

SUMMARY

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A NOMADIC (ANTI)MONUMENT
IN A CONSTELLATION OF METAPHORS:
'WHITE PENETRATION' OF (MEMORY) SPACE

This article aims at distinguishing and presenting a so-far unnamed type of monuments, which – in contrast to traditional monuments erected in concrete locations permanently – wander and travel, interact not only with the inhabitants of a particular area, but also with its history and natural environment. This phenomenon, visible relatively not for long, will be discussed on several examples, both realised, and remaining in the phase of projects and ideas: 'Wandering buoy' by a Berliner duo Anne Peschken and Marek Pisarsky (Urban Art); three projects by a German duo Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz: 'Klinker-Schiff', 'Monument of the Grey Buses' ('Denkmal der Grauen Busse') and 'The Floating Towers'; 'Lenin on Tour' by Rudolf Herz; 'David (inspired by Michelangelo)' by Serkan Özkaya and the wandering sofa by Josef Trattner. At the same time, in order to emphasise the differences between individual artists' concepts, I will preliminarily systemise the monuments within the type distinguished by me.

As its theoretical framework, the present discussion takes, among others, the notion of nomadism by Deleuze and Guattari, understood as a critical and continuous train of thought: perpetual desertion of a given place, void of pretensions, taming, divisions and centres to be demarcated.

The term *white penetration* used in the present article's title was taken from Kenneth White. White admits that he had discovered this metaphor in the deliberations of an American writer William Carlos Williams, who wrote that a place is necessary but not to settle and lock there, but to have the possibility of *white penetration*. The term's meaning in the poet's philosophy is more-less equal to source experience, which aims at eliminating cultural and cognitive stereotypes. This understanding of *white penetration* seems to define accurately the condition and operations of *nomadic monuments*, which stop in a certain place only for a while, interact with the audience and inhabitants, in order to question the world-view schemata and leave a scratch on the common ways of interpreting the reality.

We live in times described as the postmemory era, in which the processes of forgetting and remembering are inextricably interlinked. The mobility of people does not support memory. Paradoxically, it is supported by the mobility of monuments; therefore, I would like to pose a thesis that nomadic monuments constitute an artists' response to both forgetting and remembering by means of traditional monuments, which become invisible with time and with their constant presence 'exempt' the inhabitants of a given place from remembering. *Nomadic monuments*, marking selected places and based on the

dialectics of presence and absence, perform the *white penetration* of (memory) space and question every constant point of view, activating the audience and inviting them to interact intensively. *Nomadic monuments* do not stun their viewers with loftiness and monumentality of form, which usually overawes and leads to silence. Artists and volunteers collect individual stories of passers-by to cast doubt on the one and only version of history and democratize the narrative, usually preimposed. In this context, nomadism is aimed at creating networks of meaning and establishing relations.

Nicolas Bourriaud places human relations at the heart of the theory he calls relational aesthetics. Bourriaud classifies traditional understandings of 'the arts' as semantic leftovers from classical art history, which divides its content into the separate fields of painting, sculpture and architecture. Today, there is a need for different terms, as art is becoming an activity, where the most vital thing is an interaction with the world using signs, forms, actions and objects. Bourriaud proposes a global dialogue, what he calls *altermodernism*, a term taken to mean a set of actions and measures that allow us to stand against tradition and standardisation, also known as globalisation, since we experience both of them as foreign and imposed from without. Thus the most coherent artistic attitude is to be a wanderer. This can manifest itself in a number of forms and actions. He particularly favours the word 'radicant', which refers to being a vagabond or nomad, with those terms being indicative of penetration at many different levels, such as geographical space, historical dimensions and cultural symbols. There is a meandering, non-linear and nonhomogeneous quality to both: altermodernism and vagabondism. It is meant to be a spacetime nomadism rather than an orderly sequence of one action following another. In this way the artwork will be judged based solely on the human relations it presents, initiates or sustains. It is the kind of artwork that relational art might produce, a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space, as was usually the case in the past. This is precisely how *nomadic monuments* work, engaging human relations, bringing about intellectual exchange, initiating a process of so-called *white penetration* and acting as a heterotopia. The artist in this scenario appears to have the characteristics of a vagabond or a nomad who sets off on a peregrination through time and space and embraces an allegory of the perpetual wanderer, understood in the way Deleuze and Guattari would put it, as the persistent questioning, continuous reflection and constant labour of a diligent brain.