

T>R>I>B>E>

EXERCISES IN TRANSITORY ART



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T.R.I.B.E.

FOREWORD BY MARTIN BRICELJ BARAGA

T.R.I.B.E.

This book is a result of a longer process that started years ago with the establishment of T.R.I.B.E. – Transitory Research (Residency) Initiative of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. T.R.I.B.E. was meant to be a research and residency network of the so-called ‘off’ spaces in the artworld, trying to connect the not so connected scenes of Balkans, Eastern Europe and beyond.

We started T.R.I.B.E. with 4 diverse organizations: MoTA – Museum of Transitory Art from Ljubljana, Artos Foundation from Nicosia, Amber Festival from Istanbul and Ciant from Prague, alongside several partners, artists and initiatives. What we realized before establishing the network is that we had always met at the same places and venues – most often in the Western Europe. Therefore, we wanted to give artists and cultural activists the opportunity to meet and create in different, often unheard, or hidden contexts.

T.R.I.B.E. issued an open call “Transition & Utopia”^{**} and offered a shared residency format to both artists & researchers where they would travel, research and create in more than one city consequently. Within the first two years, we developed several residencies and research papers, as well as working meetings and symposiums.

This book is a collection of those works and ideas that directly or indirectly reflect the theme “Transition & Utopia” or relate to Transitory Art. It could be read as a book, as a manual or as the first introduction to discovering transitory art that has been published. We didn’t want it to be another art exhibition catalogue, so we included a few practical tools – interviews, articles and manuals that make an addition to the book itself. For instance, the manual on how to hack public space with sound by Nik Nowak and a manual on how to expropriate money from the banks by Nuria Güell.

“Transitory”

We named TRIBE by the term “transitory” as a growing experiment and an effort to try to define transitory art through an organic process. This is why we have invited artists, whose poetics and tactics are very different from each other, so that the curation of the whole project would offer a more complex reading of transitory art.

MoTA – Museum of Transitory Art, whose name also includes the term “transitory”, never wanted to define this term in a manifesto manner. We never saw transitory art as a term that would be defined by a manifesto, but rather through different practices and thoughts that would correlate to today’s realities. We never saw the term as an exclusive truth or an artistic genre or direction, but rather as an inclusive term that could name the phenomena and practices we have been interested in since its existence.

MoTA is a collective of individuals, and each one enters this field from a different position. MoTA is therefore not a museum defined with walls or a building, but rather a collection of people and ideas that exist and are active within its programs.

But the term transitory within T.R.I.B.E. is to be read not solely from an artistic point of view, but as a term that relates to the transitional times and the very specific region we are working in. Within those 3 years, the issues we have raised in the open call Transition & Utopia have become a reality – Cyprus faced troika measures and frozen bank accounts, Istanbul became a battlefield of protesters demanding the citizen right to public space vs. corporate powers, which penetrate everyday politics & normal lives, and Slovenia has fallen into a deeper political, social and economic crisis as well.

Moreover, not only the Balkans & East Europe, the whole Europe is in search of its identity, the one that has always been defined and expressed as the opposite to its “other” side. The very year 2014, with growing nationalist tensions, despair and a lack of vision in the political & economic field in the whole Europe, resembles so much the year 1914 and the outbreak of the big war that it almost seems unreal how much history repeats itself.

DEFINING TRANSITORY ART

FOREWORD BY NEJA TOMŠIČ

*'it is difficult to get the news from poems,
yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there'*

William Carlos Williams, quoted on www.alfredojaar.com

In May 2014, ARTos Foundation and MoTA organised a three-day symposium to conclude the first two years of TRIBE residencies. The symposium took place in Cyprus, perhaps one of the most visually scenic and illustrative countries for the topics we were addressing in the past two years – the topics of transitoriness and transition. The aim of this symposium was foremost to discuss and reflect on the present realities we are facing as artists in the broadest sense of the word – as critical and curious human beings who aim to make changes. Our purpose was to structure a gathering that would make us understand our practices better, and consequently conclude this project with a clearer idea of what transitory art is.

The symposium was roughly divided in four topics: tactical media, spaces, transitory art and sound, following the main trails we identified in the artistic practice of TRIBE artists. But in the end, the spaces panel led to a discussion on programming and emotions, transitory art became a discussion on death and archiving, and tactical media was about dismantling any kind of definitions, starting with art. Organically, we tackled and discussed questions that move us beyond categorisations, mediums and definitions.

What is transitory art? As the founders and directors of MoTA, we are asked this question often. Like in the Little Prince, we have an answer ready for adults: transitory art is the convergence of new media art and contemporary art, the convergence of analog and digital, and art that captures the transitional mode of the present moment. But for others, the answer lies somewhere else. There is no definition that would satisfy us, because in practice and in theory, we always find something that doesn't fit in. In fact, I left Cyprus knowing transitory art does not need a definition.

Our museum started because we wanted to build a museum for us, a museum that would reflect the present; and transitory art is art that defies definitions – a museum that happens on the streets when like-minded people meet and collaborate, open-endedly, an artistic collective that is fluid, and dynamic, that responds and reflects, that changes its mission and methodology so that it responds to the situations we want to address, a museum of art that is in a constant search for the uncertain and the undefined. The introductory essays respond to the question "What is transitory art?", opening the way for some of the possible answers, yet still not creating borders where there aren't any. Written by our close collaborators, who work with us closely on both conceptual and practical levels, these contributions are an invaluable source for reflections on the facets of transitory art.

The second part of this publication is organised as an overview of concrete projects related to TRIBE. TRIBE was conceived as an experimental platform that would connect like-minded organisations in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, with the aim of creating a shared residency network, a collaborative approach to curating, and a platform for international co-productions. Projects were selected through an open call and by invitation. Roughly twenty artists and researchers participated in the residency program, while more than fifty others participated in different TRIBE activities.

The second part thus includes projects that were conceived and produced for TRIBE residencies (Azahara Cerezo, Ohira + Bonilha, Petko Dourmana, Flemming and Swintak); projects that are older, but respond to the aims of TRIBE (Jan Vormann, Nik Nowak, Nuria Guell, Société Réaliste, Karina Smigla-Bobinski); and projects that remained only project ideas or were not yet fully realised (Flemming and Swintak, Markus Jeschaunig, Gabey Tjon A Tham). They are presented in diverse ways – some as drafts, concepts and diaries, others as conversations, essays and visual documentation. The selection includes artists working in all media, and its editorial approach supports the diversity of artists and their ideas.

This is not a textbook on transitory art practices, it is rather a mind map that could lead to any possible answer. Like in our previous edition, the Outerviews, the selection is personal. Artists that we respect and admire. Artists that we would like to see in our museum of the present moment, of life, of the streets. Artists that tell us more about life than the news.

THEME FOR RESIDENCIES 2013 & 2014: TRANSITION AND UTOPIA

Transition can be seen in acute forms in current political and social conditions and in the accelerated transition of social, religious and economic notions of value. In a situation of constant dislocation and perceived loss of values, transitory art can play a vital role in adjusting perceptions and bringing forward new forms, considering and analyzing not only longer-term solutions and structures, but also smaller, short-term interventions that can help trigger processes of change, including at the socio- and geo-political level.

While the Balkans did enjoy a period of the so-called independence, they are now increasingly subject to historical Austro-Hungarian interests in new forms, and re-entering a state of disempowered economic dependence. This is accompanied by a loss of respect for human rights in Europe, and growing nationalism at the European center as well as the peripheries.

Both center and periphery are experiencing an ever-harsher capitalist regime. This intensifies processes of migration from and across the Balkans. These conditions generate social, cultural and political uncertainty and a related lack of vision and leadership at a time when much of the region's populations remain traumatized by the constantly changing and deteriorating life conditions.

The forced and even catastrophic transitions occurring at all levels of human existence (intellectual, political, personal, media) produce widespread disorientation. Transitory Art is a process that responds to the consequences of transitional "realities", which create such a widespread state of fear and uncertainty, of social and mental dead-ends.

In the current state, change seems a utopia. We believe that the role of art is to allow space for the possibility of change, generating fresh perspectives and proposing new solutions. We search for concepts and ideas in which the citizens of a dreamless Europe regain their power to change.



CONSTANTINOPLE
MARMORA SEA
AEGEAN SEA
PROPONTIS

MEDITERRANEAN
CYPRUS
ALEXANDRIA
CAIRO
EGYPT

SCALES.
Turkish Miles 80 to a Degree
Persian Fathoms 70 to a Degree
British Nautical Miles 69 1/2 to a Degree
Common French Lieues 25 to a Degree

ARABIA PETRAEA



SIMULACRA

BY KARINA SMIGLA-BOBINSKI

DR. THOMAS HUBER

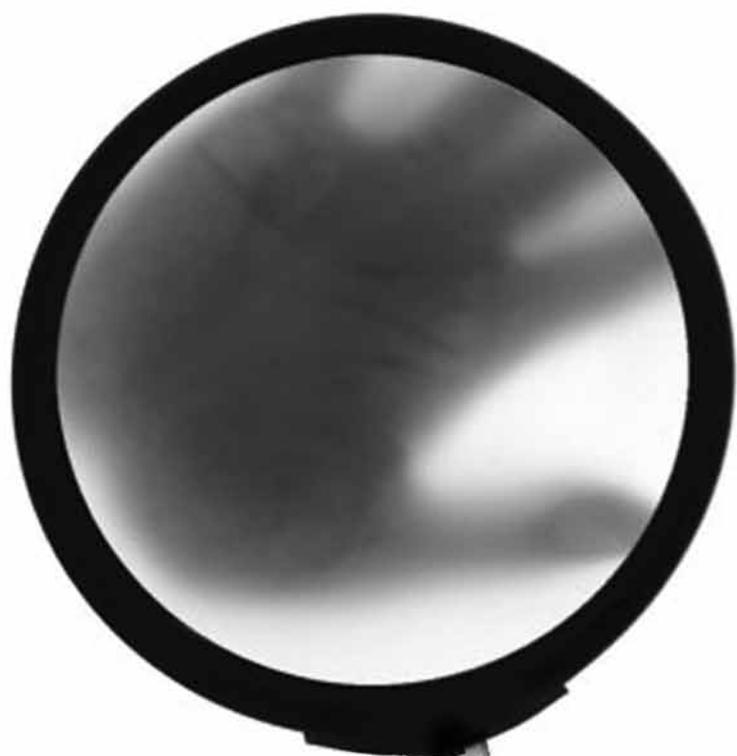
SIMULACRA is an optophysical experimental arrangement with which Karina Smigla-Bobinski successfully builds a bridge between media technology and perception philosophy. At its heart, four LCD monitor panels are assembled in the form of a hollow square and installed at eye level in the middle of the room. The ensemble appears internally gutted, overgrown and embraced. A tangle of cables and control devices pours out of the middle of the square. Several magnifying lenses dangle from chains all around it. The imageless glaring ray of the monitors gives the impression that the images had fallen out of them. What remains is the essence of the medium: Light.

The images are, however, still on the screens. All it takes to recognise them is the use of a small visual aid. In order to produce visible images, LCD-Monitors require placing several polarising films in front of and behind the pixel layers. These polarising films filter certain vibration directions of the emitting light. One of them is located on the surface of the monitor and can easily be scraped off using solvent and a glass scraper. The striped monitor no longer displays pictures, but shines with an intense white light.

The function is restored by holding a polarising film in front of the monitor, as in the SIMULACRA's magnifying glass version. It is an impressive, wondrous experience seeing images suddenly appear from the pure white by merely glancing at a seemingly transparent film. But if you turn the lens in front of your eyes, the polarising structure of the film creates wild colour shifts or even complementary negative images. When interacting with SIMULACRA, the visitors also discovered other visual experiences: if you hold a magnifying glass in front of each eye and turn them in different directions, the result is a hologram-like image. Two lenses stacked on each other in a ninety-degree angle darken the picture completely. In the design of the video images that run across the screens, Karina Smigla-Bobinski skilfully worked with the effect of an opaque glistening body of light: hands, feet and long black hair press against the inside surface of the screens, making them only visible on contact before disappearing into the white nothingness.

SIMULACRA penetrates deep into the discourses of subject and view, image and reality. Taking a magnifying glass (possibly waiting until one is free), positioning next to other people in front of the screens, viewing the images clearly or alienated with a magnifying glass – perceiving the work – requires physical actions, an active positioning, which surpasses the accustomed visual process. The viewers are consequently motivated to reflect on their patterns of perception. Smigla-Bobinski particularly tries to create awareness of the visual culture of the virtual space and its process of imagination.

Excerpt from "White Cube" by Dr. Thomas Huber, München, 2014







ADA
ANALOG INTERACTIVE
INSTALLATION /
KINETIC SCULPTURE /

BY KARINA SMIGLA-BOBINSKI

ARND WESEMANN

Similar to Tinguely's "Méta-Matics", "ADA" is an artwork with a soul. It acts itself. At Tinguely's, it is sufficient to be an unwearily struggling mechanical being. He took it wryly: the machine produces nothing but its industrial self-destruction. Whereas "ADA" by Karina Smigla-Bobinski is a post-industrial "creature", visitor-animated, creatively acting artist-sculpture, self-forming artwork, resembling a molecular hybrid such as the one from nanobiotechnology. It develops the same rotating silicon-carbon-hybrids, midget tools, miniature machines able to generate simple structures.

"ADA" is much larger, esthetically much more complex, an interactive art-making machine. Filled up with helium, floating freely in the room, a transparent, membrane-like globe, spiked with charcoals that leave marks on the walls, ceilings and floors. Marks which "ADA" produces quite autonomously, although moved by a visitor. The globe obtains an aura of liveliness and its black coal traces produce the appearance of a drawing. The globe, when put in action, fabricates a composition of lines and points that remain incalculable in their intensity, expression or form, however hard the visitor tries to control "ADA", to drive her, to domesticate her. Whatever they try out, they notice very soon that "ADA" is an independent performer, studding the originally white walls with drawings and signs. More and more complicated fabric structures arise. This is a movement experienced visually, which, like a computer, makes an unforeseeable output after entering a command. It is not by chance that "ADA" reminds of Ada Lovelace, who in the 19th century, together with Charles Babbage, developed the very first prototype of a computer. Babbage provided the preliminary computing machine, while Lovelace provided the first software. A symbiosis of mathematics with the romantic legacy of her father Lord Byron emerged there. Ada Lovelace intended to create a machine that would be able to create works of art, such as poetry, music or pictures, like an artist does. "ADA" by Karina Smigla-Bobinski follows this very tradition, as well as the one of Vannevar Bush, who built a Memex Machine (Memory Index) in 1930 ("We wanted the memex to behave like the intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain"), or the Jacquard's loom that needed a punch card in order to weave flowers and leaves; or the "analytic machine" of Babbage which extracted algorithmic patterns.

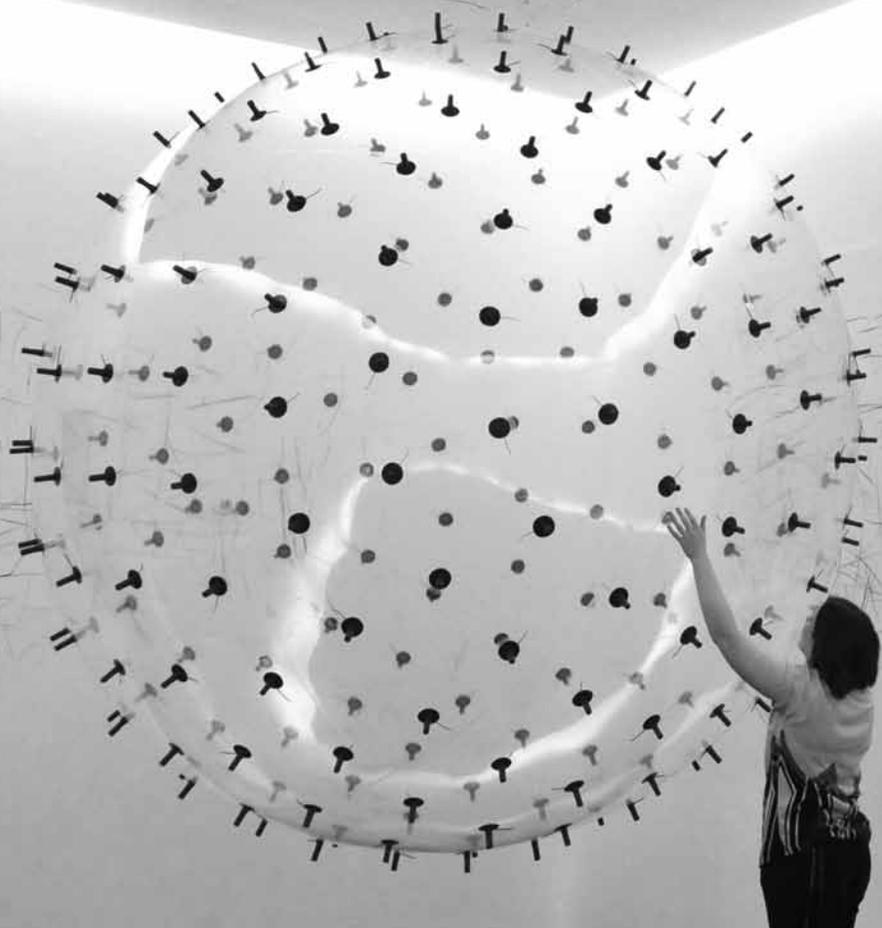
"ADA" uprose in a contemporary spirit of biotechnology. She is a vital performance-machine, and her patterns of lines and points get more and more complex as the number of the audience playing increases. Leaving traces that cannot be deciphered by neither the artist nor the visitors, let alone by "ADA" herself. And still, "ADA"'s work is unmistakably potentially humane because the only available decoding method for these signs and drawings is the association to which our brain corresponds especially when it sleeps: the truculent jazziness of our dreams.

© ADA - analog interactive installation by Karina Smigla-Bobinski

*WHEN THE WORLD
IS MAGNIFIED*

IDA HIRŠENFELDER IN DISCUSSION

WITH KARINA SMIGLA-BOBINSKI



Perhaps it would not be fair to say that the following discussion – taking place during Sonica Festival 2013 at the end of Karina Smigla-Bobinski's artistic residence at MoTA, Museum of Transitory Art in Ljubljana – is an interview. It would be far more accurate to call it a transcription of storytelling by the artist herself. Most important and most decisive for her artistic processes, narratives and contents, mediums and techniques, as I came to understand, is her overwhelming passion for art which is taking her to places she has never imagined, always embracing new experiences and manifestations of beauty, revealing paradoxes of society with artistic language with the gaze of a child and the brain of a mathematician.

Ida Hiršenfelder: *You are an artist with a long and versatile career. I find it quite interesting that you started using video and making video installations despite the fact that these technologies were largely unavailable in Poland in the 80s. The artists who, at the time, thought about video processes were mostly using film in a videastic manner. How did you start?*

Karina Smigla-Bobinski: When I was in elementary school, my father had a double 8 mm Russian film camera, and making films fascinated him very much. At that time, it has really never occurred to me that one day I will be an artist working with this kind of medium. Nevertheless, this was an extremely important experience. The double 8 mm camera tape had a really peculiar characteristic. After shooting for a few minutes, the tape needed to be turned around in a dark room in order for the images to be recorded on the flip side of the tape. So my father actually used a scarf to cover the film, and flipped it. What I still find very curious is that he was not making family portraits or films of people, but taking long and quite abstract footages of cars and time passing by.

IH: *Do you still have the tapes? Did you ever exhibit them?*

KSB: Yes, I still have the tapes. I never exhibited them, but I might do this, one day. It is not

yet the right moment. And, you know, I also have his camera that he had given to me when I was still only painting.

IH: *Until when did you only paint?*

KSB: Until the middle of my studies in Munich, actually. It was strange how I came to art. When I was little, I was mostly good in natural sciences in physics and mathematics, but when a teacher showed us a Malevich painting, something moved in me. Much later, when I was already at the academy in Munich, I set myself on a research about painting. I asked myself a question: What exactly is painting? Painting is colour and form. I examined both of them, and the world of colours really fascinated me. And hence I started exploring the qualities of light and space. This discovery also brought me to light installations and to video.

IH: *Are you still connected to the Polish art circles?*

KSB: I am starting to establish the communication once again, now. After over ten years of living abroad in Munich, I was back to Poland after I had been invited to install an exhibition in Krakow.

IH: *In the past few years, I saw a number of installations like "Morning Star", "Cone", "Ada" in the context of media art exhibitions. Before them, you were making light*

installations, a lot of video installations, and also some intense work on theatre scenography. Are you still making theatre or are you completely dedicated to media art now?

KSB: After working in the theatre for a number of years I was doubtful whether I can still make art by myself in my studio. This mood overwhelmed me for several reasons. The theatre piece was very important, informative, and we got to travel with it all around the world. Each time the performance ended, we would get an enthusiastic applause and appraisal, people saying how beautiful it was. But once the piece is done, after the first premier and a few reprisals, you yourself as an artist do not have to do anything creative anymore. You start to enjoy the applause and start to feel far too comfortable with the rewarding situation. This triggered an alarm in me. I thought I have to keep my focus on the work and specifically on the work alone. At a certain point in 2008, I decided to quit the theatre collaboration in order to develop my own artistic language. Soon after, I was invited to make an installation in Olympiapark in Munich, which I called "Island", a light installation in a public space. This park was built on the ruins from the Second World War. When the debris of the war was cleaned from the city, they piled it at its edge and formed artificial hills, which had concealed all the horror with neat and artificial slopes.

IH: *Like a repressed traumatic memory.*

KSB: I was wondering what would have happened if I was to cut this hill at its foot, place it on the water and make water reflect what is hidden inside. I installed hill-like shaped islands in the middle of a large pond seemingly floating on the water. I covered them with grass and they looked very natural to a casual observer. No one had thought that this was an art piece during the day, but during the night one could see a reflection of sleeping naked women in the water. For the piece, I only used a large diapositiva on each of the islands and plexi glass that was placed at the bottom of the floating islands. This was not a projection on the water, because it would not be physically possible. It was a reflection and thus gave an optical

illusion that the women were deep in the water.

IH: *Conceptually, it also makes a lot of sense to reflect the historical memory and not to project it.*

KSB: Yes, but also the idea of a video itself. In any of my installations, a video was never used just as a moving image. When the body of a dancer or the surface of the water was moving, I would prefer a still frame to a moving image. In the case of "Islands", I only used a single dia image and then let the water became a generator of movement and produce the other 23 frames. The water made the sleeping body look like it was breathing.

IH: *Very often, you also address hidden political or social agenda in your work, and at the same time your installations come off as formally very clean, also monumental in a way. You also often work with large scale installations. What are the reasons behind your decision to produce monumental and formal and seemingly formalistic works, and how does this answer the social questions that you are addressing? In "Ada" you also used scientific and neurological explanations.*

KSB: It all depends on what I want to communicate to people. I search for a form that is very present, which people can comprehend, feel immediately, and I think there is a better way to communicate. I believe that when you have a very strong emotion, you need to have something very subtle to mediate it. Or even better, you cannot say anything about the light without the shadow. In the aesthetic sense, this comes out as something clean. That is how I work with the installations. Another example would be mysticism. I know that in our society there is a lot of interest in getting in contact with spirituality, but a lot of people make a huge mistake when they start overemphasise it, and they become esoteric, they fail to recognize the importance of the material world. I like to speak about polarities.

IH: *Another very intriguing layer of your work is your approach to new technologies. You often produce a piece, which would not be*

possible without computers and laboratories, but you do not directly use computers. In fact, you even call “Ada” an analogue interactive installation. You used a similar principle in “Morning Star”, in which you built a rhizomatic structure with arrows. There was no new technologies, only a new vision of the physical.

KSB: I want to address people’s fear about the digital. I dislike the paranoid approach to the digital world that suggests that it takes our reality away from us, and that we become less alive when using it and somehow lost in the virtual space. Come on! A century ago with film and photography a lot of people were saying that that will be the end of painting, the end of culture. Why are we afraid of new technologies? The question is not technology itself, but how we use it. One thing is for sure, it is very wrong to be afraid of it. I wanted to take fear out of people, and prove that understanding the digital is simply exploring my understanding of the world.

IH: *It is interesting that many artists worked with virtual reality at the beginning of 2000s, but now no one talks about virtual reality and real reality anymore because we constantly live it, these two things are not separated anymore.*

KSB: The idea of fractals by Benoit Mandelbrot was first a mathematical question. If we can make a shape, can it be endless? Yes. It is not such a complex procedure. You have a line, you cut it in half in the middle, you cut it again in half, and again and again, and the story never ends. You get deeper and deeper. It seems absurd, but it is the beginning of the virtual. You may only imagine this shape existing in our head, it does not happen in the physical reality, but it tells everything about the way we see the world now.

IH: *It is interesting how, through history of art, and also through your own artistic history, we can observe a transition from abstract art to infinite art. Basically, virtuality is the possibility to think in the infinitum in the same sense we may think of the universe as an endless expansion until we cannot think about it anymore, even though it still continues. The way you play*

with the notion of virtuality in your latest interactive video installation “Simulacra” is very interesting. You place a body into a compressed space where the body itself ceases to exist. You find many times a very technical solution, and yet it is crucial for the content of the work.

KSB: For me, the technical solutions are never only formal. You have to understand that when I was a small child, everything was alive for me: the chair, the stairs, my puppet. They were not dead. When I started to use mechanical and technical objects in my work, I approached them in the same way I approach living matter. That is why it was so important for me to learn about the research of Masakazu Aono, the creator of the first nano-switch, and about the Argentine neurologist Dante Chialvo, who demonstrated that, in the nanoscale, it does not matter if something seems to be living or not. When I use technical things, I like to use them in a very clear way. I need to use a simple language, because I talk about a complex world. If I was to use a very complex language for complex things, we would get lost very quickly in this problem. I use a visual language that people can instinctively work with, and they should also feel touched. And I try to prevent people from becoming afraid of technology.

IH: *In “Simulacra”, the effect of the polarised screen was very magical, or as you say, I felt touched and emotionally addressed by it. Prior to looking through the magnifying glass with the polarised screen I never thought about the physical characteristics of an LCD screen or that this polarised screen is the only one enabling the picture to be visible. The stark white empty surface of the LCD without the polarised screen, and the image that was visible only through the lens, was a new discovery for me, and I’m always thrilled to learn something new, but in a sense, it was much more important for me, it was about what it actually made me see once I got over the pure fascination. The person in the cube in the video seemed to be in a very claustrophobic place, a very enclosed space, like it would be reaching out of*



◀ Karina Smigla-Bobinski / ADA / FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology)

the box and wanting to become physical. In this sense, it was very emotional to see this digital person trapped in the digital world and wanting to get out. What this piece also tells me is that the observer finds himself or herself in an opposite position. We want to become digital and limitless. I see a lot of people willingly post their intimate stories online through social networks. I think this can be very beautiful, not just an act of an exhibitionist. We are trapped in the physical space and we love to be online, on a smartphone, scrolling through something far less limited than our physical existence. We love to be in the digital space. Contrary to what some technophobes say, it does not trap us.

KSB: The way I try to do my art is to mediate it directly, so that the audience does not need knowledge, does not need to read a long text in order to understand what is happening there. I believe art does not need to be only for intellectuals, but for everybody. I want them to feel immediately addressed. But then, it depends on the person watching, what they are thinking about, what they have read, or know, or how interested they are to find out. I do not want to push people, they can decide on their own how far and how deep they want to explore what is

in front of them. But I do think about all these layers, this is why I make the installation in a way that it allows discovery of deeper layers of meanings. One of the key ideas behind "Simulacra" was also the fact that today, a lot of creativity or fantasy happens on the surface. In this way, connected to the screen, we are already in the matrix. What I wanted to do is to cut this illusion away ... like a Red Pill from „Matrix“. Saying, no, that what reaches your eyes and what you see are only different optical light pulses. The process is happening in your brain, it is and organic, analogue mental cinema. The claustrophobic figure trapped inside the screen in "Simulacra" is telling us a story of how it already exists in our heads. Hitchcock, one of the best filmmakers, worked on this notion of virtuality by showing a shadow, so that the viewer would produce the story and the fear in his or her head. The biggest fear comes from the unknown, from something that has not been yet lived. You cannot show the feared one, you have to stimulate people to produce the fear by themselves ... It's mental cinema. What I did removed the fantasy from the surface and placed it into the minds. Virtual is what happens in the people's heads.



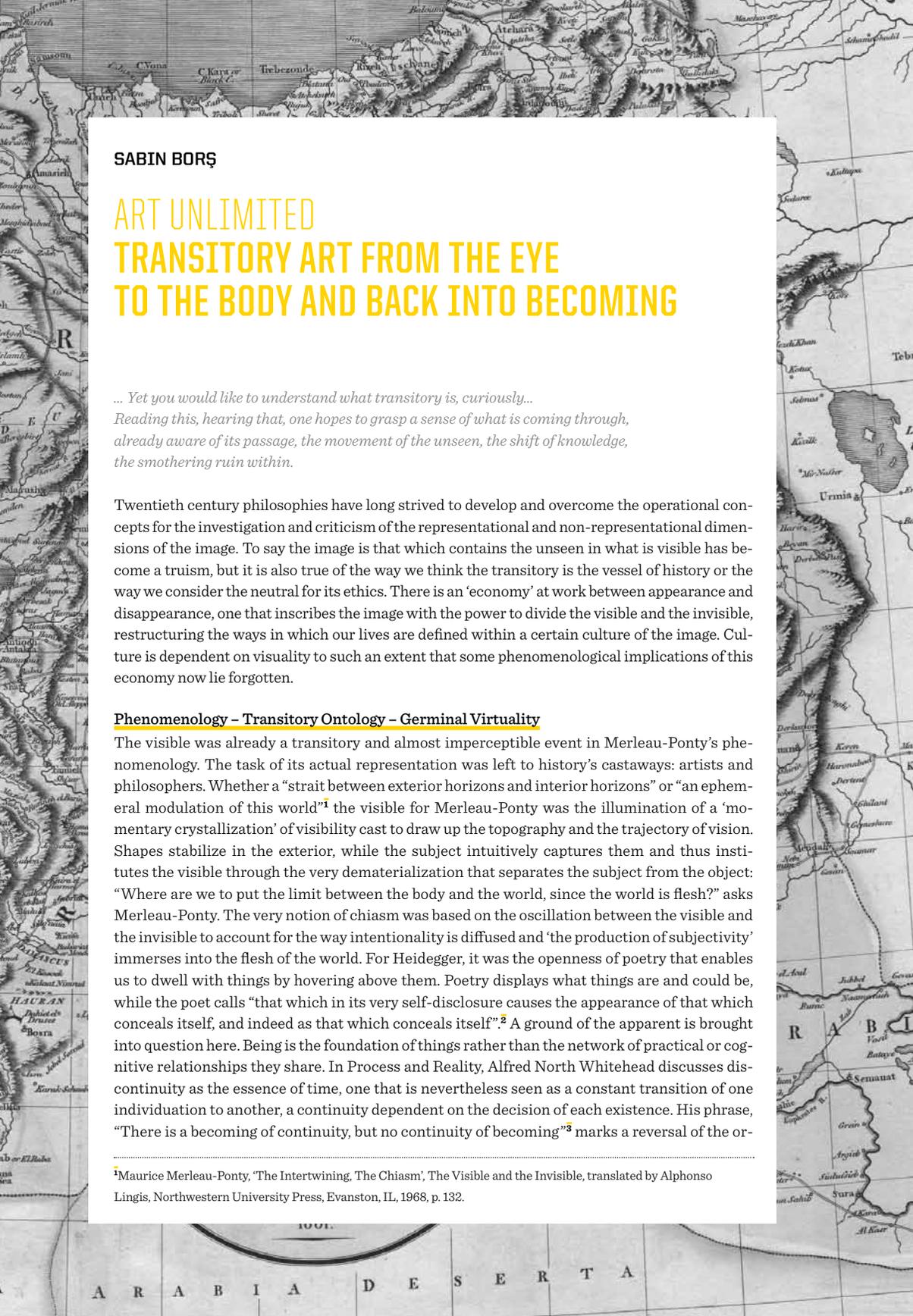
KARINA SMIGLA-BOBINSKI
POLAND / GERMANY



 Karina Smigla-Bobinski lives and works as a freelance artist in Munich and in Berlin in Germany. She studied painting and visual communication at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland and Munich, Germany. She works as an intermedia artist with analogue and digital media. She produces and collaborates on projects ranging from interactive and mixed reality art in form of installations, objects, in-situ and online-art projects, art interventions and multimedia physical theatre performances, to digital and traditional painting, analogue interactive installations or kinetic sculptures. Since 2013, she is a member of The Dream Team by DiBari Innovation Design, a unique Associated Studio bringing together architects, artists and designers from all over the world to design the city of the future, today. She is also a lecturer in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Applied Sciences in Augsburg (Germany).

Her works have been shown in 36 countries on 5 continents at festivals, galleries and museums internationally, including GARAGE Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow (Russia), ZERO1 Biennial in Silicon Valley (US), FILE Electronic Language International Festival in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), FACT in Liverpool (UK), Busan Biennale (South Korea), GAK – Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen (Germany), and the Bangkok University Gallery (Thailand).

Her collaborative performances have been shown at the Festival Montpellier (France), Festival in Ramallah (Palestine), Grand Théâtre (Luxembourg), Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon (Portugal), Festival in Kabul (Afghanistan), GoDown Art Center in Nairobi (Kenya), National School of Drama in Delhi (India), Festival Caracas (Venezuela), Fadjr-Festival in Tehran (Iran), Art Festival (South Korea), Haus der Kunst in Munich (Germany), Teatro Sesc in São Paulo (Brazil), Biennale de la danse in Paris (France), Berliner Festspiele (Germany) and Biennale di Venezia - Arsenale, Venice (Italy).



SABIN BORS

ART UNLIMITED TRANSITORY ART FROM THE EYE TO THE BODY AND BACK INTO BECOMING

... Yet you would like to understand what transitory is, curiously...

Reading this, hearing that, one hopes to grasp a sense of what is coming through, already aware of its passage, the movement of the unseen, the shift of knowledge, the smothering ruin within.

Twentieth century philosophies have long strived to develop and overcome the operational concepts for the investigation and criticism of the representational and non-representational dimensions of the image. To say the image is that which contains the unseen in what is visible has become a truism, but it is also true of the way we think the transitory is the vessel of history or the way we consider the neutral for its ethics. There is an 'economy' at work between appearance and disappearance, one that inscribes the image with the power to divide the visible and the invisible, restructuring the ways in which our lives are defined within a certain culture of the image. Culture is dependent on visibility to such an extent that some phenomenological implications of this economy now lie forgotten.

Phenomenology - Transitory Ontology - Germinal Virtuality

The visible was already a transitory and almost imperceptible event in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The task of its actual representation was left to history's castaways: artists and philosophers. Whether a "strait between exterior horizons and interior horizons" or "an ephemeral modulation of this world"¹ the visible for Merleau-Ponty was the illumination of a 'momentary crystallization' of visibility cast to draw up the topography and the trajectory of vision. Shapes stabilize in the exterior, while the subject intuitively captures them and thus institutes the visible through the very dematerialization that separates the subject from the object: "Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?" asks Merleau-Ponty. The very notion of chiasm was based on the oscillation between the visible and the invisible to account for the way intentionality is diffused and 'the production of subjectivity' immerses into the flesh of the world. For Heidegger, it was the openness of poetry that enables us to dwell with things by hovering above them. Poetry displays what things are and could be, while the poet calls "that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself".² A ground of the apparent is brought into question here. Being is the foundation of things rather than the network of practical or cognitive relationships they share. In *Process and Reality*, Alfred North Whitehead discusses discontinuity as the essence of time, one that is nevertheless seen as a constant transition of one individuation to another, a continuity dependent on the decision of each existence. His phrase, "There is a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming"³ marks a reversal of the or-

¹Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Intertwining, The Chiasm', *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 1968, p. 132.



der of causes: continuity is the effect of interferences between transitions and concrescences. The idea of an existential heritage passed down from one precursor to the entity that comes after it creates a series of inheritances and transmissions that Whitehead calls ‘trajectories.’ The actual entities are acts of becoming that form these trajectories. Whitehead divides them into concrescences, or “the fluency inherent in the constitution of the particular existent,” and transitions, or “the fluency whereby the perishing of the process, on the completion of the particular existent, constitutes the existent as an original element in the constitutions of other particular existents elicited by repetitions of process”.⁴ To simplify, two moments come together and generate a succession of inheritances and transmissions that resembles rhythms or intervals. With every breath ceased, another germinal breath prepares to displace the interval, to span the linearity of time, to give it its breathless depth. Just like a heartbeat, movement relies on a series of discontinuous acts of becoming, a series of contractions and absorptions that sustain the measurable harmonies. And it is Deleuze who, after *Anti-Oedipus*, raised the one question that marked the transition to *A Thousand Plateaus*: How does one write a sociology of fluxes? How do you psychologize a process that has no ‘for whom’? This process describes the virtual connections and assemblages that Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘Geology of Morals’ formulates as a process of stratification that disengages molecular forces from their misleading anthropomorphic and representational determinations. The social desiring-machine makes place for the stratifications of the brain that compose the image of thought. It is the infinite speed of thought that makes the transition between the various thresholds that compose the specific infinity of the concept.⁵

A more radical approach is taken by Alain Badiou in his attempt to find a ‘transitory ontology’ on a progression where nothing is concluded, an ‘intervallic dimension’ that has set no clear destination.⁶ For Badiou, the event itself is transitory and cannot be decided within a situation. It can only be decided by a subject. A break from Heidegger’s poetic ontology brings Badiou closer to

²Martin Heidegger, ‘Poetically Man Dwells.’, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper and Row, New York, 1971, pp. 213-229, p. 218 in particular. Full quote: “What remains alien to the god, the sight of the sky – this is what is familiar to man. And what is that? Everything that shimmers and blooms in the sky and thus under the sky and thus on earth, everything that sounds and is fragrant, rises and comes – but also everything that goes and stumbles, moans and falls silent, pales and darkens. Into this, which is intimate to man but alien to the god, the unknown imparts itself, in order to remain guarded within it as the unknown. But the poet calls all the brightness of the sights of the sky and every sound of its courses and breezes into the singing word and there makes them shine and ring. Yet the poet, if he is a poet, does not describe the mere appearance of sky and earth. The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is – unknown.” (p. 215)

³Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929), corrected edition, edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, Free Press, 1979, p. 35.

⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵‘concepts are ‘absolute surfaces or volumes’, forms whose only object is the inseparability of distinct variations.’ The ‘survey’ [survol] is the state of the concept or its specific infinity, although the infinities may be larger or smaller according to the number of components, thresholds and bridges. In this sense the concept is act of thought, it is thought operating at infinite (although greater or lesser) speed.’ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 21.

⁶Alain Badiou, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. by Norman Madarasz, State University of New York Press, New York, 2006.

an engagement of thought with 'contemporary atheism', which departs from any lapse into the nihilism of finitude only to open up a different possibility in the field of the infinite fidelity to the event. Philosophy must assume the gravity of acting and thinking in its pursuit of the (trace of) truth by way of 'restrained' and militant action. Badiou's militant subject is engaged in a mathematics of Being which is the thinking of every situation as pure multiple. (p. 30) This conception parts with Deleuze's Nietzschean vitalism and the Anglo-Saxon linguistic turn to found mathematics as a thinking of ontology, or what Badiou calls the 'Platonism of the multiple', an attempt to separate logics and mathematics. Badiou's Platonism acknowledges mathematics as a thought that is intransitive to sensible and linguistic experience, and dependent on a decision that makes space for the undecidable, while assuming that everything consistent exists. (p. 91) There is no knowing subject here; as mathematics proceeds axiomatically, thought must decide in favour of the axiom of choice. Binary oppositions subject/object or virtual/actual are abandoned in favour of an activation of being embodied in thought, with a logic of appearing that concerns the relations within possible situations. (p. 165)

In *Semblance and Event*⁷, Brian Massumi's discussion on the radical empiricism of William James draws on the distinction between 'objective-transitions-leading-to-functional-ends' and 'experiences-and-percepts corresponding to them in the subject'. Since they "both are in the transition", things and their experience are in transition together. Objects and subjects share this transitional movement of performative sharing, with the object bringing the subjective poles of the movement into phase. The object relates to 'subjects' as "differential poles integrating into a unity of movement", which is the event. The duration of the event's demonstrative performance is characterized by "a mutual participation co-defining the same dynamic" where subjective and objective elements "resolve back into differentials" only to let movement continue again. The object is an accumulation of transitions that is not defined by form but rather by the dispute of its renewal, as the identity of the event's elements only follows their integration and dispersal: "What the object will definitely have been, and what precisely will have been the role of the subjects, is clear only in retrospect after each integration - by which time they are already in transit to another terminus." Subject and object are thus defined in addition to one another, complementary, "in a continuing movement of integration and decoupling, phasing and dephasing, whose dynamic takes precedence over their always provisional identities"⁸ Subject and object are variations of themselves and each other concurrently; they inter-cross each other. Rather than fulfilling objective ends, says Massumi, we are carried "by wavelike tendencies, in a rollover of experiences perpetually substituting for each other". As James puts it, "These [transitional] termini... are self-supporting. They are not 'true' of anything else, they simply are, are real. They 'lean on nothing'... Rather, does the whole fabric of experience lean on them".⁹ It is a definition of art that must be performed and brought into effect, a definition of living art, or the arts of life, a transitional expression of 'creative philosophy' that is continuously in the making. A germinal virtuality seems to allow for transformations and inter-generational processes that hold the power to in-form relations and expressions.

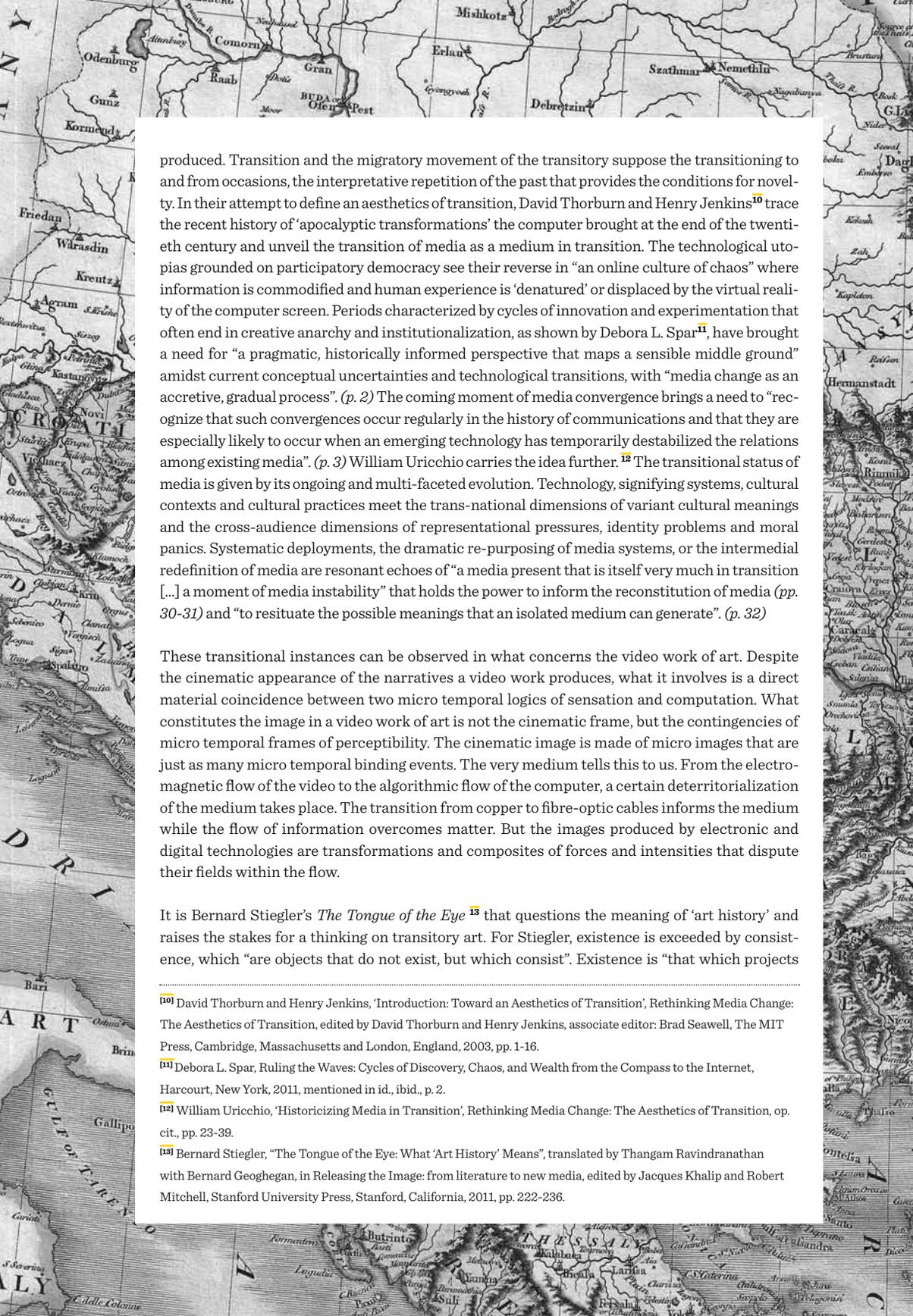
The Touching Eye and the Hunt for Seeing

It is the relation between transition and virtuality that is of interest to an idea of transitory art. It should follow transitions understood as processes through which the actual occasions of art are

⁷ Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2011, especially pp. 29-37.

⁸ *Id.*, *ibid.*

⁹ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1996, p. 238 and p. 202, quoted by Brian Massumi in *Semblance and Event*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.



produced. Transition and the migratory movement of the transitory suppose the transitioning to and from occasions, the interpretative repetition of the past that provides the conditions for novelty. In their attempt to define an aesthetics of transition, David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins¹⁰ trace the recent history of ‘apocalyptic transformations’ the computer brought at the end of the twentieth century and unveil the transition of media as a medium in transition. The technological utopias grounded on participatory democracy see their reverse in “an online culture of chaos” where information is commodified and human experience is ‘denatured’ or displaced by the virtual reality of the computer screen. Periods characterized by cycles of innovation and experimentation that often end in creative anarchy and institutionalization, as shown by Debora L. Spar¹¹, have brought a need for “a pragmatic, historically informed perspective that maps a sensible middle ground” amidst current conceptual uncertainties and technological transitions, with “media change as an accretive, gradual process”. (p. 2) The coming moment of media convergence brings a need to “recognize that such convergences occur regularly in the history of communications and that they are especially likely to occur when an emerging technology has temporarily destabilized the relations among existing media”. (p. 3) William Uricchio carries the idea further.¹² The transitional status of media is given by its ongoing and multi-faceted evolution. Technology, signifying systems, cultural contexts and cultural practices meet the trans-national dimensions of varying cultural meanings and the cross-audience dimensions of representational pressures, identity problems and moral panics. Systematic deployments, the dramatic re-purposing of media systems, or the intermedial redefinition of media are resonant echoes of “a media present that is itself very much in transition [...] a moment of media instability” that holds the power to inform the reconstitution of media (pp. 30-31) and “to resituate the possible meanings that an isolated medium can generate”. (p. 32)

These transitional instances can be observed in what concerns the video work of art. Despite the cinematic appearance of the narratives a video work produces, what it involves is a direct material coincidence between two micro temporal logics of sensation and computation. What constitutes the image in a video work of art is not the cinematic frame, but the contingencies of micro temporal frames of perceptibility. The cinematic image is made of micro images that are just as many micro temporal binding events. The very medium tells this to us. From the electromagnetic flow of the video to the algorithmic flow of the computer, a certain deterritorialization of the medium takes place. The transition from copper to fibre-optic cables informs the medium while the flow of information overcomes matter. But the images produced by electronic and digital technologies are transformations and composites of forces and intensities that dispute their fields within the flow.

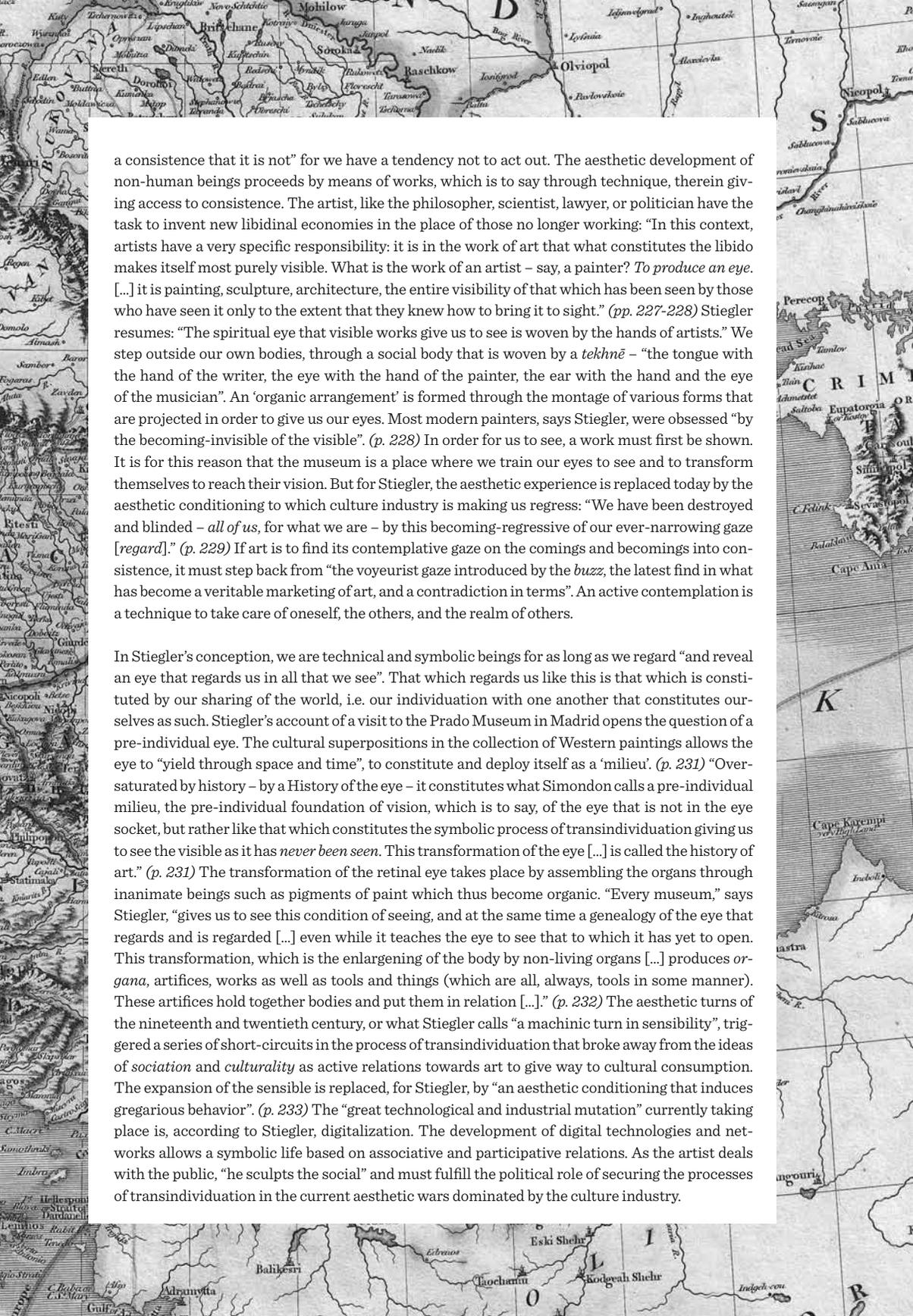
It is Bernard Stiegler’s *The Tongue of the Eye*¹³ that questions the meaning of ‘art history’ and raises the stakes for a thinking on transitory art. For Stiegler, existence is exceeded by consistency, which “are objects that do not exist, but which consist”. Existence is “that which projects

¹⁰ David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, ‘Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Transition’, *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, edited by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, associate editor: Brad Seawell, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2003, pp. 1-16.

¹¹ Debora L. Spar, *Ruling the Waves: Cycles of Discovery, Chaos, and Wealth from the Compass to the Internet*, Harcourt, New York, 2011, mentioned in id., *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹² William Uricchio, ‘Historicizing Media in Transition’, *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, op. cit., pp. 23-39.

¹³ Bernard Stiegler, “The Tongue of the Eye: What ‘Art History’ Means”, translated by Thangam Ravindranathan with Bernard Geoghegan, in *Releasing the Image: from literature to new media*, edited by Jacques Khalip and Robert Mitchell, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2011, pp. 222-236.



a consistence that it is not” for we have a tendency not to act out. The aesthetic development of non-human beings proceeds by means of works, which is to say through technique, therein giving access to consistence. The artist, like the philosopher, scientist, lawyer, or politician have the task to invent new libidinal economies in the place of those no longer working: “In this context, artists have a very specific responsibility: it is in the work of art that what constitutes the libido makes itself most purely visible. What is the work of an artist – say, a painter? *To produce an eye.* [...] it is painting, sculpture, architecture, the entire visibility of that which has been seen by those who have seen it only to the extent that they knew how to bring it to sight.” (pp. 227-228) Stiegler resumes: “The spiritual eye that visible works give us to see is woven by the hands of artists.” We step outside our own bodies, through a social body that is woven by a *tekhnē* – “the tongue with the hand of the writer, the eye with the hand of the painter, the ear with the hand and the eye of the musician”. An ‘organic arrangement’ is formed through the montage of various forms that are projected in order to give us our eyes. Most modern painters, says Stiegler, were obsessed “by the becoming-invisible of the visible”. (p. 228) In order for us to see, a work must first be shown. It is for this reason that the museum is a place where we train our eyes to see and to transform themselves to reach their vision. But for Stiegler, the aesthetic experience is replaced today by the aesthetic conditioning to which culture industry is making us regress: “We have been destroyed and blinded – *all of us*, for what we are – by this becoming-regressive of our ever-narrowing gaze [*regard*].” (p. 229) If art is to find its contemplative gaze on the comings and comings into consistence, it must step back from “the voyeurist gaze introduced by the *buzz*, the latest find in what has become a veritable marketing of art, and a contradiction in terms”. An active contemplation is a technique to take care of oneself, the others, and the realm of others.

In Stiegler’s conception, we are technical and symbolic beings for as long as we regard “and reveal an eye that regards us in all that we see”. That which regards us like this is that which is constituted by our sharing of the world, i.e. our individuation with one another that constitutes ourselves as such. Stiegler’s account of a visit to the Prado Museum in Madrid opens the question of a pre-individual eye. The cultural superpositions in the collection of Western paintings allows the eye to “yield through space and time”, to constitute and deploy itself as a ‘milieu’. (p. 231) “Over-saturated by history – by a History of the eye – it constitutes what Simondon calls a pre-individual milieu, the pre-individual foundation of vision, which is to say, of the eye that is not in the eye socket, but rather like that which constitutes the symbolic process of transindividuation giving us to see the visible as it has *never been seen*. This transformation of the eye [...] is called the history of art.” (p. 231) The transformation of the retinal eye takes place by assembling the organs through inanimate beings such as pigments of paint which thus become organic. “Every museum,” says Stiegler, “gives us to see this condition of seeing, and at the same time a genealogy of the eye that regards and is regarded [...] even while it teaches the eye to see that to which it has yet to open. This transformation, which is the enlarging of the body by non-living organs [...] produces *organa*, artifices, works as well as tools and things (which are all, always, tools in some manner). These artifices hold together bodies and put them in relation [...]” (p. 232) The aesthetic turns of the nineteenth and twentieth century, or what Stiegler calls “a machinic turn in sensibility”, triggered a series of short-circuits in the process of transindividuation that broke away from the ideas of *sociation* and *culturality* as active relations towards art to give way to cultural consumption. The expansion of the sensible is replaced, for Stiegler, by “an aesthetic conditioning that induces gregarious behavior”. (p. 233) The “great technological and industrial mutation” currently taking place is, according to Stiegler, digitalization. The development of digital technologies and networks allows a symbolic life based on associative and participative relations. As the artist deals with the public, “he sculpts the social” and must fulfill the political role of securing the processes of transindividuation in the current aesthetic wars dominated by the culture industry.



The Re-Sociation of Relational Bodies

The question of how can art sculpt the social through associative and participative relations is central to anything we were to label as transitory art, given that digital art remains largely constrained within an image framework, and that many of the works we call 'interactive' do not succeed in overcoming the hegemony of the picture and the picturesque.^[14] Art needs to engage the body in a way that unveils the transient contingencies of the body's interactions with its environment. In doing so, it can challenge the idea of boundaries and the nature of constructions, whence the social and the political are founded. Art – and 'transitory art' in particular – must emerge in the space of reconstituent activity. The political implications of this are fundamental and go back to Hannah Arendt's idea of the body politics in action, where the public only appears through the processes of speech and action.^[15] Art must not create [reproduce?] the space of appearance, but create appearance itself, and in that give us to see the visible as it has never been seen. It is the multiple and mutually inclusive dimensions of reality that art of transitoriness must actuate, topological extensions of the real that engage all senses into a holistic experience.

Transitory art is not about the momentary, the provisional, or the content of moments. It is an art of mutual immanence, sharing the very in-ness and trailing of experience, without a perceptible transition. It is what Brian Massumi calls 'experiential dissolve' when discussing the affective event of anger: "There's no determinate transition in a dissolve, just a continuous fading-out overlapping with a continuous fading-in. The point at which the changeover occurs is imperceptible by nature. It is purely abstract. But it must have happened. We know it did, because even if it wasn't perceived, it was unmistakably felt. Known-felt, thought-felt. It's a virtual affective event."^[16] The idea of transitoriness does not lie within the movement – it is an affective accumulation of shifting and varying non-localities. And to be able to render this, art must search for an affective eye endowed with the ability to fold vision and cause the folding of the body within the environment, a merge, a *blending* within the environment. The eye becomes the environment. It is what Deleuze has already seen as bodily forms of transition, in a more nuanced take on the idea of non-place as "a place only of changes". These ideas are best reflected in dance and the choreography of thoughts it involves. "Dance makes directly perceptually-felt time of the body expressing its potential for change," says Massumi, only to continue: "Dance is the conversion of the body's movement in space into the Time of its alteration: its speculative translation into a universe of pure bodily becoming. [...] The semblance of meaning produced by the dance is a direct, perceptually felt experience of the body's power of animate becoming. Semblance of self-expression: pure impersonal expression of bodily power, in nonsensuous excess over the body. [...] Body unlimited."^[17] This lived intensity and tension of living leads to existential procedures that can be translated artistically in order to convey the transformation of affects into emotion, so that it is their transition that renders us the continuous transformation of art and our re-invested vision, implicitly – "Any of these procedures can be narrativized in one way or another, structurally coded according to one version or another

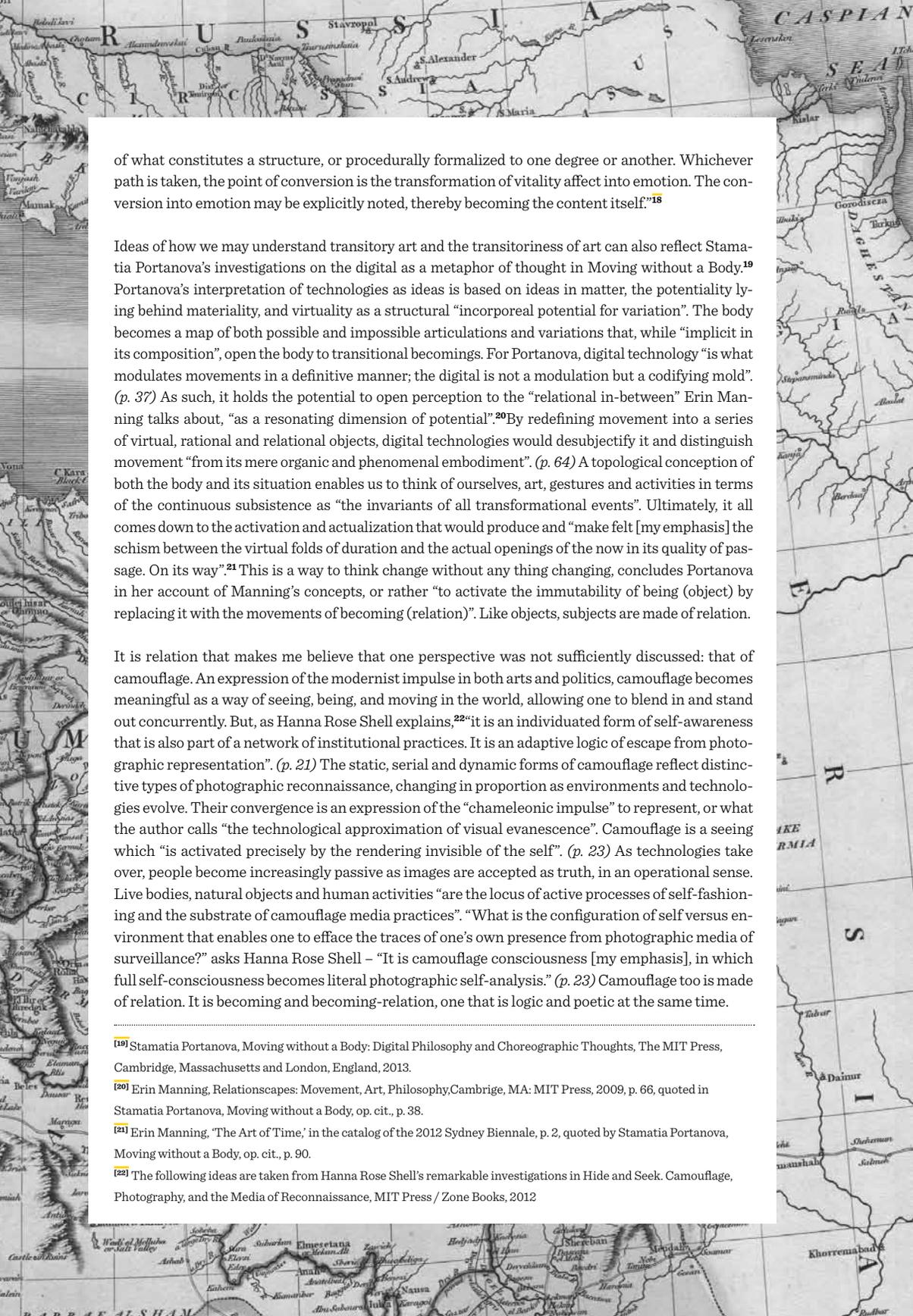
^[14] Installations relying on digital images rarely rethink the body and the socius in the environment and instead demonstrate the technological coups rather than an actual merging within the environment. Since most of the surfaces inciting to active responses rely on a series of stills (I touch the wall or I move my hand, the wall changes colour when and sometimes where the hand made the touch or the movement), it is a rather 'didactic' interaction that visually demonstrates that interactions actually take place. But is the hand nothing more than a proximate switch?

^[15] Hannah Arendt – *The Human Condition*, second edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998.

^[16] Brian Massumi, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

^[17] Gilles Deleuze, Foucault, translated by Séan Hand, University Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988, quoted and explained by Brian Massumi, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

^[18] Brian Massumi, *op. cit.*, p. 153.



of what constitutes a structure, or procedurally formalized to one degree or another. Whichever path is taken, the point of conversion is the transformation of vitality affect into emotion. The conversion into emotion may be explicitly noted, thereby becoming the content itself.”¹⁸

Ideas of how we may understand transitory art and the transitoriness of art can also reflect Stamatia Portanova's investigations on the digital as a metaphor of thought in *Moving without a Body*.¹⁹ Portanova's interpretation of technologies as ideas is based on ideas in matter, the potentiality lying behind materiality, and virtuality as a structural “incorporeal potential for variation”. The body becomes a map of both possible and impossible articulations and variations that, while “implicit in its composition”, open the body to transitional becomings. For Portanova, digital technology “is what modulates movements in a definitive manner; the digital is not a modulation but a codifying mold”. (p. 37) As such, it holds the potential to open perception to the “relational in-between” Erin Manning talks about, “as a resonating dimension of potential”.²⁰ By redefining movement into a series of virtual, rational and relational objects, digital technologies would desubjectify it and distinguish movement “from its mere organic and phenomenal embodiment”. (p. 64) A topological conception of both the body and its situation enables us to think of ourselves, art, gestures and activities in terms of the continuous subsistence as “the invariants of all transformational events”. Ultimately, it all comes down to the activation and actualization that would produce and “make felt [my emphasis] the schism between the virtual folds of duration and the actual openings of the now in its quality of passage. On its way”.²¹ This is a way to think change without anything changing, concludes Portanova in her account of Manning's concepts, or rather “to activate the immutability of being (object) by replacing it with the movements of becoming (relation)”. Like objects, subjects are made of relation.

It is relation that makes me believe that one perspective was not sufficiently discussed: that of camouflage. An expression of the modernist impulse in both arts and politics, camouflage becomes meaningful as a way of seeing, being, and moving in the world, allowing one to blend in and stand out concurrently. But, as Hanna Rose Shell explains,²² “it is an individuated form of self-awareness that is also part of a network of institutional practices. It is an adaptive logic of escape from photographic representation”. (p. 21) The static, serial and dynamic forms of camouflage reflect distinctive types of photographic reconnaissance, changing in proportion as environments and technologies evolve. Their convergence is an expression of the “chameleonic impulse” to represent, or what the author calls “the technological approximation of visual evanescence”. Camouflage is a seeing which “is activated precisely by the rendering invisible of the self”. (p. 23) As technologies take over, people become increasingly passive as images are accepted as truth, in an operational sense. Live bodies, natural objects and human activities “are the locus of active processes of self-fashioning and the substrate of camouflage media practices”. “What is the configuration of self versus environment that enables one to efface the traces of one's own presence from photographic media of surveillance?” asks Hanna Rose Shell – “It is camouflage consciousness [my emphasis], in which full self-consciousness becomes literal photographic self-analysis.” (p. 23) Camouflage too is made of relation. It is becoming and becoming-relation, one that is logic and poetic at the same time.

¹⁹ Stamatia Portanova, *Moving without a Body: Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thoughts*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2013.

²⁰ Erin Manning, *Relation-scapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, p. 66, quoted in Stamatia Portanova, *Moving without a Body*, op. cit., p. 38.

²¹ Erin Manning, ‘The Art of Time,’ in the catalog of the 2012 Sydney Biennale, p. 2, quoted by Stamatia Portanova, *Moving without a Body*, op. cit., p. 90.

²² The following ideas are taken from Hanna Rose Shell's remarkable investigations in *Hide and Seek. Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance*, MIT Press / Zone Books, 2012



A Museum of Transitory Art. ART UNLIMITED

OK, let's say transitory art... But a museum of transitory art?

The museum of transitory art could be an institution that encompasses the relational logics of the transitory and offers a participatory perspective over artistic practices, which, through their affective vitality and incorporeal impressions, show us a seeing that contributes to our transindividuation as human beings. Far from seeing this museum in its strictly institutional sense, I instead see it as a shifting yet practicable state that defines a generalized model of political action towards us and the environment. A museum, i.e. a political memory which informs action models, conscious and unconscious constructions of our awareness. A museum, i.e. a curatorial act that attends to memory, not by framing it into confined spaces or conceptual frameworks, but precisely through making available, accessible and approachable a set of artistic practices that shift away from current artistic trends only to generalize transindividual ways of seeing and becoming. It is an evolutionary understanding of both art and architecture that challenges the natural, cultural and historical foundations to address a memorial ecosystem. From artistic display and cultural display to ethical (self) display. It is not only the borders of mediums that become immaterial, but the borders of life itself. Our own bodies become more fragile, our own identities more mobile, our own desires more indistinguishable, our own selves more unstable.

The metaphorical re-construction of modern art as transitory art expresses a critical shift. That is, an urgent need for (self-)criticism. Art can incite to expression only as long as it triggers self-awakening and challenges the cultural establishments of memory. I understand a museum of transitory art as a metaphor not only for the need to re-evaluate the foundational architecture and institution of the museum, but the very architecture of socio-political memory. A shift from economical rationality and technocratic bureaucracies to the civil logics of the public space, re-constituted. **the transitory is the memory itself. memory is the event.** And it is memory, in the end, that a museum challenges, architecturally and institutionally. Art is not only seeing – transindividuation is introspection and, more importantly, recollection; a way of seeing and assuming what happens between, in-between artistic practices and exhibits, in-between the social and the political – in-between history and evolution, as consciousness first and then as human be(com)ings. While a didactic discipline continues to inform the visual stimulus of art as what we may call the pedagogy and education of seeing, art and its museums need to build the interiorly common memory, a germinal memory of ourselves as human be(com)ings.

A museum of transitory art, that is, an open space for our transition from input individuals to environs. A shift from the material and political archaeology of knowledge to the 'stratigraphy' of the living. The museum itself needs to interfere culture as discontinuity. In order to do this, a museum of transitory art needs to profanate the very institution of museum and art, so as to allow for a fundamental political restitution. This is not a museum of institutional practice, but rather the architecture of a metaphor. And it is this metaphor that can be turned into a model of political and aesthetic action. Ethical and pragmatic politics – spontaneous political aesthetics. It is our Boite-en-valise – to challenge the confinement of art within the walls of a museum, not with the irony of preserving Readymades as works of art by an institution, as Duchamp has out-maneuvered the traditional concept of the museum through practice and theory, but as a re-associated habitus bearing the full weight of responsibility for the beings to come.

Liberate (our)selves! Liberate (your)selves!

ART UNLIMITED



BLAŽ KOSOVEL

THE TRANSITORY NOTION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

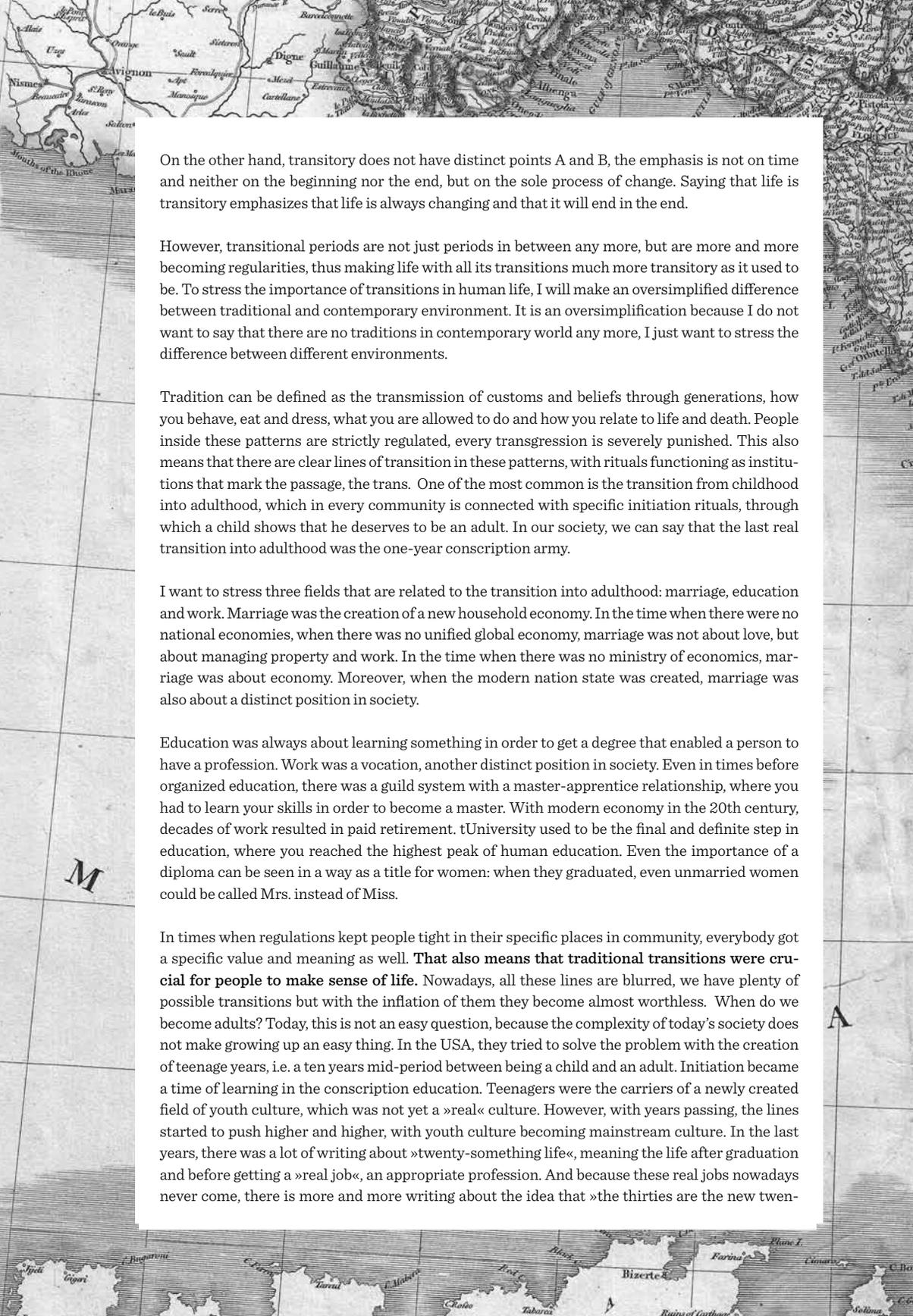
This contribution is not concerned with a specific artwork or even with the transitory art field. My purpose is to zoom out from art and focus on the sole notion of transitoriness. I will try to define transitoriness in relation to similar notions, I will show how it is related to our times and why it can be an appropriate description of today's world condition.

The root of the word transitory is *trans*, which in Latin means across. All concepts with the prefix *trans* are in one way or another related to change. This is very important for the human condition, because human beings are always in relation to something else. There is no growth without change and exchange. To name just a few of these concepts, there is transformation: a change in form or appearance, usually without the possibility to come back. The transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly or the transformation of a flower into a fruit. *Transgression* is the overcoming of rules or limitations. *Transmission* means passing through of something; it can be information on a radio or a gear in a motor. *Transcendence* means overcoming physical existence or its limitations. Transcendence is a voyage out of the burden of nature. This is also true when nature becomes a burden. *Trance* is related to it, a state of not being here by being in an altered state of mind. *Transportation* is the change of place, going from point A to point B; we know both the departure and the arrival place. It is a way to be in transit, meaning »to go across«. Both transitory and transitional derive from transit, the difference between them being the importance of the departure and arrival. Is the notion of point A and B crucial or is our path of going across more important?

Transitional refers to transition, therefore to a process or a period of change. Transition is a time between two stable moments, from point A to point B. Nowadays, the term is also used for the so-called countries of transition, i.e. the countries transitioning from the communist societies to capitalist ones. The two points are clearly visible, and the transition ends when a country is fully on the next level. Transitional period is just something in between.

Transitory, on the other hand, is something that is by nature bound to change, something impermanent. Thus, transitory is not just »something in between«, it is the most important thing. This is why we can say our life is transitory.

There are two other similar notions: transient and temporary. *Transient* is something brief, short-lived, something that does not last long. *Temporary* relates to something that is impermanent as well, but in a strong relation to time (*tempus* is time in Latin). Temporal used to be a synonym for secular, stressing our brief existence on Earth in opposition to the eternity of after-life. In the same way, saying that life is transitional means that real life actually begins only with death. We can see the life of the soul as transitional if we believe that it does not die with the body. *Transitional* is therefore related to a distinct change between points A and B, and *temporary* is related to time as its most important variable. There are more and more temporary jobs nowadays, which means that there are jobs that last for a short period of time. The same job can also be defined as a transitional one, meaning that it is a job between two »real« jobs.



On the other hand, transitory does not have distinct points A and B, the emphasis is not on time and neither on the beginning nor the end, but on the sole process of change. Saying that life is transitory emphasizes that life is always changing and that it will end in the end.

However, transitional periods are not just periods in between any more, but are more and more becoming regularities, thus making life with all its transitions much more transitory as it used to be. To stress the importance of transitions in human life, I will make an oversimplified difference between traditional and contemporary environment. It is an oversimplification because I do not want to say that there are no traditions in contemporary world any more, I just want to stress the difference between different environments.

Tradition can be defined as the transmission of customs and beliefs through generations, how you behave, eat and dress, what you are allowed to do and how you relate to life and death. People inside these patterns are strictly regulated, every transgression is severely punished. This also means that there are clear lines of transition in these patterns, with rituals functioning as institutions that mark the passage, the trans. One of the most common is the transition from childhood into adulthood, which in every community is connected with specific initiation rituals, through which a child shows that he deserves to be an adult. In our society, we can say that the last real transition into adulthood was the one-year conscription army.

I want to stress three fields that are related to the transition into adulthood: marriage, education and work. Marriage was the creation of a new household economy. In the time when there were no national economies, when there was no unified global economy, marriage was not about love, but about managing property and work. In the time when there was no ministry of economics, marriage was about economy. Moreover, when the modern nation state was created, marriage was also about a distinct position in society.

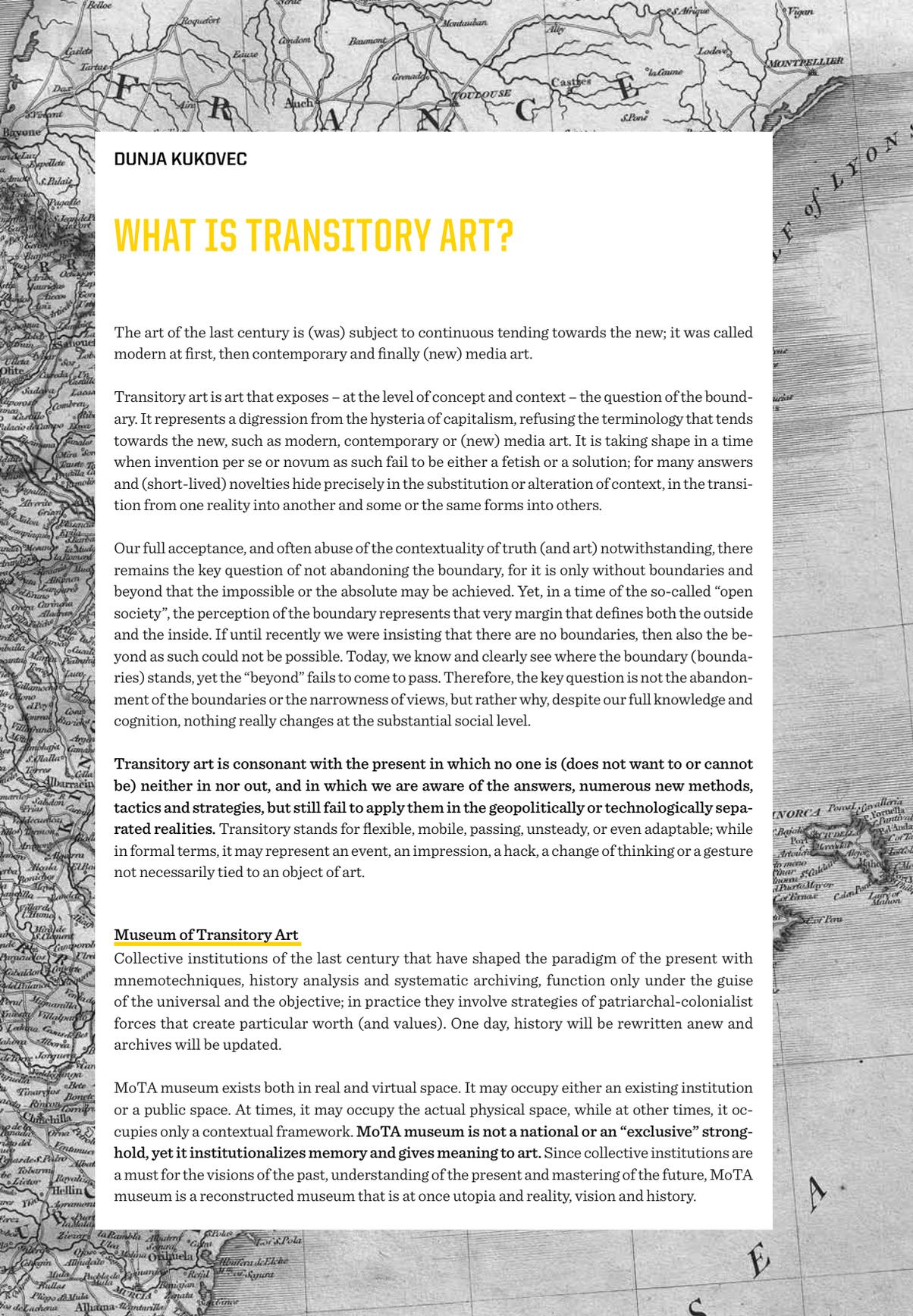
Education was always about learning something in order to get a degree that enabled a person to have a profession. Work was a vocation, another distinct position in society. Even in times before organized education, there was a guild system with a master-apprentice relationship, where you had to learn your skills in order to become a master. With modern economy in the 20th century, decades of work resulted in paid retirement. University used to be the final and definite step in education, where you reached the highest peak of human education. Even the importance of a diploma can be seen in a way as a title for women: when they graduated, even unmarried women could be called Mrs. instead of Miss.

In times when regulations kept people tight in their specific places in community, everybody got a specific value and meaning as well. **That also means that traditional transitions were crucial for people to make sense of life.** Nowadays, all these lines are blurred, we have plenty of possible transitions but with the inflation of them they become almost worthless. When do we become adults? Today, this is not an easy question, because the complexity of today's society does not make growing up an easy thing. In the USA, they tried to solve the problem with the creation of teenage years, i.e. a ten years mid-period between being a child and an adult. Initiation became a time of learning in the conscription-education. Teenagers were the carriers of a newly created field of youth culture, which was not yet a »real« culture. However, with years passing, the lines started to push higher and higher, with youth culture becoming mainstream culture. In the last years, there was a lot of writing about »twenty-something life«, meaning the life after graduation and before getting a »real job«, an appropriate profession. And because these real jobs nowadays never come, there is more and more writing about the idea that »the thirties are the new twen-

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all the revolutions are another variation of the same system as well. The already mentioned transition from (the so-called) communism to (the so-called) capitalism is the only possible transition, because it was a transition into the global (neo)liberal economy. This is why all the strategies and practices of resistance and emancipation create just another variation within the global economy of exchange. Moreover, anti-capitalist strategies are mostly related to a change of the economy on a global scale, which does not change the idea of the global economy as such. The exchange as such is not at stake, it always persists in every new scenario of change. Modern era was always about creating new ways of life, new alternatives; this is how all totalitarian movements were created. The same goes for avant-garde movements, the desire of which was the same – to impose their view on the society as whole.

As I tried to show in this very brief outline, we have less life-changing transitions because we are living in a constant transitional period, without a real ending point to which we are transiting. This makes life much more uncertain, but, on the other hand, also much more free. And this is how society becomes much more transitory than it ever was. Life is transitory by nature, but in the past communities and societies were not as transitory as they are today. This means that transitoriness is one of the most important notions to understand in today's society. Therefore, to raise the question about transitoriness is to question this endless change. Not to search and create a new variation of it, but to tarry with the sole idea of change. Can we do it without succumbing to the temptation of going across and change?



DUNJA KUKOVEC

WHAT IS TRANSITORY ART?

The art of the last century is (was) subject to continuous tending towards the new; it was called modern at first, then contemporary and finally (new) media art.

Transitory art is art that exposes – at the level of concept and context – the question of the boundary. It represents a digression from the hysteria of capitalism, refusing the terminology that tends towards the new, such as modern, contemporary or (new) media art. It is taking shape in a time when invention per se or novum as such fail to be either a fetish or a solution; for many answers and (short-lived) novelties hide precisely in the substitution or alteration of context, in the transition from one reality into another and some or the same forms into others.

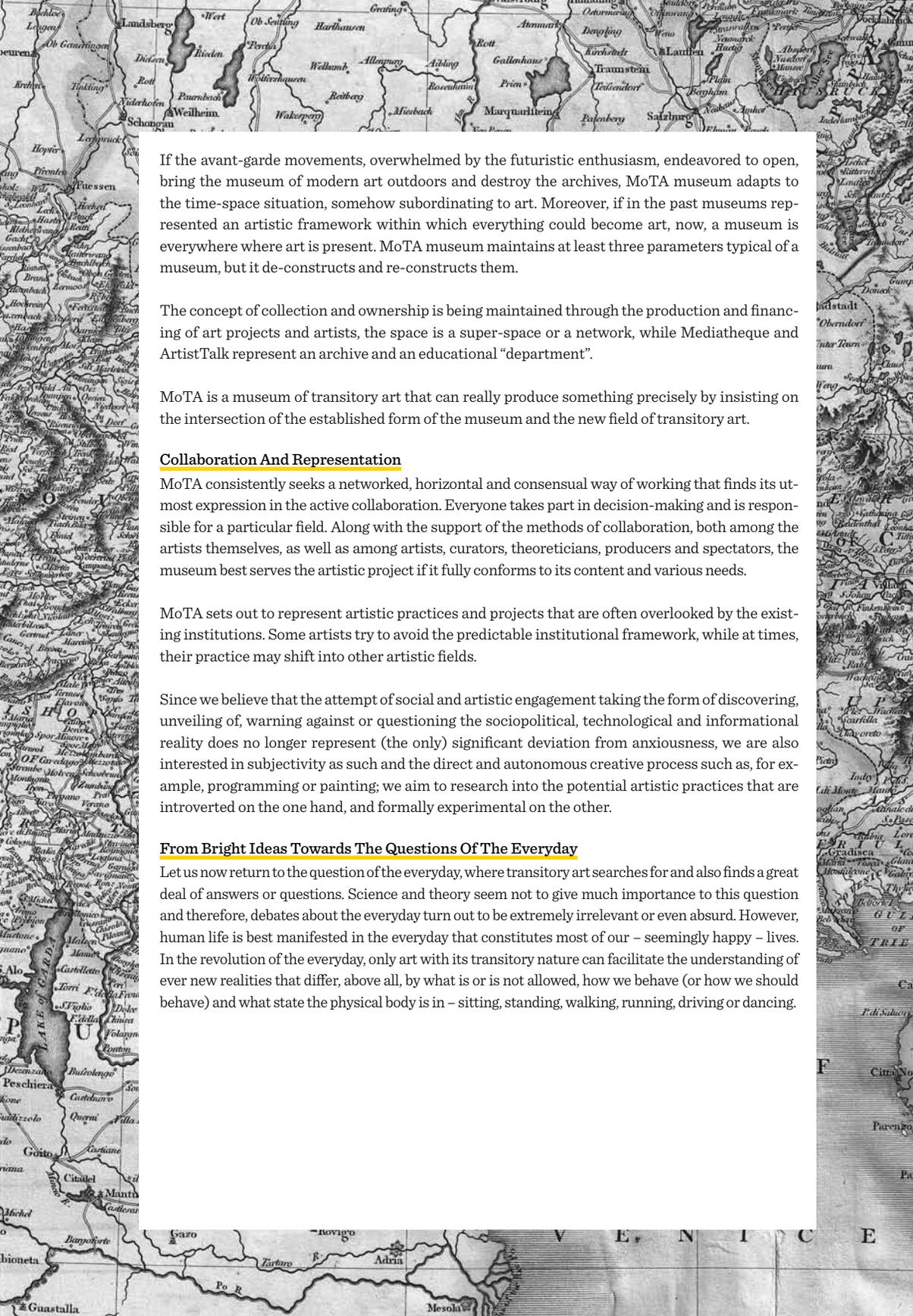
Our full acceptance, and often abuse of the contextuality of truth (and art) notwithstanding, there remains the key question of not abandoning the boundary, for it is only without boundaries and beyond that the impossible or the absolute may be achieved. Yet, in a time of the so-called “open society”, the perception of the boundary represents that very margin that defines both the outside and the inside. If until recently we were insisting that there are no boundaries, then also the beyond as such could not be possible. Today, we know and clearly see where the boundary (boundaries) stands, yet the “beyond” fails to come to pass. Therefore, the key question is not the abandonment of the boundaries or the narrowness of views, but rather why, despite our full knowledge and cognition, nothing really changes at the substantial social level.

Transitory art is consonant with the present in which no one is (does not want to or cannot be) neither in nor out, and in which we are aware of the answers, numerous new methods, tactics and strategies, but still fail to apply them in the geopolitically or technologically separated realities. Transitory stands for flexible, mobile, passing, unsteady, or even adaptable; while in formal terms, it may represent an event, an impression, a hack, a change of thinking or a gesture not necessarily tied to an object of art.

Museum of Transitory Art

Collective institutions of the last century that have shaped the paradigm of the present with mnemotechniques, history analysis and systematic archiving, function only under the guise of the universal and the objective; in practice they involve strategies of patriarchal-colonialist forces that create particular worth (and values). One day, history will be rewritten anew and archives will be updated.

MoTA museum exists both in real and virtual space. It may occupy either an existing institution or a public space. At times, it may occupy the actual physical space, while at other times, it occupies only a contextual framework. **MoTA museum is not a national or an “exclusive” stronghold, yet it institutionalizes memory and gives meaning to art.** Since collective institutions are a must for the visions of the past, understanding of the present and mastering of the future, MoTA museum is a reconstructed museum that is at once utopia and reality, vision and history.



If the avant-garde movements, overwhelmed by the futuristic enthusiasm, endeavored to open, bring the museum of modern art outdoors and destroy the archives, MoTA museum adapts to the time-space situation, somehow subordinating to art. Moreover, if in the past museums represented an artistic framework within which everything could become art, now, a museum is everywhere where art is present. MoTA museum maintains at least three parameters typical of a museum, but it de-constructs and re-constructs them.

The concept of collection and ownership is being maintained through the production and financing of art projects and artists, the space is a super-space or a network, while Mediatheque and ArtistTalk represent an archive and an educational “department”.

MoTA is a museum of transitory art that can really produce something precisely by insisting on the intersection of the established form of the museum and the new field of transitory art.

Collaboration And Representation

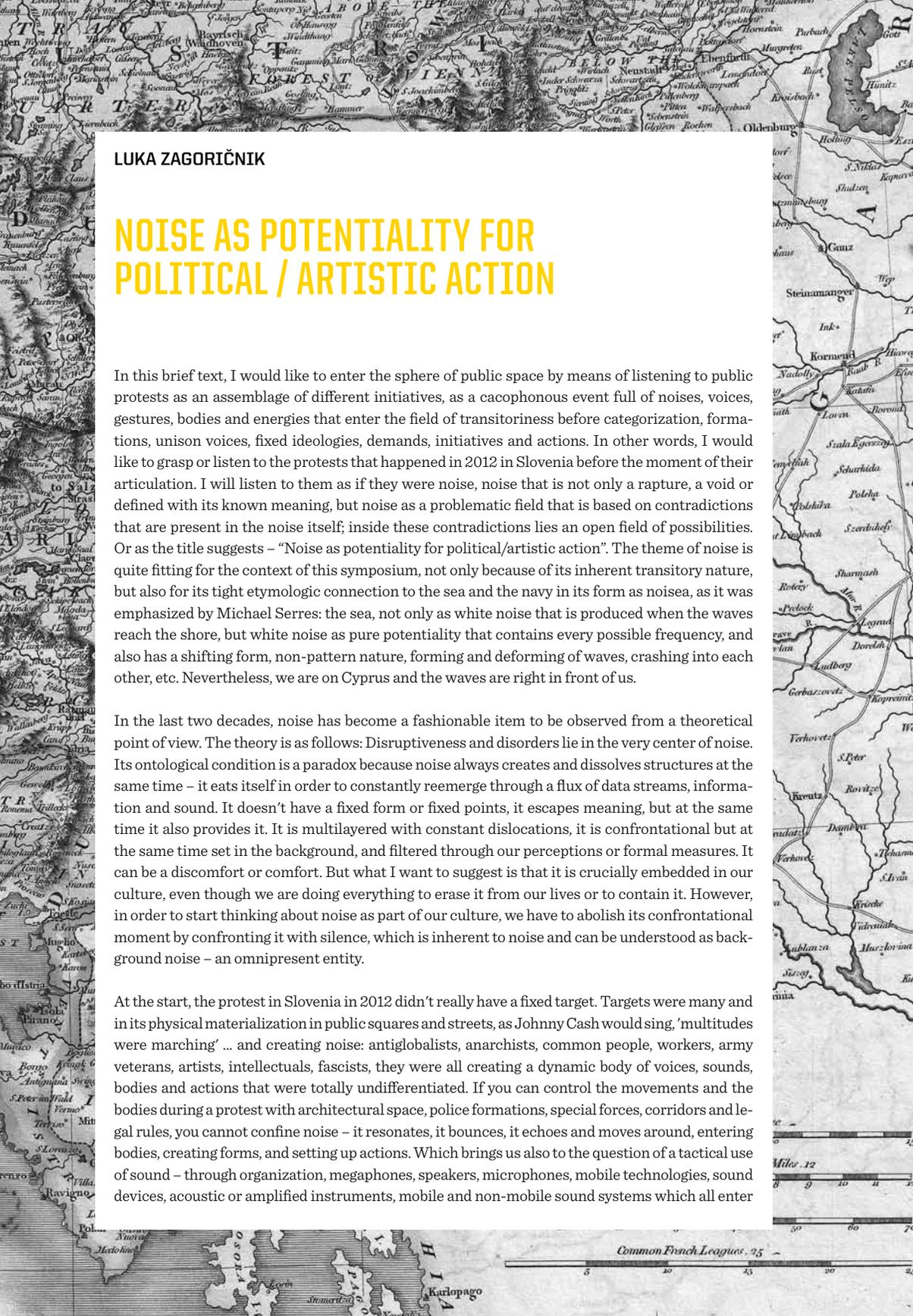
MoTA consistently seeks a networked, horizontal and consensual way of working that finds its utmost expression in the active collaboration. Everyone takes part in decision-making and is responsible for a particular field. Along with the support of the methods of collaboration, both among the artists themselves, as well as among artists, curators, theoreticians, producers and spectators, the museum best serves the artistic project if it fully conforms to its content and various needs.

MoTA sets out to represent artistic practices and projects that are often overlooked by the existing institutions. Some artists try to avoid the predictable institutional framework, while at times, their practice may shift into other artistic fields.

Since we believe that the attempt of social and artistic engagement taking the form of discovering, unveiling of, warning against or questioning the sociopolitical, technological and informational reality does no longer represent (the only) significant deviation from anxiousness, we are also interested in subjectivity as such and the direct and autonomous creative process such as, for example, programming or painting; we aim to research into the potential artistic practices that are introverted on the one hand, and formally experimental on the other.

From Bright Ideas Towards The Questions Of The Everyday

Let us now return to the question of the everyday, where transitory art searches for and also finds a great deal of answers or questions. Science and theory seem not to give much importance to this question and therefore, debates about the everyday turn out to be extremely irrelevant or even absurd. However, human life is best manifested in the everyday that constitutes most of our – seemingly happy – lives. In the revolution of the everyday, only art with its transitory nature can facilitate the understanding of ever new realities that differ, above all, by what is or is not allowed, how we behave (or how we should behave) and what state the physical body is in – sitting, standing, walking, running, driving or dancing.



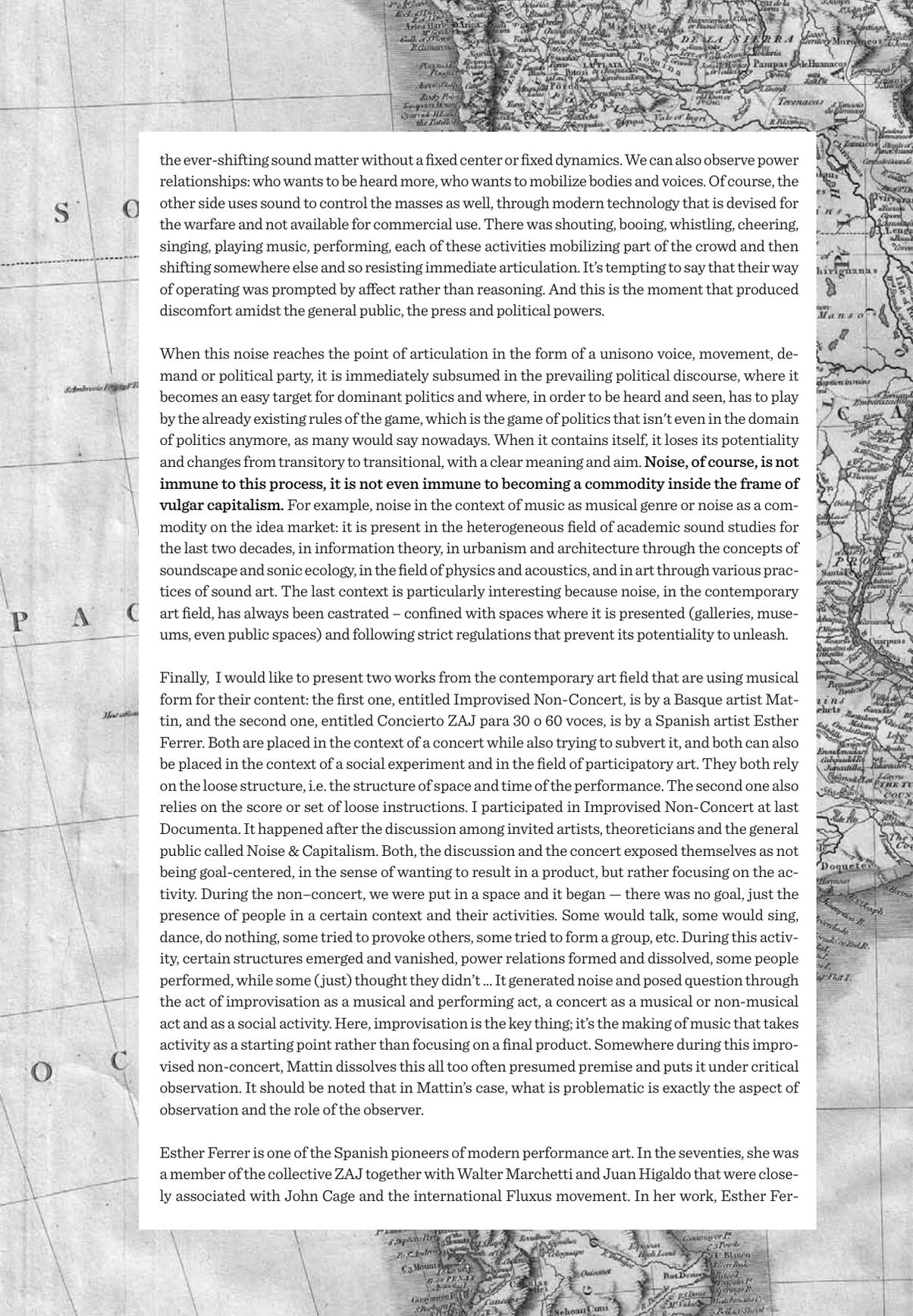
LUKA ZAGORIČNIK

NOISE AS POTENTIALITY FOR POLITICAL / ARTISTIC ACTION

In this brief text, I would like to enter the sphere of public space by means of listening to public protests as an assemblage of different initiatives, as a cacophonous event full of noises, voices, gestures, bodies and energies that enter the field of transitoriness before categorization, formations, unison voices, fixed ideologies, demands, initiatives and actions. In other words, I would like to grasp or listen to the protests that happened in 2012 in Slovenia before the moment of their articulation. I will listen to them as if they were noise, noise that is not only a rapture, a void or defined with its known meaning, but noise as a problematic field that is based on contradictions that are present in the noise itself; inside these contradictions lies an open field of possibilities. Or as the title suggests – “Noise as potentiality for political/artistic action”. The theme of noise is quite fitting for the context of this symposium, not only because of its inherent transitory nature, but also for its tight etymologic connection to the sea and the navy in its form as noisea, as it was emphasized by Michael Serres: the sea, not only as white noise that is produced when the waves reach the shore, but white noise as pure potentiality that contains every possible frequency, and also has a shifting form, non-pattern nature, forming and deforming of waves, crashing into each other, etc. Nevertheless, we are on Cyprus and the waves are right in front of us.

In the last two decades, noise has become a fashionable item to be observed from a theoretical point of view. The theory is as follows: Disruptiveness and disorders lie in the very center of noise. Its ontological condition is a paradox because noise always creates and dissolves structures at the same time – it eats itself in order to constantly reemerge through a flux of data streams, information and sound. It doesn't have a fixed form or fixed points, it escapes meaning, but at the same time it also provides it. It is multilayered with constant dislocations, it is confrontational but at the same time set in the background, and filtered through our perceptions or formal measures. It can be a discomfort or comfort. But what I want to suggest is that it is crucially embedded in our culture, even though we are doing everything to erase it from our lives or to contain it. However, in order to start thinking about noise as part of our culture, we have to abolish its confrontational moment by confronting it with silence, which is inherent to noise and can be understood as background noise – an omnipresent entity.

At the start, the protest in Slovenia in 2012 didn't really have a fixed target. Targets were many and in its physical materialization in public squares and streets, as Johnny Cash would sing, 'multitudes were marching' ... and creating noise: globalists, anarchists, common people, workers, army veterans, artists, intellectuals, fascists, they were all creating a dynamic body of voices, sounds, bodies and actions that were totally undifferentiated. If you can control the movements and the bodies during a protest with architectural space, police formations, special forces, corridors and legal rules, you cannot confine noise – it resonates, it bounces, it echoes and moves around, entering bodies, creating forms, and setting up actions. Which brings us also to the question of a tactical use of sound – through organization, megaphones, speakers, microphones, mobile technologies, sound devices, acoustic or amplified instruments, mobile and non-mobile sound systems which all enter

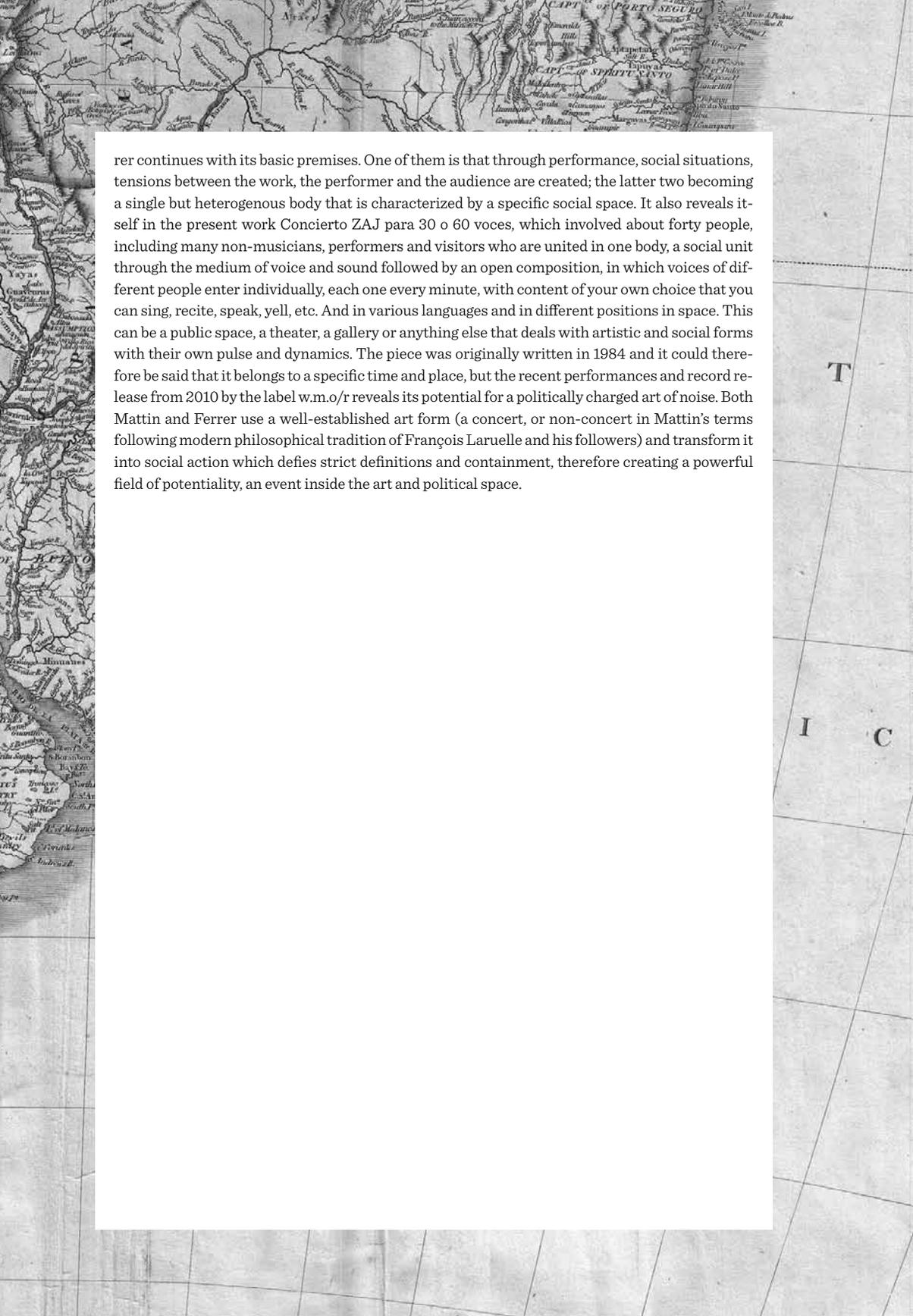


the ever-shifting sound matter without a fixed center or fixed dynamics. We can also observe power relationships: who wants to be heard more, who wants to mobilize bodies and voices. Of course, the other side uses sound to control the masses as well, through modern technology that is devised for the warfare and not available for commercial use. There was shouting, booing, whistling, cheering, singing, playing music, performing, each of these activities mobilizing part of the crowd and then shifting somewhere else and so resisting immediate articulation. It's tempting to say that their way of operating was prompted by affect rather than reasoning. And this is the moment that produced discomfort amidst the general public, the press and political powers.

When this noise reaches the point of articulation in the form of a unisono voice, movement, demand or political party, it is immediately subsumed in the prevailing political discourse, where it becomes an easy target for dominant politics and where, in order to be heard and seen, has to play by the already existing rules of the game, which is the game of politics that isn't even in the domain of politics anymore, as many would say nowadays. When it contains itself, it loses its potentiality and changes from transitory to transitional, with a clear meaning and aim. **Noise, of course, is not immune to this process, it is not even immune to becoming a commodity inside the frame of vulgar capitalism.** For example, noise in the context of music as musical genre or noise as a commodity on the idea market: it is present in the heterogeneous field of academic sound studies for the last two decades, in information theory, in urbanism and architecture through the concepts of soundscape and sonic ecology, in the field of physics and acoustics, and in art through various practices of sound art. The last context is particularly interesting because noise, in the contemporary art field, has always been castrated – confined with spaces where it is presented (galleries, museums, even public spaces) and following strict regulations that prevent its potentiality to unleash.

Finally, I would like to present two works from the contemporary art field that are using musical form for their content: the first one, entitled *Improvised Non-Concert*, is by a Basque artist Mattin, and the second one, entitled *Concierto ZAJ para 30 o 60 voces*, is by a Spanish artist Esther Ferrer. Both are placed in the context of a concert while also trying to subvert it, and both can also be placed in the context of a social experiment and in the field of participatory art. They both rely on the loose structure, i.e. the structure of space and time of the performance. The second one also relies on the score or set of loose instructions. I participated in *Improvised Non-Concert* at last Documenta. It happened after the discussion among invited artists, theoreticians and the general public called *Noise & Capitalism*. Both, the discussion and the concert exposed themselves as not being goal-centered, in the sense of wanting to result in a product, but rather focusing on the activity. During the non-concert, we were put in a space and it began – there was no goal, just the presence of people in a certain context and their activities. Some would talk, some would sing, dance, do nothing, some tried to provoke others, some tried to form a group, etc. During this activity, certain structures emerged and vanished, power relations formed and dissolved, some people performed, while some (just) thought they didn't ... It generated noise and posed question through the act of improvisation as a musical and performing act, a concert as a musical or non-musical act and as a social activity. Here, improvisation is the key thing; it's the making of music that takes activity as a starting point rather than focusing on a final product. Somewhere during this improvised non-concert, Mattin dissolves this all too often presumed premise and puts it under critical observation. It should be noted that in Mattin's case, what is problematic is exactly the aspect of observation and the role of the observer.

Esther Ferrer is one of the Spanish pioneers of modern performance art. In the seventies, she was a member of the collective ZAJ together with Walter Marchetti and Juan Higaldo that were closely associated with John Cage and the international Fluxus movement. In her work, Esther Fer-



rer continues with its basic premises. One of them is that through performance, social situations, tensions between the work, the performer and the audience are created; the latter two becoming a single but heterogenous body that is characterized by a specific social space. It also reveals itself in the present work *Concierto ZAJ para 30 o 60 voces*, which involved about forty people, including many non-musicians, performers and visitors who are united in one body, a social unit through the medium of voice and sound followed by an open composition, in which voices of different people enter individually, each one every minute, with content of your own choice that you can sing, recite, speak, yell, etc. And in various languages and in different positions in space. This can be a public space, a theater, a gallery or anything else that deals with artistic and social forms with their own pulse and dynamics. The piece was originally written in 1984 and it could therefore be said that it belongs to a specific time and place, but the recent performances and record release from 2010 by the label w.m.o/r reveals its potential for a politically charged art of noise. Both Mattin and Ferrer use a well-established art form (a concert, or non-concert in Mattin's terms following modern philosophical tradition of François Laruelle and his followers) and transform it into social action which defies strict definitions and containment, therefore creating a powerful field of potentiality, an event inside the art and political space.

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ABOUT T.R.I.B.E.

T.R.I.B.E. is a platform established to connect media-labs and artist-in-residency spaces in East Europe and the Balkans. All organizations involved are making the first steps to build AiR programs for **production and research** for **experimental, digital and research art**. The network encourages exchange between these places as well as production and touring of international transitory artworks.

All believe in building the infrastructure for artistic research, production and representation with the purpose to revitalize the either closed or just unfamiliar artistic scenes of the East.

With the planned strategy of targeted actions TRIBE aims to fulfill the following mission:

1. to connect organisations in East Europe and the Balkans,
2. to establish new AiR programs in the region and to improve existing ones,
3. to conduct research on transitory art and produce new transitory artworks.

T.R.I.B.E. was initiated by MoTA – Museum of Transitory Art (Ljubljana) built in partnership with ARTos Foundation (Nicosia), BIS – Body Arts Association (Istanbul) and CIANT (Prague).



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

MoTA Editions Ex Libris #02

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<i>Printing:</i>	Tiskarna Cicero, Begunje na Gorenjske No. of copies: 1000
<i>Thank you!</i>	Primož Puntar, Achilleas Kentonis, Ekmel Ertan, Pavel Sedlak, Andrej Boleslavsky, Michal Masa, Maria Judova, Gilles Reist, Igor Vuk, Niko Okorn, Matjaž Manček.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

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Printed and bound in Ljubljana, Slovenia.



Culture

Supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union