The Reader

Performing the Museum

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The project *Performing the Museum* was devised by the main project partners – the Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb, Croatia), the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia), the Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona, Spain) and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška (Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia) – in order to re-evaluate and rethink their resources with the aim “to generate new thinking and open new practical possibilities on the future of such institutions.”\(^1\) This would be achieved by establishing “an active dialogue with the audience through a series of presentations, productions and educational workshops, and through the presentation of artistic research to the public.”\(^2\) This publication presents an overview of those activities and the reflections of its actors, as well as presentations of similar undertakings and some general reflections “outside” the common, narrowly conceived museum context. The project hinged on the museums involved actually opening up their resources – material resources, like collections, archives and other museum resources, as well as their working methods and other forms of cultural capital – to “outside” actors to help them create different museum projects that would “raise awareness of institutional resources that fall outside the usual framework of museum collections, permanent collections and museum exhibitions, and draw attention to museum documentation, architecture and exhibition conditions, to the context of procurement of art and of its creation, to institutional written and unwritten history...”\(^3\) Those “outsiders” – mainly invited artists but also curators, educators and theorists – we called “interpreters” re-

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1. The “About” section at the project’s website (http://performingthemuseum.net/site/spip.php?rubrique1)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
presenting “different kinds of agents associated with cultural production and museum thinking.”

In this specific case the widely used term “performance” develops two distinct meanings of the word that serve to illustrate the challenges contemporary museums are faced with today: performance as restored behaviour, and performance as a level of efficiency. In general, to perform is to execute an activity in a pre-defined way – to play a certain role in an expected or prescribed manner. In his definition of performance Richard Schechner emphasizes repetition as its key feature: “Performances... are ‘restored behaviours,’ ‘twice-behaved behaviours,’ performed actions that people train for and rehearse.” Nonetheless, the meaning of performance in this project most certainly does not aim at being a mere simplistic repetition of traditional activities connected to the role(s) of museum. Although performance is an act of reiteration, of re-enactment, it can never be the same, since every repetition, whether voluntarily or not, introduces differences that produce changes in the structure and meaning(s) of the very activity that is being performed. This interplay of repetition and difference is precisely what this project seeks to enact in order to restore centuries-old museum practices in the very different context of contemporary society. The challenge is to rethink, examine and experiment with different performances of museum in order to acquire knowledge that is much needed to (re)position such seemingly dated institutions in new social circumstances. Starting from the largely obvious premise that museums are and have long been in crisis, the main challenge is to provide a set of possible answers to the question what is to be abolished and what is to be preserved in the structure and workings of the institution of museum.

Another meaning of the term “performance” has an explicitly economic dimension and carries some important and unavoidable connotations for museums. Nowadays it is widely used in the context of the global economic crisis and refers to the measuring the success of an enterprise in terms of efficiency vis-à-vis its organization, resources, costs, expediency and profitability.

4 The “Interpreters” section at the project’s website (http://performingthemuseum.net/site/spip.php?rubrique4)
6 “Performances are made from bits of restored behavior, but every performance is different from every other. First, fixed bits of behavior can be recombined in endless variations. Second, no event can exactly copy another event. Not only the behavior itself – nuances of mood, tone of voice, body language, and so on, but also the specific occasion and context make each instance unique.” Ibid., p. 29
“Performance management includes activities which ensure that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner.” Thus, better performance means the job is done in shorter time using fewer resources. Such connotations point to a new social and economic structure, wherein the previously extensive state-funded public sector is radically cut back, driving public institutions towards financial self-sustainability and so-called resource optimization. While traditionally, under welfare-state capitalism, public institutions such as museums depended predominantly on the nation-state for both socio-political agendas as well as support, today they depend increasingly on their audiences to help sustain themselves. Museums are challenged to prove their very existence in the current political context of Europe, whose main instrument of cultural policy – the Creative Europe program – supports projects like this one. EU cultural policy is designed around self-sustainable models of cultural tourism and cultural industries. Museums surely take this challenge as a threat to their traditional institutional position; but it also represents a chance consciously treat their publics as clients in a way that would be part of a wider cultural democratization process – a chance to reshape “objectives and indicators” by opening up their mechanisms of knowledge production in order to involve the communities around them.

The project Performing the Museum is based on an acute awareness of present day material and ideological circumstances, and of a possible direction in the museum’s future development: “The traditional roles of the contemporary museum are changing. Its most important activities are no longer merely storage, studying, and exhibiting of artworks, but also an active involvement with the museum’s audience.” A classical definition of the purpose or function of museum includes the work of collecting and preserving, displaying or exhibiting, and, crucially, educating in terms of scholarly research as well as of public education. In the European tradition, from the French Revolution onwards, museums are mainly regarded as public organizations – publicly-funded institutions performing a public service of collecting, preserving and displaying public collections and all carried out by professional public servants. Nevertheless, during most of the 19th and 20th centuries museums were more exclusive and hierarchical institutions rather than democratic ones, especially since they were explicitly involved in the reproduction and legitimation of the values of modern nation states. And it is this role of the museum that has seen particular

7 Wikipedia article “Performance Management” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performance_management)
8 The “About” section at the project’s website, op. cit.
criticism from the 1970s onwards – mostly from academics – much of which revolved around questions of the appropriation of culture, the production of meaning, and power relations in the process of collecting and exhibiting. The museum’s sanctioned choice – like other modern knowledge-driven institutions, was to brand “authoritative statements, which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and which select those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding. The authority to arbitrate is in this case legitimized by superior (objective) knowledge…”9 making them a sort of body of legislators that “laid down the law” and thus establishing a norm of the knowledge they were to create and transmit. This evokes Zygmunt Bauman’s description of the shift from modernity to postmodernity in terms of the changing role of intellectuals, from one of “legislator” to one of “interpreter.” He claims there is a shift from modern intellectuals as legislators of universal values who legitimated the new modern social order to postmodern intellectuals as interpreters of social meaning. Now, intellectuals or, rather, cultural workers actually, are called on to perform the role of mediators – those who facilitate exchange between institutions and communities or individuals. They are actually mediators but no longer between the state and the people, but between particular communities and the existing social institutions. The interpreters in this project are invited not only to interpret social meanings, but to produce them, to examine the mechanisms and assets of the museums – archives, collections, their operational, relational and cognitive power, and to perform this institutional process.

This publication can be seen as a continuation of the experiment initiated by this project. It is a reader, keeping well in mind the sheer volume of publications on the subject of museums over the last quarter century. Far from being a reader for experts in museology or museum professionals comprised of referential texts on different aspects of structure and the practice of contemporary museums, this book is actually an agent of reading – a reader of this project. It is just one of a number of possible readers of the current situation at museums, seeking answers to long-standing questions related to the museum’s performance: How do museums perform their public role? How do they relate to the existing cultural, social and political circumstances? How do they perform in terms of public education, public accountability and public access? This reader consists of texts written by invited authors of various backgrounds and critical approaches together with curators from the institutions participating in this

experiment, and also presents a part of the documentation of the project actions – interpreters’ readings of the resources of the museums involved.

The map of the project consists of four cities: Novi Sad, Zagreb, Barcelona and Slovenj Gradec, where the work of the interpreters took place. In the case of the Antoni Tàpies Foundation this took the form of an exhibition in the archive: “How to Do Things With Documents”, the result of research by R Roger Bernat, Lúa Coderch, Experimentem amb l’art, LaFundició, Objectologies and Pep Vidal, and dealing with the registers of mediation from different perspectives and methods of analysis. Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška focused on the controversial political past of the gallery and the potentiality of that memory. The exhibition “Muzej v gibanju” then presented works by Nika Autor, Vadim Fiškin, Tadej Pogačar, Isa Rosenberger, Barbara Steiner and Anna Lena von Helldorff, ŠKART Kolektiv (Dragan Protic and Đorđe Balmazović), as the outcome of various methods and approaches to the gallery’s past: memory, archive, collection, and its specific connection to the local community. The Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina turned to the interpretation of archiving as one of the museum’s primary concerns, with the exhibition “Archive and Power”, and particular attention paid to (de)constructing memory and the museum’s relationship to the power it wields in the construction of history, consisting of artworks exploring public and private archives, as interpreted by Jasmina Cibic, Zoran Todorović, Saša Rakezić Zograf, Isidora Todorović and Doplegenger (Isidora Ilić and Boško Prostran). The Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb invited artists Soren Thilo Funder, Fokus Group, Jasmina Cibic, Pilvi Takala, Karol Radziszewski and Dalibor Martinis to both interpret and intervene. It also extended the invitation to conservators and curators, so the history of this museum, the first to embrace contemporary art in its very name, opened itself up to new readings; conservators Mirta Pavić and Tesa Horvatček, as well as photographer Ana Opalić created “1957 Didactic Exhibition”, and Ana Kutleša analysed Božo Bek’s archive.

Along with a presentation of the work of the interpreters, this reader also embodies the larger process of self-reflection on the part of the museums included in this project, as articulated by the curators in the partnering institutions, which enables us to follow the various readings of the invitation, and the interpretation and conclusions from both vantage points. Naturally, some aspects of the project together with the theoretical treatment of them, received more attention than others, which fact was also taken in consideration in the design of the chapters herein.
In the spirit of extending the project invitation to interpret the museum, the opening chapter entitled “From Dissolution of the Past to Meta-Future in the Meta-Museum” features two essays framed as “outsiders’ views,” providing insight into the changing paradigms and contemporary critique with which we are faced when dealing with questions of history, museums and art. Boris Buden provides an overview of the wider social and political processes that have changed the notions of history, past and museum, all of which present a considerable challenge and one that museums simply cannot avoid responding to. Obsession with the past is seen here as a symptom of its dissolution, which renders the museums tomb-like residues of previous historical paradigms now dispersed into a state of irreversible plurality. Jelena Vesić and Vladimir Jerić Vlidi develop a specific overview of the changes in the relations between museum, art and education that spurs a critique of the immanent reproduction of power through the epistemological system of “museing”. By staging a sort of dialogue between Mieke Bal, Walter Benjamin and Luis Camnitzer they explore the possibilities of a future museum – the meta-museum.

In the chapter “Institutional Self-Reflection”, the self-reflection of the institutions is analysed through particular cases of exhibition production together with an overview of museum responses to recent critique. As regards the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Barbara Steiner and Anna Lena von Helldorff show how the archive, memory and specific relations between a gallery and the immediate community can be reflected in the conceptualization of the exhibition in an examination of its new(found) relevance. Aida Sánchez de Serdio Martín examined the way the activation of relational processes with the groups that challenge the museum can make the actual transformation, how these relations and the future of the museum can be archived and come to constitute a long-term institutional learning process. The next chapter, entitled “Archive: Interface of Disruption,” deals with the problem of archives as resource in museum projects through the curators overview of the projects: “Archive and Power” in MSUV in Novi Sad and “How to Do Things With Documents” in Fundació Antoni Tàpies. Gordana Nikolić and Sanja Kojić Mladenov reflect on an exhibition that dealt with artistic strategies that posit archive as resource and a form “as the ground zero of potential oblivion or new memory”, considering the way the very methodology of accumulation represents a design that engages social, political and technological power. Oriol Fondevilla presents the overall process of the conceptualization of and intensive discourse around the project that was designed to “disrupt the institution” by opening the archive up to six research projects. Again this text serves to perform the process and build an archive itself, revealing the pro-
duction dynamics of a project that continuously questions the modes of exposing and researching the archive. The case studies grouped under the chapter “Challenging Museums” offer three kinds of challenges. One is the challenge of establishing an institution that emerges from Ana Kutleša’s research on the history of the archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, which makes a thorough exploration of the economic, social and political conditions and context around the establishment and transformation of a pioneering institution of contemporary art in Yugoslavia. The other case study that emerged from the project examines the challenge posed by calling on the museum to treat an important part of its history, and realised as “Didactic Exhibition 1957”, described by curator Jasna Jakšić and invited interpreter, conservator Mirta Pavić. The third such task is the challenge imposed upon the museum system from the emerging field of new media, more precisely by video, in this instance without the institutional infrastructure enjoyed by this production, and described by Branka Benčić using as example the Motovun Video Meetings.

The last part, “The Space of Antagonism”, assumes the role of conclusion. Andreja Hribernik examines the present and future horizons of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška by looking back at the original founding and early decades of the museum from the perspective and in the context of its position in contemporary society through “Utopian Moments”. Gal Kirn and Niloufar Tajeri present their research on the (im)possible archive of dissent in the form of institutionalized memory. With their example of “confrontation with reality beyond the museum space” we hope to set the trajectory of the journey that is this project toward an exit away, indeed out of the trap that Boris Buden so illustratively calls a trap.

The project Performing the Museum observes a strategic orientation towards the “creation of knowledge, based on the non-hegemonic, emancipatory principle.”10 Since the French Revolution, when the Museum (Louvre) as institution was opened up to the general public and no longer just a privileged few, the Museum has been a place for the legitimization of the citizens’ state, a source of knowledge and cultural memory made accessible and shaped to give structure to the very idea of culture and knowledge consistent with certain imperatives that emerged with the age of Enlightenment. Museums taxonomically structure their physical objects into comprehensive knowledge systems – and this

10 The “About” section at the project’s website, op. cit.
is what they have in common with archives. 11 Steven Conn points out that one of the ideals of the founders of the museums is “stability and order on bodies of knowledge and to reflect and produce changes in that knowledge.” 12 Ivan Gaskell notes 13 that the bodies of knowledge produced by museums has been and continues to be epistemologically structured such that change occurs only by almost exclusively incremental means, and is a matter of refinement. That structure, in which objects function “as synecdoches standing for bodies of knowledge”, does not, as Conn points out, readily permit radical or fundamental alteration or even revision. And it is in the very intended “stability and order of the bodies of knowledge” that we recognize those fixed elements that we need to destabilize. Those bodies we move to perform; and we could also see this as a delegated performance, inviting our interpreters to use those bodies in their own choreographies in our “Performing the Museum”. What then makes such an action a performance is a mode of evocation, if not a form of restored behaviour, of the initial opening up of the museum to the public. In the process of shaping the museum’s transformation we can experiment with and in the(ir) resources, open and destabilize the mechanisms of knowledge production and use its ‘cognitive devices’ to envision a different future.


13 Ivan Gaskell, “Museums and Philosophy – Of Art, and Many Other Things Part II”, Philosophy Compass 7, Bard Graduate Center, 2012, p. 18
From Dissolution of the Past
to Meta-Future in the Meta-Museum
The “past” is a historically changeable category. Not only does every epoch experience the past in its own particular way, but every society produces a past in its own epochal way. Therefore, the “past” is not a dimension of an always-already given time, but represents a constitutive segment of historical temporality that is being created with the narrational, ideological – i.e. cultural – apparatuses of the larger overall social reproduction. One such device or source of production is the historically relatively new – or more precisely, modern – institution of the museum, which represents a place of production of historical temporality in the form of knowledge about the past. To be sure, that produced historical temporality is itself historically specific.

Once upon a time, the idea that the past can be learned was inseparable from the understanding of that past as the source of knowledge. In past centuries, school children were taught Cicero’s famous proverb: *Historia est magistra vitae* (“History is life’s teacher”). It is interesting that Hans-Georg Gadamer translates the Latin word *historia* as the “memory of life” (*das Gedächtnis des Lebens*). He was convinced that today we are worlds away from the true meaning of Cicero’s proverb. Gadamer further emphasizes that in Cicero, as well as in the usage of the ancient Greek word istoria by Thucydides and, later, by the Roman historiographers, the meaning of the word is closely connected with the idea of testimony. One must have been present at the site of an event, experience it as an eye-witness, in order to be able to tell a story about it. In addition, the story, in order to be worth telling at all – i.e. to be the source of certain knowledge – need not necessarily have been true. Only a personally experienced history – one that was evidenced by no one other than the one witnessing the event – could be life’s teacher.
In all of these instances, the notion of the past was in no need of the institutional medium of museum in order to produce educational effects. Likewise, it was in no need of history as academic discipline, as a subject taught within various educational institutions. On the contrary, the “history” that is taught today in schools does not teach anything. Certainly, knowledge of “history” is useful, but for quite different purposes. It can provide us, for example, with a cultural, i.e. national identity. It can help us build a career, whether academic or political, or it can inspire our artistic creativity. It can certainly facilitate our socialization, but it cannot ever teach us how to live our lives.

In order to grasp the difference in question here we must first understand the radical change in the very nature of historical temporality that took place not so long ago. In ancient Greece and Rome, and on through the Middle Ages, history unfolded in the unambiguous and transparent space of self-enclosed pre-modern society. It was experienced as a kind of “relative eternity” that reflected the cyclical rhythms of natural processes. The time of people’s lives did not differ considerably from that of their parents or their parents’ parents. In fact, different generations shared one and the same historical experience. Therefore, historical experience could be a source of knowledge, it could teach in the sense of the practical importance of knowledge about the past.

With the advent of the Modern Era and, more precisely, the Enlightenment, the very idea of history underwent a radical change, a change sanctioned even in contemporary grammar. Up until the mid-18th century, the word history was always used in plural, designating multiple histories, only later becoming – as Reinhardt Koselleck showed – a collective singular.1 As such, this term no longer implies a temporally unique space of experience. In this new history the future loses any connection with the past. Now history itself is busy opening up a new space of experience. Its temporality is now differentiated according to events that are developing at different rates and thus have different meanings. From this point forward, history is articulated through respectively different temporalities. This new history is no longer some neutral and abstract form in which historical events take place. On the contrary, it becomes an autonomous force capable of and willing to change the existing social reality. Finally, with the French Revolution history becomes a fully-fledged subject, a subject that creates its own experience and its own temporality.

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1 Reinhard Koselleck, Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2003
It is no coincidence that the institution of museum was established precisely in the modern period, when history was enthroned as the Subject. Now, when the difference between the old and the new becomes a social, political and crucially, a cultural determinant, the past itself is being objectified as some old thing that can not only be preserved, cultivated and studied, but moreover, recreated. All things of importance now have their own history – language, nation, knowledge, culture, art, etc. In this way the European colonial forces have used the institution of museum – as Benedict Anderson argued – in order to territorially demarcate their colonies abroad and to give their respective populations distinctive identities. Without museums there are no “imagined communities”, as there is no modern historical temporality.

But, what if today all of that has come to an end? What if history, as the subject of modernity, has become merely a thing of past, an object that can be preserved, fostered, investigated – and, why not – enshrined in a museum? Isn’t this precisely what Francis Fukuyama had in mind when he wrote at the end of his famous 1989 essay on the end of history: “In the post historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual care taking of the museum of human history”?2

History, which had to deposit the old things in a museum in order to create something new, has finally found itself deposited in the museum. And in that museum art and philosophy are left with their only remaining role – that of curator. They are now in charge of the conservation and study of past events, of selecting and presenting the best parts of the museum depository for the display of narratives that would be interesting for visitors. Bearing in mind today’s almost pathological obsession with the past, i.e. with what is today called culture of memory one could easily claim that Fukuyama’s prophetic vision from a quarter century ago is not so far from the truth. But, if the world that we inhabit had itself become just a global museum of human history, what exactly is being preserved and cultivated, i.e. produced in all those numerous museums that litter the cities, regions and national states of today? Is it merely a simple past articulated by numerous narratives and equally numerous forms of usage? One can find various things in such museums: here, national art history is presented as the crown jewel of national identity; there, a local archeological or ethnographical collection is presented as the main tourist attraction; all over larger or smaller heaps of old artifacts held together by more or less convincing stories; and taken together, devices that produce and reproduce

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cultural history. This state of things confirms what Walter Benjamin stated in his famous essay on Edward Fuchs: “Cultural history, to be sure, enlarges the weight of the treasure that accumulates on the back of humanity. Yet cultural history does not provide the strength to shake off this burden in order to be able to take control of it.”

Certain questions, however, remain: What is the meaning of the notion of “humanity”; and of “cultural history” today? How can we imagine a humankind that shakes the burden off its back and takes things into its own hands if the era of its historical subjectivation – the subjectivation of history in the image of humanity – has long passed?

For example, for a long time the notion of society implied a certain universality. The thoughts and actions of the members of society directly mirrored the thoughts and actions of humankind. Visiting any of the museums of that society provided insight into a segment of the universal, cultural history of humanity. By speaking the language of a certain society, no matter how peculiar it might be, one was expressing thoughts that were considered to be fully translatable not only into all other languages, but that they, in fact, express in their specific manner the very language of humanity as such. With the end of the 18th century German Romantic philosophers condensed all of this under the notion of the “spirit” (Geist). However much a national language expressed the unique and unrepeatable, and therefore untranslatable, spirit of a nation, it was still a constitutive part of the universal spirit – the one articulated not only by the idea of world literature (Goethe’s Weltliteratur), but moreover by the notion of world history. Even the word “culture” was then only used in its singular form. The idea that there are many different cultures, that the word “culture” could be used in plural, starts to develop only at the end of the 19th century. At the same time, at the socio-political level of world history such principles were established which – regardless to what extent they were guaranteed by societies placed in a political container of a geopolitically particular and culturally-historically contingent form of a national state – claimed (their) universal validity. One example of this was the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. The social, political, cultural and historical arena of the modern national state, however particular it might have been, was always already universal. In the same way the historical model of its international representation was also the only model of universal representation of the whole.

of humankind. The International Art Exhibitions of the Venice Biennale are excellent examples of that very model.

This model of presenting contemporary art, in spite of its unquestionable Eurocentrism, functioned flawlessly for more than a century. The art, selected according to agreed standards of national self-representation and exhibited in separate dedicated national pavilions every other year, was nevertheless experienced as “art in its time”, thus acquiring a canonical status within the world history of art. That remained the case until the 54th Biennial in 1993, when Achille Bonito Oliva attempted to subvert the logic of national representation by asking the national selectors to host artists of other nationalities, including and particularly those that had no national pavilion of their own. Although the subversion scheme was not entirely successful, the logic of national representation – and its identification with the representation of world art – found itself in crisis, one that it would not be able to pull itself out of. From then on, contemporary art – a term that appeared simultaneously with proclamations of the end of history on the one hand, and with the acknowledgement of globalization processes on the other – has been articulated in and as two distinct spheres.

In the sphere of global representation, it is articulated as the so-called art-system – a transnational, mobile, hierarchical, market-oriented power-phenomenon. It has its local hubs in New York, Miami, Brussels and London, and relies on the world’s most prominent museums, private galleries and collections, i.e. on the global infrastructure as represented and provided by more than 150 biennials the world over. Nevertheless, this art-system is not embedded in any concrete nationally defined society and in this sense it is post-social in character. Although it lays claim to a universal validity of its (overriding) aesthetic criteria, the art-system is culturally particular, i.e. it represents the art of the West. From the perspective of time, it does not unfold within history, but it is itself an articulation of a historically specific temporality – contemporaneity as a temporal form of global modernity.

In the sphere of local articulations, contemporary art is actually socially embedded, but only within the framework of identitarian communities – not necessarily within national communities alone. Following the logic of so-called area studies, contemporary art is also articulated as a specific art of specific areas, like the East European, African, South American or Arab. Naturally, there is no Western contemporary art area because that which defines an area as such is precisely its difference from the West. In other words, art in this sphere
is always particular, no matter how much within its particularity – for example, the national – it lays claim to a universal validity. And it does not unfold in history, but within a multitude of its particular histories that exist in parallel with each other without ever converging to form a single joint historical narrative. This situation evokes the pre-modern age, when history existed only in its plural form.

This recourse to medieval times has a deeper sociolinguistic meaning. Back then there were two spheres of linguistic practice. The language of the political power, of the state and legal regulation, of the knowledge, both secular and sacred, the language of the social elites, was Latin, the *lingua franca* of the time. But the lower social classes used different vernaculars in everyday life that were the forerunners of modern national languages. Between those two levels was a profound social, political and cultural chasm. It is similar to the chasm that exists today between the global sphere of cultural articulation and the new vernaculars – the old national languages and cultures, their local intellectual and political elites and institutions that lost their connection with the advanced processes of globalization. In terms of contemporary art, this gaping chasm was already clearly defined back in 1992 by Mladen Stilinović, articulated in his statement that proclaimed “An artist who cannot speak English is no artist.”

Most importantly, those two worlds no longer share the same historical temporality. Not only do they not live the same “now”, but they do not share the same past, either. While one of those worlds relegated human history to the past and declared itself the museum of that history, the other’s past dissolved into countless vernacular histories that simply can not be stitched together into a joint narrative any more. As a result, there is no future in the museum of museums. Either we break out into the light or we remain entombed in it.
“So, this is, in some ways, often called the first piece of conceptual art. Does anyone know what it is? I don’t expect the ladies to know,” says a British aid worker to a group of bewildered schoolgirls somewhere in Afghanistan in a brief and somewhat bizarre scene from Adam Curtis’s documentary *Bitter Lake* (2015), as she displays a photo of an upside-down urinal, that is, of Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917). She continues: “An artist called Marcel Duchamp, who is very important in Western art, put this toilet in an art gallery about a hundred years ago. It was a huge revolution.” Several scenes later, the art lesson comes to a conclusion: “Of course it was very provocative, people were very angry, and I think it’s important to understand when this kind of work emerged it was partly political. It was to fight against the system and say, ‘What is art? It is what I think it is.’”

At first glance, this scene seems to represent an amalgamation of all the problems that could possibly arise with respect to using art in (any) education. Besides the expected invoking of notions of hegemony, colonization, indoctrination and oppression, it also aims to acknowledge a certain sense of the uselessness of art, or perhaps even assume the detrimental effect that art may inflict on the young and inexperienced observer. After all, up until recently much of Europe, for example, seemed to share the sentiment. Even worse, we somehow know that the ugliest consequences are yet to come, maybe soon, maybe in some more distant future: surely those kids will misconfigure the entire cultural concept of the West; quite possibly they will now hate and fear whatever they think art is, quite possibly forever; this trauma might (will!) result in the psychological birth of this or that pathology. But if this image, this

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1 The teacher/aid worker we see in the film is probably an employee of Turquoise Mountain Trust (*Bonyad-e Ferozkoh*), a British NGO operating in Afghanistan according to their mission statement “Artists Transforming Afghanistan”.
scene, feels wrong on so many levels, what kind of image might feel right? Is it really Duchamp’s work that is the most harrowing detail in this story? What might the kids really be thinking about it all? Let’s return to the classroom a bit later, after a brief examination of the conceptual and historical relations between the education system and the world of art.

**Between Trivium and Quadrivium: Trajectories of “Useful Knowledge”**

The very fact that we are seeing widespread discussion of education is symptomatic of an extreme situation. During the “best of times,” education was discussed in relation to the growing economy and technological advancements as those issues that revolved around the question of producing adequate professionals by expanding and improving scientific disciplines and methods. That discussion was underpinned by the ideology of social progress and imbued with hopes for a better future; it was concerned with expansion and advancement, with what to add to the growing field of studies, of subjects, themes and methods to be learned, in order to meet – even exceed – whatever the demands of the future might be. Now, in the “worst of times”, the discussion on education seems formally unchanged, since it still revolves around questions related to the most adequate disciplinary and methodological model for coping with the new social and economic structures. But today the primary task has shifted from expansion to taking tactical steps backwards in order to “readjust” the educational system in accordance with the exigencies of the ongoing economic crisis. One of the first “cuts” that such policy demands addresses the future. Once progressive – and at the same time necessarily utopian – the idea of future has been eliminated from scientific and socio-economical discourse, and reduced to “pragmatic forms of crisis management” driven by criteria such as financial “self-sustainability” and economic “resource optimization”.

If we add to this discussion the contemporary re-examinations of the concept of Museum – a cognitive and ideological apparatus that was once crucial for the understanding of what the world is and what humans are – we witness a perfect storm, and find ourselves at the very centre, where the two crises meet. Those crises are telling, reminding us that the flight towards the future (once again) seems to lost its way, and that (once again) we are unsure how to think Museums, or all art for that matter. Have the notions of Education and of Museum finally been exhausted? What is the use of either of the two in a world that seems to be undoing a lot of the achievements of past decades? Have School and Art simply become “too expensive” for the needs of today?
Historically, the connections between art and education were established very early on, with the idea that the means of art should lie at the very core of both the learning process and becoming an autonomous individual. The concept of *liberal arts* has been firmly embedded in the Western academic education ever since the late antiquity, outlining the field of possibly useful knowledge deemed essential in becoming an independent person, providing the knowledge necessary to take an active part in public life. The liberal arts (*artes liberales*) are those subjects or skills that in classical antiquity were considered essential for a free person (*liberalis*, ‘worthy of a free person’) to know in order to take an active part in civic life, something that (for Ancient Greece) included participating in public debate, defending oneself in court, serving on juries, and most importantly, military service. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric formed the core of the liberal arts, while arithmetic, geometry, music theory, and astronomy also played a (somewhat lesser) part in education. This curriculum of humanism spread throughout Europe during the 16th century and became the educational foundation for the schooling of the European elites, regardless of whether they were the part of the “emerging bourgeoisie, or part of the political administration, the clergy, or perhaps entering the learned professions of law and medicine.” Although the modern concept of education is today quite far from the “liberal arts worldview”, now being subsumed to the knowhow paradigm and other forms of instrumentalisation of knowledge under capitalism, the academic title of Bachelor of Arts (BA) still reminds us of the connection between the formally recognized academic member of society and her proficiency in the matter of arts.

As far as Art goes, however, the scepticism was there from the very start, for both the Old and the Middle Ages had their reasons to be suspicious of the concept of art in education. Plato famously feared that Art could, with its unmatched power over the observer, falsely reveal what can be mistaken for Truth but is actually not, while Christianity feared any version of Truth other than the one it offered. By the time the Renaissance arrived the term Art had accumulated a lot of fear and scepticism around it – its release of tensions in

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2 As Roy Harris describes such concept is the consequence of the fact that “from late antiquity onwards, Western education became essentially an education based on literacy”: “It is this partition of the curriculum which reflects, unmistakably, the extent to which, in the universities at least, the arts had come to be regarded as both applications and developments of human reason rather than utilitarian pursuits of pleasurable recreations. Activities that had neither verbal nor numerical foundation, or demanded a subordination of these to extraneous objectives (as, for instance, agriculture and architecture), fell outside universities’ educational brief.” Roy Harris, *The Necessity of Artspeak. The language of the arts in the Western tradition*, Continuum, London and New York, 2003, p. 33-34
the post-Enlightenment era was a source of immense power, and Art demonstrated its unmatched supremacy in the complex mediation of the world.

Unlike the concept of apprenticeship, the liberal arts-based formal education, both in its lower (frequently mandatory) and especially higher levels (frequently described as academic), came to be connected with the concept of abstract thinking. Although the utility of abstraction was praised by the Enlightenment as the “free thinking” behind reason and science, Romanticism revealed its underside in the form of imaginative free association that countered cold, rational thought. The faculty of Art to “skip” or to “slip” the systematic scientific observation of reality and venture into many other (imagined) worlds that apparently do not belong to the given reality was always considered subversive, and at best a distraction from the task of rationally comprehending the world as it is.

The contemporary notion of liberal arts (history, language, literature) was born in the “best of times” in order to provide a level of general knowledge and to develop general intellectual capacities (like reason and judgment) as opposed to strictly professional or vocational skills. There was a concern that these new specialized professionals would lack a comprehensive worldview that corresponded to the demands of the dominant ideology. Considered sufficiently disciplined and systematized, Art played an important role in this project as the main vehicle by which to accept the values of the “Atlantic civilization”. Once such values were accepted, liberal education in the 21st century will put new emphasis on so-called “people skills” – learning to appreciate cultural diversity and fostering tolerance of others and otherness, as well as learning how to cope with constantly fluctuating social circumstances, for in the era of (post-) globalization especial importance is given to communication. Today Art has largely been reduced to a subsidiary role and is used as an informative or illustrative tool, while at the same time it has been shifted to the centre of professional education as the primary vehicle of entrepreneurial creativity. Far from being perceived as allusive and treacherous, Art is today considered one of the pillars of the cultural and ideological foundations, as well as an important constituent part of the (global-neoliberal) economy.

**Museums and Musing Over Education**

The Enlightenment gave birth to Art as institution, discipline and profession that ideologically celebrates freedom of thought and creation, while promoting the knowledge of Art as an indispensable means to becoming a civilized per-
son in the new bourgeois society. The global colonization that followed the Age of Discovery enabled the realization of the indisputable importance of Art in understanding both the development of the New World and its origins in the obsolete and fantastic Old World. This brought about a strange effect: some Europeans were overwhelmed and fell into hysteria faced with this new power of Art. The phenomenon, characterized by rapid heartbeat, dizziness, confusion and even hallucinations, was later named hyperkulturemia or the Stendhal syndrome, thus separating the civilized – city dwellers, citizens or simply the bourgeois – from the others that were too primitive to relate to the concept, or even had “no word for art” in their languages. Museums were precisely those social institutions charged with maintaining and regulating this game of separation, division and re-unification, with its primary task to cultivate well-adjusted subjects for the dominant social order.

The ancient Greek etymon of the word museum refers to the Muses – the patron divinities of the arts, suggesting that the Museum is actually a temple. Nevertheless, it is widely considered that Plato founded the first museum as an educational institution, one that teaches liberal arts under the patronage of the respectable Muses in charge. This building dedicated to the study of arts, rather than simply another institution similar to school, largely resembled what we would recognize today as a library. It is then little surprise that early discussions of modern museums drew parallels with libraries; as J. Lynne Teather pointed out in her research on the shaping of modern museums based on the experiences of 19th and early 20th century Britain, the emerging Museum professionals from the second half of the 19th century perceived themselves as “without a history, without traditions, almost without experience”, and found the only professional connection and topic of reference in the work of well-established librarians. This was especially so when considering the respective roles of curator and librarian, as Teather reminds us quoting the following argument: “What is the function of the librarian? It is to procure good books, put them on shelves, take care of them, and have them always accessible to visitors. But it is not the function of a librarian to teach the people who come there Greek, Latin history, geography, English literature, or anything else…” But ap-

3 The phenomenon was first explored in the book Naples and Florence: A Journey from Milan to Reggio (1817) by Stendhal. The book documents this condition brought on by his first visit to the Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence. The syndrome was diagnosed and named in 1979 by Italian psychiatrist Dr. Graziella Magherini.


parently Museums are not Libraries, and others valued the educational potential of Museums greatly, to the extent that “curators should teach the teacher”.  

The Museum’s role to teach (both professionals and public) and to provide public knowledge was both emphasized and challenged from the very beginning, in various ways. During the late 19th to early 20th century, after the earlier stages of acquiring, collecting and systematizing, the emphasis shifted to the Museum’s relation to education and public programming. (“...(W)ith the additional pressures related to museum education and public programming came more debates about the nature of museum work and the balance of education and collections work.”) During the modern era Museums were frequently “saved”, precisely by invoking their mission of public education, indeed becoming one of the central resources in most of the formal educational systems still in use today. For something that for a very long time was viewed as useless and even possibly detrimental to education, Art came to be accepted as a (near) legitimate source of cognition. Still, even today, its status as a provider of knowledge is frequently challenged, and instead subordinated to “proper”, scientific knowledge.

The history of the development of the Museum can also be seen as a history of attempts to construct a type of display for its knowledge, to find a way to present the knowledge it contained in its trove of artefacts and to trigger learning processes using its great faculty for showing and telling (narration). In Europe, and later also in its colonies, throughout centuries of Christian aristocratic rule, churches were decorated with religious sculptures, carvings, paintings, mosaics and stained glass windows depicting scenes and characters from the Bible. Such displays represented the so-called Poor Man’s Bible, a kind of picture book in space aimed for those who were illiterate but who still had to know the “Word of God”. Those awe inspiring show-and-tell routines are the historical precursors of exhibition and museum narratives, which still rely on instructive stories and edifying examples in order to produce a certain knowledge-effect for its spectators.

Over time, museum exhibitions adopted different principles in structuring their displays: while the 19th century museums proclaimed the era of systems, their 20th century counterparts were celebrating movements; and today the

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6  Ibid., p. 32, Lynne Teather quotes from William Evans Hoyle, “The Use of Museums in Teaching”, Museums Journal 2, February 1903

7  Ibid., p. 32
sole structural principle backed up with scientific claims is quickly being abandoned, with the emphasis shifting to the dynamics of criticism and a re-focusing on programmatic doubt and a mandatory re-examination of the epistemological frameworks of modernity. As exhibition execution always corresponds to the knowledge it is working to convey and instil – since the very knowledge to be passed down is itself in question – today’s exhibition displays tend to be more complex, more spectacular and less straightforward.

Rethinking Museum as Colonial Project in the Post-Colonial Era

At the outset of her 1992 essay, Mieke Bal is standing in Central Park, in New York, between the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which caters to “matters of art” on one side of the park, and the American Museum of Natural History, on the other, exploring and tracing the story of “life”, of “universal” human development. These two represent the sixth and third most visited museums in the world, respectively. “Around ten o’clock most mornings yellow dominates the surroundings, as an endless stream of school buses discharges noisy groups of children who come to the museum to learn about ‘life.’” Before we get in, Bal reminds us that “comprehensive collecting is a form of domination,” and that “museums belong to an era of scientific and colonial ambition, from the Renaissance through the early 20th century, with its climactic moment in the second half of the 19th century.” This points to the primary function that the Museum draws from its own history – the ideological justification of Western domination over the rest of the world. Nevertheless, she aims to analyse Museum as “not the nineteenth-century colonial project but the twentieth-century educational one.” It is the way in which this knowledge is constructed and conveyed in such institutions that Bal aims to explore. According to her, the Museum of Natural History, representing the “other of the Met”, seems to be a good place to observe the way knowledge conveyed by the Museum is articulated and represented, as well as the way visitors “take it” as subjects of the museological operation. She illustrates an important part of this operation through the way in which the American Museum of Natural History shows “the human rise to civilization”. The Official Guide Book is explicit about its edifying task: “A monument to humanity and nature, the Museum instructs, it instructs...”

9 Ibid., p. 560
10 Ibid., p. 561
11 “While the Met displays art for art’s sake, as the highest forms of human achievement, the American Museum displays art as an instrumental cognitive tool – anonymous, necessary, natural.” Ibid., p. 559
spires, and it provides a solid basis for the understanding of our planet and its diverse inhabitants.”

12 As human cultures are presented as higher and lower in terms of development – with “our” culture representing the historical peak of development – it inevitably results in a more or less clear division between “us” and “them”. It is precisely this taxonomic ordering that is doing the job of ideologically justifying Western artistic and cultural superiority. The same is also present at the Met, where “Western European art dominates, American art is represented as a good second cousin, evolving as Europe declines, while the parallel marginal treatment of ‘archaic’ and ‘foreign’ art, from Mesopotamian to Indian, contrasts with the importance accorded to ‘ancient’ as predecessor: the Greeks and Romans.”

14 Such implicit exclusions on the basis of race and culture have been thoroughly criticized over the course of the late 20th century, making museums “definitively compromised by postromantic critique, postcolonial protest, and postmodern disillusionment.”

15 As they cannot avoid coping with such obvious reproaches, museums have to include self-reflection of their own ideological position and history, which assigns them the status of what Bal calls the “meta-museum”. “The double function of the museum as display of its own status and history (its metafunction), as well as of its enduring cognitive educational vocation (its object-function), requires the absorption in the display of that critical consciousness.” Therefore, a meta-museum “speaks to its own complicity with practices of domination while it continues to pursue an educational project that, having emerged out of those practices, has been adjusted to new conceptions and pedagogical needs. Indeed, the use of the museum in research and education is insisted on in its self-representations...” Yet, the question remains, whether the existing self-reflective strategies amount to a self-criticism potent enough to rectify previous faults and shortcomings and to bring radical changes to the content and procedures of its educational effort.

12 Ibid., p. 557-558
13 In fact, both museums are grounded on one and the same taxonomic basis: “The division of ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ between the east and west sides of Manhattan relegates the large majority of the world’s population to static existence and assigns to only a small portion the higher status of producers of art in history.” Ibid., p. 559
14 Ibid., p. 557
15 Ibid., p. 560
16 Ibid., p. 562
17 Ibid., p. 560
In order to examine this mechanism further, Bal considers the Museum’s display as a narratological device: “Indeed, the space of a museum presupposes a walking tour, an order in which the exhibits and panels are to be viewed and read. Thus it addresses an implied ‘focalizer’, whose tour is the story of the production of the knowledge taken in and taken home... [T]he display is a sign system working in the realm between the visual and the verbal, and between information and persuasion, as it produces the viewer’s knowledge.” The effectiveness of this rhetoric of display is situated in the dynamic between the verbal panels (explanatory texts) and the visual exhibits, “a specific exchange between verbal and visual discourse.” “This is one form of truth-speak, the discourse that claims the truth to which the viewer is asked to submit, endorsing the willing suspension of disbelief that rules the power of fiction. For the visitor entering through this hall, this is the equivalent of the ‘once upon a time’ formula, the discourse of realism setting the terms of the contract between viewer or reader and museum or storyteller.” One of the central mechanisms employed here is the naturalization achieved by what Bal calls the “aesthetics of realism”, as “Realism is the truth-speak that obliterates the human hand that wrote it, and the specifically Western human vision that informed it.” Thus the narrative told by the display becomes indistinguishable from “reality” – it produces the “truth” of witnessing the truth, of being able to “be there and see that”. It is precisely the effect of the rhetoric of metadata – the way artefacts are named and contextualized, particularly the way they are connected and juxtaposed in their spatial disposition, how they are related with other artefacts, and, eventually, with the observer.

Bal also finds a strange precondition for understanding the works of art or artefacts on display in the Museum: one has somehow in advance to be familiar enough with their meaning. More precisely, one has to find satisfaction in confirming the “well-known” meanings offered by the Museum: “[W]ell known’ disqualifies as ignorant the surprised viewer who hesitates to willingly suspend disbelief.” This puts the Museum’s educational function in question: “By seeing what one already knows one cannot see what one doesn’t know (yet). What is destroyed, then, is the educational function of art that is so central to the museum’s self-image,” Bal warns us in another text written a few years lat-
er. Consequently, the knowledge thus produced and recognized by a museum visitor, amounts to a confirmation of her subjugation to the dominant ideology that helps her affirm her belonging to the “civilized” and “cultural” people of the West. In Bal’s opinion, the main issue surrounding the present-day meta-museum as self-reflective institution is its knowledge production. “[W]hereas the verbal panels do demonstrate an awareness of the burning issues of today’s society, it is the lack of the absorption of a more acute and explicit self-criticism, and the presence of an apologetic discourse in its stead [that remains problematic].”

She offers, almost in passing, an interesting way out of this situation: “Instead of the panels on which words give meaning to the order of things (allusion intended), large mirrors would have been a better idea. Strategically placed mirrors could not only allow the simultaneous viewing of the colonial museum and its postcolonial self-critique, but also embody self-reflection (in the double sense of the word), lead the visitor astray, and confuse and confound the walkers who would thereby lose their way through evolution and, perhaps panicking a bit, wander amid diversity to their educational benefit.” What Bal outlines is the position from which observers can construct the Museum narrative, but also see the construction of the museum narrative that includes they themselves as imaginary focalizers. In this operation, museal *mise en scène* opens up as *mise en abîme*, revealing another picture warns reflecting the act of observing itself as it was constructed by the Museum-as-storyteller and as it was perceived from the point of the implied focalizer – who in turn begins to reflect not only on the content of knowledge to be conveyed but also on the framework of its construction and its own position in it.

**Museum as “reflection of the second order”**

The same year Mieke Bal writes her critique of museums only several blocks from Central Park a place called Salon de Fleurus opened. This para-institutional space, arranged as a theme room containing copies of paintings of the modernist “great masters”, preserves and evokes memories Gertrude Stein’s former apartment at 27 Rue de Fleurus in Paris. A famous writer and art collector, Stein, together with her brother Leo, created during the early decades

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24 Mieke Bal, “Telling, Showing, Showing Off”, p. 562
25 Ibid., p. 572
of the 20th century what Rebecca Rabinow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art – where parts of Stein’s acquisitions are frequently displayed – describes as something “more than just a collection – it was really the seed that began the spread of what we consider modern art throughout Western Europe and America.”

In its very setup, the New York Salon de Fleurus – as a recreation, a replica of Stein’s living room – is designed to confront the visitor with the problem of copy, and in so doing raise some key questions about the seemingly indisputable notions of art museum as well of artwork and artist. It displays only copies of the artworks, which, though they convey meaning as articulated within (the) art history, serve their purpose of standing as examples, specimens or artefacts that illustrate and illuminate modern art history. The whole room, representing the “birthplace” of the modern art narrative – that was subsequently appropriated (in its material form of paintings) and articulated (in the form of modern art history) by the Museum of Modern Art – is a reproduction designed to be a copy, thus mirroring, redoubling and reflecting the art history in question. “A copy could short-circuit the history of art. Instead of being chronological, implying development and progression, art history could become a loop... If an original is a reflection of reality, then its copy is a reflection of a reflection, or a reflection of the second order. [T]he purpose of a fake is to conceal, whereas a copy proposes to reveal. A fake is essentially opportunistic – it does not question the system: undetected, it is the original; uncovered, it is discarded as a forgery. On the other hand, a copy is out in the open, obvious and blunt; once it is incorporated into the system, it starts questioning everything.”

Quite conveniently, there is always a copy of Walter Benjamin’s *Recent Writings (1986-2013)* lying open somewhere there that can help us understand the critical

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apparatus of this Salon. Here, Benjamin’s writings revolve around the idea of Museum as the creator of art and the narrator of its history. He traces the birth of the art museum at the beginning of the 16th century and the establishment of Belvedere Romanum as museum, when the very act of transferring antique artefacts into a space specially organized for the “aesthetic enjoyment” of its visitors made them works of art. Moreover, that particular display was considered exemplary of what an art piece should be, therefore suggesting or imposing a definition of art. Soon enough, art was dissociated from the guild system and given an elevated position above mere craft. Hence, alongside ushering in the notion of art, the museum also fashioned the notion of artist: “A painter or sculptor was not just a craftsman any more, but a unique and exceptionally gifted individual, an almost God-like creator called an artist.”

As the Age of Discovery gave way to the Age of Great Colonial Powers, another important aspect of the museum was established – the institution of art his-

28 The walls of the New York Salon, perhaps as small as Stein’s original place, covered with copies of grand masterpieces recreates the atmosphere, if not monumental quality, of a proper Museum. There is a strong sense of “timelessness” to such a setup. But, as we read in Benjamin’s Recent Writings, this is an illusion, since there is no such thing as a “timeless masterpiece”, and furthermore, although the “Art Museum can be seen as a timeless repository of exceptional works of art”, it is likewise an illusion. He observes that despite frequently changing and updating the history they represent, Museums themselves are perceived as timeless and not a subject of change. Benjamin adds that “to go to the museum was to see the past, arranged as history, which is fixed and unchangeable. Of course, this was just a ‘temporary timelessness’, since the technology, design, and aesthetics of museum displays change all the time. And thus the picture of the past keeps changing as well.” Ibid., p. 36. While this sounds like a straightforward observation and a simple truth, it is not apparent or self-evident. This is perhaps another illustration of how significant insights are easily neglected in the presence of a strong narrative such as that which Museums produce.

29 “One day in 1506 AD, news about an excavation of an unusual statue reached the pope, and he immediately dispatched Sangallo and Michelangelo to the site. Sangallo instantly recognized the priest Laocoon and his sons, mentioned in Fliny’s writings, the unfortunate characters of the mythical Troy. Not too long after, several more statues were placed in the garden in specially built niches on the surrounding walls, including the reclining Nile and Tiber, Apollo, Laocoon, Venus, Cleopatra, Torso... and suddenly in the very heart of Christendom a vision of a completely different world was beginning to emerge, a vision that would have a profound impact on the entire Western world for generations to come... Those statues, previously almost invisible as scattered parts of an urban landscape, now displayed together, became ‘aesthetic objects’ admired primarily for their beauty. It was almost irrelevant why they had been made in the first place, what roles they once had played, what their internal narratives were. In today’s terms, we could consider these statues to be the first readymades and, in fact, the first objects of art, while the Belvedere Romanum could be understood as the first museum of art...” Ibid., pp. 131-132

30 “[T]he council of the ten-year-old king [Louis XIV] issued the ‘Arrêt du Conseil d’Etat’ on January 27, 1648. With this decision, painting and sculpture were declared to belong to the ‘liberal arts’ and so removed from the control of the guild system. From then on they were not in the category of cabinets and armors, but in the same category as astronomy, music, arithmetic, and grammar. These were all considered to be non-material and individually conducted activities, impossible to organize into guilds, and thus couldn’t have manufacturing standards. Now painting became the result of a rather reflective activity similar to poetry and not something valued because of the mastery of the hand — and so introduced the concept of a ‘learned artist’ instead of an ‘ignorant artisan.’”. Ibid., pp. 135-136
tory, with its own chronology (prehistory, Egypt, Antiquity, Renaissance, Baroque, neoclassicism, etc.) and own spatial distribution (and later, proposing new divisions according to national schools and international movements). Here we witness the institution of art museum creating a story of art – a notion and practice that up until then was non-existing. “Most importantly, this is the story that defines the very nature of art; it defines what art is. (...) Art is most likely a notion defined by the story called art history, and it exists only within that story.”

Benjamin seems to agree with the abovementioned observation by Mieke Bal that a museum display is always a narrative, a story that constructs (art) history. But, while Bal focuses on the rhetorical devices employed within the museum display, Benjamin radicalizes the notion of museum not only as the (hi)story teller of art but also as the creator of the very notion of art. “[I]t is the art narrative that gives meaning to any object (‘artefact’) it incorporates, supplying it with the legitimacy of a ‘work of art’. In fact, it is the narrative that is important, more than artefacts. It’s like branding. Art history itself is a brand. It is also a way of branding products (artworks).” It is not only that the art museum tells a story of a certain period, nation or movement, it primarily articulates the history of art – the story of what art is, how to recognize it, how to understand the meaning of it and how to appreciate it.

**On De-Artization and Meta-Museum ($x = M + m^0$)**

For Benjamin “art” is an historically and socially specific category: “We should consider that art itself is not a universal category, but an invention of Western culture that appeared out of the Enlightenment and was gradually imposed on all epochs and all (non-Western) cultures.” The important point that Benjamin makes is that art as a notion exists only within the discourse of art history and materialized in a form of museum display. Indeed, all one can possibly say about art seems already defined by the structure of the discourse of art history. As this narrative over time became embedded in academic and public discourse and in art and educational institutions, a story of art told by the museum display became the only story of art; it established itself as a kind of sacred

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32 Ibid., p. 144
33 “[T]he notion of the ‘artist’ belongs to the art historical narrative itself, while the ‘curator’ and the ‘art historian’ are storytellers (narrators) of a kind. Art historians usually tell the story through texts, while curators tell it through exhibitions.” Ibid., p. 34
34 Ibid., p. 37
35 Ibid., p. 185
story that hinges on the convictions of its practitioners and consumers, thus becoming impervious to any perspective other than that of its disciples. “In other words, the question is how to move beyond art history, how to establish another platform from which we could see art history from the outside.”

Since for Benjamin museums are already places of re-contextualization of the existing (or newly made) objects – of transferring them from one context to another and assigning them a new “artistic” meaning by articulating them within a new art history narrative – to move outside it would largely consist in the re-contextualisation of artworks, that is, in their de-artization. What would be useful would be “[a] gradual detachment from the notion of art and an attempt to look at an artwork as a human-made specimen, as an artefact of a certain state of mind or cultural/political milieu. This approach should not be one of a passionate believer and admirer of art, but one that is a diagnostic, almost cold, approach of an ethnographer.”

Consequently, art museums would have to be transformed into institutions that reflect on art history as well as on the constitutive notions of artwork, artist and art itself. “[A] meta-art museum would be a museum where works of art are exhibited not as some kind of ‘sacred’ objects but rather ethnographically as specific artefacts of the Western culture that emerged out of the Enlightenment. This would be a museum that exhibits former works of art as meta-art artefacts (de-artization), while a meta-(art museum) would be some kind of a place where an art museum itself is the theme, the subject matter.” This strategy of observer gaining better a understanding of something by observing both another observer observing something and observing that something himself does correspond with Mieke Bal’s proposal for explicit self-reflection by placing mirrors within museum displays. Benjamin proposes the following summary of the procedure: “Meta-level is a position M defined in relation to P as an outside position that at the same time could recognize and even incorporate position P. Meta-position M recontextualises position P by assigning a new layer of meaning to P while not entirely forgetting its previous meaning.” And this is also where, again like the conclusions formulated by Bal, Benjamin thinks, at least in the beginning, that the confusion and sense of being lost in

36 Ibid., p. 32
37 Ibid., p. 168
38 Ibid., pp. 194-195
39 Ibid., p. 193
such a meta-operation is not only necessary, but also welcome, and beneficial for one’s future awareness and understanding.⁴⁰

Although Benjamin recognizes that this process will also result in a certain amount of unlearning, of “stepping back”, so to say (“in some ways, the “new society” will have premodern characteristics, while at the same time reflecting the fact that “not forgetting modernity” is one of its important components”), he is very clear that this meta-position is not about the simple destruction of the art narrative and the obliteration of the notion of art, but more about something resembling the Hegelian Aufhebung (sublation). “When art history was being established, it didn’t forget the Christian narrative. It just recontextualised it. And these meta-artworks are not forgetting the narrative of art history – they might be one way of recontextualising it”. Eventually, “what we have is recontextualisation rather than a deconstruction of the historical narrative. While deconstructing is in some way closer to ‘forgetting,’ recontextualising might come closer to ‘remembering.’”⁴¹ Thus, future museums, or rather meta-museums, will be “places that change the way we establish collective memory and our understanding of the past. And the way we decide to remember the past, what kind of stories will become our memories, all that will determine what steps we are going to take towards the future.”⁴² All of this together produces a certain outlook towards the future, that is, one meta-future, which is marked by the proliferation of examining and manipulating meta-functions, leading towards the establishment of the “meta-institutions” of the future. Of course, all of this happens in meta-history, which “would reflect upon a history but it itself would not be based on chronology and the uniqueness of the characters, objects, and events it includes”. And according to such a scheme, art as we know it has to cease to exist.

⁴⁰ “You have something you call “known” as a place where you feel good and safe. And then you have “unknown” as some kind of dark and dangerous place on the other side of the border. The entire era of modernism could be understood as a process of pushing the boundaries and broadening the territory of brightness by turning this “unknown” into the “known” … Now, we are dealing with works that actually pursue the opposite approach. They turn the “known” into the “unknown.” There are no more boundaries, and danger is no longer beyond some distant frontier. The very place where you stand and feel safe begins to look a bit strange; we recognize it but it is not the same.” Ibid., p. 35-36

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 40-41

⁴² Ibid., p. 68
The Art (of) Thinking After the Death of Art

This sudden abundance of (meta-)options leads us towards Luis Camnitzer and his educational proposition based on the concept of art thinking, something that is “much more than art: a meta-discipline that is there to help, expanding the limits of other forms of thinking.” Perhaps similar to that which Benjamin proposes – in a way, taking a distance in order to get closer – Camnitzer wants to first do away with certain clichés and acquired wisdoms, with “the dominating idea that art-making is reserved for a chosen few, that art is based on therapeutic self-searching, that anything an artist does is art, that whoever doesn’t understand an art product is a Philistine, and that art is an industry by and for a minute fraction of the world’s population.” He points out that there is an everyday practice whereby art is simply an expressive, communicative and cognitive device available to everyone, much like literacy. But if art, in order to be able to serve the interests of colonization and the expansion of an art market,” is understood as some universal language – “a kind of Esperanto capable of transcending all national borderlines” – then “the idea of art as a plain language underlines a notion of it as a form of communication, and in this case, power is not granted to the market, but to those who are communicating.” Camnitzer concludes: “Put simply, good education exists to develop the ability to express and communicate. This is the importance of the concept of “language” here, the implication being that both art and alphabetization can be linked to nurture each other.”

In such a perspective “art is not really ‘art’, but a method of acquiring and expanding knowledge. Consequently, art should shape all academic activities within a university and not be confined to a discipline.” Moreover, for Camnitzer “science is a mere subcategory of art.” “Science is generally bound by logic, sequencing, and experimentation with repeatable and provable results. Mostly it presumes that there is something knowable out there that can be instrumentalised and represented. It doesn’t matter if it is in what in science is called Mode 1, being propositional, or Mode 2, being interventionist. Art is all of that, plus the opposite. It stays in both modes simultaneously. It creates itself while it allows the play with taxonomies, the making of illegal and subver-

45 Ibid.
46 Luis Camnitzer, “Thinking about Art Thinking”
sive connections, the creation of alternative systems of order, the defiance of known systems, and the critical thinking and feeling of everything. More than any other means of speculation it allows us to travel back and forth seamlessly from our subjective reality to consensus and possible but unreachable wholeness. It allows a mix of the megalomaniacal delirium of unbound imagination with the humbleness of individual irrelevance.47

What happens if we observe art as way of thinking unconstrained, either through scholastic or commonsensical rationalizations, open to venturing beyond the given and open to unforeseen possibilities? Camnitzer, both a long-time artist and educator, suggests approaching artworks in a way similar to what Benjamin terms de-artization. He, too, finds it important not to focus on objects, but on “all conditions and interests that generated them, and to understand the distribution of power and the interests they are serving,” in order to “expand our knowledge and also perceive how the society we are living in is constructed.”48

Camnitzer sees the use of an artwork as a cognitive tool almost exclusively in a public situation, as an encounter of artwork, artist or curator, and audience: “Personally, I would prefer looking around the work of art to find out what conditions generated its existence.” His description of the process is not unlike that of the game where by “trying to identify what question the piece is trying to answer, and to then answer the question themselves” lay viewers are, “through a process of problematisation placed on the same level with the artists”. Most importantly, this is moment when both the artist and the viewer “embark on the same research”.49 Its main premise is egalitarianism – “a socialism of creation” – effectuated through a dialogical process. “The main aim should be to equip the public so that people become able to question and demystify, to explore the borderlines of their own knowledge and see how those borderlines may be moved outward. That is where ‘art thinking’ is more important than ‘art making.’”50

Museums, as institutions with an educational role, are one of the ideal sites for Camnitzer’s practice of art thinking; but he discovered first hand how difficult

47 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
it can be to bring them to do it. “[Museums] pride themselves on having an educational program. However, the way it’s done is very hypocritical. Educational programs are segregated from the curatorial activities and used as public relations offices. The focus is on expanding the consumer base as shown by circulation numbers easy to use for funding, rather than trying to have transformative effects that cannot be quantified. Working as a pedagogical curator for a museum I once proposed a project for the pedagogical presentation of an exhibition. This prompted the director (with applause of the curator) to say: ‘This is a museum, not a school.’ My reaction (besides resigning) was to come up with the statement: ‘The Museum is a School; the artists learns to communicate; the public learns to make connections.’ Using Photoshop, I superimposed it on the façade of the museum and sent the picture to him as revenge. I then realized that there was more to it, and now I’m trying to get the text on the façade of as many museums as I can, and presented as official museum statements.” 51

Metadata of Metadata: Ways of Doing, Ways of Seeing, Ways of Thinking

Camnitzer, too, and in a very concrete manner, describes the opportunities created and afforded by understanding and manipulating metadata: “I discovered that working with descriptions of visual situations was much more efficient than making visual situations.” 52 What does a metadata paradigm mean in this particular case? As the object remains an object and a subject of its own laws and disappears nowhere, what changes is not the object or the truth of its material form but the purpose and the meaning of the object. That is, what changes is the external of the object; its reason to exist, its power to influence some particular this or that, its ability to be, or not, a part of a particular story. The insights provided by Benjamin (“constitutive notions of art could not be constitutive notions of meta-art”) and Camnitzer (“art thinking is ... identifying a certain freedom of connections that allows me to understand things better”), may be paraphrased to describe the educational journey in which arrival at a meta-destination will be fostered by a freedom of connections and marked by the absence of the constitutive notions of the previous paradigm.

Trying to locate and follow the meta-knowledge emanating from Art and Museum simply for the purposes of discovering art as the principle of meta-education might perhaps be an interesting discovery – or a very strange loop; but

51 Ibid.

would certainly produce consequences. Bal speaks of metamuseum and it’s metafunction, about the “incredible density of metarepresentational signs” and “metadiscursive implications”; Benjamin looks into the concept of “meta-history” and finds “meta-positions” and further, “meta-meta-positions” of art objects and actors in exploring the phenomena of “meta-artworks” or “Meta-Kunst”; meanwhile, Camnitzer outlines what might well be the most important function of art – that of “meta-discipline”: “Art thinking is much more than art: it is a meta-discipline that is there to help expand the limits of other forms of thinking. Though it’s something as autonomous as logic might be, and though it can be studied as an enclosed entity, its importance lies in what it does to the rest of the acquisition of knowledge.”

Just as having or looking at the data does not amount to knowledge, the existence of meta-data itself does not automatically produce meta-knowledge. This is especially true in the case of art thinking: it requires “more” (is it the (in)famous “excess” of art?) be involved in the process of data processing. But it is precisely this “more” as the ultimate product of ideology that remains elusive on the surface of analysis. That “more” (or perhaps the “excess of art”) would be precisely that which is perceived to be present in art but cannot be expressed (today) with the language of liberal arts. Just as importantly, there is nothing mystical or mythical connected with this “more”, or that should be involved in the explanation of this “more” but the notion of “more” itself. The trajectory traced throughout this research can be described as moving from “the ways of doing” to “the ways of seeing” to “the way of thinking” It points to the transformation in our understanding of the nature of knowledge and the process of learning that will be based on the methods and principles implied by the paradigm of metadata. But it is important to inspect the parameters of such a progression in order to understand the “for whom?” part of the equation.

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Time now to check back with the Afghan school kids left in that improvised classroom from the beginning of this text, or, if you like, the middle of the film. We were worried that they might have been confused by the lecture, by profane objects and complex concepts presented to them as the heights of a certain foreign culture. “Confusion is sometimes the first step towards learning.”

53 Luis Camnitzer, “Thinking about Art Thinking”

54 Title of the well known book of 1972 (published by Penguin Books) and TV series of the same year (broadcast by BBC) written by the writer and artist John Berger.
Benjamin might have offered. So are people in the West exhibiting everyday stuff in galleries and claiming it as art? What do galleries have to do with revolutions, with artworks and politics? “Art thinking is ...identifying a certain freedom of connections that allows me to understand things better,” Camnitzer might repeat. But can anyone simply go around making claims as to what art is art with no other arguments than simply “I claim”? Perhaps they might try. Like the philosophical anecdote that suggests the possibility that contemplating a solitary drop of water will at some point inevitably result in the awareness of the existence of oceans, it can be said that the kids were, technically speaking, given a chance. But were they – really? And what was found lacking, or surplus, in such a proposition? In the end, Camnitzer offers up good advice, advice on which all invited guests to this textual investigation might agree: “In essence, one cannot educate properly without revealing the power structure within which education takes place. Without an awareness of this structure and the way it distributes power, indoctrination necessarily usurps the place of education.”

Institutional Self-Reflection
In 1995 the Fundació Antoni Tàpies hosted the exhibition *The End(s) of the Museum* reflecting the crisis of the museum as institution through a series of proposals by 14 artists, including Marcel Broodthaers, Ilya Kabakov, Francesc Torres and Andrea Fraser, along with an international symposium and a series of debates. From our present perspective, over 20 years later, *The End(s) of the Museum* can be seen as a lucid and anticipatory project that foresaw the criticisms of museums and cultural institutions in general that would come to emerge in the new millennium. However, although this exhibition set out to conduct “a sustained theoretical and critical inquiry into the genealogy of the museum” that would question “the epistemological presuppositions of this institution, which is also to say [...] its social, economic and political aims”, it affirmed, on the other hand, the idea that it “aims neither to describe situations nor to prescribe solutions but rather to analyse the ways in which the museum is imagined within and without the histories and institutions that have over-determined it.”

Ten years later it seems it became necessary to describe more specific situations, and to highlight the way the boom in contemporary art museums that developed in Spain throughout the 1990s well suited the interests of city authorities looking to stimulate their economies through certain cultural policies related to social pacification and gentrification (so-called “urban regeneration”), as well as by creating city brands and promoting tourism (also known as “putting the city on the map”). Still, five years later, in the context of a pur-

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1 Fundació Antoni Tàpies (http://www.fundaciotapies.org/site/spip.php?rubrique206)

poseful dismantling of public services and institutions – which also served to expose some shameful cultural policies that, more often than not, were based on overspending and alienation from local communities – there was already an urgent need to seek solutions to the crisis and imagine other kinds of institutions. More than calling them into question, it was clear that the social, economic and political aims of the museum had to be reformulated.

In a text from 2008 Jesús Carrillo speculates on the possible role of centers of contemporary creativity in their social and cultural context. Although these centers cannot be definitively identified with the museum (in fact, Carrillo argues that centers of creativity have replaced the museum paradigm of the 1990s), some of the issues highlighted by the author can be extrapolated to the present case of the museum, albeit with some differences. One of Carrillo’s main points is the need for art centers to respond in an eco-systemic manner to their environment, which implies encouraging the negotiation of the local with the foreign and strange, nurturing a local creative dynamic and, above all, “to connect with the desires, expectations and potential” of certain urban populations that are “varied, mobile and heterogeneous in their needs and expectations.”

For this to happen, it is essential to protect art centers against exploitation by speculative urban policies, as well as to establish forms of independent and transparent management.

As the effects of the crisis have crystallised in the world of culture in a less spectacular but more profound manner (from budget cuts and drastic reductions in staff to the normalisation of long-term precariousness, gradual impoverishment and instability as an accepted way of life), criticism and proposals about the role of cultural institutions have moved towards a call for degrowth, and a social economy of culture that incorporates feminist perspectives, as well as a certain social responsibility to citizens entitled to a public culture.

Meanwhile, museums have modulated their discourse, calling for a change in the relationship with their audiences and recognising that their artistic and cultural proposals must be capable of establishing a dialogue with people

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3 Carrillo, J., “Reflexiones y propuestas sobre los nuevos centros de creación contemporánea” (http://medialab-prado.es/nmedia/828)

4 See: Oliveras, J., “Crisis, cultura, sector cultural y desobediencia” (http://www.nativa.cat/2013/06/crisis-cultura-sector-cultural-y-desobediencia) and Rodrigo, J., “¿Es posible una economía feminista de la cultura?” (http://www.nativa.cat/2014/11/es-posible-una-economia-feminista-de-la-cultura)

within the framework of contemporary socio-political debates (Barenblit, Enguita and Romero, 2013). This seems to be the result of a timely coincidence between the need to legitimise (waning) public funding, even the very existence of museums, and a desire to turn them into real agents in the public debate on the political economy of culture; a debate, moreover, in which various artistic practices fostered by contemporary art museums would play an important role.

However, despite many claims for this new relationship, there appears to be an insurmountable difficulty in realising it in practice. Museums have the capacity to sustain a lot of criticism within their vitrified walls (or maybe not, judging by the conflicts that have recently arisen around exhibitions featuring highly politicised content) but nothing seems capable of traversing those walls and changing the institution from within. What is needed to take this requirement seriously? Probably to think about the museum from the perspective of its relations and not its programmes (content, activities, research). But while this may seem an attractive idea, one that could easily become an institutional slogan, it has seemingly insurmountable implications for the organisational operation of the museum. Beyond the rhetoric, to truly conceive of the museum from the point of view of its relations would risk disrupting the very structures of the institution. To begin with, it would no longer be possible to consider its relations as an added value or an easy way to better introduce its programmes in specific target collectives or as a predesigned format in which the public is invited to participate in. Instead, it should be seen as the starting point of all its actions and identity. And above all, it would destabilise the nature of the institution in its many dimensions:

- The number and type of subjects (in terms of ability, race, sexuality, age, class, cultural capital, etc.) entitled to question it
- The knowledge and forms of knowledge production considered valid in this dialogue

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7 Recently, we witnessed two cases that demonstrate the limits, at least in this country, of the freedom of artistic expression. In 2014, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía was obliged to respond to a complaint from the Association of Christian Lawyers over the exhibition of a work that alluded to the burning of churches. For its part, the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona was about to cancel an exhibition in 2015 that included a sculpture in which a figure possibly representing King Juan Carlos I was sodomised. The episode ended with the resignation of the curators in protest over the attempted censorship and the subsequent resignation of the museum’s director.
• The separations established between rational-irrational, intellectual-affective, or mind-body
• The selection of content and the programming of activities
• The provision and regulation of space and time
• The criteria determining what should be inside and outside the museum
• The criteria defining what parts of the museum should be visible or invisible
• The decision-making processes and those involved in them
• Economic management and forms of funding
• Accounting procedures (what, how and to whom)

Just by looking at this list it is not difficult to understand why such a transformation of the museum is a complex task, even when and where there is a will to venture into such an undertaking. To denormativize/denormalize the museum is in fact a contradiction in terms, since such institutions are based on and have their origin and rationale precisely in the production of normative knowledge and normalised subjects and bodies, as well as the preservation and reproduction of the value of national or private heritage. Therefore, it could be argued that the transformation of the museum in the sense described above is both necessary and impossible. The struggle for this to happen must be constantly renewed, since the norm tends towards its own reproduction. Although, as the theories of performativity remind us, a norm is never guaranteed but it must be re-actualised over and over again, with the necessary implicit displacements. On the other hand, deviations from the norm face structural resistance that transcends the will of the individuals involved, leaving such deviations frustrated, occurring in prophylactically restricted spaces.

8 It is important to note that museums are different and have different institutional modes. It is therefore somewhat unjust to generalise about them as if they respond to a single model. Nevertheless, the challenges they face are similar, even if their scope for action and ways of relating to these challenges differ.


within the institution or even in spite of it. Nevertheless, the fact that their chances of succeeding are limited or unlooked-for does not diminish their power and at times even the opposite can happen: a burst of unrestrained disorder or an ephemeral assault on the institution can be as powerful as a gradual and deliberate transformation.

Leaving aside for a moment the most unpredictable outbursts and assaults on the museum, historically one of the spheres where it is possible to open spaces for the agency of relations within museums has been the educational practices, although historically these have also occupied a subaltern position in museums. It is not only that education has been allocated a secondary role in these institutions, or has been a concern of departments with less decision-making capacity, budget and prestige, but also and above all that its function is seen largely in terms of dissemination and reproduction of institutionalized knowledge. This implies that education is aimed at communicating the discourses of the museum’s curatorial practices to more or less knowledgeable audiences in a manner that is accessible but accurate. Or that its function is to facilitate access to content and artistic practices for groups of people who do not normally frequent museums in an educational and playful way.

By contrast, the critical and transformative role of education is far less acknowledged partly because it questions the same institution that includes education in a subordinate manner, i.e. without the same degree of agency and discursive prestige as the artistic or curatorial function (which may help explain why institutions value artists and curators over educators as agents of

13 An extraordinary case of transgression of the established functioning of the museum was carried out by The Agencies that during the spring and summer of 2001 turned MACBA into a base of operations for numerous political and artistic actions in the course of anti-globalisation protests against the various financial and political summits that were to take place in the city of Barcelona. The taking over of the museum acquired a level of organisational and symbolic meaning that exceeded the initial political commitment of the institution, and although its management defended the action of The Agencies throughout the cycle ended before the summer and the museum did not renew such an alliance or similar form of political action subsequently.

14 In line with the previous note, the Agencies, though ephemeral, have maintained their importance as a key example in the relationship between art institutions and direct action. Another example of ‘taking over’ the museum is the Liberate Tate movement arising from a workshop organised by Tate itself in 2010 and leading to the occupation and interventions in the museum in order to expose and put an end to the funding it receives from British Petroleum.


17 Ibid.
radical pedagogy, especially if they are external). Education in the museum is often put in a position of having to tackle all these dimensions at once, however contradictory they may be. It also develops tedious and repetitive tasks that lack glamour; but above all it is the liminal zone of the institution and, therefore, that which relates to subjects, discourses and practices far removed from those normalized by the museum. It is this fact that demonstrates the role of education as a privileged relational place from which to rethink (destabilize) the museum.

From this relation, one might imagine the museum as a great pedagogical device that can operate educationally in multiple dimensions and forms, beyond the existence of a specific department. For example, everything from management, departments of art and conservation to the offices could become educational spaces, by transgressing the division between what is internal and invisible and what is open and visible within the institution.

In the same way, the role of institutional archives, traditionally considered internal or only accessible to accredited researchers, could equally be transformed. An archive that abandons its role of “black box” or “classified material” closely linked to centralised power, when conceived from a relational and educational perspective becomes a mode of producing new knowledge, of public questioning and proliferation of meanings attached to the museum. Evidently, this also has fundamental implications with regard to accountability and institutional openness to public scrutiny, since archives have historically been the heart of darkness of the institutional control over information.

In this sense the project Prototips en codi obert (Open Source Prototypes) developed by the Fundació Antoni Tàpies is an example of this opening of the museum archives to the interpellation of various agents. The availability of the

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18 Although sometimes these roles are combined or overlap, they generally tend to be distributed according to the traditional separation, in part because the forms of legitimacy and recognition afforded each type of professional are different. For example, it is difficult for artists to consolidate their careers if they renounce the principal claim of authorship and control over the movement of the collaborative projects in which they participate. On the other hand, it is unusual for museum educators to claim any authorship. In this context, hybrid identities experience great difficulties maintaining themselves in this border position.


20 Prototips en codi obert is a project that proposes the historical archives of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies as a tool for developing collaborative work processes or autonomous projects on contemporary cultural and artistic practices by groups, organizations and educational centers. For more information about the project, consult http://www.fundaciotapies.org/site/spip.php?rubrique1082 and see Oriol Fontdevila’s chapter in this volume.
internal documentation of the museum to students, artists and other agents is a unique opportunity to understand the workings of the institution and, by extension, the art system. As expected, decisions have had to be made about the degree of access to each document due to issues of intellectual property and privacy. It seems that here we reach the limit of institutional openness: even the accessible archive needs to continue to exercise certain forms of regulation and relative closure of its contents, or risk becoming a massive leak in the manner of WikiLeaks, which no institution can afford if it wants to maintain its integrity, even its very existence. In any case, closing the circle opened at the beginning of this text, Prototips proposes other forms of renegotiating the boundaries of the museum beyond a critical macro-analysis of its genealogies by intervening in the less visible micro-gears of the institutional machinery. More than a destabilisation or assault on the museum, it proposes a transformation of its everyday functioning, perhaps less radical but potentially more sustainable.

To conclude, another challenge in relation to the archive has to do with the ways in which the museum archives its future, especially when faced with fluid and ephemeral relational processes – like education, but also the arts that are based on collaboration – whose complexity and interpersonal quality require special care in their register and the way they are recorded. How can relations be archived? It has been argued that in these cases invisibility should be preserved in order to avoid their “spectacularization”. But this strategy, which is certainly necessary on occasion (Phelan, 1993), also deprives those within the community of cultural workers interested in these types of artistic or educational relational projects of the narratives that would allow them to learn from the experience of others.

So, one of the most exciting lines of work to emerge in this archive-related paradigm is how to account for this type of process in a careful, complex, fragile and partial yet productive way. Because after all, no matter how many times the museum activates its relational processes with the agents around it or with groups that challenge it, none of that transforms the institution in the sense discussed above if it does not become part of its own nature through something like the construction of a memory and a long-term institutional process of learning.

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It is hardly news that the appreciation of artworks and connected to this, notions of aesthetic quality and social relevance, are always changing. What is new, however, is a growing awareness that these changes also take place in the museum – thus replacing the concept of museum as representing objective, universal values. In contrast to commercial galleries, art associations and alternative spaces, where quality was supposed to be tested, the museum has maintained the institutional status of the eternal. Which is why artist Ad Reinhardt looked at it as a “treasury” and “tomb”. According to him, the museum is “soundlessness, timelessness, airlessness, and lifelessness”.\(^1\) Since the 1960s, and almost simultaneously, largely inspired by feminist and post-colonial discourses and institutional critique, doubts have been raised over who defines quality and relevance for whom; who is represented in the “Olympus” of eternal values and what and who is excluded. Since then, the ideology of the museum – in terms of claiming universal, eternal values but in fact hiding the interests imposed on it by dominant groups – has been questioned on many levels by artists, curators and a growing number of museums.

Against this background, we developed *collection reversed — transfer, transformation and ruptures*. Our research began with the international exhibitions held at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška in 1966/67, 1975, 1979, and 1985, because they formed the point of departure for the museum’s collection. Many artists from all over the world followed the public calls, sent artworks and made donations afterwards. The non-aligned movement had some share in this, which started in Belgrade in 1961, and was initially conceived by India’s first prime minister, Nehru; Indonesia’s first pres-

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ident, Sukarno; Egypt’s second president, Nasser; Ghana’s first president Nkrumah, and Yugoslavia’s president, Tito. All five leaders advocated a middle course between the Western and Eastern Blocs. The non-alignment movement changed the collection policy of many museums in Yugoslavia, and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška collection is a good example, with larger bodies of artworks from Indonesia, Bolivia and South Africa next to works from the Western and Eastern blocs.

We, being foreigners ourselves, not only looked into the shifts in the international exhibition agenda but, in parallel, into the transformation of the works over the time they have been in the collection, in terms of the status they enjoy, what they mean, and the way they are shown. In addition to the exhibition collection reversed, but within its own specific frame, we presented henry moore comes back. Henry Moore was a referential figure in the museum’s programme up until the 1980s. Despite the fact that his work was extensively shown at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, the collection today does not contain a single piece by the artist. On this special occasion of our exhibition, we hoped to serve the desire to bring Henry Moore’s work to Slovenj Gradec. Ultimately, we succeeded in securing two (modest) sculptures from the Museum of Modern Art in Banja Luka and four works on paper from the British Council. Our efforts to temporarily accommodate works of Henry Moore at Slovenj Gradec were also documented and shown.

Looking at the international art exhibitions of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška from a contemporary perspective allowed us to simultaneously consider successive events of the past and to trace the changes in their agenda. However, today they are only indirectly accessible – through catalogues, photo documentation, descriptions, archival material, witnesses, current experts, and the works themselves, which were taken from the international exhibitions into the permanent collection. Our sources neither provided a complete impression nor were they entirely reliable in terms of information. In fact, they did show us something, and provided us with some information, but could not claim to be exhaustive and instead, invited speculation. Dealing with such gaps and discrepancies therefore became an intrinsic part of our presentation. We related exhibition – catalogue – collection to one another and placed artworks next to archival material and reproductions in order to be able to read transfers, transformations and ruptures that have occurred over the course of time.
When going through the collection of artworks, catalogues and archive material, it became obvious that the international exhibitions were in midstream during their respective times. **Peace, Humanity and Friendship Among Nations**, 1966/67, featured an enormous array of media and artistic approaches united under an umbrella of universal values and aesthetics. This concept expressed on the one hand the vast variety in and of humankind, and on the other, the overarching goal of the exhibition to overcome racial, national, religious and/or ideological differences through a strong common agenda, as expressed in the title. **peace 75 – 30 uno**, 1975, featured “committed figurative art” and demanded social engagement from all of the participating artists. This time, any retreat into universal humanism (which was then considered to be passive) was rejected and critical debate was raised over questions of individual creation and the prioritisation of aesthetic objects. In the continuation, **for a better world**, 1979, went further in transcending individual creation and the borders of art, architecture, design, sociology and psychology towards interdisciplinary and/or collectively produced works. Distancing itself from functionalist modernism and allowing room for speculation, **for a better world** aimed, nevertheless, at contributing in practice to “a better world”, advocating self-empowerment and critical positions toward consumerism and consumer culture. Unlike the first three exhibitions and their clear agendas, **For Peace. Heritage in Wood, Woodcut, Small Sculpture in Wood, Architecture – One-Family House in Wood**, 1986, seemed conceptually adrift. In fact, the organisers forced a number of highly diverse parts (art, crafts, folk culture, “African” sculpture, and a competition for single family houses etc.) into and under a single concept united only by a common material – wood. On the occasion of the international exhibitions, which took place at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, artists donated a total of 99 works for the first exhibition, 38 for the second, 1 for the third and 4 for the fourth exhibition.² Obviously, willingness to donate diminished steadily over the course of years and exhibitions.

Central to our project were six exemplary cases, in which, according to our analysis, significant transformations and ruptures had occurred. They were summarised under the following headings: (1) **from art to politics to art**, 1966/67, (2) **from political activism to quiescence**, 1966/67, (3) **from a symbol of world hope to a symbol of Slovenj**

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² When we did the exhibition we found one donation, meanwhile it is four.
Gradec as “peace messenger city”\(^3\) 1966/67, (4) from framework to framed work, 1975, (5) from the documentation of art to artworks and back to documentation, from a collective, process-related work to a single work of one author, 1979, and (6) forcing techniques to the subject of the exhibition, 1985.

Case 1 and Case 2 were related and explored changes in the position of Victor Vasarely and Walter Solón Romero. In the first case Vasarely was taken as an example of ostensibly depoliticised art that insisted on its apolitical power but was, in fact, heavily politicised. The Hungarian-born artist who made his career in France was taken as evidence, if not proof, of openness and social progress – in short, of modernity, both, in the West and in Communist countries as well as in Yugoslavia.\(^4\) Today, the decorative qualities of Vasarely’s works enjoy the spotlight, and their once-political incorporation is almost forgotten. Walter Solón Romero can be seen as an antithetical figure to Vasarely, because he was interested in the political reach of art from the beginning. Together with other artists he founded the Antaeus Group, a group that dealt with social issues that affected life in Bolivia. Seen from today, Romero’s work has been largely absorbed by the museum’s aura, trivialising his formerly explicitly political approach. Today the reputations of both Vasarely and Romero have diminished considerably.

Case (3) was dedicated to Ueno Makoto’s “Espoir” (Hope), 1963. The work employs the motif of a dove, widely popular at the time, with an olive branch representing a symbol of hope. Makoto’s “Espoir” became an iconic motif, for both the exhibition and the town’s agenda. It gradually transformed from a symbol of world hope to a symbol of Slovenj Gradec as “peace messenger city”.\(^5\) This transformation remains, and closely corresponds to the place of its installation today: Makoto’s dove is exhibited in the mayor’s office at the town hall, and is still considered a symbolic ambassador of the city. Case (4) took Daniel Buren’s blue-and-white striped coloured flag as its point of departure. Inserted into a row of national flags, together with the UN and the city’s flag, it was shown in front of the museum entrance in 1975. Following Buren, the serial coloured stripes were meant to represent “markers” that pointed to their context and in so doing, delineated certain specific frameworks related to art. In Slovenj Gradec, his con-

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3 Peace Messenger cities are cities around the world that have volunteered for a United Nations initiative to promote peace and understanding between nations.

4 In 1946, a communist government was established. In 1948, Yugoslavia distanced itself from the Soviet-Union. Tito criticised both Eastern Bloc and NATO nations and, together with India and other countries, started the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961.

5 Some years later, a special edition of stamps with Makoto’s dove, including nine stamps and a special envelope with the date of issue – 24.10.1970 – was produced.
tribution for peace 75 – uno 30 constituted a statement in its challenging of national identities and identifications through a non-classifiable flag that had its origins in an explicitly everyday context (Buren referenced and used awning cloth). Years after the exhibition took place, Buren’s flag was framed – and its original intention was lost. Basically, the painting (Buren saw his stripes as painting) that had literally left the confines of the museum and went out into the streets was recaptured by the museum some decades later. During our research it emerged that the work’s framing was never authorised by the artist; today it is considered a document of the process that led from an interest in frameworks to a (literally) framed work. Case (5) followed the many changes in the status of the works by Ico Parisi, Riccardo Dalisi and Milan Ranković together with shifts in the attribution of authorship. After being shown in the exhibition for a better world, photo boards of Dalisi’s project “Traiano” and Ranković’s garden in Belgrade, together with photographic reproductions of Parisi’s work, went into the collection of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška under the names Parisi, Dalisi and Ranković. Dalisi’s work, however, was produced collaboratively – in this case with children from the urban quarter of Traiano in Naples, and Ranković’s garden was photographed by Branko Nikolić, the actual author of the photographs. The status of the photo boards and the reproductions – whether they would be authorised art works or not – long remained unclear. Today they are considered as documentation once again. Case (6) was dedicated to the exhibition For Peace, 1985, which revolved around the material “wood”. Due to the limited budget, works from the collection were integrated into the exhibition, works already shown in the international exhibitions in 1966/67 and 1975. Obviously, the desire to achieve a strong and clear focus caused things like different techniques and artistic concerns to disappear. Discrepancies in dates and titles arose, which is only partly attributable to the various translations (into Slovenian, French and English); instead, they were in large part the expression of changed views on the artworks. Our research reconstructed the differences in the attributions and traced the changes.

The presentation: A careful selection of the donated works from 1966, 1975, 1979, and 1985 was literally laid out on a modular structure throughout the centre of the exhibition hall. The single elements we used were part of the modular wall system developed after the renovation of the 1960s exhibition hall by

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6 In our exhibition we presented the framed flag on one wall and exactly opposite a reproduction showing the flag in front of the museum entrance. This photo board was produced on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the museum director Karl Pečko. We integrated it as an “object of representation”.

Edi Koraca in 2010. They were both reset vertically and reversed horizontally and thus reminiscent of a spine: the laid-out or rather laid-down panels showed the works on paper and/or reproductions of the catalogues from the same perspective and in the same way they are preserved in the drawers of the museum archive and/or as the spread pages of a book when reading. The paintings were presented on the vertical panels, directly deriving from the central spine – this time, referring to the storage grid system employed in the archive. In short: the main reference points for setting up the display came from the museum’s archive/storage itself.

Viewing the exhibition demanded a decision: whether to start on the right- or the left-hand side. The tour led all around the spine structure and offered front and rear views in equal measure. Entering the exhibition, the vertical panels stood facing the visitor in a shifted (offset) perspective, superscripted with the respective year and title of each international exhibition. Assorted text and material reproduced from the catalogues and the archive emphasized the more important aspects of each exhibition. On the back side of each “case” – we looked at the international exhibitions as cases, just like we did with our six exemplary cases along the sidewalls – only paintings were shown. Graphic arts, photographic documents and contextual information were placed on the laid-down, reversed walls, protected by glass panes. With the 1979-case, reproductions from the catalogue were shown beneath glass as the original representation of the exhibition. In contrast to the way the panes are usually used, i.e. to cover and protect single works and commonly framed – we arranged the glass panes in blocks, one against the other, without leaving any space between them. With this we again referenced the modular principles inherent to the architecture of the exhibition hall. On the surrounding walls we showed the six exemplary cases of transfers, transformation and ruptures the artworks had undergone over the course of years. Artworks and contextual information/material were all displayed on both the gallery walls and on the modular panels exactly the same way. In addition, standardised museum pedestals of all kinds were integrated.

Catalogues and archival materials were reproduced four different ways: first, they were photographed as objects according to the straight or direct perspective of a spectator; second, as objects in the inclined perspective of a reader; thirdly they were scanned flat, like even, readable documentation revealing the materiality, formatting and context of the original source. And lastly, the texts and content were typeset in a straightforward layout in black and white in order to convey the content without retaining the look of the original source.
We produced these four perspectives on the given material consistently throughout, in normative A3 format. Quotes from the catalogues, however, were transcribed, typeset and printed on a grey-scale background in order to mediate between the aesthetic of photographed/scanned reproductions and the reset text material. The quotes were laid out near the glass panes on the horizontal walls/panels as comments, thus contextualizing the artworks.

We, the interpreters of the collection and the authors of its 2015 presentation, are convinced that museums and other art institutions have a duty not only to present artworks but also to provide information about their social and economic contexts, and to speak of changes in the perception, meaning and status the works enjoy. The most important facet for our project was – and we hope this has become clear – to exhibit the conditions of showing, perceiving and receiving alongside the artworks and the contextual information. Ultimately, three layers were tightly connected: the artworks, the contextual information and the exhibition itself, in and with which our approach was visualised, ‘materialised’; in short, in which it manifested itself.

At the outset herein we wrote that the museum has always been a place of transformations – but for a long time it did not speak of its own transformations. We set out to break this silence and make it speak about its past and presence.

(Photo documentation of the exhibition appears in the chapter “Performing the Museum Interpreters”)
I'm not sure about the fact that you are now preparing a reader. It's as if the projects we've carried out were rendered legitimate simply because they ended up being set down on paper, which is what a museum inevitably produces.

Roger Bernat, 2016

There is a paradox that is constantly reproduced when art comes close to its non-representational substrate: this is when, stripped of its symbolic layer, it reveals an infrastructural layer that one never quite knows how to deal with. Despite the performative emphasis in works of art related to institutional criticism since the turn of the century, it is fair to say that these are in danger of being relegated to mere artistic genres if they fail to achieve a minimum of impact in terms of the structural challenges they repeatedly invoke.

Understanding this phenomenon is made easier by arguments put forward by different theorists with regard to three non-representational areas in which art has tried to play a role in recent years. These are the questions of the archival, education and material agency:

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1 It would not be correct to refer to a “performative art” as such. As Dorothea von Hantelmann has pointed out, artistic practice always involves a performative component on the specific terms in which thinkers like John Austin and Judith Butler have formulated the concept: every sign has a capacity for action, and by updating or displacing the conventions organised around it can affect the realisation of what is rendered. Thus, “There is not performative artwork, because there is no non-performative artwork” (Hantelmann, 2010). Even so, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in this theory among artists, which has resulted in attention being paid to questions like the effectiveness and relevance of art, as well as new perspectives emerging in relation to aspects that go beyond the field of representation and were traditionally identified with mediation. In relationship to this trend, the text you have before you supposes an engagement between performativity theory and the discourses of institutional criticism, something that, in Hantelmann’s view, should not arise: “An art that is conscious of the efficacy of its own performativity could possibly replace [critique] with a more constructive and effective attitude.” Our position is, on the other hand, closer to a genealogy of feminist thought that sees in performativity a way of renewing the understanding of critical thought itself, so that it would result from actual contact – rather than from a distant positioning – and from matter and mediation, rather than from discursivity or representation. As Marina Garcés writes in “To Embody Critique”, “The problem of critique has traditionally been a problem of conscience. Today it is a problem of the body. How do we incarnate critique? How does critical thought acquire a body?” (Garcés, 2006).

Boris Groys sees the archive as the sub-media space *par excellence*. However, Jorge Blasco regretted the trend that has arisen among artists to *represent* without fully taking on board the verb “to archive” in all its complexity: “We are left with metaphor, representation, ‘form’.” Even though institutional criticism expected the archival to penetrate the art world and affect its taxonomic and expositional conventions, in the end it is the archive that tends to find its place as a new fixture within the established taxonomy; as Blasco puts it, as “a taxonomic category as powerful as certain styles and media: painting, sculpture, multimedia, archive and macramé.”

Also well-known is the tension posited by Irit Rogoff, between education as a disruptive influence and the crystallisation of education as a new aesthetic convention in contemporary art: “On the one hand, moving these principles into sites of contemporary display signalled a shift away from the structures of objects and markets and dominant aesthetics towards an insistence of the unchartable, processual nature of any creative enterprise. Yet on the other hand, it has led all too easily into the emergence of a mode of ‘pedagogical aesthetics’ in which a table in the middle of the room, a set of empty bookshelves, a growing archive of assembled bits and pieces, a classroom or lecture scenario, or the promise of a conversation have taken away the burden to rethink and dislodge daily those dominant burdens ourselves.”

Finally, the issue is brought up to date by the recent arrival of the so-called new materialism: as Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey and Suhail Malik put it in the introduction to one of the first anthologies on the topic, “If realism and materialism are to follow through on their claims to radically reorganize modern epistemological and ontological categories (...) we should anticipate not only new themes for art practices, exhibitions and cultural production, but also starkly different ways of making, perceiving, thinking and distributing them. What is left relatively unexamined – and presents a much greater problem for current orthodoxies of cultural artistic production – is the systematic and methodological challenge that a thoroughgoing realism and/or materialism presents

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to the way that exhibitions or artworks claim to produce meaning in their prevailing paradigms."

These remarks allow us to specify the paradox we pointed out at the start: approaches including clear input from performativity theory do not seem, in general, to be in a position to anticipate differential modes of production and the circulation of art and knowledge. While performativity deals with the question of representation from a pragmatic perspective and considers how a symbolic plane can have a disruptive effect on reality, this theory seems closer today to being absorbed by a traditional system of representation than one able to reconfigure it. Performativity is therefore in the process of becoming just another representation of contemporary art. Once again we find ourselves left with metaphor, while performativity is hardly to be found as a *modus operandi*. 

In this respect we feel it is important to highlight the *Arts Combinatòries* (Combined Arts) project by the Antoni Tàpies Foundation. After a decade-and-a-half of a consolidated, pioneering programme of exhibitions and activities at this museum, which have generated and introduced to Spain some of the most important ideas related to art and institutional critical thinking, feminisms and post-colonialism, it was only in 2007 that, with the arrival of Laurence Rassel at the helm, the possibility of transferring this whole critical baggage from the exhibition galleries to the operation of the institution itself was considered. Thus importance was attached to questions and issues like: can a cultural institution not only represent feminist thought, but decide to be guided by approaches derived from cyberfeminism or queer theory? And can institutional criticism serve to drive the working of a museum? In short, can the structure of an institution be consistently open to critical thought?

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6 One explanation for this phenomenon could be that artists and curators have largely continued to see representation and discourse as those fields where they could make a contribution, while the translation into performativity of non-representational aspects such as mediation or infrastructure, which are barely touched on in their work, is sidelined. This is made absolutely clear in the above-mentioned essay by Dorothea von Hantelmann, How to Do Things with Art (2010). It is symptomatic that in what is probably the most perceptive approximation so far produced to contemporary art and the discourses of performativity, the structure of the whole argument revolves around the figures of four artists – James Coleman, Daniel Buren, Tino Shegal and Jeff Koons – who are in the end almost the only agents that Hantelmann describes with a certain agency. In our view, a theory or historiography of art based on performativity should present the role of artists alongside the capacity for the intervention of other actors, infrastructures and technologies that come into play in generating artistic phenomena. In Hantelmann’s opinion, the artist is probably the only actor in the artistic field with the ability to disrupt, while the others are relegated to the conventional background, which is also portrayed in his work as notably static.
The key factor raised in effecting this transfer of critical thought to the non-representational substrate of the institution was the creation of an archive, opened in 2009, which has made available to the public the documentation generated by the institution in its day-to-day work managing activities and exhibitions. The archive also enabled the organisation of ongoing cooperation between three of the institution’s departments: under the name Arts combinatories (Combined Arts), the Museum began a process of linking the archive department itself – run by Núria Solé Bardalet – with that of public activities – headed by Linda Valdés – and that of education – under Rosa Eva Campo and Maria Sellarès Pérez. The process of linking the archive to the public sphere led to the project Open-Source Prototypes, which I had the opportunity to curate, a platform for research and action that has worked together with different agents related to the educational sphere; as well as to How to Do Things with Documents, the Museum’s contribution to Performing the Museum, which has involved inviting a series of artists and people of different profiles to spend time doing research in the institution’s archive.

However, can this story also be told according to a modus operandi in line with the concept of performativity? For it is not a matter of portraying it according to an exegetic discourse, but of setting out some of the stress lines running across the project and trying to make them reverberate through this same exposition. This is attempted below by quoting fragments of thoughts expressed by some of the actors involved in the projects who have worked within the sphere of the archive over this time:

“At that time [by 2007], Miquel Tàpies (President of the Board) and Nuria Enguita (then chief curator) invited me to consider what the institution could be like in 20 years, to open it to various publics and ask questions that had never been asked. I decided then that it was important to open the institutional archives to the public, and for the institution itself to study how it works and worked – what are its main features, what does it know?” Laurence Rassel

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7 The following part of the text includes statements made within the context of assessments of Prototips en codi obert (Open-Source Prototypes) and of Performing the Museum, as well as in other contexts. The corresponding bibliographical citations can be consulted in the section on references. It is in any case important to underline that the description given of the projects is not exhaustive, and that they do not include the voices of actors who have been important to the carrying out of the project, yet whose testimony regarding the matters discussed is not available. See Appendix III: Diagram by Pep Vidal tracing the relationship between the three initiatives discussed in this text: Open Source Prototypes, Performing the Museum and How to Do Things with Documents.

From a performative standpoint, the archive cannot be identified as the passive guardian of an inherited legacy, but as an active player in shaping both collective memory and institutional and governmental processes. This is how Rassel saw the archive as a space from which it was possible to begin the proposed conversation with the public about the institution’s own configuration, with the prospect that “the audience could become the user, an intermediary of the museum.” It was not therefore simply a matter of democratising knowledge or making the institution transparent, but of approaching the archive as the interface through which the institution “would be disrupted and would so become unstable.”

“In a way, the foundation archive is the heart of the Open Source Prototypes project. Seen as a knowledge tool, the opening up of the archive documentation has been and is an attempt to provide the groups participating in the project with a review of museum management practices from a different standpoint. Approaching museum practices from an archive means shifting the usual centre of research from the field of art, the work of art, to the documentary world generated by the art, whether through the management of a museum’s collection or through setting up exhibitions.”

Placing the archive at the centre of a process of dialogue with the public sphere is something exceptional. Thus, while Solé recognises that a step beyond specialist research was required (“From the beginning another goal of the project had been to diversify the community of the archive,”), people also believed that the framework of cooperation in Open Source Prototypes should focus on the educational sphere:

“In inviting the first few groups, particular attention was paid to the following question: which kinds of partners and collaborators might be interested in becoming involved in a project that takes as its starting point

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
the historical archive of an institution and under what conditions would they be able to benefit from this?” Oriol Fontdevila

“The documentation on exhibitions kept by the archive could provide us with details of how they were managed, to allow work and discussions on legal and financial aspects that would not emerge in any analysis of the exhibition as an end product.” Joan Vilapuig, teacher at the Escola d’Art i Superior Deïà

“With regard to the foundation, quite frankly, my initial expectations were so high that when I came up against the nitty-gritty of the question I felt a little deflated (folders and more folders and you didn’t know where to begin!), but it is good experience, as it’s not every day that you can go into the archive of an institution like this one.” Mireia Jou, student at the Fine Arts Faculty of the University of Barcelona

“If there is one thing we consider to be entirely positive, it is the opportunity to respect and create a space in which different times and processes can coexist... [so that] we have been able to gradually build up our way of dealing with the archive, approaching it cautiously, taking the time necessary to rethink why, for what and how to construct this relationship.” LaFundició, members of CandeL’Hart

Between 2011 and 2015, around 20 groups carried out research processes at the Museum, consisting of education projects jointly designed by teachers, students, researchers and the project organising team, and these have been disseminated publicly through different initiatives in different formats, as well as through interventions at the museum itself. Nevertheless, it has proved harder to foster dialogue between the different groups and generate meeting places, as well as joint presentation formats that would prove comfortable and sustainable for all of them.

As Marta Mariño, trainee researcher at the Inter-University Institute for Women’s and Gender Studies, pointed out: “In the case of Open Source Prototypes, to

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
this must be added the major difficulty arising from the highly mixed nature of the groups making up the project... Despite the underlying idea of collaboration (...) behind the project, in practice mechanisms were not created that favoured feedback in the form of dialogue. Perhaps the foundation failed to highlight the possible commonalities, so that the only thing the groups had in common was their research of and using the archive.”

“Despite all the work on genealogy, deconstruction and criticism that cultural institutions have done about themselves, concerning their role in relation to society and the historical processes that have shaped it, it is fair to say that they are still in debt to the enlightenment programme, and one of their main functions continues to be precisely that of bringing the light of culture to the ignorant. As we understand it, one of the goals of Open Source Prototypes is to short-circuit some of these disciplinary processes to generate new, anti-hierarchical forms of relations between practices and a variety of cultural actors (...). But it is too easy for the institution to repeat its habitual proselytising mechanisms with a group like CandeL’Hart. Despite any guidelines and instructions that may be issued by the institution’s management or one of its programmes, the institution manifests itself and works through countless small gestures and ways of going about things that have been interiorised by its staff over a long time, and which are not easy to change,” LaFundició

“I thought the institution and art could be tools, instruments, are a system. But some of the groups, users, were claiming that the system should work as it is. Not being users of the tools, they wanted to have the same relationship to the institution itself: visibility, acknowledgment, money, but not interaction, or conversation... But some others did converse, convert, transform the institution.” Laurence Rassel

Despite Rassel’s goal of disrupting the institution, it is a fact that the links between the project and the institution have taken time to fashion. As Linda Valdés, head of public activities and project coordinator, admits, at some points it has even been necessary to separate the project from the institution in order to guarantee its efficacy: “So, trying to be flexible without asking for more work

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19 Ibid.

from our colleagues, we have temporarily suspended some aspects of the working protocols. So, in a way, very early on, we became a self-sufficient project. Later, we began sketching out new, different protocols, incorporating our work into the dynamics of the Foundation and developing an interdependency.”

“Opening the archives was a way of enabling us to “touch” the structures and how they work... This was somewhat naïve, as what is fundamental in an institutional structure is the way it is financed and how decisions are made. Evidently you can to some degree find this inside the archive, but I realised that the issue of understanding how the institution works mainly concerned the team dealing directly with the archive, and this knowledge wasn’t shared... Some parts of the wider team were not happy with a programme that for them was too open to the uncontrolled interventions of the artistic sector of the city, including different communities and students,” Laurence Rassel

In 2015 cooperation began within the framework of the European Performing the Museum project, something that made it possible to raise funds to finance a research residency programme at the archive for six actors of different profiles. While many of these again identify with the educational sector, this time the budget available made it possible to invite artists and more independent agents. Some of the issues that had arisen with Open Source Prototypes came up again, though in a different way, while new ones appeared, arising from the structure of a framework for work and presentation that was quite confined in terms of time and processes.

“We do have to say that as Experimentem amb l’ART (Let’s Experiment with Art), this process of research and experimentation offered us many positive things. In fact, at present it is causing us to ask whether there should be more groups within Experimentem devoted permanently to experimentation and research,” Dolors Juárez and Isaac Sanjuan, members of Experimentem amb l’ART and interpreter of Performing the Museum

23 Many of the quotes shown below come from a conversation held with some of the collaborators involved in the Performing the Museum project shortly after the staging of the presentation of their research, How to Do Things With Documents. The following took part in the conversation: Roger Bernat, Mariló Fenández, Oriol Fontdevila, Dolors Juárez, Judit Onses, Núria Solé i Bardalet, Jara Rocha, Isaac Sanjuan and Pep Vidal.
“There was a lot of autism among us. We were all linked to the archive in some way, but among us we were unable to establish a dialogue... I have the impression that we saw the archive as a mine rather than an agora. That is to say, we all went to get what we could out of it, like the great land-grab of the American West. Everyone looked for gold on their own account – whoever found it got rich and everyone else could get lost. Perhaps there was a little of this in our minds – a piece by Mozart is still found every six months in some archive, isn’t it?” Roger Bernat, theatre director, interpreter of *Performing the Museum*  

“The part that maybe didn’t quite fit for me is the title of the scheme, *Performing the Museum*. At no time did I feel myself to be performing the museum. I felt myself getting involved in the archive, rethinking the archive, searching the archive, working on the archive, but I don’t think I ever performed the museum.” Pep Vidal, artist, physicist and mathematician, interpreter of *Performing the Museum*  

What caused the most discomfort among the interpreters is the joint exhibition that was held to present the outcomes of all six research projects, *How to Do Things With Documents*. This was envisaged as a three-week event on the premises of the archive itself, for which Núria Solé and Linda Valdés themselves undertook to deal with the public throughout the period. Even though the exhibition followed the initiatives each interpreter decided to present their own respective research projects; in general, the exhibition/intervention was not seen as an opportunity for the processes to reverberate through the museum structure.

On the contrary, in some cases the exhibition was seen as something that contradicted the dynamics followed by the interpreters themselves – “For our part there was disagreement when it was proposed showing the research in an exhibition format, which also conditioned certain ways of working” (Experimentem amb l’ART, 2016) – or it was seen as a “toll imposed by the institution. This is how we initially saw and interpreted the exhibition proposal. Once we understood (and accepted) exhibitions are mandatory components for art institutions we no longer saw them as a burden – nor a reason to change our way  

24 Bernat, Roger comments as part of the evaluation meeting of *Performing the Museum*. Unpublished recording, 2016  
25 Vidal, Pep., comments as part of the evaluation meeting of Performing the Museum. Unpublished recording, 2016
of working. Nevertheless, the spaces we need to socialise processes are neither institutions nor museum people” (LaFundició, 2016).26

“With regard to the exhibition, I think we all slipped into performativity formats that nobody was comfortable with, but as they were the formats we were used to... it’s very easy to end up doing an opening with all the typical features, with the typical audience... there was the right music for a few beers, a bit of fun, a nice atmosphere; wow, there are people here, our mates have come... and it’s good music, eh, but I don’t think we voluntarily composed it ourselves.” Roger Bernat27

“I thought it was great that there was beer everywhere – it was a way of invading the whole thing. I thought that weird mutation of an exhibition that actually wasn’t an exhibition was interesting. It was an exhibition in an archive, and that’s something.” Pep Vidal28

The Experimentem amb l’ART initiative within the framework of Performing the Museum consisted of generating a space for dialogue between two institutions in the process of rethinking the concept of opening up to the public. One of these was the Tàpies Foundation itself, with the archive project; the other was the Dovella primary school, in the process of redefining its master plan on the basis of rethinking the potentiality of the school playground. The contact day that was organised took place over most of a day at both locations. Experimentem amb l’ART asked cultural activist and artist Lluc Mayol to provide his thoughts on it in the form of a summary. This focused precisely on two points at which institutional resistance to the opening arise:

“The first of the settings in which resistance to the opening manifested itself was the school, at the very outset. We were invited to lunch at the Dovella school at 1.30pm on an ordinary school day. You might imagine this meal in a dining room or a space shared with pupils (who at that time of day might also be eating or have just eaten). At least you might imagine that at some point the activity would be interrupted by movement in the school (children coming and going, surprise at coming across thirty

26 LaFundició comments as part of the evaluation meeting of Performing the Museum. Unpublished recording, 2016
27 Bernat, Roger comments as part of the evaluation meeting of Performing the Museum. Unpublished recording, 2016
28 Vidal, Pep., comments as part of the evaluation meeting of Performing the Museum. Unpublished recording, 2016
strange adults invading the school, etc.), but on the contrary, lunch was in a windowless classroom, cut off from all physical and visual contact outside the room. No risk of the school’s activities interfering with our day or vice versa. Strangely enough, even when the strange adults moved around the school, from the classroom to the playground, we never came across any pupils or teachers in their daily routine.

Another time when this resistance manifested itself was at the end of the day, at the Tàpies Foundation, when the people from Experimentem amb l’ART suggested a picnic inside the building, together with a debate about where to have it. The few spaces proposed were rejected by the foundation staff on grounds of internal security and curating rules, or simply on sensible arguments (not “bothering” other staff at the centre). In any case, the picnic ended up happening in the Arts Combinatòries room, the space directly related to the activity (as it hosted the exhibition within which it was framed: How to Do Things with Documents) and seemed ready to host us without causing any disturbance. The foundation was closed to the public at the time, but if it had been open our activity would not have interfered very much at all with its routine functioning, in terms of either visitors or work.” Lluc Mayol

In fact, opening up the archive did not put an end to either opacity or resistance. When the background becomes the subject, a new, hitherto unseen background is always to be supposed. When a relationship is established, this is inevitably accompanied by exclusion. When a new displacement is generated, it is very easy for this to end up becoming the rule.

It is therefore important to point out that access to the non-representational substrate of art provided by Arts Combinatòries and the projects derived from it was not problem-free. It is precisely in this setting that art and its institutions see one another above all as a problem. However, for the same reason, these are the spaces where significant learning can be generated and possible alternatives can begin to develop, both in terms of artistic thought and in relation to the institutions themselves that make this openness possible.

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The group exhibition *Archive and Power* presents artistic investigations that explore the notion of the *archive* as accumulated knowledge produced by various types of institutions, as well as other organised structures both societal and individual. The exhibition *Archive and Power* is made up of new productions by artists who deal with the (re)interpretation of certain archive (public and private) wholes and their discursive precipitations, (de)construction of memory and the projection of new (micro)histories, as well as artistic interventions within the context analysing the relationship between the museum and the symbolic power of an institution in creating history. The artists use case studies from the past or certain processes in the register of archive practices as a resource for their recontextualisation and new performances. We proceed from the idea that, even though archives are “primary sources” that are marked by neutrality, the very methodology of *accumulation* represents a design that engages social, political and technological power. The epistemological role of archives, as well as the symbolic capital of archives, is also commensurate with their location in the system of the production of power. Digital technology has initiated a wave of fascination with archives, leading us into a new era of *archive fever* (Derrida). One extreme of this trend is a romanticising of the past and the abolition of the political as a part of the intentional or accidental design of memory. A part of the same process of de-re-politicisation is the introduction of the ideological or the current *realpolitical* as the

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1 The group exhibition *Archive and Power* and the solo exhibition by artist Jasmina Cibic *Building Desire* were presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina in November 2015, as a part of the international project *Performing the Museum*, with the following artists participating: Dolgenger (Isidora Ilić, Boško Prostran), Jasmina Cibic, Isidora Todorović, Zoran Todorović, Saša Rakezić alias Aleksandar Zograf. Gordana Nikolić and Sanja Kojić Mladenov were responsible for the curatorial concept of the exhibitions.

way in which we remember. The relationship between memory and the archive is determined by the aporia of archive fever, which tells us (not to) forget the archive, so that memory should happen.⁴

Another instance explored through this exhibition is the notion of the museum as an institution that traditionally constitutes its social role through the act of accumulation and concern about artefacts and other objects possessing artistic, cultural or scientific value. Archivisation thereby survived as one of the central discourses within the framework of which the identity of the museum is constituted in the processes of memorisation. The neuralgic point of the museum process of memori"sation is precisely the interpretative and performative act of the institution – performing the museum in society – as a potential avant-gardisation of “the past” and the political role of the institution. It is precisely the autonomy (albeit apparent) of artistic practice that we have selected as the ground zero of potential oblivion or new memory. This exhibition acquaints us with explorations of and experiments with performing the histories preserved by archives.⁴

The art duo Doplgenger (Isidora Ilić, Boško Prostran) from Belgrade explored television recordings of the regional Vojvodina Television (the former Novi Sad Television) dating from the time of its founding in the early 1970s. Their video work Through a Starless Night, Dark and Dense as Ink⁵ (2015) represents a post-apocalyptic vision of the future that takes us back to the past for purposes of locating the breaking point that signalled the changes in the global economy, labour relations and the domination of financial markets that constitute well-beaten track of the future “catastrophe of civilisation”. A look into the past takes us to one of the peripheral territories of today’s global economy – a former socialist state, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.⁶

In socialist Yugoslavia, the economic reform of 1964, which advocated a shift

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③ Ibid

④ The artists and art initiatives, acting upon the invitation of the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, realised their new artistic productions (with the exception of Saša Rakezić – Aleksandar Zograf), which is a specific aspect of this exhibition

⑤ The title of the work was taken from the opening sentence of the novel Germinal by the French novelist Émile Zola (1885). The novel is a harsh and realistic story about a miners’ strike in northern France in the 1860s.

⑥ The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was a Yugoslav state that existed from the end of the Second World War (1945) until its disintegration in 1992. It was a socialist state encompassing the territory consisting of today’s now independent states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia. It was proclaimed in 1943 on the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under the name of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, and was internationally recognised as the legal successor of the Kingdom. In 1946, it was given the official name of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, and on the basis of the Constitution of 1963 was given its final name, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
towards a pseudo-market-based (proto-capitalist) economy, was faced, as early as the latter half of the 1960s, with one of its darker repercussive components – a great rise in unemployment, which the state attempted to regulate by directing workers towards the European temporary work market, into the path of so-called economic migrations. Doplgenger produced a film essay based on selected footage (in the form of reportage, interviews, programmes, news) from the television archive containing recordings of processes pertaining to the then global economic changes and the movement of the labour force away from Yugoslavia towards Western Europe. The video arose out of found footage through a collage procedure, and consists of edited short cuts, with occasional back-and-forward interventions that interrupt the flow of the narration and its potential temporality. These interventions on recordings from the network’s archive actually distorts the existing mode of memorising recorded events and represents a new critical memory as a vision of the disaster of the global political-economic system and its many attendant consequences today.

The artist Zoran Todorović is the author of a multi-channel video installation whose title, Several Panoramas for a Phenomenology of the Irrational (2015) refers to the book co-authored by the Yugoslav surrealists Marko Ristić and Koča Popović, dating back to 1930. Todorović organised the video scenario around certain “symptomatic episodes from the history of Yugoslavia”, which the book hinted at, as did a variety of polemical texts written later. The scenario focuses on the act of a contemporary “reading” of the same archival whole composed of the above-mentioned texts and private correspondence between Ristić and Popović and performed by collaborators – groups and individuals from the theoretical-artistic scene who “share an interest in the relationship between art and politics with the said authors”. These performances were recorded in certain locations important for the text: at the Hotel Aleksandar in Vrnjačka Banja – once a sanatorium and an important gathering place of the cultural elite from the end of the 1920s and later; at the Sutjeska National Park – the location of the famous Battle of Sutjeska, fought between the Yugoslav Partisans and the German troops in the summer of 1943, which brought the German offensive to a halt; inside the building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers – one of the most important national museum-type institutions for modern and contemporary art.

7 Konstantin Popović-Koča (1908–1992) was a Serbian and Yugoslav communist, philosopher, surrealist poet, participant of the Spanish Civil War and the National Liberation War, a Lieuten-tenant-General of the Yugoslav People’s Army, a socio-political worker in the SFRY, a hero of socialist work and a national hero of Yugoslavia. From 1948 to 1953 he was Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav People’s Army; from 1953 to 1965 he was the Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the SFRY; and from 1966 to 1967 he was the Vice-President of the SFRY.
art. The visual language of this monumental installation is conceptualised through the relationship of the absence-presence of the protagonists, for in two of the three segments of the installation their presence is confirmed by an audio recording, whereas the video recording presents a bare landscape, that is, an ambience wherein the presence of the protagonists remains unseen. In this way, the artist contrasted the dynamic performativity of the speech form as a discourse on art and politics, with the meditative, almost motionless shot of a panorama in the video, which is reminiscent of a traditional landscape in oil on canvas. Contrasting the audio and video forms here also acts as a kind of trigger, moving the viewer to ponder suggestivity and the manifold meanings of the “reading”, the political articulation, in the process of memorising the image and the other way round.

The comic strip author Saša Rakezić, alias Aleksandar Zograf, reviews the notion of the archive in the context of the characteristic practice of self-archiving through the comic strip, wherein the author, who is at the same time the protagonist of the comic strip and the narrator, presents certain real or partially imagined situations from his own life. Within the framework of the exhibition Archive and Power, Rakezić exhibits a selection of his comic strip panels created between 2003 and 2014 as a kind of pseudo-diary and personal pseudo-history, through which the public/official history is reflected as the macro level or the zeitgeist wherein he locates his stories. The selected episodes represent Rakezić’s fascination with flea markets and forgotten archive material as the main resources for the narratives of his comic strips, in which the accumulated archive of the “collective subconscious” from flea markets is reanimated and redesigned.

In her work Soft Connections (2015), artist Isidora Todorović explores the less visible goings on in the white cube of a gallery, a museum, where it is usually the course of organising and exhibiting works of art that constitutes the main event: the visitors’ reaction to the setting or the event, and the mutual connections between the visitors. The artwork is ephemeral in its final form. It is an “open work” that is realised as an unpredictable performance carried out by the visitors to the exhibition. The artist follows the movements of the visitors at a museum exhibition, experimenting with technology – soft computer circuits, electronic communication and the body Internet. This interactive work

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8 Except for an accidental reflection of their movements on the glasses on the table in front and similar.

9 Soft circuits / E-textiles – a fabric that contains digital components (LilyPad Arduino and similar).
uses *soft circuits* integrated in sewn vests that visitors can put on and thus become moving points of the senso-motoric interaction of the museum audience. The recipient experiences the sensory impressions of the sender as a series of tactile (vibration), auditory (sound) and visual (light) stimuli. The connected technology that is worn (just like various gadgets) is actually the technology of connected bodies (the body Internet), whose function in this case is to simulate sensation, even emotion, through the momentarily created network. Bodies thus become an unstable network “archive” of recorded impressions.

A separate segment of this is the solo exhibition *Building Desire* by the artist Jasmina Cibic, which is conceptually linked with the exhibition *Archive and Power* through the specific practice of rehistorisation. The exhibition *Building Desire* at the museum represents a unique *Gesamtkunstwerk* consisting of a single-channel video installation, watercolour illustrations and separate parts of an architectural model, which were set up as exhibition furniture on which visitors sat. In her new video installation *Pavilion*, Cibic explores the instrumentalisation of visual language in the construction of spectacles within the framework of the imaginariun of the nation state. The case study and, at the same time, the protagonist of this work is the building of the national Pavilion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a project by the pioneer of Yugoslavian modern architecture Dragiša Brašovan (1887–1965), which was erected temporarily in 1929 at the World Exposition in Barcelona. Despite the international accolades and its exceptional reputation, not enough is known about Brašovan's pavilion today, for the scant documentation of it that has been preserved is quite meagre and incomplete. In a way, we can consider Brašovan's pavilion lost in the archival process of the memorisation of the past. Cibic filled the lacunae in the visual documentation on the exterior of the pavilion using the comparative method, relying on the appearance of seemingly similar (architectural) structures that are better documented, such as the project for a villa for Josephine Baker by architect Adolf Loos. The video work *Pavilion* presents a group of female performers putting together parts of a scale model of the Yugoslav pavilion to form a whole on a theatrical stage. In the video, the visual flow of the reality that unfolds inside the theatre is accompanied by the voice of a female

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10 The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was a state that spanned both Southeast and Central Europe, which existed in the period between the world wars (1918–1939) and in the first half of the Second World War (1939–1943). It was formed in 1918 by uniting the temporary states of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (formed in the region of the former Austria-Hungary) with the previously independent Kingdom of Serbia. The Kingdom of Montenegro had merged with Serbia five days before that, whereas the regions of Kosovo, Vojvodina and the Vardar Macedonia had been parts of Serbia before the union. During the first 11 years of its existence, the Kingdom was officially called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but the name “Yugoslavia” was the colloquial designation for the Kingdom from its very beginnings. King Aleksandar I officially changed the name of the state to “the Kingdom of Yugoslavia” on 3 October 1929.
narrator, which functions as the artist’s alter ego, and describes in a documen-
tarist manner the methodology and process of reconstructing the lost pavil-
ion. Recorded from various angles and perspectives, the performance of build-
ing is transformed into a visually seductive series of choreographic arabesques
created by the performers in light overalls on a black stage floor. By giving a
role usually reserved for men (the builders working on the pavilion) to wom-
en, and by introducing a female narrative voice, the artist effects a conceptual
inversion of the ideological imaginarius manifested through the panopticon
created or suggested by the historical factography. This way, Cibic articulates
her political intervention in the ideological imaginarius of the disappeared
nation state within the framework of the contemporary recontextualisation of
the memory of the periphery. The memory of the periphery is actually a rein-
vention of imperial power, and the feminist perspective here plays the role of
rehistorising that imaginarius. Ultimately, Cibic’s Pavilion presents us with a
model of artistic intervention as a corrective of history. The artwork as a rehis-
torisation of a case study of a spectacle from the history of the disappeared
Yugoslav state also represents a critical overview of the inscription of the Yu-
goslav identity in the register of modernity during the 20th century, and actual-
ises the question of the discontinuity of avant-garde utopias as bearers of the
political emancipation of the periphery.
Performing the Museum project

“Performing the Museum” is an initiative of four different museums that aims to generate new thinking and open new practical possibilities on the future of such institutions. The initiative is built on different resources of each institution that collaborates on the project and based on different practices, some set on tradition and the already established working methods and others seeking a different methodology, resulting in experimental practices.

The museums participating on the project aim at re-evaluating and rethinking their resources: archives, collections, and working methods, in order to develop their potentials by creating knowledge and connecting to various types of audiences and social concerns. The traditional roles of the contemporary museum are changing. Its most important activities are no longer merely storage, studying, and exhibiting of artworks, but also an active involvement with the museum’s audience. For this reason, the project will develop combination of exhibitions and educational programmes based on the participatory approach, intended for both the audience and the staff. Creation of knowledge, based on the non-hegemonic, emancipatory principle is one of the strategic orientations of all the participating museums.

Each museum seeks to establish an active dialogue with the audience through a series of presentations, productions, educational workshops and through the presentation of artistic research to the public. The intention is, both for institution employees as well as for users and the wider public, to raise awareness on institutional resources that fall outside the usual framework of museum collections, permanent collections and museum exhibitions and draw attention to museum documentation, architecture and exhibition conditions, to the context of the procurement of art and of its creation, to institutional written and unwritten history, to employees and associates, and, ultimately, to the audience itself.

Partners:
Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb / Muzej suvremene umetnosti Zagreb
Museum of Modern and Contemporay Art Koroška, Slovenj Gradec / Koroška galerija likovne umetnosti, Slovenj Gradec
Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona / Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona
Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad / Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, Novi Sad
The two-year international project PERFORMING THE MUSEUM, in its first edition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (MoCAV), consists of the group exhibition “Archives and Power” and the solo exhibition “Building Desire” by artist Jasmina Cibic.

Through artistic explorations, the exhibition “Archives and Power” examines the notion of the archive as the accumulated knowledge produced by various types of institutions, as well as other organised structures of society, and by individuals as well. Even though archives are “primary sources” that bear the mark of neutrality, their very methodology of accumulation represents a design that engages social, political and technological powers. The epistemological role of archives as well as their symbolic capital are commensurate with their being located within the system of production of power. Digital technology has produced a wave of fascination with archives, ushering us into a new era of archive fever (Derrida). One extreme of this trend is the romanticising of the past and the abolition of the political as part of a deliberate or inadvertent design of memory. Another extreme is the introduction of the ideological and current realpolitiks as determinindictating the way in which we remember.

The relationship between memory and the archive is determined by the aporia of archive fever, which tells us (not) to forget the archive, so that memory can occur.
Another instance examined by this exhibition is the notion of the museum as an institution that traditionally constitutes its social role through the act of accumulation and care of artefacts and other objects possessing artistic, cultural or scientific value. Archivisation has thereby survived as one of the central discourses within the framework of which the identity of the museum is constituted in the processes of memorisation. A neuralgic spot of the museum process of memorisation is precisely the interpretive and performative act of the institution – performing the museum in society – as a potential avantgardisation of “the past” and the contemporary political role of the institution.

The exhibition “Archives and Power” presents new productions of artists who deal with exploring and (re)interpreting certain archive (public and private) wholes and their discursive deposits, (de)constructing memory and projecting new (micro)histories, and with artistic interventions within the context of analysing the relationship between the museum and its symbolic power (in the creation of history). Artists proceed from selected case histories from the past or from a terminological register as a resource that they recontextualise through a new performance. Jasmina Cibic’s solo exhibition “Building Desire” is conceptually connected with the “Archives and Power” exhibition through the characteristic practice of recontextualising a historical theme.

The project PERFORMING THE MUSEUM at the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina is realised through partnership cooperation with the following institutions: the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Slovenj Gradec and the Antoni Tapies Foundation (Fundació Antoni Tàpies) from Barcelona.

The project PERFORMING THE MUSEUM came into being as a result of the initiative of four museums to (self-)examine, revaluate and interpret the museums’ resources, archives, collections and work methods in order that these institutions could develop their potential, as a “common good”, by creating new knowledge and liaise with various kinds of audiences. A two-year programme within the framework of the project unfolding at the international level contains various public activities of the partner institutions: exhibitions and presentations of contemporary and historical artistic practices, an educational portal for children and young people, a joint digital archive, a collection of theoretical papers, publications accompanying the exhibitions, expert conferences, meetings of programme editors, numerous lectures, workshops and curatorial residencies during 2015 and 2016. The realisation of the project relies on the international cooperation
of curators, artists, theorists, education experts, audience participation in the museums, as well as on the participation of the broader public through the project’s online platform.

The exhibitions are accompanied by a three-day symposium entitled “Archive and Power” (3rd–5th November), involving the participation of experts on contemporary art and new media, as well as on the humanities and social sciences, from Spain, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, within the framework of the curatorial residency programme.

Curators and authors of the exhibition concept:
Sanja Kojić Mladenov
Gordana Nikolić

DOPLGENGER
BENEATH A STARLESS SKY, AS DARK AND THICK AS INK, 2015

Single channel HD video, stereo sound

Over the open plain, beneath a starless sky as dark and thick as ink, a man walked alone along the highway from Marchiennes to Montsou, a straight, paved road 10 kilometres in length intersecting the beet-root fields.¹

In the 1960s, Europe was faced with a new type of migration – temporary economic migration. The protagonists of this process were designated as immigrants, émigrés, foreign workers, economic migrants, gastarbeiters and workers “temporarily employed” abroad. Western European countries required a labour force on account of its conditions for economic development, emphasising the temporary character of the settling down of foreign workers. From the very beginning of the process, foreign workers were accepted as a labour force

¹ Émile Zola – Germinal (1885)
for hire that would be engaged according to a country’s need – and when their services were no longer required – they would be fired.

The liberalisation of the Yugoslav economic system and its approach to market economy created a surplus of labour force. Through the economic reform of 1965, Yugoslav state organs liberalised the migration policy and maximised workers’ going abroad, concluding the Agreement on Employing Yugoslav Labour Force with Austria, France and Sweden, and then also with FR Germany in 1968. More than one-sixth of the country’s labour force lived and worked outside of Yugoslavia. In the early 1970s, under the conditions created by the oil crisis and changes in the global economic relations, there appeared new models of labour force migration.

From the moment of signing the above international agreements, Yugoslav television recorded the processes of temporary economic migration.

Isidora Todorović

**SOFT CONNECTIONS, 2015**

*Mixed media (sewing, LilyPad Arduino, stitching)*

The work *Soft Connections* continues the author’s investigations of the soft computer circuits, e-communication and the Internet of the body itself (within the context of this exhibition – the body of the audience). The work uses sewn garments that contain integrated “soft” circuits (specifically, LilyPad Arduino and sensors), which are put on by the audience members. The garments that are put on interact mutually through sensors, creating interaction among the visitors. In this way, the sewn garments become points of sensomotor audience interaction, where one visitor “sends” sensory “impressions” while the others receive them in the form of a “touch” (which is manifested through the vibration of the electromotor) or an “auditory experience” (which is manifested by means of playing a sound) and, finally, through light. The work *Soft Connection*, then, experiments with the sensomotor impressions of the audience within the socio-culturological context of the exhibition/museum, with the help of wearable technology.
Saša Rakezić (alias Aleksandar Zograf)

1. **SKETCHES LOST IN TIME, 2014.**
2. **THE GOLD MINE, 2003.**
3. **MY FRIEND INUIT, 2003.**
4. **A POSTCARD FROM ZAJEČAR, 2011.**
5. **DR HIPNISON, 2014.**

*Colour comic strips, digital print*

Ever since I became aware of myself, I have felt this urge for searching, which has often manifested itself in my dreams as well. Subsequently I realised that it was connected with a desire for collecting all sorts of things. Looking at the artefacts thus gathered, I felt suffused with a strange radiance.

Working on comic strips, I found a lot of material for my stories’ scenarios in flea markets, or by using old and forgotten newspaper articles and books. Sometimes I simply transposed the drawings and material of other people, mostly unknown to me, into my own stories – in one such case, the flea market was the source, a gold mine of the collective subconscious, from which I extracted untold treasures. Generally speaking, in the archive that I was perhaps unwittingly creating, everything that was rare or forgotten possessed an extraordinary power.

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Zoran Todorović

**SEVERAL PANORAMAS FOR A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE IRRATIONAL, 2015**

*Multi-channel video installation*

*Several Panoramas for a Phenomenology of the Irrational* is a video installation, recorded with a specially designed camera, whose scenario touches upon a
certain number of symptomatic episodes from the history of Yugoslavia that were hinted at and that can be followed in the relations reviewed in the book *A Sketch for a Phenomenology of the Irrational*, written jointly by Marko Ristić and Koča Popović, and from some polemical texts written after the 1930 publication of this book. These texts, as well the authors’ private correspondence, make up the archive material interpreted and performed by various actors, theoretical-artistic groups and individuals who share the same interest in the relationship between politics and art as the authors of the above-mentioned texts. The work is performed as a kind of performative reading of a group of interested persons, which is simultaneously recorded in certain locations essential to the text in the form of video panoramas.

Collaborators: Stevan Vuković, Biljana Andonovska, Branka Ćurčić, Zoran Gajić, Ivana Momčilović, Sezgin Bojnik, Slobodan Karamanić

Jasmina Cibic

**BUILDING DESIRE, 2015**

*Single-channel HD video, stereo sound*

*Building Desire* is a new moving image work by the artist Jasmina Cibic. The video shows a group of female performers assembling a large-scale architectural model of the Pavilion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia built in Barcelona for the 1929 World Exposition. That temporary structure was designed by the Serbian architect Dragiša Brašovan and, according to legend, received first prize at the Exposition. Due to political intrigue, however, it subsequently lost first prize, which was then awarded to the German Pavilion and its architect Mies Van der Rohe. In her research, Cibic attempted to retrace the building’s design through institutional and private archives, reconstructing a model of the original on a scale of 1:7, corresponding to the scale of a standard 4-stud × 2-stud Lego brick as compared to the unit size of a standard house brick.

In the video, a female voice-over in documentary style presents a description of the artist retracing the lost pavilion, as well as her making up for the gaps
in the archival evidence by drawing upon other objects that were also designed in the period in order to represent various authoritarian visions of desire at the time. Serving different purposes but utilising the same formal and visual tactics of control of the spectator, these structures also happened to share the emblematic skin of the Brašovan Pavilion: the visually striking black-and-white striped façade. Such was the Adolf Loos house for Josephine Baker, designed in the same years as the Brašovan Pavilion, and the British national navy fleet camouflage invented by the artist Norman Wilkinson.

By confronting a building that was made to represent a nation state, that was supposed to house exotic desire and be a vehicle of national military control, Building Desire points to the optics of authoritarian construction of towers of control and its soft power mechanisms.

Translated by:
Novica Petrović

Texts by:
the artists

Jasmina Cibic, Building Desire, 2015
installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina
courtesy of the artist
01. Doplgenger, Beneath a Starless Sky, As Dark and ick as Ink, 2015, single channel HD video, courtesy of the artists

04. Zoran Todorović, Several Panoramas for a Phenomenology of the Irrational, 2015, multi-channel video installation, courtesy of the artist
Jasmina Cibic, The Pavilion, 2015, single channel HD video, 16:9, 6 min 43 sec in loop, production still: Matevž Paternoster
‘After WWI, Radovan continued with his work, like many others’—says the article. ‘But soon he started to prophesy about the horrible punishment that was going to strike human kind because of its unreasonable behaviour.’

‘One day, he went to his house in the suburbs of Zaječar and started to ruin and burn it piece by piece.’

‘When the house was burnt completely, and his wife and children had left in haste, Radovan started to live in a hole in the ground that he dug in the place where his home had stood. “It’s better to have the sky as a roof!” he said.’

‘His clothes are simple, and he don’t pay much attention to the food, he prefers to stare at the sky silently, for hours’...

‘With few needs, he still has one passion: newspapers. Nobody knows how he gets them, but when he reads something that fits in with his beliefs, he smiles and takes clippings.’

‘His friends are children, who bring him food and keep him company until their mothers come to take them away.’

‘His other friends are dogs. They come to silently sit next to him when he sleeps, and when he wakes up they bark loudly.’

‘Radovan rarely speaks at all, but when he does it’s mostly about his wish to stay away from the crowd, and his longing to return to the world of nature.’...
Isidora Todorović, 
Soft Connections, 2015 
mixed media 
courtesy of the artist
Do Things with Documents

The archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies contains a postcard that highlights the relation that existed between Hans Haacke and Manuel Borja-Villel during the exhibition *Hans Haacke. ‘Obra Social’*, 1995. The artist thanks the then director of the Fundació for his recommendation of a holiday destination.

The Fundació’s archive is a space where contemporary art discourses come face-to-face with praxis. Thus it becomes an indispensable resource for institutional critique and, above all, for a revision of the emergency forms that have become part of the critical discourse in art, and which institutions like the Fundació have incorporated into their contextual framework – in the case of the Fundació throughout its full 25-year existence.

What can mediation in museums teach us? To what extent can institutional critique and curatorial research generate not only artworks but alternatives? Is the archive an appropriate space in which to test other policies in culture and in art?

Roger Bernat, Lúa Coderch, Experimentem amb l’ART, LaFundició, Objectologies and Pep Vidal were invited by the Fundació to carry out research work on the archive. In 2015 they conducted approximations to the registers of mediation from different perspectives and using various methods of analysis, resulting in collaborations with various organisations and agents from the socio-cultural world.

*How to Do Things with Documents* was not, therefore, yet another exhibition based on the archive or on institutional critique. It was an exhibition in the archive, an intervention carried out right at the heart of the institution. Basically it took place within the office space of the Fundació and included initiatives that requires travelling to other places, such as a day of exchanges between
the staff of the Fundació and teachers from Escola Dovella (24 November) and a workshop for the creation of an archive on slums and the informal town of L’Hospitalet de Llobregat (25–28 November).

On 2 and 3 November there were two evening sessions with live presentations of the research carried out by the artists. The project’s international partners, Performing the Museum also took part.

How to Do Things with Documents was the first part of Performing the Museum, a project based on the collaboration between an international museum network composed of Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška (Slovenj Gradec); Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb); Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (Novi Sad).

The team of Performing the Museum at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies included Oriol Fontdevila (curator), Núria Solé Bardalet (coordinator) and Linda Valdés (activities organiser).

01

Experimentem amb l’ART

Institutional Fissures in the Concept of Openness

Concepts such as tradition, history, values, dignity and certainty are the foundations of Western democratic institutions. However, the crisis and the current changes in the political, social and cultural spheres make it necessary to reflect on a number of institutions characterised by stagnation and distance.

One of the paths seen in many debates as the ideal horizon revolves around the concept of openness. Yet, why does an institution decide to become open? What strategies must it generate to be considered open? What values lie behind the notion of openness? What dangers and tensions may we find when we idealise concepts such as openness?

Aware that we are living at an intense and changeable time, we wish to generate a crossroads allowing us to create a debate around the meaning of words and actions. A space, therefore, from which to question this desire for openness in all its complexity.

To do so, we have worked with two types of institution that constantly need rethinking: the school and the museum. As institutions, they are the result of an illustrated project that defended culture and education as the fundamental rights of citizens.

We have selected the Escola Dovella and the Fundació Antoni Tàpies as two examples and intend to share their journey for a limited time. Both of these institutions are consciously involved in a process of change that, being set against a concept of openness, activates actions that require an institutional reordering.

From a position of mediation, we have made several approximations to both the Escola Dovella and the Fundació Antoni Tàpies: conversations, interviews, reading of documents, participation in activities, etc. This has led us to an encounter between the two institutions. Our aim is not only to share the processes of institutional transformation and the challenges faced by each institution, but to steer them away, while also steering ourselves, from the traditional places of thought. By finding their differential characteristics, we hope to provoke the emergence of a critical and fertile debate.

**Experimentem amb l’ART**
Dolors Juárez, Anna Majó, Judit Onesès and Isaac Sanjuan

**LaFundició**

**CICdB Archive**

The CICdB is a series of processes of creation and collective research for the construction of knowledge and constituent practices around urban reality. The working processes of the CICdB are organised around three lines of work destined to recover the memory of the informal city and activate it in the present: a dialogic Archive, a series of Activations in the territory and a nomadic Centre.
of Operations. Some of the questions derived from these processes might be: Can we recover the subordinate knowledge and narratives and build new ones on the outskirts of the city? From the poor areas, can we organise new epistemological devices not subjected to the hegemonic models of production of the social space?

Our participation in *How to Do Things with Documents* is not based on any documentation in the Archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. Instead, we have invited its archivists to collaborate in the conceptualisation of the informal and subordinate archive of the CICdB. The process will be shown on 26, 27 and 28 November, during three open working days to which we have invited, among others, the people who used to live in the old shantytowns of L’Hospitalet, the Centre d’Estudis of L’Hospitalet, the Grup Pas a Pas, the Centre d’Estudis of Montjuïc and Marià Hispano (archivist in charge of the exhibition archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, among others). These working days are centered around one question: what should the CICdB Archive be? And a main working hypothesis: it should be a dialogic device, that is, a network of related discourses, ways of doing things, measures, tools and installations to exhibit the controversies created by its own origin and construction, and to foster a debate around this problematic.

The current exhibition includes a diagram of the genesis and structure of the CICdB, as well as audiovisual documentation of the action *Lachó Bají (The good fortune)*, produced in collaboration with the Lachó Bají Calí Association and performed on 7 November 2014 at MACBA, to coincide with the event *El sol cuando es de noche*, curated by Pedro G. Romero. We are showing this documentation here as an example of what we think the Activations in the territory of the CICdB’s dialogic Archive should be. The action, which was created in collaboration with the members of the Lachó Bají Calí Association in the course of several meetings, consultations of domestic documentary material and interviews with the local people, consisted of a walk round the places inhabited by the Gypsy community of the Gornal, an area in L’Hospitalet, from the early sixties to the early nineties. Here they at first lived in self-made shacks and later in prefabricated homes, constructed in the informal settlement known as La Cadena or Poligón Pedrosa, between the neighbourhoods of Can Pi and La Bomba. During the walk, the participants were given various texts and images with the testimonies of the old inhabitants of La Cadena and references to the development of the modern Economic District and the Lachó Bají School, the first official institution in the area.
As a paradigmatic device of the modern project, the archive is a form of praxis and epistemology that is especially useful for verifying the functioning of ‘Objectologies’. That is: the forms of decentralisation of the human subject in present-day cultures.

The growing anxiety caused by the unsustainability of the anthropocentric culture safeguarded by the institutions has led to a configuration of the world in which power (of enunciation, of government) is shifting with and toward technologies that were once ignored. It is here, in the highly de-subjectivised world of infrastructures, that the present is being disputed.

To understand/explore the ‘post-human condition’ in the spaces and practices of contemporary cultural institutions, a debugging of agents and privileged positions is urgently required.

The proposal Not Yet Know, included in the project How to Do Things with Documents at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, articulates three objectives corresponding to three paradigms of mediation:

1. A static panel of archive fragments offering unauthorised categories for reading the material.

2. A surface for iteration allowing for the material to be recomposed and for a collective rewriting of the archive.

3. A non-human agent – artificial intelligence – that speculates with the reconstituted institutional material and then reassembles it with algorithms and syntactical, possibly ontological, unexpected forms.
To know their public, museums use questionnaires and audience participation. Mailings, posters and a presence in the media are the best way to attract visitors. Visitors are then registered, analysed and ultimately monitored. Audiences are classified according to age, socio-economic status and geographical provenance. The aim is to know the identity of the different types of audience. But do the public know the identity of the museum they are visiting? Do they know its socio-economic status within the particular context of the city and country in which it is located?

Although museums continue to construct a representation of the world by exclusion – showing some things and not others –, the opposite is true in regard to the audience. In this respect, only by being inclusive can the museum organise a device of identification and selection. Museums present themselves as integrating institutions, open to the public in general, and it is precisely this that legitimises them as powerful agents in the context of public institutions. Museums like to understate their presence so they can be seen as an instrument at the service of artists and visitors, an innocuous tool that does not interfere in the communication between the two. And yet, museums no longer legitimise themselves by the works they show, but by their capacity to attract different types of audiences and encourage them to interact. The larger the participation, the larger will be the inclusion of the audience in the democratising discourse strongly defended by museums. A participating citizen is an integrated citizen. Which lead us to suspect that the museum’s interest in knowing the public, in attracting it and encouraging it to participate, is no more than an integrating instrument, or an instrument of manipulation.

Asking visitors to take part in a quiz is a way to reinforce the museum’s efforts in introducing the public into the logic of participation. But this time, visitors are not being asked to talk about themselves, or to give away their data, which, in any case, will be known to the museum by monitoring their telephone number or postal address. Neither are they being asked to participate in a democratic pantomime by voting in a referendum that wouldn’t change anything in the long term. The twelve questions in our quiz are about the institution attended by the visitor.
A quiz is a questionnaire for the benefit of the people who answer the questions, not those who set them up. The person wanting to know the result of the quiz is the same person that answers the questions. This solitary operation, of no particular interest other than to the person being questioned, allows the visitor to stop being the centre of attention. It’s not that the museum disappears while the visitor is participating, rather that, by taking part in the quiz, the visitor is allowing the institution to emerge. By consciously allowing themselves to be manipulated, visitors choose to be absent and, by doing so, they can perceive the museum from their own perspective.

Lúa Coderch

Screen Walls [Dealing with the Wind and not with Gravity], 2015

In the last few months, I’ve been going round various locations trying to build shelters or small architectures in which one could spend the night, just about. The idea came from a correspondence initiated during the project Performing the Museum, for which I periodically sent letters to different individuals and institutions. The shelters, and the letters, were an excuse to reflect on the way we inhabit the world and orientate ourselves within it, as well as our relation to time and technique.

In How to Do Things with Documents, I am showing Night in a Remote Cabin Lit by a Kerosene Lamp, two shelters constructed a few months ago and one that failed, and Screen Walls [Dealing with the Wind and not with Gravity], made specifically for this project. Screen Walls tackles the question of how any human activity leaves behind a series of traces, documents and objects, informally gathered at first, but which can in time be structured as an archive, a collection, or even a museum, among other possibilities. Based on documents from the Archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Screen Walls enumerates some of the dangers, more or less remote, that can threaten that which needs to be preserved.

Image, editing: Adrià Sunyol Estadella
Acknowledgements: Andreja Hribernik, voice; Lluís Nacenta, production
Pep Vidal

Nail to Nail to Nail, 2015

Agreement for a Residency at the Archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies (AFAT)

The department of the Archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies (AFAT), represented solely by Núria Solé Bardalet, exceptionally and in order to host the artistic project by Pep Vidal González, IDN 6826244S, resident at carrer Monturiol, 27, 9è 1a, Rubí, authorises the artist to conduct a residency at the headquarters of the Archive, from 20 July to 2 August 2015, from 8 am to 7 pm Monday to Sunday.

During this period, the artist will be at the Archive as a user and, as such, will be subject to the regulations of the AFAT, attached in this document. For most of the time, the artist will be on his own and will therefore be responsible for the installations and subject to the regulations of the AFAT.

Equally, he is specifically bound to respect the confidentiality of the documents in the Archive of the Fundació and declares, under his sole responsibility, to respect the Intellectual Property Law of the reproduction rights of any of the documents. This research is solely for academic and educational purposes. For any other use of the selected and consulted documentation, previous authorisation by the Archive of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies will be required.

During the period of residency, the artist will be entitled to welcome visitors to the Fundació, but in no circumstances will they be allowed to enter the AFAT. The artist will see any visitors at the adjacent room of Combined Arts.

To confirm this, both parties sign this document in Barcelona, July 2015.

Núria Solé Bardalet
Archive Fundació Antoni Tàpies

Pep Vidal González
DNI 6826244S
01 Experimentem amb l’ART
_Institutional Fissures in the Concept of Openness_, 2015.
Photo: Experimentem amb l’art, 2015.

02 LaFundició,

03 Objectologías,
_Not Yet Know_, 2015
Photo: Objetologías, 2015

Through *Performing the Museum* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU) in Zagreb, Croatia, an institution with an intriguing history and one of the first to incorporate the concept of “contemporary” in its name, artists, researchers and conservators have been given the opportunity to debate their own narrative by being invited to intervene in institutional self-representation.

The public programme for the project included interventions in the museum’s permanent exhibition, research residencies, an exhibition in the Richter Collection, and a presentation of the *Didactic Exhibition* in the NO Gallery of MSU. Since the Museum can provide facilities for residential programmes, several participants were invited to spend a longer time there, resulting in new works that arose as part of the project itself: these included works *Target Audience (Nicholas Brady)*, by the Danish artist Soren Thilo Funder, *Stories about Frames* by Fokus Grupa, a video by Slovenian artist Jasmina Cibic entitled *Hope*, a performance by Pilvi Takala and the preparation of a special issue of the magazine *DIK Fagazine*, issued by the flying office of the Queer Archives Institute, which was founded by Polish artist and curator Karol Radziszewski. Curator and researcher Ana Kutleša wrote about the Božo Bek Archive, and the artist Dalibor Martinis invoked his own performance from 40 years before in the exhibition *Confrontation*, curated by Dimitrije Bašićević Mangelos in the Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1976. The conservators Mirta Pavić and Tesa Horvatiček, as well as photographer Ana Opalić prepared 1957’s *Didactic Exhibition* for exhibition and reprinting.

The project team comprised Jasna Jakšić (curator), Mirta Pavić and Tesa Horvatiček (restorer-conservator), Bella Rupena and Ana Bedenko (assistants), Tihana Puc (expert associate), Morana Matković (public relations), Ana Opalić (photographer) and the designer Rafaela Dražić.
“A group of teenagers are moving through the exhibition spaces, archives and basement hallways of the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, always returning to the first Croatian avant-garde painting, *Pafa-ma* by Josip Seissel. Their movements recall the impulsive energy of a playground during recess. The strange game of hide-and-seek that plays out among the modern artworks might also evoke the imagery of high school shootings. The museum is depicted in a sort of hostage situation – the art museum is under siege and this nervous eerie situation plays out playfully in the museum’s permanent collection. Somewhere else, Philip K. Dick’s character Nicolas Brady is being invoked by means of a telepathic stream of hand-held video footage of a secret modern art collection concealed in a bunker in Leningrad. An endless torrent of modern classic artworks, disturbingly exceeding any realistic volume of such productions, bombards his consciousness and ignites a new critical sight. This epiphanic video transmission is relayed to Nicolas Brady via the godlike satellite Valis. In *Target Audience* (Nicholas Brady), the satellite takes the shape of Josip Seissel’s *Pafa-ma* and the solid modernistic formations slowly revolves and turns on its on axis, spinning silently through space. In a playful clash between the expressive movements of the youngsters in the fixed structure of the museum space and the odd potential of new imagined art collections through fiction literature, *Target Audience* (Nicolas Brady) creates a tiny orbit around a modernistic satellite invested in the hidden power relations in the architecture and structure of the (art)museum and the history of the Croatian and international avant-garde art.”
Fokus Grupa

“Stories about Frames”

“Stories about Frames” is a series of interventions throughout the exhibition space realised as a system of labels that adapts to each particular exhibition by ever renewing the content of the respective labels. Texts on the labels focus on the years in which exhibited artworks were created in order to establish links between artworks and selected art institutions from around the world. Instead of revealing the properties of the artworks, new texts point to the material reality of the art institutions, taking us beyond the boundaries of the exhibition space. The project thus creates a parallel history of contemporary art, based on the art institution rather than the artwork.

The basis for “Stories about Frames” is a digital database in development that contains institutions of modern and contemporary art. It includes information such as when and where a given institution was established, and if and what kind of transformations and architectural extensions it underwent, etc. Is it privately or publicly funded? Does it have a collection? How large is the exhibition space?

**Technical info:** Intervention, text-based, labels

**Dimensions:** variable

**Year:** 2015–2016


17 November 2015 – 31 October 2016
“Exhibition Guard” is a performance by Dalibor Martinis first carried out in 1976 in the former Gallery of Contemporary Art, the predecessor of the Museum of Contemporary Art. It was performed as part of the exhibition Confrontation, in which the exhibition curator Dimitrije Bašićević Mangelos, along with works from the contemporary art collection and the Benko Horvat Collection, showed copies and reproductions of articles about art on an equal footing with original pieces of art. The innovativeness of Mangelos’ curatorial concept lied not only in the act of bringing original works of art and copies, or documents, face to face, but in his design of confronting works of modern art with works from the past. At the invitation of the curator, who wanted to prove that “only the actual relationship of the public to actual art production demonstrates the real social role of art”, Dalibor Martinis decided to – for a second time, and 40 years later – become the exhibition guard. So he arrived at the Gallery wearing a uniform, cap, and an arm-band labelled “Guard”, and guarded the works of art by standing alternately in front of the works by modern artists, then in front copies of Renaissance or Baroque paintings. In her essay “Postmodernism’s Museum without Walls”, Rosalind E. Krauss states that the easel painting (to be more accurate, the oil painting) became the central axis around which the taste of 19th century European museums was formed, a museological dictate that stubbornly refused to champion any other models for presenting works of art. By dividing his time in an easy-natured way between works of varying value, Martinis emphasised the institutional value of certain works, specifically those by Vasarely and Knifer when bearing in mind the fact that it is usually the most valuable museum pieces that are watched over by a guard, who ensures discreetly that a safe distance is maintained between the works and the visitors. However, Martinis’ performance gesture was not discreet. Nor was it invisible. In fact, he stood or sat in front of particular works, deliberately blocking the visitors’ view of works whose value he wanted to affirm. Through
this unexpected, witty behaviour, Martinis made visitors shed their fixed ideas about works of art being artefacts with artistic values determined by the actual institutions or curators that exhibit them.”

Leila Topić

Public interview with Dalibor Martinis: Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, permanent collection, 2nd floor, 17 November 2015

Pilvi Takala
“Bait”

Pilvi Takala adapted a performance given in New York in 2015 for the Zagreb event. Whilst posing as guests, a group of actors intercepted visitors at the opening of a Boris Bućan exhibition and tried to persuade them that they had already met somewhere, and had been helped by them in some way. Towards the end of the exchange a strange detail would be implanted into the conversation, in order to arouse suspicion. The ‘red herring’ consisted of a circumstance so specific the subject was more likely to be thrown off. This guided them towards a position where they were able to choose whether or not the initial tale was flattering enough for them to overlook the more dubious elements. By using only positive false memories, Takala enabled an atmosphere in which the truth of the situation mattered less than way the situation framed the subject. The social context directly encouraged a more flexible self-image and the possibility to remodel oneself through the eyes of another.

The final part of the performance was a conversation between the artist and members of the public who had interacted with the actors and agreed to discuss how they had experienced the performance and whether or not they took the bait.

Performance: an opening of the exhibition Boris Bućan Breakfast at Printers, 14 April 2016

Performers: Petar Cvirn, Nikša Marinović, Mario Kovač, Nikolina Ljuboja, Nadja Josimović
Conservation and Exhibition of Didactic Exhibition: Abstract Art I

The Didactic Exhibition, a historical, pioneering educational project produced by the former Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1957, and designed as a travelling exhibition, was intended to educate the public about contemporary, abstract art. Even as a supporting exhibition consisting of 92 panels on which photographs and reproductions from books and magazines told the story of the emergence of abstract art, from Paul Cezanne to 1957, in its very conception, the exhibition stepped outside the format of museum education. The reason (or excuse) for its realisation was an exhibition of serigraphs by members of the Parisian Espace group – Edgard Pillet, Victor Vasarely and André Bloc – proposed to the Gallery of Contemporary Art by the critic Josip De- polo. It was probably the most visited exhibition of contemporary art in what was then Yugoslavia; after Zagreb, it went to the Gallery of Fine Arts in Rijeka, then continued its journey through Sisak, Belgrade, Skopje, Novi Sad, Bečej, Karlovac, Maribor, Sremska Mitrovica, Osijek, Bjelovar and Ljubljana, where it was hosted in the Modern Gallery in 1966. It was exhibited again in Zagreb at the Youth Club in 1961, and in the Yugoslav National Army Hall in 1967, as Abstract Art II: Didactic Exhibition.

As it travelled from Zagreb, via Skopje and Maribor, to Ljubljana, the Didactic Exhibition created a public for art which, in fact, promoted the Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art. Seen from today’s perspective, through the actual selection of canonical works of art from the first half of the twentieth century, the exhibition raised the issue of the political and cultural significance of the concept of modernity in the area of art, and of the relationship between originals and copies and the right to distribute copies, and inevitably, addressed the policies of establishing a canon and a story in the history of art. Its undisguised bias places it in the valuable category of a witness to the yearning to build up the institution and its public. Finally, the educational aid, which can be seen as a special “collage” and a narrative about art continuing on the base that had already been extended in the actual didactic course, perhaps points to the origin of artistic and social utopias.

Jasna Jakšić, exhibition curator
In considering the conservation methodology required for the panels of the *Didactic Exhibition* made in 1957, it was clear that the approach should follow the idea of a group of authors, respected theoreticians and artists, and be carried out in accordance with the object's meaning. These reproductions aimed to provide guidelines and bring modern and contemporary art, architecture and design closer to the average visitor in a systematic, understandable and accessible way. In terms of the original intention, the contents had no value as artefacts, so there was no need to assume a “fetishist” conservation approach.

In the conservation procedure, there were two main tasks: apart from the intervention itself, we needed to master the complicated task of reviewing the exhibiting options and selecting the appropriate one, then working out how to create a presentation worthy of the *Didactic Exhibition* in technical terms. A paper structure, like any paper construction, is a particularly sensitive medium, upon which it is quite difficult to implement and satisfy one of the basic principles of conservation – reversibility. The didactic panels, over their 59 years of life, had been through many different environments and conditions, and showed visible changes, primarily on cardboard background, which was known to be of poor quality in terms of durability and stability. This kind of material could only survive in ideal microclimatic conditions.

All the damage was repaired using standard conservation procedures, such as dry cleaning using conservation erasers and rubber powder, inserting a layer of Japanese tissue paper and pH neutral industrial starch glue, Eukalin BKL, along with retouching using wood watercolours. However, what aroused the greatest debate in the decision-making process was how to exhibit the panels so that both the aesthetics and protection of the fragile material would be achieved satisfactorily. Through studying the photographic documentation of the *Didactic Exhibition*, we discovered that the auxiliary system used for years in the exhibition was added later, and that the 92 panels originally shown in April 1957 were placed between two sheets of glass, at the first *Didactic Exhibition: Abstract Art*, in the City Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb’s Upper Town.

The *Didactic Exhibition* still has some minor shortcomings, such as yellow lignin stains, a component of paper, which has surfaced on the cardboard or made tiny wrinkles in the collage as a result of the moistness of the original glue. These traces are evidence of the age of the panels. However, as a result of our conservation approach and equipment, the exhibition is now protected from undesirable external influences, and aesthetically is as faithful as possi-
ble to the original 1957 presentation, thanks to an advanced aspect of museum care in accordance with the times, possibilities and circumstances.

Mirta Pavić, senior conservator

*Didactic Exhibition* on display:
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 20 April – 15 May

Jasmina Cibic

**Hope (Nada)**

The central element of project Nada is Richter’s first, but unrealized design for the Yugoslav Pavilion at the 1958 EXPO in Brussels. Cibic appropriates and recreates the pavilion as a sculpture, which in turn functions as the skeleton of her new short film, around which the exhibition is centered.

In the single-channel video installation, violinist Dejana Sekulić continually tunes the architecture according to the Miraculous Mandarin, a musical composition for ballet by Béla Bartók, which was chosen to represent Yugoslavia at the most important dates of the pavilion – its National Days – and whose role was to maximise the attention and the number of visitors. The fact that the Yugoslav state chose the Bartók ballet as its representative moment is in itself intriguing since the ballet had been repeatedly banned by numerous political systems due to its explicit subject matter – the conflict between a prostitute and her pimp and clients.

Alongside the single-channel video installation, shown in the Richter Collection, Jasmina Cibic’s installation also presents a series of collages. They take the form of a study for costume design and scenography for the second act of Nada, which will present a recreation of the original 1958 Mandarin ballet performance in the Yugoslav Pavilion at the Brussels EXPO. The series presents
portraits of a dancer wearing recreated costumes whilst re-enacting poses drawn from art-historical representations of various female Nation State allegories. Through these allegorical representations, the work alludes to the psychological mechanisms that power structures utilise throughout their conception and maintenance of their spectacle.

Jasmina Cibic’s work is site- and context-specific, performative in nature and employs a range of activity, media and theatrical tactics to redefine or reconsider an existent environment and its politics. Cibic is especially focused on analysing how art and architecture can serve as soft power strategies securing the construction and maintenance of the patriarchal spectacle of State.

The Nada Kareš Richter and Vjenceslav Richter Collection, 2 June – 17 September 2016

Karol Radziszewski

Queer Archives Institute, Zagreb

In his work, artist Karol Radziszewski aims to retrieve the discarded, neglected and minor narrative froms of the dominant discourse of art history, accessing stories that have been considered less important or offensive, such as female art, queer art and sexuality. During his residency in Zagreb, Radziszewski engaged not only with certain parts of the MSU collection, but also with historical events and characters, which of course contributed to the inclusion of parts of the untold history of LGBT culture and the history in which institutional and non-institutional art history intersect. Radziszewski will present his research and activities of the Institute in a pop-up intervention and temporary office next to the permanent collection of the Museum.

October 2016
01 Nicholas Brady (Target Audience), 2016, HD Video, 12’13”, still from video 8

02 Fokus grupa, Stories about Frames, MSU permanent collection, 2015/16, photo Elvis Krstulovic, Iva Kovac
Didactic Exhibition, 1957
Jasmina Cibic: Hope, exhibition view, Richer Collection, Zagreb, June/September 2016, photo Ana Opalic

Nicholas Brady (Target Audience), 2016, HD Video, 12’13”, still from video 8
Performing the Museum project

Muzej v gibanju (Performing the Museum)

The exhibition Muzej v gibanju (23 October 2015 – 13 March 2016) was focused on the exploration of the rich and politically controversial past of the Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti - KGLU (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška). The idea was to research the potentialities of this past in relation to the present situation of the museum, to open up topics engaging with the political situation and context of the museum in the time of Yugoslavia while at the same time keeping in mind its utopian-progressive and pragmatic-utilitarian layers.

The method of working was based on research into the institution’s archives and museum’s collection and exchange between the interpreters and the participating staff from the KGLU side. The result of the research was four works, produced by Nika Autor, Vadim Fishkin, Tadej Pogačar and Isa Rosenberger, a collection exhibition Collection Reversed: Transfer, Transformation and Ruptures. Henry Moore Comes Back by Barbara Steiner and Anna Lena von Helldorff and a workshop that resulted in an installation by the ŠKART collective. Each of the interpreters was given the free choice to engage with any given topic from the institution’s past and also its present. The choice of the interpreters was based on their different approaches towards the material and their different working methods. Consequently, the exhibition was conceptualised as a kaleidoscope of positions revealing different facets and potentialities of the museum, and its vulnerabilities and weaknesses as well.

The team of Performing the Museum at the Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti includes Andreja Hribernik (curator), Katarina Hergold Germ (documentation and collection research), Monika Žvikart (coordinator) and Nina Popič (educational programmes).
In 1966, youth work brigades, the lottery fund, support of the broader local community and the construction giant Vegrad, now bankrupt, produced 2,000 m² of exhibition space in 50 days. The opening ceremony that followed was held under the auspices of the United Nations, of which the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was a founding member. It being the round 20th year anniversary of the end of the war, and yet also being (what would prove to be) a good 20 years away from the creation of the Declaration of Human Rights, this set the context of the exhibition entitled Peace, Humanity and Friendship among Nations. The Yugoslav embassy in Damascus provided four works that were not preserved in the collection but sold. Price: $15 and $25. Titles: Family and Worker. What was that picture then, and what picture can we imagine now, almost half a century after the exhibition – when Yugoslavia has been erased from the map, and Syria is now, at this very moment, being erased, as well? First prize was awarded to a Swedish artist whose work War not only reflected past history but also talked about an unthinkable threat in the future.

Newsreel 62 juxtaposes these seemingly unrelated time fragments from the past and the present in a world that increasingly resembles “worldlessness”.

**Source material / Thanks to:**
- Ervin Kralj, documentary footage of the construction of KGLU, super 8, 1966
- Archives of RTV Slovenia, Mir, humanost in prijateljstvo, 24 October 1967
- Archives of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška
- Uroš Abram, Night Watch, 2015
- Bertolt Brecht, On Cities, “To Those Born Later”, translated by Ervin Fritz
- Translation of archives: Marko Bratina

**Thanks for the help, encouragement and alliance with the images:**
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Andreja Hribenik, Marko Košan, Marko Bratina, Ciril Oberstar and Jurij Meden

Nika Autor
Vadim Fiškin

**Museum’s Fall**

*Tree leaves, electromechanical system, 2015*

By his poetic work “Museum’s Fall”, Vadim Fishkin opens many fields of reflection. The starting point is the Peace Park at Štihuh, which contains eight sculptures, most of which were presented to Slovenj Gradec by former Yugoslav republics. Leaves were gathered for the installation in the park, where 88 trees and plants in memory of Tito were planted in 1983. The title of the work also opens up a speculative field about the future of museums while innocently pointing out the current season at the time of the exhibition.

Andreja Hribernik

Tadej Pogačar

**People and Images**

*Installation, 2015*

The historians of the new history teach us that we can understand a historical event only by taking into consideration its “forerunners”. The opening of the art gallery in Slovenj Gradec was just such an event: a case of courage, vision and the successful mobilisation of a broad audience, together with a utopian impulse from among a group of individuals with a common agenda. The installation “People and Images” is a tribute to this event. It presents the institution, people, materials and objects as actors in a social network, which is both material and semiotic at the same time.

An influential ideologue of the recent past wrote: “No one can give happiness to a human being. Not the system, nor the state, nor patia. One can only create happiness on one’s own.”
Is not the finest manifestation of this truth in the organisation of goods and money the lottery ticket of the Lottery Committee of the Art Pavilion in Slovenj Gradec?

Tadej Pogačar

Isa Rosenberger

**PEACE, HUMANITY AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG NATIONS**

*2-channel film, 2012/15*

The film *Peace, Humanity and Friendship among Nations* takes its name from the title of the international exhibition of 1966, and moreover, taking not only the title but also the utopian disposition of the exhibition as a starting point from which to begin a reflection on a possible re-evaluation of these same ideals today.

In the middle of the 2-channel film is an interview from 2012 with the founder of the gallery, Karel Pečko, then 92 years old. The film also includes some words from the gallery’s present director Andreja Hribnik as well as from her predecessor Marko Košan.

The film installation focuses on the Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti as a (both real and imaginary) space of memory and remembrance and connects questions of personal and public engagement with the actual history of the Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti, the Carinthian border and the history of Yugoslavia.

Can we actualise the ideals that drove the exhibition of 1966, keeping in mind the number of conflicts and wars, together with growing inequality, occurring today?

The film takes its formal, central motif from the cover of the *Peace, Humanity and Friendship among Nations* exhibition catalogue, with the image of serigraph CTA-102 by Victor Vasarely, which is part of the museum’s collection today. This serigraph is also an inspiration for a graphic edition that will transform the film back into paper form. Together with a copy of the film, one exam-
ple of the edition will be donated to the gallery, reflecting, on the one hand, the way in which the collection was formed and, on the other, the fact that graphic works are the dominating format of the works in the international collection.

Isa Rosenberger

Barbara Steiner, Anna Lena von Helldorff

Collection Reversed – Transfer, Transformation and Ruptures: Henry Moore Comes Back

Collection exhibition

The Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti has held a total of four international exhibitions, all of which followed the leading agenda of the United Nations which was founded on 24 October 1945: peace-making and international understanding. In connection with these exhibitions, in 1966/67, 1975, 1979 and 1985, many artists from all over the world made donations to the collection.

Our contribution looks not only into the four international exhibitions organised under the patronage of the UN, but also into the shifts in their agendas. This is read in parallel with the transformations of the works over the time they have been in the collection, in terms of the status they enjoy, what they mean, and the way they are presented. Exemplary cases show to what extent the perception of works is defined by their context. Within the frame of “Collection Reversed...”, we present “Henry Moore Comes Back”. This exhibition pays tribute to Henry Moore, who was a referential figure in the museum’s programme up until the 1970s. Despite the fact that his work was extensively shown at Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti, the collection does not contain a single piece by the artist today. For this special occasion of our exhibition, two sculptures and four works on paper by Henry Moore were temporarily housed in Slovenj Gradec.

Barbara Steiner, Anna Lena von Helldorff
ŠKART Kolektiva (Dragan Protić and Djordje Balmazović):

**Moment of Mistake**

*Documentation of the workshops for adults, 2015*

In August 2015, the ŠKART collective (Dragan Protić and Djordje Balmazović) held a special workshop for adults that focused on works from the collection. Among the suggested works, the participants chose two: *The Groom* by Borivoj Maksimović and *In the Tavern* by Anton Repnik. With reference to the selected works, they developed parallel stories, thinking about the possible variations of how the work would look if it were done before or after the actual moment the author conceived of or created the work. They expressed their findings in a variety of media.

Nina Popič
01 Nika Autor / Obzorniška Fronta: OF, Newsreel 62
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, 2015

02 Vadim Fiškin, Museum’s Fall
Tree leaves, electromechanical system, 2015
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, 2015

03 Tadej Pogačar, People and Images
Installation, 2015
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, 2015
04 Isa Rosenberger: *Peace, Humanity And Friendship Among Nations*
2-channel film, 2012/15
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, 2015

05 Barbara Steiner and Anna Lena von Helldorff, *Collection Reversed – Transfer, Transformation and Ruptures: Henry Moore Comes Back*
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, 2015

06 ŠKART Kolektiva (Dragan Protić and Djordje Balmazović), *Moment of Mistake*
workshop, 24 – 28 8 2015
photo: KGLU
Appendix I
Performing the Exhibition: ART-ACT-BOX

The basic definition of an exhibition is a “form of presentation (show, display) of a work of art in a gallery or museum space.”¹ In the normal order of things, visitors enter the exhibition space after the exhibition is set up, to observe the exhibited works of art. The exhibition is created before the audience arrives,² and its form, course and duration generally do not depend on their presence or absence.

In Andreja Kulunčić’s art project Performing the Exhibition: ART-ACT-BOX, each of these assumptions is overridden. The exhibition space is not found in an art institution, the audience does not ‘enter’ the space, but rather the space where they already are is ‘transformed’ into the exhibition space, and without them the exhibition itself does not exist. The exhibition is not set up in advance, but performed live with the audience. The performer, a contemporary dance artist, using the ART-ACT-BOX object, containing collapsible props, “assembles” the exhibition with the audience. Taking the discursive workshop format, the exhibition develops from a static to a dynamic, collaborative event, while the audience ceases to merely observe and becomes an active participant.

As in other projects, Andreja Kulunčić³ begins the overall process of realising an artistic project with research, in this case, into documentation of works of

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¹ Miško Šuvaković, 1999, Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950, Beograd – Novi Sad: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti Prometej, p. 132. Contemporary artistic and curatorial practice, naturally, continually tests the many spaces outside art institutions.

² Among well known examples of audience participation in the process of creating an exhibition is certainly do ti by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Hans Ulrich Obrist 2011, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating,* Berlin: Sternberg Press.

art held in the archives of the four museums which have come together for the Performing the Museum project: the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Antonio Tàpies Foundation in Barcelona, the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina in Novi Sad, and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška. From this research, the concept for the performance and the ART-ACT-BOX itself has arisen, the contents of which are based on the methods, materials and techniques used in works of art by the Group TOK, the Group of Six Authors, Pino Poggi, the Group KÔD, Bogdanka Poznanović, the Group Bosch+Bosch, the Group Art&Language, and Lygia Clark. These individual artists and groups are linked by the practice which was known as ‘New Art’ in the years of its inception – the 1960s and 1970s. The artists introduced non-art materials into the sphere of art, experimented with new media, tested out unconventional methods of exhibiting works of arts, addressed a random public, often in non-artistic spaces, paying greater attention to the process of how a work of art is created than the objects themselves, and establishing communication at the centre of their interest. Questioning critically the sociopolitical context around them, they aimed through their activities at social transformation, in which each individual could be involved by activating their own creative potential.

By yielding her voice to the performer (a dance artist), Andreja Kulunčić creates a situation in which the chosen artistic practice is made visible and accessible to the public. Through predeveloped choreography, the performer uses movement (gestures) and words (dialogue, readings, statements, recorded material) and the components of the ART-ACT-BOX to give instructions to the audience and involve them in the process of creating the exhibition. At the same time, the actual process can be identified with the desired artistic product. It depends primarily on trust, cooperation and communication between the

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4 The group was active in Zagreb from 1972 to 1973, and its members were Vladimir Gudac, Dubravko Budić, Davor Lončarić, Ivan Šimunović, Gustav Zechel i Darko Zubičević.

5 The group’s members were Boris Demur, Željko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Mladen Stilinović, Sven Stilinović i Fedor Vučemilović. It was active in Zagreb from 1975 to 1981.

6 The group was active in Novi Sad from 1970 to 1971 and its members were Slavko Bogdano-vić, Janez Kocjančič (to July 1970), Miroslav Mandić, Mirko Radojičić, Slobodan Tišma, Peđa Vranešević (from December 1970) and Branko Andrić, who left when the group was founded. Also associated with it were Kiš-Jovak Perenc, Božidar Mandić and Dušan Bjelić.


Performing the Museum project
performer and participants, and between the participants themselves. In the
space-time event through which the dance artist guides them, they develop
gradually from mute recipients, through trying out new creative tools, into ac-
tive performers. By using artistic materials, they perform works which encom-
pass the segments of the space (private body space, public city space, and wid-
er natural space) the sociopolitical context (the city, the state, the world) and
the effects (interaction, communication, contact) desired by the selected art-
ists. As the performance progresses, the ART-ACT-BOX is emptied, and the art
materials used disappear, becoming part of the discarded object. So each work
of art is transferred live into the present. From the visual documents – mostly
black-and-white photographs on which often considerably complex actions are
reduced – gestures return to space and time. Documentation is performed, not
with the aim of recreating the actual work of art,9 but rather activating a total-
ity of interaction which the work has the potential to instigate. In this kind of
interactive realisation, the active inclusion of the audience is needed and with-
out it, the exhibition would be impossible. By liberating the knowledge of art
locked away in institutional reserves, and transferring it outside conventional
institutional spaces and utterance, through new combinations of recognisable
presentation and educational forms, the artist discreetly conveys it, thus open-
ing up a space for creative (co)operation.

During the performance, materials and methods from works of art from the
following collections, archives and documentation were used:
1. Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb
2. Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad
3. Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona
4. Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Slovenj Gradec

Within the dance choreography, methods from the following performances
were used:
1. “Movement I Think Revolution”, authors and performers: Sonja Pregrad,
   Zrinka Šimić Mihanović, Zrinka Užbinec, produced by Improspekcija.
   Banič Naumovski, Ana Kreitmeyer, Nikolina Pristaš, Zrinka Šimić
   Mihanović, Zrinka Užbinec.

**Project production:**

Author: Andreja Kulunčić  
Choreography: Zrinka Užbinec  
Performers: Zrinka Užbinec, Ana Kreitmeyer, Maja Kalafatić and Mar Medina  
Curator and project coordinator: Jasna Jakšić  
Research coordinator: Tihana Puc  
Assistant: Bella Rupena  
Research: Tihana Puc, Bella Rupena  
Design: Ruta  
Text: Tihana Puc  
Proofreading (Croatian): Morana Matković, Jadranka Pintarić  
English translation: Janet Berković  
Slovenian translation: Marjana Mirković  
Video: Nera Miočić, Ivo Martinović  
Video editing: Nera Miočić  
Production: Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb and MAPA  
Partners: Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Slovenj Gradec; Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona

**Zagreb 2015 / 2016**

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ART-ACT-BOX is an educational project and is performed exclusively outside museums and galleries. The materials are used solely for educational, non-commercial purposes.
Appendix II
The Interventionist Wager: Pilvi Takala and the construction of ‘Our Desire’

I met Pilvi Takala on a luminous day trip to Fire Island last summer; she subsequently invites me to attend her public art project on Governor’s Island the following Tuesday for Visitors, a group exhibition held on the Island from June 20 to September 27 of 2015.

I travel to the southern tip of Manhattan for the 10-minute ferry ride to the Island in the late afternoon, dodging commuters, and waiting for my friend who was late. As I wait I pore over the splashy advertising fold and map for the Visitors project, whose friendly graphic design belies the dystopian Sci-Fi contents, which reconfigure the Island as a kind of ruin dotted with archaeological sites about urban alienation -- including Takala’s piece, Invisible Friend, where visitors to the Island are invited to ‘continue the conversation’ by texting a number provided by Takala. Mock-intimate dialogues with this ‘invisible friend’ fill four pages in the catalogue.

The glimmering Emirates-like skyline of lower Manhattan squats mute across from the high society promenade walk of the opening, where Pilvi is evasive:

“Where’s your piece?” we ask.

Takala gestures off into the distance vaguely, in a perfect dodge to the piece’s content. The mystery established here has its perfect backdrop -- Castle William, with display kiosks describing the colonial history of the territory.

“Prison? Barracks? What’s the difference?” I had offered Husni-Bey before.

We’re both a little drunk on white wine. We navigate the jazz band and the concession table to a group of also-delirious friends.
As we enter the structure of Castle William, I hear a stranger call out my name. 

‘Brian!’.

This person then begins to recount a narrative in which I had helped him fix his bike chain, a narrative which I struggle to remember.

From personal experience the effect itself is radically disorienting: Thomas’ (this boy that had supposedly met me) insertion of surprising anecdotal detail -- McCarren Park for instance, where I live; the spontaneous inclusion of a detail about a conversation about Irish family crests (mine, which has hung in my family’s living room for decades, reads ‘Celeriter’, Latin, for ‘swiftly’, a family icon that I was all too enthusiastic to share with Thomas). How could he know all of this? A guess? The insertion of these anecdotal details produced a desire to ‘play along’ (or maybe remain in a space of radical confusion) even as I resisted the ‘not remembering’ of the particular moment of my own supposed altruism.

Artist Adelita Husni-Bey, whose own work explores the possibilities of radical political collectivity within pedagogical sites such as high schools and community outreach wings of cultural institutions, was also present, and the lure of impressing a ‘new friend’ in public like this was too strong. I can pride myself (maybe) on the fact that I didn’t ‘give up the goods’ and fall into the false recognition of this public display of my supposed (and inwardly believed) generosity, but the fact was closer to one of delirium, or swoon -- I wanted to.

Let’s call it parallax. Or, following Melanie Klein, ‘projective identification’ (more on this later).

Whereas in Takala’s earlier pieces (Easy Rider from 2006, and The Messengers from 2008) the public performance of altruism is staged as an intervention to test or ‘hack’ the social equilibrium and rules of consensual conduct within a particular environment, the piece on Governor’s moves more directly to see how a narrative of altruism can be used to investigate the uneasy space of parallax involved in both our needs for recognition and in the construction of what Takala calls ‘our desire’.
How does this effect memory?

In August of 1974, in a public square in Berlin, Valie Export’s Touch Cinema reflected a certain anxiety and fascination that the artist was staging about the presence of a woman in public space; naked underneath a box, Export offered herself and her body to passersby while retaining a certain passivity. The offering as it were contains an element of both generosity -- public generosity in offering one’s body to the other -- and a kind of violent exposure as it were of the distortions that patriarchy produces in desire, both men and woman. The public staging of this, needless to say, is always political.

Roughly contemporaneous (‘72–’73), Adrian Piper’s Catalysis series sees Piper testing the boundaries of public space as well -- riding on the NYC subway with a towel in her mouth, covering her body with eggs, oil, liver and walking into Macy’s, walking down Broadway in a t-shirt emblazoned ‘wet paint’.

Whereas artists like Export and Piper, and later Andrea Fraser, staged ‘confrontational’ performance pieces Takala’s work investigates more ‘innocuous’ or altruistic forms of intervention in semi-public spaces.

Spaces such as the Deloitte office in Helsinki; the entrance of the Euro-Disney resort in the ‘new-town’ of Marne-la-Vallee outside of Paris; Governor’s Island; a public tram in Amsterdam; a mall store in Amsterdam; or, in its immaterial iteration, the mediasphere of Croatian tabloids.

In Croatia, Takala staged public phone-ins to the tabloid Story, with callers reporting incidents of Vlatka Pokos ‘actually being quite nice’ -- returning a phone to a passer-by who dropped it, etc., stretching a story published in the magazine reporting an incident in which Pokos helped push a car in high heels. This piece of ‘anti’- (or ‘counter’-) journalism (maybe the closest of her works to a form of ‘hacking’) recodes the dominant sensationalist media narrative.

The public performance of generosity -- what becomes explicit in the piece ‘The Angels’ from 2008, where Takala awkwardly performs gestures of public generosity for (or on?) mall-goers in Amsterdam -- is slyly coded as ‘what we can get away with’ in a public space saturated with surveillance or with the repressive tolerance of corporate and capitalist decorum and wild capitalist fantasy; even so far as to imply that ‘random acts of kindness’ might be the only way to productively alter -- we could even say ‘hack’ -- the social.
In Easy Rider from 2008, the site is an elevated tram line in Amsterdam. Perfectly segregated distances of safety and ennui. Within this, a spontaneous form of generosity and public altruism breaks the skin, if only for a few minutes: commuters react in bemused surprise to a situation -- a young man asking to borrow a computer for a presentation, and then a comb, and then a jacket -- in which their standard defensive posture is suddenly and radically destabilized. What is this disorientation? As if the regime of capitalism is momentarily hacked, stirring up primal forces.

In The Trainee from 2008, the transgressive frisson produced by Takala’s coy refusal to engage in forms of post-Fordist performativity lends the piece its strong comedic charge: asked what she is doing at her desk staring off distractedly into space she mutters that she is engaging in ‘brainwork’; when asked what she is doing riding up on down on the elevator she responds that “she always liked her thoughts on trains” and that “the motion produces new thoughts”. Takala, recorded remotely by Chinese spy cameras, gives the perfect ‘performance’ as the idiot-savant Bartleby, or what the Japanese call Hikikomori (literally ‘pulled inward, being confined’) -- modern-day recluses who constitute their desire through an utter refusal to participate in society’s norms. Here, ‘ironically’ enough, the space of confinement is the public sphere.

Vito Acconci’s piece Theme Song from 1973, where the artist sprawls on the floor of an apartment and literally ‘seduces’ a camera -- or the imagined viewer of the projected image -- playing pop songs in an elaborate and highly sexualized come-on... With exhortations to ‘wrap yourself around my body’, (‘wrap my body around the camera’). The persistence and aggression of Acconci’s seduction -- let’s call it the durational aspect -- is what gives the piece its force. That he engages you in the very space where projection (his? Yours?) is constituted is very similar to the ‘material’ that Takala is using for her stagings of public altruism. Whereas Acconci ironized this, there is a certain element of innocence to Takala’s intervention, within the irony.

Not to mention that we are talking about Williamsburg (where Thomas’ narrative took place), the medieval village of (‘capital-A’) Alienation, like Patrick Macgee’s Village from the landmark science fiction series The Prisoner, where
the surveillance bubble rises up out the pavement to claim you if you try to escape, in to the ocean, off the island, away from the Village. An act (or narrative) of random altruism here -- maybe in a spontaneous samaritan-like gesture of radical urban openness, helping a random dude fix his bike chain -- would only serve to break the monotonous hum of the contemporary urban ambient of restless alienation -- in other words, it is something I want to happen. Not to mention that the recording is “staged” as it were in what was once a barracks and a prison on Governor’s Island (Castle William): the glimmering Emirates-like skyline of lower Manhattan and the high society promenade walk of the opening where Pilvi is evasive:

“Where’s your piece?” we ask.

Takala gestures off into the distance vaguely, in a perfect dodge to the content of the piece. The mystery established here has its perfect backdrop, with display kiosks describing the colonial history of the territory.

“Prison? Barracks? What’s the difference?” I had offered Husni-Bey before.

We’re both a little drunk on white wine. We navigate the jazz band and the concession table to a group of also-delirious friends.

‘Mirror Stage’

Lacan suggested that the structure of the human psyche is entirely changeable through a certain modality of transference, or projection: the ‘other’, as whole-object modelled after the mother’s embracing breast, symbolizes the integration of heterogeneous or fragmented parts of the psyche into a single coherent unity. ‘Our desire’. He calls it ‘the mirror stage’: i.e. developmental energies are routed through our image (imago) of the Other, as a source of potential satisfaction, as an anchor through which we achieve a feeling of ‘wholeness’ or psychic integration; he emphasizes that this malleability also results in a distinct tendency for emulation (or we could even say imitation) in the developmental phase of the organism, i.e. a kind of projective ‘mirroring’.
We live through the other -- as a source [site?] of phantasmic projection (transferential desire).

The public performance of a certain kind of altruism ‘outs’ this. (In a certain way Takala is working with a kind of ‘trans-space’.)

The transference of ‘our desire’ becomes -- for her and for us -- a site of possibility.

In Takala’s the Real Snow White [2009], this question is posed in a more elaborate version of the desert of the real, France’s Euro-Disney complex in Marne-la-Vallee, the projection of ‘our desire’ here might be through the spectacularized simulations of capitalist fantasy set within a banal hygienic corporate park landscape. The projection of desire onto the ‘real snow white’ -- where Takala is dressed in perfect quoffed simulation itself, and eager children surround her.

Snow White is perfect cipher for this, i.e. consumerist icons as being screens for this projection of desire (which is a standard critique of capitalism).

The children in Franco-Disneyland are alienated in this way, exuberance for an icon of purity (and realness) like Snow White offers the same ironic frisson: Takala is the perfect Snow White, by the way, gentle, radiant, so the “Real Snow White” question becomes infinitely entangled in the simulation: the children’s desire is perfectly metamorphic, in a way, not far from Lacan’s ruminations on simulated fantasy. They quiver with it.

As Adelita and I walk away from the encounter with Thomas, I am stunned and a little drunk, elated and confused that I could not remember the supposed incident, excited that a random stranger had been so forward in expressing gratitude for ‘our desire’.

“I totally don’t remember that”, I said, as if it mattered.

Adelita had offered during the encounter that “Of course he did. He’s a nice guy.” This confirmation of what I seemingly ‘know’ about myself fueled my confusion even more.
Later we find a children’s jungle gym and discuss J.G. Ballard and our favorite science fiction. We realize that the last ferry is about to leave the Island. Rushing, we miss the commuter ferry and must wait for the final one which takes the Island workers back to Manhattan. A call comes in to Adelita’s cell. It’s Pilvi.

“What did you think?”

She lets on finally -- Thomas was an actor, the remembered encounter a ruse.

A mix of humor, anger, confession, irony, floods me, as if the mystery is finally solved to this moment of ‘Missing Time’. I wonder if Pilvi is aware of the American iconography of ‘Missing Time’ as a form of alien abduction. Not so alien I think, or even more closely, human desire itself is radically alien, full of mechanics we can’t always fathom, and whose forces Takala has just artfully manipulated.

Pilvi Takala, performance
(photos Borko Vukosav, Filip Beusan, Martina Kenji)
Appendix III

Diagram by Pep Vidal tracing the relationship between the three initiatives discussed in this text: *Open Source Prototypes, Performing the Museum and How to Do Things with Documents.*
Challenging Museums:

Case studies
Jasna Jakšić

Didactic Exhibition

The *Didactic Exhibition*, a historical, pioneering educational project produced by the former Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1957, and designed as a travelling exhibition, was intended to educate the public about contemporary, abstract art. Even as a supporting exhibition consisting of 92 panels on which photographs and reproductions from books and magazines told the story of the emergence of abstract art, from Paul Cezanne to 1957, in its very conception the exhibition stepped outside the format of museum education. The reason (or excuse) for its realisation was an exhibition of serigraphs by members of the Parisian *Espace* group, Edgard Pillet, Victor Vasarely and André Bloc, proposed to the Gallery of Contemporary Art by critic Josip Depolo. It was probably the most visited exhibition of contemporary art in what was then Yugoslavia; after Zagreb, it went to the Gallery of Fine Arts in Rijeka, then continued its journey through Sisak, Belgrade, Skopje, Novi Sad, Bečej, Karlovac, Maribor, Sremska Mitrovica, Osijek, Bjelovar and Ljubljana, where it was hosted in the Modern Gallery in 1966.¹ It was exhibited again in Zagreb at the Youth Club in 1961, and in the Yugoslav National Army Hall in 1967, as *Abstract Art II: Didactic Exhibition.*²

According to the minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Gallery of Contemporary Art dated 11 January 1957, the proposal was accepted for an exhibition that would represent “a historical commentary of abstraction”, and Josip De-

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¹ http://www.msu.hr/#/hr/pretrazivanje/program/didakti%C4%8Dka+izlo%C5%BEba/ (20/8/2016)

polo and Vjenceslav Richter were charged with producing it. However, at the next board meeting, Frano Baće expressed doubts about the objectivity of their work and was concerned that the exhibition might be used to promote some of the artists' personal leanings. A compromise was achieved by involving art critic Radoslav Putar, who was to translate *Abstract Painting* by Michael Seuphor two years later. Finally, as stated in the catalogue, Ivan Picelj, Radoslav Putar, Tihana Ravlić, Vjenceslav Richter and Neven Šegvić collaborated on the selection and translation of texts and the choice of reproductions for the exhibition set-up, while Vesna Barbić and Edo Kovačević represented the Gallery of Contemporary Art. Ivan Picelj designed the poster, invitation and exhibition catalogue. In an interview with the curatorial team, *What, how and for whom*, he said that he designed the panels, and there are articles and photographs in his archive that were used in their production. In Richter’s archive, on the other hand, no confirmation of his involvement has yet been found. Picelj, Richter and Šegvić were members of the EXAT 51 group that operated from 1951 to 1954. In twentieth-century Croatian art history, EXAT 51 enjoys an almost mythical status; their manifesto, read by the architect Bernardo Bernardi at a plenary meeting of the artists’ association, eradicated the difference between “so-called pure and so-called applied art”, advocating abstract art and bringing it into a mutual relationship with visual communication, and arguing passionately for the synthesis of all art forms and the experimental nature of artistic work. This event is often taken to represent a symbolic departure from the socialist realism doctrine of Yugoslavia. Although it was realised several years after EXAT 51 was disbanded, when the polemical voices had died down, the *Didactic Exhibition* revealed its proximity to both the ideology of EXAT 51 and André Bloc, Edgard Pillet and Victor Vasarely, whose serigraphs represented the *original works* at the exhibition, along with one by Mondriaan from the National Museum in Belgrade, which was shown almost incognito.

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3 In fact, during the preceding years, the Zagreb art scene had been shaken by polemics for and against abstract art, and regarding the nature of abstract art in general. Many artists and critics were involved, including Vjenceslav Richter, then a member of the EXAT 51 Group, and the painter Edo Murtić. See Koščević, Želimir, *Uvod*, in EXAT 51 1951-1956, Zagreb: Galerija Nova 1979, p. 26, and Kolešnik, Ljiljana, *Između istoka i Zapada: hrvatska umjetnosti i likovna kritika 50-ih godina*. Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2006.


5 The group included painters Ivan Picelj, Vlado Kristl, Aleksandar Srnec and Božidar Rašica, and architects Bernardo Bernardi, Neven Šegvić, Zdravko Bregovac, Vladimir Zaharović and Vjenceslav Richter.


7 Ibid, p. 78.
Although the panels seem modest from today’s perspective, particularly if taken individually, the Didactic Exhibition was the most ambitious project in terms of ‘audience development’, as we would say today, in 1950s Yugoslavia, and it was meant to be only the beginning of the Gallery’s educational work. In fact, in early 1957 the Gallery incorporated in its annual plan retrospective, guest and thematic exhibitions, including one didactic exhibition “to clarify theoretically one epoch in the history of art, like a small art encyclopaedia explains the emergence of one form or expression of art.” Apart from Didactic Exhibition: Abstract Art 1, a much less ambitious “small didactic exhibition”, Painting Techniques – Didactic Exhibition, was also produced, accompanied by original works and printed on small pieces of cardboard. Since it did not include any reproductions, it could not have been shown without the original works. However, the didactic aim of modern art to win over and educate its public was often embedded in the works themselves. Thus, in an article by Michael Seuphor that accompanied graphics by Edgard Pillet, the didactic nature of his ideograms is mentioned, which “provide a wonderful instrument for practice”. Bloc was the founder, and Pillet for many years the graphics editor of the journals L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui and Art d’aujourd’hui. The Espace group, whose work was linked to these journals and which brought together many artists and architects, published its manifesto in 1951 on the pages of Art d’aujourd’hui, in which it advocated synthesis in the arts and harmonious development in all human activity. In addition, Denise René’s gallery represented the artists at the exhibition, the same gallery where Picelj, Bakić and Srnec held their Paris exhibition, and which was advertised on the pages of these journals. As the model for EXAT, the Espace group advocated artistic activity in a social context, while the basic medium for such activity, which gathered all kinds of art, was actually represented by architecture. This was evident in examples of public interventions in Biot and Tours, and, as presented in an essay on artistic synthesis in L’art d’aujourd’hui, on the final panels of the Didactic Exhibition that reproduced the cultural centre of the university town of Caracas, a work by Carlos Raul Villanueva, in which artists like Hans Arp, André Bloc, Alexander Calder, Antoine Pevsner, Victor Vasarely, Fernando Léger and others took part. Since some of the participants were also exceptionally

8 Art d’aujourd’hui, vol. 2, no. 8, October 1951.


10 Essai d’intégration des arts au centre culturel de la Cité Universitaire de Caracas, Art d’aujourd’hui, vol. 5, no. 6, September 1954.
active in the historical avant-gardes, this synthesis was not only realised in artistic media, but also in avant-garde tendencies and directions.

As it travelled from Zagreb, via Skopje and Maribor, and concluding in Ljubljana, the Didactic Exhibition created a public for art that in fact promoted the Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art. Seen from today’s perspective, through the actual selection of canonical works of art from the first half of the twentieth century, the exhibition raised the issue of the political and cultural significance of the concept of modernity in the area of art, and of the relationship between originals and copies and the right to distribute copies, and inevitably, addressed the policies of establishing a canon and a story in the history of art. Its undisguised bias makes it a valuable witness to the desire to build up the institution and its public. Finally, the educational aid that can be seen as a special ‘collage’ and a narrative about art continuing on the base that was already extended in the actual didactic course, perhaps points to the origin of artistic and social utopias. Conditionally speaking, this was exactly why Barr’s didactic set-up, which was intended to create “an educated consumer”, prevailed in the context of a post-war European socialist country. In fact, through the reinterpretation by the EXAT 51 group, which was actually formed around the realisation of a pavilion for trade exhibitions in the late 1940s and early 1950s, abstract art gained an emerging context and reception, and via the Didactic Exhibition, as an enlightening project of cultural activism as described by Kolešnik, it gained a convincingly designed means of promotion.

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12 Kolešnik, op. cit. p. 138.
Within the extensive body of diverse materials that demand special technical and ethical care in the conservation of works of modern art, research for this apparently straightforward exhibition, executed in what we might call an ordinary medium, only confirmed its status as comprising works of art that needed to be approached with especial caution within a certain, specific context. Why, when we were simply dealing with cardboard panels, on which appliquéd, cut-out pictures from books and magazines had been stuck using school paper glue, with short captions typed out on a typewriter? Could there be simpler techniques and humbler materials than thin sheets of cardboard and newspaper pictures?

Nonetheless, there are good reasons why this exhibition has aroused expert interest and attention, with the aim of presenting it as part of the Performing the Museum programme. In considering the conservation methodology required for objects made in 1957 (with, we might say, a secondary application – showing reproductions of original masterpieces of modern and contemporary art, kept today as a document that has adopted all the characteristics of an art object over time), it was clear that the approach should follow the idea of a group of authors, respected theoreticians and artists, and be carried out in accordance with the object’s meaning. These reproductions aimed to provide guidelines and bring modern and contemporary art, architecture and design closer to the average visitor in a systematic, understandable and accessible way. In terms of the original intention, the contents had no value as artefacts, so there was no need to assume a ‘fetishist’ conservation approach. However, these same artefacts carry far more significance today than they did when they were first shown, particularly as modern art has gone on to adopt a place in modern life that is hardly negligible. So the conservation approach was logically thought through, just as it would have been in relation to any other item from the museum’s holdings.
Apart from the intervention itself, we needed to master the complicated task of reviewing the exhibiting options and selecting the appropriate one, then working out how to create a presentation worthy of the Didactic Exhibition in technical terms. A paper structure, like any paper construction, is a particularly sensitive medium; and with which it is difficult to implement and satisfy one of the basic principles of conservation – reversibility. The didactic panels, over their whole 59 years, had been through many different environments and conditions, and showed visible changes, primarily on the cheap cardboard background, which was not particularly durable and nor stable. This kind of material could only survive in ideal microclimatic conditions. Apart from deformities in the cardboard, surface soiling and small tears in the paper were also found, while in some places, the collages were coming away from the backing, either because the glue had lost its adhesive qualities, or due to various mechanical forces. All the damage was repaired using standard conservation procedures, such as dry cleaning using conservation erasers and rubber powder, inserting a layer of Japanese tissue paper and pH neutral Eukalin BKL industrial starch glue, and retouching using wood watercolours. However, what aroused the greatest debate in the decision-making process was how to exhibit the panels so that both the aesthetic qualities would come and the fragile material would remain protected. Through studying the photographic documentation of the Didactic Exhibition, we discovered that the auxiliary system used for years in the exhibition was added later, and that the 92 panels originally shown in April 1957 were placed between two sheets of glass, at the First Didactic Exhibition of Abstract Art, in the City Gallery of Modern Art, in Zagreb’s Upper Town. Of course, contemporary museum standards do not allow the glass to come into contact with the works of art, so in implementing our decision to follow the original aesthetics, we had to modify the way the glass was positioned and select special museum glass with UV protection, so that no further, even greater discolouration would develop.

In the meantime, at some point during the long period between the mounting of the first Didactic Exhibition and our review of the didactic cardboard panels (since the plan was to exhibit them in the permanent exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary Art’s new building), thick strips of fabric had been applied to both sides of the upper edges, allowing them to be hung for exhibition purposes. Narrow tabs were inserted into two places in each reinforced upper fabric section, above the actual panel. This meant the didactic panels could simply be hung on nails in the wall, a system that made exhibiting them far easier. But this system, apart from its aesthetic shortcomings, did not adhere to any particular conservation or museum standards, since the sensitive cardboard
came into direct contact with the wall, while the surfaces of the thin collages, already particularly prone to discoloration, fading and undesirable reactions to fluctuating relative humidity and temperature, remained unprotected.

In the first phase, we decided to preserve the state of the panels as we found them, although the fabric was missing from two of them, suggesting that the ‘fabric strengtheners’ had been added later. But we were guided by the decision to retain later interventions, which were probably carried out in the early years following the first exhibition of the didactic panels. So the panels in the permanent exhibition were exhibited by hanging them using fabric strips. This method, however, resulted in visible changes – deformities in the backing panels. At this point, only a segment of the Didactic Exhibition had been shown, so as we prepared the remaining panels as part of the Performing the Museum programme, we had time to analyse the problems and consider a better presentation alternative. While the conservation work was still under way, it was decided that the cardboard needed a non-acidic backing, which raised the question of how to mount such a backing on the backs of the panels in a reversible process. The best solution proved to be magnets, which were fixed to the backs of the panels using Gaylord pH neutral glue, immediately on top of the layer of Japanese tissue paper applied directly to the panel backs using Eukalin. The non-acidic backing was fixed directly onto the wall, then the didactic panels were attached to it by magnets. The strength of the magnets helped correct the earlier deformities in the cardboard panels that we had not been able to correct because of the sensitive collages on their fronts. When the exhibition is dismantled, the panels will simply be detached from the backing and stored. Museum glass with UV protection was placed in front of each panel, on a metal frame, keeping it about a half-centimetre from the face of the panel. In this way, the surface is protected from the influence of light, to which the medium used is particularly sensitive, while at the back, non-acidic foam sheets prevent the absorption of moisture from the wall.

The Didactic Exhibition still has some minor shortcomings, such as yellow lignin stains (a component of paper), which has surfaced on the cardboard or made tiny wrinkles in the collage as a result of the moistness of the original glue. These traces testify to the age of the panels. However, as a result of our conservation approach and equipment, the exhibition is now protected from undesirable external influences; and is as aesthetically faithful as possible to the original 1957 presentation, thanks to advanced museum care applied in accordance with the times, possibilities and circumstances.
The 1960s could arguably be seen as a period of particular heterogeneity and vibrancy in the history of Croatian art, when a host of different actors were particularly active on the cultural scene. Those actors are today seen as key figures in post-war art, and indeed in art in general in this part of the world. That decade, beginning with the appearance of the *New Tendencies* and ending with the *New Artistic Practice*, has served as a constant inspiration to curators, art historians, sociologists and other researchers. The great body of exhibitions, articles, lectures and other presentations have demonstrated that the potential for interpretation and historization is just as heterogeneous as the actual art produced in the 1960s. Regardless of whether the researchers have focussed on individual artistic occurrences, their formal characteristics, comparisons with international events, or even specific socio-political circumstances two institutions in the Zagreb context appeared to have been crucial: the Student Centre, and the Gallery of Contemporary Art (*Galerija suvremene umjetnosti* – GSU), the predecessor of today’s Museum of Modern Art (MSU).

It is the latter institution, the Gallery of Contemporary Art, which represents the focus of our research. The Gallery was founded in 1954; by the early 1960s it was located in Zagreb’s Upper Town, and played a key role as a generator of local artistic production.1 Today, the museum, through the *Per Muse* project, opens up its resources to external associates, with a view to re-examining and reconsidering its own position and heritage. Although it has changed its name and address since the 1960s, the institution still owes a great deal to that peri-

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With this in mind, along with the fact that the decade is a favourite with curators, theoreticians and researchers, we were interested to see whether the Museum’s resources provided in this particular setting could bring about a different perspective – one that would deliberately ignore the usual stances and attempt to provide a basis for the institution’s reflections from a different position.

The archives of Zagreb’s Museum of Contemporary Art, officially known as the Documentation and Information Department, which was established in 1961, seems the obvious place to start our research. Today, the Department consists of five extensive units: the press, photographic, audio and visual libraries, and the expert visual arts archive. The last is subdivided into the exhibition archive, artists’ archive, and personal/donated archive – documents and works gifted to the Museum, directly by artists or through their heirs, by former employees or other relevant actors on the art scene, who considered the institution the appropriate guardian of their legacies. Anyone with an interest in the 1960s will also be drawn to the Ivan Picelj Archive, which was donated to the Museum by the artist’s daughter and heir in 2012, part of which is on show in a separate exhibition room. Documents relating to the New Tendencies found in the exhibition archive, according to the department’s staff, are already the most popular and sought after items.

However, it would impossible to research the MSU archives without taking into account Božo Bek, who became the Director of Zagreb City Galleries and the Head of the Gallery of Modern Art in late 1960, and who established archival work already early the following year. When he left the institution in 1989 (as a museum adviser), he bequeathed his personal collection to the archive he had founded. Systematised in 80 boxes, the personal archive of Božo Bek consists of 62 boxes arranged in alphabetical order by artist, artistic group or exhibition, and 18 boxes of documents on the day-to-day work of the institution, arranged in chronological order, and labelled “General, expert, and accounting documents”. It is this material that we selected as the starting point for this research. The contents are not so much a means of sketching the personality of Božo Bek and articulating his importance and contribution in the decade that

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2 The historical overview on the Museum’s web pages emphasises dates from the 1960s (www.msu.hr, last referenced 29.2.2016), which are also given particular importance in a monograph written to mark its 30th anniversary (see note 1). In addition, during the last few years, the MSU has organised several exhibitions dealing with the period from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s (“Socialism and modernity”, large retrospectives of works by Vojin Bakić and Julije Knifer, and others), while in 2013, the Picelj Archive Exhibition Room was opened, the contents of which are largely related to the 1960s.
overlapped with his term of office (1960–1972), as they are an aid to piecing together a different picture, one that remained hidden ‘between the lines’ in much of the research on the artistic production of the 1960s. Can a background story on the way an institution functioned, at a time when it was determined by the wider political and economic context of socialist Yugoslavia, be brought to the foreground with the help of a personal archive?

In order to sketch some answers, we need to at least map out the basic coordinates of this wider contextual frame. In the 1960s, the economic liberalisation that had started in Yugoslavia in the 1950s intensified. The country joined the GATT world trade organisation in 1958, and signed its first agreements with the IMF, while the first international commercial loans were introduced. The American scientist Diane Flaherty considers 1961 to be a turning-point in the Yugoslav economy, when the orientation towards industrialisation through substitute imports, i.e. the attempt to achieve independent industrial development, changed direction in favour of exports and trade liberalisation, in the hope of reducing the trade deficit. A negative trade balance was the result of strategic macroeconomic decisions during the previous period of strong industrialisation. Industry was given precedence in the allocation of investments, which led to stagnation in agricultural productivity, so that Yugoslavia was forced to import food. This led to the spending of precious foreign currency on food imports, instead of using capital goods in industry to ensure continued growth and higher industrial productivity. The problems in industrial development became evident in 1960, when for the first time in eight years, growth stalled, and in the following years, the rate of industrial production fell, accompanied by instability and rising prices. In order to compensate for the lack of a technology-based rise in productivity, the so-called Revenues Act was passed in 1961, i.e. legal amendments introducing the concept of rewards based on efficiency. The historian Dušan Bilandžić, whose writings contain only covert allusions to the international links mentioned previously, writes about the


Revenues Act as a new way of increasing work productivity. “For the first time since the introduction of workers’ self-management, the amount of personal wages paid from gross income, and the amount earmarked for business funds (accumulation), increasing production, new investments in building up and extending companies were not defined – this became the autonomous right of the work collective.” 5 Although this might seem to be the logical continuation or extension of self-management, it was clear that the effects were problematic, as shown by the fact that 1961 was the last year marking a rise in employment, after which unemployment rose, which ran counter to Yugoslav socialist ideology and became a trend that was most easily remedied by ignoring it. 6

The designated liberalisation that was to be most clearly expressed in the planned social reform of 1964 was a response to the objective difficulties of post-war development, which had set itself the task of the modernisation of a devastated country, undeveloped even before the untold devastation of war. 7 In public discourse, this appeared in the form of a new developmental phase of self-management, in which this key, Yugoslav, post-1948 novelty spread to all social spheres, along with increased decentralisation and a diminished role for the state. As an alternative option, Statism was seen as a relic of rigid, centralised Stalinist bureaucracy, which needed to be abandoned in favour of the full force of “further improvements in the socioeconomic order”. 8 Led by the United Workers’ Union of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia from within, and conditioned from without by international economic relations, the idea of doing away with statism definitely held sway. The back door was thus opened for the introduction of market relations instead of planned, centralised, state economics. It is interesting that the rhetoric advancing a greater degree of self-management and autonomy, in contrast to the federal monopoly over economic policy, in fact functioned as the ideological lubricant to expand market relations. Far from being a radical about face, this transition took place within the socialist framework, yet it set an important course that we need to keep in mind when considering the 1960s, even in the artistic sphere.

How were these processes reflected in artistic production? Apart from applying the Revenues Act to cultural institutions, the Act on Budgets and Fi-

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7 Bilandžić, p. 112.
8 Ibid, p. 242
nancing Independent Institutions was also passed in 1960, a key measure which, under the aegis of democratisation and extending self-management in health, education, culture and science, drew the financing of these sectors closer to the free-market model. While the 1953 Act differentiated between budget-funded institutions (whose entire budgets were part of the People’s Committees’ budget) and independent institutions, which covered all or most of their expenses themselves (from membership fees, ticket sales, etc.), the new Act considered an independent institution to be any such body administered by a social agency. Thus, institutions were given greater administrative independence, but were deprived of direct budgetary financing in favour of raising income from various sources: communal funds, and charging for services through contracting with other institutions and individuals. Imposing a certain degree of commodification and introducing market relations into the field of artistic production, this change did not come about without criticism in socialist Yugoslavia. There is evidence of the debate in documents collected in the Božo Bek Archive as well as in articles and debates published in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the voices of the proponents of these changes are almost the only ones that have come down to us, and we can only discern the critics’ position from them second-hand. From this point of view, opponents of this new financing system understood culture as a privileged social sphere, autonomous even, entitled to occupy a special, unique position in relation to others. Their apparent fear of commercialising art, launching it into market relations and restoring the bourgeois form of culture was interpreted as fear of seeing their own positions eroding, and as a battle over “narrow professional

9 “Neka iskustva u radu samostalnih ustanova u godini 1960.” (Some experiences from the work of independent institutions in 1960), Museum of Modern Art, Božo Bek Archive (hereinafter MSU BBA) file 1, box 1, pp. 2-3.

10 “Preporuka o razmatranju pitanja u vezi s uvođenjem novog načina ostvarivanja i raspodjele dohotka u ustanovama iz oblasti culture” (Recommendation on considering issues relating to the introduction of a new means of creating and allocating revenues in institutions in the sphere of culture), memorandum from the Council for Culture of the People’s District Committee – People’s Municipal Committee, 25.7.1961, MSU BBA file 1, box 1, p. 3.

11 E.g. “Zapisnik Savjeta za kulturu Narodnog odbora grada Zagreba” (Minutes of the Council for Culture of the People’s Committee of the City of Zagreb), 17.1.1961, MSU BBA file 2, box 1, or “Teze za diskusiju o društvenom upravljanju ili samoupravljanju u oblasti culture” (Theses for a discussion on social management or self-management in the area of culture), MSU BBA file 1, box 2.

12 E.g. “Kulturna politika samoupravnog društva i SKJ” (Cultural policies of self-management society and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), ed. Ljubiša Stankov, Komunist, Belgrade 1968, or “Materijalni i društveni uslovi našeg kulturnog razvoja” (Material and social conditions of our cultural development), Deleon, Biljanović and Gardašević, Rad, Belgrade 1963.
Proponents of the change, on the other hand, argued that this was a way of democratising culture, since cultural and artistic institutions would no longer be able to rely on guaranteed financing for their own operations, but would have to strengthen links with the local community, companies, schools and other institutions, as potential sources of funding. It was repeatedly emphasised that the financing of institutions, as it was then, should be replaced by financing programmes, and that Yugoslav culture should be de-institutionalised. The reason for this discourse probably lay at least in part in the existing situation, which according to the protagonists of these debates gave cause for concern, due to its overwhelming passivity and distance from the wider public. However, did the new Independent Institutions Act really bring about changes that could resolve actual problems on the ground, in a way expected in a socialist order, and which would really help to put into practice the much hoped for democratisation of culture?

The Božo Bek Archive is valuable because it provides a possible answer, but of course a multifaceted, complex one, which raises more questions of its own.

We have already noted that the articles available at the time tended to discredit the critics of the new Act in a rather offhand manner, so the picture they provide is oversimplified and one-sided. Here, the Božo Bek Archive is again of use: for example, fresh insights into the opinions of the city’s producers of culture are provided in the minutes of a session held by the Council for Culture of the People’s Committee of the City of Zagreb in January 1961. We discover that Mirjana Gušić of the Ethnographic Museum was expressly opposed to budget contributions, and her institution was already considering alternative means of financing. “All our institutions are capital, capital invested over years, decades, and lives, which needs to be somehow revitalised – and so we are faced with the question: how?” Zdenka Munk, the Director of the Museum of Arts and Crafts, also voiced her doubts, but with less optimism. “We have tried for the past few years, by investing in factory collectives, to give something to these collectives – our work in the form of lectures, and our knowledge. Now we will have to take a new direction; if we go to the factory collectives, we will have to seek material resources in return for this work. Personally, I find this

13 “Resistance that has come from certain groups of cultural workers has often meant the protection of existing positions and relations, class and private interests, since clearly freeing culture from administrative interventions has interfered with the established order of things, including within cultural institutions themselves.” “O nekim obeležjoma idejnih strujanja i previranja u kulturi” (On some noted ideological trends and turmoil in culture), Latinka Perović, in “Kulturna politika samoupravnog društva i SKJ” (Cultural policies of self-management society and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia) ed. Ljubiša Stankov, Komunist, Belgrade 1968, p. 43
direction rather strange and I want to make that clear here. Although in this way I can actually acquire certain material resources and earn something.”

While the available articles written at the time and referenced in this research on the position of culture and art often lack any analysis of the situation on the ground, the Beck archive provides such an opportunity at the level of case studies. Without extending this kind of research to other institutions, we cannot know just how typical this example is, but bearing in mind the role played by the Gallery of Modern Art in the development of artistic production in the 1960s, it is of course important in opening up new perspectives and shedding light on the ways in which this particular institution adapted to the demands of the time. This research is limited to the early 1960s, since the social reforms of 1964 made the situation more complicated, so that towards the end of the decade it was determined by the increasingly obvious failure of the measures introduced and a growing crisis. An elaborated researching of the entire decade would go far beyond the scope of this paper.

The year 1961, the first year of Bek’s term in office, was characterised first of all by one particular administrative change; in June, the City Gallery of Contemporary Art (GGSU) wound up operations and was replaced by the Zagreb City Galleries (GGZ), an institution administrated by a Council of 11 experts. Like the GGSU, it consisted of four units: the Gallery of Contemporary Art (GSU, now the Museum of Contemporary Art, MSU), the Benko Horvat Gallery, the Meštrović Atelier and the Gallery of Naïve Art. In 1961, the GGZ had ten full-time and two part-time employees. Roughly 90% of its expenditure was financed by contributions from the People’s Committee of the City of Zagreb (NOGZ), and some 10% from sales of tickets and catalogues. Božo Bek accepted the dual position of director of the GGZ and curator of the GSU. Since it

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14 “Zapisnik Savjeta za kulturu Narodnog odbora grada Zagreba” (Minutes of the Council for Culture of the People’s Committee of the City of Zagreb, 17.1.1961, MSU BBA file 2, box 1

15 An exception is the useful, interesting analysis “Materijalni i društveni uslovi našeg kulturnog razvoja” (Material and social conditions of our cultural development) by A. Deleon, O. Biljanović and M. Garadašević, written in 1963, an article by Beno Zupančič “Integracija kulturnih delatnosti u samoupravnom društvu” (The integration of cultural activities in a self-management society), and to some extent an article by Vukašin Mićunović “Društvo samoupravljajuća i kultura” (Society of self-management and cultures) in: “Kulturna politika samoupravnog društva i SK” (Cultural policies of self-management society and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), ed. Ljubiša Stankov, Komunist, Belgrade 1968.

16 The total revenues of the NOGZ for 1961 amounted to 24,178,000 dinars (of which 18,639,000 went to the GSU), while revenues from sales of catalogues and tickets were 2,159,451 dinars (according to information in MSU BBA). In comparison, the average monthly salary in 1961 was 18,860 dinars for a blue-collar worker and 27,850 dinars for a white-collar worker (according to “Samo jednom se ljubi: radiografija SFR Jugoslavije” (You Love Only Once. Radiography of SFR Yugoslavia, 1945–1972”), by Darko Suvin, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Belgrade, 2014, p. 257.
already had a fairly well organised spatial infrastructure (on St. Katherine’s Square), the GSU became the “engine” of the conglomerate, and was the financially strongest, most active and publicly visible unit. Objective problems and unequal conditions in how the conglomerate operated, which were mitigated by internal support and Bek’s dual function”, resulted in a situation in which the policies and operations of all four units were intertwined. Therefore, it is impossible to talk about the GSU without reference to the GGZ, and vice versa. The research presented here and the insights to follow refer to the GSU and GGZ as a single whole.

Working in cramped premises, with insufficient space for exhibits, waiting for up to six months for the NOGZ to pay its contributions and insufficient staff, the GGZ responded to this newly imposed direction in democratisation with great efforts. Through its annual reports, we can trace cooperation with the Workers’ University in Zagreb, organised exhibition tours and discussions, efforts to stage exhibitions in factories, the inclusion of art history students in its work, and other interesting initiatives that showed that the institution saw educating a broader range of social strata as an important task. However, for this research it is particularly indicative that in 1961 the GGZ acquired a new department, the opening of which was a sign of the way economic processes and legislative changes would indirectly introduce market principles into cultural institutions. This was the Commercial Department (or the Propaganda Department, as it was renamed during the official transformation of the GGSU into the GGZ). The minutes of a session of the Council of the GGSU (as it was still called) held on 9 February 1961 recorded that, “Based on earlier discussions held with individual artists and art historians, and on the basis of consultations held with comrades from the finance department of the People’s Committee, it has been agreed to produce a draft for the establishment of a commercial department within the GGSU. The task of the commercial department will be, in accordance with new legislative regulations, to facilitate the creation of revenues for the Gallery. The basic function of the department will be to place high-quality artistic creations on both the domestic and foreign markets.” Further documentation showed that this last, international component was in fact crucial. By way of illustration, ten works of art were sold in 1961 (by painters Prica, Knifer, Večenaj, Skurjeni, and Kovačić), of which seven were purchased by foreign buyers and three by domestic buyers. The Workers’ University bought some graphic works. The department earned 120,000

17 Although Vladimir Gojković took over the curatorship of the GSU in 1962, it is clear from the documentation that Bek continued to play an active role in its administration.
dinars, 700 German Marks, 33 pounds sterling and 750 American dollars. In
the following years, revenues grew and by 1963 amounted to about 5 million
dinars.\(^{18}\)

Although it was stated in the Proposal for Extending Activities on a Commer-
cial Basis, which was appended to the minutes, that the Department should be
self-financing, it nevertheless required ‘seed money’ from public city funds, so
that in the second half of the year the NOGZ donated 4 million dinars to pay
for the post of the department head. Bearing in mind the new Revenues Act,
it is interesting that in the GGZ, rewards based on efficiency began with this
post; a certain Walter Ebenspanger was appointed in April 1961, at a salary of
250,000 dinars, with an additional entitlement to 10% net of all sales.\(^{19}\) From
later minutes, we also learn that Ebenspanger did not consider this rate suffi-
cient incentive, and handed in his resignation on 29 September 1961.

The minutes of a Council session held in December of that year, at which his
request was considered (and accepted) led, reading between the lines, to some
interesting moments. Firstly, we discover that the contested, insufficient 10%
was never actually paid to Ebenspanger, as “this entire proceeding is without
precedence and there is no legal regulation governing it. A series of meetings
and consultations with high-level officials of the National Bank, Chamber of
Commerce, Committee for External Trade and Secretariat for General Ad-
ministration, Traffic in Goods and Finances, along with the Foreign Currency
Inspectorate and Financial Inspectorate, failed to provide any solution that
would suit our institution, since its activities did not fall within the framework
of regulations relating to economic organisations.”\(^{20}\) We were unable to find
any information on when the GGZ opened a foreign currency bank account,
but we found considerable evidence that this did not happen until at least
1966, in spite of repeated demands by Božo Bek. As the cited passage suggests,
this ‘entrepreneurial’ step, although arising from a wider economic transfor-

\(^{18}\) See the annual financial reports for 1961, 1962 and 1963 (MSU BBA).

\(^{19}\) “Zapisnik VI. sjednice Vijeća Gradske galerije suvremene umjetnosti” (Minutes of the 6th session
of the Council of the GGSU), 21.9.1961, MSU BBA file 1, box 1. At the session held on 27.6.1961, it
was decided that efficiency rewards for other employees should be postponed, as an ordinance
on scoring points was still in preparation.

\(^{20}\) “Zapisnik VII sjećnice Savjeta Galerija grada Zagreba” (Minutes of the 7th session of the Council
isations and cultural workers\textsuperscript{21} but not, in a seemingly banal gesture, by the National Bank of Yugoslavia. It proved to be a huge problem, since in the wider context of Yugoslavia’s reorientation towards exports, it was in the interests of the GGZ to focus on the foreign market, and for artists to be paid in foreign currency. While they were able to do this by selling their work directly, as private individuals, they would have received dinars by doing business through the GGZ. In several documents, we can trace their dissatisfaction with this state of affairs\textsuperscript{22}, as well as Bek’s frustration. Although the issue of the working conditions of independent artists at the time falls outside the scope of this research and paper, it should nonetheless be said that in many places, both in the archive and in other articles written at the time\textsuperscript{23}, warnings are made over the fact that artists were unable to make a living from their work, and it was this situation that the sales department hoped to address. In this regard, it should also be mentioned that the GSU and the Gallery of Naïve Art functioned throughout as buyers of contemporary art as well, so that in 1961 they spent 7,444,747 dinars for this purpose (of which 5.991,747 was spent by the GSU), a figure that rose to 18,873,747 dinars in 1963.

This is also linked to another compelling topic revealed in the minutes regarding the discussion about Ebenspanger’s resignation, or rather the issue of how the art market functioned when the department had been established, whether it existed outside the institutional framework, and on what basis people at the GGZ assessed the move. Ebenspanger accused the Gallery of delegating work that he considered his own to previously employed curators. He objected to the decision that on trips abroad he be accompanied by “an expert, so that two people would bring together the qualities which in the current situation neither he nor the curators possessed, i.e. expert and commercial.”\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{21} “Zapisnik II sjednice Vijeća Gradske galerije suvremene umjetnosti” (Minutes of the 2nd session of the Council of the GGSU), 9.2.1961, MSU BBA file 1, box 1. In the Minutes of the 6th Session of the Council of the GGSU, it says that regarding the issue of Ebenspanger’s salary regulation, even Miroslav Križa was consulted.

\bibitem{22} Julije Knifer went furthest in his objections, at least according to written records. In a document entitled “Otkazivanje ugovora o poslovnoj suradnji” (Cancelling a contract on business cooperation), dated 28.3.1062 (MSU BAA, file 2, box 1), Bek offers a chronological account of the conflict, which began when Knifer told the GSU’s accountant that “the academic painter Murtić said he should throw the cheque away, given the low price for which the picture had been sold”. The price was $150.


\bibitem{24} “Zapisnik VII sjednice Savjeta Galerija grada Zagreba” (Minutes of the 7th session of the Council of the GGZ), 21.12.1961, MSU BBA file 1, box 1.
\end{thebibliography}
Ebenspanger feel “100% devalued”. It is interesting that there are a number of reports in the archive from trips made by Dimitrije Mića Bašićević, curator of the Gallery of Naïve Art, from which we can conclude that he was in fact the most agile in terms of placing works on the market. He made contact with several foreign galleries and individuals, and a large part of the works sold belonged to the naïve, genre.25 After Ebenspanger’s resignation, it was concluded that the post was unnecessary, and since there were already administrative problems involved in foreign currency transactions, the work should be carried out by one of the curators already employed. The documentation shows that in practice, this was Bašićević.

Although this research does not relate to the Gallery’s work in the 1950s, it is clear that the curators, at least Bek and Bašićević, were ready for the launch of the Propaganda Department, that is, they were already aware of an interest in Yugoslav art on the foreign market. We read of this in the Proposal for Extending Operations on a Commercial Basis, which says, among other things, that works “are already being purchased by individual galleries, museums and private collections”. Ebenspanger’s own report, “Situaciona slike otkupa likovnih djela u zemlji” (Current situation of in-country purchases of art works)26 also provides information about the existing art market. It is described as elementary, determined by private interests, and not aligned with the quality standards of the profession. It cautions that important works are ending up in the hands of private collectors, on the one hand, while on the other, that works of art of negligible value are being sold at high prices. The GGZ is identified in several places as a ‘guarantor of quality’ in this respect. However, works of art remain far beyond the purchasing power of the working class. Ebenspanger therefore proposes a series of measures: selling graphic reproductions to bookshops, placing ceramic sculptures in ceramics factories, offering deferred payment schemes, etc. In this context, we might say that the Propaganda Department functioned as a kind of public regulator, bringing order to a ‘wild’ market. However, the fact remains that it could not avoid the market altogether, nor the

25 See, for example, “Putni izvještaj” (Travel report) dated 8.12.1961, MSU BBA, file 2, box1. The archive contains many lists and tabular presentations of works sold by naïve artists at the end of 1963. The reason for this was the conflict that broke out in October that year, between Mića Bašićević and a group of artists, signatories to an appeal entitled “Kome služi Galerija primitivne umjetnosti u Zagrebu?” (Who is served by the Gallery of Naïve Art in Zagreb?) Known as APEL 34, it was sent to several editors and published in Večernji list on 9.11. 1963. Although we will not make an issue of this case, it should be mentioned that in the appeal, the artists accused the Gallery of Primitive Art of a lack of transparency in sales mediation, so that the artists “cease to be the owners of their own work in an unexplained manner”, while the prices set, in their opinion, were too high and not adjusted to domestic buyers.

26 “Situaciona slika otkupa likovnih djela u zemlji” (Situational picture of in-country purchases of art works), Walter Ebenspanger, 10.4.1961, MSU BBA, file 2, box 1.
treatment of artworks as goods or ornaments, all of which clearly indicated a return to the bourgeois order of art.

Direct access to the business documents of the GGZ from the early 1960s clearly shows that legislative changes, under the aegis of democratising the institution, resulted in the process of adaptation to the market, accompanied by the commodification of artistic production. Nonetheless, the administrative obstacles to business faced by the Propaganda Department showed that this had more to do with a tendency marked by contradictions, rather than a complete change of direction. In the minutes of a meeting of the Work Community held on 22 March 1965, we read that “practice has shown that the implementation of new actions and measures without securing the objective, necessary conditions, leads to exceptional difficulties that do more harm than good to the Labour Community. This does not mean they should definitely be halted, with efforts to form a single working body with a systematic, organised system of placing works of art at home and abroad, a body that would be linked to the Gallery. However, for this task, it is necessary to assure a sufficient number of posts before any action is taken, along with adequate working and exhibition space.”

This conclusion clearly shows how ‘deinstitutionalisation’ had missed the mark in relation to the situation on the ground. In fact, not only were specific material conditions required for the organised sale of works of art, but the Bek archive reveals the extent to which the GGZ, in carrying out its primary tasks, was under-equipped. Many documents are dedicated to attempts at relocating the tenants in the gallery premises in the Upper Town, and at raising funds for renovation, so that the four galleries would have an adequate depot, and some of them basic exhibition space. In one document dated 1964, Bek cautions that the problem is ubiquitous: “None of the museums or galleries has specially built premises, they are all located in adapted buildings that are inadequate in terms of facilitating their specific tasks. Here, we must emphasise in particular inadequate exhibition spaces, insufficient and inadequate room to house works of art, the lack of auxiliary rooms, workshops, etc. These problems, along with the old, adapted buildings, require enormous material resources in order to maintain them, on the one hand, while on the other, make the institutions more expensive and raise all the other costs of organising other actions.”

27 “Zapisnik V sastanka radne Zajednice” (Minutes of the 5th Session of the Work Community, 19-22.3.1965, MSU BBA, file 2, box 4
28 “Dosadašnje stanje” (The situation so far), Božo Bek, 16.6.1964, MSU BBA file 1, box 3
Staffing conditions were not favourable either: despite the slight rise in the number of employees (from 10 in 1961 to 14 in 1965), the GGZ relied on unpaid overtime, while “the specific conditions under which all four galleries exist – as expert units – forces expert staff to give up their scientific work, and most expert tasks.”

At the other end of the wages ladder, office staff were in no better a position – so comrade Vera Pavlina was doing the work of a cleaner, running the warehouse, packing and dispatching works of art, and standing in for the accountant on sick leave.

Added to this were the late payments made by the NOGZ and the generally slow communication with administrative bodies (as evidenced by many letters to the Secretariat for Culture of the NOGZ, repeated repeatedly due to the lack of a response), so we can conclude that working conditions at the GGZ were indeed problematic.

It should also be remembered that the establishment of the Propaganda Department was not the only action undertaken by the GGZ in the new circumstances: there was regular cooperation with the Workers’ University, there were guided tours and discussions held alongside exhibitions, catalogues were produced, and exhibitions organised in factories. On the one hand, this type of work was only possible in the context of systematic, progressive cultural policies that linked the working class and the cultural sphere through a series of mechanisms. On the other hand, it seems that the process of liberalisation in the early 1960s, despite its declared aim, did not support these efforts. Thus, in 1966, the GGZ adopted the Ordinance on Services and Fees, in which, along with the reintroduction of mediation in buying and selling works of art, we find items such as the use of exhibition rooms, exhibiting works from the fund outside the galleries, fees for independent exhibitions outside the galleries, and organising lectures, guided tours, courses, seminars, etc. Although charging for these services probably meant, in practice, the mutual flow of funds from one institution to another (for example, the Student Centre of the University of Zagreb charged the GGZ for setting up an exhibition), it nonetheless introduced a monetary-commodity relationship and a market logic. If we add to this the information that from the 1960s on, amateur work and amateur workers’ clubs declined in number and activity, it becomes clear that democratisation

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30 “Izvještaj o radu – pomoćnog službenika” (Work Report – auxiliary staff), 1961, MSU BBA, file 1, box 1
31 “Pravilnik o uslugi Galerija grada Zagreba / o visini naknada za usluge” (Ordinance on Services of the Zagreb City Galleries/Fees for Services), 1966, MSU BBA file 1, box 5
32 In 1953, there were 4,071 amateur art societies, but by 1961, the number had dropped to half that figure. In “Materijalni i društveni uslovi našeg kulturnog razvoja” (Material and social conditions of our cultural development) Dele, Biljanović and Gardašević, Rad, Belgrade 1963, p. 92.
only served as a kind of red carpet in the process of introducing free-market mechanisms, processes and relations into culture. In today’s capitalist mode of production, with the rise of commodification and marketisation in all social spheres, including culture and the arts, we can say that we have inherited our public cultural institutions and public support for artistic production from socialism – as well as the process or procedure of dismantling the model. In this regard, the Božo Bek Archive is a valuable basis on which to construct an analysis of effects, which may be of far more use to us in understanding our own position than would be some all too common (in the art world) romanticised perspective.
Although the Motovun Meetings were originally conceived as an attempt to revitalise the town, they grew into serious work groups for artists and critics. Among a series of artistic colonies, the Motovun Meetings stood out in terms of their focus on new artistic situations and happenings among emerging generation of artists.¹

The Motovun art meetings, organised as international encounters between visual artists, were thematic events that took place between 1972 and 1984 in Motovun, Istria. Over this time, 11 art meetings were held for artists of different poetics, generations and backgrounds. The meetings were organised by the Galleria del Cavallino in Venice, the Ethnographic Museum in Pazin, and the Gallery of Contemporary Art (now the Museum of Contemporary Art) in Zagreb, which joined the project in 1976.

From the mid-1970s onward, the Motovun Meetings came to be associated primarily with emerging practices of video and photography, highlighting the use of new media, realising site-specific projects, and using alternative exhibition spaces, linking up with the context of New Art practice. For this reason, we can see the Motovun Video Meetings as constituting a contribution to both Croatian contemporary art and the international art scene. Over the years, various artists participated, including Marina Abramović, Claudio Ambrosini, Ivan Ladislav Galeta, Tomislav Gotovac, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis, Julije Knifer, Ivan Kožarić, Zdravko Milić, Josip Diminić, Ivan Matejčić, Dora Maurer, François Morellet, Michele Sambin, Duba Sambolec, Mladen Stilinović, Miroslav Šutej, Ulay, Goran Trbuljak, Luigi Viola, and others. Although Motovun Video Meetings varied from time to time in quality and consistency in the choice of artists, certain meetings are identified today as particularly significant: Projekt urbane intervencije (Urban Interventions Project - 1974), Identitet

1976 Motovun Meeting paved the way for new opportunities in video art production as a new, emerging medium, and the role of the Gallery (or Museum) of Contemporary Art was to assume a formative position. In addition, the Motovun Meetings as a whole created a territory for cooperation between Italian and Yugoslav artists, continuing the tradition established in the 1960s by the New Tendencies, and facilitating the internationalisation of artistic space. Interest in contemporary artistic practices and recent happenings in art, room for encounters, the exchange of ideas and joint work, in a unique setting, in natural surroundings and amongst the architecture of Motovun and vicinity, were written into subsequent artistic, institutional and curatorial practices. In terms of political and social contexts, we can see the processes of cultural cooperation between Italy and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a positive reflection of the 1975 Osim Agreement. In this sense, the theme of ‘identity’ that was created throughout the 1976 meeting assumes a significant place.

Julian Myers claims that we can observe the history of the late 20th century as a history of exhibitions. At the same time, interest in the history of exhibitions grew in artistic and curatorial research, which might be understood as a (new) form of institutional criticism, but also as a contribution to writing a (new) history of art. Fragmented, unsystematic, poorly documented and archived exhibitions, festivals, events, workshops, and other happenings, particularly outside the leading artistic institutions and centres in Croatia, still need to be researched if they are to be included. When researching their history, it is important to bear certain issues in mind and examine the ways in which these public art events were inscribed in the milieus from which they arose, how and to what extent they influenced the work and organisation of art institutions, how they contributed to the formation of cultural influences, and the position

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3 Milovac, Tihomir, Paradoks nevidljivosti, INSERT- Retrospektiva hrvatske video umjetnosti, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb 2008.

4 “It is now widely accepted that the art history of the second half of the twentieth century is no longer a history of artworks, but a history of exhibitions.” Myers, Julian, On the value of history of exhibitions, “The Exhibitionist”, no. 4, 2011.
they occupied in relation to ideological and economic frameworks and the dictates of the world of art. By representing a social sphere in which active work was carried out on the meanings, stories, histories and functions of cultural materials, a fresh look at the archives might help social institutions reassign meaning to social relations and institutional policies.

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The 1970s saw changes in artistic cartography through the use of video technology, interest in multimedia, ‘extended media’, art performance, first-person speech, and analytical and critical attitudes to the language of art and the social context. Then, new media – photography, film and video – appeared on the art scene in the shape of New Art practices, which developed out of the context of conceptual art. The critical position of various artistic practices characterised the world art scene during the 1970s, and similar activities were soon to emerge also in the SFRY. The innovative artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s were launched using alternative means of artistic production and the presentation of art, through the redefining of works of art, by altering artistic conventions and investigating artistic systems. One of the most important changes that emerged out of those decades in artistic, critical action and continuing the practices of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde was the emergence of innovative, alternative artistic forms and models for producing and presenting art.5

The rapid acceptance of video as a new form was greeted with enthusiasm among artists, in spite of the challenges posed by production, definition, systematic study, and acceptance in academic circles. Video encouraged a new approach to contemporary art and quickly assumed a leading position in experimental artistic practice, paving the way for the entry of new media. In this sense, video was defined as a key component of the experimental process of the 1960s and 1970s, as Jackie Hatfield claims in *Video: resisting definition*.6

The focus of the Motovun Video Meeting articulated an interest in video as a new, communicational, artistic medium, and contributed to research into the history of (new) media art, into mapping artists, works, the organisational and institutional context, production models, and positions and transformation in

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the wider social and artistic realms. Continuity in research practice was established, articulating and reconsidering historical narratives on the beginnings of video art in the SFRY as contemporary artistic practices. At the same time, the development of new media art during the 1970s was also mapped, covering artists and their works, themes and contexts, models in the production and presentation of art, in order to link ideas, institutions, artists, works, and the new art public.

Due to a lack of video equipment, most early video works by Croatian artists were made abroad, at exhibitions such as Trigon in Graz (1973), or with equipment loaned them by foreign galleries, as was the case in Motovun with the Galleria del Cavallino, or even by using the neighbouring video workshop in Brdo in Istria, organised by the Krinzinger Gallery from Innsbruck.7 For this reason, the aspirations of a certain number of artists in Yugoslavia in terms of working with video were only sporadically realised, and only two institutions monitored this development – the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, and the Student Cultural Centre in Belgrade – in contrast to Italy, which enjoyed a far longer tradition of working with video.8

In his analysis of the social and cultural situation in the late 1970s in the SFRY, Davor Matičević identifies precisely the institutions and people who influenced the development of video art and the exchange of experiences with foreign artists (the Student Cultural Centre in Belgrade, with Dunja Blažević and Biljana Tomić, the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, with Radoslav Putar, Dimitri Bašićević and Marijan Susovski, and the Multimedia Centre of the Student Centre in Zagreb, with Ivan Ladislav Galeta), which facilitated the creation of the first video works in the region.9

In the early 1970s, Paolo Cardazzo, director of the Galleria del Cavallino, which had staged an exhibition by Croatian artists (Šutej, Picelj) in the late 1960s, established close contact with Ladislav Barišić, who was in charge of the Motovun gallery.10 The Galleria del Cavallino, then the most important gallery in Venice, had already turned its attention to the language of experimentation,

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7 At almost the same time as the Motovun Video Meeting, in fact just a few months later, another foreign gallery organised a video meeting in Istria, in Brdo, near Buje. It was the brainchild of Ursula Krinzinger of the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck (now in Vienna), and artists from the SFRY and Austria participated in it.


performance and video in the early 1970s, at the time of a “general crisis in the Venetian artistic panorama, including the Bienale”. It became one of the most significant places in the European context for the promotion of video art as a new artistic form. From the mid-1970s on, along with Centro Videoarte, Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrari, headed by Lola Bonore, and Art/tapes22 in Florence, headed by Maria Gloria Bicocchi, the Galleria del Cavallino was one of the most important places for video art production in Italy.

Identity

Built around the theme of Identitet – Identità, in cooperation with Paolo Cardazzo from the Galleria del Cavallino, the Museum in Pazin, and Marijan Susovski, curator of the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Motovun Video Meeting was organised as part of a wider, all-embracing art meeting, in which 15 artists from Croatia and Italy participated, eight of which took part in the video meeting: Claudio Ambrosini, Sanja Iveković, Živa Kraus, Dalibor Martinis, Zdravko Milić, Michele Sambin, Goran Trbuljak and Luigi Viola, producing a total of 24 video works.

In his introduction, Marijan Susovski emphasises “the broad possibility of applying video in art, that is the great potential for individual, personal expression, whether in the aesthetic, social, or another field.” Closer to the format of photography or amateur super 8mm film, the video picture has a more intimate character and is taken more personally; we feel a stronger emotional link and identify with the author, as Susovski went on to point out, highlighting the spontaneity of video as medium.

The theme of identity occupied artists working with video from the outset; and in the literature, it is often stressed that the relationship between art, technology and identity in the medium saw unparalleled research in terms of critical awareness, consistency and continuity.

Early video developed in two directions, though there were many instances in which the two trajectories met or overlapped. On the one hand, there were works that came out of research into materials and the technological ‘appara-

11 Ibid.
13 Sretenović, Dejan., Video umetnost u Srbiji, Video umetnost u Srbiji, Centar za savremenu umetnost, Belgrade 1999.
tus’ of the camera, monitor track, and the new opportunities provided by the magnetic environment, concentrating on specifics like production and reproduction processes and time/duration. Artists most often dealt with the formal properties of the medium, or with works that were built around media research and investigations into media self-awareness. On the other hand, there was the character of video as a personal, intimate medium, which in contrast to the objective opportunities of the medium and the researching of its technical and physical properties, allowed artists a different space: a space for subjective, psychological, ideological, aesthetic research – what Rosalind Kraus calls “the aesthetics of narcissism.” Through interest in the practice of performance and strategies of self-representation, video enables the artist to focus attention on his own body, so works are created as “performances for the camera”.

In response to the theme, Claudio Ambrosini, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis, Michele Sambin, Goran Trbuljak and Luigi Viola devoted themselves to researching the problem of identity in close correlation with video as a new means of communication and artistic medium, covering several aspects: issues of representation and self-representation, portrait and self-portrait, the body and performance practice, i.e. identity and (video) technology, media research, montage, time, i.e. video and photography, static and moving pictures, i.e. pictures and sound, the influence of mass media, and the context of problematising female identity.

Anticipation

The Motovun Meetings were art events to which we should return in order to review or assess their significance. They constituted a project that anticipated certain production models, processes of internationalisation and international cooperation, which today we have simply adopted and take purely for granted. They were about pioneering, innovative models and formats for workshop production in a (new) art medium; they were about the role of the museum in creating conditions and supporting the process of art production, about the transfer of knowledge and facilitating connections and cooperation, and about residences as places of joint work where people learned and mastered new knowledge and skills. The Motovun Video Meeting was important because it tackled the transformation of technological and production paradigms, discoveries that were then new, but which today comprise or embody the actual potential of video as medium.

This means ‘putting together’ an archive of material from pioneer video works, of anthological significance and documentation, which traces cooperation between artists and institutions. An exhibition based on researching the 1976 Motovun Video Meeting was staged in MMC Luka in Pula in 2015, as part of the Cinemaniac project Misliti film (Think Film), a supporting programme of the Pula Film Festival. Here, for the first time, works by Croatian and Italian artists were gathered in one place, previously affirmed in their own environments, but always lacking a common presentation framework and research context. The exhibition brought together documentation and works from various sources: photographic documentation from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, photographs of works from artists’ personal archives (Dalibor Martinis, Zdravko Milić, Michele Sambin), and digital copies of video works from the Croatian Film Association and the Milan Documentation Centre for Visual Arts.

In this way, the Motovun Meetings played a part in mapping a joint discursive space that pointed out the potentials of video art and transnational networks as opportunities for a new generation of artists and curators.

A view of the 1976 Motovun Video Meeting may help establish the contextual framework, taking into consideration a series of social, cultural, production and technological relations in which early practices in video art production in Croatia and the former SFRY developed as part of the ‘discursive phenomenon’; and may examine positions and transformations within the wider social, cultural and institutional sphere, in the confrontation between the various perspectives of history and art, media theory, and cultural, political and institutional criticism. And we should take note of the organisational means and formats, models and processes of art production and presentation, and institutional policies. Thus, a contribution to the research done on the 1976 Motovun Meeting may serve as a supplement to the history of media art and as a contribution to writing an important chapter in the history of the Museum of Contemporary Art.
The Space of Antagonism
The museum is an institution with changing social roles. And it is an inherently contradictory concept in its performance of those roles, and challenged by many social conflicts. Due to this contradictory nature, museums are often described in contrasting terms: on the one hand as ideological institutions, as disciplinary ones; and on the other, as spaces of free imagination, creativity and emancipation. It is precisely this contradiction that brings to the fore the museum’s social and political potentiality. My aim here is to analyse the Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti – KGLU, an art museum based in Slovenj Gradec in the northeast of Slovenia, in order to outline its historical background and current practices that clearly demonstrate the contradictory and conflictual – or restless¹ – nature of this particular institution and art museums in general.

A precondition to achieving this aim is to establish a concept of museum that has a political dimension. Here we refer to the political ontological level, one different from politics, which can be understood as a set of social rules and practices². Laclau defines the political as “the world of contingent articulations

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1 “[The] Museum is engaged in a performativity of its own, one which can never establish any form of presence. By being situated at the juncture of endings and openings, by plasticizing itself (moulding/dislocating), the museum is in a permanent “state of conjugation”, always about to be declined, derived, or inflected. For this reason, the museum is always in a state of dispute and contestation ... The museum is not conservative, but argumentative in the sense that it always seeks to challenge that which enters the plastic process – that which it first rejects as other (site-specificity in the 1960s, for example) and then welcomes as the same (off-site projects today).” Martinon, J.P., “Museums and Restlessness”, in: Genoways, H. H. (ed.), Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century, Altamira Press – Rowman & Littelfield Publishers Inc., Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford, 2006 p. 64,

2 “Thus we have on the one hand policy on the ontic level, which is mainly specific regimes of discourses, a particular social system and operation, and on the other hand, the ontological level – the political, which takes the principle of establishing the social.” Vezovnik, A., Diskurz, Knjižna zbirka Psihologija vsakdanjega življenja Fakulteta za družbene vede, Založba FDV, Ljubljana, 2009, p. 69
... limited by the social – the field of sedimented social practices”. Sedimentation is a process of fixing the identity of constitutive elements that are successfully articulated in a hegemonic social order. But the political is also a space of antagonisms, where antagonisms are not oppositions nor contradictions, but instead “constitute the limits of society, the latter’s impossibility of fully constituting itself”, and for that reason are partly open, in a process of revealing the radical contingency and precariousness of those elements and disarticulating them from the existing hegemonic order. Therefore the public space of a museum is not only a site for the building of social consensus – the ideological resolution of contradictions and pacification of social antagonisms – but also a site of struggle for reactivation, re-articulation and counter-hegemonic acts.

This properly political dimension of museum as institution demonstrates that it can function as a force that disrupts the hegemonic order by offering a space for the development of alternative perspectives.

Despite the fact that museums are predominantly ideological institutions there is something intrinsically utopian about them. Firstly, the museum’s main function of accumulating, preserving and displaying artefacts and artworks is grounded in the desire to avoid or eliminate oblivion, decay and death. The question of eliminating death is, according to Adorno, crucial when thinking about utopia. Secondly, all art in general has a certain utopian dimension. Ernst Bloch asserts that art and creativity are a reflection of utopian thinking that is intrinsic to all people: “Every plan and every creation

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5 “[E]very order is political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. The articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and the meaning of social institutions is fixed are ‘hegemonic practices’. Every hegemonic order is susceptible to being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices that will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony.” Mouffe, C., On the Political, Routledge, London, New York, 2005, p. 9
6 Althusser states that the main ideological apparatus of the modern state is the educational system; the dominating ideology is transmitted also through culture and cultural institutions. See: Althusser, L., Essays on Ideology, Verso, London, 1984
7 In an interview with Bloch, Adorno states: “Yes, if death were eliminated, if people would no longer die, that would be the most terrible and most horrible thing. I would say that it is precisely this form of reaction that actually opposes the utopian consciousness most of the time. The identification with death is that which goes beyond the identification of people with the existing social conditions and in which they are extended. Utopian consciousness means a consciousness for which the possibility that people no longer have to die does not have anything horrible about it, but is, on the contrary, that which one actually wants.” Bloch, E., Adorno, T.W., “Something’s Missing. A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing”, The Utopian Function of Art and Literature. The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 8
that was pushed to the limits of its perfection touched on utopia and gave ... precisely the great cultural works that had an increasingly progressive influence, a surplus over and above their mere ideology.\(^8\) The positive expression of utopia – unlike its colloquial sense of something imaginary and impossible – refers to an imaginative venturing beyond the given inspiring an intention to think through, experiment and realize an existing but latent possibility.\(^9\) Similarly, various post-structuralist theories emphasize that art, like all other symbolic constructions, carries a certain untameable surplus that prevents ideological closure and a fixing of meaning. Therefore, it could be said that an antagonism specific to museums emerges at the point where the utopian dimension of an artwork and the ideological dimension of the museum collide and clash. Consequently, in order for a political dimension to emerge, there has to be a utopian moment – a moment of the activation of the political.

A utopian moment is the appearance of a point where historical circumstances have reached a certain significant potential for a change in social relations, thus opening up the possibility of realizing the utopian dream of radical transformation. It is precisely the moment the utopian imagination is realized as an “other” space counter-posed to the uniform institutional space of “sameness” – a heterotopia, “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”\(^10\) Therefore, heterotopias can be seen as enactments of a radical political imaginary that “can be used for reflection because they are manifestations of aspects of the utopian imagination that are local and real and packed with history.”\(^11\)

An historical overview of museums established in Slovenia after WWII – and elsewhere in Yugoslavia – indicates that they were still founded on bourgeois

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9 “The specific pre-appearance which art shows is like a laboratory where events, figures and characters are driven to their typical, characteristic end, to an abysmal or a blissful end; this essential vision of characters and situations, inscribed in every work of art, which in its most striking form we may call Shakespearean, in its most terminalized form Dantean, presupposes possibility beyond already existing reality. At all points here prospective acts and imaginations aim, subjective, but possibly even objective dream-roads run out of the Become towards the Achieved, towards symbolically encircled achievement. Thus the concept of the Not-Yet and of the intention towards it that is thoroughly forming itself out no longer has its only, indeed exhaustive example in the social utopias; important though the social utopias, leaving all others aside, have become for the critical awareness of elaborated anticipating.” Ibid., p. 15


11 Johnson, P., “Thoughts on Utopia” (http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2.2-Thoughts-on-utopia-pdf.pdf)
values meant to contribute to a stronger sense of national identity, to maintain and protect local cultural heritage, and promote the development of art and culture. These museums largely acquired modernist works for their collections, but were still socialist in terms of their public institutional status, as they were socially, publicly owned by the local community. These kinds of socialist-modernist museums were primarily characterized by their openness to the wider public, as they were intended to be museums for the people, reaching out to the working classes that were not its traditional audience, and to offer them an image of the new socialist society. Already we sense a certain discrepancy, a split that marks the institution of a museum in general, one that oscillates between the traditional role of the museum as an institution that is ideologically driven and one that sees an opening up of the institution to new practices.

The KGLU was founded by a group of intellectuals in Slovenj Gradec in 1957. One was a formally trained painter, Karel Pečko, who became the director of the institution. From the 1960s on the institution’s programme was engaged with issues related to peace, humanity and solidarity, thus promoting values that closely coincided with those of the United Nations. Owing to the specific situation of Yugoslavia at the time, together with a particular political climate, the museums’ endeavours were matched by broader political support and international recognition. Thus exhibitions were organized under the patronage of the UN, marking the anniversaries of the founding of the UN and accompanied by national (Yugoslav) celebrations that were held in parallel with the exhibition openings. In 1966, a new extension to the existing museum space was built in order to properly accommodate the first international exhibition. The extension was built in just three months with the help of local factories, worker brigades and enthusiasts alike. Furthermore, the humanist message of the exhibitions marked the museum’s collection, with which in turn it acquired international visibility. Consequently, the work and direction of the museum made a significant impact on the city’s identity and charged the museum with a very active social role. The local public were also involved in organizing the exhibitions as well as the accompanying events. With this ambitious and far-reaching program the gallery gained strong support from both local political circles as well as the local audience.

Lists of the people involved in the projects reveals a large group of people actively involved in organizing gallery-related activities – not only people from the local area but also from international art circles (e.g. for various juries), business and industry. The exhibitions were based on international open calls
and on direct invitations to some of the most renowned artists of the time, including Ossip Zadkine, Henry Moore, Victor Vasarely and others. Competitions were also organized with international juries awarding prizes; some artists were even named honorary citizens of Slovenj Gradec. These were all part of a strategy aimed at creating an identity for the city through art in connection with advancing peace and culture. The exhibitions included works by artists from both East and West, but many artists also came from the non-aligned countries. The last international exhibition held under UN patronage was staged in 1985. Despite the fact that many facets of the exhibitions were politically shaped, indeed motivated, certain utopian moments emerged in the process, reflected in the fact that certain international artists decided to donate their works to the museum collection, which in turn helped the local audience identify with the museum and its political message.

Central to the process of researching the KGLU archives was the idea to approach this particular museum in Slovenj Gradec as a kind of role model of political activation and transformation in its role of museum and its social position. Nevertheless, one has to keep in mind that this (much celebrated) past was not unproblematic in terms of the way art was used and in terms of certain politically orchestrated events. Here, the utopian dimension – in the form of utopian moments – was present mainly in the form of past programmes and exhibitions that promoted the idea that art could change the world and contribute to world peace; and through strategies that involved different forms of audience involvement and engagement. We have identified two main strategies, which I will sketch out only briefly: active involvement of the local audience through organisational boards, such that the community became part of both the programme and the exhibitions; and a clear formulation of humanist values as the underlying motivation for the undertaking, which lent the events a sense of higher purpose.

With this particular history in mind, the general idea is to try and reactivate this past under present-day conditions, though not in the same form, but instead more in the sense of bringing to the fore the inspiring, empowering idea.

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12 For example, in 1966, six artists were declared honorary citizens: Peter Lubarda, Ossip Zadkine, Henry Moore, Božidar Jakac, Krsto Hegedušić and Werner Berg.

13 Focused research on the collection started in 2013 with the collection exhibition Museum as a Space of Utopia and continued within the project Performing the Museum, where we invited the interpreters to actively engage with the institution’s past, its collection and its archives. The most extensive research was performed for the collection exhibition in 2015 Collection Reversed: Transfer, Transformation and Ruptures by Barbara Steiner and Anna Lena von Helldorf; from the side of the gallery most of the data was collected by the curators, especially Katarina Hergold Germ.
that the museum was once able to define utopia\textsuperscript{14}, and that it was working towards realising it as such. Since the socialist museum, in this case KGLU, has a history of playing an active social role in the sense of actively changing society, this means defining the role of the museum anew – not only as the bearer of utopian projection, but also as an active agent informing the way we should act on utopia, in the sense of introducing new forms of political subjectivity.

The political shifts of the 1990s made it impossible to continue staging these kinds of exhibitions, with all attendant big political gestures, but our research of the KGLU archives clearly reveals that the enthusiasm of previous decades had already begun to fade come the 1980s. This fact is also clearly reflected in the donations, which were becoming increasingly smaller and less frequent with each international exhibition. Slovenia today enjoys a very good network of public museums, including the art museums that are systematically supported by the state, as well in part by the municipalities, since 1989. But this support has been shrinking of late, reflecting both the lingering financial crisis and various socio-political shifts. Most of the museums in Slovenia today, especially those located in smaller cities on the periphery, function with minimal means and significantly reduced program budgets. These museums, the KGLU among them, are now institutions with interesting collections and archives, together with interesting histories, but somehow seem to be suspended in something of a void, despite intense exhibition programs (at least for professional and/or local audiences). Their larger social role is questioned, largely because they do not attract large crowds, which seems to be the primary if not sole criteria applied by the dominant neoliberal system. For while they fulfil their role of educational institution for neighbouring schools, they do not attract the tourists – they are not museums of spectacle.

One of the principal steps key to activating the institution and redefining its role in society must lie in identifying a contemporary utopia. If in the past utopia in this particular case constituted contributing to furthering world peace and the establishment of a new society and a new people, then the question arises – what is the utopia of today? Jameson often addresses the issue of the loss of utopian thought in contemporaneity, a loss due in large part to the sweeping homogenisation of the temporal and spatial dimension. We have perpetual change, but this change does not represent real change, it is always

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\textsuperscript{14} Here I am not talking about the political appropriation and utilisation of the programmes.
a return of the Same. So in this sense it is more important to reformulate the question, and ask whether there is such a thing as a contemporary utopia at all. Because it seems as if we have lost our trust, our faith, our confidence in utopia, in the belief that we can really change something. But common human aspirations have not changed; as Ernst Bloch suggests, longing is one of our most basic feelings and cannot be erased.

For this reason, I think one of the most important roles of the museum – the art museum – is to maintain a distinctly utopian dimension through its specific position in relation to time and space. Museums have a special relation to history, especially through the collections and archives, and this marks their otherness. But a museum can also promote a kind of utopian awareness through the thematic development of utopian programs, topics and activities. In the case of KGLU today this is manifested through several activities. The basic idea is this: the political role of the museum must be emphasized, and in such terms that it acts as a political institution; it works to assume an active social role, in terms of opening the space up to political issues in the spirit of the connection between aesthetics and politics as developed by Ranciere. This is also effected through the programs that open up the museum archives, that address from a contemporary perspective the museum’s past activities and that try to see the collection of the museum as an important source of both inspiration and of topical subjects in the light of current events and the current political-economic crisis. The other point is to try and function as an institution for the community, one that opens itself up to the various events and activities that are going on in the local town surroundings. The aim is to raise awareness – awareness of the fact that the space of the museum is the space of the common, the space of the community. The other approach is to actively develop strategies that stand outside capitalist practices and to react to the needs of the environment in which the museum is based. In our case one particular problem is widespread unemployment and a general sense of powerlessness, thus the working strategy of the museum is to build on current social programs and offer people employment. We see these practices, as Mouffe formulates it, as “spaces for resistance that undermine the social imaginary necessary for a

15 “The persistence of the Same through absolute Difference... discredits change, since henceforth the only conceivable radical change would consist in putting an end to change itself...” Jameson, F., The Seeds of Time, Columbia University Press, New York, Chichester, 1994, p. 19

16 “The content changes, but an invariant of the direction is here psychologically expressed, so to speak, as longing, completely without consideration at all for the content – a longing that is the pervading and above all only honest quality of all human beings.” Bloch, op. cit., p. 5

capitalist reproduction”. And cultural production works in both directions: it contributes to the established system; and on the other hand cultural practices – and the museum is here no exception – can offer a space for resistance that questions the social relations that are a constituent part of the capitalist system. Because, as Mouffe also states, “art’s great power lies – in its capacity to make us see things in a different way, to make us perceive new possibilities.”

19 Ibid., p. 63
Back to the Future Memory of Urban Riots

The 1980s marked the high point of the postmodern discourse, which has had profound effects not only on the philosophical discussions alluding to Lyotard’s “end of the grand narratives” and the subsequent political endorsement of Fukuyama’s “end of history”, but also had an important effect on a large number of academic and artistic-museum institutions in terms of changing their on-going foci and practices. At least since Pierre Nora’s seminal essay “Lieux de mémoire” a consistent move away from history to memory has taken place, accompanied by a shift from macro-narratives to micro-perspectives and personal testimonies. Furthermore, this shift can be recognized in an actual boom in the interdisciplinary field of “memory studies”, which indicates that, for some authors, our age is “obsessed with memory”. For Derrida, it is the “archive fever” that seeks for an origin based on the naïve presupposition of arriving at a neutral and more transparent perspective on history. Parallel to this critical approach, our work also emphasizes a need for locating system-

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1 This is a thoroughly revised introductory text for our exhibition “Thinking the monument to sub/urban riots” at the Academie Solitude (January-February 2016). The project will continue as a series of workshops with political activists, architects, artists and scholars.

2 The far-reaching and illuminating critique of the postmodernist status-quo attitude was formulated by David Harvey in *Condition of Post-Modernity*, 1989. He clearly and meticulously presented a history of aesthetic and economic transformations, moving between Fordist, post-Fordist, modernist and post-modernist narratives and phenomena that continue to share a more general capitalist condition.


4 Contrary to the expected connotations coming from the ancient Greek word (arché means origin), Derrida warned us that arché is related to archonts, that is, the political class that ruled over the accumulated data and knowledge, i.e. archive, and interpreted it exclusively.
atic and symptomatic absences in the overarching archival era. Certain topics have been silenced and forgotten (revolution, or anything connected to communism,\(^5\)), while others do not even emerge as potential material for remembrance or oblivion. Our research proceeds from a topic that has been displaced, even in sociological analysis, on the premise of merely “understanding” the objective causes, and has certainly been largely excluded from the mainstream memorial discourse and practices: the emergence and radicalisation of sub/urban riots over the course of the past 50 years.

One could immediately object and ask: Why should the riots be a matter for remembrance? Is there really anything “worth” commemorating in these irrational outbursts of “impotent rage” (Žižek)\(^5\)? Politicians and media leaders remind us that sub/urban riots have allegedly always been expressions of anti-political, violent, criminal and “irrational” behaviour. It is precisely these strong, demonising reactions by the moral majority that demonstrates that there is something symptomatic at work here. The discourse on riots has not only been saturated with notions of criminality and morality, which testifies to the strong presence of repressive state apparatuses, but also points to the existence of certain ideological mechanisms of repression. We claim, repeating the old Spinozist trope, that this repression is a reaction to the “fear of the masses”, which is articulated as the ultimate fear, namely that urban insurrection might trigger or give way to civil war and total destruction. It is precisely the uncontrollable agency and destructive power of riots, which cannot be ascribed to any particular political form (party, movement, trade union) that touches the traumatic core of the modern capitalist state: private property, respect for order and monopoly over violence. Why then this need for a monument to the destruction of the existing order? Furthermore, some might argue that riots do not require any monuments, since they have always created their own monuments: rioters produced ruins in/of their own neighbourhoods. Modernity has been, from the very outset, as Huyssen clearly demonstrated, fascinated by ruins – which could be seen as the flip side of the monument. However, the aim of this research is not to aestheticize the ruins, which has been reserved for the mainstream media and their representation of riots that spectacularizes violence and ignores the deeper causality of urban poverty as well as the possibilities for emancipation of the urban poor.

Our text, in contrast, sketches some of the universal traits of urban phenomena and explores the possibility of a more lasting encounter between alter-
native memory and sub-urban riots. We wish to highlight the inter-sectional oppressions of those silenced and forgotten throughout particular histories of Western metropolises that are directly linked to the history of colonialism. Our methodological approach also attempts to mobilize certain emancipatory moments from the past of the urban periphery, as some recent artistic approaches have realised in their experiments with the narrative forms and strategies of “progressive nostalgia” (Missiano), or with what Inke Arns and Boris Buden call the practice of “retroutopia” in late Soviet and Yugoslav art. However, now that the neoliberal utopia has progressively and finally withered away, together with the “end of history”, we can claim that the proposal by Susan Buck-Morss from the most recent Documenta should be taken more seriously. Her Benjaminian take consists of mobilizing past revolutionary material in order to infect the present, which should primarily serve to de-nationalize and de-privatize the archive. This process is followed by additional steps in “training the eye” to spot the emerging “communist mode of reception”.6 In many respects her method resonates strongly with our journey to the future monument to the urban riot. As this is part of a more extensive research undertaking we shall present two parallel histories, and only briefly: in the first part we outline the common characteristics of different sub/urban riots (Los Angeles 1965/1992; Lyon 1981–1990, Paris 2005 and London 1981/2011), while in the following part we present a fragmentary history of alternative monuments that challenged the very institutional idea of the monument.

Features common to sub/urban riots

The usual dictionary definition of riot is a “violent disturbance of the peace by a crowd”, rendering it either blindly progressive or reactionary. Not so long ago Eric Hobsbawm claimed that urban riots had been repeated without much revolutionary potential, while actually referencing politics that defended the old customs.7 However, riots can become progressive, as Alain Badiou argues, as “they stir up masses of people on the theme that things as they are must be regarded as unacceptable”.8 Since the conditions in which the riot comes into being are so oppressive, the allegedly legitimate and legal representatives of physical force are increasingly undermined in the subaltern eyes. Those

6 See: Documenta 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts, Notebook 4, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2011.
7 However, after the French Revolution, when the riots of the underclasses evolved into serious widespread social revolution, the dominant classes became far more attentive to urban riots, which is why the nineteenth century witnesses a veritable rise in the study and practice of policing. Michel Foucault wrote extensively on this topic in his studies on urban management at the juncture of political power and medicine.
8 Alain Badiou, Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings, Verso, London, 2012, p. 21
that riot can be seen as a specific section of the population, “a tumultuous assembly of the young, virtually always in response to a misdemeanour, actual or alleged, by a despotic state”. Finally, riots are more than political actions following a planned strategy, and should be defined as ruptures and veritable political events.

Rupture can be more easily explained in terms of the riot’s location, as they tend to emerge in spaces that have already been subject to stricter police control and governmental (mis)management. These are the spaces where the poorer working classes reside, as well as the sub-proletarian elements and migrants from former colonies. The Invisible Committee points to the radicalisation of police control that has pushed people out of “their streets, then their neighbourhoods, and finally from the hallways of their buildings, in the demented hope of containing all life between the four sweating walls of privacy.” Moreover, the urban zones have been subjected to the logic of segregation, which apart from carrying educational, political and economic disadvantages, also form an urban geography of more or less visible walls as well as negative representations. These zones are closed off from the middle-class neighbourhoods, and are largely separated from the benefits enjoyed by the rest of society. These separations carry ideological affects that enforce the logic of division between “us” (the civilised majority of respectful citizens that adhere to the rule of law, etc.) and “them” (the barbaric and uneducated or unemployed that come from different religious and cultural backgrounds and circumstances, etc.). This affects or changes not just the way society perceives people from inner cities and banlieues, but also, in turn, how they perceive themselves and their role in society.

Our historical overview begins in 1965, in the Watts suburb of Los Angeles, which represents the beginning of a new sequence of sub/urban riots in the Western metropolises that radicalised certain existing and sporadic eruptions of urban discontent. We compare this early instance with the riot that followed on the heels of the beating of Rodney King in 1992 (and the verdict that found the policemen who perpetrated that violent act not-guilty). In the second stage, we extended our frame of analysis to two other contexts (Britain in the 1980s

9 Ibid., p. 23
11 In the specific case of London, we can speak of socio-economic segregation rather than a spatial one, since the different social groups occupy the same area. See: Owen Hatherley, “Look at England’s urban spaces: the riots were inevitable” (https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/owen-hatherley/look-at-englands-urban-spaces-riots-were-inevitable) and Jeremy Till, “The broken middle: The space of the London riots” in Cities vol. 34, 71–74, 2013
and in 2011, and France in the period 1980–90s and in 2005) in order to acquire an element of comparative spatial and temporal differentiation. Despite acknowledging certain differences in the selected case studies, be it in terms of different colonial pasts (the creation of the USA parallel to genocide and slavery vs. French and British imperialism), the phenomenon of immigration from former colonies, the intensity of the struggle of the subaltern classes or the use of violence (injury, death, gun culture) and other urban specificities (the banlieue vs. the inner city), our contribution here aims to underline certain striking similarities.

There are at least five features common to suburban riots. Firstly, sub/urban riots operate according to a logic of radical and violent disruption, which targets the central consensual points of a modern capitalist state essential to its reproduction: (private) property, respect for legal order and monopoly over physical violence. Secondly, sub/urban riots are a political response to acutely oppressive living conditions, which are permeated by racism, (post)colonialism, class exploitation and police violence. Rioters often come from the body of dispossessed youth in segregated urban areas, those who have no effective access to the established alternative political organisations of dissent such as political parties, social movements or trade unions. Hence, the political event of the riot is driven by despair and frustration, rather than by a unified political strategy. Thirdly, if riots break out as an immediate response to police brutality, then the dominant response operates on a double axis. On the one hand, even more excessive control and violence on the part of the police, sometimes accompanied by the declaration of a state of emergency and subsequent military intervention; and, on the other, by a demonising representation of rioters communicated/disseminated through mainstream media, where racial and class stereotypes of the irrational mob are reproduced. Fourthly, the political process that marks the two cycles of riots in the cities selected herein shows the transition from social-democratic (1960s/1980s) to neoliberal policies (from the 1990s onwards) that takes and practices a tougher stance toward the preservation of “law and order”. The “tragedy” of riots consists of their factual ambivalence: if a riot is contingent and opens up the urban and political space for the excluded, this void is immediately filled by increased militarisation and a more oppressive silencing of the marginalised, thus creating a negative spiral. Instead of tackling the immediate and deeper causes of the riots,

12 Paul Gilroy offered a fresh insight of this transition, which retrospectively even triggered a certain nostalgia for the riots of 1980s that were marked by a sense of optimism and commitment for deeper social change. See: Paul Gilroy, “1981 and 2011: From Social Democratic to Neoliberal Rioting”, The South Atlantic Quarterly, 112: 3, 2013, pp. 550-558
the whole of the discursive-repressive measures employed by the state ensure their swift criminalisation. This is followed by the violent logic of urban renewal: the délogement of local residents and demolitions. And fifthly, riots are highly political acts of refusal, indignation, and looting, which some authors identify as the new “moral economy of the poor”. As Étienne Balibar puts it so poignantly, riots are “not so much a ‘cause’ or a ‘project’ as an existence that is constantly forgotten or denied by the surrounding society, using means proper to the experience of reality in contemporary society”. But when their existence bursts out into society it touches a central traumatic point that Spinoza describes so well: “the fear of the masses”. On the one hand this fear bespeaks civil war and the disruption of social order, while on the other it reveals the fact that those excluded and dispossessed, even if only for an instance, open up onto a democratic yet still unarticulated potentiality. Sub/urban riots are symptoms of the failure of those very societies; they speak of the failures of the ways in which those societies attempted to “integrate” them into the dominant culture with its dominant norms, to make them docile in and for the economic and urban management of the highly policed urban landscapes. In this respect riots, at least metaphorically, become monuments to our own societies.

A fragmentary journey to alternative monuments

The history of alternative monuments reveals that they constituted and practiced a complex narrative and intended to achieve more than just mere commemoration by inventing new spatial strategies and practices that would speak from the position of the oppressed, as the five following examples show. Despite their differences in approach, scale and setting, all these monuments were ahead of their time, because they embodied a desire for and towards the future, despite their initial orientation towards the past. Such an undercurrent of alternative structures has now become an indisputable part of the historical-aesthetical cannon of monumental and museum practices, yet the radicalness of these monuments continues to challenge the very practice of commemoration. In what follows, we highlight some of the most inspiring examples from this alternative history:


15 Our initial selection of more than 30 monuments has been narrowed down to the 9 that we exhibited, while within this text the final selection comprises 5 of the most daring monumental examples.
MONUMENT TO THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL, VLADIMIR TATLIN, 1917

Tatlin’s monument is a dynamic structure that incorporates three revolving halls supported by a skeletal, spiral framework. It not only symbolises the functioning of a political system, but also incorporates its functions (the central decision-making processes of the communist government and meetings of the International take place inside it). The monument breaks with the very idea of architecture as a static form. In contrast, the building is envisioned as a dynamic device and as an apparatus that regulates certain organisational activities and social conflicts. Tatlin’s monument is concerned with the process of becoming rather than with simply being. As the name suggests it is a monument to the continuous becoming of the present, one infected by a future emancipatory horizon. It represents history as an evolving contradictory process that is never limited to national (state) issues alone. It is transnational, communicates and resolves; it is capable of organising and perceiving things differently. Despite never having been realised there were many attempts, theoretical and artistic, to realise at least part of its initial conceptualisation.16

YUGOSLAV PARTISAN MONUMENTS, DIFFERENT AUTHORS, 1960-1980

From the 1960s through the 1980s a vast alternative memorial movement emerged in Yugoslavia from within the official policy of socialist modernism. Socialist modernist memorials employed peculiar aesthetic strategies that reflected the People’s liberation struggle during and after World War II. This process or mechanism initially commemorated the widespread common suffering of the people and served as a remembrance of fascist terror and war. However, from the 1960s onwards, new modernist memorial sites encouraged and celebrated gestures of resistance and emancipation that pointed towards the future. These monuments share a certain abstract aesthetic, manifesting as a turn from a specific event to a more general notion, from a concrete political event to a more general optimism about present society and its future. These monuments are set in or consist of large public spaces that allowed for different social practice: they informed and educated, or they provided visitors with a place for picnicking or hiking; and they served as sites of countercultural activities and acts of refusal.

16 For a recent attempt to realize Tatlin’s tower see the works of the art collective Henry VIII’s Wives (http://h8w.net/work/bs.html).
**MONUMENT TO CHARLES FOURIER, THE SITUATIONISTS, 1969**

The statue of the utopian socialist Charles Fourier was removed by the Vichy government on the order of the Nazi occupying power. The empty plinth remained on the Place Clichy with its plaque ground down and obscured until 10 March 1969. It was at the precise moment that a general strike was scheduled to commence that the Situationists returned the statue of Charles Fourier to its plinth. A plaque was added on the statue’s pedestal: “a tribute to Charles Fourier, from the barricaders of the rue Gay-Lussac”, alluding to the clashes of the student protests of May 1968 in Paris. Here the Situationists were the first to use the method of “détournement” or hijacking in relation to memorials. The empty plinth stood like a monument in some “unfinished” state, holding out the potential for radical appropriation and action. Its initial historic meaning was taken up and expanded into the reality of the relevant political battles of the day. Up until such time as the municipality commissioned a new monument, the radical potential of the empty plinth and the political radicalness of Fourier were ever present.

**MEMORIAL AGAINST FASCISM, ESTHER UND JOCHEN GERZ, 1986**

This memorial consisted of a lead-coated column, which gradually sunk into the ground over a period of six years. Visitors were encouraged to inscribe their names onto the surface. The artists attempted to overcome the short-lived experience of visiting the monument by involving the visitor in a kind of permanent co-authorship and thus joint responsibility. Over the course of the six years, however, some expressive reactions appeared that had not been envisioned beforehand, like swastikas and denunciations of immigrants. These unforeseen elements lent the monument another dimension: that of an instrument that not only commemorates the past, but also gives visible expression to present reactions to the past. The (counter)monument problematized the traditional notion of a monument that represents the dominant history of a state narrative based on social consensus. And though conceived as a monument to what in Germany was perceived as an expression of absolute raison d’etat (the condemnation of its national socialist past), it served to show how the official narrative of having overcome this problematic past is in fact a precarious phenomenon. The monument here serves as a mirror of the manifold opinions of

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MONUMENT TO BATAILLE, THOMAS HIRSCHHORN, 2002

The monument to Bataille was built in an immigrant neighbourhood of Kassel during Documenta 11, and was the result of a collaborative effort between the artist and the community. It is conceived as an instrument for the inclusion of an otherwise marginalised neighbourhood by encouraging an encounter between different parts of society. It first and foremost establishes connections, connections that were not otherwise present. As such it is divided into different elements and sites, which were defined in negotiation with and run by the community: a library for knowledge transfer and discussion, a snack bar, a TV studio, and a car connecting different sites, etc. The fact that it is temporary and fragile actually lends the monument a certain strength: it can be appropriated, it is not intimidating, and it opens up spaces where people can meet as equals. It is a confrontation with reality beyond the museum space that participates in the new (art-related) trend of community monuments that are, by virtue of their form, open to external conflict and discourse. The idea, the way the monument is brought to the people, is essential; similarly, so too is the idea that without the active involvement of the people the monument itself could not have been built.

GRANBY WORKSHOP, ASSEMBLE, 2015

Following the Toxteth riots in 1981, many of the houses in four of Granby’s streets were demolished. Local residents re-appropriated the remaining cluster of dilapidated Victorian terrace houses and founded a community land trust. The design/art collective Assemble was hired and developed a project for the refurbishing of the housing, public space and the provision of new employment. The Granby workshop was launched as a continuation of the process of physical transformation. It produces and sells a series of handmade items designed for the refurbished flats. Some are made from the rubble from the four streets. The items are distributed to the rest of the world as small monuments to everyday life; they remind us of the capacity to transform the derelict spaces of injustice and ill-management (by the state) into something empowering. The project brings objects from one dwelling place into the dwelling place of others. You live with and from the monument, which makes it a reciprocal relationship: the transformation process forms the monument and the monument forms the transformation process. The social critique of gentrification...
unfolds in the form of an affirmative action, revealing a concrete alternative, which makes this “ready-made” monument an expression of alternative political representation.

These monumental strategies combine different visual and spatial approaches that can be used in addressing the position of the excluded and sub/proletarianised. But if we start integrating these strategies within the monument to the sub/urban riot we may find ourselves embarking on very different paths: should the monument instead permanently inform and motivate an awareness and transformation of oppressive conditions; or should the monument attempt to expand on the solidarities of the excluded? Also, if the rioters are those that in some violent way resist the intersectional oppression, and are also those that occupy the structural position of the (most) excluded, then the most obvious trap would be to merely represent them in memoriam, either to glorify (romanticise) or victimise their marginalisation.

**Missed encounter: Fanon and Fourier and sub/urban riots**

The re-appropriation of past emancipatory figures refers to the abovementioned gesture whereby the Situationists in 1969 returned the figure of Fourier to its plinth at the moment a general strike was about to begin. Fourier was not a politically neutral figure, but someone that envisioned a utopian society and launched an alternative urban and political practice. We introduce Fanon as a part of this narrative to trace the history of a missed encounter, posing the question: what would have happened if Fanon – who died in 1961 – had seen and analysed the sub/urban riots, and by contrast, what course would the riots have taken had the rioters articulated their struggles in a dialogue with Fanon? Fanon has remained one of the most important anti-colonial thinkers, who developed a ground-breaking analytical approach that combined a critique of racism and class exploitation in the twilight of a slow de-colonisation process unfolding both in the former colonies and in former colonial centres. Politically, he showed that the history and presence of colonialism are embedded in a cycle of continuous and systematic violence, against which a certain amount of political violence on the part of the colonised perpetrated against their oppressors is necessary. Violence as such re-enters political thought, but is far removed from the concept[jion] of violence for the sake of violence. Instead, violence needs to be politically articulate and understood as stemming

from a sense of helplessness and related unbearable living conditions. Instead of focusing on the proletariat as the traditional revolutionary subject Fanon turned to those even more excluded: the lumpenproletariat. These dangerous classes paved the way towards a new understanding of (future) revolutions that could not be ascribed to a singular historical subject. The historical subject about which we may speculate exists beyond the Western metropolis and dwells in the favelas, slums and ghettos of the developing countries, too; it is only a subject in the making and does not yet enjoy any politically constituted organisation. Furthermore, the history of the “surplus” populations of the urban areas can be related to descendants of the colonised, and more distantly the enslaved. They may be viewed either as second-rate citizens compared with the majority of the more affluent population, or as precariously positioned migrants from ex-colonies in the face of post-imperial nostalgia and xenophobia. Hence, the lesson that Fanon originally taught us about the colonised subject ought to be re-appropriated in the alternative context of the inner cities and banlieues. His lesson should be tested through the political practice of the urban poor and marginalised. Fanon, in his famous book *Wretched of the Earth*, which was censored in 1961, offered a clear statement against (post)colonial statues:

A world compartmentalized, Manichaean and petrified, a world of statues: the statue of the general who led the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge. A world cocksure of itself, crushing with its stoniness the backbones of those scarred by the whip. That is the colonial world. The colonial subject is a man penned in; apartheid is but one method of compartmentalizing the colonial world. The first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits. Hence the dreams of the colonial subject are muscular dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing. I dream I burst out laughing, I am leaping across a river and chased by a pack of cars that never catches up with me. During colonization the colonized subject frees himself every day between nine in the evening and six in the morning.19

The conditions of the urban periphery in the West are not identical to the colonial condition. Yet there are strong traces of racism and colonialism projected by the majority onto the urban subaltern classes. This is why the gesture of a return to a figure of liberation should be understood as a creative re-appropri-

19 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 2004, p. 15
Notes on the Archive of Dissent: Monument to Sub/Urban Riots

Speculative proposal: between social and aesthetic practices

The preliminary proposal consists of an array of monumental strategies that we have taken from our analysis of alternative monuments and could roughly be clustered around two axes: firstly, by spatial interventions that launch a set of social practices; here the monument focuses on a concrete action in a given context. And secondly, by approaches that focus more on monumental form, inventing new aesthetic practices that make visible and trigger political confrontation:

- **Reviving damaged residential buildings in the aftermath of riot.** This could constitute a new version of “renewal”, one that empowers the existing community and revives the physical structures according to the residents’ ideas. This strategy does not end with a completed renovation, but continues to build the community in and as an on-going process. It is reminiscent of one aspect of Fourier’s urban socio-political experiment combined with the work of the Assemble collective, which helped residents create jobs and turn ruins into products that would later be re-invested in community-building. However, a problem immediately arises: how do we prevent such approaches from becoming increasingly apolitical and based (as neoliberal economists would have it), purely on self-supporting structures?

- **Building common spaces based on social ownership, be it from ruins, shuttered centres, emptied buildings.** As Hirschhorn’s monumental practice implies, the monument should be conceived as a device to empower the community through the exchange of ideas, to negotiate, to organise the struggle, and as a space for leisure activities. In this respect, this closely resembles what Fanon called an on-going process of “decolonisation” and affirms the emancipatory powers of the oppressed that would not simply imitate the social patterns laid down by the West.

- **Breaking up spatial and social segregation with trans-community networks.** What Hirschhorn achieved was to bring the visitors to Documenta and the population of marginal districts together. This can either take place through the creation of common places, or mobility between different places. First and foremost, however, it must be recognised that this is a spatial strategy for the design of a monument that connects people. The monument could be
further elaborated by developing trans-community solidarity networks that would establish ties between the rural countryside and the urban periphery. This strategy can be interpreted along the lines of Fourier’s utopia, but it also concretely draws from recent practices from Greece and Spain.

- **Re-appropriation of a historical figure of liberation (Frantz Fanon).** We draw from the work of Hirschhorn and the Situationists, whose spatial interventions were based on the work of certain intellectuals (e.g. Bataille, Gramsci, Fourier). From a different perspective Esther and Jochen Gerz created a monument where visitors themselves become co-authors of its alterity, and in this respect represent both figures of liberation and a mirror to the present society offering an alternative opinion to the common consensus. A process of negotiation and confrontation begins. We suggest that the monument could be materialised in an alternative educational infrastructure, in a socially-owned library or info-shop that “arms” local residents with emancipatory and programmatic ideas, but also attempts to collectively imagine an alternative world.

- **Organising politicisation of and solidarity among the excluded urban poor through new monumental form.** This approach draws inspiration from Tatlin and the Yugoslav monuments to revolution, and could imagine a set of formal-aesthetic devices that execute a visual transition from riot to emancipation. The central question of this memorial form would be to launch a counter-narrative of the oppressed and articulate the link between the no-longer-existing political movements and the most excluded sectors of the population. This refers to a shift that Fanon made from the revolutionary subject of the proletariat to the dangerous classes, i.e. the lumpenproletariat.

- **In search of legal loopholes that could challenge the consensus that the riot is not supposed to be commemorated.** Gerz’s activist intervention into what a monument is and what it should be serves as an example that intervened in the physical space of a square and emphasised the standpoint of the oppressed and the forgotten. Similarly, the monument form could play with an aspect of trans-locality, drawing on riots from elsewhere and thus building critical awareness. For Fanon, the guerrilla struggle was pivotal in order to fight the stronger oppressor. It can be argued that a similar lesson is equally valid in the struggle occurring in the memorial landscape, which organises a dominant consensus that silences and makes the riot invisible as such.
Find unfinished infrastructures/urban furniture. Similar to the intervention of “détournement” by the Situationists to the Fourier statue, the existing and unfinished elements (e.g. the plinth) can be occupied, re-appropriated and reframed with minimal interventions.

**Conclusion: for a lasting encounter of memory and riot**

It is clear from the arguments herein that any work – academic, artistic or political – that attempts to mobilize an emancipatory past for present and even future sub/urban riots must, as its first task, challenge the dominant consensus on the very definition of a riot, taking account of its different modalities. Instead of outright negation and demonization we must recognise the simple fact that riots will reappear in the future; and, more importantly, that they reveal a political dimension of contemporary life that is usually overlooked. Despite the considerable gap between the emancipatory potential and the political subjectification of the oppressed on the urban periphery, this is no time to despair, not the moment to disinvest from these spaces of hopelessness. The second task of this research was to challenge the official stance of the state’s national memory and its dominant regime as regards memorial representations, while at the same time presenting a set of counter-narratives and monumental strategies that could prove useful for future proposals and realisations. To conclude, we opt to participate in a more lasting encounter between memory and the sub/urban riot, in short a counter-archive of dissent, with its attendant proper dissensual form, one that can address the riot from its own interiority.
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The publication *Performing the Museum* can be seen as a continuation of the experiment initiated by this project, this book is actually an agent of reading – a reader of this project. It is just one of a number of possible readers of the current situation at museums, seeking answers to long-standing questions related to the museum’s performance: How do museums perform their public role? How do they relate to the existing cultural, social and political circumstances? How do they perform in terms of public education, public accountability and public access? This reader consists of texts written by invited authors of various backgrounds and critical approaches together with curators from the institutions participating in this experiment, and also presents a part of the documentation of the project actions – interpreters’ readings of the resources of the museums involved.

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