

artMUSE – How European transformations trigger digital creativity

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Abstract – The paper focuses on the European media art festival artMUSE and its impact on the transformation of urban space. Artists, creative players, cultural managers, citizens and museum visitors have been brought together via diverse activities and events which have been realized from 2011 to 2012. Setting off from the mutual heritage of European cities shaped by the industrial revolution, the project revealed also the different paths European discourses about the artistic representation of epochal changes have taken since.

Keywords – media art, Europe, industrial and digital revolution, historical identities, participation.

I. INTRODUCTION

artMUSE is a EU-funded collaboration with partners from the LWL-Textile Museum Bocholt (DE), the Museum of Bitola (MK), the Gdansk City Gallery (PL), the Museum for Industrial Archeology and Textiles Gent (NL), the National Polytechnic Museum Sofia (BG), the Nordwolle North-West German Museum for Industry Culture Delmenhorst (DE) and the M2C Institute for Applied Media Technology and Culture at the University of Applied Sciences Bremen (DE). As European locations of industrial culture, urban history, contemporary art and protohistory of these cities seem to share many characteristics like technology, textile art and social development like working class movements. What are the features of these histories of industrial revolutions and in which way may they concern us even in our everyday's (digital) reality? All participating museums and institutions find themselves in a time of European ecological, economical and social transformation, looking for new cultural expressions. artMUSE faces this search in a constructive way to find virtual and real places of creativity, of intermediation and of cultural experimentation and exchange.

II. VISIONS OF EUROPEAN TRANSFORMATIONS

The objective of artMUSE is to create a space where industrial history and media art can join, interlink and learn from each other. The intertwining of art, media and the engineering technologies initiates as well as generates today's social and cultural developments. In this context, the role of the viewer of art changes even more intensively than in the times of happenings and the performative arts. Via digital media, mobile devices and the accessibility of virtual worlds by everybody, new understandings of art may arise and transform once more the relationship between artist and audience. With artMUSE, art goes outside into the streets: media artists address the industrial past by reviving its

abandoned architectural witnesses; VJ installations facelift old facades, and participative sound and audio performances animate apparent waste land. Via the transformative character of artMUSE actions and activities, different angles and coordinates emerge and broaden the perspectives from which history and today's urban spirit may be interpreted and taken as stepping stones for future innovations in participatory culture. Differences and ambivalences of objects and narration and the norms and values carried by them are questioned and negotiated collaboratively by contemporary witnesses, the interested public and exhibition organizers.

artMUSE events and actions establish ties from early industrial culture beyond the presence to a vision how life could be in a post digital future. Citizens become curators, museum directors become part of open avant-garde music space jams, international audio-visual performers transform sites of industrial heritage into public realms of new learning experiences, and visitor's ideas transcend into visual installations.

III. CHALLENGES OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

For a long time, conditions for the creation and tradition of knowledge have been determined by the political and social mainstream, whereas individual perceptions of reality were hardly represented by it. In spite of the democratisating effects the dissemination of knowledge via the new media unmistakably has [5], conditions for the creation and tradition of knowledge and memory remain dependent on contemporary hegemonic discourse. Georg Simmel's theory of the sociology of space is still valid today and also transferable to the dynamics of historiography, documentation and museum representation: Simmel criticized the connection between national state and mythical origins because it allowed claiming enduring validity of its territorial borders due to their appearance as naturally given: to the contrary, territorial borders were the result of history and therefore negotiable [9]. Similarly, in historiography there are no "natural borders", i.e. in our case there are no natural rules of collecting historical material but violent processes of inclusion and exclusion of sources and interpretations.

A. Familiar meta-narratives and disregarded micro-histories?

Especially in the context of the industrial revolution, many times the stories of the industrial workers and their families were written as a victim's plot. More often than not, such historiographic orientations are still operative in corresponding representations in museums and archives. The

archivist's strategy of "putting things in their proper place [and] making place(s) for them" [3] precludes historiographic work and often fosters essentialist and thereby dualistic representations which spread the conception of the industrial workers as passive groups of people at the time when they were oppressed by the hegemonic culture. According to this reading, millions of people had neither space of action nor had they the possibility to act individually.

These conceptions are deeply ingrained in our consciousness. Even though many researchers today are critical of these representations of the industrial revolution, many still use old scientific literature as a source. But describing the workers as 'victims', accentuates the overwhelming structures that determined small people's life. This kind of interpretation and representation simplifies and reduces the dynamics and interdependencies not only between different social classes of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, but also prevents us to recognize the relations and influences between past and present age

Apart from the structural hindrances to get a clear picture of the past described above, there is also a more anthropologically determined problem: by collecting and assembling knowledge, only what has been alien to one's lifeworld diminishes, not those aspects which are socially alien to it [7]. Chantal Zabus has called this contrast between unfamiliar life worlds, which can initially be overcome, and the socially conditioned not-belonging, "foreignness" vs. "otherness"[11].

B. Rethinking historical categories from participative angles

In the museum context, very often curatorial practices of representation are still based on the assumption that objects independent from context and interpretation show an "essence" which underlies them, outlasting all changes, determining their "true nature" and causing them to be what they "essentially" are. At the same time, this approach levels contradictions and does not allow the development of a more differentiated perspective [4].

In a postmodern world, however, it is not so clear anymore between which poles this essentialism can work at all. There is neither a common corpus of knowledge to be assumed, nor are top-down didactics appropriate for the mediation of knowledge. We cannot claim to represent or revive the past by choosing a name for a historical incident or person, by classifying it, by making it part of an exhibition's hierarchization. Against this background, the communication between the museum or the gallery, the visitor and the past is slightly changed.

More distinctly than ever before the role of the curator becomes one of a facilitator who enables the audience to get into hybrid contacts with the past through the artists' diverse interpretations. Participative art or participative museum work seem to be one possible way to meet this challenge: it considers audience engagement as its main factor. This is in spite of the fact that artwork, as traditionally understood, is something that embodies art itself – that makes it immediately present and visible in an exhibitable context. Claire Bishop

considers the audience engagement as part of the category of 'active subjects', which is contained in physical and symbolic participation [1]. One of the most vital characteristics of participation is that it is a type of role-play in which participants attempt to create some aspects of reality. But normally, the form of participation that is associated with a setting in the everyday world cannot be transformed into the museum realm. The issue gets even more complicated considering the paradoxical distinction that whilst participation is the mere repetition of a fragment of the real, it is almost perceived to be its real fragment in the museum context as it adopts its representational formats.

artMUSE attempts at blurring the division between the „symbolic“ re-creation of imaginations and the „authentic“ experience: the act of participation is both presented in the museum realm as representation of a real event as well as it itself transforms the modes of representation. The participating audience is invited to take part in the curatorial process and is thereby both object and agent: as object the audience is being reproduced via images, video documentation etc., as agent it determines the way in which representation is put into effect.

Experience and memory, and then its representation, can therefore correspond with the relationship between the museum space and its outside. The interplay between reality and illusion in the museum realm exposes the way we perceive illusion in the model. Experiencing this exposure means experiencing the reality – of multiple realities.

C. Making hidden things visible

Similarly, artMUSE tries to create a third room with regard to the interconnectedness between past and present: this room is tangential [8] to "foreignness" and "otherness", it is positioned cross to paradigms of "symbolic" and "authentic" experience. By the process of artistic translation it makes the "transcultural condition of cultures" [2] visible and invites to think about alternative narrations of the past as well as altered conditions of perceiving reality in the present.

For example, if one considers the industrial revolution as a concept of migration, of self-exploitation and collective actions, of conflicting interests and values, of diffusion of ideas and creativity, of changing urban spaces – then this concept which has left its marks in the different places intertwined via artMUSE is also transferable to today's creative industries: the artists and creative workers of today also lead a nomad life like the industrial workers more than hundred years ago, travelling Europe, with their demand depending on market conditions [6].

artMUSE re-evaluates the impact the industrial revolution had on Europe's citizens in both ways – what seems to have been a matchless victim's plot full of short-change, suppression and sacrifices is leveled by the digital age's reality of people moving and migrating due to the labor market. Young artists looking for new forms of expressions via digital technologies find themselves in a time of European ecological, economical and social transformation. Like the weaving patterns the spinning mills transformed into prints and motives

more than a century ago, today's smart media translates digital signals into a matrix of digital visualizations and collaborative sculptures.

D. artMUSE activities in 2012

The Wyspa Spichrzów (Granary Island) in the mid of the Gdansk city centre, sunken into insignificance if not into the River Motława, was in summer 2012 the centre of installations which focused on its decayed storage sheds: their former use for shipping trade goods was transformed into digital storage room facing ambiguous futures. For example, the Swiss-born artist Ursula Scherrer, living and working in New York, and her colleague Flo Kaufmann collected their findings in sound and image and combined them with photographs and prints from the time before the second world war. Their installation amid the wilderness of Wyspa Spichrzów addressed the ruins as storage rooms of time, being part of the whole and at the same time a unity in itself and in its own way a sunken island. At the artMUSE festival at the Spinning Mill of the TextilWerk Bocholt, artists showed the change of the industrial zone to the cultural zone and made the relation "human-machine-nature" in the digital revolution a subject of discussion with oil pictures, computer collages and video works. And at artMUSE festival in Bitola, the basic market economy, future prospects and civil society were addressed by deconstructing the logo of a dead textile factory giant: the artist project *Tissue* dispersed the letters of the industrial factory's logo into the space as individual identities. By putting the letters upon a separate stall and equipping those with sensors lightning up when passed by the audience, *Tissue* also responded indirectly to the official Macedonian policies of identity formation by monuments trying to evoke a heroic past.

IV. RESUME

artMUSE aims at decolonizing our historical consciousness from meta-narratives by developing micro-histories which plunge into dialogues with hegemonic readings of the past. This way, spaces for contradictions and alternative ways of interpretations are created to make more than just one layer of the historical palimpsest speak to us. The visible architectural remains and muted witnesses of the past are addressed with a multitude of voices, consisting of the artist's offers to grasp the past and its implications for today's urban life. Via experimental and poetic visions and allusions, the viewer's gaze is directed neither at the differences between now and then, nor at the "otherness" caused by the chronological gap, but on the interrelations, influences and connections between industrial past(s) and digital present(s). The core of these activities lies neither in any kind of representation of reality nor in an exhibition's distinct statement, but emerges in the process of performance and reception itself. This kind of participatory curatorial work in the public space generates an "in-between" or third variable which complements and questions traditional readings. Also after the official end of the artMUSE project, the industrial revolution's skeleton of meta-narratives remains to be padded with micro-histories – or, to stick to the image – the voices of the "other(s)" [10] need to be

woven into the broken warp threads of the spinning mills. The works of the artists associated to the artMUSE activities, though, continue to be creative reminders of this European responsibility.

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Martina Fettinga, Patricija Rilko, Ivonna Bigosa, Martins Koplins. artMUSE – kā Eiropas pārvērtības atraisa digitālo radošumu

artMUSE – Eiropas partneru no LWL-Tekstila muzeja Boholtā (Vācija), Bitolas muzeja (Maķedonija), Gdaņskas pilsētas galerijas (Polija), Industriālās arheoloģijas un Tekstila muzeja Ģentē (Nīderlande), Nacionālā Politehniskā muzeja Sofijā (Bulgārija), NW Ziemeļrietumu Vācijas Industrijas kultūras muzeja Delmenhorstē (Vācija) un Brēmenes Lietišķo zinātņu universitātes Lietišķo mediju tehnoloģiju un kultūras institūta M2C (Vācija) pašreizējā sadarbība atklāj industriālo revolūciju vietas un telpas pieredzes fundamentālo transformāciju un tās ciešo saikni ar šodienas digitālajām revolūcijām. Noslēdzoties telpās, muzeju darbs riskē, jo daudzi kategoriju temati, priekšmeti vairs neuzrunā apmeklētājus. Sakarā ar darbaspēka migrāciju, muzeju avotu un tematu atšķirīgā interpretācija tos pakļauj iekļaušanas vai izslēgšanas procesiem. artMUSE saskaras ar valdošo historiogrāfisko diskursu, kas prezentē kultūras identitātes veidošanās procesus individuālā skalā. artMUSE festivāli, kas norisinājās Boholtā (Vācijā), Bitolā (Maķedonijā) un Gdaņskā (Polijā) 2012. gada vasarā, kalpo kā mediju mākslas platformas. Pagātnes un tagadnes interpretācijas kopīgi apspriest mūsdienu liecinieki – ieinteresētā publika un izstāžu organizatori. Mediju mākslas pasākumi, kā iespēja piedalīties publiskajā sfērā, ir domāti, lai radītu "vidus" vai trešo variantu: tā kodols atrodas nevis jebkāda veida realitātes reprezentācijā vai kāda muzeja atšķirīgajā apgalvojumā, bet gan pašā performancē un tās uztveršanas procesā. Industriālās revolūcijas jauni izmantošanas veidi un perspektīvas ļauj laikmeta lieciniekiem dekolonizēt industriālās revolūcijas vēsturi no tās meta stāstījuma. Izpratne par muzeja vērtību pieejamību šodien mainās. Ir svarīgi caur performanci atklāt muzeju eksponātus to saiknē ar mūsdienu dinamiskajām pārmaiņām.

Мартина Феттинг, Патриция Рилко, Ивонна Бигоса, Мартин Коплин. artMUSE – как перемены Европы способствуют цифровой креативности

artMUSE - Современное сотрудничество европейских партнеров из LWL музея текстиля в Бохолте (Германия), музея Битоля (Македония), городской галереи города Гданьск (Польша), музея Индустриальной археологии и текстиля в городе Гент (Нидерланды), Национального политехнического музея Софии (Болгария), NW Музея Индустриальной культуры Северо-Западной Германии в Далменхорсте (Германия) и Института технологий прикладных медий и технологий Бременского Университета Прикладных наук M2C (Германия) раскрыло фундаментальную трансформацию места и пространства индустриальной революции и ее тесную связь с современными цифровыми революциями. Закрытые в помещениях экспонаты музеев на различные темы разных категорий, предметы больше не привлекают посетителей. В связи с миграцией рабочей силы возникает разная интерпретация источников музеев, и тем подвергает их процессам включения или исключения. artMUSE сталкивается с господствующим историографическим дискурсом, презентующим процессы формирования культурной идентичности в индивидуальной шкале. Фестивали artMUSE, которые проходили в Бохолте (Германия), Битоле (Македония) и в Гданьске (Польша) летом 2012 года, служат платформами медийного искусства. Интерпретации прошлого и настоящего совместно обсуждают заинтересованная публика и организаторы выставок. Мероприятия медийного пространства как возможность участия в публичной сфере предназначены для того, чтобы создать «средний» или третий вариант: его сущность заключается не в какой-либо репрезентации реальности или в расхожих утверждениях иного музея, а в самом перформансе и в процессе его восприятия. Новые способы и перспективы использования индустриальной революции позволяют очевидцам эпохи деколонизировать историю индустриальной революции от ее мета-повествования. Представление о доступности музейных ценностей сегодня меняется. Важно через перформанс представить экспонаты музеев в взаимосвязи с динамичными изменениями современности.