

Editorial

Nick Aikens, Kjell Caminha, Jyoti Mistry, Mick Wilson

This is the second instalment of the three-part series-issue of PARSE: 'On the question of exhibition'. This part seeks to further develop the multi-stranded examination of exhibition materialities, discursivities, processes and politics. The following contributions extend the considerations initiated in Part 1, by bridging the world-making and ordering techniques of exhibition—what we might broadly call its *onto-epistemological* register—with the pragmatic and technical questions of exhibitionary apparatuses, or its *operational* register. The purpose being not to create a dichotomy but rather to set up a field of tension and interference between different moments of production-analysis. This part offers detailed analyses of individual exhibitions, allowing for an interplay between the specificities of singular instances coupled with a wider angle from which to survey the field. Part 2 contains contributions from Ingrid Cogne Patrizia Costantin, Kris Dittel & Jelena Novak, Catalina Imizcoz, Joey Orr, Barbara Neves Alves, Mateusz Sapija, Vladislav Shapovalov, Sasha Shestakova, and Joshua Simon.

Within and across these two registers, key themes of exhibition as research site and the incorporation of modes of practice not singularly oriented to the gallery exhibition, are further elaborated. Rather than a monovocal question demanded of a monolithic object, in attending to the material assembled here we move across a distributed network of situated enquiries that will resonate in different ways depending where one is coming to the material from, and on where one pauses to listen. Contingency is perhaps the relay that allows a provisional pluriversality, a thinking-together that avoids the universalising gesture of a single discourse which seeks to explain everything once and for all.

Part 2 begins with Catalina Imizcoz's critical appraisal of the exhibitionary form and its modern genealogy, testing the potentials within experimental modes of exhibiting. It provides sites of knowing otherwise, what she terms "epistemological otherness." It considers two instances—Cecilia Szalkowicz's "*Soy un disfraz de tigre*" and Adrián Villar Rojas's *The Theater of Disappearance*—where exhibition architectures are enacted through explicit choreographies of human and more-than-human bodies to articulate a claim for the exhibitionary that does not reduce the form to a unitary principal of transparency.

Similarly thinking through matters of format and the material-discursive constellations of display, artist and researcher Ingrid Cogne, who works across the fields of choreography, dramaturgy and visual arts, continues the consideration of the exhibition as a locus of knowing. Again, the material-spatial instantiations of specific bodies, in specific places, in all their particularity are foregrounded as a means to claim a specificity for the kinds of knowledge work possible in exhibition. Importantly, this is proposed as a matter of exhibition as knowledge practice in its own right, and not of a knowledge transmitted from elsewhere 'via' the mediating instrument of exhibition, nor of a knowledge 'about' exhibition reduced to the terms of modern *transparency* and self-evidence.

Barbara Neves Alves takes as her point of focus the two Portuguese colonial exhibitions of the Salazar regime (in 1934 and 1940) that staged a fantasy of empire within the historical horizon of the great twentieth century waves of decolonization. Neves Alves employs the figure of the spectral to work through the relays of empire and

coloniality within contemporary imaginaries. The visual and material processes of production-analysis are centrally operative in this thinking through of the juridical-cum-exhibitionary pronouncements of “empire” at the “end of empire”.

Russia’s dual position within the global relations of coloniality including state colonialism directed toward Indigenous people living in the Circumpolar North creates, for Sasha Shestakova, different colonial temporalities. They examine this by looking at three display-artefacts (an amphibious plane, a bronze sculpture, and a carved tus) in the Museum of Arctic and Antarctic, in St. Petersburg. Emphasizing the need to avoid reducing coloniality to a solely “cognitive model” disconnected from the past and present of colonial oppression and decolonial resistance, Shestakova produces a way of thinking the complex temporalities of settler colonialism through a critical, situated deconstructive reading of exhibitionary protocols. In seeking a path to decolonize the museum they insist on recognizing the temporal ordering and authority over indigeneity exercised by the museum apparatus while also insisting on the enduring capacity for resistance that produces other modes of *duration*.

Mateusz Sapija extends the discussion of the interchanges between socio-politically engaged practices and the exhibition, a theme that has been one of the red threads carried forward from Part 1 of the series-issue. He provides a case study of the 2005 exhibition [*S]election.pl* at the Centre of Contemporary Art, Warsaw, conceived by Paweł Althamer and Artur Żmijewski as a site for enacting radical democracy.

Patrizia Costantin examines the operationalising of Glissant’s archipelagic and Barad’s refractive figures of thinking in her mapping of curatorial and exhibitionary research practices from the last decade in the Finnish context. Costantin continues another of the red-threads of discussion, namely the focus on the exhibition as a locus of enquiry and knowledge work. Her text also seeks to enact the methodologies of coproduction described in her account of these various cases that include “Contemporary Art Archipelago” (2011) and “Frontiers in Retreat” (2013-18).

Vladislav Shapovalov’s contribution is in the form of a visual essay based upon his 2017 film *Image Diplomacy*, part of a long-term project (2015-ongoing) focused on the exhibition as political medium in the 20th century. The essay combines images from scenes shot in the archives of the former Italy-USSR friendship society, Association Italy Russia, in Milan, and at the Film Archive in Bologna, with images from scenes shot inside the reconstruction of *The Family of Man* exhibition, at Clervaux Castle, Luxembourg. The work is an important extension of the studies on cold war era cultural politics and the central role of exhibition and touring shows in contesting international relations and in competing formations of transnational solidarity.

Joey Orr provides a fascinating account of British artist Jeremy Deller’s 2009 *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* and its moot afterlife within the permanent collections of three US museums. He notes that what began as a matter of simply trying to locate a cotton banner (one of the central material agents within a complex constellation of events that comprise the work and its first moments display in the USA) expanded into a still unfolding consideration of how researching and caring for the object in question extended the work’s social operation and gave further impetus to its specific *modus operandi* as an engine of dialogue. The inclusion of the work in the museum then appears not as a form of cultural incarceration and the reification of a social operation but rather, as Orr proposes, as keeping in play key aspects of social practice fundamental to the work’s inception and realisation. The work’s operations exceed its exhibitionary phase precisely through its afterlife within museological operations of care.

In recent years there have been a number of exhibitions that have sought to address the im/materiality and

instabilities of the voice and voicing, including the remarkable and ambitious (2012–2013) *Acts of Voicing: On the Poetics and Politics of the Voice* at the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart and its accompanying bilingual volume acting as both critical anthology and exhibition catalogue. Kris Dittel & Jelena Novak provide a case study of this phenomenon in their account of the recent experimental exhibition Post-Opera (TENT, V2_Lab for the Unstable Media, Operadagen Rotterdam, 2019). With respect to the operations of exhibition as such, the complex issues already at work in the spatial distribution and in the differentiation (yet co-constitution) of the subject/body/voice provide an exciting context to consider how exhibition stages the auditor-viewer. Dittel and Novak walk us through the exhibitionary staging in a compelling and thought-provoking manner.

Finally, in concluding Part 2, Joshua Simon returns us to the question of world-making and the onto-epistemological register of exhibition with which we opened. In his provocative contribution “The Exhibition as Cosmogram” Simon notes that a cosmology depicts how a certain civilisation perceives the universe, and that a cosmogram provides a diagrammatic illustration of that universe. He then moves to the bold assertion that the contemporary art exhibition operates as such a cosmogram. Taking the reader through a cascade of “generative terms, operations and gestures” he outlines a relation between the modus operandi of contemporary global capitalism and the contemporary art exhibition as form. At this point returning to Steven Henry Madoff’s “Exhibition of Friends” in part 1 of the issue-series provides some generative red threads. Both Simon and Madoff contributions are dynamically synthetic with sources; inventive, speculative, and *adisciplinary* in their effects; whilst being pleasantly and unabashedly immodest in their range. While stylistically very different, the two texts provide us with forms of writing-thinking that might be seen to manifest a specifically curatorial mode that is pointed to in many of the approaches to-and reflections on-exhibition, which readers will encounter across the issue.