

Navigating the Entropy of Time: Documents from the Institute for Cultural Cassation

Christian Chrobok

Since the birth of modernity, the modern temporal ontology has been based on the differentiation between past, present and future. However, the ontological status of time is subject to the process of entropy that undermines the temporal structures of the body of society. Thus, the boundaries between past, present and future are in flux and the temporal order is thrown into chaos. On the one hand the past is growing more and more, while on the other hand the future is shrinking, accompanied by a loss of confidence in the idea of the future and the notion of a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene.

In view of the art system, the emergence of the concept of the global contemporary, projecting a fictional temporal unit to the present, marks a departure from the modernistic paradigm and the concept of art history, based on a linear timeline called chronology and the ideas of progress and evolution. The narrative of art history and the notions of art and of the artist as *secundus deus* have its roots in the Renaissance with its concept of innovation. In the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the museum came into being as a cultural archive and a surrogate for the divine memory. The concepts of originality and genius emerged during Romanticism, which was later continued by the utopian projects of the avant-garde. Finally, in 1936, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, constructed the genealogy of art, the universally accepted new narrative of modernism.

The Institute for Cultural Cassation (ICC) navigates the entropy of time and looks at art history, art and modernism through the lenses of anthropology and ethnography. Cultural Cassation is the basic method of this archival apparatus, based on cultural memory as a tool to maneuver the transformation of the modern temporal ontology. The ICC has no permanent location and has manifested itself since its founding in 1995 in projects, installations and exhibitions at various places like art museums and galleries. It is the inner logic of the production and presentation of the objects, exhibits and projects which creates the very body of the ICC. Incorporated into the art system this structure functions as an anthropological laboratory, recontextualizing the triad of art, art history and art museum. The ICC is a vehicle of a different politics of time, constructing the future by means of the vision of an archaeological present.