

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

EXHIBITIVE CARTOGRAPHIES II

Critical Instrumentation, Exhibitive and Curatorial Narratives

Zagreb Architects Society (DAZ)

25 January, 2024

ORGANIZED by Croatian Section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA Croatia)

CO-ORGANIZERS Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split

INVITED LECTURERS

Maja Ćirić, PhD (curator and independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia); Professor Marina Gržinić, PhD (Institute of Philosophy ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia); Želimir Koščević (curator, Zagreb, Croatia); Jovanka Popova (curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, North Macedonia)

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Exhibitive Cartographies

25 January, 2024

**EXHIBITIVE CARTOGRAPHIES (CRITICAL INSTRUMENTATION, EXHIBITIVE AND CURATORIAL
NARRATIVES)**

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this conference is to present, examine and contextualise curatorial practices in contemporary art, in Croatian and in a region, but also specifically in regard to our lecturer Pedro Lorente's thesis on "museums as cathedrals of urban modernity".¹ It is important to note that the history of curatorial practices is a relatively little studied area in Croatian art history, while it is increasingly present at the international level. Our objective with this conference is to address this important subject at the crossroads of art criticism, theory and practice. There has been increasing interest in exhibition history and contextualisation of curatorial practices in art-historical research. While we can trace back exhibition history in the modern sense of a universal right to publicness to the revolutionary turmoils of the late 18th century, it was the avant-garde tendencies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that gave the history of exhibition practices a new dimension, paving the way for innovative methods, participation and the questioning of existing institutional policies, contextual frameworks and models of presentation. The emergence of neo-avantgarde and the institutional critique of the 1950s and 1960s destabilised the conventional meanings and institutional positions of artists, artworks, curators and audiences, which led to a more active role of curators in mediating new artistic expressions, but also to radical questioning of their own position. Curators became increasingly active in the creation of meaning, assuming more and more often, with their gestures or texts, the role of meta-artists, especially in the domain of conceptual art. Redefining the position of the curator-author has increasingly come into focus since the emergence of conceptual/neo-avantgarde tendencies in art.

The starting point of the conference is the curatorial figure of Želimir Koščević, the 2018 laureate of AICA Croatia's Annual Award and Lifetime Achievement Award. Exposed to late modernism but also to counterculture in former Yugoslavia, as a relatively young art historian, Želimir Koščević won a fellowship from Stockholm's Moderna Museet. In 1969 – a period of radical social progress – he worked as an assistant to its then director, Pontus

¹ Jesus Pedro Lorente, *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity: The First Museums of Contemporary Art 1800-1930*, Farnham: Ashgate, 1998.

Hultén, in organising the legendary *Poetry Must Be Made by All! Transform the World!* exhibition that featured gestures and attitudes in lieu of material artworks, thereby opening up exhibition space not only for early conceptual practice but also for radical politics by encouraging supporters of Black Panthers to gather within the exhibition. The echo of the avant-garde's entangling of life and art and the view of art as a transformative engine of social and political perception that was present in Pontus Hultén's practice would go on to motivate Koščević to take on a more experimental and daring approach to exhibition curating, but also to question the very exhibition format, which he continued to do in his curatorial beginnings, upon his return to Zagreb. This reshaping of Koščević's curating (and 'student practice') preceded his return to Zagreb and coincided with the programmatic openness and the generation's artistic experimentation at the Student Centre in Zagreb. Koščević worked there between 1966 and 1979 as head of the SC Gallery, and during this period introduced a series of innovations to its programme. Some of the innovations in Koščević's early curatorial approach include the exhibitions *Imaginary Museum*, *Exhibition of Women and Men*, *Hit Parade*, *Postal Delivery* and *Total Action*, held both outside and inside the SC Gallery. These exhibitions encouraged experimental practices and provided space to young artists; they opened up to an international exchange of ideas, interdisciplinarity, departure from the gallery and democratisation of art. A gallery newspaper was also published, aimed at self-contextualisation.

The conference is part of a wider program that includes the workshop "How to Write about Contemporary Art" which seeks to examine relations between art and contemporarity, the discourses that shape them and figures who produce them. As a follow-up to the conference, a major focus will be on analysing the role of the curator, institutional and non-institutional. The role of the contemporary art curator has radically expanded in the art world over the last several decades, and we could argue that the curatorial figure – whether one working within an institution or independently and non-institutionally – is a pivotal segment in understanding contemporary art. The main coordinates of this workshop range from drawing attention to the role of curators and curatorial collectives when acquiring relevant insights into the contemporary cultural context to examining the role of museums and galleries in contemporary society. By reviewing an exhibition event or how a particular collection is displayed, we examine the selection policies (acquisition policies, choice of

exhibits). We examine how curators – with their critical and theoretical texts but also their practice – shape the history of contemporary art and anticipate/create future tendencies; we can also see how artists assume curatorial positions at museums, applying artistic methods – in lieu of linear museological narratives – such as the use of permanent collections or existing artefacts as materials, playing with the ways of seeing and with the exhibition as an all-around experience. The workshop in 2024 will be held in Zagreb, in collaboration with ULUPUH (led by Miona Muštra, with Silva Kalčić, Klaudio Štefančić and Vesna Vuković) and in Rijeka, in collaboration with the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMSU) – led by Ivana Meštrov and Ksenija Orelj.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Assistant Professor Silva Kalčić, PhD (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split), President of AICA Croatia with Associate Professor Asja Mandić, PhD (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sarajevo) and Professor Krešimir Purgar, PhD (Academy of Arts and Culture, J.J. Strossmayer University, Osijek)

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE ASSISTANT

Miona Muštra (lecturer at Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb)

The conference EXHIBITIVE CARTOGRAPHIES III will be held at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, on 14 May, 2024.

VISUAL IDENTITY

Niko Mihaljević. Vladimir Jakolić, photo from the *Exhibition of Women and Men*, June 26, 1969, Student Centre Gallery, Zagreb. Fine Arts Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb, Inv. No.: SC-46/F1

Programme and Book of Abstracts

PROGRAMME Thursday, 25 January

15:00 – 16:00 h

Marina Gržinić

From Turbo-Capitalism in Central Europe to Necrocapitalism in the Global World: Life and Esthetics in a New Guise

Zoom Meeting <https://akbild-ac-at.zoom.us/j/61632927434>

18:00 – 21:00 h

Zagreb Architects Society Ban Jelačić's Square 3/I

Chair Silva Kalčić

Želimir Košćević

My Curatorial Practice 1966–2020

Maja Ćirić

Silently Cancelling the Present: Unveiling Narratives, Exclusion, and Representation in Post-Yugoslav Context

Jovanka Popova

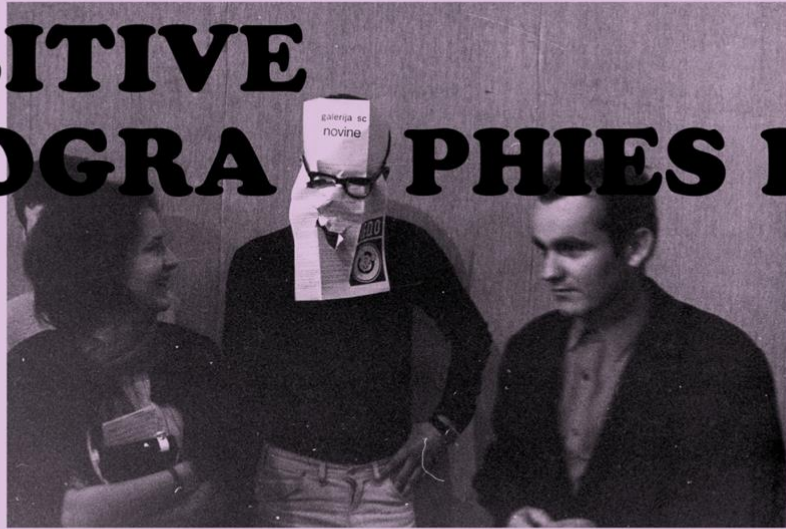
Curating as a Resilience Practice

Pedro Lorente

Contemporary Art Museums as Testing Grounds of Critical Museology

Discussion

EXHIBITIVE CARTOGRAPHIES II



**CRITICAL INSTRUMENTATION,
EXHIBITIVE AND CURATORIAL
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CONFERENCE
2024

From Turbo-Capitalism in Central Europe to Necrocapitalism in the Global World: Life and Esthetics in a New Guise

Marina Gržinić

Exhibition cartography is about considering the arrangement, placement and relationship within a space of divisions. The reference area is Central Europe on the axis of Slovenia and Austria and the former Yugoslavia. In art theory, exhibition cartography overlaps with discussions of spatial necroesthetics, and the role of the viewer in shaping experience that calls for the social contract of the image. A connection will also be made to Black Lives Matter, Muslim realities in contemporary art and processes on one side, and of disempowering on the other side. A special focus will be placed on trans* and intersectionality and formats of working with a decoloniality of cultural geography in constructing exhibitions and interventions.

Marina Gržinić (1958, Ljubljana) a full professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and head of the Studio for Post-Conceptual Art (Dpt. Art and Intervention). She is also a Principal Research Associate at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), Institute of Philosophy, Ljubljana. Gržinić is a philosopher, theorist and artist with a career spanning forty years. Gržinić's theoretical work focuses on contemporary philosophy and aesthetics after modernism. She received her PhD from the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana in 1995, making her one of the first, if not the first, in Slovenia and perhaps in the entire former Yugoslavia to receive a PhD in philosophy and virtual reality, cyberspace, cyberfeminism, postcolonial theory, French structuralism and media theory. Her international speaking and teaching engagements include the Centre for Global Studies and the Humanities at Duke University, North Carolina, U.S.A; UCLA, California, USA, etc.

She is principal investigator of the art-based research project "Conviviality as Potentiality" (FWF AR679, 2021–25). She co-edited with J. Pristovšek and S. Uitz the volume *Opposing Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Turbo-Nationalism: Rethinking the Past for New Conviviality* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020). She is co-curator of the international group exhibition "Stories of Traumatic Pasts: Counter-Archives for Future Memories" (with S. Uitz and C. Jauernik, Weltmuseum Wien, 2020–21).

My Curatorial Practice 1966–2020

Želimir Košćević

It is difficult to say when my so-called curatorial practice was formed, but this 'practice' almost certainly began long before it was defined as such over the last decades. Can the outset of my 'practice' be tied in with the exhibition projects of Alfred Barr, who in 1929, when he was 29 years old, became the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York? Or perhaps with Pontus Hultén, who in 1958, at the age of 34, became the director of the Stockholm Museum of Modern Art? Both have, each in their own way, radically transformed the traditional way in which museums operated. Or maybe it could be related to those freelancers (let's call them curators), such as Rudi Fuchs, Germano Celant, Harald Szeeman, Rene Block, Kaspar König, Laszlo Gloser, Robert Storr etc., who entered with their original projects and brought new life into the traditional museum.

Želimir Košćević (Zagreb, 1939) graduated in 1964 in art history and ethnology from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. From 1966 to 1979 he was head of the Student Centre Gallery, and from 1980 until his retirement, he was a senior curator and museum advisor at the Zagreb City Galleries, and later at the Museum of Contemporary Art. He lectured in museology as an external associate at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, and since 1983 he has been a court expert witness for 20th century art. In 1993 and 1994, he was an advisor at the São Paulo Biennial, among other things. He published over six hundred studies, reviews and articles, at home and abroad, and actively participated in numerous scientific and professional conferences around the world. He curated more than forty exhibitions and exhibition projects. In 2002, he founded the Lang Gallery in Samobor, where he lives. He was a two-term president of the Croatian National Committee of ICOM, and the laureate of the AICA Croatia Annual Award for 2019.

Silently Cancelling the Present: Unveiling Narratives, Exclusion, and Representation in Post-Yugoslav Context

Maja Ćirić

This presentation intricately investigates the subtle dynamics of contemporary narrative control, exclusion, and representation within the institutional framework in the Post-Yugoslav territory and its surrounding. Titled “Silently Cancelling the Present,” the study takes a nuanced approach, highlighting institutional deviations from current actualities, where the reinforcement of the Yugoslav narrative serves as just one facet of a multifaceted exploration.

The research aims to shed light on the intentional or serendipitous nature of incorporating the Yugoslav narrative. However, the scope extends beyond this, delving into broader institutional deviations from present actualities. The paper examines specific artistic positions and artworks featured in these institutional contexts to uncover the interconnected dynamics between curatorial decisions, representation, and the control of narratives in the dynamic landscape of contemporary art.

Key questions addressed include not only the strength of the Yugoslav identity in contrast to subsequent artistic positions but also a comprehensive exploration of broader institutional deviations from current realities. This encompasses technological and scientific innovation, technofeudalism, war terror, and their impact on or exclusion from the contemporary institutional discourse. The study navigates through themes of cultural diversity, post-socialist experiences, and the challenges associated with the trends in the Balkan region, all within the context of silently cancelling the present.

By offering a unique and comprehensive perspective on the integration of the Yugoslav narrative within institutional settings, this paper seeks to deepen our understanding of the profound significance and impact on the lack of criticality in the discourse of contemporary art. It places emphasis on the regressive aspects inherent in silent acts of cancellation within institutional contexts while acknowledging the broader trends that shape the landscape of present-day European art discourse and the impending challenges brought by the AI revolution.

Maja Ćirić, PhD (1977, Belgrade), is an independent curator and art critic, seamlessly blending the two roles. Originally focusing on the geopolitics of the curatorial, her interests evolved towards the multipolar geopolitics of planetary computation post the digital turn in 2020. Engaged in phygital projects, conferences, and exhibitions at the intersection of art, science, and technology, she also curates in the metaverse. Her impactful career includes

serving as the curator (2007) and commissioner (2013) of the Serbian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Noteworthy curatorships include the BJCEM Mediterranea Young Artist Biennale in Tirana, Albania (2017) and the 20th Pančevo Art Biennale in Pančevo, Serbia (2022). Her critical writings grace esteemed publications such as *FlashArt*, *Obieg*, *Artforum*, *Artmargins Online*, *Arts of the Working Class*, *springerin*, and *Third Text*, Sternberg Press. She is a recipient of prestigious awards, including the ISCP Curator Award, Dedalus Foundation Curatorial Research Award, Lazar Trifunović Award, ArtsLink Independent Projects Award, and Visual Artists Ireland Curatorial Research Award. She is or was a guest speaker at Harvard University, Centre Pompidou, MAC VAL, MNAC Bucharest, and recent conferences like the AICA Serbia Conference, or guest lecturer at institutions such as the Fine Arts Academy of China, Hangzhou, Faculty of Fine Arts and Faculty of Architecture at the University of Arts, and Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, etc.

Curating as a Resilience Practice

Jovanka Popova

“Curating as a Resilience Practice” critically explores the multifaceted role of curating in the contemporary socio-political and cultural landscape, in the field of the intersection between social clashes and cultural efficacy, contemplating whether curatorial practices can serve as agents of social solidarity, or as conduits for diverse political agendas. The narrative navigates the evolving relationship between art and politics, unveiling how art operates as a strategic tool for political intervention, economic rejuvenation, and the redistribution of geopolitical power.

Within the intricate web of cultural production, the presentation scrutinizes the delicate balance between aesthetic contemplation of politics and a deliberate avoidance of direct politicization. It also questions the challenges of maintaining a critical stance within art practices, highlighting efforts that oscillate between the limits imposed by the state, the market, and freelance activism. The final goal is to position artistic practices as integral contributors to democratic politics, portraying the role of the curator as a connector between privileged institutions and socially excluded groups.

Jovanka Popova (1980, Skopje) is a curator at Museum of Contemporary Art – Skopje and curator and program coordinator at Press to Exit Project Space, organization for contemporary art and curatorial practices. She is a PhD candidate at Faculty of Media and Communication, Singidunum University in Belgrade, Serbia. She has curated exhibitions in the contemporary art field in North Macedonia and worked on international curatorial projects. She was the curator of the North Macedonian Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019, and curator and coordinator for the 14th Manifesta Biennale in Prishtina, Parallel Program in MoCA Skopje for 2021–2023. She also presented her work at the Humboldt University, Central European University Budapest, Goethe University Frankfurt, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Bahcesehir University, Istanbul, Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts and other institutions. She served as a board member at MoCA – Skopje. She was executive director of Jadro Association of the Independent Cultural Scene, North Macedonia and she is president of the Macedonian Section of AICA International Association of Art Critics.

Contemporary Art Museums as Testing Grounds of Critical Museology

Pedro Lorente

Since the 1970s, critical artists have created artwork that confronts the authority of temples of culture: this practice, known as “institutional critique,” is also inspiring curatorial revisionism. It was about time! Artists have always been the foremost and keenest critics of museums, however, should museologists persist in vicariously delegating such reflexive reassessments? For a museum to be a critical institution, it is not enough to display critical art, in fact, it is more definitive to curate critically. No longer content with showing off their puzzling buildings and collections to society, museums also wish to draw attention to their own curatorial endeavours.

Critical tendencies towards museographical self-reference are gaining momentum in the 21st century. However, more particularly, a historical reconsideration vis-à-vis modernity and its modes of display is now affecting museums of modern and contemporary art. By self-referentially retrieving former displays, museums are thus offering us a reflection of themselves as narratives under permanent (re)construction. What is ultimately exhibited is the museum itself and its history. Indeed, the key point is not so much to preserve testimonies of a museum’s pedigree, but to instigate museological reflections about its past and present; even more so when museums have polemically discontinued their historical presentations. Re-assessing former displays and the criteria implemented in their staging do encourage public (self)reflection about changing curatorial practices and the evolution of museography.

On the other hand, increasingly more museums are devoting specific spaces to reviewing their respective pasts, presents and futures as institutions. However, these rooms devoted to their own history tend to recurrently remain well apart from the museum’s regular trail regardless of whether they are devised as an introduction, the end of the visit, or as both. I am sorry to say that contemporary art museums rarely devote any space to telling their own history, perhaps because most of them are quite newly established institutions. Yet, some

exceptional cases are producing curatorially prominent autobiographies. Most of these, I must say, are celebratory spaces that boast past and present deeds, but a critical stance can sometimes be found.

If only more museums would accompany reflections on their past with testimonies about present debates and future challenges! Art critics and cultural journalists could be excellent allies in this quest for public reflexivity in museums of modern/contemporary art by inspiring inquisitive reactions concerning the changing curatorial practices in the history of institutions. This is a personal aspiration I would like to encourage together with my colleagues of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA).

Pedro Lorente (1961, Saragosa) is Full Professor of Art History at the University of Saragossa (Spain), where he leads the research group Aragonese Observatory of Art in the Public Sphere. His last book in English, *Reflections on Critical Museology: Inside and Outside Museums*, was published in 2022 by Routledge. The same publisher released in 2019 his previous book: *Public Art and Museums in Cultural Districts*. Ashgate published in 1998 the book based on his PhD (supervised by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill at the Department of Museum Studies of Leicester University): *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity: The First Museums of Contemporary Art, 1800–1930*, which was the prequel to his best-known publication, *The Museums of Contemporary Art: Notion and Development* (also available in Spanish, French and Turkish).

Prof. Lorente is member of the editorial board of specialized journals such as *Museum and Society*, *Museum History Journal*, *Museology: International Scientific Electronic Journal*, *MIDAS: Museus e Estudos Interdisciplinares*, *Culture et Musées*, *MODOS*, *ICOFOM Study Series*, *Journal of International Museum Education*, *Museo y Territorio*, *Revista de Museología*, or *Museos.es*, etc.

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