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Carolyn Christov- Bakargiev

Bamiyan Buddhas, Beirut National
Museum, Anna Boghiguan,
Dario Gamboni, Man Ray, Gustav
Metzger, Lee Miller, Michael Petzet,
Michael Rakowitz, Hannah Ryggen

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*On the Destruction of Art—or Conflict
and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing /
Über die Zerstörung von Kunst – oder
Konflikt und Kunst, oder Trauma und
die Kunst des Heilens*

With a text by Dario Gamboni in the
Postscriptum / Mit einem Text von Dario
Gamboni im Postskriptum

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On the Destruction of Art—or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing

My dear friend,

Quite some time has passed since my last letter, and there are a few urgent matters that I would like to tell you about.

One day, when I was writing the place-name “Kassel” on my smartphone, I made a mistake and the word was automatically corrected by the intelligent digital device to “Kabul.” This made me think of the conflicted relationship between the technologies of communication on the one hand, and intentionality and language on the other. In turn, that made me think about conflicts in general (that is, not just war), and then about the destruction of art that often accompanies conflict as a form of trauma.

This notebook is a collage of fragments precariously held together by a sense that bodies of culture, just like bodies of people and other animate and inanimate elements in the world, survive the knots and

circumstances of history sometimes intentionally and sometimes only by chance. It speaks of art objects and taking care of them through time. It speaks of art as a casualty and form of collateral damage but, at the same time, as something that can endure, exemplifying the possibility of survival.

The word “conflict” comes from *conflictus*, past participle of *confligere*, which joins *cum* (“with”) and *fligere* (“to strike”), thus suggesting that violence (being *against*) and connection (being *with*) are correlated. Conflict, and by extension trauma, can be looked at from the point of view of inter-subjectivity, or within family ties, the intermediate social nexus, or in society at large, as well as in our multi-species environments, an unbounded world of the animate and the inanimate.

Conflict is a sharp contrast that explodes into violence, either physically or psychologically. In English, the word first appears in the 1400s and indicates the struggle between opposing peoples. In the 1700s—when commercial interests became prevalent with the rise of the bourgeoisie—the expression “conflict of interest” was in use, and by the 1850s—during the romantic, subjectivist century—it had started to be used psychologically. A conflicted person is a divided person, within whom incompatible urges or impulses are hosted. In twentieth-century field theory, for instance, a “conflicted” individual is attracted to two objectives that cannot be simultaneously reached.

In classical psychoanalysis, conflict is an internal struggle between basic impulses, such as hunger or the need for reproduction, and our social and moral prerogatives. It expresses itself through many psychic mechanisms such as removal, sublimation, and transformation (where, for example, the cause of pain is removed and transformed into a neurotic symptom, or a violent and aggressive impulse is transformed into fear of being persecuted). When we experience a state of emotional tension or pain, our impulse is to remove it psychically. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), written by Freud after World War I, he notes that beyond every libidinal impulse there is a deathly drive to release and thus eliminate tension. In the same text, he also reflects on another theoretical problem. He notes that the soldiers who had come back from the war often relived their traumatic moments, such as the exact moment when a bomb fell near them, in their nightmares, and even when awake. Since this return and repetition of the traumatic event did not accord with the theory that the causes of tension and pain are removed psychically, the question of trauma remained open and unresolved for him.

The relationship between art and conflict follows different paths. An art object can be a terrain of contention where conflict is expressed through its symbolic or real destruction. But it can also be a form of direct activist intervention in a conflict. Or it can be information/

documentation/denunciation—a form of alternative news media. Art can be a witness and can express trauma and catharsis on the affective level of an empathetic understanding and elaboration of pain; it is often a form of collective memorialization and mourning for the losses caused by conflict; and—apparently the most disengaged politically of all of the above—art can function as distraction and withdrawal from conflict within the legacy of a therapeutic notion of art. If people, art, and artists are under siege or occupation, it may be that only this last form of “withdrawn activity” is possible. (Yes, this oxymoron is deliberate.) These paths intersect at an infinite number of points. There is conflict on the level of language between a tendency toward aphasia (the absence of speech) and the move toward utterance, between ourselves as animals with semiotic embodied gestural and affective relational expressions and our subjectivity as intellectuals and producers of institutionalized knowledge. It is through the poetic voice that language rubs up against content in speech, where utterance is complicated, either censored from the outside or self-censored by the subject, interrupted by trauma.

“Trauma” in Latin, as well as the Greek *τραῦμα* (*trayma*), from which the Latin derives, indicates a perforation, a wound made by a sharp object; it is related to the Indo-European root *ter*—a “passing through” of an object or a body. It entered into English in the 1600s, and only in the late 1800s did it assume its psychological connotation—a psychic wound caused by an act of violence or an accident, or by any deeply disturbing experience that causes shock, distress, and disruption of one’s life. It is often discussed in relation to psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and literature and film studies. For Roger Luckhurst, author of *The Trauma Question* (2008), it is “a complex knot that binds together multiple strands of knowledge.”

Modern trauma research, which goes back to the early studies mentioned above, has increased exponentially since the 1970s, when the term “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) was first coined by Bessel A. van der Kolk as a severe anxiety disorder, a sense of a biological assault on the body that interrupts the flow of one’s experience to the degree where one is overwhelmed, cannot cope with the situation, and “shuts down” emotionally, losing the capacity to engage with one’s environment. It is cured in a variety of ways, one of which is encouraging the patient to relive the bodily movements and physical feelings that were experienced during the traumatic events.

But what if instead of the traumatized person, one were to think and see things from the point of view of the apparently inanimate artwork? Instead of exploring how we express trauma through artworks, we might explore how artworks themselves become traumatized, losing their orientation, severed from the experience of their environ-

ment (in an exhibition, in a collection, in a museum, in a public place, in the minds of the people who should engage with them). What would the traumatized subject “think” if that subject were an artwork or a cultural artifact? What does an object feel when it is attacked or destroyed or ignored or misunderstood, or even misplaced?

This reminds me of Walter Benjamin’s description of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* (painted the same year, 1920, as Freud wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), which was posthumously published as the ninth of his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in 1955—the year of the first documenta. It is an extraordinary example of such thinking: if one takes the liberty of identifying the angel with the painting itself, then this text describes a painting traumatized by the forward rush of progress and of war, as it looks back through history:

where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. . . . This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

In a later essay of 1931, “The Destructive Character,” Benjamin writes how

the destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter walls or mountains, there, too, he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he has to clear things from it everywhere. Not always by brute force; sometimes by the most refined. Because he sees ways everywhere, he always stands at a crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble—not for the sake of rubble, but for that of the way leading through it.²

Yet destruction is difficult to recount, and in “The Storyteller” (1936), Benjamin points to a modern crisis in the ability to tell a story, “as if something that seemed unalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences. . . . With the [First] World War,” he writes, “a process began to become apparent which has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience?”³

If Freud speaks of the neurotic repetition of trauma, and PTSD speaks of an interrupted experience due to trauma, similar to Benjamin’s observation above, then how can we apply these ideas to thinking from the point of view of the artwork?⁴ What do the rubble and the stones at the foot of the empty cavities in the cliff where the Bamiyan Buddhas once stood, prior to their bombing in 2001, see and feel? How do they speak, and how is their speech related to ours?

1 | Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969 [1st English ed. by Harcourt Brace & World, 1968]), pp. 257–58.

2 | Walter Benjamin, “The Destructive Character,” in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 1931–1934 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 542.

3 | Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in Benjamin, *Illuminations* (see note 1), p. 84.

4 | This reminds me of W. T. J. Mitchell’s *What Do Pictures Want?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), in which the author looks at the demands, wishes, and desires artworks might have.

How does their violated materiality come to matter, and how does the example of their loss and damage help us to react to a sense of the precariousness of life, the loss and damage to a flow of persons projected onto, and projected from, those artworks?

Traumatized artworks appear to be on standby; they are silent, withdrawn from visibility and discourse like the house portrayed in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), abandoned by humans and waiting in a suspended time for the end of the war and the return of its inhabitants; or like Walid Raad's miniature "shrunk" retrospective of his own previous works in a model-size, tabletop exhibition space that he has been presenting in performative guided tours since 2008 (*Part I_Chapter 1_Section 139: The Atlas Group [1989–2004]*), withdrawn and "surpassing disaster" as Jalal Toufic has described in related texts.⁵ Such works are speechless, numb witnesses of conflict, traumatized subjects unable to tell their stories.

5 | Jalal Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009), www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads/Jalal_Toufic_The_Withdrawal_of_Tradition_Past_a_Surpassing_Disaster.pdf (accessed October 2011).



Walid Raad, *A History of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art: Part I_Chapter 1_Section 139: The Atlas Group (1989–2004)*, 2008
Photo courtesy Walid Raad and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

Aside from the Oedipus complex, Freud did not develop many theories around the relationship between conflict existing within the psyche of a single person, and external conflict, as a symptom or product of our interconnected relations. It was Melanie Klein, in her

book *Envy and Gratitude* (1957), and later also Jacques Lacan, who looked at conflict in the dyadic mother-child relationship as constituent of subjectivity since birth. While at first, our mother's body is felt to be the extension of our own, the moment we become aware of the separation between us, we feel loss, depression, and mourning. In turn, this can cause envy, which is an aggressive position toward the power the other has over us—the power to give or withdraw their bodies from us. Or alternatively there can be a sense of gratitude toward the other as a provider. When envy prevails, it is because we do not accept the existence of another person who is deemed a limitation. When gratitude prevails, a relation of creativity, dialogue, and integration is constructed—through our recognition that we do not define our identity alone. For there to be a conflict, both the child and the mother must exist in a state of aggression. The mother is afraid of the aggressive nature of the envious child. If she is not afraid, if she withdraws from conflict, the conflict is defused.

In conflict there is always a web of contradictory elements without a simple solution. Art is a striated space, and it allows one to hover and remain in the realm of ambiguity and contradictions, in the space of opacity. Therefore it is a space where one can exercise the capacity to understand complex and apparently unresolvable conflicts. Art is an exercise in ambivalence as opposed to violence, and also has the potential of inventing ways of life that can be less costly, more ingenious, and less demanding in terms of labor and time, and less self-destructive.

Art can suspend or increase conflict. If the context of the conflict is ignored, if one acts as if there were no conflict (*hōs mē*, "as not"), if the artistic act withdraws from conflict, like the mother subtracting herself from the envy/aggression game, and engages with the traumatized art object from the point of view of gratitude, one can enter into a form of worldly alliance.

That is where the sphere of art, which is poised on the edge of the private and of history, becomes a location in which one can experiment with experience on the edge of the anthropocentric, where the rubble lies, and can build an imaginative society where the human is not at the center of our cosmology, but only one element within an accord of all the makers of the world, animate and inanimate, including traumatized people and objects.

Best,
Carolyn

Perhaps we might look at some pictures together, which I have gathered for you.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev Über die Zerstörung von Kunst – oder Konflikt und Kunst, oder Trauma und die Kunst des Heilens

Mein lieber Freund,

mein letzter Brief liegt nun schon einige Zeit zurück, und es gibt einige dringliche Angelegenheiten, von denen ich Dir gerne berichten würde.

Als ich neulich den Ortsnamen Kassel in mein Smartphone eingab, hatte ich mich wahrscheinlich vertippt, und meine Eingabe wurde von dem intelligenten digitalen Gerät automatisch zu dem Wort »Kabul« korrigiert. Dies brachte mich dazu, über die konfliktreiche Beziehung zwischen Kommunikationstechnologien auf der einen Seite und Intentionalität und Sprache auf der anderen nachzudenken. Dies wiederum führte mich zu Überlegungen zu Konflikten im Allgemeinen (das heißt, nicht nur im Sinne von Krieg) und schließlich zur

Zerstörung von Kunst, die als eine Form von Trauma oft mit Konflikten einhergeht.

Dieses Notizbuch ist eine Collage aus Fragmenten, auf prekäre Weise zusammengehalten von dem Gefühl, dass Körper von Kulturen, ebenso wie Körper von Menschen und andere belebte und unbelebte Elemente der Welt, manchmal absichtlich, manchmal zufällig die Wirren und Umstände der Geschichte überstehen. Es handelt von Kunstobjekten und davon, für diese über die Zeiten hinweg Sorge zu tragen. Es handelt von Kunst als Opfer und als Form von Kollateralschaden, ebenso wie von ihrer Beständigkeit als Beispiel für die Möglichkeit zu überleben.

Das Wort »Konflikt« kommt von *conflictus*, Partizip Perfekt von *confingere*, das *cum* (»mit«) und *fligere* (»schlagen«, »treffen«) verbindet und somit andeutet, dass Gewalt (*gegen sein*) und Konnexion (*miteinander sein*) zusammenhängen. Man kann Konflikte, und infolgedessen auch Traumata, unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Intersubjektivität oder innerhalb von Familien, im unmittelbaren sozialen Umfeld oder in der Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen betrachten, wie auch in unserer artenreichen Umwelt, einer grenzenlosen Welt des Belebten und Unbelebten.

Ein Konflikt ist ein scharfer Gegensatz, der physisch oder psychisch in einem Gewaltausbruch mündet. Im Englischen taucht das Wort erstmals im 15. Jahrhundert auf und steht für den Kampf zwischen gegnerischen Völkern. Im 18. Jahrhundert – als mit dem Aufstieg des Bürgertums wirtschaftliche Interessen in den Vordergrund traten – wurde »conflict« auch in dem Ausdruck »conflict of interest« (Interessenkonflikt) verwendet, und um 1850 – im romantischen, subjektivistischen Zeitalter – setzte ein Gebrauch im psychologischen Sinne ein. Eine »conflicted person« ist eine innerlich zerrissene Person, in der miteinander unvereinbare Triebe oder Impulse wirken. So wird etwa in der Feldtheorie des 20. Jahrhunderts ein Individuum von zwei Zielen angezogen, die sich nicht gleichzeitig erreichen lassen.

In der klassischen Psychoanalyse ist der Konflikt ein innerer Kampf zwischen grundlegenden Impulsen, wie Hunger oder Reproduktionstrieb, und unserer gesellschaftlichen und moralischen Verantwortung. Er artikuliert sich in vielfältigen psychischen Mechanismen wie Verdrängung, Sublimierung und Umwandlung (wenn beispielsweise die Ursache eines Schmerzes verdrängt und in ein neurotisches Symptom umgewandelt oder ein gewalttätiger und aggressiver Impuls in die Angst, verfolgt zu werden, umgesetzt wird). In emotionalen Spannungs- oder Schmerzzuständen zielt unser Impuls darauf ab, diese psychisch zu verdrängen. In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), das nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg entstand, bemerkte Freud, dass es jenseits aller Lebenstrieb- auch Todestrieb- gebe, um Spannung zu entladen und damit zu eliminieren. Freud reflektierte in diesem Text noch ein weiteres theoretisches

Problem: Er stellte fest, dass Soldaten, die aus dem Krieg zurückgekehrt waren, häufig ein traumatisches Geschehen, etwa den Moment, als neben ihnen eine Bombe fiel, in Albträumen und selbst im Wachzustand auf exakt dieselbe Weise nochmals durchlebten. Da diese Rückkehr und Wiederholung des Traumatischen der Theorie widersprachen, dass die Ursachen von Spannungszuständen und Schmerzen psychisch verdrängt werden, blieb die Frage des Traumas für ihn offen und ungelöst.

Das Verhältnis von Kunst und Konflikt gestaltet sich in unterschiedlicher Weise: Ein Kunstobjekt kann ein Streitgegenstand sein, wobei sich der Konflikt in seiner symbolischen oder realen Zerstörung ausdrückt; es kann jedoch auch eine Form von direkter aktivistischer Intervention in einem Konflikt sein; oder es kann Information/Dokumentation/Anklage sein – eine Art alternatives Nachrichtenmedium. Kunst kann Zeugnis ablegen und auf der affektiven Ebene eines empathischen Verstehens und der Bearbeitung eines Schmerzes Trauma und Katharsis zum Ausdruck bringen; sie ist oft eine Form des kollektiven Erinnerens und des Trauerns über Verluste, die durch Konflikte entstanden sind; und Kunst kann – scheinbar politisch losgelöster als alle oben genannten Beispiele – in der Tradition einer therapeutischen Kunstauffassung als Ablenkung und Rückzug aus Konflikten fungieren. Wenn sich Menschen, Kunst und Künstler im Zustand der Belagerung oder Besatzung befinden, kann es sein, dass nur noch diese letzte Form von »zurückgezogener Aktivität« möglich ist. (Ja, dieses Oxymoron ist Absicht.) Diese Wege kreuzen sich an unzähligen Punkten. Konflikte gibt es auch auf der sprachlichen Ebene: zwischen einer Neigung zur Aphasie (zur Abwesenheit von Sprache) und einer Entscheidung zur Äußerung, zwischen uns als Tieren mit semiotisch verkörperten gestischen und affektiven relationalen Ausdrücken und unserer Subjektivität als Intellektuelle und Produzenten institutionalisierten Wissens. In der poetischen Stimme reibt sich die Sprache während des Sprechens am Inhalt, wird die Äußerung verkompliziert und zensiert, entweder von außen oder, unterbrochen vom Trauma, durch das Subjekt selbst.

Das lateinische »Trauma« und das griechische τραῦμα (*trayma*), von dem das lateinische Wort abgeleitet ist, bezeichnet eine Durchlöcherung, eine Verletzung, die durch einen spitzen Gegenstand zugefügt wurde; es ist verwandt mit der indogermanischen Wurzel *ter-*, ein »Hindurchgehen« durch einen Gegenstand oder einen Körper. Es gelangte im 17. Jahrhundert in die englische Sprache und erhielt erst gegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts seine psychologische Konnotation – eine psychische Wunde, die durch eine Gewalttat oder einen Unfall verursacht wurde, oder durch eine zutiefst verstörende Erfahrung, die einen Schock, Schmerz und einen Bruch im Leben der betreffenden Person nach sich zieht. Der Begriff Trauma wird häufig im

Zusammenhang mit Psychiatrie, Psychoanalyse, Psychotherapie sowie Literatur- und Filmwissenschaften diskutiert. Für Roger Luckhurst, Autor von *The Trauma Question* (2008), ist er »ein komplizierter Knoten, der verschiedene Wissensstränge miteinander verknüpft«.

Die moderne Traumaforschung, die auf die oben erwähnten früheren Studien zurückgeht, hat seit den 1970er Jahren exponentiell zugenommen, als Bessel A. van der Kolk den Begriff »Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung« (PTBS) prägte, eine schwere Angststörung, das Gefühl eines biologischen Angriffs auf den Körper, der eine Unterbrechung des Erfahrungsstroms verursacht, so dass die Person überwältigt ist, mit der Situation nicht umgehen kann und sich emotional »verschließt«, wodurch sie die Fähigkeit verliert, sich mit ihrer Umgebung auseinanderzusetzen. Sie wird auf unterschiedliche Weise behandelt, beispielsweise indem der Patient ermutigt wird, die Körperbewegungen und -gefühle, die während der traumatisierenden Ereignisse erlebt wurden, noch einmal nachzuvollziehen.

Was wäre nun, wenn man dies nicht vom Standpunkt einer oder mehrerer traumatisierter Personen, sondern vom Standpunkt augenscheinlich unbelebter Kunstwerke betrachtete? Was würde das traumatisierte Subjekt wahrnehmen oder »denken«, wenn dieses Subjekt ein Kunstwerk oder ein kulturelles Artefakt wäre? Es geht mir nicht um eine Untersuchung dessen, wie wir durch unsere Kunstwerke Traumatisierungen zum Ausdruck bringen, sondern wie die Kunstwerke selbst (in einer Ausstellung, einer Sammlung, an einem öffentlichen Ort, in den Gedanken der Menschen, die sich mit ihnen beschäftigen sollten) traumatisiert werden, ihre Orientierung verlieren und von der Erfahrung ihrer Umgebung abgeschnitten werden könnten. Was empfindet ein Objekt, wenn es angegriffen oder zerstört oder ignoriert oder missverstanden oder gar verschleppt wird?

Dies erinnert mich an Walter Benjamins Beschreibung von Paul Klees Bild *Angelus Novus* (das 1920, im gleichen Jahr wie Freuds *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, entstand), die erst posthum als neunte These seines geschichtsphilosophischen Aufsatzes »Über den Begriff der Geschichte« 1955 veröffentlicht wurde – im Jahr der ersten documenta. Dabei handelt es sich um ein außergewöhnliches Beispiel eines solchen Denkens: Wenn man so frei ist, den Engel mit dem Bild selbst zu identifizieren, dann beschreibt dieser Text ein Gemälde, das vom Sturm des Fortschritts und des Krieges traumatisiert wird, während es auf die Geschichte zurückblickt.

Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. [...] Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm.¹

1 | Walter Benjamin, »Über den Begriff der Geschichte«, in: Ders., *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. I, Teil 2, hrsg. v. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt a. M. 1974, S. 691–703, hier: S. 697 f.

In einem späteren Essay von 1931, »Der destruktive Charakter«, schreibt Benjamin:

Der destruktive Charakter sieht nichts Dauerndes. Aber eben darum sieht er überall Wege. Wo andere auf Mauern oder Gebirge stoßen, auch da sieht er einen Weg. Weil er aber überall einen Weg sieht, hat er auch überall aus dem Weg zu räumen. Nicht immer mit roher Gewalt, bisweilen mit veredelter. Weil er überall Wege sieht, steht er selber immer am Kreuzweg. Kein Augenblick kann wissen, was der nächste bringt. Das Bestehende legt er in Trümmer, nicht um der Trümmer, sondern um des Weges willen, der sich durch sie hindurchzieht.²

Doch ist es schwer, von Zerstörung zu erzählen, und in »Der Erzähler« (1936) weist Benjamin auf eine moderne Krise der Fähigkeit des Erzählens hin: »Es ist, als wenn ein Vermögen, das uns unveräußerlich schien, das Gesichertste unter dem Sicherem, von uns genommen würde. Nämlich das Vermögen, Erfahrungen auszutauschen. [...] Mit dem [Ersten] Weltkrieg«, schreibt er, »begann ein Vorgang offenkundig zu werden, der seither nicht zum Stillstand gekommen ist. Hatte man nicht bei Kriegsende bemerkt, daß die Leute verstummt aus dem Feld kamen? nicht reicher – ärmer an mitteilbarer Erfahrung.«³

Wenn Freud von der neurotischen Wiederholung des Traumas spricht und man bei der PTBS von einer Erfahrung spricht, die – ähnlich wie die oben von Benjamin beobachtete – aufgrund eines Traumas unterbrochen wurde, wie lassen sich diese Vorstellungen auf ein Denken vom Standpunkt des Kunstwerks übertragen?⁴ Was sehen und fühlen die Trümmer und Steine am Fuß der leeren Nischen in jener Felswand, wo einst, bis zum Jahr 2001, die Buddha-Statuen von Bamiyan standen? Wie sprechen sie, und in welcher Beziehung steht ihr Sprechen zu unserem? Wie kann ihre verletzte Materialität von Bedeutung sein, und wie hilft uns das Exempel ihres Verlusts und ihrer Beschädigung auf das Gefühl der Unsicherheit des Lebens zu reagieren, der Verlust und die Beschädigung für einen Menschenstrom, der auf diese Kunstwerke projiziert wird und von ihnen projiziert wird?

Traumatisierte Kunstwerke scheinen sich im Stand-by-Modus zu befinden; sie sind stumm, der Sichtbarkeit und dem Diskurs entzogen wie das menschenleere Haus, das Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* (1931) porträtierte, das in einer stillstehenden stummen Zeit auf das Kriegsende und die Rückkehr seiner Bewohner wartet; oder wie Walid Raads »geschrumpfte« Retrospektive von Miniaturen seiner früheren Arbeiten in dem winzigen Modell eines Ausstellungsraums, die er seit 2008 in performativen Führungen präsentiert (*Part I_Chapter 1_Section 139: The Atlas Group [1989–2004]*), »einem unermesslichen Desaster entzogen«, wie Jalal Toufic diesbezüglich formulierte (*The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*, 2009).⁵ Solche

2 | Walter Benjamin, »Der destruktive Charakter«, in: Ders. *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1977, S. 289–290, hier: S. 290.

3 | Walter Benjamin, »Der Erzähler. Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows«, in: Ders., *Erzählen. Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und zur literarischen Prosa*, ausgewählt und mit einem Nachwort von Alexander Honold, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2007, S. 103–128, hier: S. 103 f.

4 | Dies erinnert mich an W.T. J. Mitchell's *What Do Pictures Want?*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005, in dem der Autor Betrachtungen darüber anstellt, welche Ansprüche, Wünsche und Sehnsüchte Kunstwerke haben könnten.

5 | www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads/Jalal_Toufic_The_Withdrawal_of_Tradition_Past_a_Surpassing_Disaster.pdf (abgerufen im Oktober 2011). Dt. *Vom Rückzug der Tradition nach einem unermesslichen Desaster*, übers. v. Christoph Nöthlings, Berlin und Köln: Walthers König 2011.

Arbeiten sind sprachlose und benommene Zeugen von Konflikten, traumatisierte Subjekte, die unfähig sind, ihre Geschichte zu erzählen.



Walid Raad, *A History of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art: Part I_Chapter 1_Section 139: The Atlas Group (1989–2004)*, 2008
Foto courtesy Walid Raad und Galerie Steir-Semler, Beirut/Hamburg

Abgesehen vom Ödipuskomplex entwickelte Freud nicht viele Theorien über die Beziehung zwischen den innerpsychischen Konflikten einer Person und äußeren Konflikten als Symptom oder Produkt unserer wechselseitigen Beziehungen. Es waren Melanie Klein in ihrem Buch *Neid und Dankbarkeit* (1957) und später auch Jacques Lacan, die den Konflikt in der dyadischen Mutter-Kind-Beziehung seit der Geburt als konstitutiv für die Subjektivität ansahen. Während der Körper der Mutter anfangs als Erweiterung des eigenen Körpers empfunden wird, spüren wir Verlust, Depression und Trauer, sobald uns die Trennung zwischen uns bewusst wird. Dies kann wiederum Neid auslösen, als Ausdruck einer aggressiven Einstellung gegenüber der Macht, die andere über uns haben – die Macht, uns ihre Körper zu geben oder zu entziehen. Doch es kann auch ein Gefühl der Dankbarkeit gegenüber dem Anderen als Gebendem aufkommen. Der Neid ist dann vorherrschend, wenn wir die Existenz einer anderen Person, die als Einschränkung betrachtet wird, nicht akzeptieren. Wenn die Dankbarkeit überwiegt, wächst eine kreative, dialogische

und integrierende Beziehung – indem wir erkennen, dass unsere Identität nicht von uns allein definiert wird. Für die Entstehung eines Konflikts müssen sich sowohl die Mutter als auch das Kind in einem aggressiven Zustand befinden. Die Mutter ängstigt sich vor dem aggressiven Charakter des neidischen Kindes. Wenn sie keine Angst hat, wenn sie sich dem Konflikt entzieht, wird dieser entschärft.

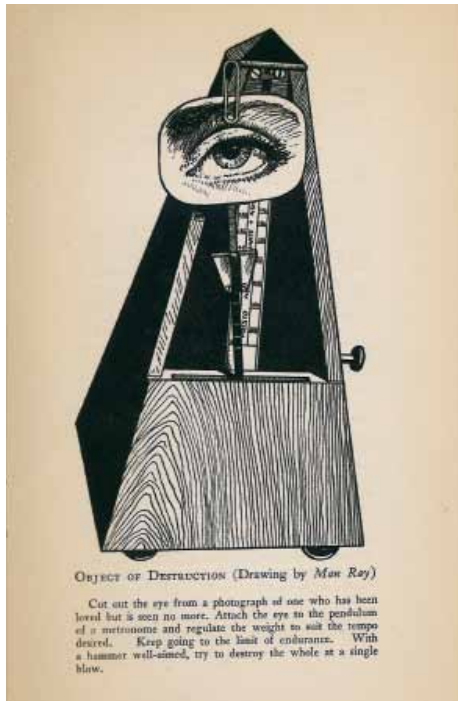
In Konflikten gibt es stets eine Verflechtung widersprüchlicher Elemente ohne eine simple Lösung. Die Kunst ist ein gekerbter Raum, und sie ermöglicht es, im Reich der Mehrdeutigkeit und der Widersprüche, im Raum der Opazität in der Schwebelandschaft zu bleiben und zu verharren. Darum ist sie ein Ort, an dem man die Fähigkeit, komplexe und scheinbar unlösbare Konflikte zu verstehen, trainieren kann. Kunst ist eine Übung in Ambivalenz im Gegensatz zur Gewalt und besitzt auch das Potenzial, Lebensweisen zu erfinden, die weniger verlustreich, geistreicher und weniger arbeits- und zeitaufwendig und weniger selbstzerstörerisch sein können.

Kunst kann Konflikte außer Kraft setzen oder verstärken. Wenn man den Kontext des Konflikts ignoriert, wenn man handelt, als gäbe es keinen Konflikt (*hōs mē*, »als nicht«), wenn sich der künstlerische Akt aus dem Konflikt herauszieht, wie sich die Mutter aus dem Spiel von Neid und Aggression herauszieht, und man sich vom Standpunkt der Dankbarkeit aus mit dem traumatisierten Kunstobjekt beschäftigt, kann man eine Form von weltlicher Allianz eingehen.

Das ist der Punkt, an dem der Bereich der Kunst, der am Rand des Privaten und der Geschichte balanciert, zu einem Ort wird, an dem man mit Erfahrungen am Rand des Anthropozentrischen, wo die Trümmer liegen, experimentieren und eine fantasievolle Gesellschaft aufbauen kann, in der das Menschliche nicht im Mittelpunkt unserer Kosmologie steht, sondern nur ein Element im Einklang mit allen belebten und unbelebten Weltenmachern ist, darunter auch traumatisierte Menschen und Objekte.

Beste Grüße,
Carolyn

Vielleicht könnten wir uns gemeinsam einige Bilder ansehen, die ich für Dich zusammengestellt habe.



Man Ray, *Object of Destruction*, 1932, drawing, published in *This Quarter*, Paris, 5, no. 1 (September 1932), p. 55.

Sometime before 1932, Man Ray made an ink-on-paper drawing of an *Objet à détruire* / *Object to Be Destroyed*. It was published in André Breton's Parisian magazine *This Quarter* that same year, accompanied by the following text by Man Ray:

Cut out the eye from a photograph of one who has been loved but is seen no more. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well-aimed, try to destroy the whole at a single blow.

The drawing was exhibited in Alfred Barr's 1936 exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Presumably in 1923, Man Ray had made the first object version of this work by attaching the

photograph of an eye to a metronome. He kept it in his studio while he painted, suggesting that the metronome was a witness to the art-making process, and perhaps what was being destroyed was time itself.

Arturo Schwarz remembers Man Ray telling him how he turned the metronome into the *Object of Destruction*:

I had a metronome in my place which I set going when I painted—like the pianist sets it going when he starts playing—its ticking noise regulated the frequency and number of my brushstrokes. The faster it went, the faster I painted; and if the metronome stopped then I knew I had painted too long, I was repeating myself, my painting was no good and I would destroy it. A painter needs an audience, so I also clipped the photo of an eye to the metronome's swinging arm to create the illusion of being watched as I painted. One day I did not accept the metronome's verdict, the silence was unbearable and since I had called it, with a certain premonition, *Object of destruction*, I smashed it to pieces.¹

Later, sometime between 1929 and 1932, he changed the original picture of the eye to that of his lover, muse, and fellow Surrealist Lee Miller, whom he had met in 1929. It has been said, both by Man Ray himself and by others, that when Miller left him in 1932, he destroyed the object with a hammer, only to remake it in order to exhibit it at the Galerie Pierre Colle in Paris in 1933 in an exhibition of Surrealist objects under the title *Ceil-métronome* (Eye Metronome). In a 1975 interview with Mario Amaya, Lee Miller stated:

We are in dispute of the very definitive fashion in which my eye was fixed to the metronome of the original *Objet à détruire*; I believe it was named *Objet à détruire* as a means of transforming it, like one of the wax dolls that one forces needles through. Because one moves the eye to make it tic-tac like an alarm, and one must buy a hammer in order to crush it.²

Later on, Man Ray would continue to carry little cut-out Lee Miller eyes in his jacket pocket, and would occasionally buy a metronome and attach

1 | Arturo Schwarz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination* (London: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 205–06.

2 | *Art in America*, New York, 63, no. 3 (May–June 1975), p. 56.

an eye to it, Tony Penrose, Miller's son, told me when I visited him in 2010.

The 1932 unique replica of the first metronome was destroyed by dada "Jarivistes" led by the poet Jean-Pierre Rosnay when visiting a Dada exhibition in Paris in 1957. Perhaps musing on the fact that it is impossible to destroy memory intentionally, or ready-made art, given the non-unique character of its materials, Man Ray made a replica with Arturo Schwarz editions in 1958 in Milan, under the title *Indestructible Object*, and after a few more replicas made in 1961 (for his gallerist Julian Levy), in 1963 (today in the collection of the Israel Museum), and in 1964 (today in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York), he finally activated a new version of the same artwork in 1965 (Editions MAT/Daniel Spoerri), which was conceived in an edition of 100. But the edition was never completed by the artist. In this way, Man Ray created a paradoxical situation in which the artwork was emancipated from its destruction, the limits of time, materiality, and the market. This constitutes one of the first conceptual multiples, freeing art from the ravages of time.

The artwork reappears with other titles at other times—*Lost Object* in 1945, transformed by a printer's error into *Last Object*. In 1970, Man Ray decided to make a further variation, called *Motif perpétuel*, an edition of forty metronomes, each with a blinking lenticular eye, editioned by the Turin-based gallery Il Fauno until 1974.



Man Ray, *Objet indestructible* / *Indestructible Object*, 1923–65
Wooden metronome and cut-out photograph attached with paperclip (Editions MAT/Daniel Spoerri, AE)
21.5 × 11 × 11.5 cm. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



Man Ray, *Objet indestructible* / *Indestructible Object*, 1923–65
Wooden metronome and cut-out photograph attached with paperclip (Editions MAT/Daniel Spoerri, 91/100)
22.5 × 11 × 11.5 cm. Private collection, Berlin



Man Ray, *Motif perpétuel* / *Perpetual Motif*, 1970–71
Ready-made wooden metronome with lenticular photograph (Editions Il Fauno, 38/40)
22 × 11 × 11 cm. Courtesy Collezione La Gaia, Busca, Italy

III.



Photo Lee Miller © Lee Miller Archives, England, 2011. All rights reserved

Lee Miller shot this image of dead bodies beside a train during her visit to Dachau concentration camp on the morning of April 30, 1945.



Photo Lee Miller and David E. Sherman © Lee Miller Archives, England, 2011. All rights reserved

Below left is an image of Lee Miller in Adolf Hitler's bathtub in his Munich apartment on Prinzregentenplatz, taken during the afternoon of April 30, 1945. At the suggestion of David E. Sherman, a photographer for *Life* magazine, she was traveling through Germany as an embedded photographer with U.S. troops for *Vogue* magazine, and had spent the morning at Dachau concentration camp near Munich. She stayed in the apartment for several nights with Sherman, perhaps her lover at the time, who also shot this picture. The photograph appears to have been staged by Miller and speaks about the role of art in relation to world events or politics. It is a "traumatized," silent photograph that suggests the impossibility of speech after what she had seen at Dachau that morning.

The same day the picture was taken, Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker. On a symbolic and also on a bodily level, Miller takes his place, creates a substitution; in part she becomes the victimizer, washing herself of his crimes. It is a "mythic" photograph—as if she were attempting to cleanse humanity of its sins.

Miller was aware of the fact that Hitler was interested in art and had taken painting classes. On the table to the right of the image there is a porcelain figurine in the realist-nationalist neo-classical style of Germany and Italy in the 1930s and early 1940s, designed by Rudolf Kaesbach and produced as an edition by Rosenthal in 1936 with the title *Die Ausschauende*. Inspired by the Venus de Milo, as well as by Renoir's *La Baigneuse* (1870), the figure's arm is raised. Miller also raises her arm slightly, holding a washcloth. She may also have been thinking of Man Ray's photograph of Meret Oppenheim, in a similar pose, with black ink or paint staining her uplifted arm, and holding a wheel—a subject trapped in the machine of modernity. If Man Ray's image was in conversation with Marcel Duchamp's *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (1915–23), also known as *The Large Glass*, then Miller's photo could also secretly refer to the structure of the *Large Glass*, with its bipartite universe. The small machine on the table near the sculpture would echo the *Broyeuse de chocolat*. Hitler is himself portrayed in the upper portion of the photograph, in what looks like a media or press image, as if the balanced world of Duchamp has been turned upside down, and his *célibataires* had made it into

the upper portion. Could this be a feminist accusation against the patriarchal military world that lay behind the image?

The object/device on the table beside the little sculpture is probably a small device for calling servants. However, its shape alludes to that of a camera, and therefore to the device that permits the obscenity of photography's detached power over life, a feeling akin to survivor syndrome that Miller may have felt in Dachau that morning with her camera. Her dirty boots lie at the foot of the tub and, on the nearby chair, her small watch is placed on top of the clothes she presumably wore to the camp.

Time has stopped. It is a photo of the camps, but indirect, without the literality of body horror.

III.



Photo © Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, courtesy Gustav Metzger

Gustav Metzger left Germany as a child in 1939, as part of the Refugee Children Movement, which brought Jewish children to Great Britain.

The image shows what is left of one of the highly colored pastel-on-paper drawings representing a couple embracing, perhaps making love, that Metzger probably made between 1953 and 1957 when he took a studio in Kings Lynn in East Anglia. After drafting his "Auto-destructive Art" manifesto of 1959, he collected all the early drawings he had made since 1945 in a suitcase; he stored them away in 1965, above a garage at the home of a relative in North London, where they were kept until 2010. Most are in a relatively good state of conservation; however, this one in particular was destroyed by humidity and folding, suggesting a loop in time. It also presents a paradox, given the care the artist had put into conserving it, and given his later work based on the repetition of the trauma of destruction as an indirect act of outrage toward a twentieth-century society that appeared at the time—during the Cold War and nuclear-arms race—to be moving toward self-destruction once again. We opened the drawings together, and I took this photograph with my BlackBerry, by permission of the artist.

MANIFESTO

SDA

(18)

SELF DESTRUCTIVE ART

This manifesto expands sda.
Sda is primarily a form of public art for technological societies

Sda, painting, and sculptures and constructions have a ^{shortish existence} life time varying from a few moments to twenty years.

When the disintegrative process is complete the remains of the work are to be removed from the site and scraped.

Sda can be created by traditional techniques plus the disintegrating factors.

Sda can be machine produced and factory assembled. In this case the artists position is comparable to that of the architect on a skyscraper building. The artist may collaborate with scientists, engineers.

The successful sda, painting, sculpture or construction is a total unity of site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process.

19 15 51

Microphones may be installed in sda works to amplify the sound of the disintegrative process.

(19)

Sda can be abstract figurative or symbolic.

Materials and techniques used in sda, ~~including~~ include:

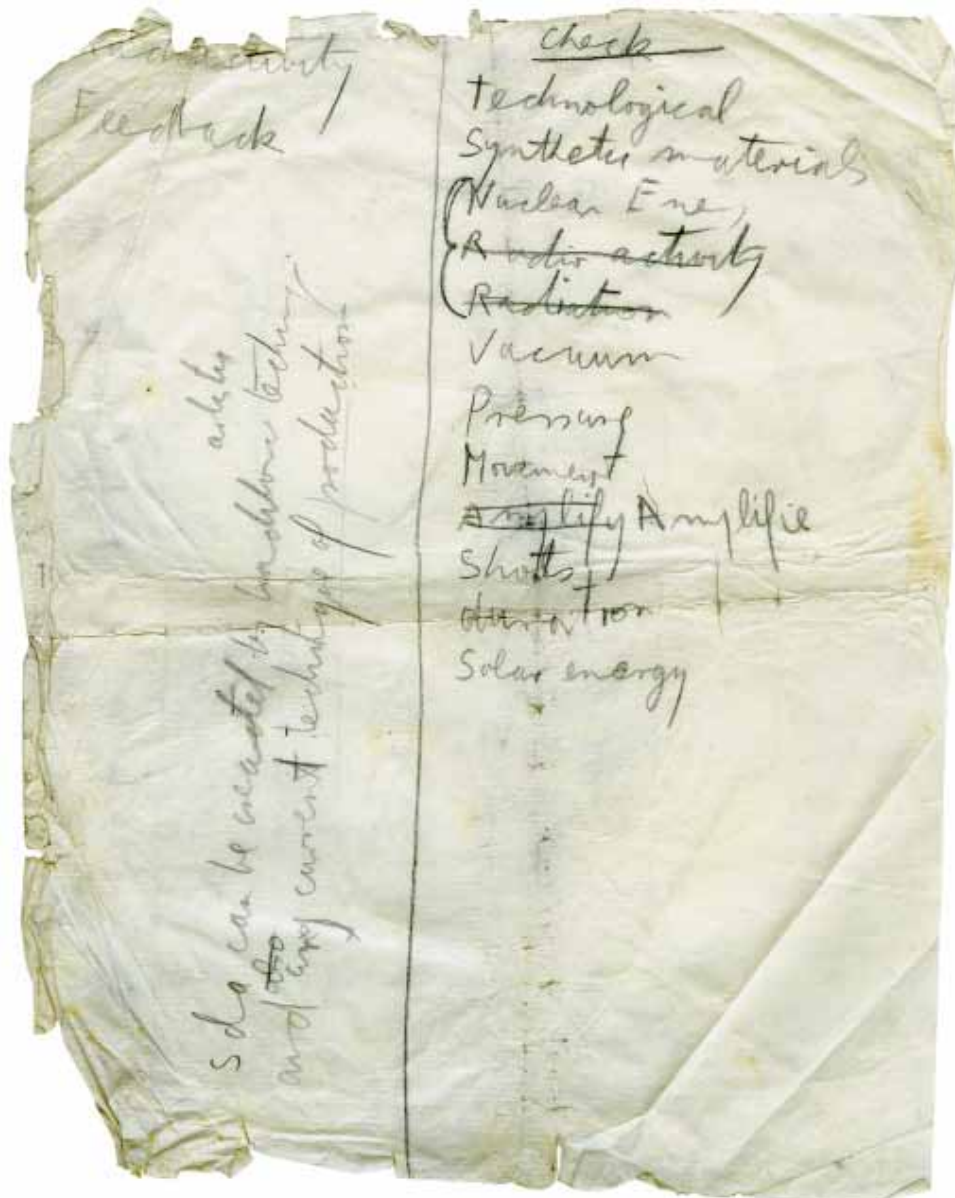
- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Acids | Light | Welding |
| Air | Mass-production | Wire |
| Atomic bombardment (out) | Metal | Wood |
| an- | Energy | Pneumatic |
| Concrete | Paint | |
| Electricity | Plastics | |
| Electrolysis | Pressure | |
| Electronics | Radio-activity | |
| Flame | Radiation | |
| lm | Shots | |
| fire | Solar energy | |
| Glass | Stone | |
| | Sound | |
| | Terra-cotta | |
| | Vacuum | |
| | Vibration | |

- Steam
- human scale
- Motors
- Feed back
- Elements
- Explosives
- Drilling
- Noise
- Gold
- Synthetic Metals
- Plastics

1954

G. Michalski

10/51



Photos courtesy Gustav Metzger and © Tate, London, 2011

These three pages, two of them hand-numbered as pages 18 and 19 and the final one unnumbered, were discovered by Chus Martínez in May 2011. I had asked her to look through the Gustav Metzger papers at the Tate archives in London, while I was looking at his drawings at Jayhawk storage. Never transcribed, published, or reprinted as facsimiles before, they are the artist's notes, dated October 19, 1959, on "Self-destructive Art," an expression that predates the term "Auto-destructive Art," eventually chosen as the title of the manifesto to which they led. The manifesto was released as a leaflet dated November 4, 1959, and first distributed on the occasion of Metzger's Cardboards exhibition at the café at 14 Monmouth Street. A comparative analysis of these October notes illuminates his decision to use the term "Auto" instead of "Self." In Greek, αὐτός (*autós*) means "him-her-it-same"; as a prefix it is used to indicate an event that is caused by one's own agency, as in the term "automatic" ("that which moves by its own impulse") and "auto-destructive" ("that which destroys itself"), and it has assumed a mechanical connotation in modernity. "Self" is very similar; it derives from the old Germanic pronoun *selbaz*, practically a synonym of the Greek *autós*. But in modern English, "self" developed to include the connotation of a subject having a form of reflective self-consciousness. This may be the reason why Metzger chose not to keep the prefix "self," since no reflective consciousness could commit such insane acts as those perpetrated during World War II, or those that seemed to be looming in the late 1950s during the nuclear-arms race. Another interesting point to note is that while the Greek *autós* is also related to the notion of "same" ("identical to that just mentioned"), the proto-Germanic *selbaz* comprises the root *s(z)le*, which means quite the opposite—something "separate" or "apart." Only a collapse of critical distance, a lack of separateness, could cause auto-destruction, while withdrawal, exodus, retreat from partaking in a contest—an "art strike" as Metzger put it in 1974, calling for artists to stop making works for three years, between 1977 and 1980—could have a generative human and radical political potential for the "self."

Metzger's October text develops in many other ways as well. By the time he released the November manifesto two weeks later, he had removed the materials and techniques used in auto-destructive art that were listed in these first notes. The November version also reorders the paragraphs sub-

stantially and makes a few more changes, such as replacing "technological society" with "industrial societies," and adding the words "natural forces" as possible agents of auto-destructive art. The version of November 4 is as follows:

Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies.

Auto-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process.

Auto-destructive art can be created with natural forces, traditional art techniques and technological techniques.

The artist may collaborate with scientists, engineers.

Auto-destructive art can be machine produced and factory assembled.

Auto-destructive paintings, sculptures and constructions have a life time varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete, the work is to be removed from the site and scrapped.

G. Metzger

[handwritten addition] *The amplified sound of the auto-destructive process can be an integral part of the total conception.*

In 1960, a "second manifesto" appeared, a slightly altered version of the first, in which Metzger decided to re-integrate the list of materials and techniques:

Man in Regent Street is auto-destructive.

Rockets, nuclear weapons, are auto-destructive.

Auto-destructive art.
The drop drop dropping of HH bombs.
Not interested in ruins, (the picturesque).

Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummeling to which individuals and masses are subjected. Auto-destructive art demonstrates man's power to accelerate disintegrative processes of nature and to order them. Auto-destructive art mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture – polishing to destruction point. Auto-destructive art is the transformation of technology into public art.

The immense productive capacity, the chaos of capitalism and of Soviet communism, the co-existence of surplus and starvation; the increasing stock-piling of nuclear weapons – more than enough to destroy technological societies; the

disintegrative effect of machinery and of life in vast built-up areas on the person . . .

Auto-destructive art is art which contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years.

Other forms of auto-destructive art involve manual manipulation.

There are forms of auto-destructive art where the artist has a tight control over the nature and timing of the disintegrative process, and there are other forms where the artist's control is slight.

Materials and techniques used in creating auto-destructive art include: Acid, Adhesives, Ballistics, Canvas, Clay, Combustion, Compression, Concrete, Corrosion, Cybernetics, Drop, Elasticity, Electricity, Electrolysis, Electronics, Explosives, Feed-back, Glass, Heat, Human Energy, Ice, Jet, Light, Load, Mass-production, Metal, Motion Picture, Natural Forces, Nuclear Energy, Paint, Paper, Photography, Plaster, Plastics, Pressure, Radiation, Sand, Solar Energy, Sound, Steam, Stress, Terra-cotta, Vacuum, Vibration, Water, Welding, Wire, Wood.

London, March 10, 1960

IV.

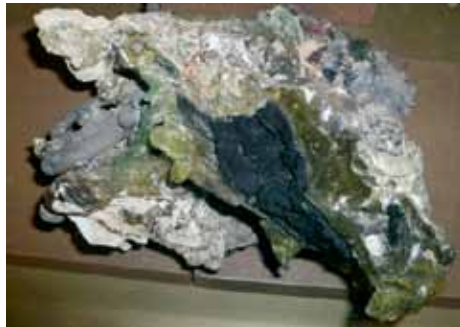


Photo © Ministry of Culture/Directorate General of Antiquities, Lebanon

The National Museum of Lebanon was founded in Beirut in 1937 and first opened in 1942. During the Lebanese Civil War of 1975–90, it was severely damaged due to its location—on the front line separating warring factions in downtown Beirut, an area known as “Museum alley” that was a checkpoint controlled variously by Lebanese militias, the Syrian army, and the Israeli army. The museum endured shelling, bombing, and flooding throughout the 1980s, when the curators closed it and began to

safeguard the material heritage it contained in various ways. Smaller objects were hidden and stored in the basement, which was walled up, while larger and heavier artifacts, including floor mosaics and sarcophagi, were encased in wood and concrete. After the war, in 1990–91, the discovery was made that a fire in a wing that had been shelled had destroyed documents and records, including maps and photographs, as well as forty-five boxes containing archaeological objects such as those in this notebook that had melted together. In 1999, the museum reopened and still hosts an important collection of antiquities.

No. 13630 is an object resulting of the fusion of metal, ivory, glass, and terracotta objects that happened to be next to each other when a fire burned for long hours in one of the Museum storerooms. Nobody could reach this area and certainly not the first floor where the fire was raging. At this stage it is difficult to identify with certainty, from the terracotta and the ivory shards, the objects that burned. It is also quite impossible to determine the shape of the glass that melted and was combined with the other objects.

(From an e-mail sent by Anne-Marie Afeiche, Curator, Beirut National Museum, DGA, August 4, 2011)



Photo © Ministry of Culture/Directorate General of Antiquities, Lebanon

No. 28108 is a combination of two bronze figurines (one human and one zoomorphic) from Byblos excavation, dating back to the Middle Bronze Age. Of course, the copper-alloy is very badly damaged, but the figurines are identifiable. There is quite a large bibliography concerning these famous Byblos ex-votos.

(From an e-mail sent by Anne-Marie Afeiche, August 4, 2011)

V.



Western Buddha niche after the month-long destruction of the giant 55-meter-high Buddha statue, demolished by an explosion on March 12, 2001, in Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan. Photo Yazhou Zou © ICOMOS Deutsches Nationalkomitee, 2002



Fragments of the Eastern Buddha, Bamiyan. Photo Bert Praxenthaler © ICOMOS Deutsches Nationalkomitee, 2002

Michael Petzet has visited Bamiyan often over the past years. To describe that situation, he wrote:

In the endless history of destruction and decay afflicting the historic and artistic testimonies of mankind, the blowing-up by the Taliban of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, central Afghanistan, in March 2001 was a devastating act of iconoclasm, pointing to the various risks and threats with which our cultural heritage is confronted today. Without a thorough investigation of the site, one had at first to assume that after the destruction of these famous monuments, located in the middle of a spectacular cultural landscape, only rubble and dust would remain. Under these circumstances, opinions at a UNESCO seminar in Kabul in May 2002 were split in two directions: preserving what was left of the Buddhas after their destruction, or reconstructing them to their prior state. Additional proposals included a project by the Afghan sculptor Amanullah Haiderasad

to reconstruct one of the Buddhas in traditional techniques, i.e. hewn from the rock and coated with clay plaster, and one by the Japanese media artist Hiro Yamagata to create an enormous laser project with thirteen Buddhas.

The first mission of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to Bamiyan in July 2002 focused for the time being solely on practical technical solutions to secure the existing remains. We were surprised to discover that in the niches that had housed the statues there was not just sand and indefinable debris, but the entire material of which the statues consisted before they were blown up: about 1,600 cubic meters of debris with rock fragments of the Western Buddha (height 55 meters) and 400 cubic meters of debris with fragments of the Eastern Buddha (height 38 meters), which had to be salvaged layer by layer and assigned to the various parts of the original statues.

Almost ten years after that first ICOMOS mission we have made considerable progress thanks to funds provided by the German Foreign Office and by UNESCO. In cooperation with colleagues from RWTH Aachen, TU Munich and Afghan colleagues, all identifiable small and large fragments weighing up to 60 tons have been recovered and stored in specially erected shelters to protect them against weathering. This enormous archive of fragments can be classified according to their original position through various procedures such as geological and geomagnetic prospection of the rock structure. After the removal of the debris, the giant feet of the Western Buddha are once again visible and the niche of the Eastern Buddha, with many original remains in situ, has been stabilized. This niche and the associated caves and wall paintings can be presented to future visitors, together with an exhibition of fragments in the partly reconstructed lower caves. Apart from two sensational finds of Buddhist relics, we now have a precious archive of about 10,000 plaster fragments from the surfaces of both statues. Through the scientific investigation of these and other remains a wealth of scientific insights have been gained, helping to date the statues to between the mid-sixth and early seventh centuries.

(From an e-mail sent by Michael Petzet, President of the German National Committee of ICOMOS, September 20, 2011)

VI.



Photo © Michael Rakowitz



Photo © Michael Rakowitz

These are images of artist Michael Rakowitz's installation *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist (Recovered, Missing, Stolen Series)* at the Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah Art Museum, in 2007. The objects on the five-meter-long table are made out of Middle Eastern packaging, newspapers, and glue and reproduce looted ancient Mesopotamian artifacts that were in the collection of the National Museum of Iraq, originally founded in 1926, closed during the first Gulf War, and re-opened in 2000 until 2003, when a tremendous looting of antiquities took place after the arrival of U.S. troops in Baghdad. The museum is supposed to reopen now, in November 2011.

Rakowitz writes:

The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist unfolds as a narrative about artifacts stolen from the National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad, in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of April 2003; the current status of their whereabouts; and the series of events surrounding the invasion, the plundering and related protagonists. The centerpiece of the project is an ongoing series of sculptures that represent an attempt to reconstruct the looted archaeological artifacts.

The name comes from the direct translation of Aj-ibur-shapu, the ancient Babylonian processional way that ran through the Ishtar Gate. A series of drawings tell how the gate was excavated in Iraq in 1902-14 by German archaeologist Robert Koldewey and then put on permanent display at the Pergamon Museum, Berlin. In the 1950s, the Iraqi government rebuilt the gate; nearby stands a reconstruction of ancient Babylon, created by Saddam Hussein as a monument to his sovereignty. Today the reconstructed Ishtar Gate is the site most frequently photographed by U.S. servicemen in Iraq.

Reconstructions are made from the packaging of Middle Eastern foodstuffs and local Arabic newspapers, moments of cultural visibility found in cities across the U.S. The objects were created with assistants using the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute database and Interpol's website. This exhibition continues a commitment to recuperate the more than 7,000 objects whose whereabouts remain unknown. Beside each full-scale reconstruction, a museum label lists factual details about the lost object. They sit on a long continuous table whose shape derives from the Processional Way.

Other drawings reveal further narratives, including that of Dr. Donny George, former Director of the National Museum in Baghdad, who worked to recover looted artifacts. Under Hussein, Dr. George worked at archaeological sites to avoid Ba'ath Party meetings and also sidelined as a drummer in a band that specialized in Deep Purple covers. A version of their "Smoke on the Water," commissioned from NY-based Arabic band Ayyoub, provides sound for the exhibition. Under threat, Dr. George and his family fled to Syria and, later, New York, where he was a Visiting Professor in the Department of Anthropology at SUNY Stony Brook until his death in March 2011.

(From an e-mail sent by Michael Rakowitz, September 12, 2011)

VII.



Hannah Ryggen, *Vi lever på en stjerne / We are living on a star*, 1958, 400 × 300 cm

Photo © Utsmykning i Regjeringsbygget, Oslo

I saw this large tapestry in 2010 when I was doing research on Hannah Ryggen with Marta Kuzma. It was bought by the Norwegian government in order to decorate the lobby of a high-rise building in the government quarter in central Oslo.

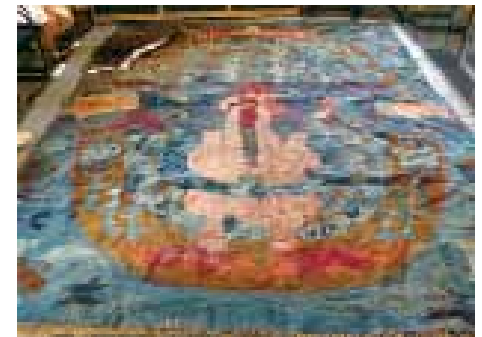


Photo courtesy KORO Norway

On July 22, 2011, at 15:25:22 (CEST), a bomb detonated in Regjeringskvartalet, downtown Oslo, and damaged the tapestry I had seen the year before.

Inger Raknes Pedersen, a conservator at Museumsenteret in Hordaland responsible for the preservation/repair of the tapestry, stated the following in a short telephone call:

The tapestry was mildly damaged after the attack July 22, 2011. Apart from water damage, dust, splinters, and a huge amount of glass dust covering the tapestry, the main damage is a tear in the bottom left corner of the tapestry. The water has now been absorbed and all particles are manually being removed with tweezers. The most urgent repairs are executed and we are now starting the process of returning the tapestry to its original state.

I wonder what “original” means and what the tapestry felt at the time the bomb exploded.

VIII.

This notebook is running out of pages and is coming to an end. It started with a note on silence, suggested by Benjamin’s notes on “The Storyteller.” It ends with notes on silence according to the Cairo artist Anna Boghiguian.

The following three images are untitled drawings by Boghiguian, all made during her travels in 2001 using colored crayon and pencil on 40 × 30 cm sheets of 200-gram Sennelier paper. As is usual for her, she combines drawing and writing into a seamless story. Each is followed by a transcription of the words that she wrote down in the drawings, as a form of both drawing and writing, a form of listening to silence that becomes a form of seeing.

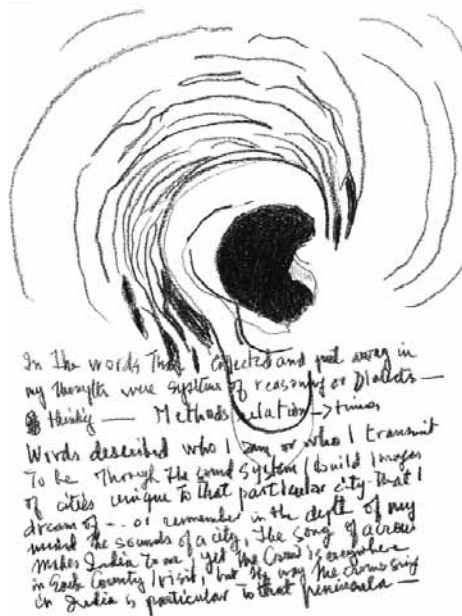


Photo courtesy Anna Boghiguian

*In the words that I collected and put away in my thoughts were systems of reasoning or Dialects—thinking—Methods, relation → times
Words described who I am or who I transmit
To be through the sound system I build images of cities unique to that particular city. That I dream of . . . or remember in the depth of my mind the sounds of a city, the song of a crow makes India to me, yet the Crow is everywhere in each Country I visit, but the way the crows sing in India is particular to that peninsula—*



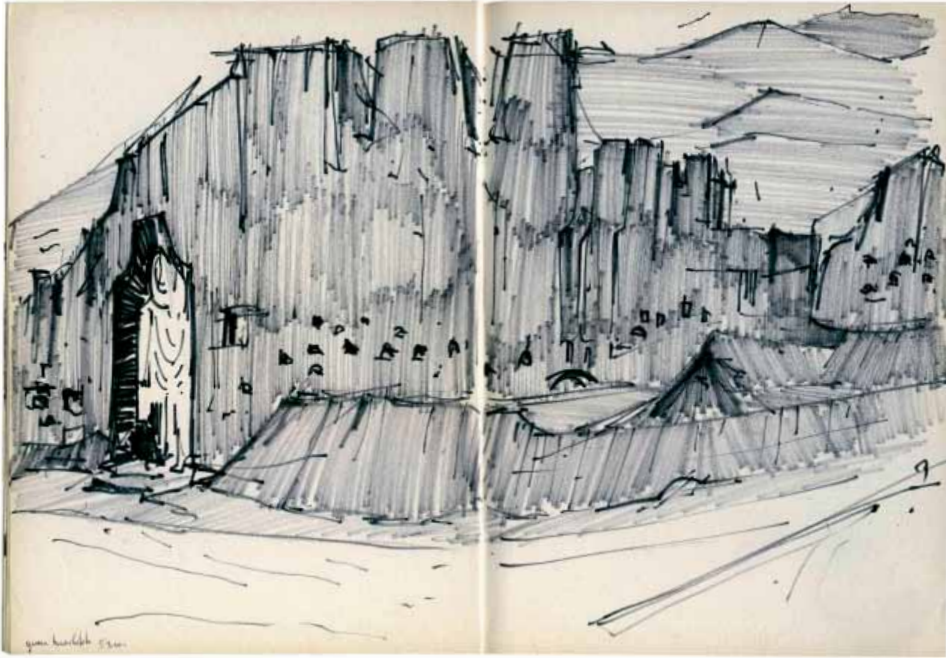
Photo courtesy Anna Boghiguian

*From Ear to ear to eye . . . From ear to ear to
‘They’ ear-dropped into all my
Thoughts, my words and actions
They wove a story that made
Out of me a Criminal, but
What was The Crime Political
Social or Religious, or all Together
a Fabrication I threatened
Something, Somewhere to the established
Systems of politics That power that
controls the system or everybody’s life
I couldn’t throw Stones to the existing
System, as I cannot say I do not have
My own Sins—But neither can I relate
To the woven Story of my existence
That I can’t recognize as I or i.*

*The word created my mind - I hope Took meaning
Stories was/is woven Through The words
that I have the passage from the outer ear to the
Land of my inner Ear to formulate a given
description of a set of action lived experience
Through hearing i created or met The world
by where my dreams & created Those descriptions
of the world within my mind. I stored
the information necessary in my luggage—The
luggage that i was born with.
The Words I heard expressed/explained
to me what the world is all about, and when
I created Stories in my mind I used
Those Vocabulary that was given to me
In a world of Silence there is no
Words, no singing of Birds, nor Traffic
Noise, it is the Silence of lack of
Hearing different from Silence, The
Silence of Infinity*

Photo courtesy Anna Boghiguian

*The word created my mind. Images Took meaning
Stories was/is woven Through The words
that I have the passage from the outer ear to the
Land of my inner Ear to formulate a given
description of a set of action lived experience
Through hearing i created or met The world
by where my dreams and created Those descriptions
of the world within my mind. I stored
the information necessary in my luggage—The
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Silence of Infinity*



Architect Andrea Bruno has worked on the Bamiyan Buddhas conservation projects in Afghanistan since 1960. This drawing of the Western Buddha is from his Afghan notebooks, and was made some time between August 29, 1960, and September 6, 1960. Image courtesy Andrea Bruno

Postscriptum

Finally, I would like you to read the following text, perhaps in a few days' time, since its tone differs substantially from the preceding sections of this notebook. I hope you will not forget. It is a republication, by permission of the author, of Dario Gamboni's article "World Heritage: Shield or Target?," published in 2001 after the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas.*

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (b. 1957) is Artistic Director of dOCUMENTA (13).

* | *Conservation: The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter* 16, no. 2 (2001), pp. 5–11. Gamboni's important book *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Reaktion Books, 1997) also sheds light on our topic.

Dario Gamboni *World Heritage: Shield or Target?*

The concept of "world heritage" is a relatively modern one. As French author and statesman André Malraux wrote in 1957, "for a long time the worlds of art were as mutually exclusive as were humanity's different religions." He noted that "each civilization had its own holy places," which now, however, were "being discovered as those of the whole of humanity." Malraux observed that for the first time, "dying fetishes have taken on a significance they never had before, in the world of the images with which human creativity has defied the passage of time, a world which has at last conquered time."

Although this concept of world heritage is one of the twentieth century, it builds upon older concepts, such as the "historic monument" and "cultural property." It shares with them the idea that certain objects possess a symbolic value that transcends their use and that a collective interest in their preservation takes precedence over owners' rights to use or abuse their property.

The concepts of monuments and heritage originated in cultic objects and practices crucial to the identity and continuity of collective entities such as family, dynasty, city, state, and, most important, nation. The idea of a historic monument implied an awareness of a break with the past and the need for a rational re-appropriation (or a retrospective construction) of tradition. Its artistic dimension further required the autonomy of aesthetic values that had appeared in the Renaissance. The crisis of the French Revolution—which made a historical and artistic interpretation of the material legacy of the *ancien régime* indispensable to its survival—accelerated this evolution. The term "vandalism," with its reference to the devastation of the Roman Empire by "barbarians," condemned attacks against this legacy by excluding their perpetrators from the civilized community.

The art theorist Quatremère de Quincy, protesting against the looting of Italy by the French armies, expressed an early formulation of the idea of world heritage in 1796: "the riches of the sciences and the arts are such only because they belong to the universe as a whole; as long as they are public and well maintained, the country with which they are lodged is irrelevant: it is only the guardian of my museum." In this prophetic view, ownership became stewardship, and rights gave way to duties. However, the "universe" it evoked was still limited to "civilized Europe," and protection ap-

plied essentially to Rome, heir to Greece and the “capital city of the Republic of the arts.”

In the nineteenth century, the development of capitalism, industry, and technology, together with the belief in progress and modernization, led to an enormous increase in the destruction of material culture. Confronted with this destruction, English critic John Ruskin asked from his generation that it become a steward instead of an owner. In reference to historic buildings, he wrote in 1849: “*We have no right whatever to touch them.* They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us.” Ruskin regarded restoration as the worst form of destruction because it meant “a destruction accompanied with false descriptions of the thing destroyed.”

But the construction of a national heritage—as a decisive contribution to the definition, promotion, and celebration of national identity—implied a considerable degree of intervention and was often predicated upon the manipulation or obliteration of earlier, competing cultural, regional, or transnational entities. On a larger scale, colonialism, ethnology, and the development of museums encouraged the destruction, the selective preservation, and the appropriation and concentration in the West of relics from the material culture of the whole world.

A growing consensus about the importance of cultural heritage and the necessity to protect it was finally prompted by the two world wars, unprecedented in their inclusion of civil targets and means of destruction. Cultural heritage thus became included in the attempts to achieve an international management of conflicts and to limit the damages and sufferings inflicted by wars.

International Protections

Measures for the protection of cultural heritage were adopted in the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, but they had little effect during the First World War. Nonetheless, by then, “vandalism” had become an argument of propaganda, and the parties in conflict accused each other of intentional destructions. Other attempts at heritage protection followed, such as the Pact of Washington in 1935 (also known as the Roerich Pact) and the creation of a commission by the League of Nations in 1938.

The most important breakthrough came after the Second World War, in the context of the new international treaties and institutions, with the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 (the Hague Convention). Its text made the idea of world heritage a central argument for the adop-

tion of international rules. It stated clearly that “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the whole world.”

In the 1960s and 1970s, UNESCO adopted several recommendations and two conventions dealing with the protection of cultural property. The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property reflected the expansion of the notion of cultural heritage and the construction of its national versions in developing countries. The 1968 Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works and the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage were in response to the impact of the worldwide expansion of technological progress and modernization in a time of peace. The introduction to the 1972 Convention declared that while the responsibility for ensuring conservation of the elements of world heritage situated in its territory lies primarily with each state, “it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate in ensuring the conservation of a heritage which is of universal character.” A World Heritage Committee was made responsible for the establishment, updating, and publication of a World Heritage List and a World Heritage in Danger List. The protection of heritage benefited increasingly from private institutions and nongovernmental organizations such as the World Monuments Fund, created in 1965, and, more recently, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), formed in 1996 by the International Council on Archives, the International Council of Museums, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Federation of Library Associations.

The creation of the ICBS followed the war in the former Yugoslavia, which was an internal rather than an international conflict and which was rooted in competing claims about identity, turning the elimination of cultural property into a major weapon instead of a by-product of military operations. The conflict prompted a critical assessment of the Hague Convention and resulted in the Second Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

At the conference on the Second Protocol in 1999, the director-general of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, noted that the recent assaults on the heritage were “part of the attack on the people themselves” and left an enduring trauma “because of the much greater difficulty of people’s rehabilitation when everything dear and known to them has been swept away.” The Second Protocol extends application of the

Hague Convention to internal conflicts and takes into account progress in international humanitarian law, such as the statutes for the International Criminal Court, which make crimes against cultural property an extraditable offense. It also plans to place under enhanced protection cultural property designated as “of the greatest importance for humanity” and to elect a committee in a manner that ensures “an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world.”

The Impact of World Heritage

What has been the impact of the concept of world heritage on attacks against art and cultural property? To answer that question would require a long inquiry, complicated by the fact that for all its protective intent, the notion and its expansion are part of a process of modernization and globalization that has considerable destructive implications. In a sense, “world heritage” is an ambulance that follows an army and tries to precede it.

The summary account given above can suggest that all would be well if the international measures adopted for the protection of cultural heritage could be implemented. But although things would certainly be better, there are more fundamental problems. One of them is the ambivalent character of listing. Claiming for certain objects a special attention and protection has the simultaneous and sometimes more real effect of abandoning other objects to environmental, economic, or political hazards. This character can be minimized, but it is inevitable to the extent that preservation and destruction are two sides of the same coin. “Heritage” results from a continuous process of interpretation and selection that attributes to certain objects (rather than to others) resources that postpone their degradation. Quatremère de Quincy and Ruskin tended to advocate a sort of passive preservation. However, we have come to recognize that designating something as heritage is a critical act, leaving no object untransformed.

This reality gives a great weight to the author and to the criteria of this selection, particularly when there exist competing authorities about, and definitions of, a given heritage. In this sense, the concept of world heritage suffers from the fact that it amplifies an idea originating in the West and tends to require an attitude toward material culture that is also distinctly Western in origin, as critics of the “religion” or “cult” of heritage point out. For French architectural historian Françoise Choay, the “ecumenical expansion of heritage practices” is supported by the globalization of Western values and references, and this worldwide conversion is fraught with difficulties, resistance, and

misunderstandings. And while “cultural consumption”—for instance, by tourists—is often crucial in providing the incentive and the means for preservation, it can result in the physical and intellectual destruction of the cultural objects being “consumed.”

David Lowenthal—author of *The Past Is a Foreign Country* and *Possessed by the Past*—also ties the particular focus of preservation to the global diffusion of nationalism and capitalism, which makes “material relics precious symbols of power and icons of identity.” While recognizing the benefits of material preservation, he emphasizes its costs, contradictions, and problems—for instance, the segregation of the past and the stress engendered by multiple claimants, since “a material relic can be in only one place at a time.” He also reproaches it with excluding other ways of coming to terms with a legacy (more common in other cultures), such as preserving fragments, representations, or processes rather than products. Even if they are meant metaphorically, the terms *cultural property* and *cultural heritage* connote physicality and ownership, suggesting that collective memory is supported primarily by tangible goods. Professor Frank Matero notes that “for some traditional societies, the concepts and practices of conservation are often viewed as antithetical to the role of continuing traditions.” But that tradition is dynamic, he adds, and even when conservation professionals intervene as cultural “outsiders,” they can shape conservation treatments and policies in a “culturally appropriate” way—that is, in accordance with the beliefs and values of the relevant groups. However, what if there are conflicting beliefs and values, or if those beliefs require material elimination rather than preservation?

The Buddhas of Bamiyan

Major steps in the protection of cultural heritage often follow the acknowledgment of failures. A more recent case in point could be the Taliban’s decision to eliminate all pre-Islamic artifacts in Afghanistan—and especially their destruction of the two fifth-century giant statues of Buddha located in Bamiyan. These acts were condemned by international institutions as an assault on world heritage—the General Assembly of the United Nations termed them an “irreparable loss for all mankind”—but they could in no way be prevented. As a result, UNESCO has established a special policy to rescue as much Afghan heritage as possible, supporting nonprofit organizations working to take cultural objects into safe custody.

As with many earlier iconoclastic actions, there are diverse and often contradictory indications about the Taliban’s motivations and

purposes. Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar's edict of February 26, 2001, stated that the statues "should be destroyed so that they are not worshipped now or in the future." This is consistent with the general ban on images, including family photographs, imposed upon the Afghan population by the Taliban rulers, whose ultraconservative culture is influenced by their Pashtun ethnic origin and their adherence to the Wahhabi strain of Sunni Islam. The official religious motive must therefore possess some relevance; according to one source, a visit to the Bamiyan statues by Italian Buddhists triggered the decision, and it is more generally noted that Taliban clerics had objected to pre-Islamic figures on display in the briefly reopened National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul.

However, no one could ignore the fact that the Buddhas at Bamiyan had lost their religious function over a millennium ago, and that other Islamic authorities and countries unequivocally protested against their elimination. Moreover, the Taliban's own official position previously had been to protect Afghanistan's cultural heritage; in July 1999, Mullah Omar had issued a decree inspired by international conventions.

Other factors must therefore have been involved—some regarding military operations and internal politics, others regarding international relationships. The Bamiyan province houses the Afghan Shiite Muslim minority, and in the months and weeks preceding the edict, it had changed hands several times between the Taliban and the opposition. The cave surrounding the largest statue of Buddha had even been used by one of the Taliban's opponents to store ammunition, until the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH), an organization created in 1994, had obtained the removal of this hazard.

There are several international factors to consider. According to some commentators, the order to destroy idols served to cover up the widespread smuggling of valuable pre-Islamic artifacts out of the country, especially toward Pakistan—smuggling that could only be carried out with the connivance of Taliban authorities. But many signs relate the decision to destroy the Buddhas of Bamiyan to the Taliban's frustration at failing to achieve international recognition and to the economic sanctions imposed upon the country by the United Nations Security Council because of its links to Islamic terrorism. Mullah Omar's edict was issued while a SPACH delegation was in the country and during an international conference organized by UNESCO in Paris that was focused on the fate of cultural heritage in Central Asia.

The Taliban's failure to obtain recognition by the United Nations—which, by the way, made it impossible to nominate the Bamiyan Buddhas for the World Heritage List—weakened the position of the moderates among them, who had obtained the reopening of the National Museum in Kabul. It may also have turned the concern for the statues

expressed by the international community, whose ostracism the Taliban resented, to the monuments' disadvantage. Returning or reducing the Buddhas to their original religious function (against all evidence to the contrary)—and exercising upon them the most radical right of the owner—amounted to a provocative affirmation of sovereignty, not only upon the territory and the people but upon the values.

If this interpretation is correct, the Taliban refused to take part in the world cult evoked by Malraux, instead subjecting it to the primacy of their understanding of Islam. This meant defining the Buddhas as idols but attacking them as works of art and icons of cultural heritage. A Taliban envoy later declared that the decision had been made "in a reaction of rage after a foreign delegation offered money to preserve the ancient works at a time when a million Afghans faced starvation." The Taliban's disingenuous expressions of surprise at the outrage caused by their act—Mullah Omar was quoted as making the typically iconoclastic statement "We're only breaking stones"—can also be understood as a criticism of Western materialism. This criticism is typical of a movement that, in the words of one commentator, "draws vitality from the perceived evils of foreign cultural imperialism."

Like the emblem developed in the twentieth century to signal monuments worthy of special protection, the notion of world heritage, intended as a shield, may instead act as a target. This is hardly surprising. The history of iconoclasm shows abundantly that the act of symbolizing—tying certain objects to certain values—sometimes has contradictory effects. It recommends certain objects to the care of those who share these values but attracts the aggression of those who reject them or who feel rejected by them. In 1915, Hungarian historian Julius von Vègh wrote that "even our age of rational thinking and middle-class self-control" did not prevent art from being endangered, "all the more as it stands today more than ever at the center of interest of all civilized people, a world of its own, a guarantee for the modern spirit and thus, at the same time, its Achilles heel, the point at which the cultivated may most easily be touched."

Within Western societies today, attacks against works of art often spring from situations or feelings of exclusion and from the absence of access to legitimate means of expression. On the world level, the real success of the idea of world heritage will depend upon the degree to which the universalism born of European Enlightenment comes to be perceived as truly universal, rather than appearing as a new form of colonialism or the cultural face of economic globalization. This cannot be provided by Malraux's "imaginary museum"—a "world of images" unified and devoid of conflicts. Instead, what we will need is a forum in which several worlds, with differing visions of heritage or legacy, can come into contact, communicate, and negotiate those differences.

100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken

Nº040: Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

On the Destruction of Art—or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing / Über die Zerstörung von Kunst – oder Konflikt und Kunst, oder Trauma und die Kunst des Heilens

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Installationsansicht mit Wilhelm Loth, *Signal anthropomorph*, 1960/61, and /
und Alicia Penalba, *Grande Ailée*, 1960–63 (detail / Detail), photo /

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Friedrichsplatz 18, 34117 Kassel | Germany / Deutschland

Tel. +49 561 70727-0 | Fax +49 561 70727-39 | www.documenta.de

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Carolyn

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