

Der Zug nach Kassel – post scriptum (2012 – 2022)

The project originally conceived in 2012 on the occasion of the 13th edition of the mega-exhibition *Documenta* in Kassel (and presented in the form of two solo exhibitions, in Zagreb and Kassel), received its new, digital performance ten years later on an independent website: the collection of artifacts by Zoran Pavelić again “traveled” by train from Zagreb to Kassel, to participate in Documenta, of course. Held for the 15th consecutive year, the manifestation lasted one hundred days, from June 18 to September 25, 2022. The idea behind of this project had not changed since 2012: the collection consisting of various memorabilia and Pavelić's independent works came to this at this world event, “representing” the Croatian art scene and alluding to the immeasurability of the local and global perspective, intrinsic and extrinsic sense.

Pavelić's project is fundamentally discursive: the point is in the story that is being developed, i.e. entwined using objects from the artist's collection. It recounts the hidden connections between art and the world, and as such has an initiatory function – it points to the secret of knowledge and thus introduces it into an imaginary community, a community that stands out by the way it handles the story. Pavelić's narrative is insofar similar to a myth. It is a “total structure” that keeps receiving new elements, constantly expanding. It does not reflect or depict reality, but seeks to draw it into itself; it strives to achieve the state where nothing exists outside of it, at least nothing truthful. Like any myth, Pavelić's story has no beginning or end; it can start at any time because it is not linear but circular. If we refer to the ideas of Mircea Eliade, we may say this is about the eternal return of the same, that is, the repetition of archetypal events, which took place in *illo tempore*: when someone gave Pavelić something, when he found or appropriated something, when he was here or there, recorded this or that, etc. – all these are not historical events, driven by the cause and made real by the effect, but only the staging of some ancient events, which used to give meaning to everything and which do not need to be explained further. Whether any of Pavelić's encounters, some of his interventions or actions, took place yesterday, ten or twenty years ago, or whether they will take place tomorrow, it does not matter; these are all interconnected legends from *those times*, where there are no coincidences or illogicalities, where everything is ideally complemented, where everything is self-explanatory and clear as day.

Like any myth, Pavelić's too has its heroes. His hero is actually one in the likeness of many; it is an artist (mage, shaman, trickster), who joins people and things, times and places. The facts of life and death are completely irrelevant here: Joseph Beuys is Ivan Kožarić is Goran Trbuljak is Josip Vaništa is John Cage is Boris Demur is Eugen Feller is Vlasta Žanić etc., and all of them are Pavelić himself. The metamorphoses reinvent the Artist, they redefine the existing boundaries between national and gender identities, between generations, between aesthetic orientations; the Artist acts regardless of his specific traits and the particular circumstances of his

existence, transhistorically, here and there, then and now. As an unquestionable romantic in understanding his mission, the Artist is there to give meaning to the contingency of the existing things, to "enchant" reality and make it extraordinary, to fictionalize causalities. And it is not so much talents and special skills that qualify him for this; it is his humility in performing the assigned task, and, here and there, a petty insolence: a theft, a tiny intrigue, benign violation of convention.

Beside heroes, in Pavelić's narrative, all sorts of objects, which he appropriates or he makes them himself, play an important role. In the story, they function as talismans – things that the hero chooses himself by presuming their "miraculous" properties; these benefits, therefore, are manifested not immediately, but with a "delayed duration"; they are activated at the moment of use, engaging objects in the story. No matter how trivial some objects may seem, sooner or later everything falls into place: after taking a leaflet from Dalibor Martinis' exhibition, Pavelić noticed that the name of Martinis' work had the same number of letters as the name of one of his, so he signed the leaflet; four lighters with the INA logo became the trademark of the Zug nach Kassel project because they were given to him by Branko Franceschi, with whom he was the first to discuss the project; a postcard sent by Geoffrey Hendricks to Đuro Seder in 1988 was found in 1995, and shared as information in 2008, exactly twenty years after it was originally sent, etc. A hero armed with talismans travels freely through the temporal dimensions: he connects the present with the past, anticipates the future; he is ready to reactivate each of these objects according to opportunity and need, once again spin the story around it, connect new circumstances with a mythical event – with a moment he met someone, or found something and appropriated it.

This type of event is not documented in art history; for art history, these are anecdotes that it leaves to oral storytelling. Likewise, an institutional system based on such history does not pay attention to the class of objects which are not works of art, but their waste, or, instead, paraphernalia (Croatian *uzmirazje*) – capital that is not part of the marital economy, i.e., goods that are not subject to the usual, formally regulated ways of use and spending, a kind of inalienable surplus. Just as Pavelić's cosmogony of Croatian contemporary art replaces the official historical narrative, so his collection is based on such a parallel, alternative economy of goods. In this system, therefore, it is not individuals and their individual artistic achievements that are important; instead, important is the community that is built and consolidated through encounters, exchange of letters and gifts, through the establishment of "important" dates, and visits to "important" places, through re-performing or quoting different insignia, images and symbols, through the devoted care for a simple communal yarn which is invisible to the naked eye and which connects us and holds us together.

Fundamentally aimed at building a community, such a story simply cannot make much sense for those who are not its participants. Of course, it is possible to delve into each individual artifact, and that individual elements or codes produce a subjective association, stimulate individual emotion. Yet, as a collective narrative, a

myth that integrates a scene, which is its quite specific thing, Zoran Pavelić's collection remains unknown and secondary to an outside observer. In order to underline this disparity, to evoke a distant context, uncover an absurd horizon of reception, Pavelić sent his collection by train to Kassel, to participate in an elite artistic event.

And yet, there is another, less likely possibility: that a cuckoo's egg travels in this train, which will sooner or later develop its full potential. For in the nature of every narrative is to master the world, to reverse the course of history, to abolish the existing state of affairs. If Pavelić's internal fabulation turns into a commanding discourse, Kassel will not represent the world center of art, but, say, a German city of fraught history. (The fabulation that, by the way, is common to us in some respects.) It wouldn't be the first time a new story has completely reversed perspective. So, who knows.

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