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### **Artistic re-enactment as a critical strategy to deal with the past in contemporary art**

In my PhD research I examine contemporary artistic practices which focus on memory politics and I intend to analyze the different kind of critical approaches that artists use to deal with the past. Within this vast field, my specific research topic is the strategy of artistic re-enactments and I try to explain – concentrating on artworks from Central-Eastern Europe – why contemporary artists use this critical tool when they interpret a past event and how the works created in that way help to understand better our present. Artistic re-enactments can be distinguished from historical re-enactments, which are organized by re-enactor societies and focus mostly on the authenticity of a specific event. Artistic re-enactments on the other hand usually take on a critical approach questioning historical representations, present missing narratives, voices and emphasize the clash between personal and collective memory.

My first observation was, that artistic re-enactments started to flourish in the 2000's both in Western-Europe, in the United States and in the Central-Eastern European region. Soon I realized, that the examples are not different from one another based on their origins and my research changed from comparative mode, towards a more problem-focused approach. I would like to propose to discuss artistic re-enactments in the framework of a so-called *in-between* state: as the projects always circulate between past and present, the body and image, reality and fiction involving different disciplines. That is why I am especially interested in the interdisciplinary aspect of artistic re-enactments, and would like to analyze how various mediums like theatre, film and art use the strategy differently as well as to point out how these genres could appear in the projects together.

My main questions are: (1) Why artistic re-enactments became an important tendency today? Why do they look “effective” in the framework of strategies which are dealing with the past? I would like to argue that with the emergence of digital technologies etc. a counter mechanism started which put the body and the bodily experience in the center. (2) Do the

different disciplines like film, theater and contemporary art refer to different tendencies when they speak about re-enactments? How is this visible in the works? My working hypothesis is that artistic re-enactments rethink the borders between film, theater and art, and create some kind of hybrid constellation which they found relevant to address issues from the past critically. (3) How do projects rewrite and bring back certain “classical” notions, like the role of the author/authorship, the notion of presence and participation/collaboration? I would like to demonstrate that despite their democratic and often horizontal working approach, artistic re-enactments still maintain the role of the author and have a complicated relationship with communities and participatory activities. (4) My last question relates to the different form of artistic re-enactments. How can we approach the art historical examples, eg. performance re-enactments or other works, which put a cultural or art historical event in the center? Can they draw an alternative perspective on art history as well? According to my supposition these works make visible the often hidden mechanisms between power structures and the art world itself. Through this they emphasize that art is not a discipline turned only towards itself but is embedded into social and political constructions.

In my research I follow an interdisciplinary methodology. In a detailed introduction of the forecoming thesis I intend to describe the phenomenon of artistic re-enactment in relation to historical re-enactments, in comparison with other artistic genres dealing with repetition, remake and reconstruction as well as together with other artistic strategies investigating the past and memory politics. This could be considered as a critical analysis of the notion as well as critical examination of the previous literature. The thesis would consist of several case studies in which I would like to analyze the above mentioned questions and dilemmas. Through the art historical and theoretical examination of the selected projects I also take into consideration the social, political and economical framework of the discussed phenomenon. Moreover, I use the method of interviews with the artists themselves and curators from the region, to gain in depth knowledge about their practice. I also consider my PhD a practice based research: as a freelance curator I often organize exhibitions which relate to my research project in some way.