

Lost and Found – Heimatlose und Heimatsuchende Museen

Veranstalter: Europäisches Kolleg Jena; Herder-Kolleg University Hildesheim; Nataša Jagdhuhn, Europäisches Kolleg Jena; Marija Đorđević, University Hildesheim

Datum, Ort: 28.10.2016–29.10.2016, Jena

Bericht von: Nataša Jagdhuhn, Europäisches Kolleg Jena; Marija Đorđević, University Hildesheim; Caroline Fries, University Mainz; Željana Tunić / Dennis Dierks, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena

The two-day museological workshop aimed to explore some old and open new paths in thinking how performance theory can be used to research heritage and institutions which are there to make, collect and cater for it. Even though, complementarity of museum and performance studies might be instinctively sensed, an argument connecting the two on the level of theoretical deliberation is absent in so far available body of theory.

Is it possible to touch the historical object of analysis through the understanding of performance as episteme, and what would be the implications of such an act? Further, if we presume that different approaches to inherited content is indeed possible, how can performance studies, the concept of ‘performance’, ‘performative museology’, performativity in museum, help us to discover the behavior of human body – collective and individual – in the creation of museum space, and therefore in its historical and contemporary transformations?

In an attempt to answer some of these questions, both theory and practice were consulted, and actual museum practice was emphasized during the workshop. Most of the chosen cases are geographically and contextually set in the region of former Yugoslavia. These institutions face the task of transformation, both on the level of content and direct visual solutions. This is why they can be considered ‘Heimatlose’, as being forced to search for the new realms of belonging. However, can we consider them as active entities and regard them as ‘Heimatsuchende’?

Within the first work day, titled „Performance and Performativity“, methods of per-

formance studies, defined terminology and examples of different applications of performance as a tool for heritage making, maintaining and interpreting, were deliberated. Special attention was given to a very specific museum philosophy and practice – ‘participation’. The variety of presented performances ranged from clearly politically engaged performances striving towards appropriating difficult heritage, internet-based performativity, to participative tools and programs within museum institutions. STEFAN KRANKENHAGEN (Hildesheim) provided the definition by Erika Fischer-Lichte of performance as constituting reality. He further noted that it is self-referential and therefore fruitful for thinking critically about artistic formats used to invite audience participation. While a museum is certainly always made up of objects and rituals, of digital technology and architectural features, what brings it into being *qua* museum is the way in which it invites visitors to come in, to use its space, to watch, listen or violate it, in order to bring about encounters of different kinds.

LÉONTINE MEIJER-VAN MENSCH (Berlin) showed this in her talk on the exhibition „daHEIM: Einsichten in flüchtige Leben“ at the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin. Exhibition makers invited asylum seekers to „friendly occupy“ the exhibition spaces and create their own display on the meaning of being at home after fleeing one’s country. NATAŠA JAGDHUHN (Jena) has referred to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (2000) helpful distinction between informing and performing museology: „A performing museology makes the museum perform itself by making the museum *qua* museum visible to the visitor“. It thus becomes visible as a medium, whereas the informing approach rather tends to hide the museum’s mediality.

Presenters from the first day raised the question of defining terms appropriate for ‘performative museology’, bringing the discussion into the realm of spatiality and space related theories. In her research, MARIJA ĐORĐEVIĆ (Hildesheim) has defined ‘performance’ as a spatial practice of ordering bodies, and the ‘performative’ as a potential for the constitution of space. In this respect, spatial relations and the role of the body within

it, are equally applicable in the physical space with sensorial rules we have mastered (or at least we claim to have done so), and within the new spaces within which rules of physicality might have changed (this is valid for all and any format of internet-based space, augmented realities, etc.). The latter was undoubtedly and convincingly demonstrated by JENNY KIDD (Cardiff), in her talk on internet-based communities of heritage and contemporary memory. Contemporary heritage and memory were dominant conversation subjects, located on two opposite polls of the spectrum of dissonance. Cases given by Jenny Kidd pointed to the potentials of applying performative means in order to care and revitalize heritage and memory. On the other side, as an antipode, ALEKSANDRA JOVIĆEVIĆ (Rome) spoke about the performance of the non-governmental, feminist organization „Women in Black“, who remind of the war crimes in Srebrenica, an act oscillating between cultural and artistic performance, where bodies are put to use in attempts to embody and thus articulate memory.

The idea of performativity as a potential for making space within the practices and institutions of memory and heritage, lead the discussion to the potential of separating the notions of time and space, and therefore of performativity and narrativity within and of an institution. Even though this distinction is valid, especially in terms of differentiating potential research paths, in the context of museums, museum work and theory, it might not be necessary. By separating the two, museum theory and practice would remain within the already achieved goals – to use new tools (as methods) for presenting heritage. However, structural change of institutions and their function would not necessarily follow and the process of institutional transformation would be prevented. One possible way for achieving the goal of structural transformation is through participation, when it is understood as performativity of an institution, a potential for creating the space it holds. As such, it unites space and time, as well as action, i.e. body.

While the first day focused on the issues of methods and terminology of performance studies and performative theory in the con-

text of museum and heritage studies, the second day of the workshop encouraged participants to enter a broader discussion concerning the possible relation between ‘transition’ and ‘performance’ (studies) in the context of the transformation of museums after the breakup of Yugoslavia. The panelists were asked to focus on the processes of ‘renewing’, rather than on the finished forms of the exhibitions/museums and to reflect on visitors’ contribution in that process.

A museum visit as a socially constructed ritual was most concretely analyzed by MILENA JOKANOVIĆ (Belgrade). Her paper was concerned with the problem of the museum and mausoleum character of the „House of Flowers“, with the accent on „the process of dealing with nostalgia in the Museum of Yugoslav History during the last few years, from the critical perspective, as well as the challenges Museum has been facing concerning ethical and conceptual aspects when dealing with its audience(s)“.

The question whether Yugoslavia as a ‘museal’ form – as creator and context, narrative and artefact – disappeared from the museums in the successor states, or is it – like „the elephant in the room“ – inextricable present in them, provoked different attitudes. JOACHIM VON PUTTKAMER (Jena) finished his presentation on the transformation of the museum landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina by concluding: „Nationalist discourse rather seems too weak to shape and to leave behind the Yugoslav legacy“. However, through case studies of the former Museum of the Socialist Revolution of Vojvodina, today a department of the Modern History of the Museum of Vojvodina by VOJISLAV MARTINOV (Novi Sad), as well as from DANICA BOGOJEVIĆ’s (Podgorica) presentation on the institutional transformation of the Art Gallery of the Non-Aligned countries „Josip Broz Tito Titograd“ to the Contemporary Art Centre of Montenegro, one could notice tendencies toward suppression of any sign of institution’s previous visual and political curriculum.

In the same manner, from the interview with ANDREJA RIHTER (Ljubljana), we learned how museological tools – philosophies and practices – developed by and in the Museums of Revolution are today comple-

tely neglected and negated. Through focusing on Belgrade-based museum cases OLGA MANOJLOVIĆ PINTAR (Belgrade) pointed to them as a reflection of society's inability to „translate“ the old museum contents into contemporary realities. She posed an important question: „Is it the criminal privatization, or the unsolved burden of the 1990s and the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo the main reason for this aporia“?

It could be summarized that all presented papers addressed losses: the loss of Yugoslavia, „the loss of future“ and the loss of history itself. BORIS BUDEN (Weimar), reminded of Fredric Jameson book „The Political Unconscious“ and the famous slogan: „Always historicize!“. He emphasized that „for Jameson, then, history was the ultimate horizon of any cultural or literally analysis“. By reason of the aforementioned 'losses', Buden asked „whether we can follow Jameson's advice today when history seems to have ultimately disappeared from the horizon of our understanding of the world“?

Plural, multi-vocal histories, side by side under the roof of one museum is how the post-Yugoslav 'condition' could be pictured. Neither the world nor the museum is developing by the rules of linear history and variety of concepts, ideas, ideologies are living in coexistence and sometimes in conflict, as the example from Vojvodina depicted.

It could be concluded that 'Heimatlose Museums' are the perfect heterotopian spaces where the relation with communism fall can be studied, since they are not to represent the past but offer themselves as a place where the relation with the past can be explored. If we consider nostalgia as an emancipative way of remembrance, focusing on the positive promises Yugoslavia can be identified with, like antifascism, internationalism, social justice, or equality of sexes as an example, can 'Heimatlose' museums then be a means of an emancipative dealing with the past?

Conference overview:

Performance and Performativity

Panel: Employing performance vocabulary at museums and heritage sites

Chair: Nataša Jagdhuhn

Jenny Kidd (Director of Teaching and Learning, Cardiff University): Virtual Heritage: performed, embodied and affective digital encounters

Aleksandra Jovičević (Professor at La Sapienza University Rome): The Tragedy of Others

Marija Đorđević (Doctoral candidate and Research Assistant, University Hildesheim): Performativity: term, method and means – researching and interpreting memory and heritage

Roundtable: Performing museums – forms of interpretive endeavors

Chair: Marija Đorđević

Stefan Krankenhagen (Institute for Media, Theatre, Popular Culture, University Hildesheim): Performing Participation

Leontine Meijer-van Mensch (Deputy-Director, Museum of European Cultures): Museums and reflecting on the contemporary

Nataša Jagdhuhn (Doctoral candidate and Research Associate, Europäisches Kolleg Jena): Toward a Performative Museology

Commentary: Caroline Fries (Doctoral Candidate and Research Associate, University Mainz)

Heimatlose & Heimatsuchende Museen

Discussion: 'Contemporary' antifascism

Chair: Milena Jokanović

Joachim v. Puttkamer (Professor of East European History at the Friedrich-Schiller-University and co-director of the Imre Kertész Kolleg in Jena): No future? Narrating the past in Bosnian history museums

Olga Manojlović-Pintar (Senior Research Associate, Institute of Recent History of Serbia): Lost in Transition: Belgrade Museums and the Construction of the neoliberal Democracy in Serbia

Boris Buden (Visiting Professor, Bauhaus-University Weimar): How to historicize after history?

Commentary: Dennis Dierks (Research Associate, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena)

Interview

Andreja Rihter (Director of the Forum of Slavic Cultures) / Nataša Jagdhuhn (Doctoral candidate and Research Associate, Europäi-

sches Kolleg Jena): Putting Heritage on the Map

Working group: (R)evolution of museums

Chair: Caroline Fries

Milena Jokanović (Doctoral candidate, Center for Museology and Heritology, Department for Art History, Belgrade University): House of Flowers: Museum or Mausoleum?

Vojislav Martinov (Curator, Museum of Vojvodina): Three steps toward irrelevance: failed transformations of the Museum of socialist revolution of Vojvodina

Danica Bogojević (Deputy-Director, Center for Contemporary Art Podgorica): From the Art Gallery of the Non-Alligned countries „Josip Broz Tito“ Titograd to the Contemporary Art Centre of Montenegro: Institutional and/or social transformations?!

Commentary: Željana Tunić (Doctoral candidate, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena)

Tagungsbericht *Lost and Found – Heimatlose und Heimatsuchende Museen*. 28.10.2016–29.10.2016, Jena, in: H-Soz-Kult 14.03.2017.