

ECONOMY AND ART: WHY WE NEED THE HUMANITIES IN UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMY

Workshop

Maison de la Recherche

28, rue Serpente

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S002

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10 AM – 1 PM

Maša Kolanović, University of Zagreb:

Economy, Literature and Art: Creating Value and Meaning

The economy, traditionally understood as a practice of production, consumption and distribution of merchandise, penetrates every section of the human life. It not only dominates the language and practices of the political elites but enters the university administration, the school and preschool system, spirituality etc. and it has always been closely connected with art in multiple ways. The aim of this paper is to question the relationship between the economy and art as a research subject and practice in various genres, contexts and in relation to different issues. The general assumptions are that: a) economic processes create a living reality at almost all levels and therefore find their specific articulation in the artistic imagination; b) already at an early stage, art as an institution has showed its character as being linked to commodification, with a dependency on economic processes such as production, distribution and consumption; c) contemporary economic thought takes art into account, that offers a more complex understanding of economic processes, which indicates the inadequacy of narrowly defined economic knowledge, which should be added to; d) contemporary processes within the sphere of financial capital demonstrate an almost fictional quality in which the economy moves away from the reality of production and unwinds on the terrain of speculative money or money based on illusory foundations, processes which have recently caused numerous crises on global and local levels and is often thematised in art (literary texts, movies, music). By mapping the various ways in which art, literature and the economy are interconnected, the presentation will open the discussion with the specific role the humanities have in understanding the economy, posing questions such as: what can the humanities and art say about the economy and what kind of specific 'knowledge' and 'values' can art and the humanities create.

Gilles Demonet, Sorbonne Université

Insights into a Multidisciplinary Approach to Performing Arts Venues in the World

Today, we cannot imagine a large city in the world that does not have at least one concert hall or performing arts center, most often existing on the initiative of the state or the local community itself. Often conceived ex nihilo, sometimes resulting from a change of use for pre-existing buildings or simply renovations, the venues seem to have multiplied since the 1990s, both in countries of ancient tradition - Italy (Parco della Musica in Rome, 2002); France (Philharmonie in Paris, 2015); Germany (Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, 2016) - and in emerging ones (China, the Middle East). The phenomenon usually draws attention to the costs of construction (budget overruns) and to the reputation of the

architects. However, the questions raised are largely related to the very function of live performance in a globally unfavorable economic context (resulting from the 2008 crisis and a decrease in subsidies). Governments increasingly expect that culture generates positive benefits for communities while also contributing directly or indirectly to the growth of the country (i.e. the economy). In addition to the increase in the number of venues, there have also been significant changes in their architectural design, their location and their interaction with the urban space. In order to understand the significance of these developments, it is important to consider this phenomenon in not only a historical but also a comparative perspective, in particular in regards to the so-called emerging countries. In this respect, the situation is not very different from that of other cultural facilities, particularly museums, which, in the West as well as in many other areas, play a new and original role in terms of regional planning and tourism. Cultural geography is a recent field of research. It seems to us, however, that the parallel between theatres and museums finds its limits in two characteristics: on the one hand, in the particular nature of the performing arts and, on the other, its origin in ancient history and its proximity to political power. While these issues naturally lead us to emphasize the economic and political dimensions of venues, it is not possible to neglect other aspects - architectural (even acoustic), aesthetic, social - because they are all inseparable from each other and only their combination will enable us to understand them in all their complexity and singularity. The purpose of the presentation is to shed some light on their interactions with their environment.

Katarina Livljanic, Sorbonne Université / Ensemble Dialogos

Who Can Sell God? Wisdom as Merchandise in the Medieval Legend of Saints Barlaam & Josaphat

In this paper, we will discuss the relationship between wisdom and merchandise, value, preciousness and priceless as it is reflected in the medieval legend of Barlaam and Josaphat and in its transmission from the Middle Ages to the staged musical performance of the ensemble Dialogos. The medieval legend of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat, a Christianized version of the life of Buddha, was among the most popular saints' legends in the Middle Ages. From the first Christianized adaptations in the 10th century, it was translated into Greek and then Latin in the 11th century before becoming extremely popular and spreading through a multitude of European medieval languages. The popularity of this story was so intense that Josaphat and Barlaam were actually canonized by the Christian church, even if there is no evidence for their existence. It is the story of King Avenir, who persecuted the Christians. When his astrologers predict that his own son, Josaphat, will one day become a Christian, Avenir decides to isolate the young prince from any contact with human suffering, aging or illness. In spite of his isolation, Josaphat meets the hermit Barlaam and converts through a series of colorful and unusual encounters, and receives teachings through parables. The transmission of knowledge, the notion of wisdom as merchandise, God as an object for sale and purchase, and the role of poverty in the figure of the spiritual teacher are all at the center of the story. Various translations and transmissions of the story from one language to another, as well as from one religion to another, have implemented notions of richness, poverty, value and material goods in different ways.

Lana Molvarec, University of Zagreb

Class and Liminality in Early 20th Century Literature: Urban Spaces and Bohemia in Tin Ujević's Prose

It is commonplace in biographies on Tin Ujević, Croatian poet from the first half of the 20th century, to highlight the importance of his years spent in Paris. These years in Paris certainly bolstered the popular image of Ujević as a bohemian and an accursed poet. Putting aside biographical readings of Ujević's

work, this presentation aims to establish a link between public spaces, third or liminal spaces, social class and the fictional figure of an author who is in a perpetual process of construction through various discourse practices. Urban space is of utmost importance for the fluidity of that subject's identity and his psychological nomadism centers around time spent in a bar. The bar is also important because it represents a liminal space between work and leisure and it inspires the subject to make art despite of the usual perception that it is a place of idleness. The subject questions class relations while deconstructing bourgeois myths about la bohème, rethinking proletarian revolution by finding a utopian potential in the city streets, and finally by establishing a beggar found at the door of an inn as the paradigmatic model for the liminal identity of a poet.

Danijela Lugarić Vukas, University of Zagreb:

How Was Soviet Consumption Tempered? Literature, Popular Art and Gendered Consumption Practices during (Early) Soviet Socialism

The aim of this presentation is to analyze consumption and consumer practices during (early) Soviet socialism, from the second half of the 1920s to the late 1930s. From the point of view of the history of consumerism in the Soviet Union, it was a dynamic and heterogeneous period, which ranged from an absolute denial of the value of any objects of consumption (other than those that cover basic human needs) through subtle, unofficial allowance of certain hedonistic practices, to open advocacy of conspicuous consumer habits (in the period of Stalin's formation of a privileged class in the first half of the 1930s). By analyzing satiric novels by Il'f and Petrov (*The Twelve Chairs*, 1928; *The Golden Calf*, 1931), and popular cultural practices (Soviet advertising posters), the analysis aims to illuminate some elements of the rich semantics of consumer goods (a product always connotes both 'use value' and 'symbolic value'), and to interpret them as allegories and symbols delivering a broader message about the ways in which consumption in the Soviet Union was simultaneously encouraged but also regulated and controlled through gendered codification of materiality. My thesis is that the ideological goal of keeping consumption practices within an acceptable framework of what is 'reasonable', 'decent' and 'unpretentious' (unlike consumption practices in capitalistic societies, which were considered 'unreasonable', 'improper', and 'pretentious') was cultivated by the articulation of consumption through two main, traditionally rooted, gendered paradigms: that of women as consumers and that of women as keepers of (symbolic) borders.

The papers will be presented (15 minutes each) followed by a discussion.

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