

WHAT IS MODERN ART?

Introductory series to the modern art 2

What is Modern Art?

Group Show

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What is Modern Art? (Group Show)

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Preface

Inke Arns

The exhibition *What is Modern Art? (Group Show)* gathers a series of art projects with roots in the (South-Eastern) European art scene of the 1970s-80s that have contributed to the development of a specific art practice based on anonymity and copying. These projects examine authors, exhibitions and institutions central to 20th century art (and its historiography), using copies to de- and reconstruct their specific art historical events and narratives.

What is Modern Art (Group Show) is the first exhibition to gather these projects in a comprehensive group exhibit at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, the Galerie 35 and the Museum of American Art in Berlin.

The exhibition includes “Collection of Drawings of an Art Amateur,” “Modern Art,” and “Salon de Fleurus.” All three works are by the Salon de Fleurus (New York), and examine the art of the 19th and the early 20th centuries. They are on display at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Studio 1 on the first floor. Studios 2 and 4 feature the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* and the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10*, two important exhibitions that took place in the US and Russia between 1913 and 1916. Studio 2 also contains Alfred Barrs *Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936*, while new works by the Museum of American Art focusing on documenta 2 (1959) can be found in Studio 1, ground floor. As the Museum of American Art in Berlin-Friedrichshain shows its permanent collection, the Galerie 35 presents “Recent Works” by Piet Mondrian, accompanied by video recordings of lectures by Walter Benjamin and Katherine Dreier.

The present catalogue is bilingual and consists of two volumes. The first of these contains exhaustive source material on the works in the exhibition (and beyond). Many of these documents are being published here for the first time. The second volume contains critical commentary in the form of articles and an interview. The contributions focus on individual bodies of works. Juliane Debeusscher’s text examines the “Americans 64” of the Museum of American Art displayed at the Venice Biennial 2005, while Branislav Dimitrijević reflects upon the Kunsthistorisches Mausoleum in Belgrade. Kim Levin discusses the Salon de Fleurus and Katherine Dreier’s lecture on Mondrian 63–96

in New York. Slobodan Mijušković examines the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* in Belgrade in 1986. The catalogue also contains an interview that Beti Žerovc made with Walter Benjamin at the presentation of the Museum of American Art’s collection *Americans 64* at the Venice Biennale 2005. The present catalogue’s layout corresponds to the design of the publication *What is Modern Painting*, published by the New York MoMA in 1948.

This project would have been impossible to realize in its present form without the support of the Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany (Halle) and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH (Berlin). We would like to express our gratitude to the Salon de Fleurus (New York), the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Haus Museum (Hagen), the Museum of American Art (Berlin), and the Museum of Contemporary Art (Belgrade), for loaning artworks from their collections to this exhibit. We would also like to extend our thanks to Christoph Tannert, managing director of the Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, Dr. Elisabeth Schulte, vice director of the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum of Hagen, and Branislava Anđelković, director of the Museum for Contemporary Art in Belgrade.

This project received important logistic support through Galerie 35 (Berlin), Andreas Stucken (Kunstverein Aichach), Dr. Elisabeth May (Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum of the City of Hagen), Vesna Milić and Dejan Sretenović (Museum for Contemporary Art, Belgrade), Jochen Dannert (Werkbundarchiv – Museum der Dinge, Berlin), Valeria Schulte-Fischedick (Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin), Zdenka Badovinac (director of the Moderna galerija, Ljubljana), Nives Zalokar (Moderna galerija, Ljubljana), and Stéphane Bauer (Kunstraum Kreuzberg, Berlin).

We would also like to express our gratitude to the indispensable Mara Traumane (Berlin/Riga), who kept all the project’s organizational threads firmly in hand, as well as Toni Lebkücher, the Künstlerhaus Bethanien’s technical director, for his excellent and farsighted realization of the project in Bethanien’s space.

All printed matter was made by Novi kolektivizem (Medvode/Ljubljana). We would like to thank them for their consistent professionalism. Many thanks also

go out to Juliane Debeusscher (Milan) for her editorial contributions to the catalogue. We are also grateful to Niels van Wieringen (Berlin) for taking responsibility for the project's financial accounting.

Our deep gratitude goes to the Annenberg Foundation and the Museum of Jurassic Technology. Without their generous support long a term endeavor such as the Salon de Fleurus would not have been possible.

Last but certainly not least, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Michael Fehr, director of the Institute for Art in Context at the University of the Arts, and director of the Werkbundarchiv – Museum der Dinge (both Berlin). In his many years as director of the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum of the City of Hagen, he provided the activities of the Salon de Fleurus in New York with support on innumerable occasions.

Translated from German by David Riff

Tripping into Art (Hi)Stories: Genealogy and/as Fiction

On the exhibition "What is Modern Art? (Group Show)"

Inke Arns

"When systems collapse, freak events such as these rise up
through the cracks."

(Kim Levin, *Village Voice*, January 19, 1993)

Dated 2013 and presented in the pavilion of Serbia and Montenegro during the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* is an anonymous project that questions the commonly accepted meta-narrative of the history of modern art. It consists of an unconventional copy of the *Armory Show*, originally held at New York's 69th Infantry Regiment Armory in 1913 as the very first presentation of modern (then still largely European) art in the United States. Unlike the Armory Show of 1913, however, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* is "no adventure," as the unsigned introduction to its catalogue dryly puts it. "At least, it is no adventure into the unknown. If it is an adventure at all, then its voyage leads into the known, the entire point being to transform the known into the unknown. The exhibition is neither shocking nor sensational. It is repetitive, uncreative, and boring. It is about the past and not the future."¹

In the more recent history of contemporary art, one can see a surprising proliferation of such "repetitive," "uncreative," "boring" exhibitions. Emerging somewhere between New York and Belgrade, their roots lie in the European art scene of the 1970s/1980s. Their anonymous author(s)² examine

authors, exhibitions and institutions central to 20th century art (and its historiography), using copies to de- and reconstruct their specific art historical events and narratives. The exhibition *What is Modern Art? (Group Show)* gathers a series of art projects that have contributed to the development of a specific art practice based on anonymity and copying. Some of them, with roots in the (South-Eastern) European art scene of the 1970s–80s, became a central point of inspiration for a younger generation of artists in Yugoslavia (i.e. Laibach, IRWIN) and elsewhere. *What is Modern Art (Group Show)* is the first exhibition to gather these projects in a comprehensive group exhibit at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, the Galerie 35 and the Museum of American Art in Berlin.

But let us dwell upon the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* for a little longer. The exhibition consists of more than 40 masterworks of 20th century visual art. It represents artists like Carl André (here dated 1913), Vassily Kandinsky (1976), Joseph Kosuth (1905), Kazimir Malevich (1985), Henri Matisse (1990), Piet Mondrian (1983), Edvard Munch (2002), Ad Reinhardt (1921), and Frank Stella (1932), thus also including artists that had not yet been born by 1913. The works exhibited are obviously copies; they are not forgeries, because they make no attempt to hide their status as copies: their dates of provenance are all wrong, and their execution is consciously dilettantish. Their anonymous creator has not attempted to reproduce the materiality of the originals in any way, opting to work against it instead. Hence, the copies of Joseph Kosuth's *Definitions* are not executed as photo works, but in oil (and dated to 1905), while Duchamp's famous urinal (1971) is a handmade plaster sculpture, and not a ceramic readymade. Forgeries usually try to

small number of highly enigmatic projects from the late 1970s and early 1980s which introduced the philosophy of a very special branch of appropriation art and had a strong impact on the next generation of artists. His 1979 attempt to initiate an International Artist's Strike still occupies a special place in the dossier of the Neoist's Artists Strike history." (Eda Cufer, in: *In Search of Balkania*, ed. by Roger Conover, Eda Cufer, Peter Weibel, Graz 2002, p. 42).

¹ Introduction to the catalogue Association of American Painters and Sculptors, *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, New York 2013, published by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrad 2013.

² Until the mid-1980s, these projects (including *Short History of Art*, 1979/81; *Harbringers of Apocalypse*, 1981) can be ascribed to the authorship of Goran Djordjević – a visual artist originally trained as a nuclear physicist, but from 1985 onward, his name disappears from the Yugoslav art context. Eda Cufer summarizes the rumors circulating on Djordjević as follows: "It is known that he left the country at the beginning of the 1990s after the fall of Yugoslavia, at the time when Serbia entered the war with other parts of the former country. After that stories began circulating about his reappearance in the United States, where it is said that he has worked for the Last ten years as a doorman of the Salon de Fleurus, New York, a live re-enactment of Gertrude Stein's Paris salon from the early 20th century housing her collection of modern art. One heard, too, about Goran Djordjević lecturing on the history of modern art at different occasions in the USA and Europe, presenting himself as a former artist and present second-hand dealer. In the former Yugoslav and international art circles, however, Djordjević is remembered for a

obscure their origins, but a copy reveals these origins, thus providing a possibility for calling its frame of reference into question. In the exhibition catalogue, a certain Walter Benjamin says that copies are tools for short-circuiting art history through its own means.³ First shown in Belgrade and Ljubljana in 1986, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* examines the relationship between original and copy, historicization and chronology, authorization and anonymity, center and periphery, as well as painting and conceptual art. This project differs from American *appropriation art* through its radical anonymity and its conscious lack of authorship. While Sherrie Levine or Elaine Sturtevant may have made copies of artworks, they still signed them with their own names. In contrast, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* no longer allows such personal appropriations. This connects the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* with other projects that are just as anonymous and obscure, such as the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10* by a certain Kazimir Malevich, shown in March 1986 in Ljubljana, the Salon de Fleurus in New York (since 1993), the Kunsthistorisches Mausoleum in Belgrade (since 2002), and Alfred Barr's *Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936*, shown at the Galerie 35 in Friedrichshain in parallel to the MoMA exhibition at Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie in 2004.

Replicants with/without a past – The *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10* (1986)

Before we move on to the most current materialization of this series, namely the Museum of American Art, which opened in Berlin-Friedrichshain in 2004 (as a further development of Alfred Barr's *Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936*, mentioned above), let us briefly return to the origins of all of these projects, which can be found in a remarkable series of lectures and exhibitions held in Ljubljana in 1986. March 1986 saw the opening of the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10* by Kazimir Malevich. In autumn, it was followed by the *International Exhibition of Modern Art – the Armory Show*. Both exhibitions had taken place far from Ljubljana shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. In June 1986, a certain *Walter*

³ Cf. Walter Benjamin, *On Copies* (New York, 2002), in: Branislav Dimitrijević, Dejan Sretenović (eds.): *International Exhibition of Modern Art featuring Alfred Barr's Museum of Modern Art, New York*, Belgrade 2003, p.73–74. Also see Volume 1 of the present publication.

Benjamin (1892–1940) also held a lecture with the title *Mondrian '63–'96* in the Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana. Though the works shown here were clearly by Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), they had been labeled with fictitious years of authorship, such as '63, '79, '83, '92, and '96. In his lecture on these paintings, Walter Benjamin noted:

“Even if we for a moment believed that by some miracle, Mondrian's original works had been secured for this occasion, we should soon be disproved by the dates marked on the paintings. [...] The only true facts are these paintings which stand in front of us. Such simple paintings and such complicated questions. We still don't know who is the author of these paintings, when they originated and what is their meaning. They rely neither on the co-ordinates of time, nor on co-ordinates of identity, nor on co-ordinates of meaning.”⁴

A scant six months earlier on – in the winter of 1985/86 in Belgrade and in the spring of 1986 at the Galerija Škuc in Ljubljana – there had been two reconstructions of the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10* by Kazimir Malevich, which had originally taken place in St. Petersburg in 1915/16. The first remake of the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10* took place in a small apartment in Belgrade from December 17th 1985 to January 19th 1986, opening exactly 70 years after the exhibition in St. Petersburg. On the one hand, the Belgrade installation consisted of a precise copy of the original version in St. Petersburg. The reconstruction of the famous corner with the *Black Square* was executed on the basis of the only surviving photo of this exhibition, which can be found in almost any serious publication on 20th century art. However, the Belgrade exhibition did not include any information on the titles or provenance of the works exhibited. The chair that one can see on the photo is also missing. In addition to the reconstruction, one could also see “the newest, neo-suprematist works” by Kazimir Malevich: suprematist figures on reliefs and sculptures from antiquity, as well as suprematist embroideries in kitschy gold frames. In September

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Mondrian '63–'96*, cited in: Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić: *Ljubljana, Ljubljana. The Eighties in Slovene Art and Culture*, Ljubljana 1991, p. 131. See also, Marina Gržinić: *Anti-Thesis: The Copy and the Original*, in: Marina Gržinić: *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-socialism & The Retro-Avantgarde*, Vienna 2000, pp. 69–101; as well as Marina Gržinić: *W. Benjamin, Kazimir Malevich, Mondrian and other Contemporary Spectral Figures and Icons – Thesis*, in: Marina Gržinić (ed.): *Zadnja futuristična predstava/The last futurist show*, Ljubljana 2001, pp. 20–26.

1986, the magazine *Art in America*⁵ published a letter, signed by a certain “Kazimir Malevich, Belgrade, Yugoslavia:”⁶

My dear friends:

I was very much surprised to learn from the article “Diaorama” [A.i.A., March ‘86] of the artist David Diaio, who actually copied my works using the famous photo of “The Last Futurist Exhibition” held in Petrograd, Dec. 17, 1915 – Jan. 19, 1916. I was little bit confused, but eventually I liked both the idea and the paintings. Hope one day to see them for real. It was not less surprising to learn from the same article that my work has recently been used by some other artists from your beautiful town of New York. I can’t stop asking myself: Why? Why now, after so many years?

I remember that cold and snowy winter in Petrograd 1915 as if it were yesterday. Everything was in motion. It was the time of great hopes, enthusiasm, optimism, futurism and, of course, Revolution. You could smell it even in the cold Russian air. The end of a great century ... a new age ... the huge and cold building at Marsovo Pole (Champ de Mars) no.7 ... “The Last Futurist Exhibition 0,10” ... no heating ... Puni running around always asking for nails ... Kliun quite nervous, like a bridegroom before the wedding. I must admit I didn’t have any previous plan for my, as you now say “installation.” It was purely accidental. I only knew that the *Black Square* must be in the top corner. Everything else was irrelevant. While I was hanging my small Suprematist paintings here and there, it didn’t occur to me that the photo of this installation would become so famous and published in hundreds of books, reviews. And today it is even “quoted” in the paintings by one of my colleagues! I don’t remember now who actually took this picture, but it is just a photo, black and white. No colors! I have the impression that this photo is becoming even more important than my Suprematist paintings. This was the major reason I kept on thinking for years to do the same exhibition again.

Since, for obvious reasons, it was not possible to do it in Petrograd, I decided to make “The last Futurist Exhibition” again exactly 70 years later (Dec. 17, 1985 – Jan. 19 1986) in a small apartment in the beautiful town of Belgrade.

One part of the exhibition was the exact replica of the Petrograd installation. But this time, no papers with the titles on the walls, no numbers, no chair. Another part of this exhibition presented some of my recent, neo-Suprematist works: Suprematist icons on ancient reliefs and sculptures.

5 Kazimir Malevich, A Letter from Kazimir Malevich, in: *Art in America*, September (1986), p. 9.

6 For more on the significance of Malevich (from Belgrade) to Neue Slowenische Kunst as a whole, see Inke Arns: *Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) – eine Analyse ihrer künstlerischen Strategien im Kontext der 1980er Jahre in Jugoslawien*, Regensburg 2002, pp. 44–48. On individual works, also see Peter Weibel (ed.): *Kontext Kunst: Kunst der 90er Jahre*, Köln 1994, pp. 409–420.

Suprematist icons in needlepoint. I think you can get a better impression from the picture.

I know that for most of you this letter will come as a great surprise, since it is generally believed that I died in 1935! I know ... Suetin’s coffin ... the great burial procession along the streets of Leningrad ... the *Black Square* on the grave ... Yes, there are many people thinking that I died. But, did I?

Kazimir Malevich
Belgrade, Yugoslavia⁷

The total identification with the copied works and with the artist whose work was being copied made these projects quite different from American appropriation art, whose representatives include not only David Diaio, but also Sherrie Levine and Elaine Sturtevant.⁸ All of these artists had reproduced the works of famous predecessors, though they now signed them with their own names, appropriating them in the process (such as Sherrie Levine in *After Walker Evens*, black and white photo, 25 x 20,3 cm, 1981). In the end, however, they continued to play by the rules of the art market that they had originally turned against. In contrast, the projects described above lead to the complete disappearance or dissolution of the artist or author in the identity appropriated. Much as in a literary mystification,⁹ the anonymous author appears in a two-fold sense: he does not only invent “a text, but also its creator.”¹⁰ This is what makes a mystification so different from forgeries or the use of pseudonyms: “Not only the object (i.e. the text) undergoes mystification, but so does the subject (i.e. the text’s fake author) [...] This subject may always be an other, but it is also connected to the mystified self as the self’s own alterity, its shadowy flipside, desired or rejected, idealized or scorned.”¹¹ Literary mystifications are primarily imitations, though it remains unclear

7 Kazimir Malevich, in: Inke Arns, Walter Benjamin (eds.): *What is Modern Art?* (Group Show), Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 44 (in Vol. 1 of the present publication)

8 For more on appropriation art, see Craig Owens: *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism*, in: *October*, No. 12/13, 1980, Part I, pp. 67–86 (No. 12) und Part II, pp. 59–80 (No. 13); Craig Owens: *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1992; Stefan Römer: *Künstlerische Strategien des Fake. Kritik von Original und Fälschung*, Cologne 2001.

9 See on the theory of literary mystification: Susi Frank, Renate Lachmann, Sylvia Sasse, Schamma Schahadat, Caroline Schramm: Vorwort, in: Susi Frank, Renate Lachmann, Sylvia Sasse, Schamma Schahadat, Caroline Schramm (eds.): *Mystifikation – Autorschaft – Original*, Tübingen 2001, pp. 7–21.

10 *ibid.*, 8.

11 *ibid.*, 8.

whether they are imitating “models drawn from reality or the phantasms of a beloved or hated alter ego [...] Mystifications display their own theatrical quality, the tension between nature (body, author) and art (word, text), between being and meaning. As such, they either demonstrate their own quality as signs, or mask their simulation as something real.”¹² In other words, simulation and dissimulation are inseparably intertwined. However, in the case of our anonymous author, the act of *dissimulation* as a crossing-out of the self seems dominant. This becomes especially clear in Walter Benjamin’s lecture on *Mondrian* in 1986, in which he clearly distances himself from appropriation art, since this direction just does not seem rigorous enough:

“In recent years, it has become modern to produce copies, primarily copies of artworks. In our century, some artists were able to gain to the attention and respect of art critics, dealers, and collectors on the basis of their copies, perhaps for the first time in history. It is clear that one of the most important consequences of appropriation art should be the highest expression of self-denial, since the repetition of famous images from the history of art makes the personality of the artist transparent and almost invisible. Yes, almost invisible. Because of this little fact, namely the artist’s identity, which remains very visible indeed, appropriation art was not able to reach complete transparency. [...] I do not think that these artists have fully understood all of the consequences that the act of copying and the copy itself entail. They were obviously not aware how deeply such a simple activity as copying questions our understanding of the artwork (its meaning), our understanding of art history (the concept of linear time), and our system of values (the art market).”¹³

Repetitions are uncanny or eerie, *unheimlich*. In this sense, copies are a threat: as Benjamin writes, they endanger the meaning we ascribe to artworks on a fundamental level, questioning a notion of art history determined by the concept of linear time, a framework that provides the basis for the art market’s system of values. In this sense, Marina Gržinić is right in comparing the paintings

of Malevich or Mondrian, that is, their copies, with the replicants in Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982), which, in turn, have a noticeable similarity to Jean Baudrillard’s simulacra.¹⁴ In fact, the simulacrum negates both copy and original:¹⁵ while copies imitate the original, a simulacrum is a ‘copy with no original,’ a representation that seems to refer to a real model although it is only simulating this reference. According to Giuliana Bruno, the replicants in *Blade Runner* “are a complete fraud. They seem human, they speak like humans, and they have feelings but no history.”¹⁶ Much like replicants or clones, the copies of Malevich or Mondrian also lead to turbulences in the system through their ahistoricity and their schizophrenic temporality. This schizophrenic temporality prevents entrance into the social order, which they threaten fundamentally: “Replicants, in the position of outsiders to the order of language, as Bruno says, need to be eliminated; as our copies they represent a dysfunction, which can question the order of the language and law.”¹⁷ To gain entrance into the order of the law, the replicants need to attain a consistent, uninterrupted past: “Their future is in the ability of acquisition, in the attainability of the past; their future is in constant attempts to form a persistent identity in time.”¹⁸ In the film, only the replicant Rachel succeeds in gaining entrance to the symbolic order. She attempts to convince both herself and others that her memories are not implanted or artificial, proving her humanity with an old family photograph: “Look, that’s me with my mother.”¹⁹ The *Last Futurist Exhibition* of 1985/86 was also reconstructed using the only existing photo of the original show in 1915/16. By now, this photo has become a part of art history. History transforms documents into monuments, wrote Michel Foucault.²⁰ Photography is not only a medium that allows society to build up extensive documentations that become inseparable from its very existence. It also gives rise to (fictitious) memories and (hi)stories. Writing

14 Cf. Jean Baudrillard: *The Procession of Simulacra*, in: *Simulacra and Simulation* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp. 1–42.

15 Cf. Gilles Deleuze: *Plato and the Simulacrum*, in: *October*, Vol. 27 (1983), pp. 45–56.

16 Gržinić 2000, 86.

17 *ibid.*, 88f.

18 *ibid.*, 89.

19 Bruno 1987, 70f.

20 Michel Foucault: *Archeology of Knowledge*, Routledge 1972 [1969].

12 *ibid.*, 9.

13 Walter Benjamin: *Mondrian '63–'96*, in: Peter Weibel (ed.): *Kontext Kunst*, Cologne 1994, p. 414f.

from Belgrade in 1986, Malevich remembers: “When I hung up my suprematist paintings here and there, I didn’t even dream that the photo of this installation would become famous one day, and that it would be published in countless books and articles.” Malevich from Belgrade (de)constructs a photograph through visual and discursive means, “creating a new (anti-)history.”²¹ Thus, a historical referent that is out of reach for us today is replaced by a photographic referent. Projects like the *Last Futurist Exhibition* 1985/86 repeat and adopt history, saving it by creating its simulacrum. In this process, fiction and genealogy are no longer irreconcilable opposites, but become close accomplices.

Museum of American Art (MoAA): The Making of Modernism

Large-format masterpieces of abstract expressionism by Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, Willem De Kooning, Franz Kline, and Robert Motherwell have been on display in the Museum of American Art (MoAA) since 2004. This museum is based in the ground floor of the courtyard wing of Frankfurter Allee 91 in Berlin-Friedrichshain. Decorated in a befitting style, the MoAA’s main room devotes itself entirely to modern American art of the 1950s (Dorothy Miller: “The New American Painting,” New York 1958). The paintings of the American heroes hang over a couch, several armchairs, and kidney-shaped tables as well as a portable record player. Of course, the works on display are not originals either, but copies as well. And even more: the museum’s second room contains an entire museum model. Alfred Barr’s *Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936* (2002) is a 2 m x 2 m model of a fictitious museum space in a scale of 1:10 with 61 paintings (acrylic on cardboard, various formats) and an object (plaster).²² It represents a spatial rendition of the art historical narrative that Alfred Barr Jr., founding director of the MoMA had developed for the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* in 1936, and which subsequently became the grand narrative of (modernist) art history.

21 Gržinić 2001, 24.

22 The collection consists of 1) 41 paintings and an object that repeat important 20th century artworks on a scale of 1:10, 2) 16 paintings that represent pages from the catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art*, which appeared in the Museum of Modern Art in 1936, and 3) 4 paintings that shown a number of views of the paintings installed in the Museum of Modern Art.

According to a statement issued by the Salon de Fleurus, this object is a “design for the Museum of Modern Art meant to show life size copies of artworks rather than their originals. The suggestion is to put this museum on display in the Museum of Modern Art on a permanent basis.”²³

The MoAA represents itself as an educational institution dedicated to the collection, preservation, and propagation of memories on how modern American art was exhibited in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s. The MoAA is an anonymous project that questions the commonly held meta-narrative of the history of modern art (i.e. of modernism). Again, it consists of an unconventional copy or remake of several historical exhibitions, all of which were organized by the MoMA in New York and which then toured Europe in the 1950s: *Twelve American Contemporary Painters and Sculptors* (1953), *Modern American Art from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (1956), *The New American Painting* (1958) and the presentation of American art at the documenta 2 (1959). All of these were curated by Dorothy Miller (except for the American presence at documenta 2, which was curated by Porter McCray). Over the course of the 1950s, these exhibitions familiarized European – especially German – audiences with abstract expressionism of an American extraction, and made a substantial contribution to the international triumph of the New York school during the Cold War:²⁴ “It is those MoMA exhibitions that helped establish the American modern art abroad, eventually leading to its dominance on the world scene.”²⁵ The third room of the MoAA bears witness to this theme: aside from asking how the *Demoiselles d’Avignon* could become an icon of modernism, this room is dedicated to “MoMA International Program.” A world map visualizes the MoMA’s global exhibition projects.

With the opening of the MoAA, Berlin joins New York and Belgrade as another node in a global network of permanent collections that examine recent art history. They include the *Salon de Fleurus*, opened in New York in 1992, which consists of a reconstruction

23 Salon de Fleurus, Statement, in: *Museutopia – Schritte in andere Welten*, ed. by Michael Fehr, Thomas W. Rieger, Hagen 2003, p. 75.

24 Cf. Serge Guilbaut: *How New York stole the idea of modern art*, The University of Chicago Press 1983; and Francis Stonor Saunders: *Wer die Zeche zahlt ... Der CIA und die Kultur im Kalten Krieg*, Siedler Verlag 2001.

25 MoAA, La Biennale di Venezia 2005.

and reenactment of the famous collection of Gertrude Stein (1874–1846), which she accumulated in her Paris apartment (27, rue de Fleurus) between 1905 and 1913. The *Kunsthistorisches Mausoleum*, founded in Belgrade in 2002, is another museum that tackles the historiography of 20th century art. One of its rooms is entitled *Fragments from the History of Art by H.W. Janson*, and consists of paintings, drawings, sculptures, books, and objects copied from this book; its other room contains painting reproductions of the illustration to the *The Concise History of Modern Painting by Herbert Read*.

It is no coincidence that the private MoAA was opened in Berlin. In a city that has become a symbol for the division of Europe during the Cold War like no other, the MoAA asks what led to the international dominance of American art during the 1940s and 1950s. In searching for an answer, it avoids simplifying explanations, such as the implementation of abstract expressionism as an instrument of the Cold War. Instead, it makes an uncomfortable proposition: the strong presence of American art in Europe after the Second World War was central to the formation of an international language for contemporary art beyond national schools.

Translated from German by David Riff

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