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I. A readymade gesture

Marcel Duchamp, one of the founders of avant-garde, in 1935 at the Councours Lépine, an innovation fair, exhibited a series of objects under titled *Rotoreliefs* - twelve cardboard lithography discs with spiral motifs in the lithography technique. When rotating *Rotoreliefs* would engender optical illusions. Although he received an honorable mention in the category of industrial art for his exhibit, the product itself turned out to be unsuccessful: he sold two discs to friends and one to a visitor. Duchamp initially produced 500 sets of *Rotoreliefs*, of which 300 disappeared in the Second World War, while rare examples were preserved for posterity.

At Interliber, a book fair, we are exhibiting the electronic publication *Ubu@50*. ^{www}/*UbuWeb* is the largest online archive of avant-garde art. The

electronic publication *Ubu@50* contains texts about UbuWeb, a digital library of references used in the texts and a complete archive of UbuWeb.

2. Fragile archives

that we're still alive. With the exception of search-engine spiders, UbuWeb is open to all. We're hiding in plain sight, right out in the open. You just have to know how to find us.

Everything Is Temporary

Over the past two decades, UbuWeb has weathered a constant series of crises—

A screenshot from ^{66/}Duchamp Is My Lawyer on an Android phone

UbuWeb celebrated its 25th birthday two years ago. Since the advent of the Internet as a global mass medium, the American conceptual artist Kenneth Goldsmith himself, using rudimentary HTML code and without asking permission, has collected, organized and provided access to otherwise difficult-to-access works of experimental film, video art, contemporary theater, conceptual poetry and concrete music. Years before museums and archives of contemporary art began to digitize material from their depots,

Ubu was a place to discover important works of cultural history and potentially the cultural future. However, in times of digital platforms, surveillance and intellectual property restrictions, precious archives like Ubu can disappear overnight. As Custodians.online once wrote in a birthday card for Ubu's 20th:

Everything is temporary, even after 20 years. Servers crash, disks die, life changes and shit happens. Care and redundancy is the only path to longevity.

In the greeting card, we, people who care, are invited to find our own Ubu. The fragility of precious archives requires us to mirror each other in solidarity. Distributed technologies are solid in automating the allocation of resources in the world of corporate services. However, in that world, the fate of the shared resources is destined to depend on technological giants. The resilient shared archives that we care about are, on the contrary, distributed with simple gestures and technologies that have served us for decades. Distributed networks of services need machines, distributed networks of cultural artifacts need people.

3. Ubu@50

Therefore, those who care will bring a 3TB hard drive and at Interliber will get a chance to copy a mirror of Ubu to that drive. By Ubu's fiftieth we should have fifty mirrors!

With Ubu@50, we ask what the future should look like to allow Ubu and other autonomous digital archives to survive over the next quarter of a century. What kind of future can we imagine for avant-gardes under the conditions of ubiquitous digital infrastructures, intensive application of artificial intelligence and technological responses to social and ecological crises? And vice versa, what kind of future can we imagine for societies from the perspective of sustainable use of technologies, radical avant-garde gestures and the commons as they were created in digital culture over the previous quarter of a century?

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I. Capitalist modernization

The early industrial capitalism unleashed an enormous social transformation through the formalization and rationalization of processes, coordination and homogenization of the everyday and permanent innovation. Thus emerged the modern bureaucracy, the mass society and the technological revolutions. Progress was made the telos of social development. The productive forces and the geographic expansion made the world and the humanity into a new horizon of both charitable and profitable endeavors, emancipatory and imperial. The world became a project (Cf. Markus Krajewski, 2014. ^{lib/}*World Projects: Global Information Before World War I*. University of Minnesota.).

2. Abolishing the old, creating the new

The avant-garde around the turn of the 20th century integrated and critically inflected these transformations. In the spirit of the October Revolution, its revolutionary subjectivity approached the social reality as eminently transformable. And yet, recurrent concern of artists was with the practical challenges and innovations of accelerated modernization: how to

control, coordinate and socially integrate the immense expansionary forces of early industrialization. This was invitation to insert one's own radical visions into life and create new forms of standardization and rationality that would bring the society out of its pre-industrial backwardness. Central to the avant-garde was abolishing the old and creating the new while overcoming the separation of the art and the everyday.

3. Avant-garde and the archive

Unleashing the imaginary and constructive forces in a reality that has become rational, collective and universal that was avant-garde's utopian promise. That was its radical innovation. Yet paradoxically, it is only once there is the new that the old can be formalized and totalized. As Boris Groys has insisted in his book *bib/On the New* (2014) has insisted, the new can be only established once it stands in a relation to the archive and the museum. This tendency was probably nowhere more in evidence than, as Sven Spieker documents in his book on *bib/Art from Bureaucracy* (2008), in the obsession of Soviet constructivists and suprematists with the archival ordering of the flood of information that the emergent bureaucratic administration and industrial management were creating on an unprecedented scale.

shard/ **Avant-garde emerging**

glassblowers/ **Marcell Mars**

Tomislav Medak

In his influential theory of the avant-garde, Peter Bürger (1984) roots its development in the critique of autonomy the art seemingly achieved with the rise of capitalist modernity between the eighteenth and late nineteenth century. The emergence of bourgeois society allowed artist to attain autonomy in a triple sense: art was no longer bounded to the representational hierarchies of the feudal system, it was now produced individually and by individual fiat of the artist and it was produced for individual appreciation of universally all members of the society.

Starting from the ideal of aesthetic autonomy enshrined in the works of Kant and Schiller, art eventually severed links from its boundedness to the social reality and made this freedom into its subject matter. As the markets for literary and fine artworks were emerging, the artists were gaining material independence from feudal patronage, the institutions of bourgeois art were being established, '[a]estheticism had made the distance from the praxis of life the content of works.'

The capitalism was becoming the dominant reality, yet the freedom of art was working to suppress the incursion of that reality into art. It was that distance between the art and life that historical avant-gardes would undertake to eliminate when they took their aim at the bourgeois art. With the 'pathos of historical progressiveness on their side', the early avant-gardes were thus out to relate and transform art and life in one go.

shard/ *The new arises from the archive*

The demand for the new arises primarily when old values are archived and so protected from the destructive work of time. Where no archives exist, or where their physical existence is endangered, people prefer to transmit tradition intact rather than innovate, or else to appeal to principles and ideas which are regarded as independent of time and, in that sense, always immediately accessible and unchanging. Such ostensibly atemporal principles and ideas are posited as 'true' in hopes that they will subsist or be rediscovered even if their cultural anchorage is destroyed. Classical art obeys certain canonical rules or else appeals to the mimetic representation of nature in order to reflect, as faithfully as possible, a nature whose essential aspects are regarded as immutable. Thinking is, accordingly, expected to respect a mythical tradition or the invariable laws of logic. Only when the social and technical means for preserving the old appear to have been secured does interest in the new arise, for it then seems superfluous to produce tautological, derivative works that merely repeat what has long been contained in archives. Thus the new ceases to represent a danger and becomes a positive demand only after the identity of tradition has been preserved – not by the putatively ideal permanence of truth, but by technical arrangements and media – and after it has been made accessible to all.

From Boris Groys, *bis/* *On the New*, Verso, 2014.

shard/ Library and archive: a modernity's contradiction

glassblowers/ Tomislav Medak

Marcell Mars

The institution of the public library has crystallized, developed and advanced around historical junctures unleashed by epochal economic, technological and political changes. A series of crises since the advent of print have contributed to the configuration of the institutional entanglement of the public library as we know it today:¹ defined by a publicly available collection, housed in a public building, indexed and made accessible with a help of a public catalog, serviced by trained librarians and supported through public financing. Libraries today embody the idea of universal access to all knowledge, acting as custodians of a culture of reading, archivists of material and ephemeral cultural production, go-betweens of information and knowledge. However, libraries have also embraced a broader spirit of public service and infrastructure: providing information, education, skills, assistance and, ultimately, shelter to their communities – particularly their most vulnerable members.

This institutional entanglement, consisting in a comprehensive organization of knowledge, universally accessible cultural goods and social infrastructure, historically emerged with the rise of (information) science, social regulation characteristic of modernity and cultural industries. Established in its social aspect as the institutional exemption from the growing commodification and economic barriers in the social spheres of culture, education and knowledge, it is a result of struggles for institutionalized forms of equality that still reflect the best in solidarity and

universality that modernity had to offer. Yet, this achievement is marked by contradictions that beset modernity at its core. Libraries and archives can be viewed as an organon through which modernity has reacted to the crises unleashed by the growing production and fixation of text, knowledge and information through a history of transformations that we will discuss below. They have been an epistemic crucible for the totalizing formalizations that have propelled both the advances and pathologies of modernity.

Positioned at a slight monastic distance and indolence toward the forms of pastoral, sovereign or economic domination that defined the surrounding world that sustained them, libraries could never close the rift or between the universalist aspirations of knowledge and their institutional compromise. Hence, they could never avoid being the battlefield where their own, and modernity's, ambivalent epistemic and social character was constantly re-examined and ripped asunder. It is this ambivalent character that has been a potent motor for critical theory, artistic and political subversion – from Marx's critique of political economy, psychoanalysis and historic avant-gardes, to revolutionary politics.

Endnotes

1. For the concept and the full scope of the contemporary library as institutional entanglement see Shannon Mattern, 2017. *lib/Library as Infrastructure*. ↔

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I. Denial of access to public libraries

The transition from print distribution to digital networks has enormously expanded the accessibility of cultural works and science. However, in that expansion of accessibility, public libraries, the central institutions of organizing knowledge and providing access to knowledge in the age of print, were denied from doing with “digital” objects what they were tasked to do with “print” objects. Because of the self-interested concerns of copyright holders, *ibid/* until the mid-2010s libraries were excluded from lending digital works and, thus, platforms that have taken on the task of organizing and facilitating access to digital works for commercial purposes, such as Google and Amazon, have captured that central position. Centralized digital platforms and copyright monopolies, erstwhile arch enemies, have then gradually come to a marriage of interest, creating a new cultural and knowledge industry of subscription access that actively denies the expanded digital access to culture and knowledge to a large part of the world.

2. Shadow libraries acting in their stead

In response to that denial, readers across the world have taken to digitizing and sharing digital texts themselves, creating their own piratical systems of access. These systems are called shadow libraries and can be regarded as a form of pirate care in its own right. While mass copying of texts is nothing specific to the age of digital networks — in earlier decades, texts found their shadowy ways of circulation through photocopies or floppy-disk copying, the scale of sharing and the ability to organize texts into large collections has allowed shadow libraries to do what public libraries were not allowed to do. In doing so, shadow libraries and shadow librarians have been articulating a politics of mass disobedience with the system of denial.

shard/ Avant-gardist subversion of copyright

glassblower/ Tomislav Medak

Even the avant-gardes in all their inappropriable and idiosyncratic recalcitrance fall no less under the legally delimited space of copyrightable works. As they shift format, new claims of ownership and appropriation are built. Copyright is a normative classification that is totalizing, regardless of the effects of leaky networks speaking to the contrary. Few efforts have insisted on the subverting of juridical classification by copyright more lastingly than the UbuWeb archive. Espousing the avant-gardes' ethos of appropriation, for almost 20 years it has collected and made accessible the archives of the unknown; outsider, rare and canonized avant-gardes and contemporary art that would otherwise remained reserved for the vaults and restricted access channels of esoteric markets, selective museological presentations and institutional archives. Knowing that asking to publish would amount to aligning itself with the totalizing logic of copyright, UbuWeb has shunned the permission culture. At the level of poetical operation, as a gesture of displacing the cultural archive from a regime of limited, into a regime of unlimited access, it has created provocations and challenges directed at the classifying and ordering arrangements of property over cultural production. One can only assume that as such it has become a mechanism for small acts of treason for the artists, who, short of turning their back fully on the institutional arrangements of the art world they inhabit, use UbuWeb to release their own works into unlimited circulation on the net. Sometimes there might be no way or need to produce a work outside the restrictions imposed by those institutions, just as sometimes it is for academics impossible to avoid the contradictory world of academic publishing, yet that is still no reason to keep one's allegiance to their arrangements.

At the same time UbuWeb has played the game of avant-gardist subversion: “If it doesn’t exist on the internet, it doesn’t exist”. Provocation is most effective when it is ignorant of the complexities of the contexts that it is directed at. Its effect starts where fissures in the defense of the opposition start to show. By treating UbuWeb as massive evidence for the internet as a process of reappropriation, a process of “giving to all”, its volunteering *spiritus movens*, Kenneth Goldsmith, has been constantly rubbing copyright apologists up the wrong way. Rather than producing qualifications, evasions and ambivalences, straightforward affirmation of copying, plagiarism and reproduction as a dominant yet suppressed mode of operation of digital culture re-enacts the avant-gardes’ gesture of taking no hostages from the officially sanctioned systems of classification. By letting the incumbents of control over cultural production react to the norm of copying, you let them struggle to dispute the norm rather than you having to try to defend the norm.

shard/ (Re)Privatization

Only someone who no longer has property is free and available for every social experiment. The abolition of private property thus represents the transition from the natural to the artificial, from the realm of necessity to the realm of (political and artistic) freedom, from the traditional state to the Gesamtkunstwerk. The great utopians of history, such as Plato, More, and Campanella, had viewed the abolition of private property and associated private interests as a necessary prerequisite for the unconstrained pursuit of a collective political project.

The reintroduction of private property thus represents an equally crucial prerequisite for putting an end to the Communist experiment.

[..] there was no return to the market as a “state of nature” but rather a revelation of the highly artificial character of the market itself.

For that reason, too, privatization is not a transition but a permanent state, since it is precisely through the process of privatization that the private discovers its fatal dependence on the state: private spaces are necessarily formed from the remnants of the state monster. It is a violent dismemberment and private appropriation of the dead body of the Socialist state, both of which recall sacred feasts of the past in which members of a tribe would consume a totem animal together. On the one hand, such a feast represents a privatization of the totem animal, since everyone received a small, private piece of it; on the other, however, the justification for the feast was precisely a creation of the supraindividual identity of the tribe.

— From Boris Groys, 2008. *bib/Art Power*. MIT.

shard/ Guerilla Open Access

A foundational formulation of such disobedience was penned in 2008 by Aaron Swartz, a prominent hacker and political activist, in his Guerilla Open Access Manifesto:

Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves. The world's entire scientific and cultural heritage, published over centuries in books and journals, is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations. Want to read the papers featuring the most famous results of the sciences? You'll need to send enormous amounts to publishers like Reed Elsevier... We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access. With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?

From "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto", Aaron Swartz, 2016. ^{666/}*The Boy Who Could Change the World: The Writings of Aaron Swartz*. The New Press.

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I. Beckett avec links

UbuWeb was an early-comer, starting in 1996 and still functioning today on seemingly similar technology, it's a child of the early days of World Wide Web and the promissory period of the experimental internet. It's resolutely Web 1.0, with a single maintainer, idiosyncratically simple in its layout and programmatically committed to the eventual obsolescence and sudden abandonment. No platform, no generic design, no widgets, no kludges and no community features. Only Beckett avec links. Endgame.

shard/ Happy birthday, Ubu.com!

glassblower/ Custodians.Online

A *www/*happy birthday letter from *glassblower/*Custodians.Online to UbuWeb on its 20th birthday.

Dear fellow custodian,

*www/*Ubu.com turns 20 this year. For about the same time the Internet has been a mass medium on a global scale and we, personally, have been using it on a daily basis. This is a perfect occasion for a gift - to Ubu, to the Internet and to ourselves: two mirrors, one at *www/ubu.memoryoftheworld.org* and one at *www/ubu-mirror.ch*.

For all accounts and purposes, something like Ubu should not exist. A single person, Kenneth Goldsmith, using no money whatsoever, has created the single-most important archive of avant-garde and outsider art. Works that have played an important role in cultural history, or could play in the future, have been collected, organized and made available to anyone, with no restrictions, just the friendly reminder to respect the works.

In a world of money-crazed start-ups and surveillance capitalism, copyright madness and abuse, Ubu represents an island of culture. It shows what a single person, with dedication and focus, can achieve.

There are lessons to be drawn from this:

1. Keep it simple and avoid constant technology updates.
Ubu is plain HTML, written in a text-editor.
2. Even a website should function offline. One should be able to take the hard disk and run. Avoid the cloud - computers of people you don't know and who don't care about you.
3. Don't ask for permission. You would have to wait forever, turning yourself into an accountant and a lawyer.
4. Don't promise anything. Do it the way you like it.
5. You don't need search engines. Rely on word-of-mouth and direct linking to slowly build your public. You don't need complicated protocols, digital currencies or other proxies. You need people who care.
6. Everything is temporary, even after 20 years. Servers crash, disks die, life changes and shit happens. Care and redundancy is the only path to longevity.

Care and redundancy is the reason why we decided to run mirrors. We care and we want this resource to exist. The first four points are the reason why we could do it fairly easily.

Ubu is now located in the US, Mexico, Iceland and Switzerland. The Iceland mirror is part of a cultural activist community, the Swiss mirror is run by a major art school. None of this matters, as long as ubu.com runs fine. But should shit happen, this multiplicity of locations and institutions might come in handy. We will see.

Find your Ubu. It's time to mirror each other in *www/solidarity*.

30 November 2016

shard/ **Digital library: a road not taken**

glassblower/ **Tomislav Medak**

In the 1990s, public libraries and archives went through a radical transformation and change of their social function. Providing access to text, audio and video on physical media such as documents, printed books, CDs and DVDs has begun to be complemented with the provision of access to text, audio and video over digital networks. Users suddenly were given the opportunity to access from their home, school or work the works of culture and science on that were on the library's server and that the library has undertaken to digitize. This expansion of access to digital works without economic barriers ended the need for the production of cultural works to depend on markets and encouraged societies to decommodify cultural production and make creative work publicly funded. It was only a matter of time before libraries and archives turned into production and dissemination platforms for literature, music and film.

Using the ever expanding digital networks, libraries then endeavoured to develop online services for their communities, while communities have embraced these services and pushed the libraries to make these services as useful channels for communication, organization and sharing of goods as possible. Libraries began to train users in order to become as technologically and communicationally literate as possible and to be able to assist in the development, maintenance and adaptation of these online services for their immediate communities.

As the creation, dissemination and reading became intimately entangled, strict boundaries between formerly market-dominated functions of authors, publishers and readers dissolved. Science was already well on its way to becoming the commons, so public libraries expanded their range of

activities and started to actively mediate science to the public, helping the public to more easily understand and interpret the complexities and uncertainties of the globalized society that they encounter through information channels from the infinite knowledge of science offers.

This counterfactual story in which public libraries and archives become the central place of cultural production and informal learning in our digital societies has unfortunately very few resemblances with the actual developments over the past three decades with digital networks, their growing marketization and the commercialization of production and access to culture and knowledge. The story is completely unconvincing, naive and embarrassing for our cynical view, trained on the realities of 2020s. Today private digital platforms and online services have come to dominate over the increasingly thin public services and public institutions in the provision of access to culture and knowledge. Technocapitalist platforms and commodified culture dominate. However, the stories that turned into our sobering reality at their onset were often unconvincing, naive and embarrassing, like those of two students from Stanford who decided to create a non-commercial search engine for all the information in the world (which, by the way, would become the biggest advertising machine of today) or of a former quant from Wall Street who decided selling books will be a good stepping stone to building a universal store (which will become the biggest sales machine today). Stories foster imaginaries, imaginaries orient actions in social realities, the meeting of imaginaries with social realities result in unexpected outcomes.

shard/ Libraries against the separation from the common

glassblower/ Tomislav Medak

Isabelle Stengers posits that intellectual property separates communities from the concrete collective intelligence that makes communities “think, imagine, and cooperate”. Once enclosed, that knowledge can be abstracted and integrated into the knowledge economy, where it’s used to train humans and machines in disembodied thinking.¹ The incursion of the planetary ecological crisis, the irruption of Gaia in Stengers’ terms, makes that abstracted intelligence impracticable to situate environmental action into the lived realities of communities. One could posit that the same is done by the technocapitalist infrastructures that separate users – be that in the processes of production, communication or social reproduction – from the understanding of the ubiquitous technological systems that we inhabit and ability to intervene into these systems.²

While public libraries were created in the 19th C with the mission to classify, preserve and transmit the abstracted knowledge to a generalised literate public, in the aftermath of the 1950s and 1960s social upheavals critical librarians became increasingly aware that data, information and knowledge are not neutral and that they reinforce social structures of exclusions, so they have sought to diversify the types of knowledge integrated into libraries.³ The pragmatics of libraries facing the irruption of Gaia might be in concretising collective intelligence back for communities who might come to depend on that collective intelligence’s development for their survival.

Endnotes

1. Stengers, Isabelle. *bib/*In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism. Open Humanities Press, 2015, p. 15. ↵
2. Pirate Care. *bib/*Local Maximum: On Popular Technical Pedagogy. Artistic Ecologies: New Compasses and Tools, edited by Emily Pethick et al., Sternberg Press / What, How & for Whom/WHW, 2022, pp. 118–31. ↵
3. Drabinski, Emily. *bib/*What Is Critical about Critical Librarianship?. Art Libraries Journal, vol. 44, no. 2, 2019, pp. 49–57. ↵

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I. A totalizing classification

Public library and archive in their epistemic and social aspects coalesced in the context of the broader social transformations of modernity: early capitalism and processes of nation-building in Europe and the USA. These transformations were propelled by the advancement of political and economic rationalization, public and business administration, statistical and archival procedures. Archives underwent a corresponding and largely concomitant development with the libraries, responding with a similar apparatus of classification and ordering to the exponential expansion of administrative records documenting the social world and to the historicist impulse to capture the material traces of past events. Overlaying the spatial organization of documentation; rules of its classification and symbolic representation of the archive in reference tools, they tried to provide a formalization adequate to the passion for capturing historical or present events.

Characteristic of the ascendant positivism of the 19th century, the archivists' and librarians' epistemologies harbored a totalizing tendency

that would become subject to subversion and displacement in the first decades of the 20th century.

2. Destabilizing the classificatory form

The assumption that the classificatory form can fully capture the archival content would become destabilized over and over by the early avant-gardist permutations of formal languages of classification: dadaist montage of the contingent compositional elements, surrealist insistence on the unconscious surpluses produced by automatized formalized language, constructivist foregrounding of dynamic and spatialized elements in the acts of perception and cognition of an artwork.¹

The material composition of the classified and ordered objects already contained formalizations deposited into those objects by the social context of their provenance or projected onto them by the social situation of encounter with them. Form could become content and content could become form. The appropriations, remediations and displacements exacted by the neo-avant-gardes in the second half of the 20th century produced subversions, resignifications and simulacra that only further blurred the lines between histories and their construction, dominant classifications and their immanent instabilities.

Endnotes

1. Sven Spieker, 2008. *bib/ The Big Archive: Art From Bureaucracy*. MIT. provides a detailed account of strategies that the historic avant-gardes and the post-war art have developed toward the classificatory and ordering regime of the archive. ←

shard/ 'Metadata Punk'

Monoskop and UbuWeb are tactics for intervening in three kinds of practices, those of the art-world, of publishing and of scholarship. They respond to the current institutional, technical and political-economic constraints of all three. As it says in the *Communist Manifesto*, the forces for social change are those that ask the property question. While *détournement* was a sufficient answer to that question in the era of the culture industries, they try to formulate, in their modest way, a suitable tactic for answering the property question in the era of the vulture industries.

This takes the form of moving from data to metadata, expressed in the form of the move from writing to publishing, from art-making to curating, from research to archiving. Another way of thinking this, suggested by Hiroki Azuma would be the move from narrative to database. The object of critical attention acquires a third dimension, a kind of informational depth. The objects before us are not just a text or an image but databases of potential texts and images, with metadata attached.

— McKenzie Wark, "Metadata Punk", Tomislav Medak, McKenzie Wark, Paul Otlet, Marcell Mars & Manar Zarroug, 2015. ^{616/}*Public Library*. Multimedijalni institut & WHW., III-20.

shard/ Database, a new aesthetics of the everyday

The object of any avant-garde is always to practice the relation between aesthetics and everyday life with a new kind of intensity. UbuWeb and Monoskop seem to me to be intimations of just such an avant-garde movement. One that does not offer a practice but a kind of meta-practice for the making of the aesthetic within the everyday.

Crucial to this project is the shifting of aesthetic intention from the level of the individual work to the database of works. They contain a lot of material, but not just any old thing. Some of the works available here are very rare, but not all of them are. It is not just rarity, or that the works are available for free. It is more that these are careful, artful, thoughtful collections of material. There are the raw materials here with which to construct a new civilization.

— McKenzie Wark, “Metadata Punk”, in Tomislav Medak, McKenzie Wark, Paul Otlet, Marcell Mars & Manar Zarroug, 2015. *bib/Public Library*. Multimedijalni institut & WHW., 111–20.

shard/ ***Destruction of archives and historical revisionism***

glassblowers/ ***Marcell Mars***

Tomislav Medak

When the dominant idea of freedom in an age is that of freedom regulated by markets, the collective capacity to pursue autonomy, equality, and welfare becomes reduced to the freedom of capital flows, the freedom of competition, and the freedom of consumer choice.

Under the coercive invisible hand of the market, the freedom of journalism tends to transmogrify into sensationalist media acting on behest of commercial and political interests; the freedom of expression into officially condoned hate speech; the freedom of research and education into sky-rocketing student fees, precarious academic labour, and intellectual self-censoring.

When the idea of freedom as regulated by markets meets the idea of political freedom as self-assertion of ethnic domination, as was the case over the last three decades in the countries of former Yugoslavia, then the sensationalist media, the normalized discrimination, and the intellectual self-censorship turn a blind eye when books are thrown out of the libraries, documents are disappeared from the archives, and monuments are blasted into the air.

Thus are material acts and facts created that wipe out the collective memory of a past where the emancipatory labour movement and anti-fascism defeated—even if temporarily—Nazism, racism, and exploitation of the underclasses. In their toleration of such material acts and facts that destroy memory, the media, the public, and the intellectuals are complicit in a rewriting of history anew. The monoethnic identity of new capitalist nation-states thus descends into a self-justificatory spiral of historical revisionism.

— Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak, “Public Library and the Return of the Repressed”, ^{666/}Stories and threads: Perspective on Art Archives edited by Sara Buraya Boned, Jennifer Fitzgibbon and Sezin Romi, 74–89. L'internationale Online, 2022.