth Freeman, queer temporalities designate the manifold usages, inventions, and imaginations of temporalities as being effective in creating bonds beyond generational and familial forms of life (Freeman, 2010). Jack Halberstam concentrates on redefinitions of the adult/youth binary through queer forms of relationality, suggesting that queerness itself is an "outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules and eccentric economic practices" (Halberstam, 2005). Carolyn Dinshaw even goes one step further, claiming that there is a "queer historical impulse", a challenge to reconsider the whole organization of a historical period through sexuality and kinship (Dinshaw, 1999). Drawing on Dinshaw's argument, Matthias Danbolt's notion of "touching history" creates affinity in relations that were supposed to remain untouched and pushed into the inaccessibility of the past (Danbolt, 2011).

book "Read my Desire" (Copjec, 1992). Copjec analyzed the Foucauldian constellation of power and knowledge and pointed out a reduction caused by a historicism that was based on the concept of power that no longer conceived itself as an external force but as an immanent category within society. This lack of externality has a major effect on the position of phenomena, as they are given a major status, possibly the status of truth itself. What occurs here again is the above-mentioned placement of history as truth rather than the placement of truth as a claim.

Copjec's theoretization of historicity adds to it the consequences for the regime of power and knowledge: "distorting the phenomenon from outside, Foucault analyzed the internal regime of power that circulated through the phenomenon itself" (Copjec, 1992, p. 5). This marks Copjec's definition of historicism as a practice that functions with purely immanent categories. What Copjec calls historicist is the conception "of a cause that is immanent within the field of its effects" (Copjec, 1992, p. 6). The result of Foucauldian historicism, Copjec concludes, is that society coincides with a regime of power relations – there is no outside of the power regime or state apparatus a society is built upon. As Copjec claimed, this understanding of historicism as an immanent force "was thus conceived to structure itself by itself rather than to be structured by an external power" (Copjec, 1992, p. 6).

Furthermore, Copjec is also very clear about the fact that it is not the formulation of Foucault's historical projects which fails, but rather the way they are put into practice. Copjec calls this a "disallowance of any reference to a principle or a subject that 'transcends' the regime of power" (Copjec, 1992, p. 7). But one might also say that it is the absence of any form of anachronism that would necessarily put the historicist practice in question. Foucault's historization of sexuality thus forms a stark contrast to Rancière's interest in both anachronism and a historical practice based on truth as a claim. When historicizing sexualities through immanent categories, what is lost is not the search for the notion of truth within subjectivity, but what Copjec calls a rupture between appearance and being. This rupture introduces a generative principle, the very possibility to historicize, because only if appearance and being never coincide can they form the condition of desire. "Historicism, on the other hand, wants to ground being in appearance and wants to have nothing to do with desire," states Copjec (Copjec, 1992, p. 7). In other words, the lack of a common temporality (or contemporaneity) for everybody necessarily has to remain a rupture between subjects of the past, present and future, and can never be resolved. The integration of the past into the contemporary, whether by the repressive state apparatus or by artistic/curatorial/(art) historical practices with purely immanent categories, forecloses the conditions that are necessary to form desire. On the other hand, practices of writing the rupture between appearance and being can produce a particular historicism (historicism with anachronism) that would accept its dependence on the theoretical superiority of poetic language. What Copjec insists on is that we become literate, that we read our

own desire and place it against a flattening of relations of power and knowledge and the assumption of subjectivity as truth.¹⁴

Daučíková's poetic practice of anachronism consists in creating a temporality for the characters of her scenes. This structural intervention turns out to be very productive as it interrupts the apparatus of historicity (the institutions of the Soviet Union) by detaching subjectivity from its supposedly truthful location in a sexuality that the state asks for. The subjects in her scenes are no longer the owners of legitimate or sanctioned sexualities, they are rather practitioners of something that goes beyond the Soviet system of power and knowledge. The means to overcome the mechanisms that regulate sexuality as a historically specific practice (within a particular time in a particular society) lies in Daučíková's allowance for sexuality to apply to all bodies, i. e. turning sexuality into a principle of subjectification, which happens through the articulation of desire alongside the rupture between appearance and being. This introduction of a universal quality of sexuality, which is the opposite of positing history/sexuality/subjectivity as truth, is directed against the sovereignty of the state that instrumentalizes sexuality for its regulation of life and death and thus insists on a position beyond humanity – a place of authority and totalitarianism that precludes all possibilities of both, anachronism and the writing of history. On the other hand, by introducing the universal quality of sexuality, Daučíková's practice surprisingly produces not only a poetic but also a quite precise historical account of its time: it shifts from a poetic work to a very precise historical document. Through Daučíková's work, we learn about the repressive state apparatuses of the 1980s.

What are the consequences of Daučíková's practice for the creation of temporality or contemporaneity? All persons appearing in her situations could be our contemporaries; their ways of relating resonate with ours. However, Daučíková makes sure we do not share a common present but are separated through a rupture between subjects of the present and the past. This rupture is painfully apparent as we read someone's (Daučíková's) efforts to read her own desire. And it is no less than this that is the poetic *and* historical project *33 scenes* – a labor to decipher the language of desire that negates its own appearance in language. It points towards desires that could not be articulated in official speech and formed the negativity that became the totalitarian state.

14 Nowhere else is Copjec so clear about the function of desire in historical writing as in this passage: "when Lacan insists that we must take desire literally, we can understand him to be instructing us about how to avoid the pitfall of historicist thinking. To say that desire must be taken literally is to say simultaneously that desire must be articulated, that we must refrain from imagining something that would not be registered on the single surface of speech, and that desire is inarticulable. For if it is desire rather than words that we are to take literally, this must mean that desire may register itself negatively in speech, that the relation between speech and desire, or social surface and desire, may be a negative one. As Lacan puts it, a dream of punishment may express a desire for what that punishment represses. This is a truth that cannot be tolerated by historicism, which refuses to believe in repression and proudly professes to be illiterate in desire" (Copjec, 1992, p. 14).

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Ksenija Orelj

Time Bending

Meandering, Meditative and Dizzy Performances

by Tomislav Gotovac

Human life at the end of the 20th century is the product of someone's wishes, scripts and directing... An artist is (...) someone who is trying to race against a deadly avalanche. Trying in vain.

(Tomislav Gotovac)

Tomislav Gotovac, a.k.a. Antonio G. Lauer (Sombor, 1937–Zagreb, 2010) was a pioneer in different media, from experimental and structural film to happenings, actions and performances. He established himself in different roles: as a visual and conceptual artist, a performer, but primarily as a film director. What fuelled this vocation were not so much his studies at the Belgrade Academy of Dramatic Arts, but endless hours of watching films and his very own analyses of film techniques.

Just like his films, in which he employed experimental and structuralist methods, Gotovac's performances, which he began in the 1970s, are characterized by finely honed directing procedures. Their structure is often simple and reduced, but makes a profound impression: it is a structure that involves the artist's own body as the medium. In his experimental films, Gotovac explores the *locked possibilities* (Turković, 2012)¹ of film language. Similarly, in his performances, Gotovac aims to challenge artistic and cultural conventions. Therefore, he describes his performances as stunts in everyday rubrics of life.

The general public has to be given a chance to understand everything ironically, not bindingly. Everything I did on the streets was my conflict with reality in some passive manner, for I never forced anyone to do the same. Ultimately, I think it was fun to watch me. I was putting myself in an awkward position so others might enjoy it (Gotovac, 1994, p. 28).

1 For more about Gotovac's film oeuvre, see Diana Nenadić 'The Declination of Film According to Tom/ Antonio Gotovac/Lauer', in: Orelj, K., Šimičić, D., Šuković, N. and Šuvaković, M. (ed). *Tomislav Gotovac, Crisis Anticipator*. Rijeka: MMSU, pp. 97-128.

At first glance, this approach seems causal, impromptu. However, these performances are carefully planned. Behind the scenes there is always a precise time schedule, a targeted location, specific movements and an entire mise-en-scène, which indicates that the principles of film directing are the foundation of all Gotovac's works. Whatever he did, he remained faithful to the ideas and concepts of his original medium, explaining how "every great author constantly makes one and the same movie, his very own movie" (Gotovac, 1984, p. 4). Meticulous directing, which is present in the artist's actions and performances, relies on the laws of coincidence and the unpredictable reactions of the environment, passers-by and the public, which contributes to the plurality of images and experiences of time. Dissonant reflections and dimensions of time that vary from circular to decelerating and meditative are essential features of Gotovac's works, which I examine in this essay under the title of *Time Bending*. I will focus on performances from different periods: *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I Love You!)* (1981), *Marshal Tito Square, I Love You* (1997), *Three Monkeys* (2008) and *Movement* (2009). It was the artist's unusual gestures that rely on dynamic body movements, but also on complete passivity, that inspired me to explore these works among many others. The first two of the above-mentioned works were urban actions, while the artist's last performances took place in a natural setting.

These works may also be seen as the artist's acrobatic acts on the theme of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the body, challenging the traditional meanings of horizontal and vertical. While the vertical dimension, reflected in its plainest form as walking, standing, or running, is associated with an active, male principle, transcendence, and the primacy of vision, the opposing horizontal dimension is related to a passive, female principle, characterizing immanence, profaneness, and tactility (cf. Plate, 2004, pp. 55–57). In these works, the performer's body becomes a changeable vector, with tendencies of both rising and falling, mobility and inertia. Each work has its own emphasis, i. e., articulations that are visible in the appearance of the body, bodily movements and trajectories, and Gotovac uses them to open an interspace between traditional binaries. The horizontal and vertical dimensions are converted into giddiness, into a moment of vertigo that upsets the primacy of an upright over a relaxed and passive position of the body.

Seen from the present-day perspective, these performances look like an anticipation of the widespread hyper-acceleration that, supported with modern technology, favors incessant production and does not leave much room for pausing, recuperation and abandonment to the flow of time. Gotovac's actions and performances seem to mock the unrelenting rush that relies on a constant mobility of the body and an active, upright figure. Instead of optimizing the body towards greater efficiency, which is a prerequisite to progress, Gotovac's works focus on subjective dynamics and inner being. Appearing provocative and eccentric at first, they actually move away from celebrating the body as heroic, solid and invincible. They challenge the aforementioned qualities that are typically assigned to the male subject and the ideology of progress. Instead, these works affirm a time that invokes a sense of vulnerability and gentleness. They are reminiscent of various reactions of escape



1 Tomislav Gotovac, *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I Love You!)*, 1981, action, Zagreb.

from the dominant rhythm, presenting acceleration as one of the socially standardized (in Gotovac's words, "directed") time forms. His last performances, *Three Monkeys* and *Movement*, which took place in a natural setting, appear like attempts to confront us with speed – speed which is unavoidable, speed that reflects the ephemerality of our lives.

The City as a Scene: Confounding of Action and Reversal of Time Routine

Gotovac's actions in public space were always carefully directed, and often began at noon, with the sound of the Grič cannon. *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I Love You!)*, which Gotovac performed in 1981 in the very centre of Zagreb, also began at midday. *Zagreb, I Love You!* is also Gotovac's homage to Howard Hawks and his film *Hatari*, particularly the scene of a rhino fleeing from hunters who are trying to capture it for a zoo. In Gotovac's performance, the rhino is a metaphor for the artist, for a lone eccentric who is trying to escape the attempts of others to constrain and tame him, an eccentric who is always in breach of some external regulations. In this "urban jungle", Gotovac shows up in his "birthday suit". He moves around boneless, without any symbol of status and identification, presents his most naked, most vulnerable image, where the senses are in full swing.

This quick performance relies on the element of surprise, just like his first striptease performance, *Streaking*, which he did for the purposes of the film *Plastic Jesus* (Belgrade, 1971). Gotovac appears suddenly, emerging from a doorway in Ilica Street and starts walking along the main pedestrian promenade. He walks toward the central square, yelling *Zagreb, I love You!*, and then lies down on the asphalt and kisses it. The action is ended by a policeman, who “arrests a guy who is completely naked and walks around the Square yelling ‘Zagreb, I love you!’ but does not appear to be aggressive” (Marjanić, 2009). The dynamic journey of the upright body is followed by the body’s horizontalization, the act of becoming one with the asphalt. This act, which in itself does not serve any purpose in an urban space, in fact confronts us with a witty rebus about progress. In contrast to the traditional definition of progress as a linear movement forward, progress becomes a questionable, fragile category. A moveable timeline clashes with a time that stumbles, a time that matches this passive body on the sidewalk. Instead of a vital image of modernity (popular in the Western and the socialist cultures alike), the city is introduced as a place of contradictions. Urban “rain forest” becomes the space of action, but also a space of deactivation of movement, which can rarely be noticed in a city and is undesirable for a normal “flow”. It is precisely these borderline moments that *Zagreb, I love you!* emphasizes. It introduces diversion into the bustle typical for city centers, and produces the effect of stopping and slowing down. Taking time as a readymade category, this performance focuses on the loosening and relaxing of the body as the prerequisite of any form of mobility. The objectivity and alleged uniformity of time seem to dissipate when we are confronted with time as an experiential category, subjected to different impressions of the body’s transience. “Artistic practices of interruption, stopping, and arresting can thus be seen as work towards ‘countertemporalities’. Countertemporalities are not simply a negation of the temporal; they are neither a mere denial nor a hereafter of time. Their objective is not to negate or abolish time, but to reflect and multiply experiences of time” (Gronau, 2019, p. 16).

Gotovac’s defamiliarizing of social rules relies on the carnivalization of everydayness, which is typical for the conceptual and new art practice of the period. Using eccentric gestures and challenging the usual ways of moving in urban space, the artist plays with the role of the “usual suspect”. Therefore, we can follow him “through works in which he exists in polarities, between being a weird and potentially dangerous suspect, an entertainer and provocateur, a heretic and devotee, always on the verges of social (im)propriety” (Orej and Šuković, 2017, p. 321).

Identification with marginal characters who are in disagreement with the generally accepted roles is what characterizes some other works of Tomislav Gotovac, in which the midday walker attracts public attention with his unusual appearance. *Adapting to Objects on Marshal Tito Square – Marshal Tito Square, I love you!* also suggests multiple experiences of time, with an emphasis on suspending and confusing the action. The longest and physically most exerting action was performed in 1997, between Franklin Roosevelt Square and Marshal Tito Square (today’s Republic of Croatia Square). This methodically



2

Tomislav Gotovac, *Adapting to Objects on Marshal Tito Square – Marshal Tito Square I Love You!*, 1997, action, Zagreb.

directed performance also starts at noon and involves quite a specific costume. The artist shows up wearing orange worker's overalls with *Howard Hawks* written on the back, white gloves and sneakers, and a baseball cap. He enacts a performance involving a circular movement that begins and ends with Ivan Meštrović's *The Well of Life* (Meštrović was Gotovac's favorite classic artist). Circling the square, he explores its architecture, from the elements of high culture to the props of popular culture. He pauses at the architectural folds, feeling the sculpturally emphasized points. Finally, he clings to Meštrović's work, to the naked bodies "frozen in space", which represent the circle of life from birth to death. He touches different obstacles, trying to adapt to them as much as he can: edges of buildings, urban equipment, benches, dustbins, traffic signs ... He hugs these elements, lies down, flexes himself, bends over. Just like in *Zagreb, I Love You!*, he twists and bends the everyday, and he does it with a lot of emotion.

Marshal Tito Square, I love you! is like a declaration of love to the city. Gotovac approaches the urban space as though it was a human being, which is reflected in his relationship to the architecture and the way he presses his body against its curves and cavities. "It is a lover's relationship to Zagreb. [...] This performance involves me trying to squeeze my body into every nook and cranny of my beloved square."²

2 From the announcement of BADco., on the occasion of their reconstruction of Gotovac's performance, <http://badco.hr/hr/news-item/tomislav-gotovac-14-10-2017>.

The performance appears as urban acupuncture³ that has a specific rhythm at certain points and uses a circular choreography of returning to the place where everything begins. *The Well of Life* itself has a central composition, which is additionally accentuated by the spiral workflow of the action. This double circularity suggests that time may have a vertiginous dimension. Personal time, in which we immerse ourselves in the flow of our own thoughts and emotions, is placed in contrast to public time in an attempt to resist the standardized measurements using a slowing, circular rhythm.

By referring to *Marshall Tito Square, I love you!* as “the essay on my own youth” and reminiscing of the times when he came to Zagreb for the first time as a child, Gotovac allows us into his own biography, summoning the memories of the past and contemplating bygone days. The usual experience of racing against urban speed is brought to the ground, literally. Having been slowed down, it accepts new and subjective temporal rhythms.

Intimate Choreography: the Bending of Time in Gotovac’s Late Performances

In contrast to the already anthological works described above that loosen the dynamics of social time, presented with images of and the flurry of public spaces, the artist’s later and less known performances are emphatically intimate and come with an introspective note. They explore the standardization of personal time that is adapted to the ticking of the clock and the rapid flow of life. These performances took place as part of the performer festival in Štaglinec, a suburban area of Koprivnica. From 2005 to 2015, the festival, at the initiative of artists Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić, brought together numerous Croatian and foreign artists. Gotovac performed there both as Tomislav Gotovac and Antonio Lauer after he took his mother’s maiden name in 2005.

Gotovac performed *Three Monkeys* and *Movement* when he was in his seventies, right before his death. In some way they are his farewell works, his endeavour to make peace with the limitations of reality and his mental and physical state – his confrontation with his own end. These performances are articulated with soft and open positions of the body, devoid of heroic poses. They are poetic and moving, not rebellious and provoking like his earlier works. They are preoccupied with the body in its constrained activity, the body that examines its own gravitational axis and vertical and horizontal dimensions, which are weakened by aging. Unlike the swarming urban settings previously seen in his performances, these last works are set in nature. It is a natural surrounding that, instead of

3 A similar approach to the city as a multidimensional organism is noted in *Total Portrait of Zagreb*: “It has its body and soul. It has its own bloodstream, its own breathing system, and nerves, and steps, it has its optimism and pessimism, its illnesses, and arms, and legs, and body; it has its head, nose, ears, teeth, and its own eyes ...” This is a synopsis for a film that has never been made (1979), which is kept at the Tomislav Gotovac Institute, founded by Zora Cazi-Gotovac and Sarah Gotovac following the artist’s death. The institute is managed by curator Darko Šimičić.



3 Tomislav Gotovac, *Three Monkeys*, 2008, performance, Štaglinec.

pursuing historical and chronological time, acknowledges a cyclic flow of the living matter, a time of growth and a time of decomposition, and it is a perfect *mise-en-scène* for these works that address the topic of vanitas. Dispelling the anthropocentric illusion of the primacy of man's position in the world, these final performances shatter any belief regarding human exceptionalism in the natural order of things.

The performance *Three Monkeys* is free from the usual dynamics of movement as well. With his mobility restricted, Gotovac calls into question the credibility of the human senses, emphasizing this by intentionally blocking them. Again, this is reminiscent of an earlier work, a performative photograph entitled *No Hear, No See, No Speak* (better known as *Three Monkeys*, 1979). However, along with the organs of sight, speech and hearing, the artist now wraps up his genitals, too, the centre of sexuality. With bandages all over his body, accompanied by his friends and the audience, Gotovac meanders around the Štaglinec estate, trying to stay upright and oriented. His zig-zagging course through space represents the body in all its perseverance, but also in its possible degeneration and fragility. It reflects the paradox of the body's own energies.

In this performance, Gotovac moves slowly, looking back and stopping every now and then. He touches the space around him. He touches the audience, too. He steps into the intimate space of others, which involves an intensive interaction, as the artist's body "glues" itself to the body of another with an intimate blend of its own presence and smells. He

maintains his balance by leaning on his friends, but also by listening to the voice of his intuition. Seen through this prism, the performance is an exercise in immersion into our own self. In this process, slowing down and setting aside action play the key role in finding one's own rhythm and keeping one's balance. *Three Monkeys* bring us back to the intuitive potential of the body. Placing the emphasis on the rhythm of (inner) movement instead of focusing on the effect and purpose of action, *Three Monkeys* reminds us of meditation practices and age-long rituals of gathering one's own energies. "To move slowly, to observe the flutter of time, to quit playing the hero and stop going with its flow. To ignore time as though it was a naïve commercial for something else, something that is truly wanted" (Tokarczuk, 2003, p. 272).

His last performance, *Movement*, is also characterized by restrained choreography and limited mobility, which stands in contradiction to the very title of the work. It has a particularly acoustic nature, focused on acoustic waves at the edges of discernability, and is one of his rare verbal-acoustic performances. Gotovac walks around the Štaglinec garden, moving in irregular circles. He is down on all fours, crawling, touching the ground, barefoot and barehanded. Along with occasional vowels, he articulates the sounds *k, t, d, p, m, n* in recurring intervals. Although initially this "acoustic shower" may seem like a strange incantation, the artist actually piles up difficult sounds that are a reminder of his long struggle with a speech impediment, the stutter that was his constant companion in youth. "With this ritual, he simultaneously invokes and relieves the feeling of pain while the sheer rawness and roughness of expression points to the one thing all of us ultimately go back to: to the elementary and the unspoken" (Špoljar and Špoljar, 2019, p. 38). Gotovac refers to the performance as follows: "When I entered my seventh decade of life, I was persistently overwhelmed by themes of some sort of departure since the body began to fail. I started to think about the simplest things and phenomena of which nothing remains, and these are the body and nature: namely, trees, sky, and body noises" (Marjanić, 2012).

In these performances, time becomes emphasized as a concept that reinforces the tendency of all things towards being lost and disappearing. While his earlier works appear to be removed from the optimized image of urban progress, *Movement* and *Three Monkeys*, with their minimalist dynamics and simplified direction, are a shift from the optimized image of the body which is forever in action, with efficient motions directed forward. All the way, until its own departure that cannot be faked but only learnt and accepted.

Is the Next Step Leading Me on or Shall I Fall?

Amid the general mobility of commodities, people, ideas and information, inertia is one of the dreaded fears. The compressed and abstracted time of late capitalism acknowledges a pause as long as it is calculated within the individual list of chores. An efficient body is a privileged body. Aged, aging or inert bodies have been pushed to the margins. In our



4 Tomislav Gotovac, *Movement*, 2009, performance, Štaglinec.

hyper-accelerated society that attempts to fend off its ultimate fear with its cutting-edge technology, the final standstill, death, has to be tricked in order to grow old without aging, in order to “buy some time”.

“Somehow, people have come to love only some changes. They have come to love growth and becoming and not shrinking and decomposing. Maturation has always been more appealing than decay. People like what is younger, juicier, fresh and unripe. What hasn’t been completed yet, a bit rough around the edges, driven from the powerful inner spring of potency, that which is yet to come. Only what is new, what hasn’t been before. The new” (Tokarczuk, 2003, p. 272).

In this sense, artistic practices such as those of Tomislav Gotovac are intriguing because they mock the negations typical for the present time. They depict “an abhorrent body, a non-aesthetic body that is afflicted by the hardships of time but doesn’t aim to hide it” (Špoljar and Špoljar, 2019, p. 37). Like the previous performances, Gotovac’s later works also explore alternative models of time. With a specific, intimate note, they address retrospection and evocations of the past (*Movement*), or explore introspection and perseverance in time (*Three Monkeys*). Their circular journeys appear meditative and dizzying at the same time, promoting an extended consciousness that exists somewhere between the

safe ground and an unknown sphere. Both *Three Monkeys* and *Movement* express bodily movements that are often identified with unwanted states of disorientation and collapse, and they acknowledge these movements as natural and vital moments of keeping balance.

With their winding trajectories, Gotovac's performances remind us of the imperceptible but always present moments of seeking balance; yet, they may also denote ancient rituals (cf. Anderwald, Bucher-Trantow and Grond, 2017, p. 13) characterized by circular choreographies focused on an (inner) equilibrium, which can be observed in different cultures and periods, from tribal dance rituals to the whirling of dervishes. Performance turns into a game of seeking orientation, a mobile koan with unusual positions where one tries to achieve balance in an externally imposed rhythm. In a seemingly paradoxical way, Gotovac offers an escape from the acceleration and the compression of time in these twisting performances. Familiar time frames disintegrate, indicating, like in Eastern spiritual practices, that we are not just passive victims of the flow of time. We *are* time. We are the ones who create it. And in doing so, we shape exemplary images that can either destroy or renew us. All the way to entropy.

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Vlasta Delimar

Antonio G. Lauer

Balancing Film Time and Real Time

Antonio G. Lauer a. k. a. Tomislav Gotovac did not live by the rules of real time, time that is assigned to us by social needs and norms. He had his own time. Even when he had a full-time job as a clerk, he never allowed the imposed rhythm of the administrative work to disturb the rhythm of his own time. Moreover, he referred to this employment as his first directing job. The time he spent working as a clerk was his film time, which he transformed into his own. For Lauer, film time that could undergo wonderful transformations was more than acceptable.

For Antonio G. Lauer, watching films was like going to work. Watching films was not an entertainment, but a real job, which meant transforming the time of film into real time and vice versa – transforming real time into film time.

One of his most important works, *TOM*, was created in Štaglinec in 2006, where Lauer burned his name. This act of name-burning was not just a drastic break with the imposed identity; the very process of how the performance was created was a film space in itself, a film space in which time was important as it was part of the contemplation. Again, this was where the transformations of real time into film time took place. The preparation for the performance took three days. Each segment was repeated, in full concentration. My participation in this process, the process of creating this performance, was tremendously exciting and I felt honored to be there.

The job of directing requires discipline, and Lauer was a very disciplined person. I have never met a more orderly person.

The real time of the *TOM* performance was transformed into film time:

Day 1 - Definition of the performance site, laying the groundwork (cutting out the weeds)

Day 2 - Formation of the letters T, O, M by digging out the soil and forming a 15-cm deep canal

- Filling of the canal with sawdust

- Day 3 - Laying out newspaper sheets in the form of letters T, O, M
- Arrival of the audience
 - Pouring gasoline over the newspaper sheets
 - Throwing a piece of crumpled, burning newspapers on the word TOM
 - Observation of fire that destroys the name TOM
 - Observation of the burned name TOM, which turned into black dust

Watching films is a job that requires a lot of time, as no film can be watched only once, each one has to be watched multiple times. Lauer's time with people was very similar. An encounter could not be short, any get-together had to last several hours, it had to repeat itself. Therefore, our get-togethers in Štaglinec went on for hours. Our lunch at the "Bijela kuća" restaurant in Koprivnica lasted forever. Lauer literally ate just two bowls of soup, at the waiter's astonishment. This was not film time, this was Lauer's time, and he was able to transform it into film time if he wanted.

In his last years, Lauer used to sit in Jelačić Square in Zagreb, for hours, and observe people getting on and off the trams. That was the job of Antonio Lauer, the film director.

In Milan Božić's work, which consists of a series of photographs from Koprivnica in 2008, the two of them are sitting, talking and, again, balancing real time and film time.

Concerning the relation to time in terms of young and old age, Lauer used to say that the Lord is the one who decides on everything.

Ann Cotten

Method Piercing Time Scrolling Dariia Kuzmych

1.

The heart of art does not, of course, lie in painting. Since the first cave painting, the media of painting have been – besides wall, pigment, and binder – the painter, the viewer, and their respective experiences, transposed in place and time. For representational forms of art at the very least this transposition can be seen as an important part of the “kick” that we get from it. None of these factors can be examined independently. Rather, like a triangle in mathematics, each can be described by means of the others, and the sum of these descriptions describe – as best we can – what it is to be a triangle.

Time is a thing that we know only as we know it. Only speculation, abstraction or other forms of trance allow a view from outside of time – and these views are artful illusion, since our existence is tied to a transient body. Time has thus only ever been described or examined by a person in a place; even when machines tell it, they are telling it to us dwellers in these rotting corpses. Dariia Kuzmych is no exception: she examines time by tracing, marking, playing with and reproducing the ways in which she needs or uses it.

Time has particular qualities as a human environment. As Alexius Meinong points out in his classic work on value theory: what is needed is not there. Thus a need necessarily pertains to an absence.¹ Absent things whet our desire, feed speculation. We can as yet only dream of a non-human perception of time, as we can only dream of non-humans, while gazing at our watches in their poker-faced masquerade of servitude to human use. All kinds of computers are of course built up around time codes, to the extent that the collapse of all systems was a serious worry when the date changed, back then, to 2000. But precisely because linear time is such an aprioric building block of machines' existence, it is hard to think of it meaning anything to them – and the same basically goes for humans. Time codes make sure that

1 Alexius Meinong: *Zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Werttheorie*. Graz 1923, p. 15f, p. 28, in a footnote. On p. 15, Meinong references B. Bolzano's 1837 *Wissenschaftslehre* concerning the determination that a satisfied need is, strictly speaking, no longer a need. Meinong further reminds us that sometimes we do, sometimes do not know what we are missing.

processes run in the right direction and don't get tangled up, but time codes are, as the word reports, a code, built expressly to correspond to the collective subjectivity of human beings. Certain basic, body-based impressions, such as time being irreversible, fulfill the function of a basic, aprioric code of morality. Crimes and injuries can't be undone, all memories are illusions, and we are constantly falling apart.

A simple flip of hierarchy, of course, might change everything. A knife wound, for example, in a split second makes gradual erosion processes laughable. But it is then healed, closed by something like the erosion of the gash by the web of life, which seems in such moments a strangely robust network of cooperation. It is no wonder that people have mystified the concept of emergence, as such phenomena truly seem miraculous. As if we were self-organized spontaneously out of some bread dough forgotten by a hot spring. While in fact there is no self: ourselves are illusions, ghosts, phantom melodies arising of the complex, cooperative music our DNA churns out incessantly by having itself read on protein, thereupon performing various operations before changing into something else, for reasons akin to gravity minus boredom.

In any case: Subtract life, and the data will fall into a jumble with no more reason for any linear order. Like all the junk in the house of a deceased person. Art, in the sense of objects, such as sculptures, paintings, even records of performances, helps us see even recent history in the light of artefacts, with the artificial aura of centuries of soil collecting around them, and curators as archaeologists of the present reading, canonizing, constructing a population as sparse as that of the Neolithic. One might say meaning, or even coding in general, is built as a device to skip through time, to take shortcuts.

The CD player, this quiet domestic innovation of the 1990s, eclipsed by the information highway, Clinton, Iraq, institutionalized conceptuality over linearity, seemed to kill, rather than add itself to, LPs and tape cassettes with their linear reading mechanisms. CDs with their light-based technology took, automatized and improved the way people used to lift the arm – somewhat unofficially – and lower it to another place on the spiral timeline of the LP, an act that had always felt vaguely transgressive, like Godzilla in a doll house. What was a skill, a gesture, a danger, a social topic, was now no longer an issue: and we swim disoriented in the perfection.

Another way to escape from materialism in concepts of time is to consider differences; consider also the existence of large numbers of people, coordinated along the common ground of shared time. Just as we try to stop breathing one another's air, separated by masks or by kilometers, what remains is time, measured by a common measure, but tasting different on every side of the manifold subjective divide. While we thus share time, it is by forgetting it together, for example in a parallel construction of meaning where, for the space of a game, the observer or reader is content to be guided and follow the commands²

2 Cf. Boris Groys's recommendation of thinking to think of philosophy as commands or imperatives, in order to avoid a commodified "supermarket model" of shopping around in philosophy for favorite, attrac-

of the artist's or the narrator's production of meaning. And as we are accustomed to and skillful in this game, we fool with it, push its limits, manipulate each other, or train together to develop special skills like wild leaps.

The production of sense is thus an intersubjective bridge, built for flexibility between perpetually changing shores and generations of users. To continue in the metaphor of Pythagorean geometry, the specifics of person, time, and place may shift, but they remain connectable as long as the description of the triangle, i. e. language or the production of meaning, is valid. Hence the panic-like emphasis that has traditionally been placed on truth, accuracy, science as the bases of common reference. Should the question of truth – in relation to the containers of lie and error – ever be diluted, language and thus the common reference point would slowly begin to deteriorate. However, until the deterioration process was completed, it would still reference the idea of truth, now obsolete, even as it sank into the depths of what once was time, like a star seen by a human on Earth.

Visual art has its languages and codes, which are durable and reliable like bamboo scaffolding, and it is on this framework that artists are able to hang their personal perceptions – in a detail far beyond what is contained in words or schemata. I hesitate to say subjectivity – this concept is a shallow fiction, since we all consist of the same molecule types and comparable experiences. We do not know what part of the personal way we notice and remember, reproduce and connect things is a result of the specific sequence of experiences that have taught us all this. It is a mix of skill and impressionability, influenced by a number of factors. What kind of a body do we have – easily forgotten? Strong? Awkward? Are our neurons fast to fire, fast to forget? Are we always following in the footsteps of too many data, putting the ends together? Are we rejoicing, cursing, careful, skeptical when we glance around? Are we always the smaller or the quieter ones, do people tend to turn their heads and listen when we open our mouths, or only sometimes, when a current gathers us into the collective moment? Factors too manifold to compute make up the tissue of what the shortcut “subjectivity” might be covering for. And even if genetic/biological factors were stronger, is this subjectivity? Is not the physical basis also just a site-specific conglomeration of data, unique as a fingerprint, but completely arbitrary? However special each unique pattern may be, it all decays, and this is what makes us a collective runway for time. When I look at a key work by Dariia Kuzmych, “Leaving the Town's Body: a map” (2016–2018, shown during Architecture of voice festival at Plivka Art Centre, Kyiv), what seems to be happening is an escape from the body through phenomena like phantasms, text reading, or projection. Such perceptual and artistic phenomena use the body, as an organ of perception of time and images, for other purposes than its own life; and the delight that one can feel at such use, or usability, may reach its limits when it comes to maintaining such services while at the same time processing pain, existential confusion, or perhaps both.

tive, cheap or opportune ideas. Boris Groys: *Introduction to Antiphilosophy*. Translated by D. Fernbach. London, New York 2012, p. xvii.

Time, like existence in general, can be experienced as paradisaical or as endless pressure, torture, hell. It depends on one's frame of mind, the chemistry in one's system, and what one is trying to do. This difference can be disorienting, and seems to be more so the less one is bound to conventional rules and timetables. These are often functional relics of past media, workflows and traditions such as 9 to 5, the – finally – regulated working hours, with the remaining time designated for leisure activity: a modern phenomenon, like the metal scraps people use for garden fences. In many types of work, there is objectively no particular need for a synchronization of presence. On the contrary, many areas have long developed shift systems in which humans have adapted their rhythms to fit the routines of machines that know no day and night. But we live in the past, model our behavior on the past, without knowing why. The past serves the function of making many aspects of the present invisible, drawing attention toward differences in detail. Past experience makes it easier to decide, to mold reality around a fiction, and though it quickly dwindles into the abstraction of a conceit, this can make it all the more flimsily attractive. Like digital cameras that look just like analogue ones allow us to fabricate a continuity of the trade, the art, the intent of what we are doing when we capture an image of a place in a moment.

What else other than concepts from the past, though, should we orient our time management around, if the machines are always a step ahead and at the same time, they too, often modelled on historicizing accounts of our needs? How do we work if the mail programme, the cutting programme, the social media, the phone are all on the same screen, modelled on a desk, but a hellish desk that has no time and no space? This tightness of the metaphor has led to us virtually reinstalling the scroll, originally a medium from ancient Egyptian and Chinese times, but this time with an open beginning – in the “eternal present of the spotless mind”, to quote a film title from 2004 that quoted a 1717 poem by Alexander Pope – and a past that disappears into the fog. When we designed the interface to everything as a kind of universalist cockpit, we got what we wanted: to stay in one place, not to feel or use our body, to gaze. To scroll. It is heaven. It is total control. Was the precursor to scrolling the view from the cockpit of a small airplane, the ecstatic moments of young war pilots on drugs?

2.

People doing artistic work with its almost sociological requirement of self-reflection and engagement may develop a campy manner of aligning to the city's rhythms of day and night. Or they may not. But you know that you could: choose your work rhythm, as though writing a sentence by weaving your life through the rhythms of the city. One imperative of artistic work is to follow and provide space for exact perception, warding off preconceived notions that tend to cut experiences short, to tidy them up to fit the nostalgic structures

of our cityscapes. End your artistic work at six to meet up with your friends for alcohol while the bars are open. Of course, daylight may play an objective role. But, if you are not a very particular type of painter, there is nothing to say that it is daylight that you need. Imagine months spent in a cellar cutting colored glass to copy a mosaic from a bygone era – in which it was claimed it was made for you. Then imagine the image of the mosaic on your iPhone, in a plastic bin – the little loop of the airport routine – dropped, cracked, remembering this moment from then on, every time you use it. The intrepid plane still flying through the blue-green cut-stone sky. Imagine interrupting whatever you are doing every hour to do exercises, and interrupting the exercises to sketch yourself doing them. Imagine a line of paintings of sun hitting a wall, hung on the wall tracing exactly the trajectory of this spot of sunlight. Imagine the same things in different places, later. Again later, in a different place. In the first place again, but again later. (Fig. 1)

Recently, visual artist Dariia Kuzmych has set out upon a thorough inspection of the medium time, using an array of tools to do so. Her principal tool is the room or atelier, as a virtual space and as real spaces. The mind behind the gaze is thrown about, as it were, by the wild whims of the sunlight's angles, but also its resident artist's moods, the throes of the evolution of the project. Visiting the artist periodically, maybe once every one or two weeks, I watched these spaces become cluttered and cleared, and saw, in gleeful mise-en-abyme, paintings of paintings of paintings of photos of paintings hung on a wall, hung on a new wall for the artist to reflect upon while she continues to work on them and paint paintings of their array. As a kind of control group, another wall shows sketches of time, of states. Concrete in the sense that every brushstroke is the precise document of a moment. The next moment. The next. And then the jokes you can make, if, say, you go back and correct the line of the first one. From then on, linearity gets muddled: a consciousness is not a watch, more like a Turing machine with its endless tape of commands and results, calculating from where it was set, sent by the last command.

When the medium of the brain is reused, there ensues a palimpsestic situation in which the previous uses mix and mingle with the current use. This is why repetition feels so good. Actually, it doesn't only feel good. The reason why it mostly feels good is that the brain selects for pleasant feelings. Remembering trauma means stress for the body and is avoided.³ What is much stronger is the relaxing lack of fear that orientation and learning provide. Learning is a safe and stimulating pastime, a succession of experiences of recognition. Even in the case of learning to avoid catastrophe by the experience of catastrophe, the absence of catastrophe in the catastrophe and a growing reliability of one's own skills in avoiding it mark the contours of a possible safe space for relaxation. This "comfort of knowledge and skill" may be the neurological motor behind humans' faculty for pattern recognition.⁴

3 For a popular synopsis of research on the brain's methods to support a non-objective optimism, see Tali Sharot: *The Optimism Bias. A Tour of the Irrationally Positive Brain*. 2011

4 Pattern recognition, and recognition of the recognition, are fundamental strategies for understanding a situation. Arkady Kononov, Ian Krajbich. *Neurocomputational Dynamics of Sequence Learning*. Neuron,

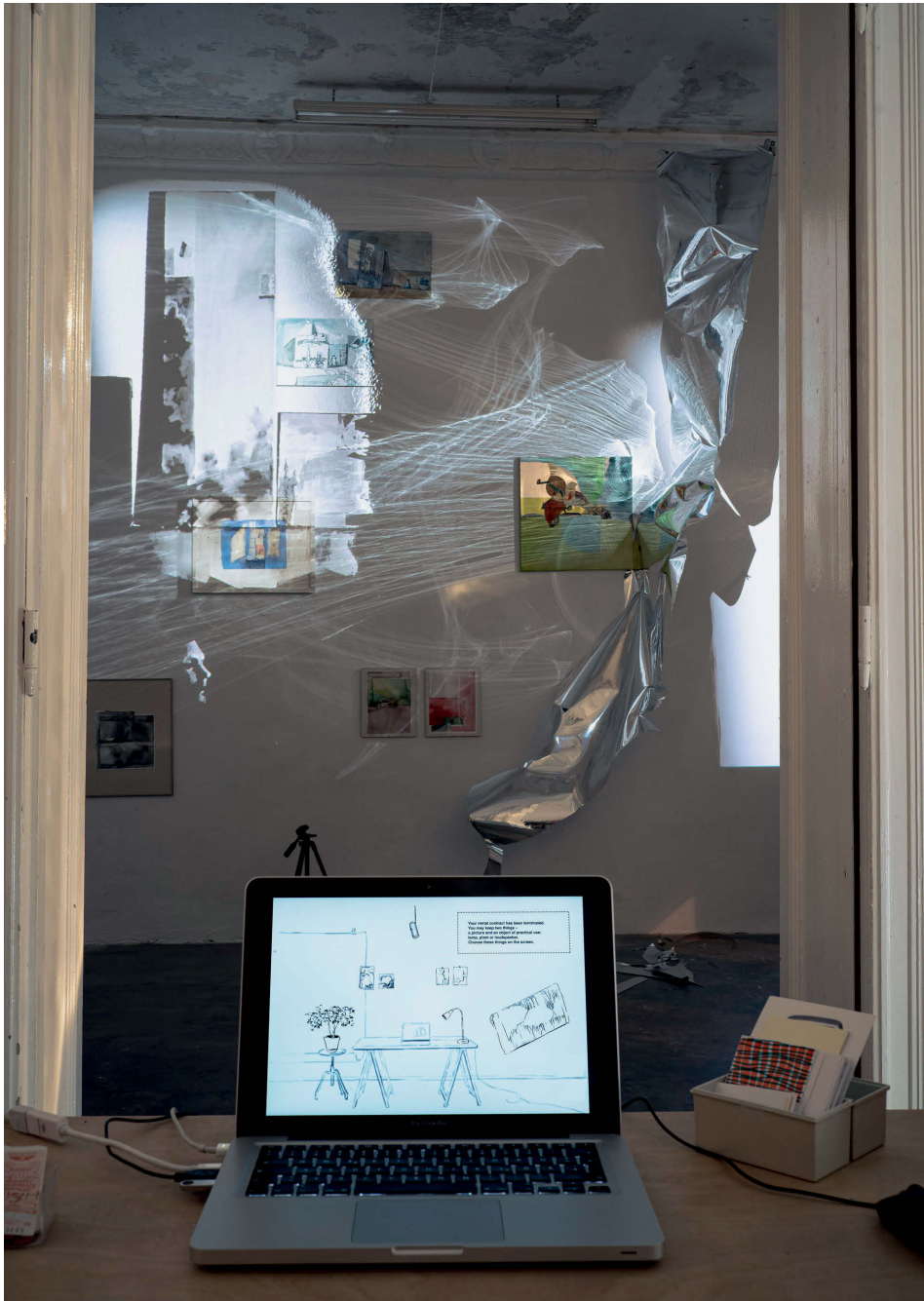
In games of mimesis, the agreed reference of visual representation serves as a foundation for games of interpretation, mnemonics, visual jokes, commemorations, social and human games. The game of mimesis is a game of reference, triangulating people into a shared world through its depiction. It is often called symbolic, but the contractual fixedness of a code would seem to cover up the way our eagerness for pattern recognition is able to discover patterns and correspondences in almost any somewhat complex state of affairs presented to us as a “portrayal” of another one.⁵

In Dariia Kuzmych’s work, like in that of an important point of reference for her, Ilya Kabakov, the sheer physicality in time as well as the cultural experience seem thrown against the wall together as in a projection. In this sense the projections that feature in her latest multimedia installations, such as “Your rental contract has been terminated” (2020), echo the way human beings are in, and cannot escape from, situations. The framing here is so close to life that it makes one want to avoid ethical or ideological questions concerning life in the precariat, for instance whether it is a good or a bad thing to have to keep moving like this or to be allowed to keep moving like this. Who is on top or in control of these moves – who is experiencing these things – when does experience turn into being thrown about, destroyed, trampled, when one can no longer play, has no pleasure in being in time. One feels perhaps, when no hope fuels impatience, a simple general protest against everything. In a way, Kuzmych again and again flips the control switch while in a space with objects. Construing the backbone of home and work out of a few flimsy objects, through a few artistic gestures, the slavery catering to the physical demands of practical life, dragging suitcases, accessing things, procuring and consuming – it all becomes a space to play in and play with – through the shift in the gaze triggered by beauty, by the sun’s angle. We see life, in its extreme brutality and exquisite delicacy, as the warm, golden-red late afternoon sun hits the studio wall, in a moment when the mellowing drive of the day hits upon the realization of the futility of trying to finish everything that same day. And this sunlight, enchanting precisely because of its impartiality, also falls on the paintings stacked against the wall, the spatial joke of past experience materialized in tokens, in prototypes for symbols as it were – since one cannot make a symbol alone.

The sun may also glance upon the black surface of a smartphone. If you swipe and enter the code, or press your finger to identify yourself (already a stark decision which to prefer as medium of identity, mind or body) you can find an archive of moments reaching back into the past – all the way back to the first smartphone owned by Kuzmych, including relics from even earlier like analogue childhood photographs. The Instagram archive goes down deep in time, in a structure like a scroll (and with the same problems that readers of Publius Ovidius Naso or the Tale of Genji had with their silk or papyrus scrolls: long

Issue 6, 27 June 2018, Pages 1066-1068.

5 Hermann Rorschach: Psychodiagnostik: Methodik und Ergebnisse eines wahrnehmungsdiagnostischen Experiments; (Deutenlassen von Zufallsformen) ; mit den zugehörigen Tests bestehend aus zehn mehrfarbigen Tafeln : [Textband]. Bern 1921.



1 Daria Kuzmich, *Your rental contract has been terminated*, 2020-ongoing, installation view, dimensions variable.

rolling if you are looking for a particular place farther down, which privileges reading and writing from the top).

Dariia Kuzmych fishes in this deep conveyor of time, groping for typology. We are working on a project called “How does it happen”, in which we examine different types of ruptures, breaks, tears, discontinuities, illusions and reflections in images. She fishes out the images and enlarges them, traces lines with the brush tool in her digital drawing programme. These steps echo the production of a graphic novel from personal experience, but work a bit differently. There is no storyboard and no strategic dramatic curve to cater to readers specialized in a certain kind of experience. Instead, we grope for classifications. Dariia is on to something, certain ideas for which she sees the selected pictures as iconic for, and which my analytical cross-fire of questions doesn't help to pin down. She arrives at a canon of images like gateways through which I seem almost to enter Dariia's mind, although this obviously is a different, a simulated version. I am strict because I am scared or at a loss and I want to understand Dariia's interest in its specificity as well as its shareability. I demand abstract definitions, trying to get at the skeleton of a theory that can be valid for anything, anywhere, and that looks and smells like a theory. You have to have more than one image per category! I almost shout at her. Dariia is more interested in delineating the precise contours of the experience. Before jumping to parody the imperialistic practice of categorization, she carries out a thorough examination of the material. The other begins with the next person; if Borges' “Chinese Encyclopedia”, popularized by Foucault, is iconic for its making use of Orientalism for a troubling of Western hierarchic categories, it also opened the door for a reshuffling of the order of the mind.

In the process of writing these texts in English and German and having them translated into Ukrainian, one thing we encountered was the untranslatability particularly of abstract words. Ukrainian has even less tolerance for the theoretical ballet of ambiguous sentences than English does. In such cases one is coerced to use concrete paraphrases: deeply changing the nature of the text; the position of the text in nature. All languages are in perpetual transition, but some, like Ukrainian, are particularly hot, as Marshall MacLuhan put it. At the moment, a lot of texts which are international theoretical points of reference are being translated: this means, a language is being found, a language is being invented for them, with them.

When Dariia decided at age 13 that she would use Ukrainian in everyday life, rather than the Russian spoken by her Ukrainian parents, it was a political decision fuelled by a linguistic consciousness that a language lives by its speakers, translations, and usage, and needs a large body of speakers to live. She belongs to a generation of young, urban, international Ukrainians, disgusted with certain continuities of post-Soviet style, disturbed by censure and violence, disappearing bloggers and journalists, and the war in Donbas; not completely diaspora but widely traveled and traveling; willing and competent to build a future almost from scratch – and for the time being having a flat white in one of the cafés where the ambitious and fashionable meet with close friends who, like Dariia's mother

Svitlana Selezneva, may have gone to art school but still spent their professional lives making ends meet in precarious labor, here or abroad. In the irrepressibly tender tones of the Ukrainian language, as well as in the prices of things, those pushing for a neoliberal future interchange with their compatriots who seem to be left behind in the past; the present seems not a mix, but a startling juxtaposition.

Those who stayed in Kyiv can sometimes be cold towards the returning diaspora, and art is a hard business. But at the same time world-building unites, in the whole range between punk squat, popup gallery, and utopia, and the fragility of our semi-digital world in general makes the generations look at each other with a tender sort of care, especially when there is such a stark rift. Time is not the least fragile aspect – no one knows how long the present will last. This is not the settled brick stability that allows bourgeois in the so-called West to forget themselves in making plans. To put it in an image: the sun is visible.

In William Gibson's *Count Zero*, people (console cowboys) enter something called the Matrix that strongly resembles the Internet, using a virtual vehicle which they call a horse.⁶ It was the first Gibson book I read. The *MacGuffin* in it was a piece of art by an artist modelled on Joseph Cornell, a small cupboard harnessing the power of nostalgia, apparently so powerful that it could send three people whistling through cyberspace on a virtually impossible mission. Gibson, famous for his stylish use of design and art in thriller-esque plots full of dystopian gimmicks, became a major influencer of the design market. His new books are used as inspiration for clothes and gadget design in the cyberpunk style. Conversely, trademarks mentioned in a Gibson novel will see their stock shares rise noticeably. The mention of Cornell may have been a factor in that artist's current market value. On the other hand, the fact that the artist caught Gibson's attention, with all due respect to the author's investigative taste, might already have been a symptom of Cornell's increasing fame. If you have ever tried to find the best way to clean or polish a surface, there are many advantages in a circular movement. One also comes to wish one had the power of micro-time-travel in order to layer the power of one moment and keep the cleaning time compact. Similarly, when brushing one's teeth or showering, in the typically sensorially specialized environment of a bathroom, one may lose track of the moments and pass and repass over already polished body parts, repeating the happy experiences with hot water or obsessing about not missing a millimeter of gum. Likewise, the foundation of the abstract concept of value is not material, but has the character of such massive massage. At the beginning of the 20th century, the mathematical modelling of economic theories involved numerous circular arguments, which were duly discovered and documented. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, and for practical reasons, naïve basic theories remain the basis for economic models, with tricks and adventurous constructions to compensate, patch, or make use of their incongruence with reality and the self-fulfilling prophecies of valuation and prediction in the virtual part of the market as it pertains to desires rather

6 William Gibson: *Count Zero*. London 1986.

than needs. This situation remains until today – and it has become successively more difficult to change the running system. The cynical basis of the capitalist world economy is clear but incredible to a flow of fresh generations. In fact, there is no incentive to keep a realistic relationship. People with money or credit (credibility) invested in the game are not interested in accurate representation of reality (it's horrible!), but a stable estate of fictions supporting a floating, unjust status quo which they are accustomed to being on the flip side of. In the time-coded, automated calculators and sales of futures, hedges and other probabilistic gambles, it becomes apparent that not only is this constructed plausibility a kind of currency in a world processed for economic calculation, but currency consists of futures – futures of hopes – hopes of myths, fictions, prejudices, and fears. The game of words is something akin to the fiction market of illusions, opinions. An image, a video: they demand time, then refuse to produce meaning. In the best case, they might slow down automatic trading for a moment by taking away bandwidth.

Pearl dives into the past deal in a luxury product. Time is their raw material. We watch the accumulation and destruction of meaning. Ideas seem to age from day to day like the flower petals and orange peels Kuzmych puts in frames and devices as part of her installations. We see concepts, spatialized, reacting, as it were, to the air in a kind of conceptual oxidation process. In Kuzmych's tetralingual context (Ukrainian, Russian, German, English), words appear as cumbersome, erotic, shining bodies that can trigger euphoria as well as deep and informed gloom. They live, alongside various types of visual art, as one of them. Concepts are extracted from text and drawn on paper.

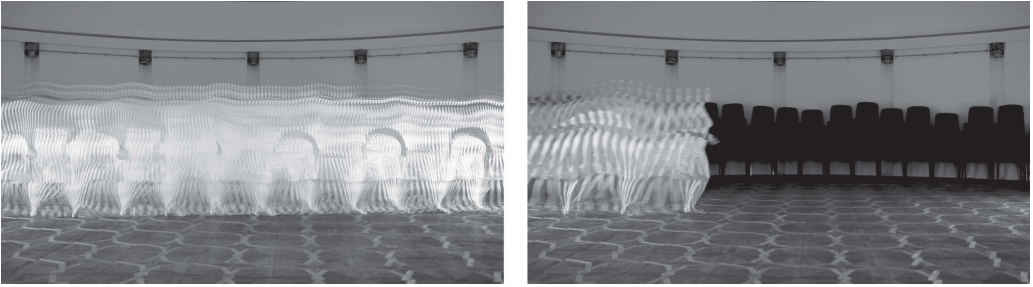
As she pierces the clutter with each new line in time-space, Kuzmych seems to hold her consciousness as a kind of laser cutter into all the inherited ideas and problems of our current situation. One of the most striking points of attack she has found is reading Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), with veiled parody, as if she were seriously determined to understand the concepts of this notoriously obscurantist work. Her sketches of Heideggerian notions bring out their grotesqueness and at the same time actualize them into real moments of a reader, a thinker, a room.

Heidegger is a writer who is almost impossible to read in his original language – productive readings have all come about through translation. His notions wither or bloom when stripped of the pathos he connects with Germanic roots, and freed from the etymological entanglements. A proficient non-native speaker reading him is in good company. Though the ideas are born from a strange obsession with words, they may, so many have wondered, just need to be cleaned, as it were, by translation or illustration – ideally by someone whose background helps not to confound identity or in-group bias with interest. Thus, black ink line for line, the reading artist shoots down toxic clouds. Apart from the drawings, she also plays with the words themselves, using the German language like a set of watercolors. Not oil paints. In Kuzmych's sketches of Heideggerian concepts, strains of time/consciousness become graphic lines. Creating illusions is of course just as possible in graphic art as in the sleight-of-hand of philosophical terminology. Indeed, the kind of

sense-making that will fascinate and delight a mind wishing to understand and to triumph continually actually requires constructions that logically resemble Escher's staircase. But it is an open question how such tricks from the German language of almost a century ago – through the mind of a digital native educated in a post-soviet art school – can be translated into a contemporary visual language of diagrams. Of course, it not only a humoristic but also a practical decision to approach precisely Heidegger in this way, as his excavations in etymology and circling, almost graphic evocative style provide rich material for all kinds of pattern recognition – rather than logical reasoning, let alone compatibility or communication with other thinkers. Is drawing a democratic medium? Be that as it may, translation is where the pressure to be understandable is concentrated, in this case the translation between languages and between media act as two levels of a kind of distillation process which is not out to purify essences, but to observe transformation.

Reading any philosopher in a language not 100% one's own (that is, as anyone not born between the pages of a philosophical treatise) is a potentially hallucinogenic temporal experience. Behind many theoretician's initially opaque prose often lies a huge sense of wonder – often at the bare facts of space and time. At the beginning of G. F.W. Hegel's *Phenomenology*, for example, there is a passage in which the author expresses boundless surprise at the fact that “there” one time designates a tree, then a house, then a horse paddock. Such alienated and alert sentiment shows the power of language or more broadly, of art and authorship to manipulate and loosen, as it were, the fabric of reality.

Reading in general is of course a quite particular temporal experience. A roller-coaster ride in a roller-coaster whose existence – and adherence to the rails – are dependent on one's firm faith in them. As studies on techniques of speed reading have shown, there is typically a lot of hopping around being done by eyes and by consciousness. Roman Jakobson famously described the paradigmatic things going on in the space of any poem, alongside what it says – observations that have been confirmed by recent eye tracking studies. In the case of abstract, but evocative writing, like abstract treatises on being or the nature of time, the time code is particularly special. The time it takes to read and the time it takes to metabolize, as it were, a concept, diverge. Perhaps the intercultural looseness of the use of a language not yet firmly hammered into the ground of experience – or, in the case of Heidegger, re-loosened – may help allow for a more polydimensional rendering of vocabulary in its connections to the world, not only to other words. Chaucer and Shakespeare had the wildest poetry with a young, highly intercultural English; Vladimir Nabokov infused the language with a richness of grammar, irony and consciousness of sound that came from the schooled mind of an emigrated Russian-language poet. Dariia Kuzmych's work on Heidegger is ongoing and will be sure to bring fascinating readings of the much-read eccentric's take on time, while also reapproaching French post structuralism from behind.



2 Dariia Kuzmych, *Acceptance*, 2014–2016, video still, loop.

3.

Pain and time are a throbbing pair, forming a moiré of sensitivity and its medium. If memory seems attracted to pleasure, pain seems to evoke evasion – and evasion is perhaps the one most characteristic feature of human consciousness. For example when compared to non-human, non-biological agents, it is human beings who get tired, get bored, get distracted, die. Evasion is an elementary reflex developed by creatures who live among things harder than themselves, like flying stones, words, and concepts linked in public opinion. To distinguish ourselves from non-biological consciousnesses, we could thus be called animals-who-regularly-cut-off-their-trains-of-thought. It is along the trellises of mathematics that we have trained our cleave-happy reason into passably symmetrical forms which allow us to speculate on the continuation of the lines, the projection of issues onto other issues, as can be done with light, or more generally, the discovery, by analogic reasoning and verification/falsification, of what we call the laws of physics. It is cutting that makes smooth surfaces, allows projection, permits escape with an option of coming back: not to the original place and time, but to a non-original place and time that is then filled with a repetition, echo, contour of the previous version. (Fig. 2)

Dariia Kuzmych's faculty for aesthetic ecstasy complements her experience of extreme pain, making these echoes and partial repetitions extra poignant. Two dangerous traumas lie dormant in her biography, we might say: *Revolution of Dignity* (2013–2014) and the result of a road accident: a splintered leg which, until Kuzmych's recently installed artificial knee joint, could not be bent. Strangely, there is hardly anything more intimately personal than a completely random accident, as if there were no possible draining of the shock via logic, necessity, value, guilt. Because this totally general and yet ultra-personal feature/ event/ situatedness that is inescapable but not easily integrated into identity, the trauma of pain without reason is particularly hard to grasp and thus a tough but very important element – as object or as agent – in artistic work. Kuzmych has included experiences with her stiff leg in her artwork from time to time, in ways of her own choosing, which often have to do with empowerment, regaining control and also tender play with



3
 Dariia Kuzmych,
 from the ongoing
 series *Pain and
 movement studies*,
 working title, 2020,
 pastel on paper.

the body part that gives so much trouble.⁷ In her 2014 work “Acceptance”, for example, she amplified a techno rendering of her unique gait through a room, running and walking, and handed out postcard format instructions on how to sit, sleep in buses, or squat to take a picture. In such practices Kuzmych feeds her art with experience in the best tradition, and at the same time makes use of artistic means to gain insight and control over self, life, body, time: a control which is, for the perceiving animals that humans are, always tainted by reflection.⁸ Recently she has been documenting her ongoing rehabilitation exercises by drawing, pausing in the ergo therapeutic pose to sketch herself, creating pastels that are at the same time realistic body drawings sketches of a body and also gestural art, real-time documents of the movement in the moment. Pastel is particularly apt as a medium for recording the directness, the skin on mat feeling, down to the fingerprints. (Fig. 3)

A striking pattern that runs through all of her work, and is perhaps grounded in the post-Soviet background, is that beside all sensitivity and subjectivity, Dariia has a rational methodology and hard-working habits. Work that can lead to states in which time dissolves as a subjective thing, and becomes rather the rhythm of a work or an exercise. Recently I saw works she had started when unable to sleep: the paper covered with lines,

7 When retraining a muscle transferred from thigh to kneecap to fulfill its new functions in the new place, Kuzmych laughed that it was like educating a child, which was at times absent-minded, willing or not, tired or funky, depending.

8 <https://dariiakuzmych.com/Acceptance>

an almost literal or one-to-one translation of time into space that was strangely moving, knowing that this was time that was not meant to be experienced, working sensibility that was not desired. And then a sort of kindness of mechanical attention turned this time into blue lines in space.

Dariia's sense of color, shape and humor rests upon method that is like a gait – sometimes, it seems, consciousness and reflection like a butterfly perched on the heavy-set hand of a worker. Adept at virtually all media, she can play with the qualities of all of them, from digitally generated images to oil, watercolor and mosaic. Typically in her shows she combines the different works in transmedial structures, creating narrative spaces that play with and examine our hybrid living environment from an artistic perspective. Transitions in space, transitions from the physical to the digital characteristics of objects, and our interactions with such intermedial spaces are her medium and at the same time a topic of her work.

4.

Finally, seemingly banal, but not to be forgotten – and swiftly gaining patina in pandemic times – is transportation as medium of the mind. *Transport*, the French word for being artistically moved, is an intellectual mirror to the field of public transportation – a connection lacking in German-speaking countries. In English, it has not completely shed some fairy-like tinge of being magically spirited to some other place, an association with the figure of *Gestundete Zeit*, the hundred years gone in the blink of an eye through the hand of fairies – with a grotesque echo in *Wizz Air*, the discount airline that plays a role in the lives of many people living between Berlin and Kyiv. Gogol's *Viy* comes to mind, the woman-demon that “rides” the hero until his nerves are in tatters – an excess of transport that is fought by a careful management of time and space, three nights spent in a chalk circle in a church.

No doubt Dariia's life, in transit between the European cities Kyiv, Berlin, and Vienna, is basis and medium for the Insta thread, the Heidegger interpretation, the still-lives, the *mises-en-abyme* and the documentary work she was doing in Dresden.⁹ But this basis is a moving one, which makes one glad that reflection is a butterfly. The transits between these places are also transitions between value systems, which raises questions and touches on deep underlying currents. Sometimes it seems like the effects of such travels can be felt in shifts of mood or method on the surface of the developing projects, as if following deep underlying trends. The image in my mind that led to the butterfly of reflection is actually

9 In her 2017 work “Dresden. Menschen auf dem Platz” (Dresden. People on the Square), Dariia Kuzmych travelled to demonstrations of the right-wing Pegida movement to interview and draw portraits of participants in the demonstration, collecting the material in an art book that plays with the heroic aesthetics of ideological realism as well as the fake idylls of touristic city picture books from the post-war boom period – highlighting the patchwork and incongruent nature of the interviewees' reasoning.



4 Dariia Kuzmych, installation view of *Dresden. People on the square*, 2017–2019, 72 pages, 3 / 25 exemplars, in German language, installation with the book and furniture.

the wall full of cards, sketches and post-its peeling off, fluttering, flying in the hot stuffy air of the Vienna Gemeindebau atelier, when Dariia turned on the fan. In her multifaceted, process-oriented, and wildly poetic installations, she turns her back on an unspoken retrograde tendency in the art market to retreat to more easily commodifiable object-shaped works of art, and indeed to the illusory reliability of commodification. She always retains the power and sang-froid to cut up, collage, reshuffle previous work. Kuzmych, with her hybrid spaces and structures, stays on the game side of the game. (Fig. 4)

Work, the more absurd, measureless and tailorable it becomes, is a particular way to deal with time. The discrepancy between the relative scalability of pain and suffering of man-hours and the market-dependent fluctuation of the value of work and skills is an endless source of strife and an almost insulting basis for all of our identities and consciousnesses. Particularly in the case of artistic work, there could hardly be a more hysterical market – hysterical also in the sense of slow reaction (hysteresis). While it takes decisive investments of time, space, material and skill to produce art, the sale of art takes place as a huge gamble. And yet, the objects make trouble, are messy, unwieldy, fade or glitch in their media like a broken data carrier. Thus, as anyone working in this field knows all too well, the illusion of a logical and reliable relation between working-hours and value is obviously absurd, and yet, as a fictionality, can almost be said to flirt with being a commodity in itself: it can function as a value

to present a plausible fiction in the light of current, currency-like fictions, or in other words: fitting in to the game that is being played and that everyone is afraid of falling out of. Practices of provocation flirt with the danger of displacing themselves rather than the fashion. Due to the slowness and inertia of real – reeling – production, many good artists have fallen out of fashion, or not never made it been in. Recent constructions like the “AI” humanoid artist figure Ai-Da offer depressing glimpses of what the ideal artist is like in the minds of people with money: an attractive young woman eager to talk about art as an emotionally rich, deeply enjoyable pastime, patient with mansplaining, a polite teacher of traditional narratives about greatness, art history and creativity as a rewarding hobby – the safe pretty story collectors are assumed to want to hear.

It has been argued that to develop a sense of beauty, AI lacks grounding in the ability to feel pain, as an interface that allows us experience our own decomposition. In a way far from aggression, rather imbued with a mysterious lightness, Dariia Kuzmych’s work makes use of human experience as a canvas of knowledge, understanding and perception, which also includes suffering. Dariia’s rational approach to the irrational is unlike most other forays into the psychology of artistic expression; the expression is analytical in ways that seem at times to bend the bars of language. Grounded in the physics of the body, in sports and training, in pain management and relearnings, her technique connects ideas with the flow and expanse of time, inside and outside the brain, and articulates the details and beauties of a solid ground shared with other living beings. Like living bodies, ideas must be kept alive in time – a fact that the ephemerality of Kuzmych’s projections and remixes does justice to. Her system remains flexible and resilient, a living network of skill and perception, in which the artist’s tetralingual situation, even as it balances in an unreliable world where rental contracts are suddenly terminated, visa rules change, and discount airlines reroute, is beyond doubt an important factor for this floating multistability. Without thinking artists as Dariia Kuzmych, we run the danger of getting stuck in aesthetic languages, opinions and world models from several centuries ago for a world that has evolved according to its own and our logic, which we may perceive, but have no language yet to talk about.

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COMMUNITY
WORK PROCESSES
REALITIES OF LIFE
THE MEDIUM

Anamarija Batista and Waltraud P. Indrist

Time Sphere

Plant Life as Part of Architectural Design

“That is what I say here in Čikat, the plants survive
both the hotels and the changes of government.”

(Dlaka, 2019)

Introduction – Cypresses, Greenhouses and Pot Plants as Heralds of Modern Temporality

In 1833, a minor sensation took place in the world of botany. Plants from London reached Sydney; they had survived the long ocean journey without water or a fresh air supply. The mini greenhouse constructed by Nathaniel Ward – known as “Wardian case” – out of wood and glass created a microclimate that produced a growth-promoting effect regardless of ambient temperatures (Cf. Grotz and Lack, 2021). The plants survived and the architectural innovation had simultaneously revealed a thinking in “new” temporalities: it meant a plant could be taken out of its “natural” environment and literally transplanted into a new climate zone, regardless of the specific climatic conditions encountered en route. This heralded the start of the houseplant and greenhouse era. Botanical “sensations” from different geographical regions gradually became part of local, everyday living spaces and markets. In the bourgeois homes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the new potted plants were henceforth presented in drawing rooms alongside murals and wallpapers with botanical patterns (Cf. Ruppel, 2019). Depicted both in real and in abstracted form, they became a defining element of the architectural and artistic world of their time.

Plants on their journey paths – new living conditions in new geographic regions – thinking in “new” temporalities. (Fig. 1)

The co-author Anamarija Batista wrote this paper as part of the research project “Collective Utopias of Post-War Modernism: The Adriatic Coast as a Leisure and Defence Paradise” (AR 439), funded by the Austrian Science Fund within the PEEK program. The co-author Waltraud Indrist published this paper as a researcher of the Institute of Architectural Theory, Art History and Cultural Studies of Graz University of Technology.

The attraction of plants – if one follows Georg Simmel’s thoughts on jewellery as an accessory in his essay “Psychologie des Schmucks” (“Psychology of Jewellery”) – makes an important contribution to expanding the sphere of meaning of the plants’ owners (Cf. Simmel, 1908). By acquiring them, through their presence and their materiality, people experienced a part of the world, an experience which could in turn be presented and passed on to their environment. At the same time, the plant represented a replacement of that which had been changed, displaced and sealed by construction, i. e. the natural temporal-spatial arrangement that had existed at this location at an earlier time. In this context we might say that potted plants not only create a balance to the weight of the modern building materials used in construction, such as concrete or steel, but also establish a kind of circular temporality that can be experienced through the metamorphic ability of the plant. This cycle resists the temporal sphere and the aging of the surrounding building material, which is unable to regenerate. What we encounter instead is the postulation of a different kind of corporeality that seeks to establish a memory of the outside world.

Pot plants as a trace of a green past and a figure of metamorphosis.

The use of modern-day building materials, especially large panes of glass and plastics together with tubular heating systems, make the growth and mobility of the botanical world more dynamic and flexible in temporal terms. The spatial environment created in this way enables the time of growth for the plant to be regulated. This feature turns the plant into a mass product. It becomes an integrated component of the planned interior or green space of the architecture (Cf. Gröger, 2019).

More dynamic and flexible growth of plants results in mass production of plants.

It unfolds its presence in the company of the inhabitant, the guest, but also of its plant companions. Plants become familiar. As Aida Bosch puts it, everyday presences “function as cognitive, material and psychological supports of human existence, as a supplement to its ‘half-ness’ (Plessner, 1982) and as a compensation for what it lacks (Gehlen, 2016)” (Bosch, 2019, p. 300).¹ In her view, another kind of presence that counteracts the routine character of the so-called extra-ordinary presence “seeks out the crack in the world with wide-awake senses” (Bosch, 2019, p. 302).² The author connects this presence with aesthetic or sublime experiences. Thus, the orchid’s beauty for instance, with its palm-sized blossom, causes us to pause in the midst of everyday activities.

1 “[...] fungieren als kognitive, materielle und psychologische Stützen des Daseins des Menschen, als Ergänzung seiner ‘Hälftenhaftigkeit’ (Plessner, 1982) und Kompensation seiner Mängelhaftigkeit (Gehlen, 2016)”. Translated by A. Batista.

2 “[...] dass der Riss in der Welt mit wachen Sinnen aufgesucht wird”. Translated by A. Batista.



1
Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, *On the growth of plants in closely glazed cases.*

Plants as close friends, family members as compensation for that which is lacking.

The relationship of the plant to the built environment of modernism is currently being shaped on yet another level. Some modernist buildings no longer retain their original function. A number of them have become modern ruins. While in the past, the plant was planned or designed as part of the living or working space of these buildings, today it is taking on a “new” role. It has mutated into an artefact of architectural heritage, a support that survives modernity, or in itself undertakes the work of the architect at the abandoned location. The departure of the human being enables the plant to re-appropriate the built space in new forms. Ultimately, in some cases, the plants even transform the architectural forms into new sculptural elements through their overgrowth. Their presence thus indicates transience, but in their restoration of the ecological system they also bear witness to “plant spaces” that existed before architecture or outlived it.

Plants as co-producers of the spatial bring new temporal orders into play.

According to Henri Lefebvre, plant arrangements also allowed for “new” orientations of the gaze. Thus, for instance, cypress trees mediated a “new” form of seeing in the Renaissance period, a circumstance which led to the discovery and emergence of a central perspective (Cf.

Clemens, O. et al., 2002, p. 10). In his text “The Production of Space”, Lefebvre analyses space following Karl Marx and his attempt to trace epochal economic social formations. As a result, he suggests that, among other things, the cultivated cypresses at Tuscan courts were decisive for the “recognition” of perspectival space. The reason for this lies in the re-organisation of the land management system, which Italian merchants and banking capitalists initiated from the 14th century onwards. They introduced the tenancy system, which entailed both a “new” division of the land and a changed mode of production. The palaces built in the countryside were surrounded by the tenant farms of the peasants. The tenant farms themselves were connected by cypress-lined lanes. The linear arrangement of the trees reaching into the depth was reminiscent of the perspective view seen from the court terraces of palaces – a view that evoked ideas of both distance and a pathway through it, a kind of “penetrating view” (Ibid.). “This space is dominated by perspective; it absorbs nature by subjecting it to the measure and demands of society, admittedly under the rule of the eye and no longer under that of the body” (Clemens, O. et al., 2002, p. 12).

Finally, the viewer of a landscape painting of this style and period could imagine himself walking along the lane: the imaginative tracing of temporal and spatial sequences resulted from the tree arrangement and the new mode of production.

Plants as producers of the perspectival view and supporters of the new mode of production.

If one were to look for the “most significant” plant protagonist of the industrial age, this status could be awarded to the houseplant. The proliferation of these plants took place within the emerging homogeneously sealed space, which at the same time was fragmented by parcelling. The houseplant, immanent in its own architecture, became part of the living and working community. However, in this constellation, namely in the pot, it has to rely on human cooperation and has itself become separated from its contemporaries, just as Lefebvre diagnoses a fragmentation in the capitalist production of space, which entails a kind of impossibility of overview. It needs the care of a human being.

Plants need the care of human beings.

How the plant becomes part of modernist architectural thinking, what form of temporality it brings in and how it penetrates “current” social formations, will be reflected and explained on the following pages based on selected case studies. We discuss the transformation that greenhouses initiated, as well as the way in which modern thinkers, for instance Hans Scharoun and Zdravko Bregovac, consider plants and botany in their design process. In the final part of the text, we will turn our attention to reflecting on the contemporary role of plants in relation to “empty” architectural sites, examining the “The INA Office Building” on Šubićeva Street in Zagreb here, as well as Igor Eškinja’s artistic work “Do Plants Dream of the Future?”



2 Joseph Nash, *Perspective from the southern entrance*, 1851, colour lithography, plate 4: the transept.

The Modern Spirit and Greenhouses – The Crystal Palace, London (1851)

Buildings for plants were one of the first indicators of modernism in architecture: modern greenhouses combined state-of-the-art bridge-engineering and greenhouse construction. The most famous representative of this type was certainly the Crystal Palace that was built 1851 to house the Great Exhibition – the first World’s Fair – in London’s Hyde Park. It is considered to have been one of the most innovative buildings of the Victorian era with its innovating use of prefabrication and modularization. During the construction, some 60,000 panes of cylinder sheet glass were produced using a ground-breaking new method by the Chance Brothers in only a fortnight (Chance, 2018). The Crystal Palace itself – with its glass panes and the cast iron structural elements – was assembled with great speed in five months, reaching impressive dimensions of 560 metres (about 1850 feet) in length and 33 metres (about 108 feet) in height. Glass panes had become a new mass product. Last but not least, the compelling design itself did not stem from an architect, but rather from a *gardener*, Joseph Paxton (1803–1865) who won the competition among 245 entries (Cf. Beaver, 1970).

The greenhouse as a temporary building with great attraction through its innovative use of the translucent material glass as a new mass product.

Apart from the technical aspects that are a pure expression of the modern spirit, the Crystal Palace may be regarded as a materialised architectural metaphor of the *enlightenment* with its light-flooded halls and its literal dissolution of the (brick) wall (of previous typologies such as orangeries). Moreover, this architecture of light seems to anticipate the modern credo “light, air and sun” nearly 70 years before institutional movements such as Bauhaus.

Thereby the visitors must have had the paradoxical impression of being both inside a building and outside it in the open air at one and the same time. Contemporary coloured lithography provides a first hint of this. (Fig. 2) The artist Joseph Nash not only illustrated the lively hustle and bustle inside the Great Exhibition in detail but also focussed on the sky and the cumulus clouds that are clearly visible through the glass ceiling and hence refers to another temporal sphere outside the building. Now, within this permeation of inside and outside that comes along with technical innovation, lies – according to the renowned art historian Sigfried Giedion – not only the beginning of the dissolution of the (central) perspective that had prevailed since the Renaissance but a new “space-time” conception itself: “The essence of space as it is conceived today is its many-sidedness, the infinite potentiality for relations within it. Exhaustive description of an area from one point of reference is accordingly impossible: its character changes with the point from which it is viewed” (Giedion, 1943, p. 356).

The architecture of the Crystal Palace can stand as a prototype of Giedion’s new “space-time” analysis. Giedion exemplified this understanding by juxtaposing Walter Gropius’ Bauhaus, 1926, with Pablo Picasso’s “L’Arlésienne”, 1911–1912. The iconic Bauhaus corner with its “glass curtains” (Giedion, 1943, p. 400), with its “glass walls blend[ing] into each other at just the point where the human eye expects to encounter guaranteed support for the load of the building” (Giedion, 1943, p. 401) by a column. But as there is no column, “the extensive transparency that permits interior and exterior to be seen simultaneously, *en face* and *en profile*, like Picasso’s ‘L’Arlésienne’ [...]”: what emerges is a “variety of levels of reference, or of points of reference, and simultaneity – the conception of space-time, in short” (Ibid.). To return to the lithography mentioned earlier, it also subtly illustrates twin points of reference: We see the inner space-time (and its lively hustle and bustle) and as our gaze wanders further to the clouds above the elm tree – a key element in the lithography (see more below) – the existing outer space-time (e. g. walkers in Hyde Park) is simultaneously referred to. A twofold space-time emerges, glides from one into the other, overlaps fluently.

*The space-time of the inside and outside is connected throughout the glass façade.
The central perspective becomes obsolete.*

This impression of a fluent space-time transition between interior and exterior space – this time through the motion of the visitors, their bodily experience – was further emphasised by Paxton’s scenic interior garden design concept: on the one hand, he created a vivid botanical landscape inside the Crystal Palace at ground level. (Fig. 4) This extended the



- 3 Attributed to Claude Marie Ferrier, *The Crystal Palace from the northwest corner. Two treetops just peek out from the inner courtyards of the building*, 1851, originally albumen-on-glass negative.

spatial impression of the garden theme for visitors who just had entered the building from Hyde Park into the interior.

On the other hand, three existing elm trees opposite the Prince of Wales Gate and close to the main entrance had themselves become a design parameter. In his final design, Paxton decided not to fell the elms³ and instead allowed the tree crowns to shape the barrel vault of the main transept. (Fig. 2) The elm trees of Hyde Park were thus able to survive and flourish after the Great Exhibition, which was reassembled for the last time in Sydenham in 1854.⁴ Elsewhere and almost escaping notice in the massive dimensions of the structure, two other existing trees were integrated into the northwest corner of the building. In this case, the inner courtyards secured their survival. From the outside, only two treetops peek out from the courtyards. (Fig. 3) Again, the visitors strolling through this courtyard, that

- 3 After objections were raised against the first plan of a flat roof this would have meant the destruction of the trees.
 4 Albeit they do not appear to have survived to the present day, an intriguing 360° view of the site is provided (*The Great Exhibition Virtual Tour*, no date).



4 Philip Henry Delamotte, *The tropical court in the transept of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, 1854.*

is, through Paxton's botanical-architectural intervention, were at the same time referred back to the outer space-time.

Plants as connectors of the outside and inside configurations.

Another aspect that came along with the Crystal Palace was a process of democratisation. Firstly, the admission fee to the first World Fair was reduced after four weeks to a quarter of the initial price from one pound to five shillings and finally to six pence. This made the exhibition accessible to a much broader audience, including labourers. "The maximum number of visitors in a single day was 109,915 on the 7th Oct, 1851" (*The Great Exhibition Virtual Tour*, no date). Finally, the "crowds were huge, with an estimated six million people attending. That was a third of Britain's population at the time" (*The Great Exhibition 1851*, 2019).

Second, a twofold democratisation was set by the ornamental plants themselves: the idea of cultivating tropical plants outside their original environment, in the living rooms of northern latitudes *and* not just exclusively affordable for bourgeois and middle-class households.

In the Hyde Park version of the Crystal Palace, this was represented in a small version in front of the northern part of the main transept. There were two fountains in front of the elm, and one was surrounded by tall tropical plants of considerable height. Together they formed a refreshing and cooling zone. An extended version was later realised in Sydenham, 1854. (Fig. 4) These tropical plants thus introduced a global, even cosmopolitan, sense of society in the midst of 1850s London. Anyone who entered the Crystal Palace at the time was immersed into a different time zone, without needing to travel or to spend much time there. Since access to the building was also granted to the working class after a few weeks, which meant the experience was able to penetrate all social classes, one might speak of a paradigm shift.

The Crystal Palace as the impulse giver for cosmopolitan feeling not only for the upper class but also for many inhabitants of Great Britain at the time.

Karl Marx Court (1927–1930), Vienna

The extent to which plants – their relation to nature – and modern architecture increasingly stand for a new dawn, a new social order is expressed in early social housing projects such as the prominent Karl Marx Court, 1927–1930, in Vienna, Austria, by architect Karl Ehn (1884–1959). The building complex, which spans a continuous length of one kilometre and has often been cited as a prime example of a “superblock”⁵, is characterised by its spacious green courtyards including playgrounds for children and, as a consequence, by its low residential density (compared to the former tenement houses (Zinshäuser) for labourers). The relationship to nature is architecturally emphasised by the balconies. Not only do these represent the equality of all citizens, since balconies were now being made available for people of all classes. They even *materialise* the modern credo “light, air and sun”, as they serve less for household activities (in some former typologies they were situated on the courtyard façade with access from the kitchen), but rather for recreation and to establish a connection to nature for the modern urban dweller (Großstadtmensch). Thus, the balconies of the Karl Marx Court anticipated the demand for “the right to green” (Cf. Krasny, 2012) and at the same time intertwine with Henri Lefebvre’s *The Right to the City* (1968) for the urban dweller. The latter has been “created” in the modern era and lives in a small flat since work and other functions are outsourced from the immediate living environment to the city. The urban dweller considers the city itself as part of his/her living realm. Hence, the residents’ “space-time” of movement has increased.

In Vienna, the balcony has materialised as a strong architectural-political element over the past hundred years for these reasons. Consequently, the legislator (depending

5 Manfredi Tafuri introduced the terms “superblocco” (Tafuri, 1971, p. 287) or “Riesenblock” in (Tafuri, 1977, p. 191).

on which lobby group was stronger at the time: that of the owner or that of the tenant) sometimes declared the space in front of the façade as public space, sometimes as “private” space, thus prohibiting or allowing individual access to it via a balcony.

The balcony as a realm for plants and a semi-public space from which the inhabitants perform The Right to the City.

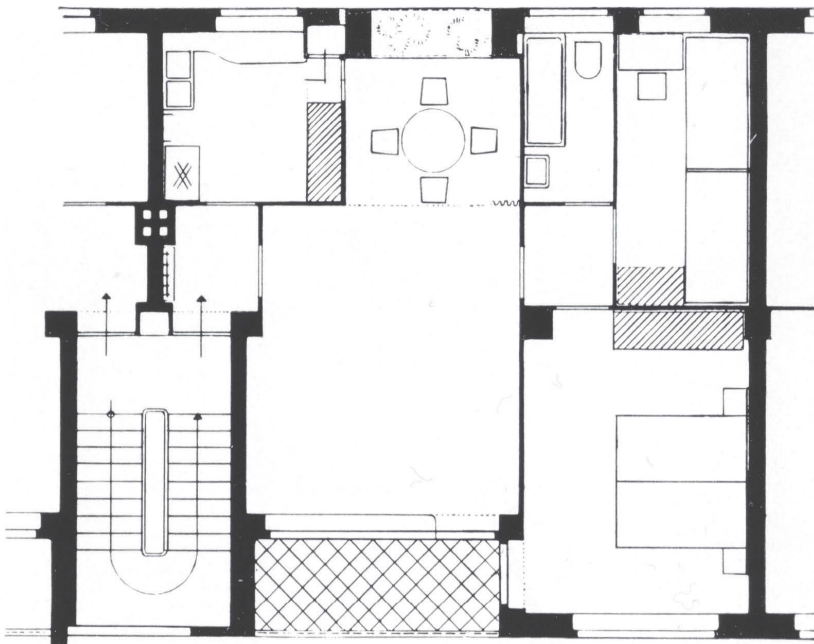
Siemensstadt-Jungfernheide Estate (1930), Berlin

Another case that explores this new social order and its entanglement between architecture and nature is, for instance, often present in the designs of architect Hans Scharoun (1893–1972). When Scharoun was interviewed for a glass trade magazine in 1937, he explained his specific approach to optimizing architecture for the urban dweller: “In a certain sense, nature should be ‘drawn in’ to the house through the glass wall, find its continuation there and create a closeness to nature, when climatic conditions do not allow spending time outside. This provides an unimagined depth even to smallish rooms. All this is vital, especially for recreation”⁶ (1937, quoted in Kürvers, 1996, p. 2.15).

One example of such an approach was realised in the social housing estate of Siemensstadt-Jungfernheide, 1930, in Berlin, Germany. The project was initiated by the Senate of Berlin and financed through the so-called “Hauszinssteuer” (home interest tax). Scharoun designed a master plan for the estate that largely preserved the existing trees (Cf. 1930, cited in Pfankuch, 1974, p. 91–95) of the former heathland (Heide). His three building designs of the types A, B and C formed the entrance to the park Jungfernheide and allowed for a strong relation between the tree population and the architecture by aligning the floor plan typologies and elements like balconies and windows. This is particularly evident in building type C. (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6) Scharoun himself lived in this apartment for 30 years with his partner Aenne: The living/dining room spans the entire depth of the building and has natural light from both sides. Additionally, on the west side, a loggia provides direct access to the outside and connects the apartment to the existing old trees in the small park in front of the building. To literally ‘draw in’ nature on the east side of this room, too, Scharoun integrated a plant window, like a small winter garden.⁷ By broadening the wall in this part of the room, it was possible to allow for sufficient space for the pots and the plants themselves.

6 “Im gewissen Sinne soll durch die Glaswand die Natur ‘hereingezogen’ werden in das Haus, ihre Fortsetzung dort finden und eine Naturverbundenheit erzeugen, wenn die klimatischen Verhältnisse den Aufenthalt im Freien nicht gestatten. Dadurch bekommen selbst kleinere Räume eine ungeahnte Tiefe. Alles das ist besonders für die Erholung sehr wichtig.” Translated by W. P. Indrist.

7 Scharoun also implemented this principle of architecturally “drawing nature in” to the apartment in other designs, for example with small winter gardens or even by embedding large plant pots directly into the floor of the living rooms: e. g. in the Mattern house (1933–1934), the Baensch house (1934/1935) or the Moll house (1936/1937).



5+6 Hans Scharoun, *Siemensstadt Estate, Berlin, Building Type C, Apartment Hans Scharoun*, 1930, photography by Arthur Köster, in: Pfankuch, 1974, p. 96 and 97.

*Plants are part of our living space, whether you are sitting indoors or outdoors.
The continuum of nature as a design strategy by Hans Scharoun.*

To sum up, Scharoun understood architecture – including social housing – as a spatio-temporal interweaving of architecture and nature and hence was paradigmatic for modernism: In Scharoun's design the plant (window) not only represents what has been displaced by construction activities – as mentioned in the introduction – but it is rather the attempt to produce a continuation of nature throughout the dining/living room from the east side park to the west side park. At the same time, and by implementing his new design for Siemensstadt (future) within the existing tree population (past) a temporal connection between the upcoming and the familiar even strengthened this spatial approach. Plants and their process of growing, withering and regrowing inside the apartment thus additionally emphasise the temporal moment. Ultimately, their presence aims to produce the “psychic support of human existence” postulated by Aida Bosch.

Hotel Helios (1960) and Hotel Bellevue (1966), Mali Lošinj

The incorporation of existing flora into architectural design also took place on the island of Mali Lošinj during the construction of Hotel Helios, 1960, and Hotel Bellevue, 1966, by architect Zdravko Bregovac (1924–1998). The surrounding pine forests, which had been planted with active support from the people of Lošinj in the 19th and early 20th centuries, were incorporated and integrated into the modernist designs: whether, as in the case of Hotel Bellevue, through the design of an atrium typology so that the hotel is literally immersed into the pine forest, or via the underlying spatial planning concept of the Helios hotel complex, which seamlessly incorporates the existing natural spaces into its building concept. The room wings, arranged at right angles to each other, are adjoined by an open atrium with a garden; next to it, surrounded by trees, is the ground-level café-restaurant area. Not far from the hotel, opposite to the main entrance, bungalows are built into the forest. (Fig. 7)

The time-consuming and intensive work of earlier generations in the context of planting Mali Lošinj, especially the Čikat Bay, was valued by Bregovac and taken into account in his final design. It was his ambition to be as gentle as possible with the existing botanical environment. Bregovac was also aware that such an architectural design, which allows for as much existing greenery as possible, creates the shadow, a varied incidence of light and the reflections that are so pleasant.

The trees need time to grow, planting them and making them grow is a lot of work. It is easy, but not very wise to cut them down without an urgent reason.



7 *Hotel Helios, Mali Lošinj, 2019.*

The reforestation project on the island of Mali Lošinj, which had been suggested by botanist Amroz Haračić and his colleagues, was initiated as a labour-intensive task for the women and men of the island. The work of the women who, as shown in the photo below, carried buckets of water on their heads to irrigate the young pine trees that had just been planted on the island, was acknowledged and used by Bregovac. (Fig. 8)

In contrast to the current building practice on the Adriatic coast, where the existing trees and plants are often removed or sharply pruned, the design practice of Bregovac was to preserve the existing flora as far as possible. At the same time, in consultation with the client, Bregovac aimed for a high functionality of the spatial structure. At that period, there were no predefined standard categories in today's sense, so the architect himself was actively involved in the considerations or the question of standardization (Turato in 'Tri-kultura', 2015). In other words, the situation was advantageous as the design itself and the architectural idea contributed to the development of the standard, in contrast to the situation where the existing standards represent the determining guidelines for the design. The aim was to create a high level of atmospheric and functional quality in and around the building. The developed hotel infrastructure was to fit into and even to maintain the encountered environment. For Helios and Bellevue, the scale of his architectural design was based on the configuration of the existing landscape. "If some of his hotels did not have a roof, we would not even perceive them as volumes", writes architect Ivana



8
Hotel Helios, Mali
 Lošinj,
 no date.

Nikšić Olujić in her book *ZDRAVKO BREGOVAC: arhiv arhitekt*⁸ (Korbler, 2015). The art historian Irena Dlaka emphasises that not only did the architects of post-war modernism in Yugoslavia, especially in the 1960s, show respect for what was already there, but that the hotel employees themselves, who were also co-owners of the hotel, were very careful and “tender” with the already existing plants when designing the green spaces such as the park atrium of the Hotel Helios: “[...] the plants that were found got their openings in the roofs [...]”⁹ (Dlaka, 2019).

Modernist approaches such as in Hotel Helios und Hotel Bellevue incorporate the plant world into their paradigmatic thinking. They develop an awareness of the importance of interaction and the inclusion of the flora in their design concept. The everyday presence of plants should be accessible to everyone as far as possible. The intention behind this is to create places of regeneration that should be capable to establish a balance with the working world. They are meant to be locations that serve as meeting places for conversation, a recreational space, or a space for sports activities. Hence, the plant world of modernity creates free and unproductive spaces that were not conceived exclusively in terms of money-mediated market traffic, but as locations in which interlocking beliefs, presences and activities take their place. Dlaka for example emphasises that Hotel Bellevue was not only a place used by tourists, but also a venue where local people held their celebrations, drank coffee, met and relaxed.

8 “Da se na nekim njegovim hotelima mjestimično ne pojavljuje krov, ne bismo ih ni osjetili kao volume.” Translated by A. Batista.

9 “[...] zatečeno bilje je dobilo svoju rupu, sakle na krovu [...]” Translated by A. Batista.



9
Hotel Bellevue,
Mali Lošinj,
no date.

A local resident remembers the days, when Hotel Bellevue was still operating:

The main value of Bellevue was that none of the rooms had a sea view. Lošinj has always been a health centre. People came here for three weeks to solve their respiratory problems, especially in winter. Why do you need a sea view for this? What you need is a forest around you and your lung needs aromatherapy from the moment you open the window. The sea is always there for you of course, you can go down and look at it as much as you want. Our establishment does not have a sea view, it has a view of the old town. Nobody complained about that. Today people do. Why and how? I think it is because people have changed. When they catch sight of the blue sea, they immediately fall into a trance. You can sit in the grotto and watch the sea as much as you want. What we had here was an architecture that was gentle to the environment, gentle to what was already there. And it was built to fit the human scale. Everything in that hotel contributed to making you feel good. We went for coffee, we went for a walk, we went once again for coffee and cake. I mean here ... it was affordable. This was where all the balls, parties and carnival celebrations took place. People came here to dance in the bar, or to listen to a singer. I miss it ... I miss it... because we don't have a city hotel anymore and everything else is a poor substitute. The younger generation will not be as fortunate as we were, that is certain (Dlaka, 2019). (Fig. 9)

INA Office Building (1982), Zagreb

It is not only outdoors that the “green” balance to the working environment is sought. Indoors potted plants aim to contribute to the “greener” atmosphere of the interior, as part of the working environment (Wimplinger, 2021).

A variety of potted plants were co-planned as part of the 1982 project “The INA Office Building” on Šubićeva Street in Zagreb. The short art documentary film “Currents” by Katerina Duda, 2019, shows how the existence of the plant world was transformed at the moment when employees had to vacate the building due to the strategic business decisions of the MOL Group in 2016.

The construction of the building on Šubićeva Street began at the time of the major oil field discovery in Slavonia (Beničanci) and the off-shore explorations on the Adriatic island of Mljet. The building also became famous because the government of the Republic of Croatia at the time proclaimed Croatian independence in its premises in 1991. Since 2010, the Hungarian conglomerate MOL and the Croatian state have been the main shareholders of the enterprise; both are engaged in a legal dispute over the issue of acquiring the shares.

Architect Nikola Filipović won the competition and is the originator of the ideas for the building; it was however the group of architects Miroslav Pak, Franjo Kamenski, Slobodan Jovičić i Vladimir Rukavina who implemented the project (1979–1983), as Filipović withdrew from the project in the early stages.

After the company’s decision to move former employees from the building in the centre of Zagreb to other locations, the only “residents” left in Šubićeva Street were plants, which were abundantly integrated and planned into the elliptical corridor architecture, the entrance hall, the bar and the offices. The recessed glass ceiling allows sunlight in, which sustains the plants. The fact that they can still inhabit the building’s interiors is thanks to the care they receive from a gardener employed by the company. (Fig. 10)

The artist Katerina Duda discovered the fascinating interior of the building, which one would hardly suspect from its external appearance, the glass façade, as part of her research into the art and cultural activities of the socialist company INA.

The houseplants are good work colleagues. They do not write emails. In most cases, they are reliable, humble, and grow slowly.

The focus of Duda’s investigation was the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery, which was established by the association of former INA workers in 1986. The gallery continues its activities to this day. Its special feature lies in the fact that side by side with the works of important (ex-) Yugoslav artistic positions, the gallery shows the works of amateur artists. This mixture of voices and positions is also reflected in the hybrid art collection of the company. The artistic works themselves have not only hung in the offices of the employees or lingered in the storage rooms of the gallery, their presence has also unfolded in the private spaces of



10 Katerina Duda, *Currents*, 2019, video still.

the employees (GMK, 2021). But it was not only works of art that have become part of the corporate culture as artefacts and communication formats; plants such as dragon trees, birch figs or tree friends were also considered important protagonists of the building's interior and were included in the planning, according to the insight Katerina Duda had during her tour around the INA Office Building.

Katerina Duda's film "Currents" focuses on the plant world and its anchoring in the architectural conceptual landscape. At the same time, it also documents the transition process of the plants that have followed the employees who moved out of the building. Their stories are narrated by the gardener, who has taken care of these plants for years and who also remembers their original places, for example in the bar, where plants had their place and would not have been obliged to bend in the way they must today. The gardener knows the exact locations of the green residents, rooms 305, 204, 205, from the corridor on the third floor, 202a, 135, etc.

Plants correspond to the architectural environment and thus also to the light and acoustic atmosphere in the building. They would "notice" if they were re-potted in a different setting (Cf. Duda, 2019a).

Whether plants would follow the employees depended on the possibilities of the new working environment. The staff expressed their wishes about the plants they would like to have as neighbours again. The luxuriant shared spaces – such as the entrance hall or

the bar – but also the indoor plants no longer meet the current formal requirements for space optimisation. Paraphrasing the gardener, Katerina Duda says what is modern at the moment are plants that do not tower upwards, but have limited upward growth, which is due to the smaller room sizes (Cf. Duda, 2019b). When the film was made, it was still unclear which part of the plant community would be part of the migration.

In the opening sequences of the film, Duda shows how the rhythm of the spaces was created not only with the help of architectural elements and furniture, but also with the help of plants. They not only created the social spaces; they were simultaneously a part of those spaces. According to the gardener, this was because the plants were behaving differently now that people were no longer occupying the building (Cf. Duda, 2019a). The plants had plenty of light in the building on Šubićeva Street, not only from the glass ceiling, but also from the large window fronts that offer a view over the city.

In the second part of the documentary, the audience hears a choir rehearse the song “Zdravi bili ded i baka” in the INA building and the comment of the choirmaster to the singers: “I know the acoustics confuse you a bit, but you have to adjust to them” (Duda, 2019a). The acoustics are created in the space, by the space. They unfold the voices, spatialise them and create the stage for vocal expression. The fabric of the building in general enables or impedes communication, it enforces or obstructs it. In the same way that the choir members must to get used to the acoustics of the empty INA building, they will also have to arrange themselves with their new office spaces, much like their plants. Both are confronted with a new spatial and presumably organisational situation. As in the case of the acoustics, also here the question arises for whom the architectural, but also the associated organisational and communication spaces were and are still being planned, what criteria were and are decisive here and for whom they allow what kind of development or which variations of the same theme. A metaphorical image can be drawn from the glass ceiling of the building, which supplies the plant world with light during the day and influences the intensity and incidence of light, or from the hanging lamp sculpture, which as a luminous geometric plant gives the glass-roofed atrium a new contour in the evening hours.

The “confusing acoustics” can be conceived as a figure of thought for the messenger of transition, the transformation of the socialist era into the privatised capitalist structures of the present. The idea that the realisation of social freedom will be achieved through collective organisation or collective corporate ownership lost its validity in the 1990s. The building in Šubićeva Street is an artefact of the socialist era, but also a testimony to post-war modernism, which imagined communal spaces on a grand scale: the simultaneity of the spacious flora in the imposing entrance hall juxtaposed with the bar for the workers on the top floor, the unfolding of which received advance attention. The spheres of work and rest were still separate.

A feature of emerging modernity was that the plant world could be found as a co-inhabitant in institutions such as schools and town halls, but also in businesses or private spaces. The plants that were once painted on interior walls as decoration during the 19th

and early 20th centuries (see below), but also the façades of bourgeois houses, were now understood as a privilege open to everyone and as an important actor in developed space.

Interaction with the plant world enables a refraction, and the plants remind us of the importance of care and attention.

“Do Plants Dream of the Future?” (2020)

The behaviour of the plant world, which interacts not only with humans but also with the animal world, is a subject of artist Igor Eškinja's work “Do Plants Dream of the Future?” Together with botanists Željka Modrić Surina and Boštjan Surine he explores the plant world of abandoned industrial sites – Delta, Brajdica, Mlaka, Hartera, Molo Longo – in Rijeka. One of the “results” of this artistic process are the wallpapers designed and created by the artist. Here, the history of the place and the site is thematised, stylised and told through the design. In some concepts, Eškinja draws on already existing forms of representation such as the herbarium, architectural typologies or the pattern roller; in others, the composition, the development of the motif, takes place on his own initiative. With Modrić Surina and Surine, Eškinja embarks on a voyage of discovery, exploring a new world of plants that he had previously perceived as weeds (Cf. Eškinja, 2020).

The weed does not exist, what you experience as a weed is an important protagonist of the plant microcosms.

The reconquest of the land happens simply because human beings have retreated. A different sense of temporality has been introduced in the process. Plant diversity moves into these “free” spaces to seek its own territory. Here the plant systems are more varied, so Surine, because the system has not yet stabilised. A kind of wilderness is making its way into the city, where it will flourish temporarily or for a longer period of time, depending on the general conditions (Cf. Eškinja and Surine, 2020). In view of the new climatic requirements, it seems sensible to rethink the interaction between planning authorities, residents and botanists regarding this relationship, considering not just spatial but also new temporal conditions. Where does nature come into the city, what microcosms does it unfold here and what interfaces arise with the animal world or the city and its inhabitants?

In abandoned urban areas, many plants arrive to examine what is available to them there. The variety in vegetation is often greater than in some forests. For a short time, until the system stabilises, you can find many different plants as protagonists browsing this newly available area.



11 Igor Eškinja, *Do Plants Dream of the Future?*, in: DeltaLab, exhibition, Drugo more Gallery, Rijeka, 25 June–25 July 2020 and 13 August–22 August 2020.

In the 19th century, wallpaper was an attempt to bring the plant world into the home in an aestheticised and abstracted way. In the 20th century, wallpaper became a mass product alongside the potted plant. The current collaboration between Eškinja, Surine and Modrić Surina brings another claim into the discussion, namely the development of spatial and social concepts that enable the development of ecological spheres in urban space (Cf. Eškinja and Surine, 2020). This kind of accessibility helps to create or expand the already existing framework of discussion not only on a sociological but also on an aesthetic-theoretical level: thus, the challenges of today's urban planning or urban policy can be inspired by botanical concepts on brownfield sites. (Fig. 11)

Interwoven into these forward-looking ideas is an effort to understand the plant world without conceiving it as a commodity, but to further deconstruct and abstract its forms, architectures and communities through image, sound, smell and textual forms. The relational structures of thought currently demonstrate that the orders of time and space must be respected in the context of these biotopes and that an arbitrary adaptation to paradigms of the human world of production is not sustainable in the long run. Nevertheless, the guidelines of modernity must be further developed precisely in the context of social development. For example, the accessibility to a wallpaper world with its history and narratives, created in the context of an artistic-scientific collaboration, can also be an inspiration in everyday life for the contemplation of the plant world encountered in urban space, which is so often overlooked. They also reflect on new modes of production and design.

What can be learned from plants about community systems and spatial and temporal arrangements?

Walter Benjamin pointed out that while the effort was being made to develop new means of production during his time, in relation to the plant world it could have been said that a new form of living together was sought by setting apart from the recent past. In this, the new image fantasies were referring back to the ancient past and the time of the classless society and natural space.

“Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated – which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history (*Urgeschichte*) – that is, to elements of a classless society” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 4).¹⁰

- 10 “Der Form des neuen Produktionsmittels, die im Anfang noch von der des alten beherrscht wird (Marx), entsprechen im Kollektivbewußtsein Bilder, in denen das Neue sich mit dem Alten durchdringt. Diese Bilder sind Wunschbilder und in ihnen sucht sich das Kollektiv die Unfertigkeit des gesellschaftlichen Produkts sowie die Mängel der gesellschaftlichen Produktionsordnung sowohl aufzuheben wie zu verklären. Daneben tritt in diesen Wunschbildern das nachdrückliche Streben hervor, sich gegen das Veraltete – das heißt aber: gegen das Jüngstvergangene – abzusetzen. Diese Tendenzen weisen die Bildphantasie, die von dem Neuen ihren Anstoß erhielt, an das Urvergangene zurück. In dem Traum, in dem jeder Epoche die ihr folgende in Bildern vor Augen tritt, erscheint die letztere vermählt mit Elementen der Urgeschichte, das heißt einer klassenlosen Gesellschaft.” Translated by A. Batista.

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Sarah Lauß

Travelling Together

On Aspects of Temporality in Early Amateur Film

“It was in fact the mobile camera, the panning camera in motion, that first allowed us the filmic experience of space. Not space in perspective, not a picture that we experience from outside, but a space in which we ourselves move with the camera, and experience with it the time needed to measure out its distances.”

(Balázs, 2010 [1930], p. 137)

Manageable, portable cameras for private use – for instance the 9.5mm cine camera made by the French company Pathé, the so-called Pathé-Baby – enabled people to make films in their leisure time from the 1920s onwards. This unleashed a plethora of possibilities and seemingly endless liberty regarding the filmic capture of experiences in this free time within the amateur field. Its configuration and portability predestined the cine camera for filming on the go, particularly “suited for travel and excursions, and thus amateur film was from the start linked to the idea of mobility: to be out and about, to capture impressions, and take them home” (Lesky, 2014, p. 261).

Commercials for the Pathé-Baby also took up this idea, forcefully promoting a mobile medium. (Fig. 1) A discernible pattern in this advertisement discourse suggests that private filming was a simple and uncomplicated matter. The aim was to present the camera as easy to take along, simple to handle, and inexpensive – as shown in the following slogan from 1927, slight variations of which can be found in several advertisements:

“I am filming the joys of travel and hiking with the Pathé-Baby amateur cinema apparatus, creating the most marvellous memories with the hand-cranked Pathé-Baby film, to conjure up the summer delights for my friends and me on the projection screen. Foolproof and inexpensive – only one crank is turned – and lo, the interesting landscape, the travel experience, the sweet children, the merry excursion are captured forever in their fresh exuberance. Your life will become twice as joyful when you can relive all the pleasures you have enjoyed time and again!”
(*Photo-Sport. Illustrierte Monatshefte für Amateure*, June 1927, p. 21).

A 9.5mm cine camera also was the companion of the producer or producers¹ of a film shot in this format, *Mit dem Ö. T. C. Klub Royal nach Budapest und die ungarische Puszta* (*To Budapest and the Hungarian Puszta with the Ö. T. C. Club Royal*), which forms part of the amateur film collection of the Austrian Film Museum; its opening sequence is the main focus of this contribution.² At the beginning of the film, we see travellers (men as well as women, and even a dog is on board) in cars and on motorcycles driving from the Viennese city limits towards Hungary. They are captured in motion from the back of a moving vehicle.

Who is filming, and when exactly, has not been verified – no precise information on the production of the amateur film, which was donated to the Austrian Film Museum in June 1984, has been handed down. However, the film's title provides some clues as to the context: it identifies the travellers and filmmakers as members or associates of the Austrian Touring Club (ÖTC), on the road in the context of an activity of this automobile and motorcycle club. A look at its archive enables us to identify this journey.³ In the club's magazine, we can find the announcement of a May drive to Budapest for automobiles and motorcycles, including a detailed travel schedule and precise route (*Offizielle Nachrichten des Ö. T. C.*, April 1931, pp. 1–2). The next issue of the Austrian Touring Magazine reports on this society ride between 1 and 3 May, 1931 (Fig. 2), on a total of three richly illustrated pages: what is emphasized is the wide echo the journey had – at arrival in Budapest, more than three hundred motor vehicles with around one thousand participants were registered (*Österreichische Touring-Zeitung*, May 1931, pp. 19–21).

The already-mentioned opening sequence takes up nearly a minute of the roughly 35-minute amateur film. It allows us some insights into a practice of mobile film that, in the context of the organized leisure activity of a club, consolidates into a shared experience of filming, driving, and taking a trip. With this example as a starting point, the present contribution will introduce possible aspects of temporality in the early amateur travel film. In so doing, it will consider aspects of production as well as reception, but also look at the composition of such amateur films, and include the discourse in manuals and guidebooks for amateur filmmakers. My aim is to conceptualize temporality in the amateur travel film with regard to the possibilities of the mobile cine camera, as well as with regard to references to professional film production.

1 There is no clear answer to the question of how many people collaborated in the production of this film.

2 The time code of the opening sequence is 00:00-00:54 from *Mit dem Ö. T. C. Klub Royal nach Budapest und die ungarische Puszta* (1931). Amateur film, 9.5mm, b/w, silent, 16fps, 34:26. Austrian Film Museum (0901-09-0233).

3 I would like to thank Joachim Moser from the archive of the Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club (ÖAMTC) for the decisive information and his further comments.

PATHÉ - CINÉMA - PARIS



ALLE FRÖHLICHEN STUNDEN
der schönen Frühlingszeit filme ich mit dem

Pathé-Baby AMATEUR-KINO-APPARAT

Kinderleicht und billig – nur eine Kurbel wird gedreht – und schon sind die herzigen Kinder, der lustige Ausflug, die Reiseerlebnisse, das aufregende Match in ihrer frischen Lebendigkeit für immer festgehalten. Wie schön ist es, die wundervoll verbrachten frohen Tage immer wieder auf die Projektionsleinwand zu bringen und jeden freudigen Augenblick nochmals zu erleben!

Wir zeigen Ihnen gerne einen
Pathé-Baby-Film,

Sie werden auch ein Pathé-Baby-Amateur werden wollen!

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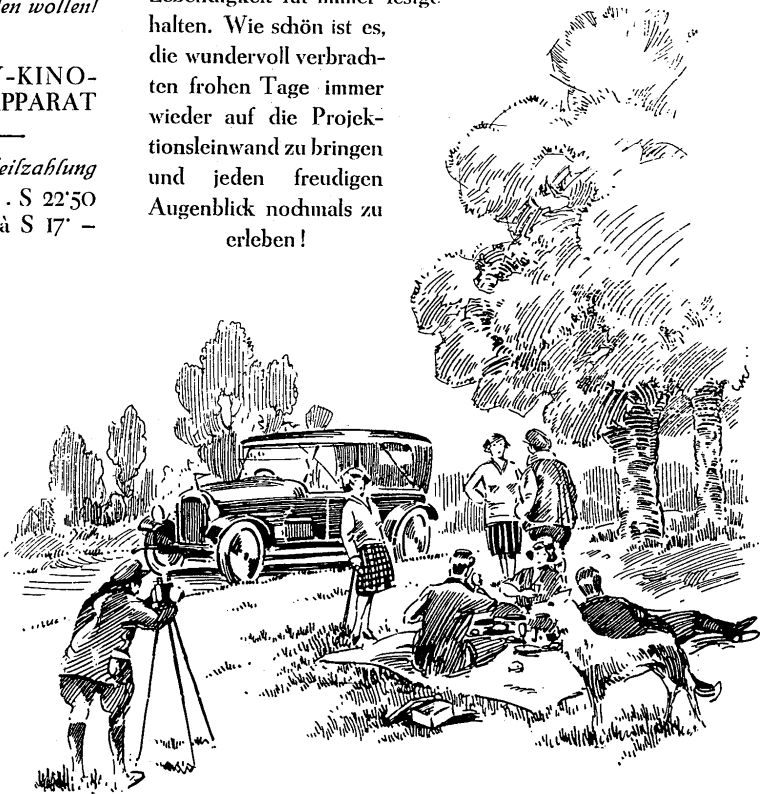
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Wien, III, Rennweg 52

★

Verlangen Sie unter Berufung auf dieses Blatt die Gratiszusendung unserer hochinteressanten, reich illustrierten Broschüre:

„...und so gewann sie die Weltmeisterschaft!“

★



Sportliche Nachrichten



Gesellschaftsfahrt des Ö. T. C. nach Budapest

Jahrzehntelang waren die Landstraßen infolge der Entwicklung des Eisenbahnverkehrs verlassen und leer gewesen; nur gelegentlich holperte ein schwerfälliges Bauernfuhrwerk von Dorf zu Dorf. Der sehr geringe Verkehr blieb auf einen kleinen Umkreis beschränkt, er war fast lokalisiert. Mit dem gewaltigen Aufschwung des Motorfahrzeugverkehrs, der nach Kriegsende einsetzte und sich seither überall mächtig entwickelte und sich noch weiter steigern wird, erlangte die neu belebte Straße wiederum eine Bedeutung als Trägerin des Verkehrs, die sie früher nie gekannt hatte.

in zwei Gruppen, in elastische Beläge (sowie Mischbeläge: Guß- und Stampfasphalt) und in Hartbeläge (Pflasterungen und Betonbeläge) eingeteilt werden

Die Nachteile der elastischen Beläge liegen darin, daß die Oberflächen namentlich durch die Pferdehufe aufgekrazt werden; es entstehen die so gefürchteten Schlaglöcher. Schon daraus geht hervor, daß der Unterhalt von Straßen mit weichen Belägen kostspielig ist. Diese Straßen sind aber auch gegen Witterungseinflüsse sehr empfindlich, wie man jetzt nach dem strengen Winter und dem



Von der Gesellschaftsfahrt des Ö. T. C. nach Budapest.
 Von links nach rechts: An der ungarischen Grenze. — Mittagsstation in Győr.

(Phot. Motor.)

Der Motorfahrzeugverkehr hat aber der Landstraße nicht nur eine nie geahnte Rolle im gesamten Verkehrsleben zugewiesen, sondern er hat auch die Straßenbauer vor ganz neue Aufgaben gestellt, von denen man vor einigen Dezennien noch nichts gewußt hatte.

Anfänglich wollte man nicht erkennen, daß ganz neue Probleme entstanden sind, die nur durch moderne Straßenbaumethoden in verkehrstechnischer und wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht wirklich gut und befriedigend zu lösen sind. Zuerst half man sich mit der Staubbekämpfung. Diese war gewiß sehr notwendig, doch kann sie letzten Endes nie mehr als ein Palliativmittel sein, weil der sehr dichte und sich sehr rasch vollziehende Überlandverkehr widerstandsfähige Dauerbeläge erheischt. Dieser gesteigerten Anforderung war die nur der Staubbekämpfung dienende bisherige Oberflächenbehandlung nicht genügend gewachsen gewesen. Deshalb ging man in den letzten Jahren zur Verwendung von Dauerbelägen über, die

starken Schneefall zu konstatieren Gelegenheit hat. Aus eigener Erfahrung kennt der Motorist einen andern Mangel dieser Beläge; bei Regen oder Nebel wird durch die Nässe der Belag glitschig und seifig, die Adhäsion sinkt zu einem Minimum, die Schleudergefahr tritt ein. Ein weiterer Nachteil wird durch die dunkle Farbe hervorgerufen. Namentlich bei Regenwetter ist ein Bitumen- oder Teertränkebelag nachts so dunkel, daß man sogar sagt, die schwarze Straßenoberfläche fresse das Scheinwerferlicht förmlich auf.

Alle diese Nachteile sind nun bei den Hartbelägen und vorab bei der Betonstraße vollständig ausgeschaltet.

Die Betonstraße verlangt etwas höhere Erstellungskosten als eine Straße mit elastischerem Belag, dafür benötigt sie aber eine weit geringere Wartung und minimale Ausgaben für den Unterhalt, so daß sie im Endeffekt einen sehr wirtschaftlichen Belag darstellt.

Eine solche ideale Betonstraße, die übrigens auch vor kurzem in



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Simultaneously in Motion

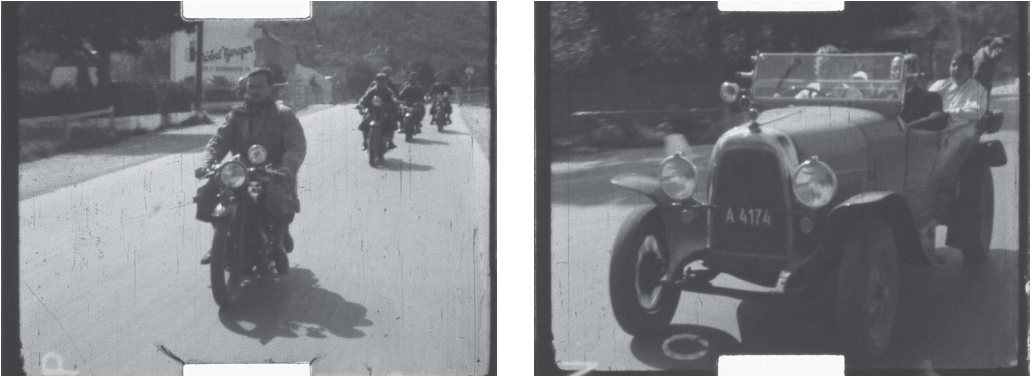
The attempt of getting the camera to move preoccupied filmmakers, directors and cinematographers from the earliest moments of the history of film. Much of the discussion and pioneering developments were shaped by the desire for a free camera that could be moved anywhere, by its unlimited freedom to move. For that matter, the use of various camera movements in film reflects similar motives until today: the aim is to follow movements taking place in front of the camera and bring them into the focus of the audience. In addition, camera movement serves to assure and convey spatial as well as temporal continuity in film (Schernickau, 2006, p. 316).

In general terms, a camera movement or filming with a moving camera in which the latter changes its position in space is called a travelling or tracking shot (Wilkening, Baumert and Lippert, 1966, pp. 199–201; Rother, 1997, pp. 94–95; Mikos, 2003, pp. 193–194; Monaco and Bock, 2011, p. 89; Hickethier, 2012, p. 62).⁴ From a film-historical point of view, Annette Deeken (2006, p. 299) describes the travelling shot as a “simple piggyback technology” characterized by the use of existing means of transport: “Loading the camera onto a mobile base and thus representing the passage through space by the movement of the running camera is an aesthetically impressive but technically simple and also inexpensive solution. The travelling shot is not a privilege of financially powerful film production but a low budget phenomenon” (Deeken, 2006, p. 299).

There are many possible rides for the camera, and film seems to have used them all, whether vehicles on land, on water, or in the air, motorized or muscle-powered. Such a ride-along of the camera with the apparatus mounted on trains, streetcars or automobiles became established in the early days of cinematography, not only as a stylistic device, but as an independent form of film. Produced, among others, by the companies Pathé, Lumière, and Biograph, these travelling shots, referred to as phantom rides, can be found in the programmes of the very first cinemas (Rother, 1997, p. 230). From the rigid connection between camera and vehicle, what emerged were autonomous short films documenting a certain distance with a constant shot, fixed camera position, and steady speed. The rhythm of the film was defined by the goings-on and the surroundings along the road, with the principle of chance deciding what could be seen when and where – a unity of place, space, and time is for instance typical of early city films like the one of a drive through 1906 San Francisco (*A Trip Down Market Street*) (Mattl, 2016, pp. 54–57).

A preferred ride in amateur film, and “best complement” (Niklitschek, 1927, p. 1) for the cine camera is the motor vehicle with which “favourable occasions for shots” (Niklitschek,

4 Depending on the direction of the movement, we distinguish between forward travelling shots, reverse travelling shots, sideways travelling shots, parallel travelling shots or free travelling shots: the camera moves towards an object, away from an object, past an object, nearly parallel to a moving object, or completely freely, i. e. is not bound to a single direction (Wilkening, Baumert and Lippert, 1966, p. 199; Rother, 1997, p. 94; Mikos, 2003, p. 194; Monaco and Bock, 2011, p. 89; Hickethier, 2012, p. 62).



3–4 Motorbike and car ride, stills from *Mit dem Ö.T.C. Klub Royal nach Budapest und die ungarische Pußta*, 1931.

1927, p. 1) will arise naturally, in particular in the course of the “chance to travel in one’s own automobile and thus to organize one’s holiday in an especially charming manner” (Blaschko, 1941, p. 33). Although the presented film is an accomplished example of motorized amateurs’ ingenuity and readiness to experiment, the combination of “motorcar and camera” (Blaschko, 1941, p. 33) results in specific requirements due to the sometimes difficult and not always predictable conditions while shooting. This unpredictability arises from the peculiar dynamics of the respective situation, which cannot be planned, or at least only partially, and may escape the control of the amateurs.

The practice of amateur filming in general as well as filming while driving as practiced here in particular often takes place under constantly changing conditions. (Fig. 3–4) In the course of this dynamic process of recording, those participating in it – those filming, but also those filmed – attempt to coordinate and manage the situation by means of specific action patterns and interaction forms, with their actions related to each other and having consequences for each other (Roepke, 2006, p. 120). In the amateur film in point, this becomes apparent, amongst others, in gestures between the individuals in front of and behind the camera, for instance when the driver of a car uses a hand sign – a gesture we can often observe in amateur films (Schneider, 2004, pp. 161–163) – to indicate that he is going to overtake the camera on the left. (Fig. 5) The unpredictability of the shoot situation, the open borders between the field of recording and the surroundings, are also perceptible with regard to people being present or coming along by chance, for instance when a pedestrian at the roadside turns to look at the passing motor cavalcade and stares into the camera.⁵ (Fig. 6)

5 Livio Belloi (1995, pp. 27–49) described this typical figure of the “gawker” in early cinema for the films of the brothers Lumière, who were confronted with curious audiences during their shoots in public space.



5–6 Gesticulating driver and gawking pedestrian, stills from *Mit dem Ö.T.C. Klub Royal nach Budapest und die ungarische Pußta*, 1931.

The interference of many different situations and actions that cannot always be planned and controlled in conjunction with the simultaneity of movements in front of and behind the camera creates a specific dynamic of the shoot. Not only the coordination of the situation and of those participating in the production, but also mastering the technology may be challenging. Filming with a (motor) vehicle should add value, but may also cause enormous additional effort with – in particular technical – uncertainties, difficulties and complications that need to be addressed.

To support amateur filmmakers in the challenges arising in this process, there is a body of reference literature: in addition to magazines, manuals and guidebooks about the subject provide practical hints, normative rules and numerous tips and tricks for amateurs. The spectrum covers everything from the method and technology of filming and aesthetics to other relevant aspects in the production of an amateur film, for instance economic or legal issues (Zechner, 2015, p. 17). One of the key aspects they cover is the arrangement of the contents of an amateur film regarding ideas on the choice of subjects and motifs: there are, among others, suggestions of suitable motifs, drafts of film subjects and sample scripts. On the other hand, and first and foremost, there is advice and tutorials aiming to facilitate the technically correct handling of the film camera and other equipment as well as elementary questions and problems of filmmaking like light and exposure, camera work, framing, length of scenes or films, and post production (Zechner, 2015, p. 28) – including comprehensive explanations and comments on the film camera in motion and on filmic time.

In this advice literature, what the initial focus is on the mastery of time as the “main problem of filmmaking” (Opfermann, 1940, p. 233). According to it, an individual film scene is timeless and is always experienced as present by the audience, even when a historic, long-past event is represented. The proper composition of a scene allows the audi-

ence to empathize and experience it as present time. Movement, whether in front of or behind the camera, has a key role to play in this process; it “invariably reinforces the impression of presence, whether something is moving within the scene or the camera moves while shooting” (Opfermann, 1940, p. 235).

In addition, the travelling shot, in which the amateur is on a moving vehicle and films the landscape rolling past, is discussed as a possibility for the camera in motion. Its use leads to an increased susceptibility to mistakes and disruptions in amateur film and may – due to bumps and vibrations of the vehicle – cause shaky images and blurred shots. In order to minimize possibly disruptive factors and achieve a vibration-free movement of the camera as the “precondition for the perfect travelling shot” (Blaschko, 1941, p. 43), the authors recommend suitable procedures and provide instructions for filming while driving which demonstrate some of the technical problems encountered: “The scenes of the drive itself can be filmed from the car at moderate speeds and on smooth roads. You best stand up straight in the car and absorb bumps with your knees” (Gross-Talmon, 1939, p. 47). What is “important here: stand with slightly bent knees with your feet well apart and don’t support the camera anywhere” (Lullack, 1945, p. 24), and “never without a tripod on a bad road! The result would look as though the cameraman had had one too many” (Blaschko, 1941, p. 34). So, while travelling shots are fraught with preparation, demand some effort, and deliver uncertain results, they are described as the dream of any filmmaker and are said to bring the film to life (Blaschko, 1941, p. 42).

A Moving Experience of Space and Time

Travelling along on different moving bases, a visually perceptible change of place of the camera as a basic condition and prerequisite of the travelling shot, is characterized by some activity as visual appeal in the film, because “what we see is moving, flows along, blurs the contours, denies the contemplative pause. This sometimes results in a restless staccato of optical transience, but always in a delightful change of motifs” (Deeken, 2006, p. 302). The camera itself moves all the time, with a continuously changing centre of perspective that makes things move out of or into the field of vision – travelling shots show new elements of the image by and by, although constantly, and are able to dramatize, distance, and characterize (Wilkening, Baumert and Lippert, 1966, p. 200). Images with little action acquire variety through the continuous “displacement of the depicted perspective. What is added to this spatial aspect of expanded perception is the temporal one, as the key achievement of the travelling shot is its ability to make the viewer experience the duration of a trip and the speed of the means of transport. [...] Whatever the camera sees from its vehicle, the viewers will observe the form and duration of its movement at the same time. This draws them in, captivates, engages” (Deeken, 2006, pp. 300–305).

A moving film experience in more than one sense: the audience can follow the film from a continuously changing point of view although they themselves physically remain in the same place (Peters, 1972, p. 179). Viewers apparently – for this is what it seems to them – see the things that are shown just as though they would move in three-dimensional space themselves (Wilkening, Baumert and Lippert, 1966, p. 200). Seeing a scene shot with a moving camera in this way may result in an experience of movement and involve a feeling of being in motion oneself (Peters, 1972, p. 179). In contrast to the representation of a travelling object moving towards, away from or past the immobile camera, travelling shots mean an exchange of roles that requires a change of perspectives in the truest sense of the word as the camera shifts from the “distanced status of the observer at the roadside to the active position of a driver or passenger. Watching the drive therefore becomes the simulated view of someone driving. In media history, this is a completely new representation that is aesthetically unique to the medium of film, achieved by the synchronicity of the ride and the current shot: the travelling shot shows the passage through the geophysical expanse, covering a route, conquering spatial distance – and it enables us to experience this passage through the space between live, as it were, in real time, from the position of a passenger” (Deeken, 2006, p. 301).

Although the camera can in principle take any direction and position in travelling shots, the dominating shot is mostly a normal view on eye level in the course of a forward movement. This is not the case in the amateur film in point: here, reverse and parallel travelling shots alternate. The former are characterized by a line of sight in the opposite direction of the movement – the camera points against the direction of travel from the rear of the car onto what is happening. Such a look back runs counter to a conventional experience of space, which is conceived as looking forward. In contrast to sideways travelling shots, in which the landscape seems to be passing by, this would rather look as though the landscape was staying still, unmoved by the passage of time (Deeken, 2006, p. 306).

However, the unnatural feel of a reverse travelling shot does not come into play in the mentioned amateur film. This is due to the fact that the camera by no means only looks back against the course of things, but alternates reverse with parallel travelling shots, and also uses panning shots that allow for a seamless transition between these two possible applications of the travelling shot. Cars and motorcycles moving forward, or rather their drivers and passengers, are hot on the heels of the camera, they follow it or overtake it with daring or insolent nonchalance, or are pursued by it in their turn. Accompanied by more or less discreet interactions of those filmed with the camera, it is not only addressed as such, but becomes the focal point of an event it captures: looks making sure of something, situational poses, pointing gestures aim to help structure the course of the drive and the film and clearly show that this is by no means a stagnant situation – in spite of the look backwards, things seem to be moving forward constantly.

Simultaneously on Site

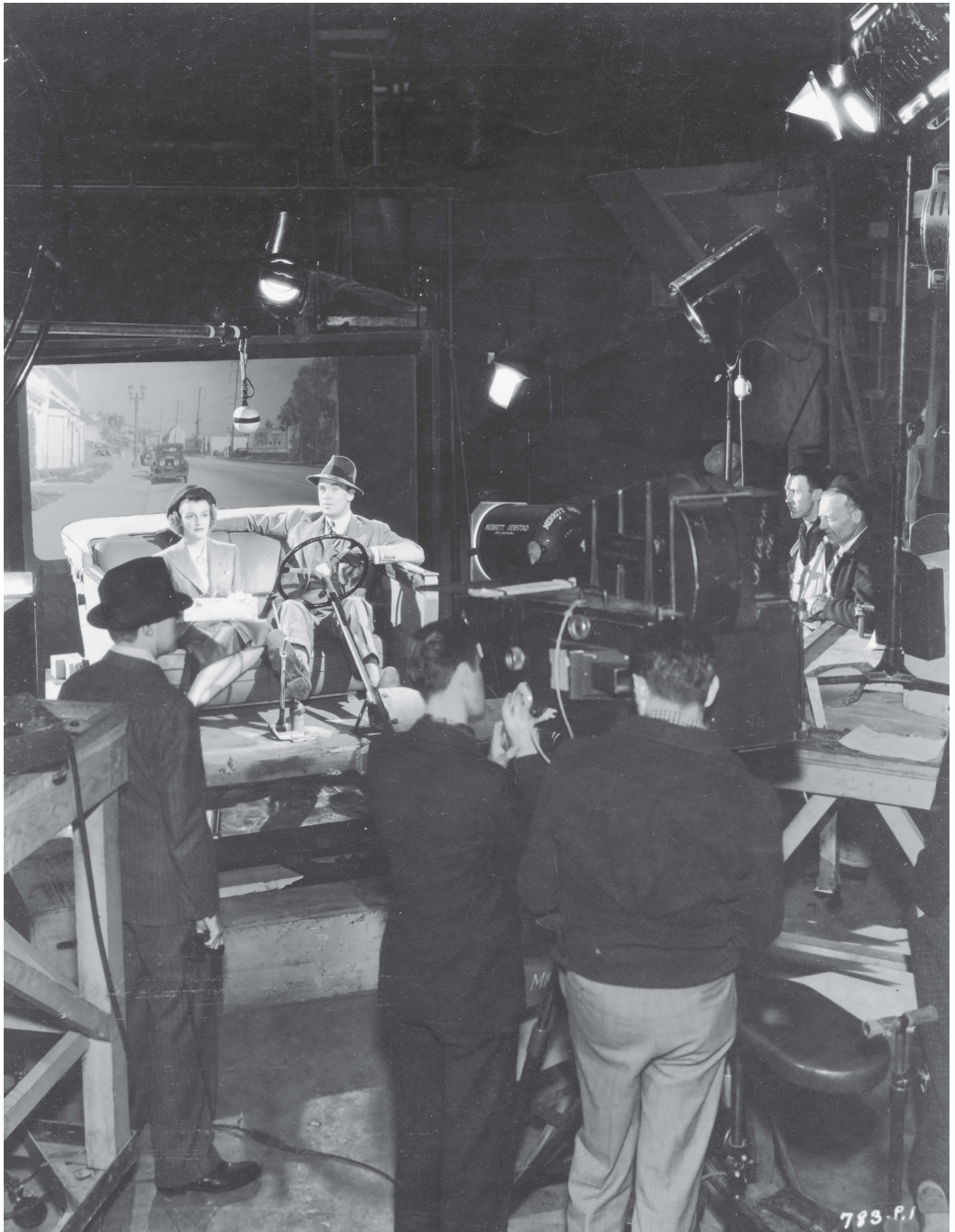
The distinctive feature of the amateur film in point is therefore that the people and objects taking part in the shoot, those filming and those filmed, simultaneously move in the exterior space. This includes the fact or rather the possibility of being in the midst of events with the cine camera. Regardless of the question – which cannot be resolved with any certainty – whether this drive or journey that is the focus of this amateur film was a welcome opportunity to take up a camera, or a conscious occasion to practice filming: the camera is on site, it is present at an event, and simultaneously captures this event on celluloid. There is a necessary temporal-spatial correlation between the experience and the recording of this experience.

One thing, therefore, that may be formulated as a basic condition of the production of the amateur film in point was a challenge for Hollywood cinematic productions at the time. Here, too, shots of car drives in particular had enjoyed increasing popularity for some time: in the car, people are being chased, they live their dreams of freedom and independence, and address human relations. Who doesn't know these scenes of the sinister villain, the fearless hero, or the couple in love in a driving car with – more or less – exciting landscapes and beautiful cities passing by? The difficulties of Hollywood cinema in realizing such scenes are palpable: in contrast to the mobile amateur film, it needs to compensate for potential immobility in production by relying on the technical possibilities of its industry.

In order to simulate location shots in the film studio because shooting on location or travelling to the original location would be difficult or unfeasible, the rear projection technique is used. (Fig. 7) It is a method allowing temporally and spatially separate scenes to be combined by special filming techniques or film technical mechanisms (Wilkening, Baumert and Lippert, 1966, p. 234). The actors do not move in real surroundings but act in front of a screen onto which the proper background is projected. The aim is to create the illusion in the film that the players actually are in the environment visible in the background that was generated by means of rear projection (Binotto, 2013, p. 37).

According to Laura Mulvey (2007, p. 3), rear projection made cinematic space and time heterogeneous, creating a kind of “dual temporality”: “The splitting of the scene into hybrid time and space introduces not only awareness of the original moment of cinematic inscription, the real time of the index, but the indexical time is also doubled” (Mulvey, 2012, p. 211). What functions as the background of a scene has inevitably been recorded beforehand, at an earlier time, and projected at a later time in the studio, combined with the action and the set in the foreground there, and filmed together as one scene. With this interlacing of diverging times comes a “temporal dislocation” (Mulvey, 2007, p. 3) that is reinforced by the contrast between the documentary character of the projected images and the artificiality of the studio.

In particular moving scenes, like for instance car rides, were often depicted by rear projection – by this means, it became possible to show film stars in different, even exotic ex-



7 Use of the rear projection technique in representing a car ride in a Universal studio during the production of *As Good as Married*, 1937.

teriors, and to shoot adventurous drives or journeys to distant lands without endangering the actors (Rother, 1997, p. 257). Almost any place, regardless of its condition or accessibility and no matter how distant or inhospitable, could serve as a location for a film's plot.⁶ The conspicuous weaknesses of rear projection are sometimes all too obvious: when there is a lack of precision in its execution, in particular drive scenes feel unnatural and unconvincing, even implausible, when for instance the movements of foreground and background fail to correspond, i. e. are not executed simultaneously – at the same time or at the same speed.

Amateur film escapes such pitfalls: in spite of many limitations, it seems to have an advantage over Hollywood cinema; as a mobile medium, it allows filming in the most diverse locations. In the advice literature, this is put in a nutshell as a great benefit over professional film in the following terms: "We don't build sets but walk right into reality" (Isert, no date, p. 63). What is more: in the amateur film in point, the shots can only be generated because someone is on the road, is travelling and taking the camera with them. Without the journey, which is an opportunity or the occasion for filming, the film wouldn't even exist. As an immediate, direct testimony it documents a trip of the Austrian Touring Club and demonstrates how the mobile camera and motorized mobility interact in the course of the journey.

Visualized Travel Time

Filming and travelling can be understood as forms of recreational activity that were considered as an expression of a new understanding of leisure that had developed since the 19th century, with the bourgeoisie in the lead and slowly gaining ground in the lower middle classes in the first half of the 20th century. At the same time there emerged the trend of organized activities outside the home, of club recreation. Those who were able to afford filming in the 1920s and 1930s also had the necessary resources to travel, and vice versa, and were often members of a club (Schneider, 2004, pp. 71–73). These leisure activities, which, in this period, have to be understood as the privilege of certain groups, and the consumer goods necessary for them, which only few people were able to afford – the personal film camera, one's own automobile or motorcycle – were mainly for individual fulfilment, enjoyment and pleasure; they provided qualities of experience that are also manifest in the amateur film in point. Travelling seems inevitably linked to taking a camera along – a connection that Susan Sontag (2005 [1973], p. 6) also emphasizes, noting that it is positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without a camera in the luggage. In the sense of an evidence of experience, it is what makes the experience real.

6 This fact indicates another benefit of rear projections, i. e. economic reasons for the use and the prevalence of this recording technique, following the principle of cost minimization in the film business: cutting down on possibly considerable travel costs for cast and crew working in the shooting of a film, and thus the reduction of production cost and effort of a film (Deeken, 2004, p. 63).

Neither do the authors of manuals and guidebooks leave any doubts as to whether it is all but one's duty to travel with filming equipment; they emphasize that the small and light cine camera is easy to take along – and those who leave it behind will soon come to rue this decision. On the journey, “probably the most important subject for the film amateur” (Lange, 1939, p. 39), and “apart from family life the largest stumping ground for the amateur camera” (Strasser, 1937, p. 44), there is no shortage of suitable motifs “in ever-changing abundance and interesting vibrancy” (Gross-Talmon, 1939, p. 40). As compared to any other subject, deciding about the sequence of scenes and choosing motifs here comes easily to amateurs. When “travelling with the camera” (Gross-Talmon, 1939, p. 40), a film may thus develop almost by itself, with the respective shots following the course of the journey, illustrating the passage of time, and naturally result along the prevailing axis of space and time.

Nevertheless, it seems as though the abundance of possible motifs that offer themselves necessitates a more critical selection, the things that absolutely need to be recorded – what happens, is seen and experienced on the journey – demands a specific order. This circumstance holds a certain challenge that the advice literature points out in a warning and cautioning tone: “Nowhere the possibilities are more varied, the sensibility of the filmmaker more receptive, the motifs more tempting, but by the same token, the danger of unreflected snapshots greater than on a journey. You see too much, and want to take everything home with you” (Strasser, 1937, p. 44).

The amateur travel film – “in most cases a souvenir film” (Plaumann, 1933, p. 193) – therefore developed a certain pattern over time: after describing preparations and departure, what follows is the depiction of the journey itself, ending with the return journey and arrival home. The tips of what amateurs should shoot on a journey (initially put as a question) or what has to be filmed on a journey (already framed in the imperative mode), and the just about inexhaustible material for a travel film can be summed up in relevant groups; besides the stay at the destination and individual events during this stay, it is particularly the trip itself as well as sightseeing along the road that are emphasized as important instances of using the camera (Strasser, 1937, pp. 46–47). With regard to the “infinite possibilities of recording travel on film” (Strasser, 1937, p. 47), the result is a general outline of introduction, main part and conclusion; the introduction should be dedicated to the start of the journey and the drive to the destination, and the depiction may be “short, for instance in telegram style” (Gross-Talmon, 1939, p. 40).

Filming not only during but also before the journey, which is suggested in the advice literature, is omitted in the example in point. We see nothing of specific preparations for the drive or for the journey in general, nor the start of the tour, for instance the group gathering, posing with fellow travellers or vehicles, loading and boarding the vehicles, or leaving together. This is surprising in view of the context of this amateur film: the Austrian Touring Club (ÖTC) founded in 1896 as the club-based, organized precursor of the Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club (ÖAMTC). Initially it had mainly catered for cyclists, but soon included motor sports in its programme. During the First Republic, the Aus-

trian Touring Club finally became an all-round middle-class club characterized by services provided to its members as well as effective publicity activities. It particularly focused on staging competitions or organizing excursions and trips (Marschik, 2015, pp. 24–25).

One of these is documented in the images in point, which are dedicated less to the events before the journey but directly to the drive itself, introducing the film with it and thus clearly showing its focus as well as framing and determining its further development: the journey captured on film is uniquely defined by driving. The drive not only stands for motorized mobility, for movement in the sense of progress on a journey, but rather for the experience of travelling by automobile and motorcycle. One is on the road, mobile and motorized, and driving as a recreational pleasure is foregrounded. In this way, the car and motorbike drive grows into a guarantee for a very special travel experience.

Linked to the motorized experience of driving and travelling is being together in the club with people sharing one's interest: they are not only mobile and motorized, they are travelling together. The time spent on the journey and visualized in the film represents a communal experience that only becomes possible through the organized gathering of like-minded people in the motorized travel group, and characterized by the interaction between driving and filming. Here, leisure time is organized travel time in the club context, and travel time is driving and filming time. Consequently, this amateur film can be understood as a culmination of a communal filming, driving and travelling experience. This experience is recorded in its momentariness, captivated on celluloid, and thus conserved.

A Filmic Order of Time

Capturing and preserving on film comes with choosing and arranging situations or events deemed worthy of representation and memory. Recreational filming takes place along problems and principles of composition that have the function of organizing experiences in this leisure time. By asking what can, should, or must be filmed, and deciding what is actually filmed in which form, amateur film practice correlates with other recreational practices, for instance in the example in point motorized trips or communal travel, and acts upon them to frame them. The production of an amateur film therefore may help in structuring the diversity of life by arranging time, segmenting experiences, and condensing them into an individual narrative for its viewers (Schneider, 2004, p. 216).

In particular in amateur travel film, impressions during a journey have to be captured by the camera's lens, saving them to be able to remember and to relive them at a later date by means of the recording. Therefore, the film camera should be a "constant companion on all journeys and excursions. It allows us to conserve the optical impressions and later repeat them as often as we like" (Jaensch, 1928, pp. 8–9). Amateur film permits to hark back to experience, and freely relive it in watching it; reception can do whatever it pleases with the travel time visualized in the film, it can be stopped, repeated, or skipped: "And later, at

home [...], the film projector is connected – and everything comes alive again, becomes present, gains plasticity and life! Now I can watch at leisure things that fleetingly passed by at the time, I can linger at every detail, stop the film when something fascinates me, I can clarify what was confused, allow a preview of what follows, train the gaze and sharpen it for new observations” (Tiesler, 1931, p. 13).

Not only the traveller but also others who were not part of the journey are supposed to enter into the respective shots, and the film as a travel medium seems to be predestined to achieve this. When someone goes travelling they have many a story to tell – or at least they should have, and the amateur film has a special contribution to make to a successful telling as the “images – in fact living images – of things seen on the way” (Jaensch, 1928, p. 9) would support a thrilling presentation of the journey, more so than the spoken word or the static image; “even the most incurious spectator must feel a certain regret, even years later, when watching this film, about not having been on this particular weekend trip” (Frerk, 1936, p. 69). A shot the viewer can enter into should be arranged accordingly – movements are essential for the creation of the “feeling of travelling along” (Deeken, 2006, p. 313) when watching an amateur travel film, they “basically stand for the passage of time; they symbolize developments and are a reminder of passing (life)time. Through them, time as a dimension invisible to the eye becomes ‘visible’, the passage of time becomes tangible” (Rolshoven, 2017, p. 63).

If we are to believe the authors of manuals and guidebooks, the producer or producers of the amateur film in point did a lot right. With regard to its opening sequence, it is an outstanding example of the possibilities of the medium, and in particular of the execution of an amateur travel film – here against the background of the club context of a touring association. With travelling shots, the film practice itself is mobilized and the camera is set in motion; it does not remain immobile in the distance, for instance at the roadside like an unconcerned observer, but travels along on a vehicle and is in the midst of events. In this way, the shots are able to represent a car and motorcycle drive in a remarkable way, record the travelling party on the move in a befitting manner while driving, and introduce the film, setting its focus.

Using the shots created while driving can achieve an impression of the drive into which later viewers may enter. Although we can only speculate as to the screening practice of the amateur film in point and its context, we can assume it was produced in order to be shown to an audience – either the members of the travel party wanting to remember the time spent together on this journey watching the film, or uninvolved others, for instance club members or family, relations or friends of the travellers who the trip is described to by means of these images. What we can say with near certainty is that only an amateur film could fittingly capture this communally organized experience of driving and travelling together.⁷

7 I published this contribution as a researcher of the Department of Art History at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. It presents results of my dissertation on early Austrian amateur film, which was funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences within a DOC-team-fellowship (2016–2019). I would like to thank Anamarija Batista and Eva Kernbauer for their support and comments on earlier versions of this text.

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Kristina Pia Hofer

Sonic Assemblies

Artistic Historiography, Video Sound, and Representation in *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*

Introduction

In her single channel video installation *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012), Elizabeth Price (b. 1966, Bradford, England) weaves a seductive narrative by linking three visually similar hand gestures – twistings of the wrist – taken from apparently unrelated historical contexts: a drawing of the sword found in tomb sculptures in British Gothic cathedrals, the dance moves performed by the US-American pop group The Shangri-Las for a BBC recording in 1965, and the desperate waving of hands through a barred window by female* Woolworths employees who were trapped in a fire that would kill ten people in the Manchester department store on May 8, 1979. Using the characteristic scroll text and bold capital letters she employs in many of her works in the 2010s, Price suggests the bearers of the gestures are communal witnesses to a historical tragedy of gender and labor. By reading what the mourners share (“WE KNOW”) in between (and superimposed on top of) photographic archival images, audiences learn what urgencies connect them across the gaps of time that seem to separate them only at first glance. Auditorily, the installation manifests this connection in a dense fabric of overlapping voices and silences: percussion and pop tunes in overpowering volume pierce the stillness of muted news footage, and the muffled pleas of written words. Tangling together, these heterogeneous auditive and visual materials perform as the installation’s eponymous choir: a polyphonic assembly of very different voices sounding out about history.

Adopting what Salomé Voegelin (2014; 2019) has called a “sonic sensibility,” this contribution listens attentively to how *Choir*’s auditive content and qualities affect, shape and change the meanings produced in and by its images – and how these images, in turn, may alter initial impressions of what its sounds (can) do. It asks how paying attention to both “sensation and meaning, the thought and the beyond of thought, performance and reflection, without giving preference to either and without returning to a naïve apperception before thought” (Voegelin, 2019, p. 13) may complicate readings of *Choir* as an easy portal to historical fact. I will discuss how reviewers have routinely addressed the work as

an audiovisual history lesson that told the ‘real’ story of the 1979 Woolworths fire, while Price’s montage of video images cannot represent plausible relations of its actors across ‘real’ historical time (section 2). I will then ask how the sonic textures of the work imagine contemporaneous spaces of possibility that do not, and need not, conform to a rational separation of time between a present and a past (section 3). In section 4, I will trace how Price, by using the artistic method of video collage, questions the relationship between visibility and invisibility in historical representations by means of sound. In section 5, I will turn an uncomfortable visible absence in Price’s choir into a question to confront the politics of my “sonic” methodology, and ask how speculations with and in sound as an ‘invisible’ medium can remain accountable to urgent problems of (visual) historical representation and situatedness that continue to haunt artworks with a claim to a feminist critique of the status quo.

The Trouble with Representation

In December 2012, Elizabeth Price was awarded the Turner Prize for *Choir*, which had been on display in Gateshead, England earlier that same year as part of a solo exhibition entitled *HERE* (Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, February 3, 2012 to May 27, 2012). Although the artist herself noted that the installation’s narrative was the product of her deliberate creative construction, and a construction that makes use of a *fictional* combination of archival elements (Price, 2012), different reviewers have discussed the work as a potent means of teaching contemporary audiences about historical facts. The Telegraph’s chief art critic Richard Dorment, for instance, praised the work as bringing history into the present by audiovisual intensity that was cerebral, intimate, and affectively engaging. To him, details about the Woolworths fire manifested so palpably that he suggests that other audiences, too, would “never forget what [they] learn[ed] about the tragedy.” The installation’s exceptional educational prowess, Dorment argues, stemmed from the rhythmic juxtaposition of archival footage and ‘girl group’ pop tunes that would give historical “information [...] clearly and succinctly,” while at the same time operating with attention-gripping immersive appeal (Dorment, 2012). A TimeOut review of May 2012 similarly suggested the work was propelling forgotten facts, sentiments, and persons right into the present. By way of the “flickering, intermittent and flame-like” images of its “revived” news footage, *Choir* would make the emotional shock experienced by witnesses to the fire accessible to present-day viewers, and thus answer to “the human desire to somehow encapsulate or resurrect a vanished moment” (TimeOut, 2012). Film critic Michael Sicinski, writing in the United States in 2013, called the work “a charismatic memorial” to the fire victims of 1979 that made a case “against the powers that squandered them and would let them be forgotten” (Sicinski, 2013). A December 2012 story in the Manchester Evening News, published just days after Price’s winning the Turner had been announced, saw the work do similar things, but came to a very different conclusion. Under the header

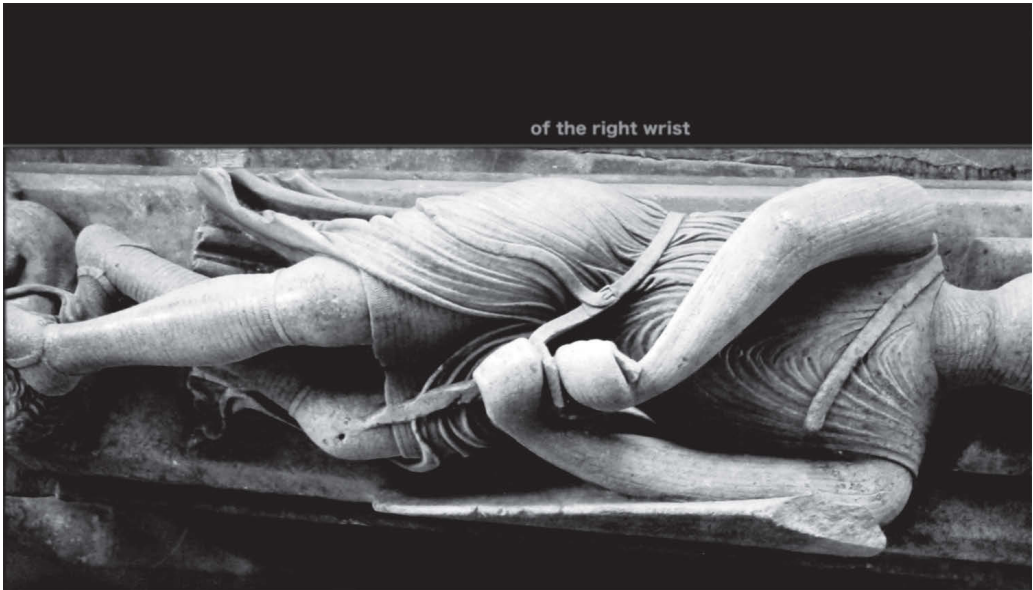
“My Sister died in the Woolies Fire – How Dare They Call It Art,” Christine Flanagan, whose sister Susan Heaton was among those killed in the department store 33 years before, called Price out for sensationalist appropriation of the news footage (“she has no connection to the event”) at the expense of both the victims and the bereaved she had erased (“there has been no mention of any of the families who lost people in the fire,” both quotations: Flanagan in Manchester Evening News, 2012).

Looking at *Choir*'s own (art) historical moment, it is not surprising that audiences have read it as an attempt at faithfully representing the 1979 Woolworths fire. The installation is among a growing number of artworks that, since the late 2000s and by gleaning methodology from the historical sciences, have shown a strong investment in “history-telling,” a development that has been referred to as the “historiographic turn” in contemporary art (Roelstraete, 2009). Introducing the term in an acerbic commentary for e-flux journal in March 2009, Belgian curator Dieter Roelstraete argued that artists working in the “historiographic mode” were taking a convenient out from addressing the pressing and complex concerns of the present (and the future). By turning to the past, he remarked, ambiguities could easily be swept aside in favor of an (uncritical) siding with whatever, whoever was supposedly in need of salvaging. In his words:

With the quasi-romantic idea of history's presumed remoteness (or its darkness) invariably quite crucial to the investigative undertaking at hand, these artists delve into archives and historical collections of all stripes [...] and plunge into the abysmal darkness of history's most remote corners. They invariably side with both the downtrodden and the forgotten, reveal traces long feared gone, [...] bring the unjustly killed back to (some form of) life, and generally seek to restore justice to anyone or anything that has fallen prey to the blinding forward march of History with a capital, monolithic “H.” (Roelstraete, 2009)

I quote Roelstraete at length because his comment expresses a basic assumption about historiographic artistic motivation which, while stripped of this particular text's derogatory connotations of artistic and philosophical naiveté, resonates loudly in the mentioned reactions to *Choir*: that the goal of artists working with archival historical material (such as Price), has always been, automatically, to reconstruct historical events as truthfully as possible, to *speak for* historical actors of an event, and to *make them visible* against official histories that routinely obscured them.

The problem with applying such a sweeping assumption to *Choir* is that the work presents an all but uncomplicated relation between the story it tells in its eighteen-minute video, and the historical event it supposedly brings to light. A first complication lies in the video's dramaturgy, which spends ten minutes – more than half of its entire running time – on developing its particular understanding of the figure of the choir, and on establishing this choir as its principal narrator, before it finally turns to the Woolworths fire as a proper event. In



1 Elizabeth Price, *THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979*, 2012, video still.

interviews and artist talks given in 2012 and 2013, Price elaborates in detail how the video's timeline reflects the timeline of her own research process, and owes more to her speculative, associative engagement with a number of vastly different archives¹ than to actual historical connections or causalities (Price, 2012; Price in Harvey, 2013). The artist recounts how she initially developed her idea of the choir as narrator while working with black-and-white photographic images of Gothic cathedrals that depicted the 'choir' as an element of medieval ecclesial architecture. What caught her attention was a striking, recurring gesture in the human-shaped sepulchral effigies found on choir floors in many different locations: a twisting of the wrist, most likely a drawing of the sword (Fig.1), that made the figure on the ground seem to hover between rise and defeat, between life and death (Price, 2012).

When she consulted art historical literature, Price could not find a satisfactory explanation of the gesture's meaning, only speculations that it indicated the figures belonged to the same social class. Intrigued by the gesture's evocative yet opaque quality, she connected it to a resonant expression she had come across in a different archive, and a very different 'choir': in a YouTube video of a performance that the young, white, all-female* North American pop group The Shangri-Las gave for the BBC in 1965 (Price, 2012; Price in

1 These archives range from formal and authoritative, like the National Monuments Record (now English Heritage Archive, mostly used for *Choir's* act one), to popular and informal, like YouTube (mostly used for act two), to legal/forensic, like the investigative archive of BRE Global, a UK based company developing policy recommendations for fire security (mostly used in act three).



2 Elizabeth Price, *THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979*, 2012, video still.

Harvey, 2013. (Fig.2). Swaying to the rhythm of one of their signature tracks of middle-class teenage heartbreak and irretrievable loss, wearing black bodysuits and stony expressions, the group in this video performs hand gestures that struck the artist as “rhetorical [...], expressive and powerful, [and] relatively enigmatic,” and thus very similar in tone and color to the gestures she came across in the Gothic choirs (Price, 2012).

Compelled by the “sombre” sensibility that dominated both sets of (audio-)visuals, she began grafting images of the Gothic sculptures and video material of the Shangri-Las into an assembly of polyphonic voices that would commemorate, mourn, and remind audiences that ‘they knew,’ without exactly knowing herself which concrete story or historical occurrence this choir spoke in relation to. Only after having “built this auditorium,” Price was actively looking for a third gesture coming from “an action, a drama or event” that could take center stage in her setup (Price in Harvey, 2013). She found it in historical BBC news footage from 1979, which shows female* Woolworths employees waving their arms through a barred window of the burning department store. (Fig.3) As their gesture visually resembled those found earlier in the other archives, the artist decided to make the Manchester fire “the event that the chorus would know about” (Price in Harvey, 2013).

So even though the video’s narrative arch culminates with images of the Woolworths fire, thus marking the tragedy as its central event, it could be argued that its main interest was not to unveil information about this particular event for information’s (or the event’s) sake, but to outline *how* its narrator builds towards the unveiling of this information. In



3 Elizabeth Price, *THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979*, 2012, video still.

other words: The *Woolworths Choir of 1979* can be read as the story of how the choir tells the story of the fire. The work's title, with its delicate play on rhyming words that replaces the historical event ("fire") with a fictitious narrator of the artist's own making ("*Choir*") marks this subtle but important difference.

A second complication can be found in another 'wrong' timeline, namely, in *Choir's* recruitment of mourners from historical contexts that precede the Woolworths tragedy. Though presented as witnesses to the fire ("WE KNOW"), neither the Gothic sculptures nor the Shangri-Las make sense as figures that would 'know' about the 1979 event, as their sombre expressions date to moments (the middle ages and the mid-1960s, respectively) that had not yet seen the department store deaths happen. A closer look at the gestures Price uses to connect the three historical moments reveals that these 'false' witnesses are related in an openly counterfactual lineage with a more than puzzling temporal logic. The artist arranges them in sequence, which at first sight suggests a causal and linear relationship. The medieval effigies of act one introduce and establish the striking gesture during the first six minutes of the video. In act two, the Shangri-Las seem to pick up the statue's movement, twisting their wrists just like the medieval figures do. In act three, the pop performers seem to hand the gesture over to the Woolworths employees and fire witnesses of 1979, who steadily perform their own version of it. What this visual chain causes for me is a strong impression of mirroring and echoing. The different members of the choir are imitating each other – but who is imitating whom? The narrative sequence act one=cathedral (middle ages) – act two=pop

performance (1965) – act 3=Woolworths fire (1979) suggests that the gesture originated with the Gothic sculptures, and that the later actors imitated the medieval choir’s expression. An analysis of the performative quality of the gestures in their different settings, however, unsettles this impression. The gestures that appear in the two narratively and historically earlier contexts are highly stylized, tightly controlled, and meticulously choreographed. As Price (2012) points out herself, the Shangri-Las’ hand movements appear restrained to the point of being a “rhetorical” form. The Gothic effigies take this expression to the extreme by literally casting it in stone, thus arresting it in form for centuries to come. It could be argued that these expressions are self-conscious and self-reflexive: their performers are perfectly aware that – and how – they are moving their hands, and they know (“WE KNOW”) that they are offering their gesture *to* the audience, to look at. The gestures appearing in the Woolworths fire footage, in contrast, are gestures of urgency: they are spontaneous, reactive to an immediately threatening experience happening in the now (for the trapped employees) or in the very recent past (for the witnesses retelling what they saw), and connotative of an affective reaction, rather than a staging of a protocol or strict movement score. But if the measured dance of the sculptures and the Shangri-Las echo the Woolworths victims’ urgent waving, how could they possibly reflect an utterance such a long time before it even happened in 1979? The two explanations that come to mind – supernatural foreshadowing and/or time travel – point to fantastic genres (Gothic Romance and Science Fiction, respectively), rather than to a faithful representation of the Woolworths fire, and those who lost their lives in it.

To further complicate things, the victims that Price’s anachronistic choir mourns are at least partly fictitious, too. Structurally, the video’s narrative culminates in showing the news images of historical individuals: very real female* retail workers, trapped inside the burning Woolworths building by very real metal bars. By finally revealing this footage as though it was the last missing piece in a puzzle, the video takes the figure of the ‘shop girl’ as the focal point through which the experience of being killed by a warehouse fire in 1979 would be framed in this story. This figure, however, is fictitious: not only because the actual women whose entrapment is documented in the BBC material were rescued and survived (Price in Harvey, 2013), but also because no female* retail worker was among the casualties that day. Of the ten persons who died, nine were customers sitting in the cafeteria at the time the fire started, among them Susan Heaton. The tenth person was Cyril Baldwin, a male* Woolworths employee who perished while helping other customers escape (Woolworths Museum, 2017). Though Price was aware of this fact during the later stages of assembling *Choir*, she decided to keep the ‘shop girls’ as the focalizers of her narrative (Price in Harvey, 2013).

All three complications show that *Choir* can neither claim to be ‘speaking for’ historical actors of an actual event, nor to ‘rescue’ a deliberately hidden or neglectfully forgotten historical truth from ‘History.’ Instead, they reflect the artist’s interest in *composing with* archival material, in arranging it while taking liberties, and, in Price’s own words, “suggesting or imagining and supplanting” (Price, 2017).

Beyond 'Speaking For,' I: *The Woolworths Choir* as Contemporaneous Assembly

Choir thus practices a kind of historiography that differs strongly from Roelstraete's definition of the term, and that contradicts the assumptions of truthfulness expressed in the 2012/2013 reviews. Austrian art historian Eva Kernbauer (2015) offers a theorization that better suits the work. Reassessing the "historiographic turn" in 2015, Kernbauer proposes that a large number of contemporary artworks turn to historical representation not to produce proof of a past reality, but to question the very conditions of such a production. Artistic historiographies of this sort, she argues, employ methodologies from the historical sciences to problematize truthfulness, and to reflect on the entangled relationship between impressions of 'truth' and persuasive (audio-)visual storytelling (2015, p. 24, p. 30). Challenging Roelstraete's implicit assumption that only artists, with their unscientific (or "quasi-romantic," Roelstraete 2009) desire for the past, needed to tell affectively appealing stories to win over audiences, Kernbauer points at the ambiguity of 'history' as a concept and a term. In its double meaning of "event and narrative," of denoting both a past experience and the account that retells it, history – as scholarship and discipline – has at its very core the concern of how to craft a story (Kernbauer, 2015, p. 24). Presumably purely artistic means of generating knowledge – for instance, by immersion, imagination, and speculation – are part and parcel of many scholarly historical methodologies that aim to make history accessible, graspable, "clear" and "understandable" for contemporary audiences (Kernbauer, 2015, pp. 28–30). The most promising critical potential artistic historiography affords, Kernbauer concludes, is thus "to show how problematic, changeable, and manipulative the tools to a supposed understanding – narrative and pictorial structures, explanations, interpretation aids – are, and to disclose the inevitable limits of such a claim" (2015, p. 40). By placing its emphasis on the figure of a multi-vocal choir, which is a historically implausible but, judging from the reviews quoted above, still highly convincing narrator, and by assembling this choir from a combination of archival material that most audiences were likely to neatly distinguish into make-believe (music videos on YouTube), documentary (historical BBC news reports), and legal evidence (footage of the BRE's forensic reenactment of the fire's devastating spread through the building) if they consulted them independently from each other, *Choir* commits to exactly these concerns.

Price's piece, however, does not dwell on the seductiveness and unreliability of visual material alone. Sound, too, sets in motion the speculative associations necessary to perceive the video's multiple voices as a choir, and thus as an assembly that would mourn the Woolworths fire together. In addition to the visual cues described above, around which the choir gathers on the level of images (the similar hand gestures, the bold letters and scroll text repeatedly announcing "we know" in writing), auditory cues connect the mourners in a sonic relation. One of these cues is the density of the work's sonic texture. As an installation that makes a very conscious claim of gallery space by sonic means, *Choir* is, in the artist's words, "loud as cinema" (Price, 2017). The video soundtrack's auditory compo-

sition follows the pattern sparse–indulgent–sparse: the multilayered sound collage of act two, which packs the airwaves with melodies, percussion, voices, rumbling noises of unspecified origin and a searing, high-frequency buzz which resembles what Mack Hagood (2015) has called “the tinnitus trope” of narrative film, is bookended by long stretches of silence, which are punctured only by short, sharp, single sonic events (hand claps, finger snaps, beats on a tambourine, and a clicking of a computer mouse or carousel slide projector) that remain so few and far between that they are clearly discernible from each other. The loudness of the sound events heightens the affective, somatic impact² not only of the composition’s noisy parts, but also of its silences. Especially the volume of the isolated, percussive *punctum* in acts one and three makes the absence of sound around it emerge as a substance that is palpable, sculptural, voluminous in its own right, and of a paradox quality: it is of dead weight, and drag-down-heavy like the dense, ‘empty’ still frames of monochrome color that often visually accompany it, but at the same time it stirs, tense with expectation of what will sound out next, and when, making me fidget while holding my breath. This tension is the auditorily induced echo of the tension Price describes she has *seen* in the hand gestures of the Gothic tomb statues and the Shangri-Las: enigmatic, yet charged with meaning; hovering between exploding out upwards and sinking to the ground; expressive, yet restrained.

Paying close attention to *Choir*’s use of sound allows me to introduce yet another art theoretical approach that would contradict, and complicate, Roelstraete’s narrow definition of what artistic historiographies (can) do. The Swiss-born, England-based sound artist and philosopher Salomé Voegelin has dedicated a series of monographs (2010; 2014; 2019) to trying to articulate how listening, both as an academic method for engaging with art, and as a political strategy, could possibly impact upon, and change, structures of inequality as they are lived and known in empirically, socioeconomically and materially manifest worlds of the present. In her latest book, which engages with many works of (sound) art that themselves deal with the issue of artistic history telling, Voegelin sets out how listening enabled her to feel out how artworks cared for the *unactualized* – to what is not yet (and, very likely, also to what never was), but what *could* be (2019, p. 19). Borrowing from a recent development in the political field of International Relations, Voegelin argues that unactualized possibilities can change the actual, when social agents take them seriously, and consider them as “thinkable” future options (2019, p. 19). She points out that thinking the unactualized “does not resemble a trivial fantasy, easily dismissed, but [that it] can move from the understanding of norms and normativity, their instigation of actual and real, into real possibilities that are transformative and radical” (2019, p. 19). Her approach offers a way of thinking *Choir* beyond the two mutually exclusive categories

2 When I asked for reactions after showing *Choir* in a bachelor media studies seminar at University of Applied Arts Vienna in 2017, one of the students commented that they “felt assaulted” by the piece’s sound design.

that Roelstraete's frame would allow for, namely, an obscure, lost and substantially over-and-done-with past on the one hand, and the present of the artist, who is forever separated from what has passed by their own locatedness in historical time, on the other. The space Voegelin's thoughts open for re-engaging with *Choir* is one of presence – presence, however, not of historical facts and/or people “as they really were” (Benjamin 1968[1940]), who are magically propelled into the artist's own and fundamentally different historical moment, but of voices who, in a shared here-and-now, are seriously deliberating how what *could* have happened could turn into what could happen still. In such a space, the linear timelines that I tried to outline above, and which did not accommodate Price's anachronic mourners to begin with, can fold over into each other, roll and tumble and layer up, and finally branch out into at least two directions at once: they allow *Choir* to be as much about how the past shapes the future as about how the present shapes the past. The implausible present space and time that the artwork suggests acts as the hinge connecting these plural temporalities. The mourners' assembly happens here and now, and they congregate to sing about and point at their contemporaneity, as much, if not more, as they tell of the different historical contexts they have come from to meet here. By calling this assembly “polyphonic” (Price, 2017), the artists emphasizes that none of the voices is, in and by itself, principal or privileged. At the center of attention is an interest in *how* they emerge as an assembly, in a coming-together of bits and parts that are – and remain – heterogeneous, while still being able to assemble, in order to tell a story (see Bakhtin 1984[1963]; Tsing 2015, pp. 23–4). Like all the other voices of the choir, the Woolworths fire victims join the congregation as present voices singing with the others, as agents feeling out a potential for change, not as remote or lost subjects in need of ‘speaking for’.

Beyond ‘Speaking For,’ II: *The Woolworths Choir* as Sonic Assembly

In her talk at the Baltic in 2012, Price explains that in constructing her choir as a contemporaneous polyphony, she “wasn't looking for something essential, or something that would underpin them all, I was simply looking for a point of contact, a point where I could connect or attach them, where I could join them” (Price, 2012). Her wish to “join them” can be read in its double meaning here: Price not only connects her heterogeneous materials by polyphonic means, but also draws attention to the artistic methods she uses to gather and compose them. The artist thus literally joins in the choir as one of many voices that tell on how history, as a narrative, can be assembled. This for instance becomes visible in shots that communicate how Price collected ‘her’ archival material by capturing it with a video recording device. Multiple frames show the YouTube material she uses playing on her MacBook, or the art historical photographs she selected as illustrations in a book she holds up to the camera.

The most striking example of artistic-method-becoming-voice, however, again emerges from the way the artist handles sound. In addition to being loud, *Choir* is also a noisy work – in the conservative, technologically defined sense that it does not transmit auditory information clearly (see Thompson, 2017, pp. 49–51). While the percussion and clicks in acts one and three carry through the silence sharply and distinctly, act two clouds its more contoured sounds, like the Shangri-Las’ singing and the choruses, the tinnitus buzz and the hand claps added by the artist, in a tangle of sonic events of unspecified origin. Here, the relation of single discernable sounds to what is playing out visibly on screen is not always immediately comprehensible. The low rumble, indistinct shouts and faint clashing melodies that can be heard here are a result of how Price edits her material, of the software she uses, and of how she arranges the clips she filmed into narrative composition. The artist describes her approach to video editing as “collage” (2012; 2017): she drags as many short clips as possible on the timeline of Final Cut Pro, and arranges them in thematic clusters on top of each other. Instead of starting out with a finished storyboard, her scripts form as she generates scenes from these groupings and puts them into sequence. In her 2017 talk at Emily Carr, Price intimates that this composing method allows her to “start making the film in order to see what the film is going to be,” instead of beginning with a finished story in mind. Letting the narrative unfold in its own time forces her to keep all the material that makes up a cluster in the timeline of her software, since she will often rearrange the visual composition of a scene by dragging different images on top of the pile of clips. When the sequences are finally done, the artistic process of compiling, grouping and layering will no longer be visible, but it will remain present in the video’s soundtrack:

One of the things that is really important about the way video editing software works is that [...] the cursor will generally only see the top [image]. But it will hear all the sounds, cause the sounds are porous. [...] When I put an image on top of the other, unless I make this image transparent, it makes that other image invisible. But the sounds – this doesn’t happen. Sounds just layer up. And often – because I record everything myself, in the studio, often handheld without a tripod – there’s a lot of sound that comes in with the clips. [...] you know, maybe I’ve got the Buzzcocks on or the radio, and there’s a news story, and all of this material just comes in. By accident. And comes in and ends up on the timeline. And often the image gets separated from the sound, and the sound just washes around. And is all audible. (Price, 2017)

By keeping these “porous” sounds in the final soundtrack edit of act two, Price presents a prime example of how Salomé Voegelin’s suggestion of engaging the unactualized by sonic means could be put into artistic practice. After all, Voegelin posits that a perception of seemingly fantastic alternatives to the present may emerge when listening out to what she calls “the ‘how’”: the actualized “conditions” that have shaped the present in such a

way that they allowed only the one present outcome to manifest, at the expense of all other possibilities that had to remain enfolded in the contingent (2019, p. 19). Price's approach to editing *Choir* echoes Voegelin's methodology not only by being very vocal about its own 'how,' but also by pointedly locating 'her' sounds' transformative potential in their invisibility. As prevalent in sound (art) studies, Voegelin's work builds heavily on the belief (or the hope) that auditory engagement can rouse subjects to assemble in different ways than those (exclusionary) ones that are characteristic for vision/image regimes – not in spite of, but exactly *because* of their invisibility, which would allow auditory voices to share presence in a contemporaneous space without elbowing each other out of the possible by covering each other as visible forms would (see Voegelin, 2010, pp. xi-xiii and pp. 1–14; 2014, pp. 3–5, p. 37, p. 84, p. 165; 2019, p. 30, pp. 109–112, pp. 119–120, pp. 134–139, pp. 188–192, pp. 199–201; also see LaBelle, 2018, pp. 29–59; Hofer 2021, pp. 62–64). With her “porous sounds,” Elizabeth Price adds a voice to her choir that, very literally, bespeaks video collage as an audiovisual method with a visual dimension that is structurally upheld by invisibility. For one image of a cluster to become visually perceptible, it is necessary for every other image in the same cluster to remain unseen. The “top image,” the one that has been chosen by the artist to take the upmost place in a pile, has visibility privilege over the manifold invisibilities that underpin it, that it rests on. In contrast, the sonic dimension of the collage allows all the material that helps the artist shape her story to be present, to sound at the same time – at least during act two. The noisy, liquid sounds of this section seep through the top image to call attention to the the other clips, to the potentiality of the not-shown, to the possibility that the narrative could also have been told otherwise, in other images, in other stories, in a different sequence of visual utterances, by another artist, narrator, and/or artistic method.

Representation, Revisited: 'Sonic Sensibility' and Situatedness

The installation as a whole, in an exhibition context, invites visitors to fully enter and become part of this sonic assembly with their whole bodies. At the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in 2012, wooden seating that visually echoed the CGI animations of the church choirs in the video's act one was placed in front of the projection screen, and two downward-facing speakers, which were hanging from the ceiling near the screen's top corners, blasted the sounds of the choir at audiences seated there. Though offering a materially manifest choir-space to step into, Price did not seek to simply engulf visitors in her narrative but aimed at an experience that allowed them to question the conditions of their immersion. In an artist talk at the Baltic in 2012, she points out that she wanted audiences to realize the suspension of disbelief she required from them if they wanted to fully conflate the installation's physical, and the video's narrative, spaces:

One of the reasons I called the show *HERE* was because I think when the narrator insists on the idea of ‘here,’ it completely fails as an assertion. It pushes the fictional conceit too far. And when it says it’s ‘here,’ it reminds the viewer of their embodied location in the situation, the particular fabric by which they are surrounded, the institution, the actual conditions of the arrangement in which they are sitting. [...] I want to counterpoint and interpolate, provocatively, the fictional or narrative sense of location constructed in the video, and the actual location in which the viewer – or, you know, me – sits. Or stands. (Price, 2012)

When measured against standards that can only separate history from fiction, the “*HERE*” Price invited her audiences to enter at the Baltic was an impossible space. An art theoretical engagement with it thus necessitates an approach that allows for dealing with “impossible things” (Voegelin, 2019, p. 13), and for taking them seriously in their own terms. Like the sonic spaces of engagement Voegelin describes, the immersion Price offers hovers between rational and affective modalities, and between deliberate action and passive handing-over. When I, as an audience, am invited to step into being-with the choir, the installation holds space for me, to feel out my range of options among the other voices: how far will I surrender to this strange ‘here,’ to the lure of the improbable narrative? What will I provisionally actualize by joining in? And: which stories of my own will I bring with me, which will I keep out of sight?

The latter question raises issues of situatedness, which become especially poignant when trying to assess how *Choir* gets to speculate – by sonic *and* visual means – about politics of gender and class, and what racialized subject positions this speculation potentially produces for its choir of mourners. One of the stories the installation seems to tell is that the Woolworths fire of 1979 was so deadly because the store’s management willingly put their employees at risk. Act three of Price’s video revisits in detail how stacks of cheap, highly flammable upholstered furniture were kept crammed in an enclosure in the display area of the furniture department, and that the doors to the department’s fire escapes were permanently locked shut. This managerial decision resulted in masses of toxic smoke that rapidly developed after the fire broke out while employees and customers were caught by fire doors that wouldn’t open. By focalizing this story in the figure of the trapped ‘shop girl’ instead of the nine customers and one male* employee who were killed in the actual historical event, the unactualized possibility the piece’s choir tries to sing into presence seems to be a feminist critique of gendered labor in post-1945 capitalism. In very broad terms, its voices could be described as gathering for a collective act of recalling (“WE KNOW”) that within the economic structures of the late 1970s in Britain, the lives of female* service workers were deemed expendable.

On the plane of visual representation, however, this reading is troubled by a striking absence: that of voices of Color of any gender.³ The ‘top images’ visible in the video, the ones that made it to those positions in Price’s clusters that would get to cover up those below them, show the choir as overwhelmingly white: the Gothic statues are of light stone, the extremely highlighted, harsh and bright white complexions of the Shangri-Las contrast starkly against the dark background of the BBC studio, and all but one of the witnesses as well as every single fire fighter and expert investigator that appear in the historical footage of act three visually register with me as pasty, pale, very light-skinned, and as bearing features that probably wouldn’t get them stopped on the street, either in 1979 or now, by police racially profiling passers-by. This a relevant omission for a story about work in the UK in the 1970s (see Solomos, Findlay, Jones and Gilroy, 1982). As the British-Nigerian post-colonial scholar Amina Mama demonstrated in 1984, the British workforce of the 1970s, especially the low-paid service sector, crucially relied on African and Caribbean Black women and women of Color, and it was these women’s lives that British state politics systematically threatened by enforcing economic structures made it disproportionately easier to exploit them than white female workers (Mama, 1984). Five years earlier, in the year of the historical Woolworths fire, the Indian-born UK-based writer and activist Amrit Wilson had published *Finding A Voice: Asian Women in Britain*, a book that provided first-person accounts of the unsafe conditions Asian women workers met in British sweatshops, and how they self-organized to fight against them (Wilson, 1979).

By admitting none of these historical subjects and accounts to its image plane, *Choir* keeps the important role that racialization played in the division of the British workforce into a privileged majority and expendable minoritized groups during the 1970s out of frame, and out of focus. With this omission, the installation once more reveals that it cannot, and will not, provide a *representation* of the past, least of all one that would finally grant visibility to subaltern subjectivities that ‘History’ systematically and structurally eliminates from view. To work with sonic methodology responsibly, however, requires taking the installation’s biased visual representation into account. To simply overlook the whiteness of the choir, and to embrace its sonic dynamics as opening up an emancipatory feminist space that would fully transcend – and thus render obsolete – “the limits [...] of representation” (Voegelin, 2019, p. 4), risks repeating an epistemic violence that white-centered feminisms, historically and at present, are well known to be prone to: to sell the positions and sensibilities white-racialized women* (can) hold in their societies as a universal experience shared by ‘all women’ (see Carby, 1982; Amos and Parmar, 1984; Mirza, 1997; Ahmed, 2020, Carby, 2020), and to regard their own racialization as visually unmarked, unremarkable, and not worth the mention (Frankenberg, 1993; Mirza, 1997,

3 This absence is not total: One important voice that makes an – albeit short – appearance in act two who I think I recognize is the Anglo-Somali punk musician Poly Styrene, who, between 1977 and 1978, acted as the iconic singer and frontperson for the British band X-Ray Spex.

pp. 1–3; Schaffer, 2008, p. 54; El-Tayeb, 2011, p. xiii). What role racialized situatedness would play in the possibilities that the Woolworths choir sonically unfolds remains a startlingly open question. Elizabeth Price's repeatedly pointing out that she is speaking from her points of view and audition in and with the piece (Price, 2012; Price in Harvey, 2013), in addition to her decision to keep the hefty weight of the "buried" materials audible in act two, perhaps indicates that for her, too, hers was a project that should remain open-ended, but at the same time mark its unactualized possibilities as both promise *and* trouble. By interring again and "leav[ing] [...] buried" (Price, 2017) large parts of the archival material she has unearthed, by keeping the bulk of it visible and fully accessible only to herself, Price mimics the way that the writing of history, as an academic project, often works. *Choir* thus constructs a space that exhibits the messy process of historical research itself; by making it audible as a process that involves amassing, making narrative choices that can be heavily influenced by the researcher's identifications and situatedness, and finally saying only a very small portion of what could have, and perhaps should have, been said.

Conclusion

In this contribution I have argued that *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, as an artistic historiography, makes perceptible that archival, documentary sound-images can be assembled into convincing 'historical' stories, which nevertheless remain fictional artistic accounts of the present and the past. Looking at, and listening to, the choir as the installation's central narrative agent, I have suggested that Elizabeth Price does not summon its voices as an educational tool, or at least not as a tool that aims to provide information about historical facts as facts. I have challenged a reading prevalent in reviews of the work published in 2012 and 2013: that the installation aimed at 'making visible' and 'speaking for' the historical actors who lived through, or died during, a department store fire that destroyed the Manchester Woolworths building in May 1979. By paying special attention to collage and assembly as the artist's method of choice in editing archival material, I hope to have confronted Dieter Roelstraete's suggestion that artistic historiographies are necessarily one-dimensional and methodologically unsophisticated. Drawing on Salomé Voegelin's method of listening out for how historically and currently unrealized potentialities might reverberate within an artwork's sound, I have suggested that Price's installation allows for tentative spaces of a contemporaneous assembly connecting the historical actors to the artist and audiences that encounter them in the now. I have also shown, however, that a sonically sensitive engagement with this artwork must at the same time remain accountable for its politics of visual representation, unless it willingly wants to keep hidden racialized structures of labor and gender inequality which are as troubling when thinking about the 1970s in Britain as they are when thinking about who gets to speculate about history in the present.

My argument thus does not at all suggest that ‘history’ is completely up for grabs, that all historical accounts are treacherous and unreliable, that all historical facts are negotiable, or that the best (and most ‘sophisticated’ way) of approaching records of historical experience is to mercilessly deconstruct them. Complex issues of historical representation that are for instance expressed in the very real grievances of fire victim Susan Heaton’s sister, and in the invisibility of BPOC voices in the ranks of the work’s choir, need to be taken seriously, and must remain present when discussing artworks that make use of archival material showing and sounding histories that have lasting effects on social actors living in the now. My goal was to stress again that it is worth a look at – and a listen to – *who* assembles the particular stories that pass for accounts of historical events, and to recommend Price’s installation as an artwork that draws attention to exactly this question. I brought the artist’s descriptions and interpretations of her methods into my text to show that she knows (SHE KNOWS) that her work is, and can only be, a reflection of her dealing with the “telling of history,” and that she communicates about it openly. Reviews that ignore this reflective mode, and reinterpret *Choir* as an attempt at explaining the Woolworths fire in all its historical complexity, render the gist of the work invisible and unheard.⁴

- 4 Funding note: this contribution was completed as part of the Elise Richter project “Situating Cinesonics: Materialities of Sound in Audiovisual Art Acts,” Austrian Science Fund (FWF): V770-G.

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Credits

Katalin Cseh-Varga

Fig. 1: Courtesy Archive of Anna and Romuald Kutera; Fig. 2: Courtesy of the artist; Fig. 3: Courtesy Archive of the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences (AIAPAS, *Zbiory Specjalne Instytutu Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk*), Ryszard Stanisławski Archive, 1842/1/1/1-10, Warsaw; Fig. 4: © „Lucian Blaga” Central University Library, Cluj-Napoca.

Iris Laner

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Barbara Reisinger

Fig. 1: Robert Morris, *Drawings 1961-1976*, Craig F. Starr Gallery, Plate 14, n.p; Fig. 2: Courtesy mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig; Fig. 3: Digital image Whitney Museum of American Art / Licensed by Scala.

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Ann Cotten

Fig. 1: Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Pidust, photographer; Fig. 2–4: Courtesy of the artist.

Anamarija Batista and Waltraud P. Indrist

Fig. 1: Wikipedia; Fig. 2: Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum, Reg. no.: 1917,1208.2277; Fig. 3: Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc.No.: PH.400–1982. Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O128944/view-of-north-west-corner-photograph-negative-ferrier-claude-marie/> (Accessed 18 August 2021); Fig. 4: Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc.No.: 39291. Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1101716/photograph/> (Accessed 18 August 2021); Fig. 5–6: Courtesy Bildrecht, 2022; Fig 7: Courtesy Anamarija Batista and Goran Škofić, research trip 2019, research project: “Collective Utopias of Post-War Modernism: The Adriatic Coast as a Leisure and Defence Paradise” by Antonia Dika and Anamarija Batista; Fig. 8–9: Courtesy Anamarija Batista, private postcard collection; Fig. 10: Courtesy Katerina Duda; Fig. 11: Courtesy Igor Eškinja, photography by Damir Žižić.

Sarah Lauß

Fig. 1: Courtesy *Photo-Sport. Illustrierte Monatshefte für Amateure* (1927), XVII (May), p. 21. ANNO/Austrian National Library; Fig. 2: Courtesy *Österreichische Touring-Zeitung* (1931), 32 (5, May), p. 19. Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club (ÖAMTC); Fig. 3–6: Courtesy *Mit dem Ö. T. C. Klub Royal nach Budapest und die ungarische Pufsta* (1931). Amateur film, 9.5mm, b/w, silent, 16fps, 34:26. Austrian Film Museum (0901-09-0233). Photos: Collection Austrian Film Museum, Vienna; Fig. 7: Courtesy Marc Wanamaker/Bison Archives.

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Fig. 1–3: Courtesy Elizabeth Price.