

Letters From/To
the Constituent
Museum

'internationale

FROM

/

TO

Letters From/To
the Constituent
Museum

FROM/ TO Letters From/To the Constituent Museum

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Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca, Sofía Olascoaga,
Adela Železnik

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PRESENTATION:

Dear Readers

PRESENTATION:

Dear Readers

Fran MM Cabeza
de Vaca, Sofía
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Adela Železnik

Dear readers,

The following publication is the culmination of ideas, inquiries, experiences, and debates that unfolded within L'Internationale's Mediation Group during the *Our Many Europes* programme.¹ The Mediation Group is made up of curators, educators, mediators, art practitioners, and thinkers-by-doing; essentially, people related to education and public programmes, people who work in or are associated with museums, and members of the L'Internationale Confederation.

However, we are not just a working group or support group. Rather, we are also a reading group, a debate group, and, above all, a group of people who are looking for new ways of thinking together, sharing experiences, and having fun.² While we are all committed to L'Internationale's goals, our work also involves engagement through mutual affective support.

Over the past two years, our ongoing discussions have materialised in the form of letters — we like to think about the resulting ensemble of conversations as “a box of letters”, a container of missives sent over time among people in situated contexts.

As ancient communication devices, letters crystallise a moment in time and build a fiction in which it is possible to freeze, for a moment, the relationship between (at least) two different temporalities: the moment of the person writing the letter (From) versus the one who reads it (To). For this reason, the correspondence is often imbued with an aura of nostalgia that we actively hope to mitigate in the editorial work of this publication. In the current context of a reactionary world, nostalgia is the last thing we need.

On the other hand, as the artist Pedro G. Romero reminds us from Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community*,³ the readers of a common letter make up, almost without knowing, a community: people who relate to others through the estrangement of reading a letter

that, apparently, is not addressed to them. For this reason, we understand that this box of letters can harbour the power to build community. In reading the letters, we experience the possibility of becoming protagonists and recipients, of imagining lives, relationships, and contexts of distinct voices and making them our own. Although these voices are signed with specific names and surnames from specific cities and continents, they could be the voices of anyone. This “anyone” encloses a powerful political enunciation of international solidarity.

Within the Mediation Group, we realized the importance of taking time to meet every week during the lockdown, of having the opportunity to experience each other’s company in our “private spaces” and to communicate not only professionally, but also to share our worries, fears, and care.

The letter-writing practice came out of this very spirit. After the lockdown meetings, Sofía Olascoaga, a friend and colleague, was invited to join the process and help us organise the material we had gathered. By then, most of our museums were beginning to open again, and we were facing a “new reality”.

Most of our letters reflect this new reality, especially the ones where their writers encountered the sweeping brutality of right-wing politics, intervening in the realm of culture with no principles or concerns.⁴ Most letters tap into relationships and friendships, while addressing the idea of *constituencies* or the situatedness of our institutions.⁵ For some authors, they are a way of expressing frustration, while for others they are a way to “archive” and/or acknowledge important themes and/or relations in their professional lives.⁶ Some letters take the form of a soliloquy, others have responses and a sequenced exchange.

These communications approach, in practice, a direct dialogue with those identified as their *constituencies* by each member in the group. But, beyond naming or categorizing who *is/are* a constituency — and who *is/are* not — we ventured into the practice of enacting and exercising a notion of *being-in-constituency-with* as a metaphor

inspired by Trin T. Minh-Ha's proposal of *speaking nearby*⁷ to focus on making visible the inherently reciprocal bond: a back and forth, but also the in-between nature of our constituent relationships. There, specific conversations acknowledge the relational threads that constitute, in living form, the museum's life.

The discussion about "constituencies" has been a long-standing issue among L'Internationale partners. In fact, it started with some questions, for instance: "Do we have a constituency or do we just have audiences?" posed back in 2014.⁸ One of the landmarks of these discussions was crystallised in *The Constituent Museum. Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation*, published by L'Internationale in 2018.⁹

Since then, our lives have substantially changed, our work within the *Our Many Europes* programme continuously affected by crises; the shift of cultural policies in Europe that made the rise of the extreme right possible, or the crisis of European solidarity with migrants from Syria, Iran, Pakistan, and numerous African countries that reached its peak with the war in Ukraine. The consequences of the war, along with the threat of nuclear and environmental disaster, have also been, and continue to be, at the core of our concerns.

More recently, the Covid pandemic affected our work substantially, resulting in an impasse over the methods, values, and ideas we had been practicing in the field of education and mediation for many years. Moreover, it made us rethink how to live and work together and acknowledge the importance of friendship and care for each other.

The letters allow for particular positions and subjective voices to become *loci of enunciation*, showing particular conditions, local languages, political spaces, interactions, and relationships cultivated over time within the museum context. These expressions include contradictions, frictions, open-ended questions, interrogations, memories, and the value built over durational conditions. Our deep affective and transformational experiences within the group demanded a closer site from which to speak and reflect together.

* * *

This publication is thus a set of twenty-seven letters, written at various times by participants in the group and by invited correspondents. Some voices were commissioned to address a certain letter, person, issue, institution, or to respond to a letter they received.

The correspondents and recipients include our constituencies, artists from the museum collections and others, exhibition curators, educators, museum workers from departments such as programming, fundraising and administration, interns, frequent visitors, migrant communities, even a museum building and non-human beings.

The contents of the “box” are organized into three main sections:

Conversations, which articulate exchanges and elaborate responses through sustained dialogues.

Relationships, which draw up relational traces of constituencies within and beyond institutions, and their cultivated affect.

Institutions, where labour conditions and internal elements of institutional life, as well as personal hopes of transformation, are made visible.

Finally, there is a **Timeline** that situates meetings, sessions, and participants that have informed this publication over time, providing an informational record of our process.

* * *

A letter is always sent into the future: there is no other option. But that future, as the dystopian stories that capitalize on the eco-social collapse in which we find ourselves reflect, cannot be “just the present

by another name — the endless, expanding, exhausting now of multiple interlacing crises”.¹⁰

Our wish, dear reader, is that this box of letters projects a future that is not ahead, in the distance, but here all around us, building itself in the — simple, transforming — action of reading carefully.

We hope you enjoy this reading.

Yours sincerely,

Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca, Sofía Olascoaga, Adela Železnik

ENDNOTES

- 1 See: <https://www.internationaleonline.org/programmes/>
- 2 Dear Colleagues of L'Internationale/Pablo Martínez, Adela Železnik
- 3 Pedro G. Romero, *Las Correspondencias*, Cáceres: Editorial Concreta, 2010
- 4 Dear Bojana: Empty Corridors, Empty Spaces/Adela Železnik
- 5 Adela Železnik/Jesús Carrillo; Dear Colleagues of L'Internationale/Pablo Martínez, Adela Železnik; Dear Adela/Carmen Calvo Santesmasas; Adela Železnik/Tanja Završki; Sara Buraya Boned/Somateques.
- 6 Đorđe Balmazović/Kotnikova, 2022; Maria Mallol/Andreja Bruss; Dear Bojana/Steven ten Thije; Dear SALT/Hera Büyüктаşçıyan;
- 7 A resonating metaphor informed by Trin T. Minh-Ha's *Speaking Nearby*: "Not about or on behalf on, but from a position of exteriority with intimacy, eyes and ears open wide". In: Nancy N. Chen, "Speaking Nearby:" A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, March 1992, pp. 82–91
- 8 Adela Železnik/Jesús Carrillo, Jesús Carrillo/Adela Železnik
- 9 Byrne, Morgan, Paynter, Sánchez de Serdio, Železnik (eds.), *The Constituent Museum. Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation*, Amsterdam: Valiz and L'Internationale, 2018.
- 10 Van Heeswijk, Hlavajova and Rakes (eds.), *Toward The Not-Yet: Art As Public Practice*, Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2021.

II

CONVERSATIONS

Relationships, Listening,
Negotiation, Methodology,
Correspondence,
Echoes and Resonances,
Extended Dialogue,
Utopian Space, Intimate
Processes, Shifts in
Institutional Ways of
Working

FROM/ TO

1.

Letter from
Sofía Olascoaga:
Dear
Conversationalists,
Tablemates

Tepoztlán, Noviembre 2022

Dear conversationalists, tablemates,

I am writing from my desk, looking out the window towards a patio with plenty of vines, succulents, cacti, some in pots, and also wild plants and flowers growing in the cracks of the cobblestone and on the roof; at the centre of the patio there is a large laurel.

From this very seat, I have joined our multiple virtual meetings for almost two years. We have gone back and forth through the threads of numerous conversations, like a skein that unravels and tangles again, simultaneously and successively.

Moving between moments of frank curiosity and attentive listening, and others responding to the commitment to transfer meaning beyond our sustained colloquium. Navigating between the tiredness of the end of your workdays and my early mornings — due to time differences between Mexico and various European cities — while rehearsing our voices and fueling productive efforts and shared creative flows.

Dictionaries and etymological references tell us that conversing is defined as living and dwelling in company. Not only wandering physically, but in “the turns given by ideas, words, thoughts, through language and speech, when holding conversations between individuals”.

“*Conversatio*, in Latin, was the action of turning and returning to things, using them frequently (the common use of objects); when referring to people, it designated frequentation, frequent contact, intimacy with one another; that is to say, the fact of turning towards each other in a frequent relationship. It was the action of the verb *conversari* that meant ‘to stay tied to a place’, living with or living in society. Thus, *conversator* in Latin means not even a conversationalist, but rather a diner — a commensal — one who shares a table, meal or meeting with others; it had nothing to do with chatting or expressing points of view”.

The space that we have built by engaging and intertwining words passed between one another has allowed us — through shared speech and the written word — to go through recent and present times, and to propose imaginations of the future. The threads of words woven in the form of letters make the conversation a framework that functions less as a statement and more as a skein with different possibilities for spinning.

The set of letters in the publication that we created — as lines of thread — is derived from our conversation practices, and from the commitment to socialize these fabrics with other voices through adjacent, constituent conversations. They are a practice, in a continuous becoming and undoing; they are also the harvest from our meeting table.

The word *conversation* differs from dialogue or monologue: it is not the teacher explaining to the student (dialogue), nor is it the political positioning in front of an audience (monologue). Conversation is closer to companionship and confrontation (versus, adversary, controversy)... A group that meets to expose and exchange (*versare*) points of view, proper and shared. *Versare*, in turn, links with *verteré* (to turn) from which pouring, vertebra, vertex... and also vertigo, derive.

Dwelling. Listening: to one's own voice, and to others'; a mutual listening. Where are we here, now?

When I was invited to join the group, and to think together on a publication, I began by listening to the recordings and reviewing notes from your earlier conversations from 2020. I had been studying Narrative Practices at the time, and proposed an activity inspired by tools centred on deep listening, exploring resonances and retracing what made sense to you at the time we first met. This background inspired our method of writing letters to both unravel individual threads and weave collective ones as a way of making sense.

Slowing down to lessen the pressure to produce a concrete output of those intimate sessions seemed a relevant dynamic to honour the intimacy and honesty of your sharings, the personal perspec-

tive, as well as the deep rethinking of the meaning of mediation, art, and museum practice within new conditions. This paved the way for a more organic process prioritising listening to what was said, and listening to each other and to the seismic life changes of recent years.

The compilation of conversations in the form of letters makes a kind of sounding board, with one-way messages, and others in a sequence of exchanges, at different distances and speeds. It is a set of records of comings and goings, a document of the tables we sat at in our multiple meetings, of frequent contact, of intimacy, and of looking at each other. To open the black box of the process, the people, their stories, and offer them in a structure of multiple and open readings. They are a harvest stemming from the sustained encounter that created a place: let's imagine ourselves at a table again, among diners, as commensals.

Our venture is to open — and socialize to debate — a reflection that is incomplete by nature, nourished by trust, cultivated in affective relationships and sustained duration. The exchanges carried out to respond to obstacles and crises also invest fertile energy in socializing future possibilities and in the desire to reconfigure institutional processes, to identify limits and vulnerabilities, to appeal for a closer dialogue among colleagues, thinking together about our realities. In addition, they situate the thread of intimate conversations into more public and socially engaged spheres, to exceed the predetermined group of members and participants, and instigate uncertainties, contradictions, and convictions.

This table that we evoke has offered us a place to process and work in the present tense based on our own experience, listening to ourselves, elaborating our work together with others: this “here” where we live together. We go around processes, objects, and ideas in each other's company, and we return to them as a way of inhabiting.

A proposal being built in practice: in progress, in real time, still...

An invitation to join a dwelling by reading letters: to go, and to return...

An appeal to patience, by sharing open lines of meaning and not necessarily resolved positions.

An offering to sit at this table...

I am grateful for the trust and the opportunity to accompany and share this uncertain process with you.

Affectionately,
Sofía





Sabinos 28, Barrio Santo Domingo, Tepoztlán Morelos,
taken between February 2021 and November 2022.
Photos: Sofía Olascoaga.















Tepoztlán, Noviembre 2022

Queridos conversantes, comensales,

Escribo desde una mesa de escritorio, mirando por la ventana a un patio con enredaderas, suculentas, cactáceas, en macetas, y con plantas y flores silvestres que crecen en las grietas del adoquín del piso, y también del techado; al centro del patio hay un gran laurel.

Desde este mismo asiento, me he conectado a nuestras múltiples reuniones virtuales, por casi dos años. Hemos ido y venido sobre los hilos de numerosas conversaciones, como una madeja que se desenreda y se vuelve a tejer, simultánea y sucesivamente.

Transitando entre momentos de franca curiosidad y atenta escucha, y otros de responder al compromiso de decantar sentido más allá de nuestro coloquio sostenido. Navegando entre el cansancio de sus finales de jornada y mis tempranas mañanas, por nuestras diferencias de horario entre México y diversas ciudades europeas, desatorando voces y cultivando los esfuerzos productivos y flujos creativos compartidos.

Los diccionarios y referencias etimológicas, nos dicen que *conversar* se define como *vivir, dar vueltas en compañía*. No sólo dar vueltas físicamente, sino “las vueltas que dan las ideas, palabras, pensamientos, a través de la lengua y del habla, al mantener charlas entre individuos”.

“*Conversatio*, en latín, era la acción de volver y devolver las cosas, usándolas frecuentemente (el uso común de los objetos) y referido a personas designaba la frecuentación, el trato frecuente, la intimidad, de los unos con los otros, el hecho de estar vueltos los unos hacia los otros en un frecuente trato. Era el nombre de acción del verbo *conversari* que significaba mantenerse ligado a un lugar, vivir con o vivir en sociedad. Así,

conversator en latín ni siquiera es conversador, sino que significa comensal, que comparte una mesa, comida o reunión con otros. No tenía que ver con charlar ni exponer puntos de vista”.

Este espacio que hemos construido, a punta de entablar y entrelazar palabras que pasan de unxs a otrxs, nos ha permitido desde el habla compartida y la palabra escrita, transitar tiempos recientes, presentes, e imaginaciones de futuro. El hilo de la palabra tejido en forma de cartas, hace de la conversación un entramado que quizás asemeja menos a un posicionamiento ensayístico resuelto, y más una madeja con diferentes posibilidades para hilarse.

Entiendo este conjunto de cartas en la publicación que conspiramos como hilos derivados de nuestras prácticas de conversación, y de la apuesta por socializar esos tejidos con otras voces y conversaciones adyacentes, constituyentes. Son una práctica, en un continuo hacerse y deshacerse. Son también fruto de nuestra mesa de encuentro.

La palabra conversación es diferente al diálogo o monólogo. No un docente explicando al alumno, (diálogo). No un monólogo de posicionamiento político frente a una audiencia

La palabra conversación tiene un sabor a compañerismo y pelea (versus, adversario, controversia)... Un grupo que se reúne (con) a exponer y cambiar (versare) puntos de vista, propios y compartidos. Versare es el frecuentativo de vertere (dar vuelta) de donde nos llega verter, vértebra, vértice, vértigo.

Ir y volver. Escucha propia, voz propia, escucha mutua. ¿Dónde estamos?

Cuando me invitaron a unirme al Grupo de Mediación con la misión de pensar juntas una publicación que hiciera honor a las conversaciones sostenidas entre sus miembros durante el confinamiento, empecé por escuchar a detalle las grabaciones, y revisar las minutas de las reuniones semanales realizadas en 2020. En ese momento, me encontraba aprendiendo sobre las Prácticas Narrativas, y propuse una

dinámica inspirada por herramientas que provienen de este campo, en búsqueda de explorar resonancias y de documentar nuestra escucha. La propuesta de escribir en forma de carta, como una manera de desenredar el hilado personal y retejer en colectivo, provino de ahí.

Priorizar los ritmos de escucha, nos permitió desacelerar momentáneamente el imperativo productivo de generar un resultado publicable, para dar lugar a la posibilidad de crear y cuidar la intimidad y honestidad compartida en las idas y vueltas de sus conversas, abordadas tanto en las experiencias personales como en la profunda necesidad de repensar el sentido de la mediación, el arte, y las prácticas museísticas, en el marco de los nuevos condicionamientos. Escucharnos desde el trastoque sísmico de los últimos años.

La suma de las conversaciones en cartas, hace una suerte de caja de resonancias, con mensajes unidireccionales, y otros en secuencia de intercambios, a diferentes distancias y velocidades. Es un conjunto de registros de idas y vueltas, son documento *de las mesas* de los múltiples encuentros, del trato frecuente, de la intimidad, y del mirarnos unos con otros. De abrir la caja de operaciones de los procesos, las personas, sus relatos, y ofrecerlos en su estructura de lecturas múltiples y abiertas. Son la colecta después de sostener un lugar de encuentro – imaginemos nuevamente una mesa, imaginémonos entre comensales.

Nuestra apuesta es por abrir (y también socializar a debate) una reflexión incompleta por naturaleza, nutrida por la confianza, cultivada en relaciones afectivas y de duración sostenida. Los diálogos, responden a los límites y crisis, pero también invierten energía fértil en socializar posibilidades de futuro, en el deseo de reconfigurar procesos institucionales, de identificar límites y vulnerabilidades, de apelar por un diálogo más cercano, entre colegas, pensando juntas sobre nuestras realidades. También, con la función de desplazar el hilado de las conversaciones íntimas a esferas de implicación mayor, a rebasar al grupo delimitado de miembros y participantes, y jugarlos preguntas y convicciones.

Esta mesa que traemos a cuenta, nos ha ofrecido un lugar para procesar y trabajar en tiempo presente la propia experiencia escuchándonos, elaborando junto con otras: esto aquí, mientras vivimos y con-vivimos. Damos vueltas en compañía a procesos, objetos, ideas, y regresamos a ellas como forma de habitar.

Una propuesta construyéndose en la práctica: quizás no resuelta, aún...

Una invitación a dar vueltas también leyendo: a ir, y a regresar...

Un recordatorio de paciencia, al encontrar y leer líneas de sentido abiertas y no necesariamente posicionamientos resueltos.

Una ofrenda para sentarse en esta mesa...

Agradecida por la confianza, y la oportunidad de acompañar y compartir este proceso incierto,

Afectuosamente,
Sofía

FROM/ TO

2.

Do we have audiences or do we have constituencies?

Adela Železnik/
Jesús Carrillo

Ljubljana, 22 June 2021

Hi Jesus,

It's been a while since we've been in touch, either in person, or by correspondence. The other day I was thinking how long do we already know each other... I realized we met for the first time in 2009, exactly at the time when the first L'Internationale was initiated¹. I was organizing *The Next Step*, an international conference of museums of modern and contemporary art, and you were one of the speakers, in fact I moderated the panel on global museums, you were participating in. We kept in contact, even more because Reina Sofía later joined L'Internationale.

We became more involved in the subject of audiences when we both took part in the mediation team of L'Internationale, within the EU program *The Uses of Art: The Legacy of 1848 and 1989*. It was you, who introduced the term “constituencies”, which became now the key topic of our thinking about a museum and its audiences. It started with a series of questions, we posed to our colleagues in 2014² and, how surprisingly, those questions still haven't been answered.

The initial problem according to me, is that the term “constituencies” originates from the political context, and related to institutions such as museums, it touches very tricky ground, close to dichotomy. Moreover, we were always thinking of the word in terms of its potential, not as a fixed term, but more as a term “in becoming”. To check our positions, we organised a meeting in Liverpool, which was conceived as an assembly of people from the institutions and groups of artists & activists, whom we defined as our (potential) constituencies. The meeting was at moments quite turbulent and it turned out with a “blueprint of demands”, presented by the “constituencies” and now published in a book *The Constituent Museum*, 2018³. Even though the meeting was intended as a beginning of a working process, we never continued from there, partly because of different dynamics of the groups and the insti-

tutions, some of the groups, like our Neteorit, soon after the meeting stopped collaborating with the museum. It was also that soon afterwards you left the Museo Reina Sofía for the university.

However, the term constituencies became part of L'Internationale vocabulary, and now, reaching the conclusion of the second L'Internationale EU programme *Our Many Europes* it is perhaps time to ask ourselves if our institutions are heading towards “The Constituent Museum” or not.

I have the feeling that we somehow lost our track. Since we are “sisters in the use of constituency” as you once put it, I would like us to resume the initial idea that “constituencies, the people, are the political basis of any democratic institution. This should be the outcome of an instituent process. In contemporary representative regimes unfortunately we tend to forget this process, and this oblivion has been used by neofascist populist movements which claim to act on behalf of a transcendental notion of the people. This is why we need to have this “relevant other” always in mind.

If we are the museum, whom can we define as our constituencies? What would be constituencies in a politically challenged situation (as it is for example in Slovenia at the moment), what would be a personal and collective responsibility? I would also like to know how would you explain the difference between The Constituent Museum and *Museo situado*, the situated museum, is it only a matter of terminology? And how do you think our situation changed in the pandemic times, when we started to talk also about care as a socio-political term? And the very last question, what do you think about a museum without exhibitions, as it seems it is an issue in this post art/post exhibition period?

Look forward to receiving your answers and cannot wait to see you again in person!

Lots of hugs,
Adela

ENDNOTES

- 1 L'Internationale was initiated by the Moderna galerija in 2009. Initially, it comprised five European museums and artists' archives, and based on the shared use of collections and archives. The founding partners of L'Internationale were the Moderna galerija, Ljubljana (MG+MSUM); the Július Koller Society, Bratislava; the Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona (MACBA); the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; and the Museum Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp (M HKA)
- 2 The questions were:
 - Do art institutions feel addresses and compelled by social demands?
 - Do art institutions have the autonomy, the capacity and the tools to recognize and to respond to such demands?
 - How can we receive and process social inputs in a way that is relevant to the definition of our institutions?
 - Do we have a constituency or we just have audiences?
 - By whom and how are our addressees identified and defined?
 - Which new forms of social engagement should we encourage in order to overcome the insularity of art institutions?
- 3 See: p. 14, note 9

Madrid, 17 January 2022

Dear Adela,

I perceive some melancholy in your letter, a feeling that I have tried to exorcise since I left the museum a few years ago. True: our “constituency based” projects did not fulfil the expectations of those who we nominally recognized as constituents, those whose demands were supposed to affect and transform the institution from within. As members of Somateca once said “we are in, but we are invisible”. Indeed, our institutions are not conceived to see, to listen and to respond to the presence of others, and less to be substantially affected by them.

Were we naïvely self-deceptive? Did L’Internationale produce a kind of institutional mirage which made us forget our structural limitations? As people involved in education, we know too well that affecting and transforming requires constant trial and failure, as much as a utopian horizon to move forward to. It is an enduring process which, by definition, is never accomplished and, by the same token, is yet to be accomplished.

I remember that after an intense debate with our confederates, the joint action of the mediation teams managed to change gears and move the discussion on “usefulness” to the more radical question about the nature of the institution in relation to its constituencies. By referring to the etymology of an English word which directly connects the power of the institution to the people it represents, we aimed at replacing the eroded notion of the public not with that of the user, but with the constituent subject: one endowed with the capacity to question the institution, providing it that way with substance and legitimacy in democratic terms. Far from the universal and consensual subject of the bourgeois public sphere evoked by Habermas, our contemporary constituencies were multiple and fragmented, closer to the counter-publics of the proletarian public sphere described by Kluge and Negt: subjects gathered around specific agendas and struggles, often

in contradiction, bearing demands and claiming for a degree of agency which existing institutions are not in conditions to assume. Members of such constituencies, absent if not directly excluded from our museums, were to be involved in L'Internationale program through specific projects, necessarily defined by the negotiations required when democratic demands meet bureaucratic protocols and inertia.

The researcher and activist Janna Graham, member of the British collective Ultrared, described the dynamics of the Liverpool meeting you mentioned in the book that L'Internationale later devoted to the then called “Constituent Museum”. She recorded in her text the “draft for a transformation project” collectively produced by the constituency groups with her insightful facilitation. Among the propositions and demands contained in the document there was an emphasis on transforming the regimes of visibility, on the democratization of resource management and on the urgency to expand the social basis and the forms of value production in cultural institutions.¹ Our constituencies were addressing very specific and reasonable demands as if our museums were actually able to listen and respond, being endowed by those demands with a power they might not have yet.

One of the projects of the Museo Reina Sofía in which the constituency paradigm was tested was the mediation dispositive devised by the art collective Subtramas for *A really useful knowledge*, the most ambitious curatorial program developed by the museum within L'Internationale framework in 2014. The principles inspiring *A really useful knowledge* challenged drastically the logics and procedures ruling the museum. The “real usefulness” of the different knowledges invoked in the program contradicted in many ways the administrative, space and operational rationale of the institution, as well as the sort of use a museum should have. Accordingly, the curatorial concept designed by the collective WHW (Who, How, For Whom) was intended to transgress the rules which mark strict limits between process and results, action and exhibition, white cube and public space, art practice and political intervention.

Our wish was that the interaction with collectively produced “useful knowledge” would affect the institution to some extent. All those who participated in the project were aware that the institutional transformation that we were discursively announcing in our programs would only take place through the friction and negotiation with those “outsiders” that we recognized as our “constituencies”, and by adjusting our goals and procedures accordingly. The effective collaborations set up by *Subtramas* with the various collectives and social agents proved to the sceptics that institutional learning was “really” possible. However, it also taught to the most naïve of us that such a learning may not revert necessarily into “our institution”. As the members of *Subtramas* argued in a later reflection on their mediation work, the answer to the institutional dilemma requires to move the focus out of the formal institution and to highlight processes and phenomena happening beyond the dual “in and out” logics.²

Having their energies diminished by budget cuts and management control, our museums have come under attack by the cultural wars led by conservative powers, old and new, which are getting increasingly strong all over Europe. Institutional members of L’Internationale, from Madrid to Barcelona, Ljubljana and Istanbul, have been violently shaken by the new wave of intolerance and fear. The hypotheses of “The uses of art” exploded into pieces well before the deadline of the project, making patent that institutional prospects and procedures are not any more the measure of time in our uncertain international and local contexts. As we know, the new project *Our many Europes* which extends the work of the confederation until 2022 has not been any luckier.

Reconsidering the institutional strategy according to the suggestions made by *Subtramas* was both urgent and necessary. As the possibility of a substantial renewal of the fossilized bones of the museum seemed temporarily impossible, an exoskeleton should be devised. This apparatus had to be built from the outside in instead of the other way round.

As I argued elsewhere, the ruling principle of this post-institutional apparatus is conspiracy. Recovering the Latin meaning of *conspiratio* – breathing together – as well as its more subversive sense as “plotting”, we should start conspiring with others beyond our walls having as a common horizon the building of and operating institutions of a radically different nature. Conspiracy spreads out through the holes surreptitiously pierced in the conventional walls separating the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal, so to achieve its subversive intentions. It involves rehearsing a relationality of a new kind. This breathing, knitting, and plotting together would produce the substratum upon which the institution to come would grow.

The development of the meta-program *Museo en red* – network museum – must be understood as part of this post-institutional strategy³. *Museo en red* is an ambivalent dispositive which works both as a timely institutional tool in tune with our contemporary “network society” and as a *Trojan horse* which allows “the enemy” to enter the citadel of the museum in disguise. The network dynamic, as re-defined by the Zapatista movement in the 90’s, has allowed the museum to hold a complex web of connections and alliances among singular entities which avoids a potentially troublesome process of subsumption or identification, at the same time as it makes possible the collaboration with entities eventually “dangerous” from the point of view of a conservative institution, or from the eyes of right-wing observers always ready to denounce the radical and sectarian nature of our operations. A good example of this is the close collaboration between the museum and the *Institute of Radical Imagination*, a “monstrous institution”, as defined by the Universidad Nómada, which gathers up a group of artists, activists and museum members from different Mediterranean countries⁴.

On the more local level, the program *Museo Situado* – Situated Museum – is a clear example of the functioning of this conspiratorial model. *Museo Situado* is an autonomous assembly of citizens and social agents of the Lavapiés neighbourhood held under the umbrella

and support of the Public Activities Department. Lavapiés, the area in which Museo Reina Sofía is located, has been going through a strong gentrification process during the last two decades, having, as well, a long tradition of activism and resistance. The mission of *Museo Situado* is to promote and to support community engaged projects in Lavapiés and beyond, as well as to channel collaborative programs between civil society and the art institution. It started in 2018, intensifying its activities during the coronavirus confinement in spring 2020⁵.

Agujerear el museo – Piercing the museum – is the motto of the group. This metaphor refers to the museum as a castle, the guarded gates of which were designed to keep “people like them” outside; as well as it implicitly identifies the group as a bunch of “outcasts” who may not intend to “take over the castle after a siege”, in military terms, but rather, more subtly but steadily, perforate it like rodents, in order to enter and unlock the institution from within. Perforating, unlike conquering, mines the structure of the building, makes it porous, soft, exposed to external influences, transforming the relationship between the inside and the outside. It involves both a danger, since it erodes the solidity of the fortress, and a new life, since the holes permit breathing and the circulation of flows which may, otherwise, become a perilous wave, or finally move to other watersheds.

The conspiratorial model at work in these programs involves a jump in the void since it gets rid of the conventional institutional safety net and replaces it with a network of alliances with unlikely peers based on trust and affection. Conspiring, as I said, means breathing together, but it also involves secrecy, the use of a double code and to act in the blind spots of the formal institution. It requires action whenever is possible and being quiet and expectant otherwise. It does not permit melancholy or disappointment since reward or recognition are never the goal. There is always the risk of being discovered and exposed, of being dispersed before the web is solid enough to produce effects, but there is always the possibility of knitting new

networks avoiding the dual logics of failure and success. Assuming both the danger and the potential of breathing together is possibly the only way to keep on building institutions today.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Janna Graham, “Negotiating Institutions”, John Byrne, Elinor Morgan, November Paynter, Aida Sánchez de Serdio, Adela Zeleznik (eds), *The constituent museum. Constellations of knowledge, politics and mediation. A generator of social change*, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2018, pp. 44–49.
- 2 Virginia Villaplana, Montse Romaní An Diego Del Pozo, “Between acts: influence, negotiate, encounter, instigate, narrate. Re-writing the Relations Between Art and Situated Knowledge Found in Times of Crisis”, John Byrne, Elinor Morgan, November Paynter, Aida Sánchez De Serdio, Adela Železnik (eds), *Opus cit*, p. 200.
- 3 See: Museo en Red definition and activities in the Museo Reina Sofía website: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/museo-red>.
- 4 The Institute of Radical Imagination (IRI) was constituted in Naples in 2017 after a series of conversations among agents from art, activism and museums. It was set up coinciding with the new project of L’Internationale, Our many Europes, bearing tight connections with it (<https://instituteof-radicalimagination.org/>). Among IRI programs and actions can be outlined The school of mutations, conceived and developed during the quarantine of Covid 19 in 2020, and Art for Universal Basic Income Manifesto, published in 2021.
- 5 For information about its activities see: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/museo-situado>

FROM/ TO

3.

somateca waits,
capitalism doesn't

Sara Buraya

Boned/somateques/
Stephanie Papin

Madrid, January 2022

Dear somateques,

I hope with all my heart you are all well, although it is no longer clear what that means.

It's a bit difficult to write to a collective someone who is no more... It's like writing to the past. So here I go, as the somateque that was and always will be....

Over the last few months, we have been embarking on a letter writing project in the working group dedicated to mediation at L'Internationale. Do you remember?

So, yes. That working group is still active and thinking about what education, mediation and working with communities means in a space like a museum, or even in a network of museums.

We have written to colleagues from the past, the present and the future, real, fictional, human and non-human, with the desire to bring notions that were once useful to us back into play; ones that we want to go over again with other eyes, other bodies and other sentient and thinking beings.

The famous "constituencies" are one of those eternal doubts: were we once a constituency? What did it mean for us? What can it mean today? Was it a problem for somateca, an erosion, a pebble in our path? We always talked about how the external agenda had a tendency to exhaust us. How proposals came to us from outside that were, on the one hand, opportunities to work together, but on the other hand, impositions of times of productivity that we didn't feel were our own. What other conflicts emerged? I'm sure I most remember those related to the institution, because they nettled me.

But also the power of thinking together. Of agreeing on other experiences. Of feeling the collective generosity. The care. Other frictions. Some warm and others painful.

I would like to share with you the letter I wrote in February 2021, when I had just started to participate in the mediation group again. For me, joining meant being the bearer of a kind of legacy, that of the processes, memories, learnings and conflicts that we went through in the previous project, The Uses of Art. And for that I immersed myself in memories of when we participated in the Subtramas programme with our actions for useful knowledge, in the trip to Liverpool with Marina and Aza, in the beautiful meeting that we organised and sponsored in Madrid with the other collectives....or constituencies?...from elsewhere. They were intense years.

I was wondering if there is someone, someone or several, who would like to take up this missive again, return some thoughts, get together to think about it again. No specific thread needs to be touched. My proposal is simple. It doesn't require much time, but perhaps the question is: who wants to, who can answer? who is on the other side?

With love and affection,

buraya

Madrid, February 2021

Dear somateques,

Do you remember the times when we used to gather in the museum very often, to make projects and being constantly stating how much we do not want to make projects, but to sit together, to talk about books, and films, and works of art, and zines, and... And paint our nails, and make massages among us, and dance, and make practices of several things like meditation, healing, self narrative, drag queering and extreme gender practices...

We have always had this internal confrontation between being able to produce projects with/for/at the institution, while our desires were getting us to other paths, less productive for the museum, but so relevant and fruitful for consolidating our collective.

At that time we were invited to participate in several projects of L'Internationale. First was the WHW exhibition ('Really Useful Knowledge'), in which we were invited by the collective Subtramas, to activate the reading space of Chto Delat at the show, by making something performative during the opening (remember we were invited just the day before?? ;P). We decided to do a chaotic, collective, multiple voices reading, while the people pass through us, with faces of surprise and probably feeling a bit lost in translation.

It was probably not the most fancy intervention ever seen... was it something like they were expecting (by they meaning all.. subtramas, WHW, the museum, L'Internationale, the art world...) when they invited "a constituency"??

We somateca¹ were at that time, one of these "constituencies", that nobody got really to have a clear idea of it ... it was like a collective invention/reinvention of a term, in which we were all in a shaky ground. Do you remember when we participated in that seminar in Liverpool with Janna Graham, about "Negotiating institutions"? and

then afterwards in Middlesbrough, to discuss the concept of constituencies itself? The conversation was on us, or on us in relation to the institution, that relation that always implied a tension, a conflict, even also between us, and came across our practices in a very disruptive way.

We tried to show that conflictedness in the text in the book *The Constituent Museum*, with that comic scene we lived in the “borders” of the RUK show, when we were trying to get to see the room where we were supposed to intervene the following day (during the mentioned opening). And we were standing there, trying to see Chto Delat installation, and then were captured and stopped by the security staff, and we were all laughing, “cierra el biombo que se escapa Lenin!” [close the folding screen before Lenin escapes!].

With that narrative we tried to unmask the different levels of legitimation you can get inside the museum (that were shown by the colors of the ID museum cards), and some of the ways the institution has to make the constituencies feel like foreigners, with no access, without papers in order.

At the moment I am writing this letter, I am starting to be part again of the Mediation group of L’Internationale. Some people you know, some others (the majority) are different than the ones we collaborated with at that time. I think you would love the way this group of people have taken the reflections and doubts we were having at that moment, and embraced them as a new different thread to continue unraveling the skein. They talk about the collections, the mediation, the constituencies. They gathered many amazing materials during the confinement, that now we want to shape as a publication. Through an interesting and thrilling process, we are trying to find a way to communicate these reflections, without making the materials lose its honesty and crispness.

How could we make something bright that can connect different readers by engaging with certain practices and reflections? To me, looking back (to the time in which you were part of the conversation)

while looking forward (to the readers of this future publication), is a way to understand what we are doing together in L'Internationale, and how we could do it.

And that's why the proposition of writing this letter made me think about you.

Missing you and our ways of doing,

With love,
sara

PD: somateca waits, capitalism doesn't!

ENDNOTES

- 1 Somateca was a collective, active between 2013 and 2017, that was founded by some of the participants of Advanced Studies in Critical Practices 'Somateca: Biopolitical Production, Feminisms and Queer and Trans Practices', directed by Paul B. Preciado at the Museo Reina Sofía in two editions: 2012 and 2013. The group worked on topics such as functional and sexual diversity, the body as a political archive, feminisms, affections and desires. It was a constellation of people who proposed research by doing together projects based on crip-queer practices, which intersected theory, artistic creation or performative action among others practices.

Madrid, February, 2022

Dear Somateques, Dear Buraya,

The first letter I wrote for Somateca was when I didn't know what it was, or what it was about, was it a course? a workshop? a collective practice? I didn't know, but I felt it was going to be something important. It was pouring with rain that Thursday in March, It took me forever to get down the street, Calle Argumosa, and reach the entrance; Novel or Sabatini? I don't remember, it wasn't yet part of my vocabulary. Sitting in a circle in that big, white, cold room (its name now erased from my lexicon), we introduced ourselves and when the round ended, what we were began. Or perhaps it was later, over beers, when we got together with the older sisters of Somateca 1. Or perhaps it was when the two Somatecas got together and there were those who carried on and those who joined. Or perhaps it was before that, in a mind that wanted to create a laboratory of dissidence that never came to be. Or perhaps there wasn't a precise moment, it was a process that lasted longer than expected, an drop of ink that spread to other spaces, in houses, in parks, in social and cultural centres, on the internet, in a chapter of a book that was never published, in a museum corridor, in the hard drive that I have on my study table, gathering dust.

We went on for some time, taking minutes, agreeing on how to respond to the proposal of I don't know what, devising a conference, cooking for everyone, writing on a pad, reading together, inventing games, walking through a forest, imagining new ways of creating content, and feeling free not to create...

Many of our projects fell by the wayside, many proposals remained unanswered, many commissions did not complete their mission, many doodles remained uncompleted, many days of reflection without conclusion.

We tried to explore among ourselves, cross-reference our experiences with others, share the resources we had (rooms, budgets, accessibility...), tend to our relationships and dynamics, present our content, collaborate with projects, think about what kind of symbolic or economic remuneration we wanted, the latter led us to a lot of debates, disagreements, learning, and more.

Sometimes we were able to combine our common interests with the proposals, sometimes we found a way to feel comfortable with the opportunity and the work involved, and sometimes we didn't get there, because it wasn't the right time for us or because it meant not respecting our own rhythms within our collective reflection.

I even feel that writing this letter embodies all these feelings, on the one hand, the pleasure of bringing these memories and these connections to life, on the other hand, the worry about leaving a proposal unanswered, doubts around having to fit into the guidelines, and concerns about the issue of remuneration (how? to whom? for what?). Capitalism is neither patient nor frugal.

But nostalgia wins, as when passing in front of my old primary school, I miss the memory of feeling at home in an institution of which the names of the rooms are fading in my memory, remembering the first day I arrived, drenched by the rain in a room so cold and then so warm.

Thank you for that time, for all that learning, for those laughs.

With love,
Stef

Madrid, Enero 2022

Queridos somateques,

Espero de corazón que estéis todes bien, aunque ya no está claro qué significa eso.

Es un poco difícil escribir a un alguien colectivo que ya no lo es más... Es como escribir al pasado. Pues aquí voy, como somateque que fui y siempre seré...

Estamos activando desde hace unos meses un proceso de escritura de cartas en el grupo de trabajo dedicado a mediación de L'Internationale. ¿Os acordáis?

Pues sí. Ese grupo de trabajo sigue activo y pensando en qué significa la educación, la mediación y el trabajo con comunidades en un espacio como un museo, o incluso en una red de museos.

Hemos escrito a compañeras del pasado, del presente y del futuro, reales, ficcionales, humanas y no humanas, con el deseo de poner en juego de nuevo nociones que un día nos fueron útiles, y que queremos transitar de nuevo con otros ojos, otras cuerpos y otras seres sintientes y pensantes.

Las famosas “constituencias” son una de esas dudas eternas. ¿Fuimos constituencias una vez? ¿Qué significó eso para nosotres? ¿Qué puede significar hoy? ¿Fue para somateca un problema, un desgaste, una piedrita en nuestro camino? Siempre comentamos como la agenda externa tendía a agotarnos. Cómo nos venían desde afuera propuestas que eran por un lado oportunidades para trabajar juntas, pero por otro, imposiciones de tiempos productivos que no sentíamos propios. ¿Qué otros conflictos emergieron? Seguro que yo recuerdo más los relacionados con la institución, porque me rozaban la piel.

Pero también la potencia de ese pensar juntas. De acuerpar experiencias otras. De sentir la generosidad colectiva. El cuidado. Otros roces. Algunos cálidos y otros dolorosos.

Me gustaría compartiros la carta que escribí en Febrero de 2021, cuando hacía poquito que había empezado a participar de nuevo en el grupo de mediación. Para mi entrar supuso ser portadora de una suerte de legado, el de los procesos, recuerdos, aprendizajes y conflictos que atravesamos en el proyecto anterior, The Uses of Art. Y para ello me di un baño de recuerdos de cuando participamos en el programa de Subtramas con nuestras acciones para saberes útiles, en el viaje a Liverpool con Marina y Aza, en el encuentro tan bonito que organizamos y amadrinamos en Madrid con los otros colectivos... ¿constituciones?... venidas de otros lugares... Fueron años intensos.

Me preguntaba... si hay alguien, una o varias, a quienes le apetezca retomar esta misiva, devolver algún pensamiento, juntarnos para pensarlo de nuevo. No hay que tocar ningún hilo concreto. Mi propuesta es sencilla. No requiere mucho tiempo, pero quizá la pregunta sea ¿quién quiere, quién puede contestar? ¿quién hay al otro lado?

Con cariño y amor,
buraya

Madrid, febrero 2021

Mis queridos somateques...

¿Os acordáis de aquellos tiempos en que solíamos reunirnos en el museo a menudo para hacer proyectos y decir constantemente cuánto no queríamos hacer proyectos, sino sentarnos juntas, hablar sobre libros, películas, obras, y fanzines, y... Y pintarnos las uñas, y hacernos masajes entre nosotras, y bailar, y hacer prácticas de varias cosas como meditación, sanación, autonarrativa, drag queering, cuerdas y prácticas de género extremo...

Siempre tuvimos esa confrontación interna entre poder producir proyectos con/para/en la institución, mientras nuestros anhelos nos llevaban por otros caminos, menos productivos para el museo, pero super relevantes y fructíferos para la consolidación de nuestro colectivo.

En ese momento fuimos invitad@s a participar en varios proyectos de L'Internationale. Primero fue la exposición WHW («Really Useful Knowledge»), en la que fuimos invitadx por el colectivo Subtramas, para activar el espacio de lectura de Chto Delat en la muestra, haciendo algo performativo durante la inauguración (os acordáis el lío? que fuimos invitadas a activa la inauguración justo el día antes?? ;P). Decidimos hacer una lectura caótica, colectiva, de múltiples voces, mientras la gente pasaba a través de la sala, y de nosotres, con cara de sorpresa y probablemente sintiéndose un poco lost in translation.

Probablemente no fue la intervención más co ol jamás vista... jajaja ¿Esperaban algo así (y me refiero a todos... subtramas, WHW, el museo, L'Internationale, el mundo del arte...) cuando invitaron a participar a «una constituency»?

Nosotras, la somateca¹, éramos en ese momento, una de esas “constituency”, de las que nadie llegaba a tener una idea clara... era como la invención/reinvención colectiva de un término, en la que to-

dos estábamos en un terreno inestable. ¿Os acordáis cuando participamos en ese seminario en Liverpool, con Janna Graham, que se llamaba “Negociando las instituciones”? y luego otro en Middlesbrough, para discutir el concepto mismo de constituency? La conversación era sobre nosotros, o sobre nosotros en relación a la institución, esa relación que siempre implicó una tensión, un conflicto, incluso también entre nosotros, y atravesó nuestras prácticas de manera muy disruptiva.

Intentamos mostrar esa conflictividad en el texto del libro *The Constituent Museum*, con la narración de esa escena tan cómica que vivimos en las “fronteras” de la muestra de RUK, cuando intentábamos llegar a ver la sala donde se suponía que íbamos a intervenir la siguiente día (durante la inauguración que he mencionado). Y allí estábamos todos parados, de pie, tratando de ver la instalación de Chto Delat que se escondía detrás del dichoso biombo, hasta que fuimos capturadas y detenidas por el personal de seguridad, y todos reíamos, “¡cierra el biombo que se escapa Lenin!”.

Con ese relato tratamos de desenmascarar los diferentes niveles de legitimación (o ausencia de ella) que se pueden obtener dentro del museo (que se hacían visibles por los colores de las tarjetas de identificación del museo), y algunas de las formas que tiene la institución para hacer que las constituencias se sientan como extranjeros, sin acceso, sin papeles en regla en un sistema de fronteras.

En el momento en que escribo esta carta, empiezo a formar parte de nuevo del grupo de Mediación de L’Int. A algunas de las personas que hay en él las conozco, otras (la mayoría) son otras, distintas a las que colaboramos en aquella época. Creo que os encantaría la forma en que este grupo de personas ha tomado el testigo de las reflexiones y dudas que teníamos en ese momento, y tira de ellas como de un hilo nuevo, diferente, para seguir deshaciendo la madeja. Hablan de las colecciones, la mediación, las constituencias. Has estado reuniendo muchos materiales distintos, de esos proyectos pasados, de los presentes y de los futuros, materiales hermosos, sorprendentes, que ahora queremos plasmar como publicación. A través de un proceso intere-

sante y emocionante, estamos tratando de encontrar una manera de comunicar estas reflexiones, sin que los materiales pierdan su honestidad y nitidez.

¿Cómo podríamos hacer algo brillante que pueda conectar a diferentes lectores comprometiéndose con ciertas prácticas y reflexiones? Para mí, mirar hacia atrás (a la época en la que formábamos parte juntas de esta conversación) y a la vez mirar hacia adelante (a los lectores de esta futura publicación), es una forma de entender lo que estamos haciendo juntas en *L'Internationale* y cómo podríamos abordar lo que esté por venir.

Y por eso la propuesta de escribir esta carta me hizo pensar en vosotros.

Echandoos de menos, a todos y a nuestras formas de hacer,

Con amor,
buraya

PD: la somateca espera, el capitalismo no!

NOTAS

- 1 Somateca fue un colectivo que estuvo activo entre 2013 y 2017, fundado por algunas de las personas participantes en el programa de Estudios Avanzados en Prácticas Críticas *Somateca: Producción biopolítica, feminismos, prácticas queer y trans*, dirigido por Paul B. Preciado en el Museo Reina Sofía durante dos ediciones: 2012 y 2013. El grupo trabajó en torno a temas como diversidad sexual y funcional, el cuerpo, la normatividad, los feminismos, los afectos y los deseos. Fue una constelación de personas investigando en torno a las prácticas crip-queer (taradas cuir), en distintos proyectos que tomaron la forma de reflexión teórica, creación artística o acción performativa.

Madrid, febrero de 2022

Querides Somateques, Querida Buraya,

La primera carta que escribí para Somateca fue cuando no sabía lo que era, ni a lo que iba, ¿era un curso? ¿un taller? ¿una práctica colectiva? No lo sabía, pero presentía que iba a ser algo importante. Llovía mucho aquel jueves de marzo, la calle Argumosa se me hizo eterna hasta llegar a la entrada, ¿Novel o Sabatini? No lo recuerdo, todavía no formaba parte de mi vocabulario. Sentadxs en círculo en aquella sala blanca, grande y fría (su nombre ya se borró de mi léxico), nos presentábamos y cuando acabó la ronda, empezó lo que éramos. O quizás fue después en las cañas al juntarnos con las hermanas mayores de la Somateca 1. O quizás fue cuando nos juntamos las dos Somatecas y estuvimos lxs que siguieron y lxs que se unieron. O quizás fue antes en una cabeza que querría crear un laboratorio de la disidencia que nunca llegamos a ser. O quizás no hubo un momento preciso, fue un proceso que duró más de lo esperado, una mancha que se expandió a otros espacios, en casas, en parques, en centros sociales, culturales, en internet, en un capítulo de libro que nunca nos publicaron, en un pasillo del museo, en el disco duro que tengo en mi mesa de estudio cogiendo polvo.

Fuimos alguna vez, tomando acta, consensuando cómo responder a la propuesta de no sé qué, ideando unas jornadas, cocinando para todxs, escribiendo en un pad, leyendo juntxs, inventando juegos, paseando por un bosque, imaginando nuevas formas de generar contenidos y sentirnos libres de no crear...

Muchos de nuestros proyectos se quedaron en el tintero, muchas propuestas sin responder, muchas comisiones que no acabaron su misión, muchos doodles sin resolución, muchas jornadas de reflexión sin conclusión.

Tratábamos de explorar entre nosotrxs, cruzar nuestras experiencias con otrxs, compartir los recursos que teníamos (salas, presupuestos, accesibilidad...), cuidar nuestras relaciones y dinámicas, registrar nuestros contenidos, colaborar con proyectos, pensar qué tipo de remuneración simbólica o económica queríamos, lo último nos llevó a bastantes debates, desgates, aprendizajes...

A veces hemos podido compaginar nuestros intereses comunes con las propuestas, a veces hemos encontrado una manera de sentirnos cómodos con la oportunidad brindada y el trabajo que suponía, y a veces no hemos llegado a eso, porque no era el momento para nosotrxs o porque nos suponía no respetar nuestros ritmos para nuestra reflexión colectiva.

Siento incluso escribiendo esa carta que se encarnan todos esos sentires, por un lado, la ilusión de dar vida a esos recuerdos y esos vínculos, por otro la preocupación por no dejar una propuesta sin responder, la duda de tener que encajar en las pautas y la inquietud por el tema de la retribución (¿cómo?, ¿a quién?, ¿para qué?). E capitalismo ni espera ni escatima.

Pero gana la nostalgia, como cuando pasando delante de mí antiguo colegio, me extraña el recuerdo de sentirme en casa en una institución de la que se va borrando los nombres de las salas en mi memoria, recordando el primer día que llegué empapada por la lluvia en una sala tan fría y que luego me resultara tan cálida.

Gracias por esa etapa, por esos aprendizajes, por esas risas,

Con cariño
Stef

FROM/ TO

II.

Having the time
and the inclination...

Sara Martín

Terceño/ Fran MIM

Cabeza de Vaca

Madrid, 17 February 2021

Dear Fran,

“Tener el tiempo y el deseo...” (*Having the time and the inclination...*) seems to have begun with us. I am compelled to exercise this form of storytelling by starting up a correspondence that from now on can become a way of allowing the process to speak for itself. I shared my fears with you in previous emails, about how fragile the threat of the pandemic makes us and our communities. In a way, it reassured me to know that the Museum is committed to a presence that, although tentative, I see as vital.

I think about those signing up this week, about “elderly” people who might be there or who might want to fill in the form. How will they take this invitation from a place like the Museum and in times like these?

I think about the additional barriers and what can be done about them. Far from ignoring them, I would like to see them as another reason to make this work. Somehow these times make us so aware of everything that remains to be done...

I know that we have little time and that the affective aspect will also occupy a large part of that little time. Sometimes, the concern is the lack of time. Sometimes, the impossibility of presenting content...

The fact is that I see that from very early on this process is finding itself and its own questions. It cannot be otherwise if we want these connections to signify listening, and an imprecise, unforeseen and, of course, fragile manner of being there. This objective (to use the slang of the discipline) of “being there” appears. The process itself, through an expanded correspondence, will reveal the forms that this “being there” takes.

Sara

Querido tú:

'Teor el tiempo y el dinero...' parece
haber empezado entre nosotros.
Me resulta necesario esperar este
fin de semana en actitud desde
ya me voy a casa, pensando que es
puede convertirse en un momento
de 'hacer hablar' el propio proceso.

En mis anteriores te expuse
mis miedos en relación - lo principal
que nos hace, y hace - las condiciones
este momento de la pandemia.

De que manera me tranquilizó
saber que desde el inicio se espera
por parte de la presencia que aunque
pueda ser, sea necesaria.

Pienso en este momento de 'disciplinas'
en las posibles personas 'mayores' que
pueda estar o querer volver al
formato. ¿Cómo recibir este material
de un lugar como el inicio y a nos
pueda ser esto?

Pienso en las buenas condiciones y a
qué se puede hacer con ellas...

Madrid, 24 February 2021

Dear Sara,

I am delighted to hear that “*Having the time and the inclination...*” began in the form of a handwritten letter even before we met its participants. Although I don’t like my handwriting very much, I’m going to write to you anyway. [idea one: the handwritten letter preserves the body, writing by hand sustains the memory of the body it inhabits, their vitality]. I think that your approach does justice to a project that has indeed been going on for a while, since our first conversations, since we began to imagine a continuation of the equipoM team together, and since last year’s – ever so beautiful - *Poliniza* [idea two: projects begin long before they begin, and end long after they end; continuity]. It seems to me that the care and attention we put into each thing we do (that we did, that we will do) may be the most decisive of all those things that are in our hands (let’s keep the inclination, please, let’s find the time); and also in our hands is how to live/reconcile/be angry/negotiate with those other things that depend on others (like the logistics, which in this over-scaled Museum is an issue, like the production sheets that are not always respected, like the audio equipment that is not always ready, like the people within the structure who don’t necessarily understand what we do) [idea three: the way we treat the materials during the process permeates the process itself].

Yesterday Luis Guerra in the workshop “*Las formas del hacer, el hacer de las formas*” (*Forms of making, the making of forms*) told us beautiful things about memory and the inscribing of memory that made me think of you, of the equipoM, of my three years at the Reina Sofia Museum and of the over-60s; I also thought deeply of my father. How to sustain memory, Luis said, beyond the monument; and he said beautiful words like “*cualquieridad*” (“*any kind of being*”) and “*abandonaje*” (*abandonment*). He also spoke about *echoicity*, and I was

moved without being sure I understood exactly what he was referring to. Echo as correspondence, I think. Fields of resonance, Luis said later. [idea four: build resonance boxes, don't steal or bestow a voice. Echo is different from reverberation]

It really is great that we have filled all the places. It's also exciting to see the diversity of people (*they say I paint like Monet*) and the challenge of accompanying something so unusual and so utopian as a space of different people maintaining a correspondence, listening to each other [idea five: listening as a guide, as a guarantor of something, an action that pulls against the tide]. Just now the word *utopia* comes up, so defeated by its opposite and oh so fashionable *dystopia*, and I remember something I underlined in something I am reading “(...) [E] *very community possesses, in addition to its going institutions, a whole reservoir of potentialities, partly rooted in the past, still alive though hidden, and partly budding forth from new crossings and mutations, which open the way to further development (...)*”. This was Lewis Mumford in a 1962 foreword to his *The Story of Utopias* (1922) and he outlines more ideas on that which shapes the delicate balance between personal and communal life, the integrity of which has been destroyed by the pressure of “*perverse ideologies, institutions and mechanisms*”.

New crossings. Mutations.

Still alive, though hidden.

Let's continue, Sara. Looking forward to it.

Fran

Madrid, 6 February 2022

Dear Fran,

Unable to do otherwise, I am writing to you by hand in my notebook, which is the space reserved for when the time comes to write... (idea one: the handwritten text is a question of the body, yes, but also a transcription of time as we write about *what happens to us*).

And I transcribe my thoughts, myself, on the computer and in that process of transcribing myself, I extend myself further, I correct myself, I translate myself... and all this makes me think about writing as a place, beyond the pages of that notebook. Writing as a place of listening to one's own voice. A place, too, of turning things around.

Turning things around has always made it possible to look at them, to think about them... (idea two: could this be a simple definition of mediation practices in museums?)

I started to think about a programme of meetings and actions for equipoM 2021 under the guise of 'correspondence'. I'm particularly interested in this form of living an experience together because it is a way of keeping it alive and sharing it at the same time, an extended form of action. The idea of doing it twice seemed to offer to me (and even to ask for) a way of relating one group to the other (idea three: to think about what it means or what forms this *act of relating* can take beyond equivalence, equality, equalisation). Even more so after a time of distance, that of the pandemic, which robbed us somewhat of relationships (physical ones at least). In visual artistic terms, symmetry appeared as a way of bringing together or finding these two points in space (both teams) while maintaining correspondence as a methodology. A methodology that put experience at the centre: the *life experience* with which older participants come to the museum and *the experience to be created*, together, as a project proposal.

The difference here operates by surprise, it renders impossible that symmetry enunciated in the pre-writing of something that is

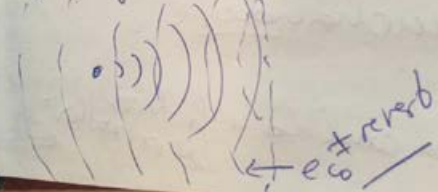
... Luis buena en el
encuentro. Las formas del hacer
el hacer de las formas, nos contaba
cosas precisas sobre la memoria
y su inscripción que me
hicieron pensar en ti, en
el equipo M, en mis años en
el Museo Pele de Jaja y en los
mayores de 60 años;
también pensé fuerte en mi
padre.

Cómo sostener la memoria,
leer Luis, más allá del
momento; y dije

Juntos ^{nos} a trabajar
al equipo M y su - ~~trayectoria~~ -
política del auto pasado.

Me parece que el mundo y
el mundo que le pongamos a
cada cosa que hagamos
(vivimos, hacemos) será así
lo más determinante de
entre todas aquellas cosas
que están en nuestra
mano (conservemos el
deseo, please / encuentro)
(Tiempo);

palabras bellas como
'alguienidad' / 'abandonaje'
También hablé sobre la
elocuidad y me vibró sin
tener la certeza de haber enten-
dido a qué se refería
exactamente. El eco como
correspondencia, peludo y o.
los campos de resonancia,
dijo luego Luis.



y también en nuestra mano
está como unir / conciliar /
~~apoyar~~ / ~~poner~~ / negociar - con
las otras cosas que dependen
de otras (como la logística),
que en este Museo son
sobre-escalado su TEMA,
como las pibas de producción
que a veces no se respetan, como
el equipo de audio que a
veces no está listo, como los
personas que - dentro de la
estructura - no necesariamente
entienden lo que hacemos)

not yet present (and we knew it): to the extent that one group is not equivalent to the other – or perhaps as a thing of experience or of the bodies themselves – the symmetry is broken. Now, as we are about to finish, I think of the value of this rupture and all that it reveals: the very present of time together as an unrepeatable, unimaginable form, as a place of possibility for life lived in community and for observing the elasticity of links, their diverse forms (idea four: thinking of time as present and then, as a requirement for listening, as a necessary continuity).

Thus, the way of working in the accompaniment of a community requires special attention to this time, so that we are weaving together the sessions, the moments, a way of *listening* to what is happening and responding to it as time goes by, or perhaps asking about it. To ask oneself every day ‘what happened today’ instead of thinking ‘what is going to happen today’. The tone of questioning is important. And to repeat to myself like a mantra: ‘write, don’t pre-write’, perhaps so that this exercise of memory, of writing, makes sense and so that the lives it summons up fit in.

That is the time we have, the time of a present that escapes, of a time that is always missing, that is the inhabited time. I have very much enjoyed our work, the moments – always brief ones – of discussing it, of naming it together.

In your letter, you talk about ‘preserving the inclination’ and I found it a very beautiful idea to dwell on now, as the last session of equipoM is about to take place, almost a year after our first letter. I am relieved to think that in spite of the rush, of the little amount of time, of the management that often drains energy away, the inclination to be is still intact, as if knowing that it is that last light that goes out that leads us to be with the people in the museum day after day.

Marguerite Duras says: *“Writing is the unknown. Before writing we know nothing of what one is about to write. And with total lucidity.”*

I’m sending you these words that have been with me for some time, the time of thinking about the place of writing in my work on

projects with people, mainly in museums. And which I now like to think of as *the time and the inclination* that has brought me to the place of this correspondence.

We will carry on, of course we will!

S

(Final note: somehow the result of this experience has to do with thinking of time in a disrupted way, or perhaps displacing its forcefulness. The project as a form of pre-writing spoke of 'Having time', the process as a form of experience brings me back to the question: What is this time that we (don't) have?)

Madrid, 17 de Febrero de 2021

Querido Fran:

“Tener el tiempo y el deseo...” parece haber empezado entre nosotros. Me resulta necesario ejercitar esta forma de relato activando desde ya una correspondencia que puede convertirse en una manera de hacer hablar al propio proceso. En mails anteriores te compartí mis miedos en relación a lo frágil que nos hace y hace a las comunidades esta amenaza de la pandemia. De alguna manera me tranquilizó saber que desde el Museo se apuesta por una presencialidad que, aunque delicada, veo necesaria.

Pienso en esta semana de inscripciones, en las posibles personas mayores que pueden estar o querer rellenar el formulario. ¿Cómo recibirán esta invitación de un lugar como el Museo y en unos tiempos como estos?

Pienso en las barreras añadidas y en qué se puede hacer con ellas. Lejos de obviarlas, me gustaría entenderlas como un motivo más para trabajar. De alguna manera este tiempo nos hace tan conscientes de todo lo que queda por hacer...

Sé que tenemos poco tiempo y que lo afectivo nos ocupará también gran parte de ese poco tiempo. A veces la preocupación es la falta de tiempo. A veces la imposibilidad de plantear contenidos...

El caso es que veo que este proceso desde muy pronto se va encontrando consigo mismo y con sus preguntas. No puede ser de otra manera si queremos hacer que esos vínculos signifiquen escucha y un estar ahí impreciso, no previsto y, desde luego, frágil. Aparece este objetivo (por usar la jerga más disciplinaria) de ,estar ahí‘. El proceso mismo, a través de una correspondencia expandida, nos dirá las formas que ese ,estar ahí‘ van tomando.

Sara

Madrid, 24 de febrero de 2021

Querida Sara:

me encanta saber que “Tener el tiempo y el deseo...” haya comenzado en forma de carta manuscrita desde antes incluso de que hayamos conocido a sus participantes. Te voy a escribir igual, aunque mi letra me guste tan poco. [idea uno: la letra manuscrita conserva el cuerpo, escribir con las manos preserva la memoria de los cuerpos en que habita, su viveza] Creo que tu proceder le hace justicia a un proyecto que, efectivamente, lleva en marcha un tiempo, desde nuestras primeras conversaciones, desde que empezamos a imaginar juntxs una continuación al equipoM y su -tan hermoso- Poliniza del año pasado. [idea dos: los proyectos empiezan mucho antes de empezar, y terminan mucho después de terminar; la continuidad] Me parece que el cuidado y el mimo que le pongamos a cada cosa que hagamos (que hicimos, que haremos) será casi lo más determinante de entre todas aquellas cosas que están en nuestra mano (conservemos el deseo, please, encontremos el tiempo); y también en nuestra mano está cómo vivir/ conciliar/enfadarse/negociar con esas otras cosas que dependen de otros (como la logística, que en este Museo tan sobre-escalado es un tema, como las fichas de producción que a veces no se respetan, como el equipo de audio que a veces no está listo, como las personas que dentro de la estructura no necesariamente entienden lo que hacemos) [idea tres: el modo en que tratamos los materiales durante el proceso impregna al propio proceso]

Ayer Luis Guerra en el encuentro “*Las formas del hacer, el hacer de las formas*” nos contaba cosas preciosas sobre la memoria y su inscripción que me hicieron pensar en ti, en el equipoM, en mis tres años en el Museo Reina Sofía y en los mayores de 60 años; también pensé fuerte en mi padre. Cómo sostener la memoria, decía Luis, más allá del monumento; y dijo palabras bellas como *cualquieridad* y *abandona-*

je. También habló sobre la ecoicidad, y me vibró sin tener la certeza de haber entendido a qué se refería exactamente. El eco como correspondencia, pienso yo. Los campos de resonancia, dijo luego Luis. [idea cuatro: construir cajas de resonancia, no robar ni otorgar la voz. Eco es distinto de reverberación]

Qué bien que hayamos cubierto las plazas, la verdad, es excitante también ver la diversidad de gentes (*dicen que pinto como Monet*) y el reto de acompañar algo tan poco habitual y tan utópico como un espacio de personas distintas manteniendo una correspondencia, escuchándose [idea cinco: escuchar como guía, como garante de algo, como acción a contracorriente]. Justo sale la palabra utopía, tan vendida por su contraria y tan de moda distopía, y me acuerdo de algo que subrayé en lo que ando leyendo “(...) cualquier comunidad posee, además de sus instituciones vigentes, toda una reserva de potencialidades, en parte enraizadas en el pasado, vivas todavía aunque ocultas, y en parte brotando de nuevos cruces y mutaciones que abren camino a futuros desarrollos (...)” Esto lo dijo Lewis Mumford en un prólogo de 1962 a su *Historia de las utopías* (1922) y nombra más ideas sobre *aquello que configura el delicado equilibrio entre la vida personal y la comunitaria, cuya integridad se ha visto amputada por la presión de “ideologías, instituciones y mecanismos perversos”*.

Nuevos cruces. Mutaciones.

Vivas todavía aunque ocultas.

Seguimos, Sara. Qué ganas.

Fran

Madrid, 6 de febrero de 2022

Querido Fran,

Como no podía ser de otra forma, te escribo a mano en mi cuaderno que es ese espacio reservado para cuando se va dando el tiempo de escribir... (idea uno: el texto manuscrito es cuestión de cuerpo sí, pero también un dibujo del tiempo en la medida que escribimos sobre *lo que nos pasa*).

Y me transcribo en el ordenador y en ese proceso de transcribirme me extiendo más, me corrijo, me traduzco... y todo esto me hace pensar en la escritura como lugar, más allá de las hojas de ese cuaderno. Escritura como lugar de escucha a esa voz propia. Lugar también, de dar vueltas a las cosas.

Dar la vuelta a las cosas siempre ha sido una posibilidad de mirarlas, de pensarlas... (idea dos: ¿podría ser esta una definición sencilla de las prácticas de mediación en museos?)

Empecé a pensar en un programa de encuentros y acciones para EquipoM 2021 bajo la fórmula sugerente de la 'correspondencia'. Me interesa especialmente esa forma de cohabitar una experiencia porque es al mismo tiempo la manera de mantenerla viva y de compartirla, una forma ampliada de acción. La idea de que fueran dos convocatorias me pareció que ofrecía (e incluso pedía) un poner en relación un grupo con el otro (idea tres: pensar qué significa o qué formas puede tomar ese *poner en relación* más allá de la equivalencia, la igualdad, la equiparación). Más si cabe después de un tiempo de distancia, el de la pandemia, que nos había robado un poco las relaciones (las físicas al menos). En términos plásticos, la simetría apareció como una forma de juntar o de encontrar esos dos puntos en el espacio (ambos equipos) manteniendo la correspondencia como metodología. Una metodología que ponía la experiencia en el centro: la *experiencia de*

vida con la que llegan al museo participantes mayores y la *experiencia por hacer*, juntas, como propuesta del proyecto.

La diferencia aquí opera por sorpresa, vuelve impostora esa simetría enunciada en la preescritura de algo que aún no tiene presente (y mira que lo sabíamos): en la medida en que un grupo no es equivalente al otro -o quizás como cosa de la experiencia o de los propios cuerpos- la simetría se rompe. Ahora, a punto de terminar, pienso el valor de esa ruptura y todo lo que revela: el presente mismo del tiempo juntos como forma irrepetible, inimaginable, como lugar de posibilidad para la vida vivida en comunidad y para observar la elasticidad de los vínculos, sus formas diversas (idea cuatro: pensar el tiempo como presente y entonces, como exigencia de escucha, como continuidad necesaria).

Así, la forma de trabajar en el acompañamiento de una comunidad precisa de una atención especial a ese tiempo, de manera que vamos hilando las sesiones, los momentos, una forma de escuchar lo que va pasando y responderlo en el devenir del tiempo, o tal vez preguntarlo. Preguntarse cada día ¿qué ha pasado hoy? en lugar de pensar ‘lo que va a pasar hoy’. Es importante el tono de interrogación. Y repetirme como un mantra: ‘escribir, no preescribir’, quizás para que ese ejercicio de la memoria, de la escritura, tenga un sentido y quepan las vidas que convoca.

El tiempo que se tiene es ese, el de un presente que se escapa, el de un tiempo que falta siempre, ése es el tiempo habitado. Me ha gustado mucho de nuestro trabajo los ratos siempre breves, de comentarlo, de nombrarlo juntos.

En tu carta hablas de ‘conservar el deseo’ y me ha parecido una idea muy bella en la que detenerme ahora, a punto de ocurrir la última sesión de EquipoM, casi un año después de nuestra primera carta. Me alivia pensar que a pesar de las prisas, del tiempo que ha sido poco, de la gestión que con frecuencia se lleva la energía por delante, el deseo de estar sigue intacto, como sabiendo que es esa última luz que se apaga, lo que nos lleva a estar uno y otro día con la gente en el museo.

Marguerite Duras dice: ‘La escritura es lo desconocido. Antes de escribir no sabemos nada de lo que vamos a escribir. Y con total lucidez.’

Te envió estas palabras que me llevan acompañando un tiempo, el tiempo de pensar el lugar de la escritura en mi trabajo haciendo proyectos con la gente, fundamentalmente en museos. Y que ahora me gusta pensar como *el tiempo y el deseo* que me ha traído hasta el lugar de esta correspondencia.

Seguimos, por supuesto que seguimos!

S

(Nota final: de alguna manera el resultado de esta experiencia tiene que ver con pensar el tiempo de forma trastocada, o tal vez desplazar su contundencia. El proyecto como forma de preescritura hablaba de ‘Tener el tiempo’, el proceso como forma de experiencia me devuelve la pregunta: ¿Cuál es ese tiempo que (no) tenemos?)

FROM/ TO

5.

The impossibility
of meeting

Adela Železnik/
Tanja Završki

Tanja Završki

Ljubljana, 17 February 2021

Dear Tanja,

I am writing to you after a long silence. It was silence from my side because I didn't know what to say. Last March we thought this pandemic would be only a temporary break during which we were going to take a breath, have the opportunity to take care of ourselves and our loved ones, and after this short while we were going to continue our normal life. I had no idea that this wouldn't be a short break, but was rather a beginning of a void, which replaced the real relationships that were established with you and the group¹.

First it was the impossibility of meetings, which already made some temporal distance between us, we could never switch to zooms or other digital substitutes, which we did within the "institutional culture", so we almost stopped communication.

Two months later, when some sort of normality was established, the real relationship wasn't possible any more. Because everything that made our crocheting meetings pleasant and warm was forbidden: food, music, socialising. We used to meet in the Social centre Rog², where almost everything was allowed. This often annoyed me then (like smoking, smell, coldness, dirt), and I wanted us to meet at the nearby +MSUM³ instead. I didn't understand why no-one really wanted it. Now I know.

I wonder if we would ever be able to establish this sort of special space of acceptance, freedom, friendship and solidarity as we experienced in this unregulated, squatted space, and if so, whether this can ever be within the museum. Once or twice we eventually met at the +Kantina MSUM⁴, but the feeling was not the same.

I would like to imagine a tool or a magic wand which would re-create this notion of security and community after this long break

and political consequences of the pandemic in our society? How to imagine art to be this wand, or museum as a secure space able to offer a shelter for all who need it?

Yours,
Adela

ENDNOTES

- 1 I am referring to *No-Border Craft*, a self-organised initiative led by women who are activists, refugees, and asylum seekers in Slovenia. They are fighting against racism and sexism, and closed borders by organising direct actions and offering each other mutual support. *No-Border Craft* succeeded to build a firm social network between migrant women and local residents in Slovenia. They created an environment for active participation in the local cultural and social events, and are looking for opportunities for an alternative economy by offering their hand-craft products.
- 2 Social centre Rog was a space within the ex-bicycle factory Ljubljana, in 2006 occupied by artists, activists, cultural workers and other collectives, who established An Autonomous Factory Rog. Social centre Rog was primarily meant for socialising and political organising of socially disempowered and marginalised social groups and individuals whose workers, civic and/or human rights were violated. They worked on problematics of social inequality and exclusion, economic exploitation, racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination tied to sexual orientation, personal circumstances, cultural specifics, etc.
The Social centre Rog ceased to operate a month before this letter was written, on 19 January 2021 when the city authorities without previous announcement demolished Autonomous factory Rog and evicted its inhabitants.
- 3 Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova
- 4 Museum's cafe, then run by migrants

20 February 2021

Dear Adela,

Your letter had a calming effect on me. To me, some levels of safety come from a feeling of collectiveness confirming once again that no one of us is alone in our experiences. Even if it can go without saying, reading about your experience makes me feel we are connected in distance that was forced upon us globally by the pandemic and locally on us as a group that was established in our beloved and troubled autonomous spaces in Rog. And every feeling of connectivity brings me hope we can find new ways of connecting.

The obstacles I experience are not only external, but also internal. In the past two years many restrictions were imposed on us, one of the most harmful one's was the curfew. Everything needed to be planned in advance. There were very few opportunities to meet anyone spontaneously in the city, it was impossible to meet for a coffee because the bars were closed and it was forbidden to walk together on the street with people who do not live together (we did that anyway). So planning in advance and making new schedules to previously spontaneous life was hard for me. Hard enough so it felt better to stay at home, read books, work and spend time with only the closest people who surround me.

I am thinking about the future possibilities of our group. Rog, our squated factory where we gathered and got to know each other better than anywhere else, where economic background was important only in the means to support each other and reduce differences, is gone. Each one of us was annoyed when the toilet did not work or because someone didn't clean the space after last night's party. But this party was legal then, even if the space itself wasn't. Because it belonged to all people who didn't fit into any project requirements for art residences, NGO projects as equal participants, etc. We painted on

the walls of the self-established Social Center and we insulated a feminist space by ourselves to make it warmer. These spaces were never closed. Can a museum decide to become less formal?

Hugs,
Tanja



Social centre Rog, 2017. Photo: Adela Železnik



No Border Craft, 2017. Photo: Adela Železnik



In front of the Social centre Rog, 2019. Unknown photographer

Ljubljana, 17. februar 2021

Draga Tanja!

Po dolgem molku se ti končno oglašam. Pišem ti šele zdaj, ker preprosto nisem vedela, kako naj začnem. Lanskega marca smo vsi mislili, da bo pandemija samo kratek premor, priložnost, da si oddahnemo, vzamemo čas zase in za svoje, potem pa se vrnemo v stare tirnice. Še sanjalo se mi ni, da to ne bo le začasni predah, temveč začetek velike praznine, ki je pogoltnila tudi tesne odnose, ki smo jih s skupino vzpostavile med seboj.¹

Najprej smo se zaradi ukrepov za zajezitev epidemije prenehale srečevati, kar je med nami takoj vzpostavilo distanco. V nasprotju z »institucionalno kulturo«, mé naših srečanj nismo mogle preprosto prestaviti na zoom ali v drugo digitalno okolje, zato smo tako rekoč prenehale komunicirati. Dva meseca kasneje, ko se je ponovno vzpostavila neke vrste normalnost, pravi odnos med nami ni bil več mogoč. Kajti skupno kuhanje in druženje, kar je našim srečanjem ob kvačkanju dajalo toplino in sproščenost, je bilo odslej prepovedano. Naša redna srečanja pred pandemijo so se dogajala v Socialnem centru Rog.² Ta prostor »skoraj neomejene svobode« mi je velikokrat povzročal nelagodje, največkrat me je motil cigaretni dim, pa mraz, preden se je prostor segrel, umazanija ... Veliko raje bi videla, da bi se dobile v +MSUM-u, ki je samo pet minut hoje stran. Nisem mogla razumeti, zakaj nikoli ni bilo navdušenja nad to mojo idejo. Zdaj razumem.

Sprašujem se, če bo še kdaj mogoče vzpostaviti tako enkraten prostor, kot je bil Socialni center Rog, prostor sprejemanja, svobode, prijateljstva in solidarnosti, in če ja, ali lahko podoben prostor sploh obstaja v muzeju? Nekajkrat smo se namreč sestale tudi v okviru +Kantine MSUM, pa občutek še zdaleč ni bil enak.

Želim si, da bi znala iznajti orodje, ki bi kot čarobna palica pričaralo tisto občutje varnosti in skupnosti, ki smo ga delile pred pande-

mijo in njenimi političnimi in družbenimi posledicami! Sprašujem se, ali je to orodje lahko umetnost in ali je v muzeju sploh mogoč prostor, ki lahko priskrbi zavetje za vse, ki ga potrebujejo?

Tvoja, Adela

KONČNE OPOMBE

- 1 S tem mislim na samoorganizirano skupino prosilk za azil, migrantk s statusom begunke in aktivistk *No-Border Craft*, ki »skupnostno kvačkajo in se družijo brez meja«. Njihova kvačkarska srečanja so se začela znotraj Skupine za vključevanje migrantk v skupnost, v sodelovanju z neformalno rokodelsko skupino *KvaKvačkaš*. Bistveni cilj skupine je gradnja socialne mreže med lokalnimi prebivalkami in migrantkami ter prizadevanje za krepitev moči in uveljavljanje znanj, izkušenj in poguma migrantskih žensk. Aktivno iščejo možnosti alternativne ekonomije in afirmacije znanj migrantk, zato so se odločile, da svoje izdelke ponudijo v zameno za prostovoljne prispevke ob različnih priložnostih.
- 2 Socialni center Rog je od leta 2006 deloval v okviru Avtonomne tovarne Rog. Primarno je bil namenjen druženju in političnemu organiziranju socialno ogroženih in marginaliziranih družbenih skupin in posameznikov, ki so jim bile kršene delavske, državljanske in/ali človekove pravice. Ukvarjal se s problematikami družbene neenakosti, socialne izključenosti, ekonomskega izkoriščanja, rasne diskriminacije in ostalih oblik diskriminacij, vezanih na spolno usmerjenost, osebne okoliščine, kulturne značilnosti, itn. Socialni center Rog je prenehal z delovanjem mesec dni preden je bilo napisano to pismo. Zgodaj zjutraj 19. januarja 2021 so mestne oblasti z nenapovedano akcijo zrušili Avtonomno tovarno Rog in izgnale njene prebivalce.

20. februar 2021

Draga Adela,

tvoje pismo mi deluje pomirjujoče. Zame občutek varnosti do neke mere izhaja iz občutka kolektivnosti, ko ponovno dobim potrditev, da nobena od nas ni zares sama v svojih izkušnjah. Morda je samoumevno, ampak ob branju o tvoji izkušnji dobim občutek povezanosti v razdalji, ki nam je bila vsiljena, vsem nam zaradi pandemije, ožje pa še posebej naši skupini, ki je nastala, se vzpostavljala in krepila v prostorih Avtonomne tovarne Rog. Vsak občutek povezanosti mi daje upanje, da bomo našle nove načine povezovanja.

Vendar ovire, ki jih občutim, niso samo zunanje, ampak tudi notranje. V zadnjih dveh letih so nam zadali veliko omejitev in ena izmed hujših je bila policijska ura. Vse je bilo treba načrtovati vnaprej. Bilo je zelo malo priložnosti za spontana srečanja v mestu, nemogoče se je bilo srečati na kavi, ker so bili lokali zaprti, uradno je bilo tudi prepovedano hoditi skupaj po ulici z ljudmi, s katerimi ne živiš (ampak to smo kljub temu počele). Načrtovanje vnaprej in delanje urnikov za sicer prej spontano življenje mi je bilo težko. Dovolj težko, da sem se počutila bolje, če sem ostajala doma, brala, delala in preživljala čas samo z najbližjimi, ki me obkrožajo.

Razmišljam o prihodnosti naše skupine. Rog, naša zaskvotana tovarna, kjer smo se srečevale in se spoznale bolje kot kjerkoli drugje, kjer je bila ekonomska situacija vsake posameznice pomembna zgolj v smislu medsebojne podpore in zmanjševanja razlik, ne obstaja več. Vse nas je jezilo, kadar se je pokvarilo stranišče ali kdo ni pospravil prostora po zabavi prejšnjega dne. Ampak tista zabava je bila takrat legalna, tudi če sam prostor ni bil. Ker je pripadal vsem ljudem, ki ne ustrezajo merilom za razpise. Skupaj smo poslikale zidove Socialnega centra Rog in same izolirale stene feminističnega prostora, da bi nam bilo toplo. Ti prostori niso bili nikoli zaprti. Se muzej lahko odloči postati manj formalen?

Objem, Tanja

FROM/ TO

6.

This language...

Huh?

Maria Mallol/
Andreja Bruss

Madrid, 26 January 2021

Querida Andreja,

How are you doing? I still miss working with you very much. Today we are in a workshop together with the mediation group, with our dear Adela and the rest of the group. Sofía Olascoaga is working with us, trying to be able to gather some ideas around the materials (concept maps, artworks, words) that the group shared and prepared during weekly meetings between March, April and June, you know, when most of us were spending the days at home in the first lockdown. Sofía asked us to write a letter so we can focus on the possible forms for these materials to be crystalized and also, for whom do we want to prepare them. And I can't help thinking of you as the recipient of my letter. I remember how we wrote the description for this activity when writing the application for the EU grant. When we decided to include the e-learning materials as an output (this language.. huh?) for the mediation group even though Adela and Pablo were so wary of them. If only you were here with us to realise what a great deal of conversations these materials have originated! Unfortunately, I was not present in all conversations the group had, too many things to take care of during lockdown (mainly the 2 little monsters at home) but when I had a look at the materials for the workshop it blew me away how the questions and research done by the mediation group reflect on the sense and the meaning of working together. Sofía mentioned a text by Arundhati Roy, published in April, called "the pandemic as a portal" and also asked us to think what we would take as a toolkit to cross this portal... and I thought to bring you (and the cats and the baby, of course) with us.

I think that this is because one of the things I cherish most about the project, about L'Internationale, it's to be able to learn and work so closely with this large number of amazing people. You know well the difficulties to translate this common sharing experiences with-

in L'Internationale to the technical words we use for the application and the reports, etc. It is hard for me to imagine the “for whom” these materials would be. But, at the same time, I recognize the importance to share how the time spent together (even if online, apart in essence, but working together) can be a trigger for a bigger shift in institutional working. Onur said yesterday a beautiful sentence to explain why he enjoyed so much the meetings during lockdown: “being online together allowed a way for us to avoid our loneliness, the loneliness of our institutions with nobody in them”. I really do not know how we would be able to share it, this intimate process, but I trust the group entirely and we will end up with beautiful, sensitive and sharp material to share (and we'll find a way to call it e-learning materials for the EU... after all everything is online now) and we will also proudly share it with you dear Andreja.

I hope life is treating you gently, that you are happy and with bright days ahead.

Love from Madrid,

Maria

Trieste, 31 January 2022

Dear Maria,

I was happy to receive your letter. It is so rare and exciting to write handwritten letters in this day and age; receiving and reading them is equally so. I would be afraid to handwrite a letter, as it would take me ages to do it properly, not to mention having to constantly check the spelling and grammar. I believe I would first write it on the computer using the complete Office suite, at least three online dictionaries and of course, the automatic spell checker... and maybe just then I would rewrite it by hand.

...by the way this is actually what I am doing with this letter...

When you mentioned writing the EU application, I instantly pictured myself during the Christmas holidays back in 2017. I was wearing my pajamas day and night, while figuring out which would be the best way to present the project. With 10000 doubts on the best structure to choose and which one of the “poetic” words to use between output, impact, result, outcome... Back then Steven, you and I were trying to imagine the future. In the case of the e-learning materials, we did not only imagine it, we predicted it as if we had a crystal ball.

I always say that writing an EU application is an act of creativity and ingenuity! Don't you think?

You are right, when you say just how difficult it is to translate the common sharing experience within L'Internationale to the technical words the EU requires for its applications and reports. There are so many connections and relations that are put in place between people, with all their nuances, that are impossible to explain in the e-table of the e-form of the e-report called max.-2000-characters-and-not-a-full-stop-more-!-you-reached-the-max-number-of-characters-ding-cancel-rewrite-ding-cancel-rewrite-ding-f****!

You have to stay within the borders. It is difficult! To stay within the borders, I mean.

I also would have loved to participate in the workshop with Sofia and to think about the “pandemic as a portal”. However, I am terrible at those kinds of things. While doing such exercises I am sort of saying to myself, “think, Andreja, think”, but I am actually not thinking. I just keep saying, “Think, Andreja, think!”

Anyway.

While thinking (intensively, of course, like never before) about the pandemic, and especially about the so-called first lockdown (Spring 2020), the image of an opening keeps coming to my mind. A gap in a fence or a crack in the wall.

In Italy, during the first lockdown, we were forced to stay within the borders of our homes. And were allowed to get out only for highly motivated reasons. We began to use our creativity, in the way only Italians can do, and resorted to all kinds of gimmicks to get out of our houses. We went to buy groceries 3 times a day, we took our dog with incontinence for walks every 30 minutes, we even became marathon runners. We tried every trick to find a way to breach our home walls.

But the pandemic raised other walls, since we were no longer used to borders between countries. You know, I live on the border between Italy and Slovenia and since 2007 there are no more border crossings. We used to cross the border every day, it was something normal. From Italy we go to Slovenia to get gas and buy meat. From Slovenia to Italy for work and coffee. Suddenly, this whole stream was stopped because of COVID-19. It was still possible to pass major border crossings for urgent matters or health reasons, but most people got stuck within the two countries. Authorities put boulders on the roads to stop cars crossing the border. Some people started crossing it through the woods... by car! Then the authorities had raised barriers there.

There is a funny episode that happened in a village close to Gorizia, a town located on the border with Slovenia. I read it in the newspaper. At least, I found it funny for how I imagined it. Like an

old Italian black and white film comedy. One early morning an Italian military truck full of soldiers coming from south Italy, who did not know the territory, was driving on a road and suddenly found itself in Slovenia. The boulders on the road that had been closing the border were removed during the night. The soldiers did not even notice that they were entering another State.

You see, how difficult it is to stay within borders!

Despite the tragedy of all the lives taken away by the virus, I have some good memories from the first lockdown, especially the sense of unity and solidarity between people. I hoped we would become better people after the pandemic. But we are certainly not. We are polarizing ourselves between no vax and pro vax, pro green pass and no green pass, etc. There are families where people go against each other.

Sorry for being so negative and pessimistic.

Let's hope the pandemic will be over soon and everything will be fine in the end. As they say "Everything will be fine in the end. And if it is not fine, it means that is still not the end."

Thanks again for writing to me and giving me the chance to write you back. I miss working with you, too. Mostly your energy and determination.

I look forward to having you and your little women at my place in Trieste, soon.

A big hug!

X X X

Andreja

Trieste, 31st January 2022

Dear Maria,

I was happy to receive your letter. It is so rare and exciting to write handwritten letters in this day and age; receiving and reading them is equally so. I would be afraid to handwrite a letter, as it would take me ages to do it properly, not to mention having to constantly check the spelling and grammar. I believe I would first write it on the computer using the complete Office suite, at least three online dictionaries and of course, the automatic spell checker... and maybe just then I would write it by hand.

... by the way this is actually what I am doing with this letter...

When you mentioned writing the EU application, I instantly pictured myself during the Christmas holidays back in 2014. I was wearing my pajamas day and night, while figuring out which would be the best way to present the project. With 1000 doubts on the best structure to choose and which one of the "poetic" words to use between output, impact, result, outcome... Back then Steven, you and I were trying to imagine the future. In the case of the e-learning materials, we did not only imagine it, we predicted it.

~~Sorry~~
Sorry for being so negative and pessimistic.
Let's hope the pandemic will be over soon and everything
will be fine in the end. As they say "Everything will
be fine in the end. And if it is not fine, it means that
is still not the end."

Thanks again for writing to me and giving me the
chance to write you back. I miss working with you, too.
Mostly your energy and determination.

I look forward to having you and your little women
at my place in Trieste, soon.

A big hug!

xxx

Andreja

FROM/ TO

7.

Closeness

Marta Skowrońska –
Markiewicz, Marta
Przybył / Blyzkist
(Maria Beburia, Olga
Mzhelskaya, Taras
Gembik)

Warsaw, 7 December 2021

Dear Blyzkist! Dear Maria, Taras and Olga!

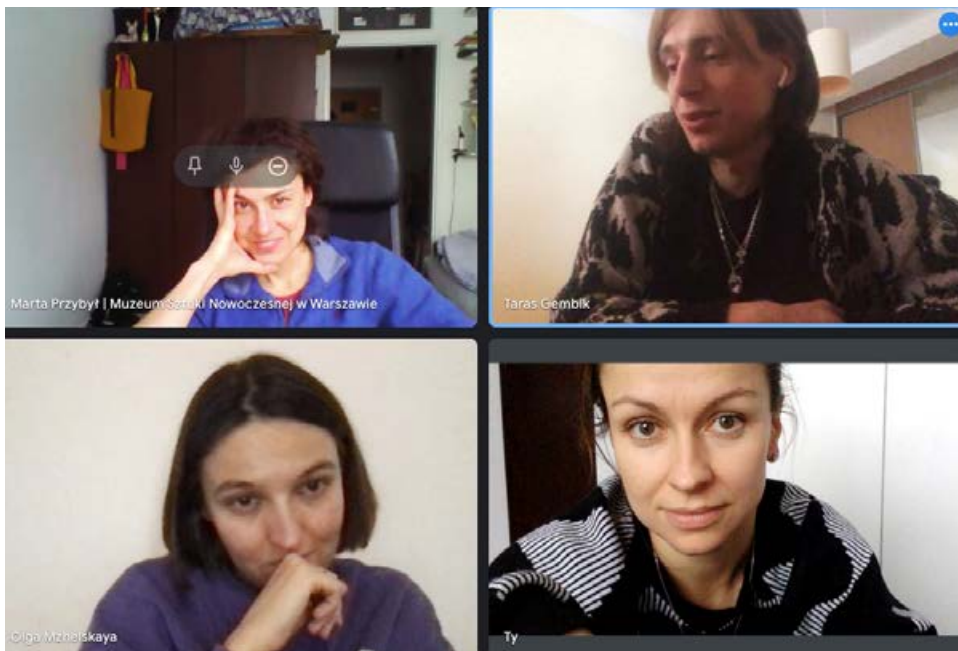
Over a year ago we invited you to work on a film for L'internationale, in which you told the story of your collective and yourselves. The process of making the film took months. At the time of the film's premiere we had the opportunity to talk about how much had changed: Maria got a job in the Ocalenie Foundation, Taras started work on behalf of people in crisis of homelessness and Olga joined your collective. So today all of you are in a completely different place...

You were shooting the film when the Museum was closed to the public due to the pandemic and the two of you had just started out as the Blyzkist collective. Since then you have conducted numerous actions, meetings, and debates, you have been involved in various initiatives. You have started cooperation with other institutions, organizations and artists. And finally, Olga joined in :) You did all of this in turbulent and uncertain times during successive waves of pandemics and crises – and we admire you for that.

As participants of the Mediation group within the L'Internationale museums confederation together with other people we are working on new kind of materials about constituent museum practices; this time it will be an online publication collecting reflections and experiences from group work in this multi-threaded, international project. We highly appreciate what we have already done together and we want to continue working with you on this publication.

We do not ask you to prepare reports or essays, but rather to write personal letters in which you would share your reflections and experiences.

We would like to ask you, both as a collective and as individual participants, to share, from the current perspective – which of your original assumptions have since become obsolete, what is important to you now and whether the goals you had set for yourselves while



Screen shot and office view from online meetings between Blyzkist and MSN education team



working on the film remained valid or changed. We also want to ask about your individual experiences and the changes that have occurred in your lives and in your activist and artistic activities in the course of the year, and how those experiences and changes affects your plans and ambitions as a 1/3 Blyzkist.

At the same time, we would like you to consider the questions that keep coming back at the meetings of our Mediation working group:

Do you believe that an institution can show its vulnerability and start to work from there?

Do you want to think and challenge our institutional structures to make them more porous and democratic?

What is the role that art can play in the current eco-social crisis?

The shape and form of the publication depends on the letters written in response to our publication by the people we invite to take part in the dialogue. Apart from the project itself, we are very much interested in learning about your experiences, thoughts, and conclusions about Blyzkist and about your personal ambitions and needs relating to it. The authors of the letters selected for publication by the group will receive fees. We also would like the first version of the letter to be written in your first language and only then professionally translated into English. It would be wonderful if each of you sent us a letter by January 10th.

What do you think? We can treat it as a form of evaluation of the cooperation, an evaluation for which we have not yet found time. For both of us L'Internationale provides the motivation and incentive to develop our joint activities.

Hugs!!!!!!

Marta & Marta

Martas from MSN :)

ENDNOTES

1 <https://www.instagram.com/blyzkist/>

Warsaw, January 2022

Dear Marta & Marta,

My name is Olga Mzhelskaya, I am an art manager and curator from Belarus. In my home country I used to be engaged in educational activities concerning art in general, and Belarusian art in particular (I run a popular blog about art called Little Hedonist – Instagram Channel). I used to give guided tours at artists' workshops, organize meetings with young artists, conduct interviews at exhibitions before audiences, lead authors' guided tours, co-author children's books on Belarusian art, I also used to curate exhibitions, educational programs and assistance programs for artists and creators, and help beginner collectors purchase art. At the beginning of the summer of 2021, my family and I were forced to flee my home country, where throughout all the years of my professional activity I, like my colleagues, used to create an infrastructure of independent culture against the centrally controlled culture and politics.

At the time of migration, my only professional contact in Poland was Marta Skowrońska, whom I met during a visit to MSN, the purpose of which was to share experience of working with children in museums and galleries. That visit took place about 6 years ago. And I am very grateful to Marta that after so many years, she helped me start my journey in what was a new frame of reference for me. Thanks to her, I started work with the MSN and with the Blyzkist initiative. Together we are currently developing mediation programs for migrants for each of the museum's exhibitions: regular and permanent excursions of the programme and accompanying events (performances, debates, lectures, etc.). I am glad that thanks to the Museum and my colleagues from Blyzkist I can continue to be engaged in educational activities for Belarusians who are now facing difficult conditions of forced migration and suffer from serious psychological trauma. As an example of my work here, I would like to cite the performance

“Sorry! I am very ashamed” within the *Warsaw under construction* exhibition, dedicated to the topic of dyslexia. It was my first serious step as an artist here; it addresses one of the problems faced by up to 20% of the world’s population (according to various studies). As part of the performance, people with dyslexia and allies read poetry in their native languages – Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian. The event had a therapeutic effect for many migrants who, due to dyslexia, find it difficult to learn foreign languages and who have not read in their native language for a long time.

I believe art and mediation can play a crucial role in healing people’s souls and helping them adapt to a new place. In the autumn of 2020, there was considerable controversy in Belarus concerning whether artists should engage in art in a situation where there is violence in the streets and people dressed in black abduct and forcibly relocate those Belarusians who wish the truth and law to triumph. Is there a need to still hold exhibitions? My answer is: yes, it necessary and important! I received a significant amount of feedback on how people are psychologically more at ease after viewing an exhibition or going to an author’s tour, etc. Here, in Poland, in a space which is completely new for many Belarusians, the relevance of art remains the same – or perhaps it is even of greater importance now. In this case, through contact with artists and people working in the field of culture, they can find relief, they can begin their study of the culture of a country that has become their second home, they can assimilate and find new useful acquaintances and friends. For migrants, all of this is priceless.

In the context of the issue discussed here, I would divide Belarusian migration in Poland into two areas: people who used to work in the field of culture, and those who did not. Their needs concerning art intersect but remain different. According to my observations (I do not think anyone has exact figures at the moment), since 2020 a larger number of Belarusian artists and other people from the field of culture have fled to Poland than to any other country of choice

for Belarusian emigrants (such as Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia). And they do have greater needs for art and mediation. For them, it is first and foremost important to study and to understand how the Polish art infrastructure works, and to be able to become part of it. Therefore, it is important to hold theme-oriented meetings for professional networking within the framework of exhibition projects. In particular, it is important to invite Belarusian authors to projects like exhibitions and festivals. It is the creative intelligentsia who provide the bridge that can connect the migrants and the cultural institution, becoming a simple choice of a useful guide. Besides, in general, migrants do care about other migrants – this was shown in my initiative of joint trips to museums and galleries in Warsaw with other Belarusians; we always have coffee in a cafe first and therefore we communicate, we get acquainted, and only then go together to see art. These are very popular events and Belarusians need such a common intellectual pastime.

Olga

Warsaw, January 2022

Dear Marta & Marta,

When I think back over the past year, collecting all the experiences, people, themes, paths and patterns we have had to deal with, whether in a cultural institution, in our daily lives or in our group work, I can't help but think about the people for whom and with whom we do our work. Migration¹, the crisis of homelessness², diversity³, LGBTQ+ people⁴ fluid identities⁵, the environmental crisis⁶, institutional critique⁷ and many other threads behind which are real people, full of emotion, faith and hope – and yes, my work this year was with and about them, but I was also doing it for myself; and this is the kind of work this year was dedicated to. I am very happy that a new person has joined our small team – Olga, who came here from Belarus, where the regime forces people to leave and look for a new home. Thanks to Olga, we have been able to organize a number of events for the Belarusian audience, which is already an important and quite large community, and the Museum should find a place for it.

When I think about my place in the collective, among cultural institutions, the word 'mission' comes to mind. I know that this word has become obsolete, but for me, as a person who came to the Museum at the age of 22, this word has become an act that I have been working on at the Museum for the last three years; mission is the word that has allowed me to get through the crisis I found myself in as a boy who came to the city, full of high expectations.

So far I've written about people, because yes, we do all this as much for them as for ourselves, don't we? But if we start talking about the Museum as a structure that belongs not only to the people, not only to the topics and issues we deal with, but also to the country we live in, the big question is whether the system in which we function supports and endorses the activities we spend long hours creating, whether everything makes sense and everyone can feel safe and tak-

en care of? Here I would like to express my great sadness, because it seems to me that the answer is no; it seems to me that all these activities show a similarity to a kind of underground work from the 1990s – a sense that civilization is just waking up, and sometimes even that we are working on some ‘forbidden’ activities. And I’m not sure, but I feel it won’t take away my faith, strength and enthusiasm.

But one thing I am sure of: that we will dance to the sounds of the Vistula River, on the banks of which the Museum is temporarily located, and we will laugh out loud during a newly opened exhibition that touches on the third wave of feminism, the climate crisis, fear, community or a malfunctioning education system.

And I believe we will do it more than once.

What about you?

I want to thank my closest friends with whom I have spent this year.

Thank you!

Taras Gembik

ENDNOTES

- 1 E.g: Blyzkist participated in the Open Institute – an artistic and social program organized by the Strefa Wolnościowa within which they organized the action “Welcomepack | Ласкаво просимо”. Blyzkist is also involved in the creation and promotion of a platform for migrant artists: [Migrart.waw.pl](https://migrart.waw.pl)
- 2 E.g: In September 2021, Taras, together with the Daj Herbatę Foundation, organized the first meeting of a series that continues to this day, a meeting of the “Anti-Crisis Film Club” for people recovering from the homelessness crisis.
- 3 E.g: In spring 2021, Blyzkist organized a multilingual family workshop “Niedziela is a week”, on the basis of which they published a bilingual mini-e publication <https://artmuseum.pl/public/upload/files/Niedziela-to-tydzien-set-zadan-dla-kids.pdf>

- 4 E.g: In February 2021, Blyzkist organized a “Queer reading of Ukrainian poetry”.
- 5 E.g: In January 2021 Taras took part in the performance of Planet “Rizdwo 6. The Ethnoerotic Mystery” directed by Mikołaj Sobczak at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.
- 6 E.g: Taras co-led a Plant and Performative Walk on the Wawer Bend organized by the Krytyka Polityczna clubhouse, Jasna 10 in Warsaw.
- 7 E.g: Organisation of debates, including debates during the XII Warsaw under construction festival, autumn 2020: “Being closer. (In)accessibility of migrants to culture.”



Screen shot and office view from online meetings between Blyzkist and MSN education team

Warsaw, January 2022

For us, the goals that we set for ourselves last year are still valid. Accessibility, solidarity, and support are important to us. These remain relevant in the light of the current sad events taking place in the Polish public and political discourse. There is still need for closeness, physical and emotional, and the pandemic has still not died down but keeps transforming into new variations, a humanitarian crisis is underway on the Polish-Belarusian border, and some further changes are being pushed in Polish public cultural institutions. Last year was extremely difficult – but I am glad we were in all of this together. Being together is all we have left. We were together all the time – online and far from each other, but also during walks, at the border, during protests.

I can see a purpose to our actions and our practice, based on regularity, process, and care. Living in a country that is hostile enough to all manifestations of otherness, it is our duty to represent that otherness and fight for its right to exist. But it is also our duty to criticize the institution as a structure that is per se an instrument of power, colonization, and exclusivity. Together, we should point to problem areas, gaps, and voids that need to be filled, but also, most importantly, we must act. We use art as a tool for integration, for support and building a sense of community, and we have to do it in a conscious manner.

I am very grateful to Taras for his constant support, but I am also grateful to all those who helped us implement our ideas and motivated us. I look forward to further cooperation with Olga and I am very happy that what we have created with Taras inspires other people around us, creating a space where we can learn from each other.

I am so proud of myself, Blyzkist, and all of us. Things can only get better further on.

Maria Beburia



Photo: Yulia Krivich

Warsaw, May 2022

The “Słonecznik” (“Sunflower”) Cultural Centre for Solidarity¹ was established as a crisis centre for solidarity and support following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It now operates as an open, solidarity-based, multilingual and multicultural community centre.

In “Słonecznik”, we learn Polish and Ukrainian. We organize medicine collections and prepare meals. We run workshops for children, educational activities, and meetings with artists and activists. We learn about Ukrainian culture and art. We share stories, experiences, and skills. We also have an international think-tank working on information warfare and contemporary geopolitics as seen from an Eastern European perspective. Together we are waiting for better times, we support each other, and seek answers to questions concerning the role of art in war.

A number of people were involved in the creation of “Słonecznik”; Taras Gembik is one of the initiators of the centre.

“Słonecznik” was established under the most critical conditions (just after February 24, 2022), although we (Blyzkist) have had a similar idea (Blyzkist) since the beginning of our cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art (Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, MSN). At the very beginning when the centre only started out, the Museum temporarily lost control of it. This was a great moment. We had the opportunity of creating a place for pure practice of community building. Bureaucracy is what hinders such activities. When an institutional structure enters, the structure of such a community itself changes immediately as well – and this affects the question of who visits and uses the Centre. So with the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the surrender of control by the Museum, there was a spontaneous grassroots mobilization and self-organization. And this is what everyone is talking and writing about, explaining what “Słonecznik” is. It is frustrating, however, that so much had to happen for a project that Maro (Mariia

Beburia from Blyzkist) and I dedicated ourselves to, to interest a larger group of people. After all, there had already been around 2 million Ukrainians living in Poland before the war.

Every day I ask myself about the extent to which these solutions, connections, and tools would be nurtured and whether they would still be considered useful when the institution of the Museum returns to a more rigid model of functioning, a model which often excludes many grassroots initiatives.

I would like to suggest that institutions always keep their eyes open to the individuals and minority groups that gather around museums and cultural centres. I think we should invite them inside the institution to work with us - to give them a voice, opportunities, and the space to act. It is fair to say that in those first months when military operation in the Ukraine escalated, the “people” who were mentioned first in the MSN mission were indeed the most important, they were present – without having their presence analysed through the prism of rules, structures, hierarchies, etc.

At the same time, the first three months were not easy. We received complaints about our activities being burdensome (the space where “Słonecznik” operates has offices and meeting spaces for MSN staff). For example, now, after three months, the collection of medicines will no longer be held at the Museum. After the pandemic the café and the bookstore were returned to their space. This frustrates me because I am unable to answer the question: Whom does such an institution want to address?

Regular, grassroots-run activities had a community-building effect (e.g. cooking together, doing workshops, providing a space to “do nothing”, to simply be close to others). Crowds of people used to come to the Centre and now, thanks to this 3-month-long grass-roots collective work, these people are returning to the events organized by “Słonecznik”.

My advice on how to keep these audiences is: work with them and be there for them; this is really important in terms of action, rather



Photo: Yulia Krivich



CAMPAIN

STAND WITH UKRAINE

PRECZY WOJNO

CAMPAIN

than posting stuff on social media. Being physically present, nurturing relationships, and listening to people's needs.

At Blyzkist, we do not set ourselves the task of imposing a framework accepted by the Museum on the community we invite. It is the people who should come up with certain forms and the institution should open up and submit to them.

I keep thinking about organizational and aesthetic issues as well. Perhaps a museum might be more alluring when it's not so beautiful. In the Ukraine, privileged groups benefit from institutionally run culture venues (museums, galleries...). But there is also infrastructure built from the bottom up, and Kyiv is central for such initiatives.

Starting from this point, I keep asking myself the question of what a place like the "Słonecznik" Cultural Centre should really look like.

My dream is a friendly place where you can charge your phone and have coffee. This is how local activity venues work. So why is the Museum not able to include such function in its programme?

Organisation of the work is also an important topic. One or two people are not enough to implement everything on a non-stop basis. I had to go part-time at my main workplace. Why? Because of the mission, because working at the Museum is important to me; but the question is: how long will I be able to function like this? I don't know. But I want to be here and I believe that many things can be changed. I think we need more openness and we need more understanding.

In order to keep the migrant/refugee audiences, we need, firstly, to invite people from Ukraine to cooperate and work with us. Secondly - we need a strong alliance. It has to start at heart – with the need to work with communities.

I think every museum should have a department dedicated to working with migrants. There should be a person mandated to talk about these issues all the time, just like there are accessibility coordinators. Some refugees will go home, but some will stay. I think a large part is going to stay. Migration and refugee processes are irreversible.

A lot has happened in this Museum, a lot has been done since the war started. We have had a great programme that is working. There is a lot of interest and high attendance. The key now is to ensure decent working conditions for the people working here at the Museum and for the Museum itself.

Does the institution see a place for us in its new building? I don't know. Everyone is now talking about our (that is, the Centre's) activities, inviting us to be on TV and to take part in conferences. This gives the institution good PR, but now we enter a stage of precise planning for the infrastructure and processes that should be able to operate in the Museum in the future.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.instagram.com/sdkslonecznik/>





Warszawa, 7 grudnia 2021

Drogie Blyzkist! Kochane Mario, Tarasie i Olga!

Minął już ponad rok od momentu, kiedy zaprosiliśmy Was do pracy nad filmem dla L'internationale, w którym odpowiadaliście o sobie i Waszej działalności jako kolektyw¹. Praca nad filmem trwała wiele miesięcy. Już w momencie premiery filmu mieliśmy okazję rozmawiać o tym, jak wiele się zdążyło zmienić. W tym czasie Maria zaczęła pracę w Fundacji Ocalenie, Taras zaangażował się w pracę na rzecz osób w kryzysie bezdomności a do grupy dołączyła Olga. Dzisiaj więc wszyscy jesteście w zupełnie innym miejscu...

Film kręciliście, kiedy muzeum z powodu kolejnej fali pandemii (październik 2020-luty 2021) było zamknięte dla publiczności, a wy zaczynaliście dopiero działalność w duecie jako kolektyw Blyzkist. Od tego czasu przeprowadziliście wiele akcji, spotkań, debat, angażowaliście się w różne inicjatywy. Rozpoczęliście współpracę z innymi instytucjami, organizacjami i artystami. Wreszcie dołączyła do Was Olga :) Wszystko to robiliście w niespokojnym i niepewnym czasie, podczas kolejnych fal pandemii i kryzysów, za co Was podziwiamy.

My jako uczestniczki grupy Mediacje w konfederacji muzeów L'Internationale, wraz z innymi osobami pracujemy nad kolejnymi materiałami dotyczącymi praktyk w duchu constituent museum, tym razem będzie to E-pub (internetowa publikacja) zbierający refleksje i doświadczenia z pracy grupowej w tym wielowątkowym, międzynarodowym projekcie. Bardzo cenimy Was oraz to, co już razem udało nam się zrobić i chcemy właśnie z Wami kontynuować pracę przy tej publikacji.

Nie prosimy o przygotowywanie raportów czy esejów, ale o napisanie osobistych listów, w których podzielilibyście się swoimi refleksjami i doświadczeniami.

Chciałybyśmy zapytać Was – jako kolektywu i każdej z osobna, z obecnej perspektywy co z Waszych pierwotnych założeń się zdez-

aktualizowało, co jest dla Was obecnie ważne i czy cele, które sobie stawialiście pracując nad filmem pozostały aktualne czy też uległy zmianie?

Chcemy zapytać o Wasze indywidualne doświadczenia i zmiany jakie zaszły w Waszych życiach i działalności aktywistyczno-artystycznej w ostatnim roku i jak to wpływa na Wasze plany i ambicje jako 1/3 Blyzkist.

Jednocześnie chcielibyśmy, abyście miały w tyle głowy pytania, które wracają na spotkaniach naszej grupy roboczej Mediacje:

Do you think that an institution can show its vulnerability and start to work from it?

Do you want to think and challenge our institutional structures to make them more porous and democratic?

What is the role that art can play in the current eco-social crisis?

Kształt publikacji zależy od tego, kto z zaproszonych przez nas do dialogu osób odpowie na nasze zaproszenie, pisząc listy. Nam, niezależnie od samego projektu, bardzo zależy na poznaniu Waszych doświadczeń, przemyśleń i wniosków dotyczących Blyzkist i Waszych osobistych ambicji i potrzeb z nim związanych. Autorzy listów, które zostaną przez grupę wybrane do publikacji dostaną honoraria za nie. Zależy nam także aby pierwsza wersja listu napisana została w Waszych pierwszych językach i następnie profesjonalnie przetłumaczona na język angielski. Byłoby cudownie, gdyby każda z Was wysłała do nas list do 10 stycznia.

Co Wy na to? Możemy to potraktować jako formę ewaluacji dotychczasowej współpracy, na którą nie znaleźliśmy dotychczas czasu. Dla Nas obu L'Internationale jest motywacją i pretekstem by rozwijać nasze wspólne działania.

Uściski!!!!!!

Marta i Marta

(ang Martas z MSN :)

Варшава, студзень 2022

Добрый день!

Меня зовут Ольга Мжельская, я арт-менеджер и куратор из Беларуси. На родине я вела просветительскую деятельность в отношении искусства в целом и белорусского искусства в частности (веду популярный блог об искусстве Little Hedonist (<https://www.instagram.com/olga.mzhelskaya/?hl=ru>), проводила экскурсии в мастерские художников, организовывала встречи с молодыми артистами, вела публичные интервью на персональных выставках, проводила авторские экскурсии, была соавтором детских книг про белорусское искусство), организовывала выставки, образовательные программы и программы помощи для деятелей культуры, помогала начинающим коллекционерам в покупке искусства. В начале лета 2021 года вместе со своей семьей я была вынуждена бежать из родной страны, где все годы своей профессиональной деятельности, как и мои коллеги, создавала инфраструктуру независимой культуры вопреки официальной культуре и политике.

На момент миграции моим единственным профессиональным контактом в Польше была Марта Сковроньска, с которой мы познакомились во время моего визита в MSN на тему обмена опытом работы с детьми в музейном и галерейном пространстве. Это было около 6 лет назад. И я очень благодарна ей, что спустя столько лет, она помогла мне начать свой путь в новой для меня системе координат. Благодаря ей я начала сотрудничество с MSN и инициативой Blyzkist. Теперь мы вместе составляем программы медиации для эмигрантов под каждую музейную выставку: обязательные экскурсии и сопроводительные мероприятия (перформансы, дебаты, лекции и т.д.). Я рада, что благодаря музею и коллегам из Blyzkist я могу продолжать заниматься просветительской деятельностью для белорусов, которые сейчас находятся в сложных условиях вынужденной эмиграции и серьёзной психологической травмы. В качестве примера хотела

бы привести перфоманс “Извините! Мне очень стыдно” в рамках выставки Варшава в будове, посвященный теме дислексии. Он стал для меня первым серьезным артистическим шагом и затрагивает одну из мало очевидных проблем, с которой по статистике различных исследований сталкивается до 20% населения всего земного шара. В рамках перфоманса люди с дислексией и сочувствующие проблеме читали на родных языках поэзию – русский, белорусский, украинский. Мероприятие оказало терапевтический эффект для эмигрантов, которым в связи с дислексией тяжело учить другие языки, которые давно не читали на своём родном языке (подробнее о перфомансе и его проблематике: <https://www.facebook.com/events/395918568678175/>).

С моей точки зрения искусство и медиация могут играть важнейшую роль во «врачевании душ» людей и их адаптации на новом месте. Осенью 2020 года в Беларуси шло много полемики стоит ли артистам заниматься искусством, когда на улице происходит насилие и из собственных квартир люди в черном крадут белорусов, которые хотят торжества правды и закона. Нужно ли проводить выставки? Мой ответ — нужно и важно! Я получала огромное количество отзывов о том, как людям становится психологически легче после просмотра той или иной выставки, похода на авторскую экскурсию и т.д. Здесь же, в Польше, в совершенно новом для многих белорусов пространстве, актуальность искусства остается такой же, а возможно и становится еще выше. В данном случае через контакт с искусством и деятелями культуры они могут разгрузиться психологически, начать изучать культуру страны, которая стала для них вторым домом, ассимилировать, находить для себя новые полезные знакомства и друзей. Это всё для мигрантов бесценные вещи.

Ольга

Warszawa, styczeń 2022

Dzień dobry!

Nazywam się Olga Mzhelskaya, jestem menedżerem sztuki i kuratorem z Białorusi. W domu prowadziłam działalność edukacyjną w odniesieniu do sztuki w ogóle, a sztuki białoruskiej w szczególności (prowadzę popularny blog o sztuce Małego Hedonisty (<https://www.instagram.com/olga.mzhelskaya/?hl=ru>), prowadziłam wycieczki do warsztatów artystycznych, organizowałam spotkania z młodymi artystami, przeprowadzałam publiczne wywiady na wystawach osobistych, prowadziłam autorskie wycieczki, współautor książek dla dzieci o sztuce białoruskiej), organizowałam wystawy, programy edukacyjne i programy pomocy dla działaczy kultury, pomogłam początkującym kolekcjonerom w zakupie dzieł sztuki. Na początku lata 2021 moja rodzina została zmuszona do opuszczenia kraju, w którym przez wszystkie lata mojej aktywności zawodowej, podobnie jak moi koledzy, tworzyłam infrastrukturę kultury niezależnej wbrew oficjalnej kulturze i polityce.

W czasie migracji moim jedynym kontaktem zawodowym w Polsce była Marta Skowrońska, którą poznaliśmy podczas wizyty w MSN, aby dzielić się doświadczeniami z dziećmi w muzeach i galeriach. To było około 6 lat temu. I jestem jej bardzo wdzięczny, że po tylu latach pomogła mi rozpocząć podróż w nowym dla mnie układzie współrzędnych. Dzięki niej rozpocząłem współpracę z MSN i inicjatywą Blyzkist. Teraz wspólnie opracowujemy programy mediacyjne dla emigrantów dla każdej ekspozycji muzealnej: obowiązkowe wycieczki i imprezy towarzyszące (przedstawienia, debaty, wykłady itp.). Cieszę się, że dzięki muzeum i kolegom z Blyzkista mogę nadal angażować się w działalność edukacyjną dla Białorusinów, którzy obecnie znajdują się w trudnych warunkach przymusowej emigracji i poważnej traumy psychicznej. Jako przykład chciałbym przytoczyć spektakl „Przepraszam! Bardzo mi wstyd” w ramach wystawy Warszawa w budynku, poświęconej tematowi dysleksji. Był to mój pierwszy poważny artystyczny

krok i dotyka jednego z nielicznych oczywistych problemów, z którymi, według różnych badań, boryka się nawet 20% populacji świata. W ramach spektaklu osoby z dysleksją i sympatycy czytają poezję w swoich ojczystych językach – rosyjskim, białoruskim, ukraińskim. Wydarzenie miało działanie terapeutyczne dla imigrantów, którzy z powodu dysleksji mają trudności z nauką innych języków, których od dawna nie czytali w swoim ojczystym języku.

Z mojego punktu widzenia sztuka i mediacja mogą odegrać kluczową rolę w „uzdrawianiu dusz” ludzi i dostosowywaniu ich do nowego miejsca. Jesienią 2020 roku na Białorusi było wiele kontrowersji dotyczących tego, czy artyści powinni robić sztukę, kiedy na ulicach panuje przemoc, a ludzie w czerni okradają z ich mieszkań Białorusini, którzy chcą triumfu prawdy i prawa. Potrzebujesz organizować wystawy? Moja odpowiedź jest konieczna i ważna! Otrzymałem ogromną ilość informacji zwrotnych o tym, jak ludzie stają się łatwiejsi psychicznie po obejrzeniu wystawy, wycieczce na wycieczkę autorską itp. Tu, w Polsce, w zupełnie nowej dla wielu Białorusinów przestrzeni, znaczenie sztuki pozostaje takie samo, a może nawet wyższe. W tym przypadku, poprzez kontakt z artystami i postaciami kultury, mogą rozładować się psychicznie, zacząć studiować kulturę kraju, który stał się ich drugim domem, asymilować się, znajdować nowe przydatne znajomości i przyjaciół. To wszystko dla migrantów bezcenne.

Ale też, w kontekście omawianego zagadnienia, podzieliłbym białoruską migrację w Polsce na dwie części: postacie kulturowe i postacie pozakulturowe. Ponieważ ich potrzeby w zakresie sztuki przecinają się, ale wciąż są różne. Zgodnie z moimi obserwacjami (nie sądzę, aby ktokolwiek w tej chwili miał dokładne liczby) najwięcej białoruskich postaci kultury wyjechało do Polski od 2020 roku niż w innych popularnych krajach emigracji białoruskiej (Litwa, Ukraina, Gruzja itp.). A ich potrzeby w zakresie sztuki i mediacji są szersze. Dla nich najważniejsze jest przede wszystkim poznanie i zrozumienie, jak działa polska infrastruktura artystyczna i możliwość wejścia do niej. Dlatego ważne jest, aby w ramach projektów wystawienniczych organizować

spotkania tematyczne dla profesjonalnego networkingu. Szczególnie ważne jest zapraszanie autorów białoruskich do projektów wystawienniczych i festiwalowych. Ponadto to właśnie inteligencja twórcza jest pomostem łączącym migranta z instytucją kultury, stając się łatwym i wygodnym przewodnikiem. I w ogóle migrantom zależy na migrantach – pokazuje to moja inicjatywa wspólnych wyjazdów z Białorusinami do muzeów i galerii w Warszawie, gdzie zawsze najpierw pijemy kawę w kawiarni i komunikujemy się, poznajemy, a potem jedziemy razem na sztukę. To bardzo popularne wydarzenia, a Białorusini potrzebują wspólnej intelektualnej rozrywki.

Olga

Warszawa, styczeń 2022

Drogie Marto i Marto,

Kiedy wspominam ostatni rok zbierając w całość wszystkie doświadczenia, ludzi, tematy, ścieżki i schematy z którymi musieliśmy i musiałem się zmierzyć czy to w instytucji kultury czy w życiu codziennym albo pracy w grupie nie mogę nie myśleć przede wszystkim o osobach dla których i o których robimy nasze działania. Migracja², kryzys bezdomności³, różnorodność⁴, osoby LGBTQ+⁵, płynna tożsamość⁶, kryzys ekologiczny⁷, krytykę instytucjonalną⁸ i wiele innych wątków za którymi stoją prawdziwe, pełne emocji, wiary i nadziei ludzie, tak, właśnie z nimi i o nich, ale też dla mnie samego był poświęcony ten rok. Cieszę się bardzo, że do naszego małego zespołu dołączyła się też Olga, osoba, która przyjechała tutaj z Białorusi, reżim zmusza osób do porzucenia i znalezienia nowego domu, dzięki Oli udało się przeprowadzić szereg wydarzeń dla publiczności białoruskiej, jest to już ważna i dosyć duża społeczność, dla której muzeum też powinien znaleźć miejsce.

Kiedy zastanawiam się o moim miejscu, pracy w kolektywie będąc wśród instytucji kultury to myślę o pewnej misji, wiem, że to słowo „misja” stało się już archaiczne, ale dla mnie, osoby, która mając 22 lata przysłała do muzeum to słowo stało się czynem które wykonuje i realizuje w muzeum od trzech lat, słowo, które pozwoliło mi wybrnąć po dużej części samemu z kryzysu, w którym znajdowałem się będąc chłopakim który przyjechał w miasto pełne dużych oczekiwań.

Pisałem do tej pory o ludziach, tak, bo dla nich i tez przede wszystkim dla nas samych robimy to wszystko, prawda? Ale jeśli zaczęniemy rozmawiać o muzeum jako strukturze, która należy jednak nie tylko ludziom, nie tylko tematom i problemom, w których się poruszamy, ale też państwu, w którym żyjemy to wynika duży znak zapytania czy system, w którym funkcjonujemy popiera i wspiera działania, nad którymi spędzamy długie godziny, żeby wszystko miało ręce i nogi, żeby każdy mógł czuć się bezpiecznie i zaopiekowany? Tutaj wyraził-

bym duży smutek, bo wydaje mi się, że nie, wydaje mi się, że wszystkie te działania niosą w sobie formułę jakiegoś undergroundu z lat 90 dopiero co budzącej się cywilizacji a nawet czasami wręcz „zakazanych” działań, z którymi pracujemy, nie wiem, a jednak nie zabiera mi to wiary, sił, entuzjazmu.

Chyba jestem pewien jednego, że jeszcze nie raz zatańczymy pod dźwięki Wisły, nad którą tymczasowo znajduje się muzeum i głośnego śmiechu podczas dopiero co otwartej nowej wystawy która dotyka trzecią fale feminizmu, kryzysu klimatycznego, strachu, wspólnotę albo słabo działającego systemu edukacyjnego.

Ja wierze ze jeszcze nie raz,
A Ty?

Chcę podziękować moim bliskim osobom z którymi spędziłem ten rok,
Dziękuję!

Taras Gembik

PRZYPISY KOŃCOWE

- 1 https://www.internationaleonline.org/dialogues/28_blyzkist_dialogues
- 2 Przykładowe działanie: Blyzkist uczestniczyło w Instytucie Otwartym – programie artystyczno-społecznym organizowanym przez Strefę Wolnościowa w ramach której zorganizowali akcję „Welcome pack | Ласкаво просимо” Blyzkist jest zaangażowane w tworzenie i promocję platformy dla artystów migranckich: Migrart.waw.pl
- 3 Przykładowe działanie: We wrześniu 2021 Taras wspólnie z Fundacją Daj Herbatę zorganizował pierwsze cyklu, który trwa do dziś, spotkanie Antykrzysowego Klubu Filmowego” dla osób wychodzących z kryzysu bezdomności
- 4 Przykładowe działanie: Wiosną 2021 Blyzkist zorganizowało wielojęzyczne warsztaty rodzinne „Niedziela to tydzień”, na bazie których wydali dwujęzyczną mini e-publicację <https://artmuseum.pl/public/upload/files/Niedziela-to-tydzien-zestaw-zadan-dla-dzieci.pdf>
- 5 Przykładowe działanie: W lutym 2021 Blyzkist zorganizowało „Queerowe czytanie poezji ukraińskiej”.
- 6 Przykładowe działanie: W styczniu 2021 Taras wziął udział w performancie Planety „Rizdwo 6. Misterium etnoerotyczne” w reżyserii Mikołaja Sobczaka w Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie
- 7 Przykładowe działanie: Taras współprowadził Spacer roślinno-performatywny na Zakolu Wawerskim organizowany przez świetlicę Krytyki Politycznej przy Jasnej 10 w Warszawie
- 8 Przykładowe działanie: Organizacja debat, w tym m.in. w ramach festiwalu Warszawa w budowie XII, jesienią 2020: „Być bliżej. (Nie) dostępność migrantek i migrantów do kultury.”

Warszawa, styczeń 2022

Dla nas wciąż są ważne cele, które postanowiliśmy sobie w zeszłym roku. Ważne dla nas jest dostępność, okazanie solidarności i wsparcia. Pozostaje to aktualne w świetle obecnych smutnych wydarzeń dziejących się w polskim dyskursie publiczno-politycznym. Wciąż jest potrzeba bliskości – fizycznej i emocjonalnej – pandemia nie ucicha, lecz przekształca się w kolejne wariacje, na polsko-białoruskiej granicy toczy się kryzys humanitarny, a w polskich publicznych instytucjach kultury kolejne zmiany. Ubiegły rok był niezmiernie trudny – ale cieszę się, że byliśmy w tym razem. Bycie razem to jedyne co nam zostało. Byliśmy razem cały czas – online, daleko od siebie, na spacerach, na granicy, na protestach.

Widzę sens w naszych działaniach i naszej praktyce, która opiera się na regularności, procesie i trosce. Mieszkając w kraju, który na tyle jest wrogi wobec wszelkich przejawów inności – jest to nasz obowiązek reprezentować tę inność i walczyć o prawo do jej istnienia. Ale też naszym obowiązkiem jest krytykowanie instytucji – struktury, która z założenia jest narzędziem władzy, kolonizacji i ekskluzywności. Powinniśmy wspólnie wskazywać na problematyczne obszary, dziury i pustki, które trzeba wypełnić, ale też – najważniejsze – działać. Wykorzystujemy sztukę jako narzędzie – dla integracji, wsparcia i budowania poczucia wspólnoty – ale musimy to robić świadomie.

Jestem bardzo wdzięczna Tarasowi za nieustanne wsparcie, ale też wszystkim osobom, które pomagały realizować nasze pomysły i motywowały nas. Czekam niecierpliwie na dalszą współpracę z Olgą – bardzo się cieszę, że to, co my stworzyliśmy z Tarasem inspiruje inne osoby wokół nas, tworząc przestrzeń, gdzie możemy uczyć się od siebie nawzajem.

Jestem bardzo dumna z siebie, Blyzkist i nas wszystkich. Dalej – tylko lepiej.

Maria Beburia

Warszawa, maj 2021

Solidarny Dom Kultury „Słonecznik” powstał jako kryzysowe centrum solidarności i wsparcia w pierwszych dniach po inwazji Rosji na Ukrainę. Obecnie funkcjonuje jako otwarty, solidarny, wielojęzyczny i wielokulturowy dom kultury.

W „Słoneczniku” uczymy się języków polskiego i ukraińskiego. Prowadzimy zbiórkę leków i przygotowujemy posiłki. Organizujemy warsztaty dla dzieci, działania edukacyjne, spotkania z artystkami i aktywistami. Poznajemy ukraińską kulturę i sztukę. Dzielimy się historiami, doświadczeniami i umiejętnościami. Działa tu międzynarodowy think tank zajmujący się wojną informacyjną i współczesną geopolityką, widzianą z perspektywy Europy Wschodniej. Razem czekamy na lepsze czasy, wspierając się wzajemnie i poszukując odpowiedzi na pytanie o rolę instytucji sztuki w czasie wojny.

Słonecznik powstał przy zaangażowaniu wielu osób – jednym z inicjatorów był Taras Gembik

SDK Słonecznik powstał w najbardziej krytycznej sytuacji (po 24 lutego 2022), choć jego idea towarzyszyła nam (Blyzkist) od początku współpracy z Muzeum. Na początku działań, instytucja chwilowo utraciła kontrolę. To był ważny moment. Powstało miejsce na czystą praktykę wytwarzania wspólnoty. Tym co utrudnia takie działania jest biurokracja. Kiedy wkracza struktura instytucjonalna zaraz zmienia się też struktura tej wspólnoty – to wpływa na to, kto przychodzi i korzysta z SDK. Kiedy doszło do eskalacji wojny w Ukrainie, instytucja oddała kontrolę, zapanowała spontaniczna oddolność, samoorganizacja. I to o tym momencie mówią i piszą wszyscy, opowiadając czym jest Słonecznik. Frustrujące jest to, że musiało się aż tyle wydarzyć by to, czemu poświęciliśmy się z Maro (Mariia Beburia z Blyzkist) dotychczas zaczęło interesować większą grupę ludzi. A przecież już wtedy mieszkało w Polsce ok. 2 mln Ukraińców.

Zadaję sobie codziennie pytanie, na ile te rozwiązania, więzi, narzędzia zostaną zadbane, jak i czy będą kontynuowane, gdy instytucja

wróci całkowicie do sztywnego modelu funkcjonowania, które często wykluczają wiele oddolnych inicjatyw.

Chciałbym zasugerować (instytucjom) żeby mieć zawsze otwarte oczy na pojedyncze osoby, grupy mniejszościowe, które są dookoła muzeów, ośrodków kultury. Myślę, że powinniśmy zapraszać ich do instytucji, do współpracy z nami - oddawać im więcej głosu, możliwości i przestrzeni do działania. Można powiedzieć, że w pierwszych miesiącach eskalacji działań wojennych w Ukrainie wymieniani jako pierwsi w misji MSN-u „ludzie”, rzeczywiście byli najważniejsi, byli obecni – bez analizowania tego przez pryzmat zasad, struktur, hierarchii itp.

Jednocześnie te pierwsze 3 miesiące nie były łatwe.

Dostawaliśmy skargi, że nasza działalność jest uciążliwa (w przestrzeni, gdzie działa SDK Słonecznik są biura, przestrzenie spotkań pracowników MSN). Na przykład teraz, po 3 miesiącach, zbiórka leków nie będzie prowadzona w Muzeum. Po pandemii wracają na to miejsce kawiarnia i księgarnia. To mnie frustruje, bo nie wiem dla kogo chce być taka instytucja, do kogo przemawiać?

Regularne, oddolne działania miały wspólnototwórczy efekt (np. wspólne gotowanie, warsztaty, udostępnienie przestrzeni do nicnierobienia, bycia obok innych). Przychodziły tłumy i teraz, dzięki tej 3-miesięcznej, oddolnej, kolektywnej pracy, te osoby wracają na wydarzenia organizowane w ramach SDK.

Moja rada jak utrzymać tę publiczność to – pracować z nią i być przy niej – to jest naprawdę ważne, a nie umieszczenie post na mediach społecznościowych. Fizyczna obecność, pielęgnowanie relacji i słuchanie potrzeb.

W Blyzkist nie stawiamy przed sobą zadania by społeczność, którą zapraszamy ubierać w formaty jakie są przyjęte w muzeum. To ludzie muszą nadawać formy a instytucja powinna się na to otworzyć, podporządkować. Myślę, że też o kwestiach organizacyjno-estetycznych. Może muzeum bardziej apetyczne, kiedy nie będzie takie piękne. W Ukrainie z kultury instytucjonalnej (muzea, galerie...) korzystają grupy uprzywilejowane. Jest też infrastruktura, która budowała się oddolnie i to Kijów był centralnym miejscem takich inicjatyw.

Wychodząc z takiego punktu, ciągle zadaję sobie pytanie rzeczywiście powinno wyglądać takie miejsce jak Społecznościowy Dom Kultury Słonecznik.

Moje marzenie to przyjazne miejsce, gdzie można podładować telefon i napić się kawy. W ten sposób funkcjonują miejsca aktywności lokalnej. Dlaczego więc muzeum nie jest w stanie włączyć do programu takiej funkcji?

Ważnym tematem jest też organizacja pracy. Jedna, dwie osoby nie pociągną organizowania wszystkiego non-stop. Ja przeszedłem na pół etatu w swojej pierwszej, głównej pracy. Dlaczego? Dla misji, bo działanie w muzeum jest dla mnie ważne, ale jak długo będę w stanie tak funkcjonować? Nie wiem. Ale chcę tu działać i wierzę, że wiele rzeczy da się zmienić. Myślę, że potrzebujemy więcej otwartości i działania na luzie.

Żeby utrzymać publiczność migrancką/uchodźczą potrzebujemy po pierwsze zaprosić osoby z Ukrainy do współpracy i pracy. Po drugie – potrzebne nam jest porządne sojusznictwo. To musi iść z poziomu serca – potrzeba pracy ze społecznościami.

Uważam, że w każdym muzeum powinien być dział do współpracy z migrantami. Powinna być osoba uprawniona do mówienia o tych kwestiach ciągle, tak jak w przypadku koordynatorów dostępności. Część uchodźców wróci do domów, ale część zostanie. Myślę, że duża część zostanie. Procesy migracji i uchodźstwa są nieodwracalne.

W tym muzeum wiele się już wydarzyło, wiele się udało zrobić od wybuchu wojny. Zrobiliśmy super program, który działa. Jest duże zainteresowanie i wysoka frekwencja. Teraz kluczowe jest to, żeby zadbać o godne warunki pracy dla osób wykonujących pracę tu w muzeum i dla muzeum.

Czy instytucja widzi nas w nowym budynku? Nie wiem. Wszyscy teraz mówią o naszych (SDK) działaniach, zapraszają do telewizji i na konferencje. Instytucja ma dzięki temu dobry PR, ale teraz jest etap precyzyjnego planowanie infrastruktury i procesów, które będą mogły działać w Muzeum w przyszłości.

FROM/ TO

8.

Art is what makes
life more interesting
than art

Piet Van Hecke/
Robert Filiou/
Voorforvaastfanclub

Antwerp, 17 January 2021

**Dear Mr Filiou,
Dear Robert',**

As you know, we have been celebrating Art's Birthday at the M HKA on 17 January for more than ten years. On your birthday, with cake and champagne, with performances and music, we then bring together people who are closely connected to the museum. Artists, staff members, journalists, students, a varied bunch of people who form our most important constituencies. I think, by the way, that this concept of the constituent museum, in which relationships take centre stage in the museum, would have interested you. Your idea of the Eternal Network (also called *La fête permanente*), which assumes that artistic expressions are manifestations of the Eternal Network that connects all the artists around the world, fits in nicely with this, I think. Last Sunday, 17 January, we celebrated your birthday in a humble, not to say sad way. Because of the measures taken as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, organising public activities in the museum was not permitted. I suspect that such far-reaching measures for museums have never happened during your active career, but I can assure you that these are unreal times, to say the least. After all, what is left of a museum if there is no public? But we haven't forgotten you, Robert! Through the 'wonderful' world of livestreams and web platforms, we have sent out performances and actions in honour of your birthday. We even (virtually) popped the champagne!

There is something else I need to get off my chest. A thought that you, with your vision on 'work as play' might also follow. I hardly dare write it down, and it will probably be considered controversial. But I would want you to follow my reflection on how the pandemic, despite all its negative influence on the cultural field, perhaps also creates possibilities. Opportunities to see different things than usual, or to look at things differently than usual. I would like to bring Hannah

Arendt into this. Her books have landed on top of my pile again in the context of our exhibition *Monoculture – A Recent History*. She divides the *vita activa* into ‘labour’, ‘work’ and ‘action’. If we were to apply this model to an institution such as a museum, ‘labour’ concerns everything that is constantly needed to keep the museum running (from the cleaning crew to the financial director). Because these needs cannot be satisfied once and for all, ‘labour’ never really ends. ‘Work’, unlike ‘labour’, has a clearly defined beginning and end. This includes exhibitions and projects. ‘Action’ is: the making of political and ethical considerations through dialogue and action. In acting, identity and the world take shape. Whoever acts, enters into a ‘web’ of relations with others. This makes action unpredictable and fragile. It requires courage. So this includes everything that we understand to be constituent practices. The pandemic, of course, first hit ‘labour’ and ‘work’ in the museum: fewer projects, fewer exhibitions. And wouldn’t such a logic be desirable in the future? The number of exhibition projects per year in the M HKA and elsewhere has quadrupled in the last ten years. I think we should do something about that to make room for action. Could we eventually – I hardly dare say it – learn something from this damn pandemic?

Warm greetings and a happy birthday,
Piet

ENDNOTES

- 1 The playwright, poet, artist and thinker Robert Filliou (1926–1987) is a key artist of the M HKA-collection, and is more radical and provocative, but at the same time more subtle and playful than most of his contemporaries. M HKA regards artists as a crucial constituency that may help us radicalise everything we do – by never sacrificing the specificity of whatever it is that artists do. As Filliou said: “Art is what makes life more interesting than art.”



Art's Birthday cakes at M HKA by Ria Paquée, Leon Vranken, Hans Op de Beeck, Vaast Colson, AMVK and Kati Heck.
Images copyright M HKA





Antwerp, 22 January 2021

**Dear voorforvaastfanclub,
Dear Vaast,
Beloved friends,**

I miss our artistic actions at festivals in care centres and in the museum. We have nevertheless managed to continue the work in one way or another over the past year. And that we even managed (even if it was a showcase performance for some and a livestream experience for others) to pop the champagne to celebrate, in good tradition, Art's Birthday on January 17th. (Hurrah for Robert Filliou). As I watched the performance from the pavement (I have added the pictures below, I don't think I had sent them to you yet), it reminded me of Joseph Beuys' dead hare. The lifeless mannequins remind me of the potential of contemporary art to teach us to exist as subjects: to be in the world without placing ourselves in the centre of that world. Such a vision of learning is not child-centred or pupil-centred, nor is it curriculum-centred. Rather, it is world-oriented, focusing on what it means to be in dialogue with the material and social world. It is, of course, humorous to juxtapose this with the statement of that other self-proclaimed Eurasian, Jimmie Durham: "What a coincidence that I am so often at the centre of the world." Your space in the Wolstraat in Antwerp is increasingly developing into what Foucault calls a heterotopia: "a real place, which forms a kind of counter-site, a kind of realised utopia, in which all other real locations that one might encounter in culture are both contested and reversed."

Greetings,
Piet



Photos voorforvaastfanclub. Images copyright M HKA

w wh at*
Wolstraat 31
B-2000 Antwerp

March 2022

Dear Piet,

Thank you for writing!

Thank you for your inspiring reflections!

We have thought it all through with our covid club (which appeared in 2020 and was nicknamed the minus). In doing so, we first searched our own hearts and then asked the minus to follow up on those findings while continuing Vaast's text work "For All The People Forever". And we popped the bottle for V45¹.

The images can be seen on w_wh_at's Instagram from the 27th of March 2022. Ps. what> became w wh at*

We greet you warmly,
the voor for vaast fan club

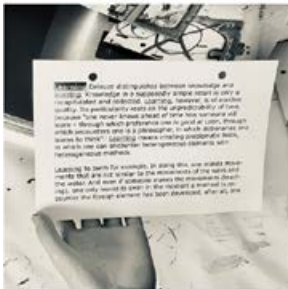
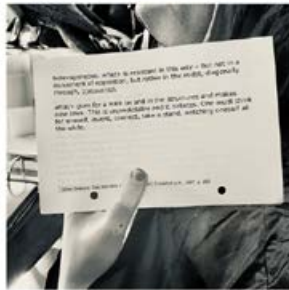
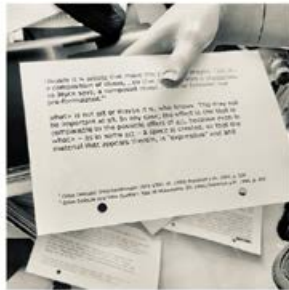
ENDNOTE

- 1 Vaast Colson celebrated his birthday on the 25th of March 2022, turning 45 years old. This day marks the beginning of the fan days.



Photos voorforvaastfanclub.
The images can be seen on
w_wh_at's Instagram from
the 27th of March 2022.







III

RELATIONSHIPS

Constituent Bodies,
Museum Workers, Non-
human Constituencies,
Artists, Needs and
Possibilities, Migrants
and Borders, Extended
Crises, Gardeners, Users,
Teachers, Affect and
Politics

1.

Letter from
Pablo Martínez:
On the Limits of
the Constituent
Museum

Trigueros del Valle, late July 2022

Dearest Adela,

First of all, sorry for taking so long to get back to you — the last few weeks have been pretty hectic, and I've really struggled to concentrate on writing. In mid-June I finally left Barcelona, where I had moved in 2016, as you know, to start working at MACBA. Also, this very week, I've been at the legal hearing for my dismissal, which happened a year ago. I'd like to thank you for inviting me to take part in this publication. I know that you, Fran and Sofía thought that this contribution of mine could perhaps be something more essayistic, but, after several attempts, I now think that our usual letter format — that we came up with together, when I was still part of L'Internationale — is more fitting for what I want to share. To me, it just feels more natural if we continue with this epistolary relationship of ours. I hope that's okay with you.

So, how's your summer going? Mine's been a bit weird so far. Since I left Barcelona I've been homeless, visiting friends and family, sorting out things for Madrid before I move back there in October. I don't think I've told you, but I've managed to rent the same flat on Calle Molino de Viento, where I used to live. I remember the day when we first met in Madrid, ten years ago, and I had only just moved in there. You and I really hit it off, so I excitedly invited you to come up and see the flat; we bought a bottle of wine and sat around drinking in the cold, half-furnished apartment, sprawled on chairs and on the floor, along with some other friends. I'm glad I can go back to that house where I was so happy — I think it repairs, in some way, the institutional violence exerted against me, which did not take into consideration just how difficult it is to change cities and find a new job and house with so little prior warning. I'm not only talking about the emotional burden, but also in material terms, for those of us who depend on a salary and have no property other than our labour.

It's no surprise, then, as I said above, that the past few weeks have been quite so chaotic — as well as packing up my stuff, I've been busy gathering documentation for the hearing that took place last Monday. While I was contacting different witnesses, I had in mind this text that you had asked me to write, as well as the concept of “constituent museum”: after years of debating it and trying to put it into practice, I realised that what we thought of as abstract “constituents” had become, over time, collectives, associations, work colleagues and other individuals, whom I was now calling upon to certify, before a judge, my relationship with them and with the museum. I found it paradoxical (and conflictive, hence the delay in my writing) that some of the people I was contacting to testify against the museum were actually a fundamental part of what we considered in our meetings to be “constituent bodies”, those agents with whom we were collectively building a museum yet-to-come.¹

If you remember, in the idea that we had of a constituent museum, we thought it was fundamental to recognise the importance of the social movements that have fought for the active transformation of the world through equality and social justice. That is, those collectives who, through their actions, have resisted the projects of dispossession and capitalist competition by means of different strategies, demanding changes in the institutions so that they might respond to and reflect projects of collective emancipation. We always understood, as noted in our book, that “...as opposed to what is commonly known as education, mediation or interpretation within museum institutions, [the concept of constituency] does not take the visitor as a passive recipient of predefined content, but as a member of a constituent body, one that facilitates, provokes and inspires.”² As you well know, because you are a fundamental part of that transformation, the practice we have been developing for years (in the mediation departments of many museums) is more about the construction of an active and critical citizenship, rather than just the straightforward transmission of institutional discourses. This practice attempts to transform the museum

in collaboration with other agents, rather than granting the museum the exclusive capacity for enacting change. Essentially, the constituent museum seeks to invert the colonial logic that prevails in European institutions of the Enlightenment tradition.

This is not so much a question of thinking about how the museum can transform its context, but rather how it can enter into dialogue with it: the museum needs not only to incorporate new debates that might bring an end to its longstanding isolation, but it must also be affected by these ideas and thus allow for the possible transformation of its own structures. This dissenting practice is by no means complacent, and in fact it generates tensions that usually impact us the most, that is, the workers caught up in the middle of it all. It is an agonistic approach to mediation, and it does not conform to the interests of certain members of museums' boards of trustees (which, at least in Spain, are often made up of people linked to banking, real estate speculation or the fossil fuel extraction industry). Board members like this have their own vision of the museum, and, albeit with some honourable exceptions, they see it as a place where educational work is supposed to be a matter of social reproduction, of affirming the status quo: for them, it is not a place for any liberating and emancipatory practice, or for testing ways of doing that might challenge the very dynamics that generate inequalities and injustice in the first place (including within the museum itself, no less). It thus follows that inhabiting the institution's borderline spaces is not easy to cope with, emotionally: right across the cultural sector, many workers in education departments are suffering from anxiety attacks or depression, or have otherwise quit their jobs in search of different career options. And it's no surprise, given that these processes of collective elaboration invariably mean that these workers' bodies and their affects end up colliding, head-on, with the museum's steadfast, unmoveable walls.

In relation to this, over the last year I have repeatedly wondered whether European institutions are ready to build constituent museums. I am thinking, for example, about all the controversy around

documenta 153. Despite all my reticence about these kinds of global exhibitions, I decided to visit this particular edition because I was enthusiastic about the curatorial proposal: it proved (as confirmed during my visit there) that things really can be done differently, and that another art world is possible. However, those who have spearheaded this transformation have been put under great pressure by certain parts of the media, as well as by the board of documenta (that is, by the institution itself) — as I see it, this is a clear example of the extent to which the museum in Europe is right at the centre of a cultural war, or a minefield, as our colleague Mabel would say.

While visiting the exhibition in Kassel, I got thinking about the parallels between the concept of *lumbung*⁴ as deployed by the collective Ruangrupa, and the “constituent museum”. I was also wondering whether the success of this Indonesian collective’s proposal was due precisely to the fact that they come from an artistic context very unlike the European one, not only in the functioning of its institutions, but also in their approach to collectivity and their conception of art itself. With their proposal, they have challenged the conventional limits of the art institution by means of a genuine redistribution of economy, visibility and power, three elements upon which the European museum is founded. If I try and think of an effective decolonisation of the institution, I believe that the concept of *lumbung* — which puts redistribution and the commons at the very centre of it all, whatever the consequences may be — is a way of doing things that must open up a new paradigm, one we should definitely follow up in European institutions, beyond documenta. But do you think, Adela, that museums here are ready and willing to redistribute their economy, their power and the control over their visibility?

I don’t want this letter to seem too pessimistic, but at this point in the project I cannot help but be sceptical about the real possibilities of a constituent museum in Europe. Museums are often governed by agents external to their own teams, and are boxed-in by the very restrictive European regulations; in essence, they are built on the

foundations of nation-states and rely on financial backers with their own vested interests. Besides my personal experience, in your most recent messages I sensed that you were hinting at this when you told me about the extent to which Moderna galerija has undergone modifications in its organisational structure, stemming from changes in the Slovenian government. You mentioned how these changes have affected you personally, and not only you, but also many of the constituencies you worked with. No wonder you're so emotionally and physically drained. To some extent, that's how I felt when I was still working at MACBA; as I've told you in previous conversations, my dismissal was actually a liberation on many levels. We both know that what happened to us, in different museums and countries, is the reality in many institutions. I've been thinking about how museum workers, especially those of us who actively work to implement constituent processes, are affectively exposed to what happens in the institution; I have always believed that we are one of its constituent bodies. I remember, in our monthly mediation group meetings, which became weekly during the pandemic, that many of us found moments of relief, mutual support and shared solidarity by talking not only about our projects, but also about how the governance structures of these institutions sometimes felt so stifling.

Therefore, from our positions, we must articulate a thought and an action that does not focus on a neoliberal understanding of the affects, but rather situates them in the tradition of Spinoza, who considers that "to be is to affect and to be affected". This approach thus supports the centrality of interdependence, since there are no subjects (nor institutions) that take precedence over the relationship. This idea, i.e. of the affects as configuring a subject who is always in relation, is a fundamental one: it is diametrically opposed to any other consideration of the liberal subject as a sovereign and autonomous self who controls their own impulses and emotions by means of wilful reason. Human resources departments constantly call for workers to "control" or "manage" their emotions, in line with that liberal conviction that

the self is autonomous, and that any subject's depression, agitation or anxiety has nothing to do with their having to deal with the world or its structures. As opposed to the subject engaged in collaboration and interdependence, whom we have spent so much time thinking about in our mediation group meetings, the subject best suited to the demands of capital, at least since the 19th century, is the one with firm emotional control. I like to think of constituencies in alliance with Jane Bennet's ecologist proposal to put the affects back at the centre of the political project, since affects are quite simply the bond between the being and the world.

When we invited Sofia to join the debates of the Mediation Group for this publication, she suggested that we could write letters to each other, but also to some of the people we considered to be the museums' constituencies. I remember that my first letter was addressed to my colleagues at the museum. I think it might be a good moment to revisit a fragment of that letter:

I am writing this letter to you as part of the mediation group at L'Internationale, where we are thinking collectively about the potentialities and challenges of the constituent museum. We are writing letters to different constituent members of the museums. I chose you as recipients of my letter as I believe that museum workers are also a constituent body of the institution, not just administrators or bureaucrats. For me, it is crucial that we open a debate around our function as cultural workers and producers. Regarding the constituent project, I have been thinking about how we usually claim that the museum is so far removed from the surrounding neighbourhood or from the city, but sometimes I wonder how far removed we are, as workers, from the museum itself and its programme. Project-based work, deadline management and the segmentation of labour inside the institution (something that is not specific to MACBA, but in fact widespread within cultural institutions) all make me

think that it is almost impossible to generate a sort of situated cultural practice. Changing the culture of the city should be instigated by cultural institutions, and we know that such a shift requires vast amounts of time and energy. Furthermore, mutual support is not actually quite so simple, and is full of contradictions and obstacles. It also requires lots of imagination and bravery.

As constituents of the museum, we can also ask ourselves: how do we want to be governed? What sort of museum practices do we really want to enable? In what kind of projects do we really want to be engaged? Do we really want to continue feeding the neoliberal dynamic of giving visibility to artists, promoting the mass mobilisation of people and further touristifying our city? Why are we still tolerating the institution's structural racism, with all its bureaucracy and its refusal to collaborate with so-called undocumented immigrants? Are we just museum workers, or do we want to be one of its more active constituent bodies? I know that all these questions are difficult to answer, so I am just putting them to you, and I am asking them to myself, first of all, out loud. Because I am also exhausted, after this long year of the pandemic, with all my friends and loved ones so tired, sick and depressed...

I would like to end this letter with a proposal that encompasses all these experiences: to reclaim the role of museum workers when it comes to the shaping of museums' policies, their programmes, their missions and their actions. This is a call to organise ourselves, fully conscious of our power as a constituent body of the museum. The first step would be to reengage with the unions to protect the rights of all the workers who make up the museum, including any precarious collaborators and the subcontracted cleaners and security guards. I believe that the cultural struggle should in fact be a material struggle for

the improved living conditions of all those who comprise the museum. Now is the time to keep building alliances with others, to defend the mission of the museum, without any spurious interests in play. Extinction Rebellion recently did this in their action at the Museo Reina Sofía, protesting against the misrepresentation of the meaning behind Picasso's *Guernica*, when the NATO "first ladies" were photographed in front of it. Similarly, Liberate Tate are demanding the end of the alliance between the ecocidal British Petroleum and art institutions; other movements like Strike MOMA or Decolonize This Place are also making breakthroughs. I think it is time for us museum workers to risk some of our privileges in order to defend the commons, namely the museum itself, beyond any financial interests and neoliberal rationale that only care about profit. We still have a lot to do, but from our experience we know that we are not alone, and that the museum still holds great power: if we stand together, we can activate it once more.

I must leave you now; I think I've gone on too long anyway. Enjoy the end of the summer, and keep in touch! I hope to see you very soon.

Yours, as ever,

Pablo

ENDNOTES

- 1 In the midst of the pandemic, I wrote some articles on “the museum yet-to-come” and the need to rethink institutional practice so it is better suited to a world in crisis. One of these pieces can be found at: <https://kunsthallewien.at/en/pablo-martinez-fail-better-notes-for-a-museum-yet-to-come/>
- 2 *The Constituent Museum. Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation: A Generator of Social Change*. Amsterdam: Valiz with *L'Internationale*, 2017.
- 3 For further information, see <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/481665/censorship-must-be-refused-letter-from-lumbung-community> as well as *L'Internationale's* statement in support of documenta 15: https://www.internationaleonline.org/opinions/1093_statement_in_support_of_documenta_fifteen
- 4 *Lumbung*, directly translatable as “rice barn”, is a collective pot or accumulation system used in rural Indonesia, where crops produced by a community are stored as a future shared common resource, and later distributed according to jointly determined criteria. At the centre of *lumbung* in documenta 15 is the imagining and building of these collective, shared resources into new models of sustainable ideas and cultural practices. For more on *lumbung*, see <https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/about/>

2.

Đorđe

Balmazović/

Koćnikova¹, 2022



ENDNOTE

- 1 Kotnikova is a street in Ljubljana, quite near the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MSUM), where a refugee asylum centre was established in 2015. On the initiative of, and in collaboration with, students from the Faculty of Architecture and Design in Ljubljana and their tutors, educators from MSUM and Đorđe Balmazović initiated a carpentry workshop with the asylum centre residents to renovate their common room.

3.

Dear Bojana:

Empty Corridors,

Empty Spaces/

Adela Železnik

Ljubljana, 25 May 2021

Dear Bojana,

It is half past four and while I was making a cup of tea, I realised I was alone on the third floor of the MSUM¹, where our offices are. This is not unusual these days, when even though the museum is open and the pandemic is decreasing, our colleagues keep working from home. Lately, there were sometimes only you and me present in the middle of the workday. Why is that so? I like taking a break on the roof terrace, to look over the roofs towards the horizon, towards west, and the setting sun. I can see the whole plaza² from above, linking the three museums with the ministry heritage building and Metelkova 6, the only unrenovated building.



Photo: Adela Železnik

To be honest, this plaza, due to various reasons, has never become a lively place full of people, as the Ministry of Culture had imagined and hoped, and now it is even emptier. The Kantina³ is still closed, even though the museum is open, and its terrace urgently needs to be repaired; our tenants are still trying to find a way to cope with the consequences of the pandemic.

I think that the general listlessness caused by the government's negative, arrogant and disdainful attitude towards art and culture, hand in hand with their ignorance to cultural workers' needs during the pandemic can be literally noticed from above. On the pavement across the street there are traces of red paint, left behind after the weekly protests of cultural workers in front of the Ministry of Culture. From the terrace above, I can still recognize the graffiti SRAMOTA (SHAME)⁴, written in front of our museum. It is visible despite the persistent cleaning, as if the state authorities wanted to conceal their disgraceful act of institutional violence.

Where are all the people? Even the asylum seekers from the Kotnikova asylum who used to pass regularly on their way to the adjacent Metelkova City seem to have disappeared. While looking towards the Metelkova 6 building, I remember how shocked and appalled we were last October to learn that the Ministry of Culture demanded that the cultural, research, and civil-society organizations with headquarters at Metelkova 6 vacate the premises by the end of January 2021⁵. It came at the same time as the government's decision to withdraw financial support to the student radio *Radio Študent*, and later even more shockingly, to the STA (Slovenian Press Agency), and other critical media⁶. As we both know first-hand, Moderna galerija was one of the first national institutions – if not the only one in Slovenia – that collaborated with social movements⁷. As a progressive institution we used to write letters of support to our neighbours at Metelkova 6 and the Autonomous Factory Rog⁸.

How can we keep that spirit alive, and the comradeship of those days, among us and with our constituents, now scattered



Cultural workers' protest, Ljubljana, 26th May 2020

Photo: Božidar Flajšman

Izbor del iz nacionalnih zbirk Moderne galerije in
iz Artest 2000+ Selected works from Moderna
galerija's national collections and Artest 2000+

FILMSKA KOMUNA ROŽAVA: Oblike svobode
ROJAVA FILM COMMUNE: Forms of Freedom
6. 3. - 16. 8. 2020

KAROL RADZISZEWSKI: QAI/CEE
12. 3. - 20. 9. 2020

JASMINA ČIBIČ: Fundus prizadevanja
The Foundation of Endeavour
1. 9. - 29. 11. 2020

Autografija, zagonetnost, upornišvo: fotografija
BOŽIDARJA DOLENC A Autography, Uncanniness,
Rebellion: The Photography of BOŽIDAR DOLENC
17. 12. 2020 - 19. 3. 2021

LEWIS TRONDHEIM in pijavi zajci
LEWIS TRONDHEIM and Drunken Rabbits
7. 10. - 29. 11. 2020

FREPIH DRAUGHT

JOŠT FRANKO
junij - september June - September 2020

JAKA BABNIK
oktober - december October - December 2020

SIRA

FMŠUM

Muzej sodobne umetnosti Metelkova / Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova

MOTAF



around the city and elsewhere? What is a possible response to such aggressive acts? Is joining forces in common battles gone forever? Or do we need to reinvent our modes of thinking and working together? Within and outside the institution?

See you tomorrow morning, x x Adela

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova.
- 2 The museum complex used to be former Yugoslav army barracks. In 1991, when the YU army left the country, the state took responsibility of the southern part of the complex, planning to transform it into a museum quarter according the model of Museumsquartier in Vienna. They renovated three buildings for the three national museums, Moderna galerija came here last, 10 years ago, when we opened the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova.
- 3 Kantina was a cafe in the +MSUM, run by the local community of migrants, providing them an opportunity to work and utilize their knowledge in preparing traditional dishes, as well as building social networks in the wider Metelkova area.
- 4 The words SRAMOTA (SHAME) were painted overnight in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Moderna galerija, and some other museums in Ljubljana after the politically motivated replacement of their directors in late 2020. Two years later this action was signed/recognized by the s.c. Non – grupa, who on 8 February 2022, the Slovenian Day of Culture publicly introduced a homonymous monograph, published by the ZRC SAZU.
- 5 When Janez Janša became Prime Minister, he started systematically attacking all progressive cultural institutions, especially those with a long tradition of fighting for civil rights and independent thought. This was followed by some directors of important national museums being replaced, and critical media and individuals being disqualified.

- 6 The national television became the target of the most brutal attacks. Even now, although we have had a new, more democratic government since April 2022, it is run by the previous, politically appointed director and board.
- 7 The first such initiative was Radical Education (RE), a project in a public art institution, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, in 2006. (See: Bojana Piškur, Possibilities for Emancipation, The Constituent Museum, pp. 174-177)
- 8 The letters of support are published on the Moderna galerija's website: <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/visit/3061/letter-of-support-to-all-working-at-metel-kova-6/>, <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/visit/3281/letter-of-support-for-the-users-of-rog/>

Ljubljana, 25. maj 2021

Draga Bojana,

Ura je pol petih popoldne, in medtem ko sem si pripravljala čaj, sem ugotovila, da sem v tretjem nadstropju popolnoma sama. V bistvu ni to nič novega zdaj, ko večina kolegov še vedno dela od doma, čeprav se epidemija odmika in je muzej odprt za javnost. V zadnjem času sva bili sredi delovnega dne velikokrat v pisarnah prisotni samo midve. Ali ni to nenavadno?

Med delovnim časom rada delam premore tako, da se spreham po terasi in gledam preko bližnjih streh proti zahodu, kjer zahaja sonce. Od zgoraj imam tudi lep razgled na muzejsko ploščad, ki sega od sosednjih muzejev, stavbe Ministrstva za kulturo za dediščino do najbližje Metelkove 6.

Če smo odkriti, ta ploščad nikoli ni zaživela, kot si je zamislilo ali želelo Ministrstvo za kulturo, zdaj pa je postala še bolj prazna. Tudi Kantina je še vedno zaprta, kljub temu da smo muzej že odprli. Njena terasa je nujno potrebna popravila, naši najemniki pa se še vedno ne morejo sestaviti po uničujočih posledicah epidemije.

Občutek imam, da se celo s strešne terase opazi splošna apatija, ki sta jo povzročila odklonilni, arogantni in zaničujoči odnos te vlade do umetnosti in kulture ter predvsem popolna ignoranca vlade do umetnikov in kulturnih delavcev ter njihovih potreb in pravic med epidemijo. Ostanki rdeče barve na tlaku pričajo o številnih protestnih akcijah kulturnih delavcev, ki so potekale pred Ministrstvom za kulturo, pred +MSUM-om pa se še vedno vidijo ostanki napisa SRAMOTA, kljub vztrajnemu prizadevanju čistilne službe ministrstva, da bi ga odstranili.

Sprašujem se, kje so naenkrat vsi ljudje? Celo prosilci za azil, ki so redno prečkali ploščad na poti iz azilnega doma na Kotnikovi na Metelkovo, so nekam izginili. Ko gledam proti Metelkovi 6, se spomnim, kako nas je lanski oktober popolnoma šokirala zahteva ministrstva,

da morajo nevladne organizacije, ki imajo že od osamosvojitve naprej svoj sedež na Metelkovi 6, do januarja 2021 izprazniti svoje prostore. Vendar je bil to šele začetek; nadaljevalo se je z umikom finančne podpore Radiu Študent, kasneje STA in drugim kritičnim medijem. Kot obe dobro veva, je bila Moderna galerija ena redkih – če ne sploh edina – (umetnostna) nacionalna institucija v Sloveniji, ki je sodelovala z družbenimi gibanji, velikokrat smo sodelovali v boju za pravice nevidnih delavcev, za ponovno pridobitev javnega prostora ...

Kot institucija smo pisali tudi pisma podpore sosedom na Metelkovi 6, Radiu Študent in Avtonomni tovarni Rog ob njihovi deložaciji.

Ves čas se sprašujem, kako ohraniti ta duh solidarnosti, ki smo ga včasih delili z našimi »konstituenti«, ki so zdaj razseljeni po celem mestu in še kje. Kakšen je pravi odgovor na ta nenadni rez? Ali so skupe bitke izgubljene za vedno? Ali pa moramo samo iznajti nove oblike sodelovanja? V instituciji in zunaj nje?

Se vidiva jutri, x x Adela

4.

Dear Gardeners/ Alejandro Simón

20 March 2019

Dear gardeners,

Here is a review of the non-human life that has been growing happily since we brought them into the garden and that we have been able to continue to plant as they have acclimatised to the garden's mixtures. There is still plenty of room for planting; more in the shady flowerbed, because of the temperatures there, which makes plants less likely to self seed there, although its rhythm and pace is bringing us lots of joy.¹

*****Having taken root and grown in the shady flowerbed, we find:

ACANTHUS. Last time, we were thrilled by its greenery. It has grown healthy and strong on the sides in cooler temperatures. It would be nice to plant some more so that they can grow together and nourish the soil where the olive trees are weak.

ELDER. This has been happy ever since we put it in the flowerbed. It's a little tree that we planted very much on its own, we could support it more, by bringing in other plants, or along a tree trunk so that it grows upwards a little more. That's it, happy from the first day.

IVY. It seems strong and resistant, but you learn from experience that when it is small you have to nurture it a little bit. Then it becomes very powerful. We made the mistake of not tying it to the trunks properly and its shoots get covered in soil when the wind blows and this slows its growth a little. But we took care of this the other day and they are already reaching upwards in search of some light. They may have other types of ivy in the Retiro² but in any case they live well in this flowerbed and there is room for more growth.






HELLEBORE. It has always been bright green and its flowering brought one of the late winter surprises this year, together with the acanthus, one of the most intense greens in the flowerbed.

*****Happy life in the sunny flowerbed:

LUPINE. It is happy and has a structure to its leaves that is so different from the rest that it brings vitality to the garden. We could plant it closer to a trunk or bush to make it climb. We planted it vertically and it has stayed horizontal, I think it is more of a climber than a creeper.

RUE. We are lucky to have this, it has a wonderful blue-green colour, it's medicinal and magical. If any more arrive, it would be best to plant them under a tree canopy or somehow protected from frost because it was vibrant until this winter's very hard spell of frost. Now some of them are in bloom. <3

FENNEL. We have lost the copper-coloured one but the green one has held up and grown very nicely. I would plant more because of its foaminess and vibrant green.

ROSEMARY. Despite being a hardy, local, medicinal and aromatic plant, we only have two small rosemary trees. I would bring more! *A la flor del romero, romeero veeerde*³ (Here's to the rosemary flower, rosemary green.) 

LAVENDER. The flora is very attractive for the bees that we already see flying around the garden. It is strong and independent. Together with the small pond that we are thinking of as a drinking spot for birds, it could help attract the attention of insects.

LADY BANKS' ROSE. If we lift the soil towards some shoots, we could root some more; they are growing very well.



SAGE. Large and leafy, they are all in flower. Just the sight of them inspires remedy and health.

Hugs and kisses in every shade of green that grows,
gardeners, see you on Tuesday <3 <3 <3 <3

All pictures by Alejandro Simón and Alejandra Riera

***Pictures: Workers remove the fence that prevented access to the flowerbeds in the Garden of Mixtures on 11 December 2018.

***Text: email from a gardener on 20 March 2019

ENDNOTES

- 1 We gardeners write to each other by mail to share our experiences and readings coming out of our weekly meetings, or about our lives alongside non-human lives.
- 2 The *Garden of Mixtures* is made up of two flowerbeds. It does not follow traditional gardening methods. Plants have been brought in and care has been taken to ensure that they live happily alongside those that were already planted there and those that have moved in by themselves. A municipal nursery in the Parque del Retiro was one of the places that provided us with plants, but they also came from various parts of the countryside and from different homes.
- 3 Translator's note: *A la flor del romero, romero verde* are lyrics from a traditional Spanish folk song.

20 de marzo de 2019

Buen día jardineras

Aquí un repaso a la vida no humana que crece feliz desde que las llevamos al jardín y que podemos seguir plantando ya que se han conseguido aclimatar a las mixturas del jardín. Sigue habiendo mucho espacio para plantar. En el parterre sombreado donde más, por sus temperaturas hace más difícil la aparición espontánea de plantas aunque su ritmo nos está dando muchas alegrías.¹

*****En el parterre sombreado han enraizado y crecido:

ACANTO. En nuestra última jornada su verdor nos entusiasmó. Ha crecido sano y fuerte en las orillas con temperaturas más frías. Plantar alguno más podría ser lindo para que se acompañen entre ellas y nutran el suelo donde los olivos flojitos están.

SAUCO. Desde que lo llevamos al parterre ha estado feliz, es un arbustito que hemos plantado muy aislado, podríamos traer alguno más para apoyarlo con otras plantas o en algún tronco para que suba un poquito. Eso, feliz desde el primer día.

HIEDRA. Parece que es fuerte y resistente pero cuando está pequeñita, por experiencia, hay que acompañarla un poquito. Luego se hace muy poderosa. Hemos tenido el despiste de no atarla bien a los troncos y se cubren sus guías de tierra cuando sopla viento y frena un poco su crecimiento. Pero de esto nos encargamos el otro día y ya están guiadas hacia arriba en busca de algo de luz. Igual puedan tener en el Retiro² otros tipos de hiedra pero en todo caso en este parterre viven bien y hay espacio para más vida.


ELÉBORO. Estuvo siempre verde intenso y su floración ha sido una de las sorpresas de este final del invierno, junto con el acanto, de los verdes más intensos del parterre.

*****Vida feliz en el parterre soleado:

LUPINO. Está feliz y tiene un ritmo en las hojas tan diferente al resto que aviva el jardín. Podríamos plantarlo más cerca de un tronco o arbusto para que suba. Lo plantamos con forma vertical y se han quedado en forma horizontal, me da que es más trepadora que rastreadora.

RUDA. Es una suerte tenerla, tiene un verde azul maravilloso y es medicinal y bruja. Si viene alguna más convendría plantarlas debajo de alguna copa de árbol o protegida de alguna manera de las heladas porque ha estado muy vibrante hasta la temporada tan dura de heladas de este invierno. Ahora están algunas floreciendo. <3

HINOJO. Hemos perdido el de color cobre pero el verde aguantó y ha crecido muy bonito. Plantaría más por su espumidad y verde vibrante.

ROMERO. A pesar de ser una planta fuerte, local, medicinal y aromática solo tenemos dos pequeños romeros. Traería! A la flor del romero, romeero veeerde 

LAVANDA. La flora es muy llamativa para las abejas que ya vimos algunas volando por el jardín. Es fuerte y autónoma. Junto con el pequeño estanque que estamos imaginando como bebedero para pájaros podría ser un apoyo para llamar la atención de insectos.

ROSA BANKSIAE. Si levantamos con la tierra hacía algún tronco podríamos enredar alguna más que están creciendo muy bien.

SALVIA. Grandes y frondosas, están todas en flor. Dan salud y medicina con verlas.

Abrazos y besos en todos los tonos de verde que crecen
jardineras, hasta el martes <3 <3 <3

Todas las fotografías son de Alejandro Simón y Alejandra Riera.

***Imágenes: Operarios retiran la cerca que impedía el acceso a los
parterres del jardín de las mixturas el 11 de diciembre de 2018

***Texto: mail enviado por unx jardinerx el día 20 de marzo de 2019

NOTAS

- 1 Las jardineras nos escribimos por correo para intercambiar experiencias y lecturas de nuestros encuentros una vez por semana o de nuestra vidas en relación con las vidas no humanas.
- 2 *El jardín de las mixturas* se compone de dos espacios de terreno y no siguen la disciplina jardinera institucional. Se han llevado plantas y se ha cuidado que vivan felices junto a las que estaban allí como a las que han nacido de forma voluntaria. Un vivero municipal hospedado en el Parque del Retiro ha sido uno de los espacios que nos ha provisto de plantas pero también han venido de distintos campos y de distintos hogares.

5.

Dear Visitor X/

Piet Van Hecke

Antwerp, 1 April 2022

Dear visitor X**Dear young people of the Hospital School'**

Last Thursday was the vernissage of your exhibition at the M HKA. It is nice that we have been able to continue working together for the past two years, be it from a greater distance and in a slightly smaller form than usual. I now consider you to be an important constituency of the museum, a group of people with whom the museum enters into long-term, reciprocal relationships. In other words, you - like your phenomenal teachers and management - are close to my heart. Yet something strange is going on. I might have bumped into some of you last week in the museum with a beer in your hand. Perhaps we nodded to each other in a friendly way. Shaking hands, or - imagine - giving a hug to someone you don't know personally seems like something from the distant past. Maybe we even had a brief conversation about the works you have made. But I don't know, because I don't know you. In fact, I am not allowed to know you.

For various causes (psychological or physical), you are temporarily taking classes in the hospital. For understandable privacy reasons, your identity must be kept strictly secret. Even your signature at the bottom of the works of art must be erased at all times. Of course, such measures are taken with the best of intentions to protect you. But it is hard to deny that in one move you are being deprived of your identity, dehumanised. Could it be that an already vulnerable group is made even more vulnerable? Isn't it important that if we want to take care of each other, we start from a point of view of humanity, of specificity? The idea that measures taken under the guise of protection and hygiene always contain a limitation becomes crystal clear when we look at the measures taken in recent years: curfew, quarantine, COVID passes, closed borders. These are all measures that restrict our freedom.

You are part of the group of society that is most affected by this: young people. The figures are staggering: one in four young people in Belgium has thought about suicide since the corona crisis. Two out of a hundred actually try to end their lives. Almost half of them feel lonely. More than half cry every week. And I would venture to say that the pandemic has sharpened the figures, not caused them. For decades, young people have been trapped in an extremely individualised, neo-liberal and post-modern society. With a bottomless focus on achievement and profit and with a social fear of the other. Where can young people go today to find depth, security and peace? At school, the emphasis is on competences and on individual cognitive achievements. Could the museum, as it is interpreted by Pascal Gielen as a semi-public space, play a role here?² I would certainly like to explore this further with you in the coming years.

Lately, I have been reading Toon Tellegen's letters to my daughters before they go to sleep. I came across this one:

“One morning the wind delivered a letter to the squirrel. Curious, the squirrel opened it and read:

‘Wish list:

A grain of sugar.

Don't knock on the door. No dancing.

Don't sing. Don't celebrate.

Don't drop by by chance either.

Putting down a grain of sugar and leaving immediately.

Not giving more or anything else.

Not calling out, “Congratulations, sand fly.”

Not waiting for: “Thank you.”

Don't surprise us with anything.

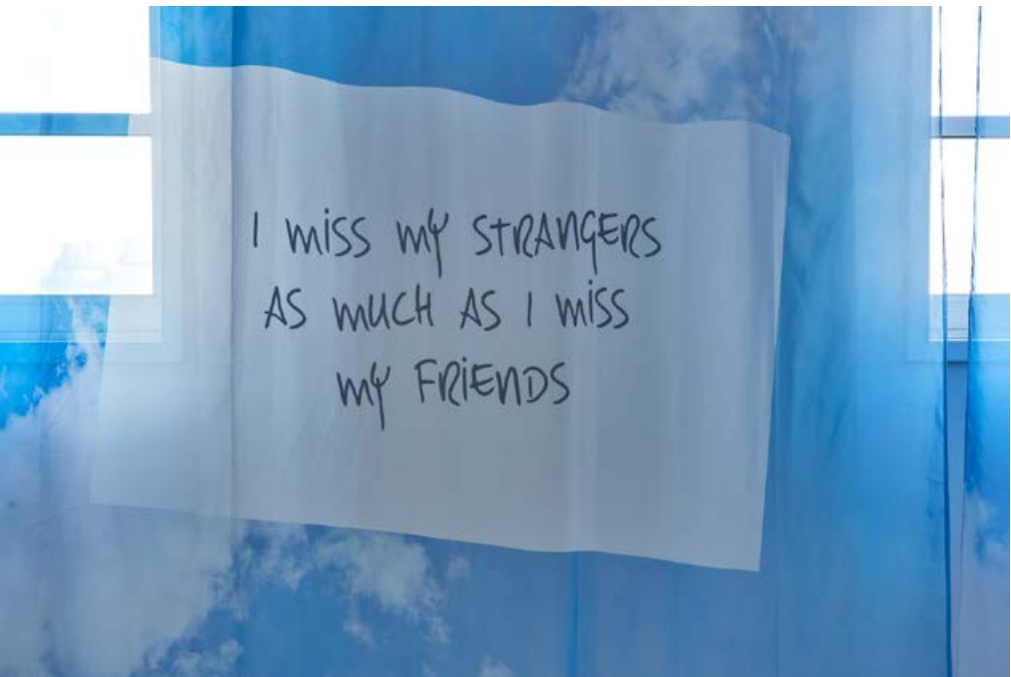
Not peeking behind a tree to see if I'm coming out.

Not being angry.
The sand fly”

Perhaps art can be the grain of sugar.
Be sure to let me know what you think of this poem. Or, even better,
send me a poem you like.

Warm greetings,

Piet



Hanne Lippard, *Contact Mood Share*, exhibition view, M HKA 2021
Courtesy and copyright of the artist and M HKA
Image by We Document

ENDNOTES

- 1 Most schools regularly organise cultural activities such as theatre and film performances, workshops and museum visits. Young people who attend classes at the Hospital School because they are physically or mentally challenged, miss out on these opportunities. That is why the Hospital School and the M HKA have been joining forces since 2016. Every year, a number of works from the M HKA collection travel to the Hospital School. Under the guidance of professional artists, the students experiment in workshops with different materials and media. For me, this trajectory is the story of wonder, experimentation, action and creativity that can arise when you are exposed to contemporary art.
- 2 It encompasses a sense of temporary connection without people having to like or know each other. The ground of intimacy lies in the recognition and acknowledgement of a common culture, which offers the contours within which a visitor can and dares to surrender to an artistic experience. Something that moves one visitor also seems to move the other and they dare to confess this to each other in each other's presence for a short while. This creates a silent bond and mutual understanding without visitors having to speak to each other, share each other's vision of life or convictions or love each other. In other words, the M HKA occupies an ambiguous domain between the private and public sphere, between intimacy and anonymity, between proximity and distance, between friends and strangers.

Antwerpen, 1. 4. 2022

Beste bezoeker X
Lieve jongeren van de Ziekenhuisschool!

Afgelopen donderdag vond de vernissage plaats van jullie tentoonstelling in het M HKA. Fijn dat we de afgelopen twee jaar hebben kunnen blijven samenwerken, al was het vanop grotere afstand, en in een iets kleiner vorm dan gewoonlijk. Ik beschouw jullie ondertussen als een belangrijke constituency van het museum, een groep mensen waarmee het museum langdurige, wederkerige relaties aangaat. In mensentaal: jullie liggen me – net zoals jullie fenomenale leerkrachten en directie – nauw aan het hart. Toch is er iets vreemds aan de hand. Ik ben sommigen van jullie vorige week ongetwijfeld met een biertje in de hand tegen het lijf ben gelopen in het museum. Misschien hebben vriendelijk naar elkaar geknikt. Handen schudden, of een – stel je voor – een knuffel geven, zijn we verleerd. Misschien hebben we zelfs een kort gesprek gevoerd over de werken die jullie hebben gemaakt. Maar ik weet het niet, want ik ken jullie namelijk niet. Sterker nog: ik mag jullie niet kennen.

Jullie volgen om uiteenlopende redenen (psychologisch of fysiek van aard) tijdelijk les in het ziekenhuis. Omwille van begrijpbare privacy-redenen moet jullie identiteit strikt geheim gehouden worden. Zelfs jullie signatuur onderaan de kunstwerken moet steeds worden uitgewist. Uiteraard worden zulke maatregelen met de beste bedoelingen getroffen om jullie te beschermen. Maar het is moeilijk te ontkennen dat jullie in één beweging voor een stuk worden beroofd van jullie identiteit, ontmenselijkt. Zou het kunnen dat een alreeds kwetsbare groep zo nog kwetsbaarder wordt gemaakt? Is het niet belangrijk dat we als we willen zorgen voor elkaar net vertrekken vanuit een menselijkheid, specificiteit? Het idee dat maatregelen die worden genomen onder het mom van bescherming, altijd een beperking in zich houden wordt ook kraakhelder als we de maatregelen van de afgelopen jaren bekijken: nachtklok, quarantaine, COVID-passen, gesloten grenzen. Stuk voor stuk maatregelen die onze vrijheid inperken.

Jullie maken deel uit van de groep uit de samenleving die hier het hardst getroffen wordt: jongeren. De cijfers zijn onthutsend: één op de vier jongeren in België heeft sinds de coronacrisis aan zelfmoord gedacht. Twee op de honderd probeert ook echt een eind aan het leven te maken. Bijna de helft voelt zich eenzaam. Meer dan de helft huilt elke week. En ik zou durven beweren dat de pandemie de cijfers hoogstens heeft aangescherpt, niet veroorzaakt. Al decennia lang zitten jongeren opgesloten in een extreem geïndividualiseerde, neoliberale en postmoderne maatschappij. Met een bodemloze focus op presteren en winst Met sociale angst voor de ander. Waar kunnen jongeren vandaag nog terecht om diepgang, veiligheid en rust te vinden? Op school ligt de nadruk op competenties en op individuele cognitieve prestaties. Zou het museum, zoals het door Pascal Gielen geïnterpreteerd wordt als semipublieke ruimte hier een rol kunnen spelen?²² Ik zou het de komende jaren in elk geval samen met jullie verder willen onderzoeken.

De laatste tijd ben ik de brieven van Toon Tellegen voor mijn dochters aan het lezen voor ze gaan slapen. Deze kwam ik tegen:

“Op een ochtend bezorgde de wind een brief bij de eekhoorn.

Nieuwsgierig maakte de eekhoorn hem open en las:

‘Verlanglijst:

Een korrel suiker.

Niet op de deur kloppen. Niet dansen.

Niet zingen. Niet vieren.

Ook niet toevallig langskomen.

Suikerkorrel neerleggen en meteen weggaan.

Niet méér geven en ook niet iets anders.

Niet roepen: ‘Gefeliciteerd, zandvlieg.’

Niet wachten op: ‘Dank je wel.’

Niet ergens mee verrassen.

Niet achter een boom blijven gluren of

ik naar buiten kom.

*Niet boos zijn.
De zandvlieg”*

Misschien kan kunst de korrel suiker zijn.

Laat me zeker weten wat jullie van dit gedicht vinden. Of stuur me een gedicht dat jullie mooi vinden.

Warme groeten

Piet

EINDNOTEN

- 1 De meeste scholen organiseren regelmatig culturele activiteiten zoals toneel- en filmvoorstellingen, workshops en museumbezoeken. Jongeren die in de Ziekenhuisschool les volgen omdat ze fysiek of mentaal even niet meer mee kunnen draaien, missen deze mogelijkheden. Daarom slaan de Ziekenhuisschool en het M HKA al sinds 2016 de handen in elkaar. Elk jaar reizen een aantal werken uit de M HKA-collectie af naar jullie school. Onder begeleiding van professionele kunstenaars experimenteren jullie in workshops met verschillende materialen en media. Dit traject is voor mij het verhaal over de verwondering, het experiment, de actie en de creativiteit die kunnen ontstaan als je wordt blootgesteld aan hedendaagse kunst.
- 2 Ze behelst een gevoel van tijdelijke verbondenheid zonder dat mensen elkaar graag moeten hebben, of elkaar hoeven te kennen. De grond van de intimiteit ligt in de herkenning en erkenning van een gemeenschappelijke cultuur, die de contouren biedt waarbinnen een bezoeker zich kan en durft overgeven aan een artistieke ervaring. Iets dat de ene bezoeker roert lijkt ook de ander te raken en ze durven dat in elkaars nabijheid voor heel even aan elkaar bekennen. Dat scheidt een stille band en wederzijds begrip zonder dat bezoekers elkaar daarvoor moeten spreken, zonder dat ze elkaars levensvisie of overtuiging moeten delen of zonder dat ze elkaar daarvoor moeten liefhebben. Het M HKA bezet met andere woorden een ambigu domein tussen de private en publieke sfeer, tussen intimiteit en anonimiteit, tussen nabijheid en afstand, tussen vrienden en vreemden.

6.

Dear Sara/
Nick Aikens

15 August 2022

Dear Sara',

I hope this finds you well.

It's strange to write a letter knowing it will be made public. It takes on a kind of double address - to you and to the many others that will read it in the publication. But given it's such a rare chance to write to a colleague *and* reflect publicly on aspects of L'Internationale, I'll try my best to work with this particularity!

It's mid-August and I am writing to you from the train on my way back to Brussels after the holidays. I was meant to write – and promised Adela – before the holidays but there were too many things to do. I'm pleased I didn't as I was totally exhausted, like everyone I think. The first half of this year was such a sprint – restarting after the pandemic but with everything and everyone moving differently. So, holidays were very welcome.

I write, first and foremost, to say thank you for the work and comradeship over the past years with L'Internationale. You have been such a dear colleague, but also a source of inspiration for the way in which you approach your work and that of the confederation. But I write to thank you particularly for the support you have given me in *Rewinding Internationalism*, the project I have been working on for a couple of years now and which you have played such an important part, even if your work might not be directly visible when the exhibition opens in November. It's the invisible work I want to thank you for, and to draw people's attention to!

I conceived of this project – of trying to explore the entangled, knotty construct of internationalism – because of the conditions of the confederation. By this I mean that the frame that we have in *Our Many Europes* – that of the 1990s, the structure of the network itself, of a constellation of colleagues working in different contexts – and the very name of L'Internationale - felt like a prompt. This prompt

might be to devise a frame for both research and exhibition making that worked with and through the different positions and knowledges of the confederation. In this sense the project grew out of the specificities of the confederation. And of course to do this, as we've talked about, at a time when there is a real need to reclaim internationalism as both an idea and strategy to face the world, as Jean Luc Nancy would describe it.

My feeling, which you got straight away, was that L'Internationale afforded the possibility to conduct a different type of research-exhibition project, where we, as curators, researchers, cultural agents could work through something. Not that we knew exactly what we wanted to say about a certain topic, or even what precisely that topic was, but that through talking, meeting and working together, the 'thing' comes into view. It felt fitting, necessary even, that that thinking through should happen under the banner of internationalism. The exhibition, the research, the thing we were looking towards, could emerge out of conversations with a network of colleagues invested in understanding what it means to work pluriversally, across contexts and from different subjective and institutional realities.

When I reached out to different colleagues, those I had formed affinity with over the past years and who I thought would be interested to contribute to this project – Sebastian, Pablo, Hiuwai, Bojana, Nav, Farah and you – your engagement and encouragement was immediate. What I admire about your approach to the role of Project Manager for *Our Many Europes* is your engagement with ideas, the political and the imaginary that is then manifested through strategy, and operations. This is, of course, the project or ambition of L'Internationale - to find an operational form across very diverse contexts that might allow the possibility for a different type of transversal institutionality to emerge. In many respects it's the key to any political or cultural project. But it's a pleasure and an inspiration to see you put it into practice.

When I reached out to you to see what project or collection works might emerge as a contribution from Reina, you took the time to think through – really carefully - what would make sense from the position of the museum you worked in, the confederation and the project itself. It's so easy – given never ending workloads and a constant lack of time – to skim over requests, or to turn to solutions that are readymade and easily at hand. I've done it countless times. So, thank you for pausing and thinking through, and then suggesting something that was logistically more complicated – but was a brilliant response to the various components of what I was trying to do.

Introducing me to Paulina Varas and setting up the collaboration with Red Conceptualismos del Sur was such a smart move! It was possible of course because of your work in Museo en Red at Reina, where you work with a number of different networks and collectives, from local groups in Madrid to partnerships like that with Red Conceptualismos in South America. Reina's contribution to *Rewinding*, then, was not one that spoke from Madrid, Spain or Europe but redirected its voice (but also its resources) through the Red Conceptualismos network. This is where I feel extraordinarily lucky to work within the context of L'Internationale. That I can reach out to a colleague like you in Madrid and draw on your extended network through Museo en Red is pretty unique. And to do this while not really knowing what we're looking for, but wish a shared interest in a context, or construct, or simply a possibility - in this case the possibility of internationalism and what it might mean today – feels precious. I think it comes down to a shared trust and respect for each other's work – and the project of the confederation. That's definitely the reason I reached out to that group of people for *Rewinding*. There is an eagerness to think and work together in the confederation, to do the work that the potential of L'Internationale speaks to. It's so valuable and so rare when projects in our institutions need to be defined, communicated and essentially sold to audiences. We need to cherish thinking through together, working through together,

not knowing together - and to do that with all the tools we have at our disposal.

Thanks to Paulina's important work, one of the opening rooms of the exhibition will become a chance to think with the context of Chile in the 1990s, the intellectual and cultural work that was taking place there as it emerged from dictatorship and became a testing ground for the neoliberal project. Paulina's work, the three 'nodes' of research relating to Felix Guattari's visit to Chile in 1991 where he gave a lecture on 'The Three Ecologies', the journal *Revisita de Critical Cultural* founded by Nelly Richard and the commissioning of a film by the feminist activist Cecilia Barriga to explore transnational feminisms, has been a project that has also brought us into contact with your colleagues in the library, archive and collections at Reina. As you know we will show a number of issues of *Revisita* from Reina's library collection as well as images by CADA, Lotty Rosenfeld and Diamela Eltit from the collection, all artists, activists and writers deeply connected and important to the journal. Your engagement – both in content and operationally – with this work has made all that possible. Thank you.

This part of the collaboration points to the crazy potential of the confederation, that remains relatively untapped. That we can develop research for an exhibition in Eindhoven with Paulina and the Red Conceptualismos network, that draws on the library and collections of the Reina Sofia, that then forms part of a constellation of projects that are in conversation with other actors, archives and collections from different parts of the world ... the research really emerging out of the process, relationships and resources. I think it can lead to an approach to research and exhibition making that is much more dispersed, decentred from a single idea, history or voice, but at the same time is located and situated. I also think it's something unique to the confederation because of the trust and affinity that has been built up over more than ten years of working together. I hope L'Internationale can push this further in the years to come – to use research, exhibitions and archives in more and more inventive and inter-dependent ways. But none of it is

possible without operational and strategic thinking, that allows these resources and relationships to be mobilized, which you have been so brilliant at doing.

So thank you Sara for all the invisible work you have done.
And here is to the possibilities of what is to come.
Warmly, as ever,

Nick

ENDNOTE

- 1 Sara Buraya Boned

7.

Dear Teachers/
Marta Przybył

Warsaw, June 2021

Dear teachers,

Hope you are satisfied with coming back to school. Pandemic times were so exhausting for many people and the school community suffered severely. So on the one hand, it must be a great relief now, but on the other you face new problems – effects of social isolation, online work with students, difficult experiences of many people creating the school system (and activity of minister Czarnek is not making it any better).

I am a museum worker, and I also work in education. Our experiences from the pandemic were not easy, but they taught us a lot. From the beginning of this strange time, many cultural institutions exchanged their ideas, brainstormed what to do to support schools in difficulties of online education.

We prepared many online classes and workshops, we were learning new ways of communication and new online tools, and we shared it with you. We hope it was useful. Later on during the next waves of the pandemic everybody became tired of anything that was online and there's nothing strange about that.

Now as we come back to meetings in real life (in person) – it's like a new stage of our relationship. We want to create it together. We feel that culture can be useful in so many ways. It can help to renew social bonds, it has therapeutic power, it opens new horizons and it gives real experiences.

Our next exhibition planned for autumn is focused on education. We look at critical moments in Polish history and how they affected the educational system. We also pay attention to space and architecture, and active people who change school from the inside. We invite you to think and talk together with us.

We want to discuss with you how to be useful, and how to support change in school.

Education team, MSN

8.

Dear Conxita/
Madeleine Carey

Barcelona, January 13, 2022

Dear Conxita,

I don't have your address, but maybe I could leave this letter for you at the cafeteria where we first met. The cafeteria was closed for a while during COVID, but they have opened again. I went by the other day and got a take-out coffee—something I would have found barbaric in the before times—and I asked after you. Mar, the woman who works there, told me she hasn't seen you since the pandemic began, but that doesn't mean, necessarily, that something happened. We've all changed routines, haven't we? I no longer go to the office, no longer have coffee at 10:45 every day.

We “met” if I could call it that in 2018, two lost souls in a coffee shop filled with foreign university students: all hot noise and blooming hips. We were smaller, quieter, much older than the other clients and both always sat alone with our coffee. Once we had to sit together—do you remember? How gingerly you moved over to my table when Mar, exasperated, asked if we could squeeze together? It was crowded that day with all the students—their long hair and bright shiny folders.

You asked, “Are you from here?” And I said yes, because I'm as from here as I am from anywhere. Later you told me you weren't born here either, but in the south, but all that mattered little when you were there in the coffee shop, the only people speaking Catalan.

Once you asked why I got coffee there, when it was crowded and overpriced and I told you I liked to escape from where my coworkers went for their coffee. “I like to be alone,” I told you. “Me too,” you said. “I'm terrible in groups.”

And so our friendship began, one of mutual respect, comfortable distance, politeness, dare I say admiration? Most mornings we just acknowledged one another, but sometimes we spoke: about the cold or the noisy students, your grandchildren, the books we were

reading. Once, later on, we were reading the same book. For me that cemented our bond.

In November 2019, we saw each other outside of the coffee shop. We were both at the MACBA, on the first floor, in the first room of the permanent collection. You were with a group of women, all around your age, maybe early seventies. A tall wiry man was giving you all a guided tour. And I was at work, “on duty,” showing two architects from Brazil the ways in which Catalan architects are so key to understanding certain political anomalies of this place.

You winked at me, but didn’t say a word. We were both faking it—being talkative and attentive in a group. The next day we laughed about it at the coffee shop, each one at her separate table.

We saw each other at times at the museum. You liked to wander through the rooms, alone. When I saw you I would nod and carry on. Once, in the summer of 2020, you left a book for me at the MACBA reception, a novel by Sara Mesa. I wanted to thank you.

And I did. Do you remember the autumn of 2020? Covid was bad again and we saw each other crossing the plaza in front of the museum? You were with your daughter and your grandchildren and I was with my husband. Even with your mask on I recognized you, your defensive posture—arms crossed over your chest, shoulders up—that matched my own. I thanked you perhaps too profusely. No one shook hands, we didn’t introduce our families. You said, “I’ll see you soon” and we all carried on.

I’m hoping you’re healthy, Conxita, alone and reading a book. And I hope I see you at the museum again soon. I’ll just nod, I won’t say a word.

Un abrazo,

Madeline

9.

Dear Marta/
Marta
Skowrońska-
Markiewicz

Warsaw, February 2021

Dear Marta,

I am writing to you to gather some thoughts about the mediation group's workshop we had in January and to share some concerns.

I must confess that it was a great challenge to step in the process in that stage of the project without your support and presence. Every time I was saying something I was wondering how much my impressions are relevant to the whole process you all went through. I wanted to be useful and helpful but it was difficult to operate somehow without knowing the wider context.

Even though the atmosphere of the meeting was friendly and secure I felt a little bit out of place.

I was wondering if the feeling I had is somehow comparable with the feelings our audiences can have? People who come to our Museum, what we know from surveys, are in the majority people much involved in culture, people who are interested in contemporary art, people who are open and curious about our work. Even though they can still feel overwhelmed, lost or uncomfortable sometimes while visiting us or joining the activities we design. Why is that? Is it just because they lack some knowledge or experience we have or maybe they need more time to get used to the works and ideas we are presenting?

I am not sure if it makes any sense. I just needed to share this vague feeling...

Best,
Marta SM

10.

Dear Pandemic/

Alba Pérez

Cadenas

Madrid, 16 February, 2021

Dear pandemic,

I wish you could read this letter in a parallel time/space frame in which you are no longer existing for all of us, so we can say that this toxic relationship has finished already.

Since we are next to celebrate our first anniversary, I am feeling nostalgic of those first days in which you were almost invisible, and we all here at the museum were so naïve working on the programmes for 2020. I remember my agenda full of notes, duties, post-its and scrawls, my inbox nearly about to explode, and feeling the office like home. I remember last days of February celebrating the cineclub about the exhibition *Musas Insumisas [Defiant Muses (Delphine Seyrig and the Feminist Video Collectives in France in the 1970s and 1980s)]*, I remember how enthusiastic we felt. I remember March 8th in the streets.

And then faded to black – the museum (the street) was suddenly silenced. The next memory in our heads is the landscape of our laptops and our webcams and our fears and our uncertainty, sirens and applauses and working with great difficulty. I read an article by Mariana Enriquez called *La ansiedad (anxiety)* and it resonated with me.

Since the summer we have been trying to imagine new ways of living in the museum while we must seem safe places. We have this ‘ansiedad’ to rethink ourselves and to bring new ideas of becoming museums in something like this. In the meantime, society is living this slowtime, wondering if life will be the same again. The future is now, and it is hard to imagine your impact on our reality.

(Not so) kind regards,

Alba

11.

I don't know
many people who
are good at saying
goodbye/ Anna
Cerdà i Callís

Barcelona, 11 October 2022

I don't know many people who are good at saying goodbye... Not me anyway. On 14 October I will be leaving (temporarily, for now) the Museum where I have worked for more than seventeen years and I didn't know what to say. Some colleagues who are close friends outside of work, or with whom I shared a lot of work before the summer, already knew. I took it as a test, as a way to prepare myself. Nothing.

Then I thought of going through farewell e-mails from beloved colleagues and paying them a kind of tribute using their own words. But I wasn't in the mood for a palimpsest either.

There is a problem of timing in these situations. Unless the job change takes you by surprise, you've already had time to reflect, assess the pros and cons, and make decisions. But many people around you react with fear, nostalgia and even sorrow when you are no longer here, because every cell pushes you to leave things tied up as best as possible and to put energy into future projects. Or that's what's happening to me, at least. I feel a very strange kind of emotional dissociation. I guess time will calm everything down. In my first week away, I will return to MACBA for an opening, I want to know how I feel crossing the Plaça dels Àngels again and entering the Meier building, this time, really, *from the outside*. Who knows.

I'm also wondering how I've been able to say goodbye to my colleagues at L'Internationale, some of whom I have known for ten years: two online meetings and an email. In this post-pandemic hangover that still afflicts us, everything is very strange. You can't touch their arm or propose a toast with those people with whom you've shared intense moments working on common projects, sharing institutional problems or travelling together (that intimacy that comes out of sharing breakfast!).

I keep thinking about those fashionable concepts of transversality, porosity and care, and how, despite saying it and trying

it, programming activities and publishing books and articles, it is still so hard for us to apply those concepts. How bureaucracy and departmental and hierarchical management limit us all, and how much richness and energy, how much abundance remains hidden between those endless meetings (many unnecessary), unattainable protocols and snap decisions taken in a hurry without looking up from the screen.

Despite everything, there have been many brilliant moments that I will take away with me, and they have invariably been shared moments: the toasts during an opening, that moment when a problem during an installation is solved because we can all listen and learn from each other, our ability to be together, those *Our Many Europes* moments, in Madrid, despite the screens. The spider's stratagem. To understand that hierarchies limit everyone, although some more than others. How a local initiative with some friends led me to collaborate with Italian colleagues. Laughing with the cleaning staff when neither they nor I knew if what was on the floor was to be thrown away or was an artwork. The pride when some famous artist says "what a good job you're all doing".

I guess the key is not so much that you're leaving, but what you leave behind and how you leave it. Because almost everything is transformed, even goodbyes.

Lots of love, friends. I'm leaving, but not completely!

Anna Cerdà i Callís

Assistant Curator

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From: Anna Cerdà acerda@macba.cat» acerda@macba.cat
For: MACBA Staff + Cleaning, Security and Reception Staff
Sent: Friday, 7 October 2022 6:00 p.m.
Topic: As you all know...

Hello everybody! It will never be a good time, but since most of you already know and time flies, I prefer to send you an email now:

It turns out that 14 October will be my last day at MACBA (for a while). In principle I am taking a 6-month leave, to put (even) more energy into a project that I've been running with a group of friends for over a year, <http://www.paral-lel62.cat>*, the old Sala Barts, which, as you must know, is a municipal facility.

So, when I officially join, we will make a public presentation (we already have a date, 21 October), but the new management already started in practice on 1 June and I am dedicating evenings, nights and weekends to it.

I am very excited about the project and the people who will make it possible. Soon you will be able to subscribe to our newsletter on the web. And, of course, here is my contact**. I'm sure that one way or another we'll keep seeing each other: it's impossible to get rid of family, you know 😊.

I could never summarise everything I've learned, sweated over, shared and worked at during my seventeen and a half years in this Museum. And I don't think it's necessary. You were there too. Thank God you were! I want to thank you and wish you all the best, in the Museum and outside.

The last few weeks have been very intense on many levels. I'm sorry if I haven't been able to give each and every one of you the time and attention you deserve (this is open to interpretation, hahaha!). I won't have the time or energy to organise a farewell party right now, but I thought I'd tell you that on Saturday, 22 October, we are holding a great festival at our place***, and that some colleagues have already

said they'll come. The more the merrier, and if you buy season tickets it will be a great help in supporting the project. And so, I propose a toast to doing what I like best: doing things with people.

Bye and see you soon, I will only be 10 minutes walk away 😊!

Anna

* [web under construction] Paral·lel 62 is a space dedicated to music and other disciplines. It also promotes and collaborates in socio-cultural projects. It has a horizontal governance and aims to offer its own services through the social economy and solidarity. We want to contribute to the consolidation of the Paral·lel as a space for neighborhood life and culture for everyone.

**

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here's a video to make you want to come: <https://ja.cat/2F6tx>

Barcelona, 11 d'octubre de 2022

No conec massa ningú que sigui bo acomiadant-se... En tot cas, jo no. El proper 14 d'octubre me'n vaig (de moment temporalment) del museu on he treballat més de disset anys i no se m'acudia què dir. A algunes companyes amb qui tinc més relació fora de la feina, o amb qui vaig compartir un pic de feina abans de l'estiu, ja ho sabien. M'ho prenia com un assaig, com una manera de preparar-me. Res.

Després vaig pensar de repassar correus electrònics de comitat de companyes estimades i fer-los una mena d'homenatge usant expressions seves. Però tampoc no estava d'humor per un palimpsest.

Hi ha un problema de tempos, en aquestes situacions. Si no és pas que el canvi de feina t'agafa per sorpresa, ja has tingut temps de reflexionar, valorar pros i contres i prendre decisions. Però molta gent de la que t'envolta ho entoma des de l'ensurt, la nostàlgia i fins i tot la pena quan tu ja no ets aquí, perquè totes les cèl·lules t'empenyen a endreçar el que deixes obert el millor possible i a posar energies en els projectes futurs. O això em passa a mi, és clar. Es produeix una mena de dissociació emocional ben estranya. Suposo que el temps ho apaivagarà tot. La meva primera setmana fora vindré al MACBA a una inauguració, tinc ganes de saber com em sento creuant altre cop la Plaça dels Àngels i entrant a l'edifici Meier, aquest cop, realment, *des de fora*. Qui sap.

També dono voltes a com m'he pogut acomiadar de les companyes de L'Internationale, alguna de les quals conec des de fa deu anys: dues reunions online i un correu electrònic. En aquesta ressaca post pandèmica que encara ens amara, tot és ben estrany. No pots ni tocar-los el braç ni brindar amb aquelles persones amb qui has compartit moments intensos treballant en projectes comuns, compartint problemàtiques institucionals o viatjant plegats (aquell amor que neix quan comparteixes esmorzar!).

Em donen voltes al cap els conceptes de moda de la transversalitat, la porositat i les cures, i com, malgrat dir-ho i intentar-ho i programar-ne activitats, publicar-ne llibres i articles, ens costa tant d'apli-

car. Com la burocràcia i el funcionament departamental i jeràrquic ens limita a totes, i quanta riquesa i energia, quanta abundància no queda oculta entre reunions infinites (moltes innecessàries), protocols incomplibles i decisions preses des de la urgència i sense aixecar la vista de la pantalla.

Malgrat tot, hi ha moments que brillen i que m'enduc, i m'adono que sempre són moments compartits: els brindis durant una inauguració, aquell moment en què un problema en un muntatge es resol perquè ens sabem escoltar i aprendre els uns dels altres, com vam saber estar junts, els d'Our Many Europes, a Madrid, malgrat les pantalles. L'estratègia de l'aranya. Entendre que les jerarquies limiten tot-hom, tot i que afavoreixin més uns que altres. Com una iniciativa local amb uns amics em va portar a col·laborar amb les companyes italianes. Els riures amb el personal de neteja quan ni elles ni jo sabíem si el que hi havia a terra era per llençar o era obra. L'orgull quan algun artista de fama et diu "que bé que treballem".

Suposo que la clau no és tan marxar, sinó què deixes i com ho deixes quan marxes. Perquè quasi tot es transforma, fins i tot els comiats.

Una abraçada, companyes. Me'n vaig, sense anar-me'n del tot!

Anna Cerdà i Callís

Curadora Adjunta

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MACBA

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De: Anna Cerdà <acerda@macba.cat>

Per a: Plantilla MACBA + Personal de Neteja, Seguretat i Atenció al Públic

Enviat: divendres, 7 d'octubre de 2022 18:00

Tema: com que ja ho sap tothom...

Bona tarda a tothom! Mai no serà bon moment però com que quasi totes ja ho sabeu i el temps vola, prefereixo enviar-vos un correu ara:

Resulta que el proper 14 d'octubre serà el meu últim dia al MACBA (durant una temporada). M'agafo, en principi, una llicència de 6 mesos, per posar (encara) més energia a un projecte que fa més d'un any que impulso amb una colla d'amics, <http://www.para-lel62.cat>*, l'antiga Sala Barts, que, com deveu saber, és un equipament municipal.

Així que m'hi incorpori oficialment farem presentació pública (ja tenim data, el 21 d'octubre), però la nova gestió va arrencar a la pràctica ja l'1 de juny i hi estic dedicant vespres, nits i caps de setmana.

Em fa una il·lusió enorme, el projecte, i la gent amb qui el farem possible, aviat us podreu subscriure a la nostra newsletter al web. I, evidentment, aquí teniu el meu contacte**. Segur que d'una manera o altra ens seguirem veient, ja se sap, de la família és impossible desempallegar-se'n, 😊.

Sóc completament incapaç de resumir tot el que he après, suat, compartit i treballat en 17,5 anys en aquest museu. I crec que no cal. Vosaltres també hi éreu. Sort de vosaltres, de fet. Us vull donar les gràcies i desitjar-vos que sigueu molt felices, al museu i a fora.

Les últimes setmanes estan essent molt intenses a molts nivells, disculpeu si no us dedico a totes i cadascuna el temps i l'atenció que us mereixeu (això està obert a interpretacions, hahaha!). No em donarà temps ni tinc energies per muntar ara mateix un comiat, però se m'acut dir—vos que el dissabte 22 d'octubre tenim un festival preciós a casa nostra***, i que algunes companyes ja m'han dit que vindran. Quants més serem més riurem i que compreu abonaments els anirà

molt bé per sostenir el projecte. I així brindem fent el que més m'agrada: fer coses amb gent.

Salut i fins ben aviat, que marxo a 10 minuts d'aquí, només, 😊!

Anna

* [web en construcció] Paral·lel 62 és un espai destinat a la música i a altres disciplines, que també impulsa i col·labora en projectes socioculturals, que té una governança horitzontal i pretén oferir els serveis propis a través de l'economia social i solidària. Volem contribuir a la consolidació del Paral·lel com un espai de vida veïnal i de cultura per a tothom.

**

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aquí un vídeo per fer-vos venir ganes de venir: <https://ja.cat/2F6tx>

IV

INSTITUTIONS

Institutional
Vulnerability, Collective
Responsibilities, Museum
Building, Subjective
Operations, Institutional
Transformation, Working
Conditions, Limits
and Reaches of/with
Constituencies, Dialogue
as an Act of Liberation

1.

Letter from

Viviana Checchia:

Dear Mediation

Group

London, September 2022

Dear Mediation Group,

I am writing this letter to you all to share some ideas and perceptions that have crystallised a bit over the last three years or so. Quite a number of events and transitions have happened during that period: some of them personal, some of them professional, many of them global. Previously, transition might have been by default a negative thing for me, but it appears more positive just now. The transitions I mention here all occurred, of course, during a major worldwide shift: the entire population of planet earth has been affected by Covid-19. Luckily the virus did not affect my body directly, but nobody was excluded. Life as we knew it did not exist any longer.

When the pandemic started I was living and working in Scotland as Public Engagement Curator at the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Glasgow. In my role I was building a stronger and stronger bridge between the CCA, and broader society. Thanks to my job I regularly shared life, labour and energy with arts practitioners, gardeners, chefs, politicians, activists, farmers... a really wide range of people from all over the city and surrounding areas. We would learn from each other, and collaborate on myriad projects: all of which were reliant upon gathering, meeting, socialising and working directly with each other, in the gallery and around the town, in person, and in solidarity.

My working life, then, was very invested in listening to our communities, our stakeholders, to amplify their voices, both in the arts and in neighbourhoods and constituencies. Many institutions in Scotland were trying to activate a credible and meaningful connection with areas of multiple deprivation, minority groups, subaltern groups, and wider policy was encouraging this work in our sector. In any case, I would not be able to practice otherwise: I was raised in a horizontal community, a group of people of different ages and backgrounds happy to

share their resources, their know-how, in an attempt to live in harmony as a collective gathering. Many of the communal values I experienced in that farming community over those formative years have stayed with me. The legacy of the rural culture running in my family over generations, coupled with a strong engagement with politics and activism, created a clear set of values and expectations about how we can live together in the world and led me to take an interest in how such values might translate and find a productive life in the arts sector, in particular for the development of public engagement and access.

And the CCA was indeed an excellent platform to test such ideas and put into practice some of these principles. The CCA worked on a model that the director, Francis McKee, called *open source*. Making best use of the large building that housed the CCA, the director decided to grant free access to anybody who wanted to use parts of the space to deliver their activities and programmes. When I joined the organisation in 2015, *open source* was working with more than one hundred organisations and producing around five hundred events per year. A year and a half later, the volume of activity tripled and so did the partner numbers. I was focused on trying to give confidence to those people and groups who would never feel empowered enough to propose an event to *open source*. Over time, *open source* was enriched with a greater diversity of protagonists, with some part of the Public Engagement Programme (PEP) activities; they felt inspired and stimulated, and wished to deliver their own activities as part of the PEP and then within the *open source* programme.

While the *open source* would gravitate mainly around the CCA facilities, I was trying to operate around town, using other venues, seeking to share resources with very diverse communities. These people, communities and organisations became core constituents of PEP and CCA. I felt attachment and responsibility towards the people involved. Our relation was based on mutual exchange and mediation, during workshops, conversations, gatherings, meals, and other communal activities.

In March 2020 all of that changed. CCA closed its doors with the beginning of the pandemic and put all programmes on hold. Activities did not shift wholesale to digital, they were simply postponed until such time as real life would be possible again. I was furloughed and until further notice, could not work or engage and share life and creativity with my constituents. My thoughts turned to the community of refugees I had been engaged with as part of our Public Engagement activities. If the CCA was going to be shut as an art venue perhaps it could still be repurposed during the pandemic, for food banks or medical supplies or similar in-real-life for-real-life platforms. In the end this shift was not practicable. It was hard not to feel as if I was failing my constituents. Repurposing the venue for me was the most obvious contribution we could make as a cultural organisation with clear community impact, but most of the attention was actually towards art practitioners and similars; we were supporting them financially, whenever possible.

To be honest, it was hard not to feel obsolete. With no way to maintain the quality of in-person engagements, not in the building nor in the community, there was no outlet for my programme. After a number of months of furlough and no end in sight, I secured another job and moved to Sweden, to be Senior Lecturer for the MFA at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg. The course was focused on the role of the artist in society and the definition of publicness. I thought this was exactly what I needed to focus on conceptually, and find my way back to the engagement I valued so much in my practice. I was delighted to participate in L'Internationale and join you all as a member of the Mediation Group. Our discussions were most welcome and stimulating by virtue of a genuine attempt to challenge the definition of constituent.

Once again, though, circumstances meant that the contours of our constituents were perhaps necessarily shaped around art institutions, art practitioners, and concern for their income, their care, their health and wellbeing. It felt like our field of constituents had contract-

ed somehow. Pre-pandemic we were committed to outreach; we were increasing our audiences; we were committed to the people of the neighbourhood, and committed to action with and for our local minorities. When Covid hit, it was as if the outer limits of attention were brought closer to home, to make sure artists could survive the pandemic. What had happened to our care for our constituents and collaborators beyond the outer wall of the organisation? Covid was perhaps enforcing a ‘closer to home’ operating principle, directly or indirectly.

Maybe the crisis of the pandemic compelled the organs of the art sector, of any sector, to function for the preservation of the *body*, for the proximal biological beneficiaries; colleagues, friendly institutions, customary partners, the already-working-with, identifiable family? There were times it appeared our sector was perilously close to an admission of self-absorption, of caring more inwards than outwards; moments when we existed more for ourselves than for our constituencies amongst diverse publics.

This letter can’t answer any of these postulations, it merely raises a personal sense of urgency about the need for re-engagement with society. I haven’t had much time to think these things through with you all, now that I am away from Sweden and searching for ways to redeploy my civic spirit in actuality. The pandemic has created something of a long Covid effect in respect of living and sharing, and I think we have not yet found a new way of cohabiting with the here-to-stay impacts of the last three years. I hope our wider constituents have sustained their cohesion and compassion, and that they will share with us one day, when we can all open up once again in generosity.

Keep the horizons open and keep up the good work!

Best,
Viviana

2.

Dear Colleagues
of L'Internationale/
Pablo Martínez,
Adela Železnik

1 February 2022

Dear colleagues,¹

We hope you are all well despite the times we live in. We don't only think of the most evident results of the pandemic, which has deeply affected our lives and work, but also of the consequences of the shift that cultural policies are making in Europe, the rise of the extreme right, fascism in Eastern Europe, the restrictions of our rights and freedom... and on top of it the ecological crisis.

Sorry, we don't want to start too pessimistically, we're writing to you on the occasion of the mid-term meeting of L'Internationale. It is Sunday evening; the sun has already set some hours ago and we are typing this letter to you, our friends and colleagues, to share some of our concerns, visions and methodologies, as we were asked by Sara and Maria.

We are writing on behalf of the mediation team, a group of curators, educators, mediators, art practitioners and thinkers by doing, all very committed to L'Internationale goals and affectively supporting each other. We may say that we are not just a working group, we are definitely not a support group only, but also a reading group, a debate group... and above all a group of people who are looking for new ways of thinking together, sharing experiences and having fun.

And how have we been working together in these past months?

Discussions of how we understand constituencies in our situated contexts was a long and enriching process. Even though it was clear to us that we do not want just to deliver outputs or produce outcomes, we planned video dialogues, online materials and an e-book as the outcomes of this process.

We chose a *dialogue* in the first place, being a fundamental tool for critical pedagogies. Dialogue in pedagogy is not a mere exchange of ideas between two or more people, but also a practice that challenges the notions of who knows and who doesn't know things. As

Paulo Freire puts it, dialogue should be an act of liberation instead of a practice of domination.

Let us mention two examples of dialogues with our constituencies: Fran from the Reina Sofa was just about to start a project about queer pedagogies and Onur from SALT planned a dialogue on eco-farming with the anglo-spanish collective *Cooking Sections*. However, the pandemic last March stopped the production of dialogues, the essence of which were live encounters and community meetings. The work with constituencies has been severely affected in all institutions. Social distance is generating social boundaries and work with the most vulnerable population has never been more difficult. Media claim that we live in a Health crisis, we know that above all we're facing a crisis of humanity. This can be seen in the territory between Bosnia and Croatia where refugees have been constantly turned back violently from the EU border, or in the schools of el Raval in Barcelona, where the majority of the population are migrants and live very precarious lives.

We found the time of a lockdown very important, since, as if we needed mutual support, we started to meet on a weekly basis instead of every month.

Do you remember, Mabel? We kept meeting every week from March to June, every Tuesday from ten to eleven... We all like to remember these meetings, which became a sort of special time for us, when we got used to the views of our private spaces on the screens, became acquainted more intimately, and also have been able to express our worries, fears and care...

We were primarily concentrating on the preparation of a common online s.c. learning material and our discussions were intersecting three modes of thinking: mediation, collections and the constituent museum.

We were posing questions such as *Can museum collections be useful to rebuild relationships?* A question by Marta from MSN Warsaw.

As most of those questions remained unanswered,
We saved some to share with you in the following two days.

These questions are:

- Do you think that an institution can show its vulnerability and start to work from it?
- Do you want to think and challenge our institutional structures to make them more porous and democratic?
- What is the role that art can play in the current eco-social crisis?

These are our 3 questions for the start but we would love to listen to yours and continue this process of creating a constituent museum in practice together.

Maybe you can write us a letter, this is the way we are working at the moment with Sofia Olascoaga: we are writing to our friends, colleagues, constituencies to express our modes of vulnerability, solidarity and care.

Yours sincerely,
Mediation team

ENDNOTE

- 1 The letter was written as the Mediation Group's activity report for the L'Internationale midterm online meeting on 1st February 2021.

3.

Dear Adela/
Carmen Calvo
Santesmases

Ljubljana, 22 June 2022

Dear Adela,

I have been here at the museum for more than four months now. You have given me a spot right next to your office on the third floor. A table, a chair and a footrest. You welcomed me very warmly and throughout these months I have felt your care, so as I have felt it with Sanja, Bojana, Ana and Tomaž to whom I am also very grateful.

Since I first arrived at MSUM in October you asked me about my interests in this museum. I told you the Moderna galerija's work as a whole attracted me deeply, as well as its relationship with L'Internationale. Since then we have been talking about institutional critique and the multiple contradictions it hosts. In our latest conversations we went through the question of the relevance of museums nowadays. Now I wonder to what extent does it make sense to barricade political positions within the museum walls. And this has a particular meaning at the MSUM at Metelkova neighbourhood, former military base. In this letter I will share with you some doubts that come to me when thinking about this.

I wonder whether political activism from museum's high positions, can be a double-edged sword. L'Internationale looks like a useful tool from the inside but it's hard to access it. It is the same with museums. There is a limited space in order to maintain acceptable working conditions, nonetheless the workloads are huge. From my position, that of a graduate master student from Madrid, I see my future – as well as my colleagues see theirs – full of uncertainty. My job opportunities are traversed by my social condition, which here at the MSUM in Ljubljana, it summarises in the fact that I am paying (thanks to my parents support) in order to work, even though I have a European scholarship. I receive a retribution of 350€ per month which doesn't even cover the costs of the accommodation. However, I am grateful for this internship opportunity, luckily given to me and I appreciate all your

effort and support which made this possible. But I see myself and my friends in Madrid going towards a professional atmosphere that cannot hold us, a network of European scholarships made many times not to challenge the social and economic differences among the European youth but to maintain them (how and when is the scholarship money given, taking for granted that everyone of us who are able to take full advantage of the scholarship already have the income to travel and find accommodation). As a worker I am concerned about my future. Often my generation doubts if we can still believe in it. But I am also concerned about not betraying the severely precarious community of cultural workers I am part of. How to use my own privileges for the benefit of the whole.

My main worries are if we –you and I– can ask for revolutionary means for a revolutionary end hosted by institutions. It seems inevitable for museum workers to go along with the authoritarian logics that rule the museum, that make it possible to deal with the State – we are talking about national art institutions. But also, if the argument is flipped, how long can the museum be parasitized before the power logics that rule it absorb all its revolutionary potential? It would mean forcing the museum against its own logic, as Paul B. Preciado puts it¹. For example: how long can countermovements like the queer movement benefit from museums' visibility before becoming a profitable product devoid of content?

In the museum's framework, power, as well as censorship, works one way: top-down. It rarely works the other way around. When the anarchist artists and street agitators *Mujeres Creando*, accept to exhibit at Museo Reina Sofía, for example, there is always this question of coherency "if you criticise institutions, why do you accept money from them?". But this question is only asked to the ones at the bottom of the pyramid. If you have the means, if you have the capital, you might not have to surf the contradictions of selling your workforce to survive². The question of the coherency is asymmetrical, as Cristina Morales says³. It would seem that, as an artist, you'd have to be a sub-

missive worker to the institution and unable to be critical. The opportunism of the neoliberal system, which always applauds what is popular in order to benefit from it, has led sometimes to misunderstand the museum as a free space where everything can be said. But power relations persist in these spaces; every now and then the power of capital and the old aristocratic powers within the State, remind museum workers of their inferior position.

However, as Jesús Carrillo has said, the fight for more egalitarian structures within the museum is always about failing. Maybe it's not about losing hope and conforming with the situation, but about finding the way to fight through particular, targeted and practical moves. When I was in Madrid for the Christmas holidays Jesús told me "one thing we have learned (he was talking about *museo situado*) from the feminist movement is that any place is good for making the struggle visible". But how to prevent the power in the institution to absorb the cause and make it disappear altogether. I see that both Jesús and you carry many years of experience at your back and sometimes the dilemma is having to choose between political activism and your position at the institution. We, as many others, have witnessed how this utopian project of stretching institutional authority and confronting it with itself has made some people lose their positions.

On the other hand, as we have talked about, when from the museum there is a use of the terms and procedures of local movements, self-organized politically engaged groups and anarchist theory, I wonder whether this practice –that could be regarded as inclusive, tolerant, with the authoritarian load inherent of these terms– wouldn't be a strategy of stealing words and procedures from smaller groups, swallowing its political potential and misusing it in a space like the exhibition room, where power structures organize relationships but now in a hidden and secret way nobody can point at or talk about. How do we intercept these dynamics of reproducing the power structure?

For me, one of the biggest contradictions for museum workers in high positions is to speak as if they were the museum in an artificial

we that would represent all its members. I find this plural very tricky as it rarely addresses who it includes. Perhaps the museum should last longer than these workers in a way that it would permit new members to occupy it; taking into consideration the will of its components to actually be part of the network of the museum and in which way to do this. Enter independently to occupy the museum and be able to also leave it. I doubt if it would be practical to take a pause and describe every time there's a new possible "we" in order to address the problem of representation and avoid taking another's voice. However, I understand that when you have been working that many years in the museum there is plenty of yourself in it. But maybe the hopes held from this museum at its beginning aren't the ones held by the new generations of cultural workers.

I can understand as well that the different museums hold very diverse ways of organizing themselves and it could seem mistaken to, from my position, start offering alternatives. Nonetheless that is not my aim. I just share the intuitions that I have felt when comparing my one-year-master at Museo Reina Sofía and these few months at MSUM. I have felt that the size does matter and here in Ljubljana I have seen a more direct way of dealing with everyday tasks: you proposed to me to develop a workshop⁴, you encouraged the reconstruction of the terrace in order to re-open the museum's Kantina again and you are always willing to hear my ideas and proposals and carry them out.

Personally, I find hope in the fact that cultural institutions and museums are several things at once⁵—a relief and a trap—; national museums sharing an understanding of their historical responsibility with all the State, bureaucratic and capitalistic dynamics attached to it, but also spaces for institutional experimentation and hybridity. The same way museums can act as power machines of verification, which means they turn truthful everything they host⁶, they cannot prevent themselves from also hosting parasitizing initiatives that go against their very own logics. Being these multiple things at the same time, acquiring this fluid model of hosting very different activities inside of them,

creates tensions. And this multiplicity is not inside the theory, but it actually takes place against the vertical and top-down models of power structures that rule museums themselves. Perhaps because this is the only way museums can be kept alive, by managing its relations to state institutions while some of their workers intervene so as to keep its localities engaged as well. Nonetheless, the covid-19 pandemic has interrupted many of these critical initiatives organized from the bottom up. Now I feel as if there would be a closer control on these activities. The number of people is restricted, and the social distancing is translated to the way we see each other and share our ideas, our feelings. As Maria Galindo said, everyone and everything is infected, there's nothing we can do anymore without having to deal with coronavirus⁷. It could be understood as part of our lives and I wonder whether the covid-19, as Cristina Morales said, would be, as well, a social system of population management, radically twisting the way in which people socialise, in both present and future terms⁸.

Going back to the question of the relevance of museums nowadays, Mateo Feijóo, former director of Naves Matadero, once told me that one of the premises that guided him as an art director when he was in Naves was that artistic practice, understood at any level, shouldn't be about kicking out the rich people, but about making everybody rich⁹. I understand his statement as an advice towards redistribution. If museums are rich in visibility, if they are rich in symbolic capital, then I wonder whether they'd have to make visible the deviation from the hegemonic canon, for example. Even though it's true that the battle can't be fought through the mainstream only, and even if we shouldn't be satisfied with that, this channel is undoubtedly part of the change. Queerizing the museum is, partly, using the spotlight to show queer art practices. One example would be the work of art at Nouvel Building's inner courtyard at Museo Reina Sofía. *Beauty Salon* is a piece from Giuseppe Campuzano and Miguel A. López, transforming the museum façade showing queer portraits in a massive size demanding the visibility of queer futures, confronting the utopian possi-

bility of this future to happen, with reality. Queer in Campuzano is the obligatory mixture, the revolt of the wretched and the pointing out of the false stability of cis-hetero colonial authority¹⁰. A few meters from Campuzano and Lopez's piece there is the main door to Café Nouvel, a very elegant and expensive cafe that makes it impossible for average neighbours from Lavapiés –where Museo Reina Sofía is located– to hang out there. The queer fight for unveiling the different power structures takes places in very specific places of the museum and not all the time. I doubt that the coexistence of many universes at the museum guarantees equality but I believe it is a step in that direction. How much time, if at all, will it take to assume a generalised agreement on radical change?



Beauty Salon (Salón de Belleza) (2014) Giuseppe Campuzano and Miguel A. López, <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/beauty-salon-salon-belleza>

I don't think museums have to disappear in order to change their dynamics. There are many ways of signaling their patriarchal, bourgeois and colonial past, that are already taking place in different museums¹¹. But it could also be through small gestures, relating to its locality, that cannot be controlled or sold. Provide its space for occu-

pation. I would suggest that museums can be slowly dismantled inside-out if their workers maintain their independence, if they don't merge with the institution's identity. This way it would be possible to criticise it with some distance. Thus, it would mean that museums could be understood not as fictions freed from violence and oppression, but as spaces where these oppressions can be talked about and fought against. I honestly think this relationship and your generosity having me here is part of that radical change.

Yours,
Carmen C Santesmases

ENDNOTES

- 1 Paul B. Preciado (2017) <https://vimeo.com/239484758>
- 2 Cristina Morales (2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdneVT5ej-M>
- 3 Íbid.
- 4 <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/education/3461/workshops-women-gazing-at-women/>
- 5 Alicia Arévalo, Carmen Santesmases, Francesca Todeschini (2021) https://www.arteinformato.com/documentos/14.Covid-19_por_Alicia_Arevalo_Carmen_Santesmases_y_Francesca_Todeschini.pdf
- 6 Paul B. Preciado (2017) <https://vimeo.com/239484758>
- 7 María Galindo (2020) <http://iips.usac.edu.gt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sopa-de-Wuhan-ASPO.pdf>
- 8 Cristina Morales, Cristina Rosenvinge (2020) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNSKdz_GW74
- 9 Mateo Feijóo, Carmen Santesmases (2021) <https://veinte20.org/mateofejoo/>
- 10 Miguel Ángel Campuzano (2007) <https://pdfcookie.com/documents/campuzano-museo-travesti-del-perupdf-g27oyogd3ovo>
- 11 Beatriz Martínez Sosa (2022) Revisión y reflexibilidad: cuando el museo se expone. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzput6JoFAY>

Liubliana, 22 de Junio de 2021

Querida Adela:

Llevo más de cuatro meses en el museo. Me has puesto un sitio justo al lado de tu despacho en la tercera planta. Una mesa, una silla y un reposapiés. Me has recibido cercana y a lo largo de estos meses he sentido tu acogida cariñosa, igual que la he sentido de Sanja, Bojana, Ana y Tomaž a quienes también estoy muy agradecida.

Cuando llegué al MSUM en octubre me preguntaste por mis intereses en este museo. Te dije que la museografía de la Moderna galerija en su conjunto me atraía profundamente, así como su relación con L'Internationale. Desde entonces hemos hablado de la crítica institucional y de las múltiples contradicciones que alberga. En nuestras últimas conversaciones tratamos la cuestión de la pertinencia de los museos en la actualidad. Ahora me pregunto hasta qué punto tiene sentido atrincherar las posiciones políticas entre los muros del museo. Esto tiene una lectura particular en el MSUM, ubicado en el barrio de Metelkova, antigua base militar. En esta carta comparto contigo algunas dudas que me surgen al pensar en estas cosas.

Me pregunto si el activismo político desde los cargos de responsabilidad de los museos puede ser un arma de doble filo. L'Internationale parece una herramienta útil desde dentro, pero es difícil acceder a ella. Ocurre lo mismo con los museos. Hay un espacio limitado para mantener unas condiciones de trabajo aceptables sin embargo las cargas de trabajo son enormes. Desde mi posición, la de estudiante de máster de Madrid, veo mi futuro -al igual que mis compañeras ven el suyo- lleno de incertidumbre. Mis oportunidades laborales están atravesadas por mi condición social, que aquí, en el MSUM de Liubliana, se resume en el hecho de que estoy pagando (gracias a la ayuda de mis padres) para poder trabajar, aunque tenga una beca europea. Recibo una retribución de 350€ al mes que no cubre los gastos de alojamiento. Sin embargo, estoy agradecida por esta oportuni-

dad de prácticas, que por suerte se me ha brindado, y aprecio todo tu esfuerzo y apoyo al haberlo hecho posible. Pero me veo a mí misma y a mis amigas en Madrid dirigiéndonos hacia un ambiente profesional incapaz de ampararnos, una red de becas europeas hechas muchas veces no para desafiar las diferencias sociales y económicas entre la juventud europea sino para mantenerlas – cómo y cuándo se da el dinero de la beca, dando por sentado que quienes podemos aprovecharla ya tenemos los ingresos para viajar, encontrar alojamiento y mantenernos-. Como trabajadora me preocupa mi futuro. A menudo mi generación duda si podemos seguir creyendo en él. Pero también me preocupa no traicionar a la comunidad precarizada de trabajadoras culturales de la que formo parte: cómo utilizar mis propios privilegios en beneficio del conjunto.

Lo que más me inquieta es si nosotras -tú y yo- podemos exigir medios revolucionarios para el fin revolucionario que albergaran las instituciones. Parece inevitable que quienes trabajan en los museos se deban plegar a las lógicas autoritarias que lo rigen, que hacen posible el trato con el Estado -estamos hablando de instituciones artísticas nacionales-. Pero también, si se invierte el argumento, ¿durante cuánto tiempo puede ser parasitado el museo antes de que las lógicas de poder que lo rigen absorban todo su potencial revolucionario? Significaría forzar al museo contra su propia lógica, como dice Paul B. Preciado¹. Por ejemplo: ¿cuánto tiempo pueden los movimientos de resistencia como el queer beneficiarse de la visibilidad de los museos antes de convertirse en un producto rentable y carente de contenido?

En el marco del museo, el poder, al igual que la censura, funciona en una dirección: de arriba abajo. Rara vez funciona al contrario. Cuando artistas anarquistas y agitadoras callejeras, como Mujeres Creando, aceptan exponer en el Museo Reina Sofía, por ejemplo, se plantea esta cuestión de coherencia: si critican las instituciones, ¿por qué aceptan dinero de ellas? Pero esta pregunta sólo se hace a quienes están en la base de la pirámide. Si tienes los medios, si tienes el capital, puede que no tengas que surfear las contradicciones que implica ven-

der tu fuerza de trabajo para sobrevivir². La cuestión de la coherencia es asimétrica, como dice Cristina Morales. Parecería que, como artista, tendrías que ser una trabajadora sumisa a la institución e incapaz de ser crítica. El oportunismo del sistema neoliberal, que aplaude siempre lo popular para beneficiarse de ello, ha llevado a veces a malinterpretar el museo como un espacio libre donde se puede decir todo. Pero las relaciones de poder persisten en estos espacios. Cada cierto tiempo el poder del capital y los viejos poderes aristocráticos dentro del Estado, recuerdan a las trabajadoras de estos museos su posición de inferioridad.

Sin embargo, como ha dicho Jesús Carrillo, en la lucha por unas estructuras más igualitarias dentro del museo se trata siempre de avanzar fracasando. Tal vez no se trate de perder la esperanza y conformarse con la situación, sino de encontrar la manera de hacer la lucha a través de movimientos particulares, dirigidos y prácticos. Cuando estuve en Madrid por navidad Jesús me dijo: “una cosa que nosotros (se refería al *museo situado*) hemos aprendido del movimiento feminista es que cualquier lugar es bueno para hacer la lucha visible”. Pero cómo evitar que el poder en la institución absorba la causa y la haga desaparecer del todo. Veo que tanto Jesús como tú lleváis muchos años de experiencia a vuestras espaldas y a veces el dilema es tener que elegir entre el activismo político y vuestro puesto en la institución. Tú y yo, como tantas otras, hemos sido testigos de cómo este proyecto utópico de estirar la autoridad institucional y enfrentarla a sí misma ha hecho que algunas personas pierdan sus puestos de trabajo.

Por otro lado, como hemos hablado, cuando se utilizan desde el museo los términos y procedimientos de los movimientos locales, de los grupos horizontales autogestionados, políticamente comprometidos y de la teoría anarquista, me pregunto si esta práctica -que podría considerarse inclusiva, tolerante, con la carga autoritaria propia de estos términos- no sería un robo de palabras y procedimientos de grupos más pequeños, que secuestra su potencial político y hacen un mal uso de él en un espacio como la sala de exposiciones, donde una serie de

estructuras de poder organizan las relaciones pero ahora de una forma oculta y secreta, difícil de desvelar. ¿Cómo interceptar estas dinámicas de reproducción de la estructura de poder?

Una de las mayores contradicciones de los trabajadores de los museos que ocupan altos cargos es hablar como si fueran el museo en un *nosotros* artificial que representaría a todos sus miembros. Me parece que este plural es engañoso, ya que rara vez aclara a quiénes se refiere. Quizá el museo debiera durar más que estos trabajadores de manera que permitiera a nuevos miembros ocuparlo; teniendo en cuenta su voluntad a la hora de participar de la red del museo. Entrar de forma independiente para ocupar el museo y poder también salir de él. Podría ser práctico hacer una pausa y describir cada vez que haya un nuevo *nosotros* posible para abordar el problema de la representación y evitar tomar la voz de los demás. Sin embargo, comprendo que cuando una lleva tantos años trabajando en el museo, hay mucho de sí misma en él. Pero quizá las esperanzas que teníais en este museo en sus inicios no son las que tienen las nuevas generaciones de trabajadores culturales.

Entiendo también que los diferentes museos tienen formas muy diversas de organizarse y sería una equivocación empezar a ofrecer alternativas desde mi posición. Ese no es mi objetivo. Sólo comparto mis intuiciones al comparar mi año de máster en el Museo Reina Sofía y estos pocos meses en el MSUM. He sentido que el tamaño sí importa y aquí en Liubliana he visto una forma más directa de afrontar las tareas cotidianas: me propusiste desarrollar un taller³, impulsaste la reconstrucción de la terraza para volver a abrir la Kantina del museo y estás siempre dispuesta a escuchar mis ideas y propuestas y llevarlas a cabo.

Personalmente, encuentro esperanza en el hecho de que las instituciones culturales y los museos son varias cosas a la vez⁴ -alivio y trampa-; museos nacionales que comparten la comprensión de su responsabilidad histórica con toda la dinámica estatal, burocrática y capitalista que conlleva, pero también espacios de experimentación e hibridación institucional. Del mismo modo que los museos pueden actuar

como máquinas de poder de verificación, lo que significa que convierten en verdadero todo lo que acogen⁵, no pueden evitar acoger también iniciativas parasitarias que van en contra de sus propias lógicas. Al ser múltiples cosas al mismo tiempo, al adquirir este modelo fluido de albergar actividades muy diferentes en su interior, se crean tensiones. Porque esa multiplicidad no está dentro de la teoría, sino que tiene lugar en contra de los modelos verticales y descendentes de la estructura de poder propia de los museos. Tal vez porque esta es la única manera de que los museos se mantengan en pie, gestionando sus relaciones con las instituciones estatales mientras algunos de sus trabajadores intervienen para mantener también sus localidades comprometidas. Sin embargo, la pandemia de la covid-19 ha interrumpido muchas de estas iniciativas críticas organizadas de abajo a arriba. Me parece que ahora hay un control más estrecho de estas actividades. El aforo ha estado restringido y el distanciamiento social se tradujo en la forma de vernos y compartir nuestras ideas, nuestros sentimientos. Como dijo María Galindo, todo está infectado, ya no hay nada que podamos hacer sin el coronavirus entre medias⁶. Podría entenderse como parte de nuestras vidas y me pregunto si el covid-19 no sería, también, como decía Cristina Morales, un sistema social de gestión de la población que modificaría radicalmente la forma de socializar, tanto en el presente como en el futuro⁷.

Volviendo a la cuestión de la relevancia de los museos en la actualidad, Mateo Feijóo, antiguo director de Naves Matadero, me dijo una vez que una de las premisas que le guiaban como director de arte cuando estaba en Naves era que la práctica artística, entendida en cualquier nivel, no debía consistir en echar a los ricos, sino en hacer ricos a todos⁸. Entiendo su afirmación como un consejo hacia la redistribución. Si los museos son ricos en visibilidad, si son ricos en capital simbólico, entonces tendrían que hacer visible la desviación del canon hegemónico, por ejemplo. Si bien es cierto que la batalla no puede librarse sólo a través del *mainstream*, y aunque no debemos conformarnos con eso, este es sin duda parte del cambio. Queerizar el museo es, en

parte, utilizar los focos para mostrar las prácticas artísticas queer. Un ejemplo sería la obra del patio interior del Edificio Nouvel en el Museo Reina Sofía. Beauty Salon es una pieza de Giuseppe Campuzano y Miguel A. López, que traviste la fachada del museo con retratos queer de gran tamaño reivindicando la visibilidad de los futuros queer, confrontando la posibilidad utópica de que este futuro suceda, con la realidad. Lo queer en Campuzano es la mezcla obligada, la revuelta de los miserables y el señalamiento de la falsa estabilidad de la autoridad colonial cis-hetero⁹. A pocos metros de la pieza de Campuzano y López se encuentra la puerta principal del Café Nouvel, una cafetería elegante y cara que hace imposible que el vecindario medio de Lavapiés -donde está el Museo Reina Sofía- pueda parar por allí. La lucha queer por develar las diferentes estructuras de poder tiene lugar en espacios muy concretos del museo y no todo el tiempo. Y aunque dudo que la convivencia de muchos universos en el museo garantice la igualdad, creo que es un paso en esa dirección. ¿Cuánto tiempo se necesitaría para que cunda la idea de un cambio radical, si tal cosa es posible?

No creo que los museos tengan que desaparecer para cambiar su dinámica. Hay muchas formas de señalar su pasado patriarcal, burgués y colonial, que ya se están usando en algunos museos¹⁰. Podría ser a través de pequeños gestos, relacionados con su localidad, que no se controlen ni se vendan. El museo puede, a veces lo hace, ofrecer su espacio para la ocupación. Quizá, los museos podrían ser lentamente desmantelados de dentro a fuera si sus trabajadores mantienen su independencia, si no funden su identidad con la de la institución. De este modo, sería posible criticarla con cierta distancia. Esto significaría que los museos podrían entenderse no como ficciones liberadas de violencia y opresión, sino como espacios en los que se puede hablar de esas opresiones y luchar contra ellas. Y creo que esta relación y tu generosidad al tenerme aquí forma parte de ese cambio radical.

Muy atentamente,
Carmen C Santesmases

ENDNOTES

- 1 Paul B. Preciado (2017) <https://vimeo.com/239484758>
- 2 Cristina Morales (2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdneVT5ej-M>
- 3 <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/education/3461/workshops-women-gazing-at-women/>
- 4 Alicia Arévalo, Carmen Santesmases, Francesca Todeschini (2021) https://www.arteinformatado.com/documentos/14.Covid-19_por_Alicia_Arevalo,_Carmen_Santesmases_y_Francesca_Todeschini.pdf
- 5 Paul B. Preciado (2017) <https://vimeo.com/239484758>
- 6 María Galindo (2020) <https://iips.usac.edu.gt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sopa-de-Wuhan-ASPO.pdf>
- 7 Cristina Morales, Cristina Rosenvinge (2020) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNSKdz_GW74
- 8 Mateo Feijóo, Carmen Santesmases (2021) <https://veinte20.org/mateofejoo/>
- 9 Miguel Ángel Campuzano (2007) <https://pdfcookie.com/documents/campuzano-museo-travesti-del-perupdf-g270yogd30vo>
- 10 Beatriz Martínez Sosa (2022) Revisión y reflexibilidad: cuando el museo se expone. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzput6JoFAY>

4.

Dear Pascal
Gielen/ Piet Van
Hecke

THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE DIALECTICS

INSTITUTION & UNINSTITUTION

SEMI PUBLIC SPACE

YOU'RE MORE SAFE THEN IN A PUBLIC SPACE

EMPTY (AS IN... NO PUBLIC)

OPEN-CLOSED PUBLIC-PRIVATE UNSAFE-UNSAFE

PHYSICAL NEARLETS IN SHARING AFFECTS FOR CULTURE

TRUST

CONDITION OF DISSENSUS

INTIMATE RELATION WITH STRANGERS

WITH OR WITHOUT YOUUUU

BLAIR YOU TOO

BONO

WHERE IS OUR OWN HISTORY? (INSTEAD OF USA)

NATIONAL CULTURE & COMMON LIBERAL, BOURGEOIS INDIVIDUALISM IDIOSYNCRATIC ARTIST HIGH CULTURE VERTICAL AESTHETIC

REPRESENTATIVE

1. VOTING QUANTITY

2. DELIBERATIVE TALKING QUALITY CONSENSUS

3. A WONKISH DOING & THINKING DISSENSUS

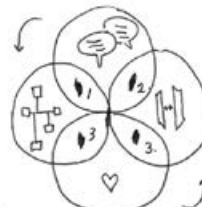
IT HAS TO DO WITH DEMOCRACIES



WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

PROTEST CULTURE (COLLECTIVISM)

COUNTER CULTURE, FOLK POST MODERN MULTICULTURALISM, MONOCULTURE MIDDLE CLASS CURATOR (MORE IMPORTANT THEN CREATOR) HORIZONTAL AESTHETICS CREATIVE ENTER PRESENCE IDENTITY POLITICS METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM COMPETITIVE SYSTEM:



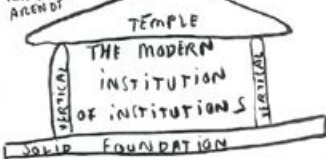
CONCRETE ADVICE PROBLEMS: TRUST, RESPONSIBILITY ETC.

PLATFORM (ALL DEPARTMENTS) SLOW INSTITUTION SELF ITERATIVE UNITS

ONLY WORKS WHEN APPROVED ON THE SAME TIME

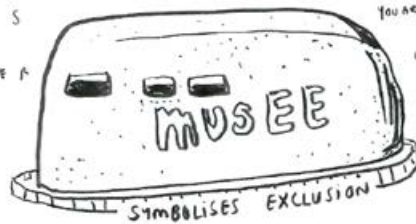
TACTICAL LEADERSHIP

CONSTITUTIONAL CYCLE = UTOPIA



IN THEORY: RECIPROCAL CONSULTATION CULTURE OPEN STRUCTURE ACTIVE CITIZENS

HUGE GAP DOING



Antwerp, March 2022

When I asked him to write a letter to the future museum, Pascal Gielen sent me this drawing that artist Karina Beumer made during his lecture on the constituent museum. I have added a quote from his text below.

“After all, a constituent museum policy constantly creates openings. It creates possibilities to make visible (as yet) invisible, inaudible and non-expressible cultural expressions. Constituting, therefore, means moving around, constantly presenting new frames of reference, models of meaning and possibilities for qualification. However, in doing so, a museum risks losing the ground under its feet, stability and certainties that are just as necessary to be able to function at all as an institute of meaning. In other words, development and innovation (the niche effect) must be able to balance with a permanent collection and a canon in order for a museum institution to function. It is therefore necessary that a constituting movement slows down and comes to a standstill at regular intervals. At that moment, the institution emerges that guarantees certainties and fixed values. However, when the museum becomes bogged down in this institutional movement, it comes to a standstill. It cuts itself off from society as a showcase of lifeless artefacts, a collection of dead culture from a past, distant or otherwise. If, on the other hand, it remains a mere constituent, it tends to drift adrift in an endless ocean of cultural relativism.”

5.

Dear Bojana/

Steven ten Thije

Eindhoven, Sunday, February 27, 2022

Dear Bojana,

This letter comes, as so many things, too late. I was supposed to send it on Friday, but like everything this also went differently than planned. This letter is now written on a Sunday, two days late. Adela asked me to write it, which is a somewhat unusual way to start a letter, yet then not much is business as usual today (nor was it ever within the context of L'Internationale). The letter is also written under the very dark spell of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The horror is so unspeakable, that I don't have words to describe what is happening. Perhaps at the end I might find some.

Adela's request was to write a letter to someone to reflect on our current EU-funded programme *Our Many Europes*. I didn't have to think long, to come up with you as receiver, even if there are so many people in my mind that I cherish, belonging to the loving cosmology of L'Internationale. Still, I quickly arrived at you, as it was you whom I approached to talk about my own ambition within the programme to address, in one way or another, the Yugoslav wars of the nineties and especially the dramatic Dutch participation in it and its role in the Srebrenica genocide. In some sense our exchange and the difficult process that followed out of it describe to me best what I have learned from L'Internationale.

When I approached you it was not out of the blue, as we had known each other since 2009, even if not very well perhaps. I was then a very young researcher and just started at the Van Abbemuseum. I was invited by Charles to join the *Next Step* conference in Ljubljana, which Moderna galerija organized. Since that moment I became more and more fan of the idea of L'Internationale. My interest in it was that it offered me a way to find a position within a changing world, which I found hard to relate to. The moment around 2009 one could describe negatively as the point when the Western

optimism of the globalization of the nineties was questioned and its hegemony, summarized in an liberal, capitalist, democratic social model, got a big blow felt even in the centres of the West, especially 9-11 and the banking crisis. To me, a blond, white boy from the most ancient centres of the West – the Netherlands – it meant a very rigorous recalibration of my worldview. As perhaps most people living under an hegemonic ideology, I was hardly aware that my worldview had been determined by one. And even when I dimly understood that that was the case, I had very little idea what I could do about it. L'Internationale in some sense was where I found my own answer to that search, as it was within the context of the confederation, that I was allowed to obtain a much richer outlook on the current world and its history.

It was also within this context that Yugoslavia as region and history appeared in my life with a depth and significance endlessly more meaningful than the blunt clichés I grew up with. It was also within this context that I started to ask myself why the narrative I had to describe the Srebrenica tragedy was so shallow and meaningless? What had really happened there and why wasn't it translated into a story that could give us both direction and understanding?

The first thing I learned within the context of L'Internationale was that some questions take time and cannot be asked or answered directly. I don't even remember how I spoke about it then, but at that moment the conversation that I had didn't translate into action. Instead what I learned was first of all the general complexity of modern Europe and how the world was strung together through the violent history of European Imperialism. The manner in which I learned this was through listening to my colleagues in L'Internationale and their friends, followed by reading, whereby for the first time history books took over from art history books.

This attitude of listening is perhaps what most contradicted with the region and context I grew up in. When you live in it, you are hardly aware of it. As white boy in the Netherlands, you are cultivated

into an attitude that always believes that you can quite quickly understand what is happening and, even more annoying, believe you know also what everybody should be doing. Recognizing what you don't know, and that your position of privilege perhaps even blocks you from understanding, is perhaps the first thing I had to do.

So, after this tough lesson, it took me quite some time to dare to ask the question into the complex history of Srebrenica. It was only at the beginning of this current programme *Our Many Europes* that I felt the time was right. The person I asked the question to was you and several other colleagues from Moderna galerija, whereby in the end it was us too who spoke about it most. The essence of your response to my question was in a sense simple and beautiful and echoed what I had learned from L'Internationale in the years before. You said: don't ask me, ask people in Bosnia. Of course, our conversation was much longer than that, but this was the core. Even if Slovenia was a part of Yugoslavia, it wasn't proper for you to speak about what happened elsewhere in the federation. What you could do, and did, was to introduce me to people from Bosnia and start the conversation there.

I followed your advice and was happy with your help. You introduced me to Lana Čmajčanin and she then introduced me to more people in Bosnia and beyond. In the conversation that unfolded what happened is very much in line with what had happened before. How I saw things was quite different from how they saw things. The first and most prominent thing was the topic of Srebrenica itself. They made clear to me that to understand Srebrenica, we should not talk about Srebrenica. This kind of complex and paradoxical logic probably in 2008 would have made little sense to me, but being connected to L'Internationale for ten years made me more susceptible to the wisdom in these confusing remarks.

Srebrenica had become a brand-name not so much for an event, but for a particular reading of that event, which was problematic in many ways. Perhaps most of all, because, as I fear also

my own intention was, this reading tried to contain the event in a narrative of guilt and forgiveness, while omitting to ask why it had happened. The narrative around Srebrenica was one of an aggressor – the Serbs – the victim – the Muslim Bosnian population – and the weak policeman – the UN, and in this case the Dutch. Whereby in this narrative the only thing that seemed to occupy the world, and especially the Dutch, was why the policeman failed so dramatically. Nowhere, in this narrative, was the question raised as to the longer history of the conflict, the bigger role played by the European imperial powers in this conflict. Nowhere did people wonder if and how the imperial powerplay that had played such a major role in the region throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, echoed schemes of repression and exploitation practiced in the many colonies of the empires. The approach to the conflict was as ineffective as trying to mend a broken arm by putting on make-up.

So, as in most processes I have been involved in within L'Internationale, I had to come to terms with my own ignorance and arrogance, by forgetting what I thought I knew and listen. The plan that we started working with in the end departed from this necessity to talk and listen, the necessity to take this step of exchange before anything else. During these conversations another event appeared more and more from the background as the better starting point, an event very well known to you: the Bandung conference of 1955 in Indonesia, which marked the beginning of the Non-Aligned Movement. Re-reading the Yugoslav wars from the nineties against the background of this important alliance, appeared to hold much potential. Connecting the wars in the nineties with this movement which for the first time in history, united a wide and disparate coalition of countries and people who were in different ways victims to the colonial aggression of European empires, seemed like a small step into arriving at somewhat more of the “full” story.

In all its imperfection this process to me marks what is the beauty of L'Internationale and also its notion of “constituent museum”.

Museums and the professionals in it, especially the curators or the so-called “content staff”, especially within the West, are trained traditionally to consider themselves as being in possession of knowledge, whose professional challenge is mostly how to disseminate this knowledge. How the knowledge is obtained, and if you are even in a position to be able to claim such knowledge, are questions rarely asked. This is profoundly problematic in a world where there are so many experiences of the same event, which only in their interaction can produce something of a meaningful narrative to relate to it. Even if constituent working remains profoundly difficult, the main principle of it, I think, has helped me and the museum I work for, to change my practice and experiment with collaborative forms whereby more people are brought into a position to speak from their understanding and experience.

The process to address Srebrenica is also meaningful to show that the constituent museum is not a ‘numbers game’. It is not so much about including the maximum number of voices or even a form of full scale representation. Perhaps the museum sector as a whole could have such monumental aspiration, certainly not one institution, not even the whole L’Internationale confederation. What we can do as constituent museums, is to recognize the limitations of our own perspective and invite people into the process, and figure out together how other perspectives can be made visible. Not only in the form of artworks shown, but by being responsible together for the narrative, for the institution. Maybe then one escapes the pitfall of the echo chamber, repeating only the perspective already known, and allowing the possibility to see things anew in a more meaningful manner.

While writing this letter, I received an e-mail from Sara Buraya, written to a large group of L’Internationale colleges. There has been contact with people in Ukraine and members of the confederation asked if and in what way we could help. It is against and beyond all odds and it is saddening and depressing to realize how little one can

do. Yet, I see a tiny glint of hope in the fact that our method remains intact and that instead of speaking about Ukraine, our principle remains to ask people in Ukraine to speak for themselves and ask them what they would need from us. I fear as cultural institutions we give very little to help to face the immediate peril, yet we will do what we can to help raise awareness by giving voice to those in danger.

Thanks Bojana, for all the conversations, and helping me to learn to listen.

Sincerely,

Steven

6.

Dear Museum

Building/

Marta Przybył

Warsaw, February 2021

Dear Museum (building) under construction

Hope you are doing well, although it's surprisingly cold this winter. I see You growing from the basements at the construction site when I pass the center of Warsaw. Hope you have good company. Different people take part in Your becoming. Some of them touch Your concrete walls with their hands, and others with thoughts and concepts. You are quite a complex structure although you are not ready yet.

Who will make Your white concrete interiors alive? Is it art? Works from museum collection on permanent exhibition or those which just drop in for temporary ones? And artists who create them – what place and role will they take in Your every-day functioning?

Talking about people – I wonder which department of workers You will like and need the most? Technicians, curators or maybe the education team? Who else do you expect to cocreate your daily life? Art-experts, common Warsawians, tourists, migrants, students, people with special needs or insects?

Would You like to stay quiet and empty only with pictures of you on social media and online transmissions from Your belly? Or do you prefer busy meetings, crowded vernissages, performances and other events?

I am very curious what reality will you grow into. I hope You will be a place of meetings open for those who need to use you, who need to say or show what is important and what is not visible enough. Hope You will be used by many and it will make you happy. I also hope You will go green one day.

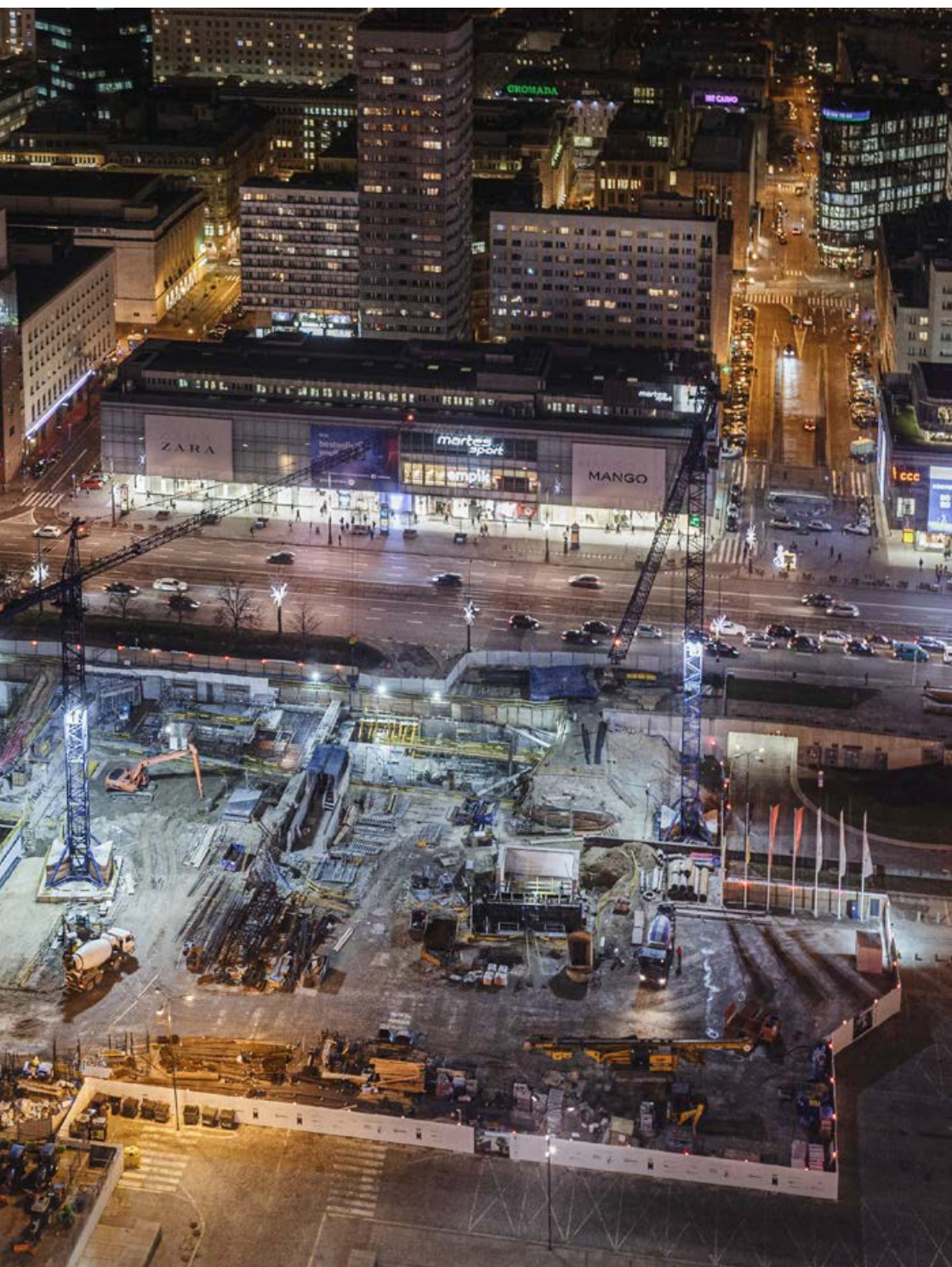
Bye for now, I think about you a lot.

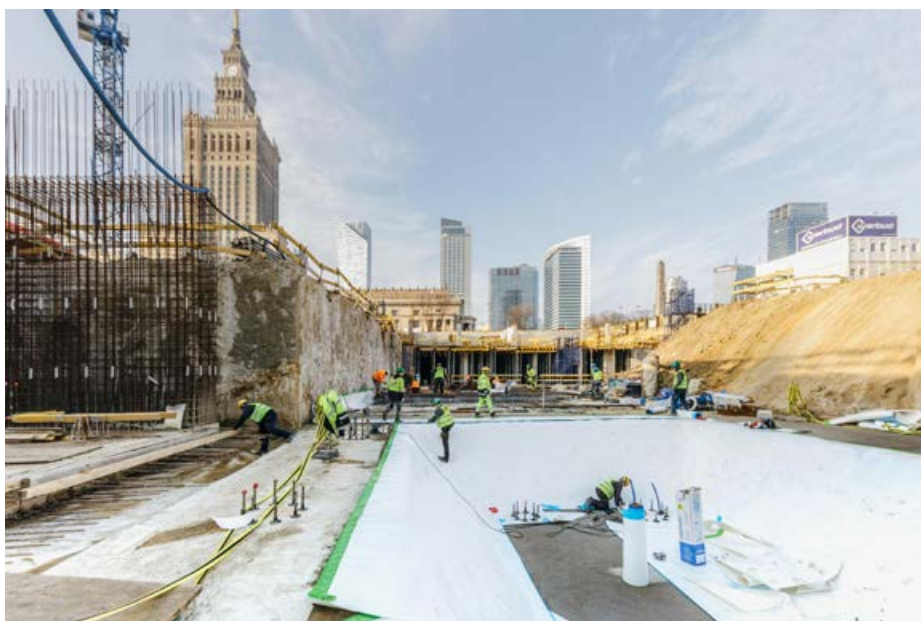
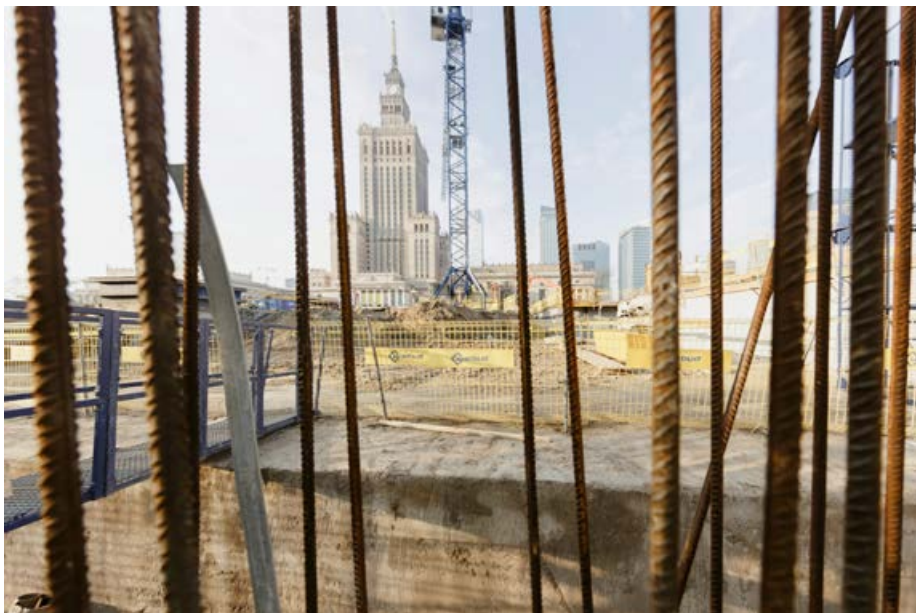
Marta

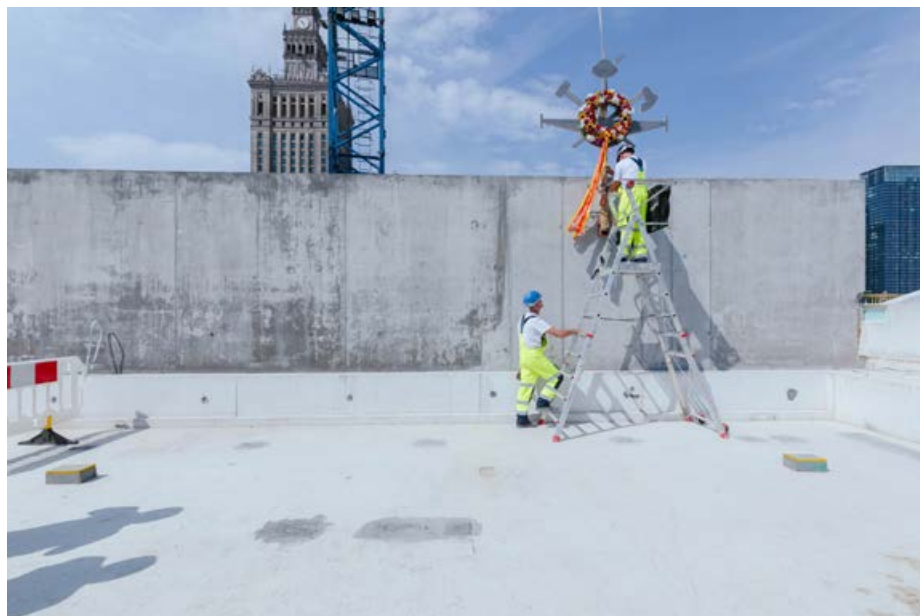












7.

Dear SALT /

Hera

Büyüktaşçıyan

Istanbul, June 2022

Dear SALT,

Whenever I come by, either as a viewer or as a participant, you often remind me of a childhood memory. I recall holding my grandmother's hand and walking into the building of the former Ottoman Bank, where you are currently situated in Beyoğlu. I would observe its wooden counters and grand pillars with admiration, and feel a sense of detachment that one would often experience in older stone buildings on a hot summer day.

Years later, through the exhibition *A Century of Centuries*, this particular memory unravelled within another fragment of time, when I discovered a ceiling fresco on the second floor of SALT's Beyoğlu building delineating an unknown land that echoed the unknowns of the space. And that led to a more profound journey, which also formed the way I experience and make sense of certain places.

These two encounters resurface whenever I happen to be in, or pass by your buildings. I think these particular memories configure how I perceive your presence through the spaces that shape you as an institution. It is also deeply connected with the idea of preserving, collecting, and sharing in a vicious cycle of remembering and forgetting, erasure and reinscription of the contested flow of history that surrounds us.



A ceiling fresco in SALT Beyoğlu, 2015
Photo: Mustafa Hazneci (SALT)



My encounter with SALT often leads me to discover different timelines and historical layers. It seems to me that both of its buildings have a crucial role in defining and reinforcing the institution's layered identity, standing as the reminders and witnesses of urban history. As someone who often associates the physical and historical presence of space with what it produces, I keep thinking about how SALT resonates with where it has been based. It invests in the meaning of "recording time" and forms an entire body of recollections that probe the depths of social, political, and urban histories through its connection with the idea of the archive and the production of knowledge.

As an artist who has participated in various public programmes and exhibitions organized by SALT, such as *A Century of Centuries* and *Apricots from Damascus*, I have often felt the inevitable presence of the institution's physical structures. Acting as living organisms that constantly render the cyclic flow of the city, or rather, as the keepers of its momentum and trajectory, both sites activate, transform, and enhance the scope of each endeavor. At this point, I think SALT is rooted in the characteristics of where it is housed, both physically and metaphorically, which is reflected in and communicated through different methodologies of knowledge and cultural production.

SALT Galata, as the former headquarters of the Ottoman Bank, bears the traces of Alexandre Vallauri's work, while SALT Beyoğlu is situated within the former Siniosoglou Apartment, a building that assumed many personas due to societal ruptures – functioning first as a residential apartment inhabited by citizens of varying ethnicities, and later, as the headquarters of a political party, with offices used for commercial purposes before hosting Garanti Platform, and eventually SALT. In this context, the institution carries a deep understanding of inheritance through its multi-layered shell, evoking a sense of accumulation manifested in an ever-expanding urban and cultural palimpsest.

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan

Sevgili Salt,

Ne zaman bir izleyici veya katılımcı olarak ziyaretine gelsem bana bir çocukluk anımı hatırlatıyorsun. Beyođlu'ndaki mekânına ev sahipliđi yapan, bir zamanlar eski Osmanlı Bankası'nın da bulunduđu binada anneannemle ele ele tutuŖarak yryŖmz hatırlıyorum. AhŖap tezgâhlarını ve heybetli stunlarını hayranlıkla seyrederek, sıcak yaz gnlerinde eski taŖ binalarda bulunan pek çok insanın deneyimlediđi gibi dıŖarıyla aramda bir kopukluk hissedirdim.

Seneler sonra, *Yzyılların Yzyılı* sergisi vesilesiyle, Salt Beyođlu'nun ikinci katının tavanında bilinmeyen bir yeri betimleyen ve bu mekânın bilinmez ynlerini de ađrıŖtıran freskoyu keŖfettiđimde, bu hatıra baŖka bir zaman paracıđı zerinden tekrar belirdi. Bu da daha derin bir yolculuđun baŖlangıcı oldu, bazı mekânları deneyimleme ve anlamlandırma Ŗeklimi belirledi.

Bu iki karŖılaŖma binalarının iinden veya yanından ne zaman gesem tekrar yzeye ıkıyor. Bu anılar, seni bir kurum olarak Ŗekillendiren mekânların zerinden varlıđını anlamlandırmamı sađlıyor. Bylesi sreler, bizi evreleyen tartıŖmalı bir tarihi hatırlama ve unutma, silme ve tekrar yazma edimlerinin kısır dngsne ikin olan muhafaza etme, toplama ve paylaŖma eylemleriyle de yakından iliŖkili.

Salt’la karşılaşmalarım genel olarak farklı zamansallıkları ve tarihsel katmanları keşfetmemi sağlıyor. Bana göre iki yapı da, kentsel tarihin hatırlatıcıları ve tanıkları olarak, kurumun katmanlı kimliğinin oluşturulması ve pekiştirilmesinde oldukça önemli bir rol oynuyor. Mekânların fiziksel ve tarihsel varlıklarını üretimleriyle ilişkilendiren biri olarak, Salt’ın içinde bulunduğu mekânı nasıl yansıttığını düşünürken buluyorum kendimi. Salt, bir anlamda “zamanı kaydetme” fikrine yatırım yaparak, arşiv kavramı ve bilgi üretimiyle kurduğu ilişki üzerinden sosyal, siyasi ve kentsel tarihlerin derinliklerine inen bütüncül hafızalar oluşturuyor.

Salt’ta düzenlenen *Yüzyılların Yüzyılı* ve *Şam’da Kayısı* gibi çeşitli sergi ve kamu programlarına katılmış bir sanatçı olarak, kurumun fiziksel yapılarının kaçınılmaz varlığını farklı şekillerde deneyimledim. Şehrin döngüsel akışını sürekli olarak görünür kılan organizmalar ya da şehrin deviniminin ve yörüngesinin muhafızları olarak bu iki mekân, kurumun çalışmalarını etkin kılıyor, dönüşümü ve gelişiminde rol oynuyor. Bu noktada Salt’ın hem fiziksel hem de metaforik olarak, mesken tuttuğu yerin özellikleri üzerine kurulu olduğu düşünüyorum. Bu da farklı bilgi ve kültür üretimi yöntemlerine yansıyor, bu yöntemler aracılığıyla aktarılıyor.

Osmanlı Bankası’nın genel müdürlük binası olarak tasarlanan Salt Galata Alexandre Vallauri’nin çalışmasının izlerini taşıırken, Salt Beyoğlu toplumsal kırılmalar sebebiyle birçok kez kimlik değiştirmiş eski Siniosoglou Apartmanı’nda bulunuyor. Önceleri farklı etnik kimliklerden insanların yaşadığı bu apartman, daha sonra bir siyasi partinin il başkanlığı, büro ve iş hanı gibi işlevler üstlenmiş, ardından ilk olarak Garanti Platform’a ve nihayet Salt’a dönüşmüş. Bu bağlamda kurum, çok katmanlı kabuğuyla miras kavramına dair derin bir kavrayışı içinde barındırıyor; çağırdığı birikim anlayışysa, durmadan genişleyen kentsel ve kültürel bir *palimpsest* olarak vücut buluyor.

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan

8.

Dear artists,
researchers, col-
leagues and users
of SALT / Gül İçel,
Eylül Şenses

Istanbul, June 2022

Dear artists, researchers, colleagues, and users of SALT,

What a challenging past few years it has been!

We have been coping with the pandemic, adjusting our lives accordingly, and grappling with the social and economic consequences. Unfortunately, the down times affected our motivation, and the physical distance created a strange sensation of detachment.

Every cultural institution had a unique, and challenging experience navigating through immense uncertainty on a global scale, and SALT's was no different. At the time when the pandemic transformed into a "reality" from a remote possibility, SALT was planning to open the exhibition *Climavore: Seasons Made to Drift* by London-based spatial practitioners Cooking Sections. We had been working for the show for almost two years and the research process involved several field visits; sharing and learning from a diverse range of people from different disciplines and places, which was the part we enjoyed most in this process. Our main goal was to bring people together that contributed to the research and elaborate on the cases – works presented by Cooking Sections, but due to the pandemic our main goal took a hammering.

After the initial shock, we started to find new ways to challenge the difficulties brought on by the pandemic, and creative approaches to continue. Luckily, working within a cultural institution with an international network helped us immensely in motivating our hearts and minds. Collectivity and solidarity came to the fore, and being involved in exciting new discussions with colleagues, peers, and mentors gave us the opportunity to decipher and utilize the necessary coping tools for the much-needed intellectual and emotional stimulation. Through collective work, we were able to follow up our research and programming with more of an experimental approach.

The exhibition, which was initially to open in the spring of 2020, could now be launched only a year later in April 2021. The artists could not come for the installation and hence we constantly communicated online through digital drawings and online meetings. Although online programs often are unable to replace the physical environment of sharing, our follow-up conversations with the artists as well as the public online turned out to be fruitful, collaborative, and inspiring.

Stubbornly holding on to the so-called “normalcy” in this post-truth society, we now know how to sustain a certain cool and calm. We are more committed to learning than ever, especially when embarking on new research projects. We keep in mind what we learned and experienced during this time span and utilize these tools to continue stronger despite the pressing economic and sociopolitical circumstances. As newcomer programmers to the SALT Research and Programs team, we look forward to collaborating with our L’Internationale partners and meeting everyone in person one day, hopefully soon.

Our warm wishes,
Eylül Şenses and Gül İçel

Sevgili sanatçılar, arařtırmacılar, çalıřma arkadaşlarımız ve Salt kullanıcıları,

Son birkaç sene ne kadar da zorlu geçti!

Salgınla beraber deęişen kořullara uyum saęlamaya çalıřtık; sosyal ve ekonomik sonuçlarıyla boęuřmak durumunda kaldık. Kapanmalar motivasyonumuzu da etkiledi ve fiziksel mesafe tuhaf bir kopukluk hissi yarattı.

Her bir kùltür kurumu küresel ölçekteki belirsizliklerle uğrařırken kendine özğü zorluklar yařadı. Salt için de durum farklı deęildi. Pandeminin uzak bir ihtimalden bir “gerçeklięe” dönüřtüęü dönemde Salt; mekânsal pratiklere odaklanan, Londra merkezli Cooking Sections ikilisinin İklimci: Mevsimler Sürüklenirken sergisini açmaya hazırlanıyordu. Bu sergiye neredeyse iki senedir hazırlanıyorduk ve arařtırma sürecinde çeřitli saha ziyaretleri gerçekleřtirmiřtik. Farklı yerlerden ve disiplinlerden insanlarla tecrübeler paylařmış, onlardan bir sürü şey öğrenmiřtik ve bizim için sürecin en keyifli kısmı da bu olmuřtu. Amacımız, arařtırmaya katkıda bulunan insanları, Cooking Sections’ın sunduęu vaka arařtırmalarını etraflıca incelemek üzere bir araya getirmekti, ancak maalesef bu planımız da pandemiye yenik düřtü.

İlk řoku atlattıktan sonra, pandeminin getirdięi zorluklarla bařa çıkmak için yeni yollar bulmaya, devam edebilmek için yaratıcı yaklařımlar oluřturmaya bařladık. řanslıyız ki, uluslararası bir aęa dâhil olan bir kùltür kurumunda çalıřmak motivasyonumuzu yüksek tutma konusunda bize epey yardımcı oldu. Kolektivite ve dayanıřma öne çıktı. İř arkadaşlarımız, akranlarımız ve mentorlarımızla beraber yeni ve heyecan verici tartıřmalara dâhil olmak, bu dönemde entelektüel ve duygusal açıdan ihtiyacımız olan fikir alıřveriři için gerekli araçları keřfetmemizi

sağladı. Kolektif çalışma sayesinde daha deneysel bir yaklaşım geliştirerek program ve arařtırmalarımıza devam edebildik.

2020 baharında açılması planlanan sergi, ancak bir sene sonra, Nisan 2021’de gerekleřebildi. Sanatılar kurulum iin gelemedi, dolayısıyla srekli olarak dijital izimler ve evrimii toplantılarla iletiřim hâlindeydik. evrimii programlar oğunlukla fiziksel paylařım ortamının yerini dolduramasa da sanatılar ve izleyicilerle srdrdğmz evrimii sohbetler olduka bereketli, katılımcı ve ilham verici oldu.

Gnmzn gereklik tesi toplumunda inatla szde “normal”e tutunmaya alıřırken, değışen dinamiklerle beraber belli bir lde sakin ve serinkanlı kalabilmeyi ğrendik. zellikle de yeni arařtırma projeleri sz konusu olduğnda, ğrenmek iin her zamankinden daha kararlıyız. Bu zaman dilimi boyunca ğrendiklerimizi ve deneyimlediklerimizi yeni aralara dnřtrerek, giderek zorlařan ekonomik ve sosyopolitik kořullara rağmen daha gl bir řekilde devam edebilmek iin kullanıyoruz. Salt Arařtırma ve Programlar ekibine yeni katılan programcılar olarak, L’Internationale ortaklarıyla beraber alıřmak ve umarız ki yakın bir gelecekte herkesle yz yze tanışmak iin sabırsızlanıyoruz.

İten dileklerimizle,
Eyll řenses ve Gl İel

9.

Dear Users/

Onur Yıldız

Istanbul, 15 February 2022

Dear Users,

Here are a few questions for you;

Where are you? Where do you go when it is not possible to visit the cultural institutions, use the library, see the exhibitions and explore the archives?

Who do you have with you? Who do you talk to? Who do you listen to? Is there anyone answering your questions? Have you got someone teaching you or you can teach to?

What do you need? Have you got all the resources you need? Have you got an internet connection and books?

What makes you curious? What do you want to learn about?


And lastly, what can we do for you?


Best regards,
Onur

V

TIMELINE




Mediation group
working process
(dates, facts,
and images)

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E N I L E M I T	23/11– 21/12/2017	Exchange e-mails regarding the Mediation research programme Mediation and audience development capacity building strand	Adela Železnik, Pablo Martínez, Andreja Bruss, Maria Mallol	
	17–19/ 09/2018	Kick off meeting. Museo Reina Sofía	All members of the future working groups. Amongst them (which later will be part of the Mediation Group) Pablo, Adela, Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca, Sebastian Cichocki	 Photos, p. 282
	30/11/2018	Meeting Mediation in Madrid (as part of the participation in the conference Wide Audiences, celebrated at Museo Reina Sofía)	Adela, Fran, María, Pablo, Sebastian, Piet van Hecke, Mabel Tapia, Tonina Cerdà	
	20/01/2019	Online meeting	Pablo, Adela, Mabel, Fran, Sebastian, Onur Yıldız	
	26/02/2019	Online meeting	Fran, Sebastian, Onur, Mabel, Maria, Adela, Alba Pérez Cadenas	
	26/03/2019	Online meeting	Fran, Alba, Sebastian, Pablo, Mabel, Adela	
	30/04/2019	Online meeting	Unregistered attendants, no minutes on this meeting	
	28/05/2019	Online meeting	Fran, Pablo, Maria, Adela, Zofia Czartoryska	
	25/06/2019	Online meeting	Fran, Alba, Sebastian, Pablo, Mabel, Onur, Adela	

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E	17/09/2019	Online meeting	Zofia, Mabel, Adela, Onur, Fran, Alba, Olle Lundin	
N	30/10/2019	Online meeting	(missing minutes)	
I	13–15/ 11/2019	Mediation meeting in Barcelona at MACBA	Guests: val flores, María Salgado, María Monsonís (workshop at MACBA Kitchen) Adela, Olle, Alba, Sebastian, Piet, Tonina; Marta Przybył, Fatma Çolakoğlu, Anna Cerdà, MACBA: Alicia Escobio, Isaac San Juan, Yolanda Jolis. Fran could not attend because of lower back pain	 Photos, p. 283
L	NO MEETINGS REGISTERED (NO MINUTES)			
E	14/03/2020	Lockdown in Spain		
M	18/03/2020	Lockdown in Belgium		
I	22/03/2020	Lockdown in Turkey		
T	23/03/2020	Lockdown in Netherlands		
	25/03/2020	Lockdown in Poland		
	31/03/2020	1st meeting online in pandemic	Adela, Alba , Piet , Olle, Pablo, Fran, Maria, Marta, Mabel, Onur,	
	07/04/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Alba, Piet, Olle, Pablo, Fran, Maria, Marta, Mabel, Onur	Olle sent to all of us an example/ experiment of an »e-learning« material based on sound.

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E	14/04/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Olle, Mabel, Pablo, Onur, Marta, Fran	We decided to split in smaller groups to work on each material separately: Collections (Olle, Alba), Constituencies (Fran, Pablo and Onur), Mediation (Marta, Piet, Adela).
N	21/04/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Alba, Fran, Mabel, Olle, Pablo, Sebastian, Sofia	
I	28/04/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Fran, Mabel, Marta, Olle, Pablo, Piet	
L	12/05/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Alba, Fran, Mabel, Olle, Onur, Pablo	
E	19/05/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Fran, Mabel, Olle, Pablo	
M	26/05/2020	Weekly online meeting		
I	09/06/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Pablo, Marta, Piet, Mabel, Alba, Fran	
T	16/06/2020	Weekly online meeting	Onur, Adela, Pablo, Marta, Mabel, Olle, Fran	

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E N I L E M I T	23/06/2020	Weekly online meeting	Adela, Pablo, Marta, Fran, Mabel	The three groups have advanced in their work and we think we need now to move forward to the next step. Now we all have to propose someone to lead the editorial work which will put all the material we have done in a direction. The 3 groups might be finishing their work during this week. We consider that this person should be someone from outside the group or the insitutions, in order to bring some fresh eye to the materials and make it (hopefully) more radical.
	30/06/2020	Weekly online meeting	No minutes found	
	07/07/2020	Weekly online meeting	Maria, Marta, Alba, Olle, Adela, Mabel	
	14/07/2020	Meeting posponed		
	29/09/2020	Online meeting		A new member of mediation team from MSN: Marta Skowrońska-Markiewicz, from then on we are talking about »Marta & Marta«.
	21/12/2020			Olle announced he was leaving VAM.
	05/11/2020			We invited Sofia Olascoaga to help us organize e-learning material.

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E	25–26/ 01/2021	First workshop meeting with Sofia Olascoaga	María, Sara, Adela, Onur, Pablo, Viviana, Marta, Fran, Sofía	 Photos, pp. 280–281, 284
N	1–2/02/2021	Mid term meeting OME L'Internationale	Adela and Pablo read the letter Dear Colleagues	
I	23/02/2021	Workshop 2: letter writing development		
L	06/04/2021			Alba communicates she's leaving her position in the Education Department
E	05/05/2021	Workshop 3: Notions of Documentation Purposes from Letter Writing Strategy		 Photos, p. 285
M	25/05/2021	Workshop 4: Maps of addressed experiential, conceptual and political aspects		
I	23/07/2021			Pablo sent us a mail that he was sacked from MACBA.
T	22/08/2021			Onur left SALT.
	30/11/2021	Workshop 5: Additional Letters		
	08/02/2022	Workshop 6 letters, incoming commissions (final ones!), footnoting (revision needed for context, or commenting)		
	28–29/ 03/2022	Editorial team meets in Madrid	Sofía, Fran, Adela	 Photos, pp. 286–287
	26/04/2022	Mediation group	Fran, Adela, Maria, Martas, Gül, Eylül, Fatma, Anna, María	

	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW
E	26/05/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela, María	
N	05/05/2022	Editorial team with Blyzkist and MSN	Fran, Adela, Sofia, Marta and Marta with Taras from Blyzkist	
I				
L	30/05/2022		Adela, Maria	
E	23/06/2022	Meeting in the lobby of the hotel in Warsaw	María, Adela	
M	23/06/2022	Meeting with the design studio Fontarte in Warsaw	Sara, María, Artur Frankowski, Magdalena Frankowska	
I				
T	29/06/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	06/07/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	13/07/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	20/07/2022	Meeting with Fontarte	Sofia, María, Magdalena, Artur	
	10/08/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	18/08/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	24/08/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela, Maria	
	06/09/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	14/09/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela	
	21/09/2022	Keyword date. Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran	
	27/09/2022	Editorial team meets online	Sofia, Fran, Adela, Isabel, Maria	

material
as
bitácora

L'internati

mediation

25.01.71

with
Jofia
Olafsoa

how can we
create a material
that transmit the
process and the
tone of
conversation?

risks
of
become
anecdotic

trace
the process

martha
fran

process involve the
complexities,
it can be
relevant
contextual
through

make the
background
visible

sara
vulnerability, for granted,
never take anything
practices of research
with adela
productivity
stop production
was Carthage

onale.

maria, sara, adela,
oscar, pablo, viviana,
marta, fran, sofia.

group.

* * * ((piet, marta,
alba, oller))

* situate the voices -

* different temporalities
- keep a balance -

* kind of statement -

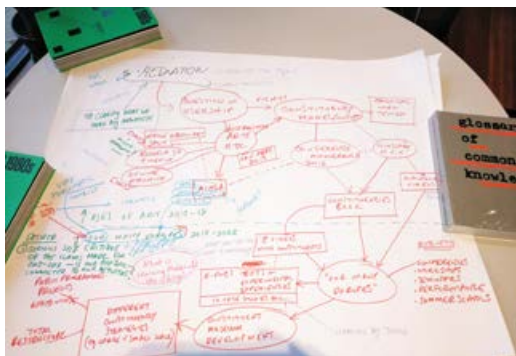
working in pairs
what has been
relevant, useful,
resonant?

how did it influence/
permeate
your work? -

pablo
viviana
go, collectivity,
show instead of what
sense of time and space
on this adm. new way of
solidarity
constituting

oscar and maria

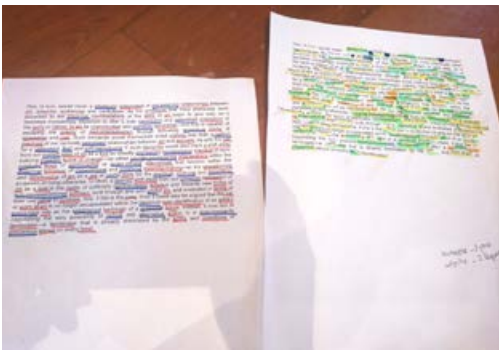
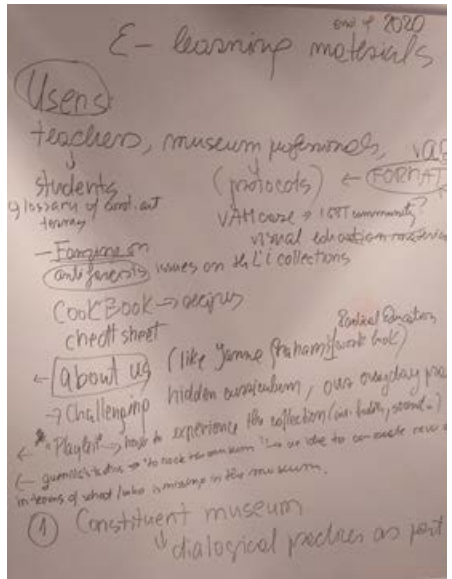
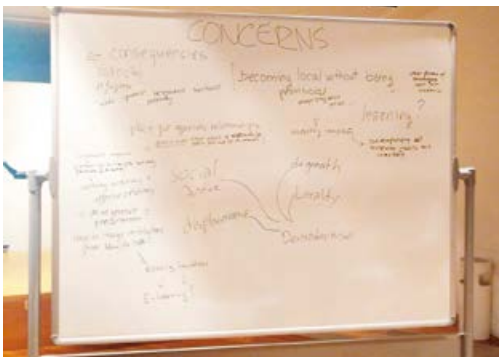
create community, loneliness of the
methodology,
get away of local pressure,



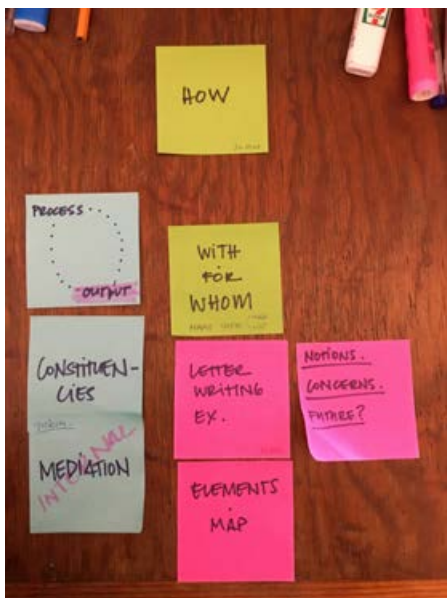
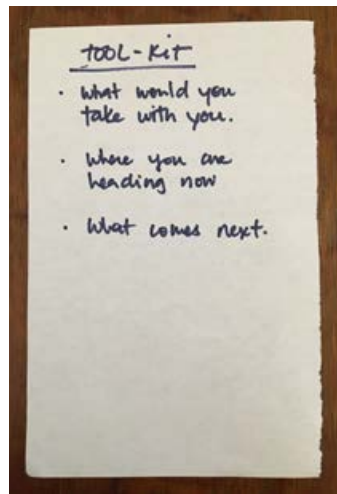
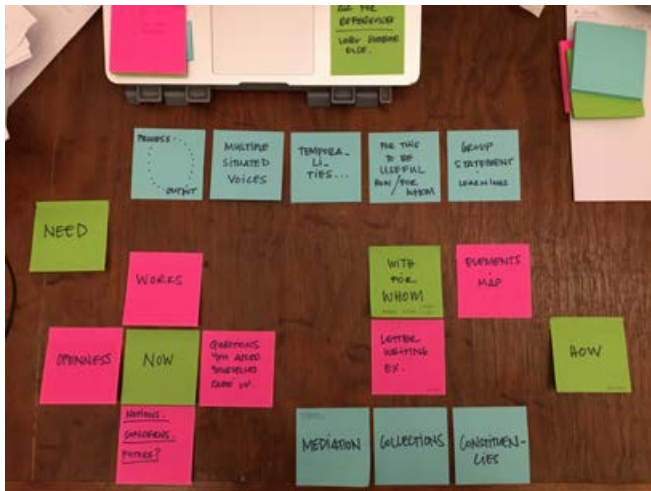
Photos and concept maps done during the Kick-off meeting of "Our Many Europes" programme in Madrid. 17-19 September 2018



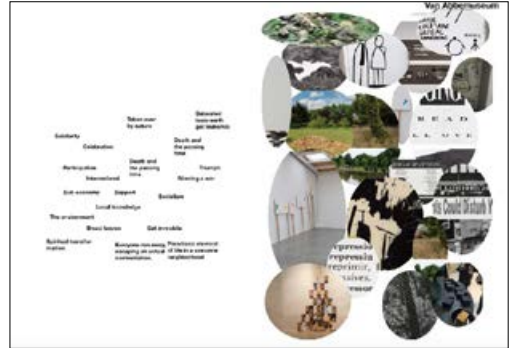
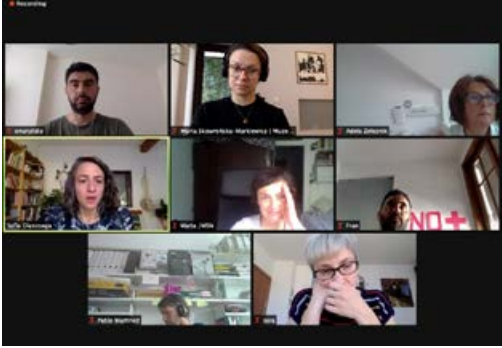
← Caption Previous page:
Minutes workshop by Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca. 25, January 2021



Pictures from mediation group meeting at MACBA, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. 13-15 November 2019



Sofía Olascoaga concept maps.
Workshop 25-26 January 2021



Workshop 3: Notions of Documentation Purposes from Letter Writing Strategy. 5 May 2021



Common Maps and the mediation diagram

Publication content structure



Ilya and Emilya Kabakov, *20 Ways to Get an Apple Listening to the Music of Mozart and Other Works*, 1997. Photo: Dejan Habicht.
Courtesy of Moderna galerija, Ljubljana



Paweł Althamer, *Paradise*, 2009. Photo: Jan Smaga.
Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw



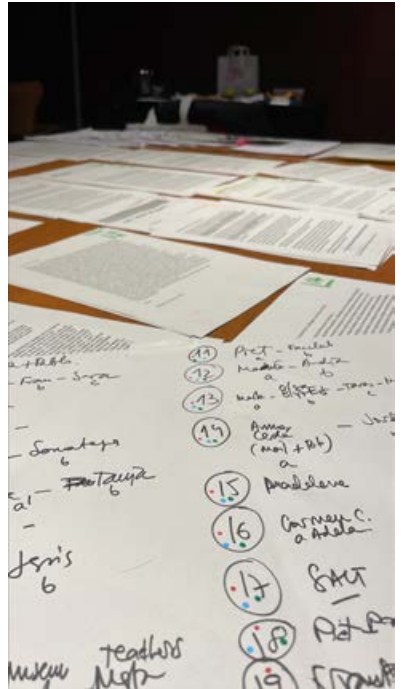
Bicycle protests
Ljubljana, 2020.
Photo: Adela
Železnik



Video- Nou
Servei de Vídeo
Comunitari.
Manifestació
de Bicicletes,
1997. Collection
Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte
Reina Sofía



Pictures from editorial meeting in Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid. 28-29 March 2022



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ABOUT

THE AUTHORS

NICK AIKENS is a research curator at the Van Abbemuseum (since 2012) and a PhD candidate at HDK Valand, University of Gothenburg (since 2018). He is part of the Editorial Board of *L'Internationale Online* (since 2013) and was a narrator for the *Glossary of Common Knowledge* during the *Uses of Art* programme. He has also been involved in numerous curatorial and publishing projects within the confederation. His current project *Rewinding Internationalism: Scenes from the 1990s, today* (Van Abbemuseum, November 2022–April 2023) is part of the *Our Many Europes* programme and involves multiple collaborations with colleagues, as well as presenting collections and research projects from *L'Internationale* partners.

DORĐE BALMAZOVIĆ, together with Dragan Protić, is a founder of the Škart group, which was established in 1990 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. During the 1990s, they collaborated with many activist groups in Serbia, including Women in Black, with whom they still work. From 1990 to 2000, the group made little “samizdat” books and artworks, subsequently distributing them to the citizens in self-organised street actions. From 2013 to 2017, Škart made seventeen maps of migrants’ journeys to Europe, based on the testimonies of migrants in asylum centres in Bogovadja and Banja Koviljača. The Moderna galerija has been collaborating with Škart in the field of exhibitions and public programmes, and from 2016 to 2018, Balmazović participated in these programmes with local migrants and asylum seekers.

MADÉLINE BEACH CAREY is the author of the story collection *Les filles dels altres*. Her work has appeared in *Southword*, *Conjunctions*, *El Món d’Ahir*, *de/rail*, *RIC Journal*, *echoverse*, *The Sultan’s Seal*, *Full Stop*, *The Momentist*, and elsewhere. Carey has been the recipient of awards and fellowships from the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, the Edward Albee Foundation, Faber Residency, Hawthornden Castle, Greywood Arts, and Ventspils House. She teaches creative writing at the Irish Writers Centre and is head of Institutional Relations at MACBA.

BLYZKIST (from Ukrainian for “closeness”) refers to community, to being together, physically and emotionally. What is this community and who belongs to it? Are we all part of it, regardless of class divisions, language barriers, or sexual orientation? BLYZKIST started during the pandemic in 2020, when we had to remember to keep a safe distance from another person, when “closeness” took on a new meaning. Currently, in the context of Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the ongoing humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, the persecution of people in Belarus, and events in the Polish and international political field the need to come together and to unite in solidarity and provide mutual support is exceptionally strong. We address Ukrainian and Belarusian-speaking audiences living in Poland — audiences that are far from their own home. Through our activities we want to build relationships with people with migrant and refugee experience and support them in feeling “at home” while in another country. The aim of our activities is to integrate migrants from the eastern border of Poland by organising workshops, meetings, and discussions. We want to be a platform for sharing experiences and nurturing identity, and we hope that the activities of the Blyzkist group will fill the gap in Warsaw’s cultural activities aimed at this community. We are part of the “Sunflower” Solidary Community Centre, which was set up as an emergency support initiative during the first days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Currently, it functions as an open, supportive, multilingual, and multicultural space.

MARIA BEBURIA is a cultural and NGO worker from Odesa (Ukraine) who has lived in Warsaw since 2014. A graduate of the SWPS University with a degree in Cultural Studies, she studied at the Institute of Polish Culture, from the University of Warsaw. Collaborating with the Museum of Modern Art since 2017, Maria has worked in the Education Department and provided guided tours of the exhibitions. Together with Taras Gembik, she created the BLYZKIST collective. She currently works in the Ocalenie Foundation as a partnership specialist.

OLGA MZHELSKAYA is an art manager and curator from Belarus who has lived in Warsaw since 2021. She conducts various programmes for the integration of Belarusian cultural workers in Poland. She also collaborates with the Museum of Modern Art and other Polish cultural institutions by organising public events, curating art exhibitions, and providing guided tours.

TARAS GEMBIK is a cultural worker and performer from Ukraine. He has collaborated with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw as an educator since 2018, and works on the integration of migrants by providing a platform for them to share their perspectives and experiences within the public programme of the Museum. Together with Maria Beburia, he created the BLYZKIST collective. Since July 2021 at the Museum of Modern Art, he has been running the Anti-Crisis Film Club, with the DajHerbate Foundation, for people in a homeless crisis.

ANDREJA BRUSS worked for the Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, from 2012 to 2013 as European projects assistant and from 2013 to 2018 as the person responsible for European projects and Public Relations. Andreja was a member of the Project Team and Communication Team of L'Internationale from 2013 to 2018.

SARA BURAYA BONED is the project leader of *Our Many Europes*, the current programme of the European Museum Confederation L'Internationale. She is also responsible for the Area of Museo en Red at the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid. In the Museo Reina Sofía she previously worked as an assistant on several projects in the Collections Department from 2009 to 2012, and since 2013, she has worked in the Public Activities Department, where she has coordinated Cultural Programmes (2013–2014) and been the coordinator of International Programmes (2015–2018) and Museo en Red (2018–2022). Her research and institutional practice are traversed by a commitment to trans-feminisms, politics of care, new institutionalism, urban commons, and the archive and memory of social movements. She has been a member of the

Editorial Board of L'Internationale Online since 2018, where she has co-edited the publication *Feminisms* (2018) and co-edited, with Ida Hiršenfelder, *Degrowth and Progress* (2020). Furthermore, she has contributed as an author in different books and magazines. In her practice outside the institution, she has been part of the feminist collective Somateca (2013–2017) and the collective of political archivists Archivos comunes (2017–2020). She has been a member of the Institute of Radical Imagination since 2017, where she is part of the research group Raising Care(!).

HERA BÜYÜKTAŞÇIYAN was born in Istanbul in 1984 and graduated from Marmara University's Faculty of Fine Arts, Painting Department, in 2006. She was awarded the Emerging Artist Prize at the Toronto Biennial of Art in 2019. In her multidisciplinary practice, she uses the notion of absence and invisibility to anchor memory through unseen and forgotten aspects of time and space and architectural memory in reference to ruptures in socio-political histories. Through her sculptures, site-specific interventions, drawings, and films she dives into terrestrial imagination by unearthing patterns of selected narratives and timelines that unfold the material memory of unstable spaces. Both as a contributor and as a user, she has strong connections with SALT.

FRAN MM CABEZA DE VACA is a composer, sound artist, and music teacher. As a performer, he has been a member, among other projects, of the Farmacia 13 Improvisation Orchestra, and is an active part of the Madrid Transfeminist Fanfare. Since September 2018, he has coordinated the Communities Area of the Museo Reina Sofía's Education Department, and has been part of L'Internationale's Mediation Group since then.

CARMEN CALVO SANTEMASES is an art historian interested in different ways of building collectivity through an anarcheological stance. Foucault understood this term as a practical-theoretical attitude that asserts that there is no need for power to exist. Carmen worked within Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, as an Erasmus stipendee from 1 October 2021 to 31 May 2022.

JESÚS CARRILLO is a lecturer in Art History at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (since 1997). He was also the head of Museo Reina Sofía's Cultural Programmes from 2008 to 2015, and general director of Culture at Madrid City Council from 2015 to 2016. Carrillo engages in the critical analysis of art institutions and art's historical narratives, as well as in the exploration of new forms of institutionality. He participated in L'Internationale as a member of the Project Team and the Editorial Board of L'Internationale Online (2012–2015), and has been co-curator of *The Glossary of Common Knowledge* since 2012.

ANNA CERDÀ I CALLÍS is a manager and cultural activist, and has worked in MACBA's Exhibitions Department from 2005 until 2022, a position she combined with other interests. She co-directed the popArb festival (2005–2015) and since 2017 has been involved in the design and organisation of Acció Cultura Viva. She is part of the Governing Council of La Murga, a cooperative that arose from the community around the *Indigestió* project, and belongs to MIM (Women in the Music Industry), the advisory committee of the L'Auditori and the board of the Xàfec association of small festivals.

VIVIANA CHECCHIA is a curator and researcher who is active internationally. She is currently a residency curator at the Delfina Foundation, London. Previous to this role, she was a senior lecturer in Fine Art at HDK-Valand, Gothenburg, and before that, a public engagement curator at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow. Checchia has also produced and contributed to a range of international projects, including the Young Artist of the Year Award (2014) in Ramallah and the 4th Athens Biennale. For the past eleven years, she has co-directed 'vessel', a curatorial platform based in Puglia, Italy. In 2013, Checchia was a recipient of the ICI/DEDALUS Research Award for research carried out in the United States into socially engaged practices, and in 2016 she was awarded the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory, Laureate's Choice, for her contributions to the understanding and international profiling of Eastern European art.

PASCAL GIELEN is a professor of Cultural Sociology at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (ARIA). In 2016, he received the Odysseus Grant of the Flemish Scientific Fund for excellent international research. With this grant he instituted the interdisciplinary Culture Commons Quest Office, which conducts research into the conditions of sustainable creative labour in different urban contexts. M HKA subsequently invited them to do research on what it could mean to become a constituent museum.

GÜL İÇEL is part of the Programming Team at SALT. She studied Sociology at the University of Galatasaray and was involved in several socio-economic research projects, focusing on gender, migration, and urban studies. She has continued to discover and share knowledge and experience with L'Internationale since 2021.

MARIA MALLOL GONZÁLEZ is a cultural worker. She has worked in the coordination of film programmes, conferences, and European cultural cooperation projects at the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven) and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). She has been part of Museo en Red, an area within the Public Activities Department of Museo Reina Sofía, since 2018 and has been the project and financial coordinator of L'Internationale projects *The Uses of Art* (2013–2018) and *Our Many Europes* (2018–2022).

SARA MARTÍN TERCEÑO works in cultural institutions developing mediation projects from contemporary artistic practices. In her encounter with the public and with other professionals, she has developed mediation tools and methodologies that involve investigating, producing gestures, and questioning protocols that become political forms of being (in the institutional sphere). In 2021, she coordinated and accompanied *Have the time and desire. Correspondences in the form of...*, a programme of activities for equipoM, aimed at people over sixty. She currently collaborates with the Museo Reina Sofía's Education Department, and, together with Leire San Martín, on the project *Agujero se dice buco se parece a boca* at the Royal Academy of Spain in Rome.

PABLO MARTÍNEZ holds a PhD in Art History. Over the last decade his institutional work has attempted to challenge the limits of the museum to test and imagine the possibilities of an eco-social institutionality. He worked as head of Programming at MACBA (2016 to 2021) and prior to this as head of Education and Public Activities at CA2M, Madrid (2009–2016), and as an associate professor of Contemporary Art in the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (2011–2015). Pablo has edited books, curated performance cycles, activated collective creation processes, accompanied artists in residencies and curated exhibitions, negotiated with neighbours, protested against the expansion of the MACBA building, moved chairs, served water in seminars, applied for countless grants and danced until dawn. Pablo joined L’Internationale as part of MACBA in 2016, becoming a member of the Editorial Board of L’Internationale Online, co-leading the Mediation Group for the project *Our Many Europes*, and actively contributing to the *Glossary of Common Knowledge*.

SOFÍA OLASCOAGA works at the intersections of art and education by activating spaces for critical thinking and collective action. Olascoaga was co-curator of the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo Incerteza Viva; academic curator at MUAC (Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo – UNAM) in Mexico City, 2014; research curatorial fellow at Independent Curators International, 2011; and Helena Rubinstein curatorial fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program, 2010. She received her BFA with honours from La Esmeralda National School of Fine Arts. She is currently a member of Sistema Nacional de Creadores Artísticos, 2019–2022, in Mexico, in Experimental Practices (2019–2022) to develop the project *The Nurturer: Cooking to Learn (La Nutridora: Una cocina para aprender)*. Sofía is a co-editor of this publication, invited by L’Internationale’s Mediation Group in January 2021 to jointly think of a public strategy for sharing the conversations and processes started by the group’s meetings in 2020.

STEPHANIE PAPIN is a teacher and activist who has been based in Madrid since 2011. She has been involved in different projects in the feminist association Eskalera Karakola since 2013, and has been a Sign Language Interpreter and Linguistics teacher at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos on the Deaf Community and Sign Language Degree since 2018. Between 2017 and 2020, she trained in Gestalt psychotherapy, and from 2013 to 2017 she was part of Somateca, a group born from a study programme in critical practices on the political and artistic practices of production, normalisation, and the critique of the modern body in the Museo Reina Sofia, organising events, workshops, and interventions inside and outside the Museum.

ALBA PÉREZ CADENAS is an art historian and cultural manager. From 2017 to 2021 she worked as a Mediation coordinator in the Museo Reina Sofía's Education Area, where she participated in the launch of GIRA, an educational programme based on the concept of the *Museo de los vínculos*. From 2019 to 2021, she was part of the Mediation Group within the framework of L'Internationale, collaborating in various processes of reflection and approaches to the relationships between different communities and the contemporary museum institution.

MARTA PRZYBYŁ graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (Graphics) and Maria Grzegorzewska University (Art Therapy). She has worked with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw's Education Team since 2017, and is currently a curator of Educational Programmes at the same institution. She is interested in creative work with people, using art as a tool for conversation and understanding reality.

EYLÜL ŞENSES graduated from the Architecture Department of the Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara. She received a master's degree from Kadir Has University (KHAS) in the Architecture and Urban Studies programme. She worked as a public programme associate at the 4th and 5th Istanbul Design Biennial by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) and has been part of The Young Curators Group established within

the Biennial's 5th edition. She is one of the founding members of the Urban Studies Cooperative (Urban.koop), a collective network of urbanists, artists, and creatives willing to co-develop urban policies, programmes, and projects for local communities. Since December 2021, she has been working as a programmer at SALT.

ALEJANDRO SIMÓN is a researcher and professor of fine arts. He has worked in cultural institutions carrying out activities such as workshops and conversations, and co-curated the exhibition “Essays on the ordinary. Readings on the archive of Miguel Benlloch” at IVAM (Valencia). He came to the *Garden of Mixtures* in its beginnings while preparing his doctoral thesis. The time he spent with the plants and with his fellow gardeners was the healthiest time in these years.

MARTA SKOWROŃSKA-MARKIEWICZ graduated from Jagiellonian University (History of Art) and the Warsaw School of Economics (Arts Management). Her professional experience spans the coordination and production of educational projects and festivals, creating volunteer programmes and coordinating audience services. She has worked with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw since 2010, heading the Education Team from 2012 to 2019. She currently provides support to a number of efforts to build long-term relationships with the Museum's audiences as a chief specialist in audience development.

STEVEN TEN THIJE is head of Collections at the Van Abbemuseum. He curates exhibitions around the Collection and manages the teams working on the Collection, Library, and Archive. He is currently a member of the Archive and Collection work groups of L'Internationale. Previously, he was the coordinator of L'Internationale's *The Uses of Art* programme (2013–2018), and has worked on numerous exhibitions and published different texts and publications. He is a member of the Supervisory Board of the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and studied Art History and Art Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam.

PIET VAN HECKE studied Art Sciences at the University of Ghent, Belgium, and received Academic Teacher Training at the University of Antwerp, before working as a teacher of history and art history. In 2013, he coordinated the project Meet Me @ M HKA, the first programme for individuals with dementia and their caregivers in Belgium. In 2014, he started working in the Mediation Group at M HKA, and from 2016 onwards he has been working from M HKA in the context of the museum confederation L'Internationale.

VOORFORVAASTFANCLUB. The voorforvaastfanclub is a collective art practice that explores the work of the contemporary visual artist Vaast Colson. His vision is the guiding principle of the fan club: “A good work of art not only has its meaning but continues in our daily lives”. For a number of years, M HKA has worked with the fan club to investigate how new artistic communities can emerge, not from predetermined common interests or goals, but from a commitment to shaping care, responsibility, and empathy in society.

ONUR YILDIZ holds a PhD in Political Theory from the University of Essex, UK. He was the senior public programmer of SALT, İstanbul, between 2017 and 2021, and now works as a project director for an EU-funded project in the field of design. His research interests include radical theory, democratic politics, populism, and political uses of art.

TANJA ZAVRŠKI is an architect and activist who lives in Ljubljana. She works in interior design but also endeavours to connect activism and culture in the fields of feminism, anti-racism, and anti-capitalism, as well as queer and lesbian activism. Since 2016, she has been active in the self-organised group *No-Border Craft*, which was established to connect migrant women with local residents. At the City of Women, she was the coordinator of the *WoW* group as part of the *Women on Women* project from 2019 to 2021, focusing on gender equality through a feminist perspective and tracing the legacy of women, particularly from a diverse and intersectional perspective. Since 2017, she has been part of the *Lesbian Quarter* collective at the Škuc

Association. Tanja also participated in the Moderna galerija's programmes with migrant women. As a driving force behind the No Border Craft group, she represented the bond between the Moderna galerija institution and the group's non-institutional practices in the field of cultural activism.

ADELA ŽELEZNIK holds an MA in Art History from the University of Ljubljana. She has been working at the Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, since 1993, and from 2011 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (+MSUM) as a curator for public programmes. From 2015 to 2020, she engaged in activities with migrants and asylum seekers in Ljubljana. Železnik has been involved in L'Internationale since its foundation in 2009, and was a member of the L'Internationale Online Editorial Board and Mediation Group within the *Uses of Art* programme from 2013 to 2018. With Pablo Martínez, she has been leading the *Our Many Europes* Mediation Group since 2018.

FROM/TO

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L'Internationale is a confederation of seven modern and contemporary art institutions. L'Internationale proposes a space for art within a non-hierarchical and decentralised internationalism, based on the values of difference and horizontal exchange among a constellation of cultural agents, locally rooted and globally connected. L'Internationale brings together seven major European art

institutions: Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM, Ljubljana, Slovenia); Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain); MACBA, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Spain); Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium); Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie (Warsaw, Poland), Salt (Istanbul, Turkey) and Van Abbemuseum (VAM, Eindhoven, the Netherlands). L'Internationale works with complementary partners such as HDK-Valand Academy of Art and Design (HDK-Valand, Gothenburg, Sweden) and the National College of Art and Design (NCAD, Dublin, Ireland)

and together with them is presenting the programme Our Many Europes.



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