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Hospitable Embraces – Institutional Imagery and the Iconography of Curatorship

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Ključne riječi: institucionalna umjetnost, povijest izlaganja suvremene umjetnosti, documenta, kustoska mitologija, kustoske prakse i teorija, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

One of the crucial changes that occurred in contemporary visual art in the twentieth century was the formation of an immense institutional platform with thousands of very different institutions that not only exhibit, house, and support contemporary art, but also directly commission it and produce it. This global network of institutions is run by contemporary art experts – which as a rule means curators, not artists. Curators are the ones who devise and administer programmes, who invite the public to participate in a varied and constant stream of events, and who guide the public using a complex discourse rich in metaphor and conceptual abstraction. The art system, therefore, not only allows but even demands that the curator, too, in keeping with the charismatic ideology of the art field, be as fully “consecrated” as possible and also that production relations be defined, not clearly as actual production relations, but rather as, for instance, the relations of hospitable hosting.

One of the crucial changes that occurred in contemporary visual art in the twentieth century was the formation of an immense institutional platform operating alongside and in conjunction with the traditional contemporary art platform based on the marketplace. The new platform has developed thousands of very different institutions that not only exhibit, house, and support contemporary art, but also directly commission it and produce it. This global network of institutions is run by contemporary art experts – which as a rule means curators, not artists. Curators are the ones who devise and administer programmes, who invite the public to participate in a varied and constant stream of events, and who guide the public using a complex discourse rich in metaphor and conceptual abstraction.

Despite there being substantial differences in the way art is produced today, the field of contemporary art remains committed to a charismatic ideology as the foundation of its

existence, that is, to an ideology focused on the principle of creativity and on the most obvious producer of art – the artist. The operations and rationale of the art field continue to be aligned with these parameters. This means, among other things, that because art originates within the production of institutions, the “consecration” of institutional mechanisms and production methods – and of the institutions themselves and the people through whom they operate – becomes far more important than ever before.¹ The art system, therefore, not only allows but even demands that the curator, too, in keeping with the charismatic ideology, be as fully “consecrated” as possible and that production relations be defined, not clearly as actual production relations, but rather as, for instance, the relations of hospitable hosting.

In such a structure, of course, hosting should not be understood as unmotivated and disinterested, nor should hospitality be seen as a kind of personal attribute of the

institutions and individuals involved (although they may indeed be kind and well-intentioned people). Instead, we must accept the fact that both hosting and hospitality are structurally and professionally conditioned. It is worth noting further that the lively stream of constant events that originates in such relations strives, on the one hand, to be special, auritized, full of inspiring moments, powerful gestures and statements, and even uncertainty, while, on the other hand, everything in this stream of events is entirely calculated and deliberate. Nothing can happen on impulse, from simple delight or passion, even if it seems that it does. Events are always formatted in accord with established templates and in compliance with regulations, and they are always interpreted – including under the slogan of good and conscientious hosting – by the institution or its employee, the curator. They are the ones who explain and make sense of the event and who make sure that it aligns with the doctrine, dogma, and mythology of the art field.

This manner of operation produces, among other things, specific forms and types of imagery. Here we mean not only images associated with artworks, but also images – disseminated to a broad public largely by the media – that are associated with the institutional segment itself, in which motifs of hosting and images of the curator and their activities occupy an essential place. Imagery of this sort is today a regular accompaniment to the “lives” of exhibitions, institutions, and curators, so it makes sense to understand it as an integral part of these hospitality rituals.

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To begin thinking about such imagery – which is for the most part a continual and rather tedious documentary stream of accompaniment to activities usually connected to exhibitions – we should note that it has not yet attracted the attention of researchers. No obvious interest in such imagery can be seen either in the art field itself,² where the focus on a different kind of imagery discourages critical attention, or even in the field of media studies. Media analysts do, of course, examine the influence of a wide variety of images communicated through the media, and they try to determine the processes through which images end up in TV broadcasts or news articles, as well as the ways they are received and decoded, but it is not possible to simply transfer specific media analyses to the field of contemporary art. Still, there is no harm in accepting one of their basic findings about media images, namely, that such images do not merely present a selected content but can also influence how this content is understood, can construct a relation to it, and can have a mobilizing effect.³

Since we as yet have no specific research findings to take hold of, we will begin by mentioning certain aspects of the topic that seem obvious. There is probably no need

to discuss the fact that such imagery exists and circulates publicly or that, quantitatively, there is a great deal of it. Also obvious is the fact that these images are communicated mostly through the media, although in recent years they have become increasingly common elsewhere as well, for instance, in presentations of art production that employ documentation in which the curator's presence or participation in the art project is recorded, or on online social networks such as Facebook. With regard to the communication of these images through the media, the following two facts are best presented as a significant opposition: such imagery is mediated intentionally and deliberately, but it gives the appearance of happening or at least of originating naturally and almost accidentally. For one thing, we do not see this imagery as an inherent part of a certain way of working but merely as its discrete “side effect”; for another, we understand it as the media's factual and impartial reporting of important events – a reporting that is bound by journalistic objectivity and ethics. It seems as if the publication of this imagery in the media may or may not happen – despite the fact that, like the events in the art system we described above, the production and distribution of institutional imagery is a systematically organized and planned part of these same operations. Institutions and curators deliberately generate and steer such presentations, and also try as much as possible to steer the way they are communicated. They pursue a wide range of strategic goals with such imagery, for example, in relation to their funding sources, whether public or private.⁴

Nevertheless, we know of no universal rules, applicable to all individual cases, for how such images enter the media. What we can clearly define, however, is the existence of a constant, structurally supported circular flow for communicating such imagery to the public where as a rule we find on one side people in the contemporary art field who want to regularly present and promote their activities, and on the other side the media, which react regularly to impulses from these people because they need to have a regular influx of news about contemporary art. Here the media are perhaps most active at the point where decisions are made about which events and activities will be presented, or not. They are less active, however, at the level of selecting the actual motifs in the imagery; here we can ascribe the more active role to the people in the art field. They are the ones who, for instance, provide the media with prepared photographs or invite them along for actual or orchestrated events that are suitable for photographing.⁵ Since in all these processes we clearly see at work the activities of steering, controlling, and selecting the material, we can conclude that the images that reach publication are largely in keeping with how the field of contemporary art, or rather, the main people involved in it, see themselves or how they wish to be seen.

This assertion may sound a bit ridiculous given that depictions of curatorial activities could hardly be anything

other than a series of very similar and monotonous figural scenes, at least on first inspection, even if the curators have very different goals. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to see that such imagery aims at messages about care, devotion, and love for art and support for artistic creativity as a key mission. In no way can this imagery be criticized for not showing actual events or, for instance, showing the curator doing something that they in fact do not do. We can criticize it only for omitting, or understating, activities the curator does not wish to be seen in the glare of the spotlight and for overstating other activities. For example, from the large number of depicted interactions between various figures in the art field we can clearly read the idealized message that curators' interactions with artists are more important than their interactions with those on their "other side": directors, administrative boards and funders. Such a gap elegantly removes the problems of the production reality from our field of vision; at the same time, it serves to consecrate the curator by telling us that they are guided by the same values, ethics, and goals as the artist.⁶

When we ask ourselves about the possibility of this sort of institutional imagery having an impact, it seems necessary to stress that the simplicity, formulaic conventionality, and clear communicability of these figural scenes are the very qualities that make them so remarkably effective. On the one hand, this means the images are legible on an extremely broad scale – due to their high comprehensibility there are no difficulties in their reception – allowing them, in conjunction with widespread media distribution, to address successfully an extremely broad segment of the population and not only professional and lay art audiences. We can note that the broader the media address is, the less it is tied to presenting artwork and the more to presenting institutional pictures, and that these pictures – which as a rule are presented in isolation – even reach high-circulation gossip magazines in, for instance, their popular "events" sections. On the other hand, these very same qualities (simplicity, conventionality, communicability) tend to "passivize" interest in these practices and dampen any critical attitude towards them, inasmuch as such imagery manages to create the appearance that this really is just a documentary reporting of events and could not happen in any other way. With such an attitude, supported by the presupposition that the media show reality, or rather, that they report it critically and objectively, we easily forget the basic pre-structured nature of these practices that ensures that, under the aegis of a neutral perspective, they in fact present a world that is prearranged and extremely one-sided. It is not just that we are shown interactions between various figures in the field in a way that is disproportionate to their real influence; more importantly, we always see only that part of what happens in the field that is approved and carried out, while that part which is disallowed, rejected, or conflictual slips

out of view. The structure is, at basis, set up so the imagery presents only one side of the coin – we see only hospitality, not inhospitality – and we fail to realize that the selection of the art is actually already happening before the point we take as the point of selection, which we may then question and problematize.

The support offered to the contemporary art field by such media-disseminated imagery is exceptional, especially given the media's legitimizing and naturalizing effects. Scenes of constant communion with art continually project an embodiment of the fact that "Art is real"; the meaning, general value, and good intentions of art are affirmed, and they transform working with art into something we understand as irreproachable and even right. Through such imagery, and through such media dissemination of these images in an unobtrusive way, we also acquire ideas about the well-grounded, sensible structure and hierarchy of the field, about what is central and important, and we accept this without any particular resistance. Communicated in this way, the relationships and interactions between the different figures in the field seem somehow unproblematic, as if they originated, if not in a natural process, then at least in a reasonable one.

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Within the art field itself, media imagery exerts its influence in many different ways, which given their complexity are difficult to define. It is quite obvious that media operations with institutional imagery can contribute substantially to the accumulation of symbolic capital, prestige, and similar factors, which achieve high operability in the field and which curators and others consciously pursue and utilize in their work, for instance, in establishing their reputations. It is more difficult – given the art field's extraordinary responsiveness to media impulses – to determine how media imagery actively contributes to the formation of the most diverse range of concrete opinions, views, and assessments.⁷

Institutional imagery can achieve particular power in the contemporary art field in a situation where art professionals are not inclined towards tangible, general qualitative standards for artworks and where they have no uniform criteria for understanding why a certain artwork is presented in a certain institution. At the same time, however, these institutions present themselves, or are understood, as possessing the ability to make objective and universal artistic judgements. In this way, a schizophrenic situation is established in which the power of selection becomes – partly because of the very non-transparency of the standards – something extremely charismatic and important, even as the person who does the selecting is necessarily exposed to expectations they cannot fulfil. Increasingly, then, curators justify their selections less by explaining their artistic judgements

as objective and universal and more by demonstrating that they have approached this art with the proper attitude and in the proper way. To be sure, curators continue to present themselves as experts and connoisseurs, but at the same time they also present themselves as people prepared to do anything for art, who work on the principle of a calling and out of love – which justifies their being guided in their selections by personal preferences, inclinations, and interests. In such a situation, the curator's clear adherence to patterns of behaviour that are understood as proper and beneficial to the field can serve as significant proof of their competence. It is important that the curator presents, as regularly and clearly as possible, their strong social attachments, their loving hospitality to artists, their compliance with the dogma, mythology, and current belief of the art field, and their capacity for genuine access to art and its true essence.

In presenting these various capabilities, curators can receive effective support from imagery suitably placed. Pictures of their meetings with other figures in the field and their cooperation with various institutions can show very clearly their professional attachments, their quality and quantity, and can also be of essential help in displaying their high organizational experience and abilities. Imagery can also speak significantly about their good relations with artists and their compliance with the dogma – for example, when they are depicted as collaborating in artistic creativity itself. Through images where we see curators taking part in artistic projects as the artist's assistant, partner, or even co-creator, they are confirmed as “the first among believers”. Images of curators participating in projects that are physically strenuous or morally debatable present them as the guardian of artistic freedom and even as someone who is prepared to sacrifice themselves for art. The persuasiveness of these images rests on their depicted closeness to the artist, where the artist, through the gesture of inviting the curator to play a part in their creative processes, consecrates them and presents them as a worthy collaborator.⁸

One noteworthy aspect of institutional imagery is that by displaying curators as people who do research, take part in symposia, and the like, it also manages to convince the public that they are knowledgeable and well-qualified experts. In a world where we believe what we see, images of such activities can serve as an effective message, despite the fact that the images say nothing about the quality or type of a curator's knowledge or the presence or absence of universal artistic standards. The constant presentation of their search for and research into art, of their acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in every possible way, convinces us that curators are simply the ones who know, who can legitimately evaluate and judge, and who almost certainly do just that. And what is more, the emphasis on their constant search for what is truly art – amply supported by a raft of persuasive images – has the effect of transforming this search into a kind of personal

mission grounded in an inner necessity, in a calling. The rational level is thus joined to the transcendental level, and the curator's life is, literally, wholly transfigured into a kind of spiritual journey with a consecrated goal – a journey that, as such, is sufficient to give their selections meaning. The concept of a lifelong journey devoted to contemporary art is, in its own way, further doubled in the special, prestigious journeys that are made for the needs of large-scale exhibitions and projects. In a way that is today literally expected, the major cyclical exhibitions enact just such a publicly visible curatorial epic, one that – in a field that is totally unsurveyable due to the huge amount of art – also stages the possibility of a continent-wide or even global survey.⁹

So far we have focused on media outlets with a defined editorial policy as disseminators of such imagery, in part because we wanted to emphasize their legitimizing and naturalizing power and also because of the clear presence of an intermediary in the process, namely, a reporter who is bound by professional journalistic ethics. In the final part of our text we will look at ways of communicating institutional imagery in which the curator is directly involved or, indeed, which they themselves employ. Here we see a kind of unconsidered attitude on the curator's part towards their own activity – an attitude we might well expect from someone who works under the constant pressure that the production be saturated with marketing from beginning to end, but less so from someone who is, or purports to be, a socially aware expert in the (critical) understanding of imagery and its context.

In recent years, a remarkable quantity of institutional imagery has been communicated through social networks and formats such as blogs, where these kinds of images are posted by various people in the art field. Curators are proving to be enthusiastic users of such tools. The personal Facebook pages of many curators, for instance, feel almost like obsessive displays of their activities, with them posting, at least on occasion, self-pics and messages about themselves even several times a day. Here, of course, the ease of uploading and forwarding images, as well as a loose understanding of what social networks like Facebook actually mean, certainly play a role. The blurred boundaries between communicating with friends and strategic communications with one's professional environment make it possible for users to communicate with thousands of people as if with their closest friends. In this way, they involve perfect strangers in their projects and win admirers for their work. Or they turn strangers into co-participants, thus minimizing critical attitudes towards the project they are promoting.

The iconographic motifs of curatorship that circulate in social networks are, as a rule, not substantially different from those we have described; they are merely intensified in terms of their quantity and emotional appeal. Curators are very attracted to the possibility of posting images in sequences,

which gives the viewer the feeling of an actual, almost “real-time” look at a certain process, such as the preparations for an exhibition, and allows the curator to build up a story over time and end it with a dramatic climax. Right before projects close we are often inundated with evidence of the curator’s professional dedication, for example, homey little scenes of carting heavy objects, cleaning exhibition rooms, or relaxing in impossible positions, all of which tell us that the curator has fully surrendered their life to the art project. A special addendum to this tale of uncritical communication appears to be the mixing of professional and personal elements, in which dedication to art is further manifested in the inclusion, or exclusion, of the curator’s partner and even their children, who eagerly participate in the creative disorder before the opening or who can hardly wait to see their parents afterwards. The phenomenon we are describing enjoyed an unintentional escalation – and also became extremely visible – at the recent Venice Biennale, when many of us, all Facebook users active in the art field, were suddenly bombarded with such material. Our colleagues, the curators of different national pavilions, were posting images with almost identical motifs and, because of the Biennale’s coordinated opening dates, did so more or less simultaneously.

An outgrowth of these trends and their proliferation that should not be overlooked is *The Logbook*, one of the three publications accompanying the 2012 *documenta*.¹⁰ This extraordinary book is, in fact, devoted entirely to a narration of the creation of *documenta 13* through the activities of the curator, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, and several of her closest associates. It offers us hundreds of photographs depicting her as host or guest. The first half of the book, in black-and-white photos, documents the preparations for the exhibition, while the second half, in colour, documents the exhibition itself and the post-opening events.

The book, which is remarkably effective in terms of all the parameters we have mentioned, gives us all the answers about the curator’s competence, dedication, and knowledge – even if we merely skim through it in ten minutes. We very quickly see that Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev has mastered art on an international level as we follow her search for and research into art literally around the globe. We see her not only visiting the important art centres, but also standing in front of a rickety little airplane in the Australian outback or with a scarf around her head as she travels through Asia. We even get pictures of her all bundled up as she rides in a sleigh on a polar expedition. Nor can there be any doubt that Christov-Bakargiev satisfies the demands of the charismatic ideology: her genuine interaction with artists and art – which she obviously feels on a deep level – is communicated to us in a multitude of touching scenes of love, friendship, profound trust, and extraordinary mutual respect between all participants. Seeing such relationships, it becomes clear

to the reader (the skimmer), incidentally, that what we get at *documenta* cannot be anything other than genuine art, since it is utterly obvious that both the curator and the artists are pursuing the same goals, values and ideals. Another interesting aspect of the book, and one that further establishes the curator’s competence, is that she is also presented as an example of total personal self-realization, as it were, as someone who has, literally, everything and is living the contemporary dream. Not only is she successful in her very enviable chosen profession at the highest possible level, but she also manages to include in all this her husband, her dog, and even her two teenage daughters. In short, through a structure not unlike that of, for instance, *Pippi Longstocking* (or many self-presentations on Facebook), in which the heroine overcomes all her problems on a journey of exciting adventures, the book conveys to us its core message: namely, that *documenta 13*, whose declarative concept was that it would have no concept, is undoubtedly what it has to be, since it was born in an arduous, but wonderful and inspired, physical and spiritual journey, a journey the curator took upon herself.¹¹

The Logbook – which is essentially a picture book – is worth our attention because it transfers operations with institutional imagery to the very heart of contemporary art. For one thing, it locates this imagery – in extraordinary quantities – in a publication that would traditionally be intended (at least declaratively) for presenting and discussing art. For another, it positions this principle at one of the key points of entry to what is probably the most important cyclical exhibition in the world. In lieu of a coherent cognitive structure that would help us to read, reflect on, and also evaluate the exhibited art, we can – at the world’s most renowned artistic venue – immerse ourselves solely in images displaying the “proper” attitude to art and the search for art, while we learn nothing at all about the parameters of selection or the artworks themselves. And here the curator, a skilful host, understands us so well that we are even glad to do this: the reality and clear communicability of such imagery, very likely combined with the new reading habits we have been taught by social networks, have the effect of making us feel perfectly contented. After ten minutes of paging through the book we have the gratifying sense that we completely understand this gigantic project, and the very bulk of this instant picture book is such that we are easily stopped from searching any further and, especially, from reading anything more demanding.

Given the modest criticism *The Logbook* project received, it is clear that the potential ramifications of this gesture have not been recognized. For one thing, such manoeuvres establish new methods for justifying the selection of artworks in the heart of the contemporary art field; for another, such a gesture can have powerful wider reverberations. The stronger the allowance for particular

options in the central, expert part of the contemporary art field, the more this influences the allowance of such options more broadly, since decisions made in the central part of the field have an extremely performative effect. But even more is happening here. Instead of resisting such anti-intellectual and anti-autonomistic methods, the very core of the art field itself completes the circuit with the media and social networks and joins, in its catalogue publication, the ever-wider communication front firing out institutional imagery from all guns.

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Hospitable hosting in contemporary art institutions may well be necessary as a stance in relation to the public, but when it migrates into the relationships between all actors in the field, and even into production relations, it becomes an ideal base for an exploitation that transforms artists, especially, into a disenfranchised mass.¹² That the logic of hospitality is extremely problematic becomes clear, I think, when we ask ourselves who is actually the host in this hospitable chain. Hospitable hosting does not, after all, end with curators; they too are merely guests of the institution, which is itself merely the guest of, say, an automotive company, the City of Kassel, the State of Hessen, and so forth. The next sobering question, then, is: What are the rights of those who operate within such production relations? Here we quickly realize that, essentially, they do not exist: if you enjoy someone's hospitality, you have no right to make objections or to establish anything whatsoever of your own. You have only the right to obey the rules of the house in which, by the very fact that you are a guest, you are always and only an outsider.

Translation: Rawley Grau

NOTES

* The text was presented as a lecture at the conference *Hospitality – Hosting Relations in Exhibitions (Cultures of the Curatorial)* at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig on 14 December 2012 (concept: Beatrice von Bismarck, Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Thomas Weski).

1 On charismatic ideology, see PIERRE BOURDIEU, *The Rules of Art*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1996, 166–173. We are using Bourdieu's term "the art field" with respect to the situating of social fields in global consumer capitalism. For a thorough discussion of the suitability of this term for today's use, see *Das Kunstfeld: Eine Studie über Akteure und Institutionen der zeitgenössischen Kunst am Beispiel von Zürich, Wien, Hamburg und Paris*, (ed.) Heike Munder, Ulf Wuggenig, JRP Ringier, Zürich, 2012, 27–51, 87–106, and in passing.

2 There do exist occasional mentions or analyses of individual examples of a curator's appearance in institutional imagery.

3 Most specialized media analyses deal with images of great social or political import; they might, for instance, examine the role of media images during war. Such analyses note the mechanisms and filters that allow (or do not allow) images to reach publication, the naturalizing and legitimizing effects of the mediated imagery, and the perfidious nature of

the media mechanism that subjugates and exploits even those in the media who try to work responsibly and with good intentions. See NOAM CHOMSKY, *A Propaganda Model*, in: *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (ed.) Edward S. Herman, Noam Chomsky, Pantheon Books, New York, 1988, 1–36.

We should note that in the present text we use the term "media" to mean media outlets with a clearly defined editorial policy, whether they are mass-media publications or specialized journals and magazines. Here the reporter or editor, bound by professional ethics and rules, plays an essential role in the publication of the images.

4 Contemporary art institutions usually have a defined media policy, and the larger ones have media spokespersons or media relations departments. Curators' contracts often include explicit demands about the kind of media presence the institution wishes or does not wish them to have.

5 Photographers may, for example, be invited to the actual installing of the exhibition; with sponsorships, there may be a staged handshake between the sponsor and the curator at a press conference, even though the contracts have all been finalized and confirmed beforehand. The desire for a media presence compels various activities to produce "publishable" scenes.

6 On the problem of the mythologized position of the artist, see BETI ŽEROVC, *The Exhibition as a Work of Art and the Curator as its Author*, *Amfiteater*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2010) [*Maska*, Vol. 25, No. 127–130 (2010)], 112–120; and BETI ŽEROVC, *Die Idee der 'schönen' Freiheit: Wie KünstlerInnen und KuratorInnen der dominanten Ideologie zuarbeiten*, *Springerin*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2009), 18–22. Both texts are reprinted in English in BETI ŽEROVC, *When Attitudes Become the Norm: the Contemporary Curator and the Institutional Art*, Archive Books, Berlin – Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, 2015.

7 For decades, sociologists have been pointing to the media's remarkably high influence on science and culture. See, for example, PIERRE BOURDIEU, *On Television*, New Press, New York, 1999.

8 Pioneering or persuasive projects of this kind present us with images that today are iconic in the art field. This is true also in my own country, Slovenia. In 1999, for example, the then-artistic director of the Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana, Gregor Podnar (now a successful gallerist in Berlin), played squash in the gallery with the artist Janja Žvegelj. In 2000, the late Igor Zabel, a well-known curator at the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, had himself hung from the ceiling with the IRWIN group to fill in for an acrophobic member during a performance at an opening in which the artists, suspended on invisible wires, looked at their own paintings mounted above them. In 2002, Jurij Krpan, the director of the Kapelica Gallery, fired a gun at an artist (who was wearing a bullet-proof vest) at the Break Festival in Ljubljana. The difficulties with getting the gun and finding a shooter for the performance were resolved by the curatorial team: the two female co-curators smuggled the pistol in from Croatia and Krpan fired it at the artist – after all, as a good host he had to fulfil his promises to the artist and he believed in the project (as he stated in a conversation in November 2012).

9 A good example of such global curating might be Hans-Ulrich Obrist, who seems to have spent the last twenty-five years in constant movement researching art, all the while making sure that his activities are clearly visible. He publishes his conversations about art in many different publications, investigates specific themes and art scenes in the form of public discussion marathons, and so on.

10 *Das Logbuch / The Logbook*, (ed.) Bettina Funcke, Nicola Setari, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2012.

11 This tendency has been noted by other writers as well. Oliver Marchart compares curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's idealized global epic (which she has presented through various platforms and not only in *The Logbook*) with Karl May's travel stories *Through Wild Kurdistan* as a way of pointing to the problematic colonialist stance of *documenta 13*, which is created precisely through an uncritical, "expeditionist" interest in post-colonial and non-European positions. See OLIVER MARCHART, *The Curatorial Subject: The Figure of the Curator between Individuality and Collectivity*, *Texte zur Kunst*, Vol. 22, No. 86 (2012), 36–38. It is worth noting that on such journeys the curator usually examines

most of the material in friendly institutions, where the artists explain their projects with the help of a computer screen.

12 In recent years, in the institutional segment of contemporary art, we have seen an overall rise in inequality between curators and artists, with artists being paid less and less, or even not at all, while the middle people are maintaining or sometimes even increasing their incomes. See, for example, SUSAN JONES, *What are artists really worth? Funding, friction and the future of art*, The Guardian, 24 June 2010, URL: http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/jun/24/pay-artists-funding-friction-future?CMP=tw_tgw (accessed 20 July 2013).

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Sažetak

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Gostoljubivi zagrljaji – institucionalni imaginarij i ikonografija kuratorstva

Jedna od ključnih promjena koje su se dogodile u suvremenoj likovnoj umjetnosti u 20. stoljeću bila je stvaranje goleme institucionalne platforme s tisućama vrlo različitih institucija koje ne samo da pokazuju, čuvaju, i podupiru suvremenu umjetnost, nego je i izravno naručuju i produciraju. Ovu globalnu mrežu institucija vode stručnjaci za suvremenu umjetnost – što po pravilu znači kustosi, a ne umjetnici. Kustosi su oni koji osmišljavaju i upravljaju programima, koji pozivaju publiku da sudjeluje u raznovrsnom i konstantnom tijeku događaja te koji je usmjeravaju pomoću kompleksnog, metaforički bogatog i apstraktnoga konceptualnog diskursa. Umjetnički sustav, dakle, ne samo da dopušta nego, u skladu s karizmatičnom ideologijom umjetničkog polja, i zahtijeva da se u najvećoj mogućoj mjeri posvećuje i kustosa te da se proizvodni odnosi ne definiraju kao stvarni proizvodni odnosi nego više kao da su, primjerice, odnosi gostoljubivosti između domaćina i gosta.

U takvoj strukturi, moramo prihvatiti činjenicu da su i gostoljubivost i gostoprimstvo strukturalno i profesionalno uvjetovani, a pored toga i da ovakav način rada stvara, između ostalog, i specifične oblike i vrste slika, prikaza. Ovdje ne mislimo samo na slike povezane s umjetničkim djelima, nego i slike – dostavljene širokoj javnosti uglavnom putem medija ili putem internetskih društvenih mreža – koje su povezane sa samim institucionalnim segmentom, u kojem motivi gostoljubivosti i prikazi kustosa i njihovih aktivnosti zauzimaju bitno mjesto. Slike ove vrste danas su redovita pratnja »života« izložbi, institucija i kustosa, tako da ima smisla da ih se razumije kao sastavni dio tih uslužnih rituala.

S obzirom na komunikaciju tih slika putem javnih medija, sljedeće su dvije činjenice najbolje prikazane kao značajna suprotnost: ovakve slike posredovane su namjerno i svjesno, ali čini se kao da nastaju neka-ko slučajno. Kao prvo, te slike ne vidimo kao sastavni dio nekoga određenog načina rada, nego samo kao

njegovu diskretnu »nuspojavu«; kao drugo, mi to razumijemo kao činjenično i nepristrano izvještavanje medija o važnim događajima – izvješćivanje koje podliježe novinarskoj objektivnosti i etici. Doima se kao da je objavljivanje tih slika u medijima nešto što se može ali ne mora dogoditi – unatoč činjenici da je proizvodnja i distribucija institucionalnih slika sustavno organizirana i planirana. Institucije i kustosi namjerno stvaraju i usmjeravaju takve prezentacije, i pokušavaju koliko je moguće upravljati načinom na koji su priopćene. S takvim slikama slijede širok spektar strateških ciljeva, na primjer u odnosu na njihove izvore financiranja, bili oni javni ili privatni.

Unutar samoga umjetničkog polja, medijske slike očituju svoj utjecaj na mnogo različitih načina koje je, s obzirom na njihovu složenost, teško definirati. Prilično je očito da medijske operacije s institucionalnim slikama mogu u velikoj mjeri doprinijeti akumulaciji simboličkog kapitala, prestiža i sličnih faktora, koji postižu visoku operativnost u polju i koje kustosi i drugi svjesno slijede i koriste u svom radu, na primjer u uspostavljanju svoga ugleda. Teže je – s obzirom na izvanredno reagiranje umjetničkog polja na medijske impulse – utvrditi kako medijske slike aktivno pridonose formiranju najrazličitijih nizova konkretnih mišljenja, stavova i procjena.