

INACTIVITY – BETWEEN AESTHETIC PRACTICE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGE

ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, 11–12 July 2024



Mladen Stilinović, Artist at Work, 1978 (detail), 8 b/w photographs © Branka Stipančić, Zagreb

A Transdisciplinary Workshop of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO), University of Greifswald, in Cooperation with the ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

Organised by Oliver Aas, Hana Gründler, Antje Kempe and Barbara Kristina Murovec

Inactivity – Between Aesthetic Practice and Socio-Political Challenge

The workshop examines artistic, aesthetic, and philosophical practices of inaction throughout history in response to today's age of hyperactivity and 24/7 accessibility. It would fall far too short to perceive inactivity simply as the opposition of activity, as it encompasses various phenomena such as resistance, omission, and boredom. Equally, it might be limiting to interrogate practices related to inactivity merely as a critique of the modern conceptions of the subject and productivity. Therefore, the aim is to determine whether inaction can be considered as an agent of change, as a progressive form of 'doing' at a time when traditional 'actions' may have become obsolete. The lectures explore and question various modes of inactivity in different cultures and political systems, including those usually considered good (reflection), bad (passivity), and questionable (withdrawal). Understood as a moral and political category, we encourage a broad approach to 'inactivity' which is becoming a key aesthetic and epistemological term for the twentieth and twenty-first century.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 11 July

14:00–14:30 Hana Gründler and Antje Kempe

Welcome and Introduction

From Withdrawal to Distraction

Chair: Simon Godart

14:30–15:00 Helen Lewandowski

‘Powerful’ and ‘Interesting’: Photojournalism and Aesthetics in Luc Delahaye’s Work

15:00–15:30 Jakub Marek

The Right to Be Distracted. On the Problem of Inactivity, Focus, and Distraction

Abandonment and Evasion

Chair: David Ventura

16:00–16:30 Ewa Macura-Nnamdi

Abandoned Lives: On Inaction in Wolfgang Fischer’s Styx

16:30–17:00 Wing Ki Lee

Tang Ping and Contemporary Sinophone: Subconsciousness, Subtext, and Subdue

Productive Inactivity?

Chair: Emir Yigit

17:30–18:00 Tobias Ertl

Artistic Inactivism: Conceptual Art and Modernity’s Productivist Paradigm

18:00–18:30 Anne Gräfe

The Ambiguity of In/Activity in John Knights “The Right to be Lazy”

Evening Lecture

Moderated by Hana Gründler

19:00 D. Graham Burnett

Apophatic Activism. Science, Politics, and Silence in the 1960s

Friday, 12 July

Retraction

Chair: Valerio Aparo

9:30–10:00 Michael Krimper

“Le désœuvré, l’oisif”: The Unemployed Writer from Benjamin to Bataille

10:00–10:30 Amanda Wasielewski

Never Work Again: Creative Labor, AI and Radical Retreat

Apathy and Resistance

Chair: Oliver Aas

11:00–11:30 Josip Klaić

Gorgona Group: Inactivity as Resistance to the Socialist Regime

11:30–12:00 Renata Salecl

Apathy, Inactivity, and Alienation: The Three Virtues of Neo-Liberalism

On Doing Nothing and Slowing Down

Chair: Michal Zechariah

13:30–14:00 Ellie Power

Aimless Drifting and Slowness in Urban Films

14:00–14.30 J. Igor Fardin and Richard Lee Peragine

(In)activity and Architecture: “doing nothing apart from...”

(Not) Sleeping

Chair: Magdalena Nieslony

15:00–15:30 Angelica Stathopoulos

Bad Sleep as Moral Good

15:30 Anne Glassner, Performance and Lecture

Active Sleep! I'm Going to Rest

ABSTRACTS

‘Powerful’ and ‘Interesting’: Photojournalism and Aesthetics in Luc Delahaye’s Work

Helen Lewandowski, Royal Collection Trust

In 2003, photographer Luc Delahaye stopped working as a photojournalist, dramatically announcing his break with the industry by way of a series of photographs reframed from past work. Controversially, the series, *History*, consisted of long-format documentary war photographs reframed as grand tableaux. Rather than the quick 35mm or digital camera often used for photojournalistic work to record an event, Delahaye used a medium-format, Linhof panoramic camera to record the landscape; rather than capturing the action of a wartime scene, Delahaye captured scenes of pointed inactivity. Delahaye’s style became characterized under the umbrella of ‘Late War Photography’: photographing ‘after’ the event has happened and action has subsided, usually with an emphasis on landscape and classical compositions. This style is directly opposed to editor Harold Evans’ (by way of Henri Cartier Bresson) concept of a ‘traditional idea of a decisive moment as a news climax’.

In this paper, I explore Delahaye’s notorious break from photojournalism as both a sociopolitical and aesthetic strategy of inactivity in contrast to the industry. Related to this, I consider how photojournalistic and documentary photography function within two dialectically opposed aesthetic strategies: the *interesting* (perceived as politically inactive) and the *powerful* (perceived as active). Borrowing from Sianne Ngai’s concept, the *interesting* is information presented as art-objects, inspiring contemplation in lieu of action; it lacks the emotional address of traditional and iconic photojournalism. I describe how the detached, knowingness of the interesting can productively clash with the desire for a utilitarian, imagined political action or impact of *powerful* photojournalism, and, in many ways, underscores the paradoxical humanism of contemporary photography.

Helen Lewandowski earned her PhD in the History of Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. Her research examines distribution and aesthetic changes in photojournalism. She is currently a photography curator and lecturer based in London.

The Right to be Distracted. On the Problem of Inactivity, Focus, and Distraction

Jakub Marek, Charles University Prague

The concept of inactivity invites two principal definitions: on the one hand, in the Western tradition, it is the contemplative life, *vita contemplativa*, as opposed to the active life, *vita activa*. Non-activity here is non-interference in the world. However, as can be seen, such activity is primarily a practice, while non-activity is not inactivity, not doing nothing. The second semantic context of inactivity is therefore the resignation from active participation in both practical and contemplative life. Of course, the question arises as to what such resignation looks like. I suggest that both accounts are deficient. If we consider what examples of inactivity are currently on offer, they often involve specific – activities. Watching television or scrolling through social media is a conscious activity, a certain practice, but one that receives a similar condemnation as the medieval mind's prosecution of *acedia*, of morbid laziness. Today, procrastination is similarly condemned – in similarly moralistic language. And the notion of procrastination sums up the particular problem of contemporary “inactivity”: it is an activity that deserves condemnation, because it is not the normatively “correct” activity. Doing nothing is doing what one ought not to do, since one ought to be properly active. In my paper, I want to analyse two basic categories in relation to which it makes sense to talk about procrastination and inactivity in today's world, especially with regard to social media: focus and distraction. I want to argue that appropriate activities are constructed as centripetally focused on the individual and her self-development, while condemned activities are understood as centrifugal distractions that make the person lose the focus, the centre of gravity of her “self-creation”.

In this sense, activity and inactivity are important categories of contemporary philosophical anthropology. They testify to the constant dialectical tension between the demand, the pressure for a concentrated life, and the complementary need to live distractedly, to evade or avoid such (over)concentrated life. Social networks are a major tool of distraction but, paradoxically, also participate in the propagation of a Nietzschean guilty conscience of doing nothing. In the 19th century Paul Lafargue called for the right to be lazy. Today, we might consider calling for the need to recognize a right to a third kind of life: not only *vita activa* and *contemplativa*, but also *vita distracta*.

Jakub Marek received his PhD in 2010 at Charles University for his thesis on the philosophical-anthropological interpretation of Kierkegaard's work. In the same year he became an assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague. In 2017 he became the head of the Department of Anthropology and in 2020 the Department of Philosophy at the same faculty. His main research interests are in the continental philosophical tradition, with a focus on 19th and 20th century German philosophy and especially on the philosophical works of S. Kierkegaard, F.G.W. Hegel, F. Nietzsche, K. Jaspers and J. Patočka. In approaching the philosophical tradition, he employs the hermeneutic interpretation of investigating the effects of a philosophical work, the problem of the implicit reader and the authorial strategies of influencing the reader. In recent years, he has expanded his research interest especially to the problem of social networks and the ethics of old age. He is the author of two book monographs: a dissertation on Kierkegaard and an interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* through the prism of the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave. He is also the author of more than 30 independent studies.

Abandoned Lives: On Inaction in Wolfgang Fischer's Styx

Ewa Macura-Nnamdi, University of Silesia

On 14 June, 2023, a fishing trawler with up to 750 people on board, including around 100 children who are said to have travelled, together with women, in the hold, capsized and sank off south-western Greece, about 80 km away from the town of Pylos. 104 people were rescued; 82 confirmed dead; the rest were missing, but have been presumed dead. None of the authorized and responsible bodies (the Greek Coastguard, in particular) did anything to assist the vessel in distress, although the Greek Coastguard ordered two merchant vessels sailing in the trawler's vicinity, to supply it with water and food. This incident is just one in the ongoing series of similar incidents although it might be more conspicuous than others given the cruelty behind the initial intention on the part of the coastguard to protect life, and the subsequent refusal to save it. What these incidents have in common, though, is the way inaction is routinely mobilized in the service of border regimes, yet not as an individual and individualized form of conduct

but as a systemic response to the so-called refugee crisis. This paper offers a reading of Wolfgang Fischer's 2018 film *Styx* and aims to examine how maritime crossings undertaken by refugees take the politics of inaction beyond the resistance/cooptation paradigm revealing, instead, how inaction is already inscribed within legal-political regimes as one of their perfectly legitimate enactments. For this purpose, I look at *abandonment* as a manifestation of inaction and a political technology used to regulate unwanted mobility and bodies. Drawing on Jean Luc Nancy's "Abandoned Being" and Achille Mbembe's recent theorization of abandonment, I hope to probe the political valences *abandonment* brings in its wake rendering inaction not an agent of change (however construed) but an agent reproducing the very (legal/political) order in which it unfolds.

Ewa Macura-Nnamdi is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Literary Studies (University of Silesia). Her research interests include refugee studies, oceanic studies and environmental humanities. She is currently working on a book provisionally titled *Fictions of Water: Refugees and the Sea*. She has recently co-edited a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on Water.

Tang Ping and Contemporary Sinophone: Subconsciousness, Subtext, and Subdue

Wing Ki Lee, Hong Kong Baptist University

Tang Ping, also known as the Lie-flat movement in the context of China and being gradually trafficking to other parts of the contemporary Sinophone, is contingent to the global definition of inactivity as sociopolitical-cultural responses to authoritarian regime and contemporary uncertainties. Contrarily, *Tang Ping* is contradicted to national and global aspirations based on hyper-capitalist thinking and ethos in economic development; whilst *Tang Ping* is currently evolving and popularising as a zeitgeist at the margins of the PRC: the margins are youth, ethnic minorities, geopolitical margins such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, women and queers, and many others in combating mainstream, patriotic and patriarchal, and capitalist and communist ideologies. Somaticly described, the term and the phenomenon are charged with subversive

ideological connotations, that is departed from *Wu Wei* (effortless action) from ancient Daoist's virtue.

Tang Ping is a shield in combating global challenges that demonstrates how social beings set up boundary, role and outlook to these challenges with both optimistic and pessimistic perspectives. *Tang Ping*, an informed knowledge and everyday life practice, is subversive although it is not permissible to express who, how and what the (in)action subverts to in the public domain. *Tang Ping*, the author argues, should not be considered as reaction nor lip-service to automation at work brought by technology but a robust system across generations and geopolitical differences that has the potential to subvert mainstream ideologies. In the paper, the author will explore three conceptual layers of *Tang Ping* in contemporary Sinophone of the subconsciousness and expression, the subtext and the unspoken, and the subdued and control. *Tang Ping* creates new headspaces amongst contemporary Chinese to rethink and negotiate the spoken and the unspoken, and scaffolds new political thinking, social structure and cultural expression. The author will return to artistic and cultural productions in the contemporary Sinophone to contextualise the aforementioned.

Wing Ki Lee is an artist-researcher based in Hong Kong. His research focuses on protested imageries resulted from grassroot social movement in Hong Kong and histories of photography in the Chinese context. He is an Associate Professor at the Academy of Visual Arts, and Associate Dean at the School of Creative Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University.

Artistic Inactivism: Conceptual Art and Modernity's Productivist Paradigm

Tobias Ertl, Fribourg University

Arguably, the paradigm of *vita activa* (Arendt 1970) is what unites the social practices of art, labor, and public life in modernity despite their ontological differences. 20th century avantgarde movements like productivism and conceptualism can be interpreted as attempts to overcome art's contemplative status, its seclusion from general social production and activity. In its most ideological versions, conceptualism reiterates the

productivist fantasy of a seamless fusion of artistic and social technologies, updated for the information age. The figure of the artist as *Homo Arbiter Formae* (Burnham 1968) – heir of the *Homo Faber* of industrial productivism – reveals how deeply conceptualism is embedded in capitalist and masculinist ideologies of labor and creativity.

From the more politicized strands of Conceptual Art, artistic activism has emerged as a prominent discourse in recent decades and years (Marchart 2019; Sholette 2022; Kester 2023). The epistemic and ontological implications of the *form* of activism and its indebtedness to the productivist paradigm of modernity often remain unquestioned however in these contexts. In my contribution, I wish to offer some reflections on the continuities and discontinuities between conceptualism and contemporary artistic activism. I claim that the inclusion of activist practices into the museum institution during the last two decades not only polishes the institution's public image by conforming to their self-image as radically democratic; more subtly, it also aligns the institution's intrinsic capitalist-productivist logic with artistic practices which claim to make art a vehicle of social change.

Against this backdrop I propose to discuss conceptual gestures of inactivity and ask whether they can be seen as alternatives to the hegemony of activism within contemporary political conceptualism. For this purpose, I want to look at work which problematizes the relation between artwork as a form of activity and the productivist paradigm of modern labor: Pilvi Takala's performance-based video-installation "The Trainee" (2008), Maria Eichhorn's exhibition "5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours" at Chisenhale Gallery (2016) and Lain Iwakura and Jeronimo Voss' exhibition project "ATC Against the Clock" at Klingental Basel (2024). All these works, I will argue, deal with temporalities of inactivity not as passivity or leisure (the mere flipside of activism and productivity) but as critical models for a different rationale of production.

Tobias Ertl is an art historian based in Basel. His work is situated at the intersections of contemporary art, social theory and materialist philosophy. Currently he works as a postdoctoral researcher in the SNSF project "Real Abstractions: Reconsidering Realism's Role for the Present" at Fribourg University.

The Ambiguity of In/Activity in John Knight's "The Right to be Lazy"

Anne Gräfe, Leuphana University

With the title of his artwork "The Right to be Lazy", artist John Knight quotes Paul Lafargue's 1880 manifesto of the same name. Knight's Right to be Lazy is a flower circle with wild plants in front of the entrance to the *Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart*. The former director acquired the installation in 2008, whereupon the museum received numerous letters of complaint: Why would this wasteland be allowed, couldn't they afford a gardener to do something here instead of being so inactive? 4 Years later, the flower roundel, and with it the endlessness work of inactivity, became the setting for an installation as part of the exhibition by another artist - who erected a tent.

In the outdoor area of the Hamburger Bahnhof, different intrinsic temporalities of inactivity come into contact: Firstly, in the space of art, an aesthetic temporality of inactivity is propagated, which represents an active display of the inaction of human action. Within this museum situation, however, there is also a disregard for the work of art's call for inactivity, and therefore an inactive respect for the work of art's autonomy. Secondly, the public urban space of a former train station forecourt celebrates an inactivity that consists of not building on or interfering with nature in the middle of the city - regardless of the fast pace of urban life and acceleration tendencies of the present. Thirdly, these temporalities of inactivity experienced a call to activity and new description - and thus also belong to the moment of art as an interactive reception reaction. This already shows what I want to talk about: that art that uses strategies such as inactivity, doing nothing, or even boredom is disturbingly disturbing.

So my argument is that in the moment of aesthetic uncertainty it becomes clear, on the one hand, that reason and rationality describe the world, but can never fully grasp it. Something, a surplus, remains uncertain. Art, on the other hand, is never directly knowledge or politics itself, but rather puts us at a reflexive distance from the knowledge we believed to be certain and enables us to experience a different, often more uncertain approach to the world. Based on this "lazy" work by John Knight and its evolution in the years since its installation, my talk aims to show that philosophy, politics and ecology can be experienced differently through art. The task of art is

therefore never per se critical and enlightening, i.e. political. Rather, the many different constellations provide an opportunity to confront and pursue the uncertainties of the world within the framework of aesthetic inactivity.

Anne Gräfe has been a research assistant with Erich Hörl at Leuphana University, Lüneburg since 2022. Before, she worked at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich with Maria Muhle, at the Offenbach University of Art and Design with Juliane Rebentisch, and on the project *Pensées Françaises Contemporaines*, a cooperation with the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) and the Sorbonne (Paris 1). Her doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of Juliane Rebentisch and Andreas Reckwitz, was published in 2024 by Kadmos Verlag Berlin under the title "Langeweile Aushalten – Kontingenzerfahrung in der Gegenwartskunst."

Apophatic Activism. Science, Politics, and Silence in the 1960s

D. Graham Burnett, Princeton University

The laboratory study of ‘attention’ across the first half of the twentieth century established a powerful framework for understanding the human subject. Experiments centering on patterns of stimulus and response tested the ways that human sensory and cognitive capacities could be elicited, assessed, predicted, and ultimately integrated into powerful new military-industrial technologies. This ‘cybernetic’ subject was triggerable and could pull triggers. In this lecture, Burnett will sketch the contours of this important psychological research programme, in order to establish the background for a pair of significant counter-reactions that unfolded across the 1960s — projects that, he will argue, marked major reconceptualization of (negative) agency. Focusing on the ‘Blue Vase’ experiments of the medical researcher Arthur Deikman, and then on the ‘Silent Vigils’ of Santa Barbara Sociologist Charles H. Hubbell, Burnett will sketch the emergence of a specifically ‘apophatic’ attentional programme across the counterculture.

D. Graham Burnett is a writer, teacher, and maker based in New York City. Born in France, he trained in the History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University, and currently holds the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History and History of Science at Princeton University. He is the author of a number of books on technology, nature, and politics from the seventeenth to the twentieth century; and he recently co-edited *Scenes of Attention: Essays on Mind, Time, and the Senses* (Columbia University Press, 2023) as well as *Twelve Theses on Attention* (Princeton University Press, 2022), the latter a manifesto of the ‘Friends of Attention’ coalition. Burnett is associated with the speculative collective ESTAR(SER), and was a 2023 visiting artist at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, Finland.

“Le désœuvré, l’oisif”: The Unemployed Writer from Benjamin to Bataille

Michael Krimper, New York University

In a largely forgotten 1939 paper written in French, titled “*Notes sur les Tableaux parisiens de Charles Baudelaire*,” Walter Benjamin identifies the figure of the modern writer once the bourgeoisie rises to power as “*le désœuvré, l’oisif*,” that is, the unemployed, the idler. Whereas feudal society had attributed to the writer the privilege of leisure, bourgeois society put them out of work. In response, Benjamin argues, Baudelaire sought to transfigure the writer’s idleness and exclusion into the *oeuvre*—to fashion a poetics of *flânerie*, the unemployed writer drifting alone through the ruins of the city, language, history. By thus drawing on the rich semantic range of the French word “*désœuvré*,” Benjamin introduces a third term that suspends the opposition between the German words *Muße* (“leisure”) and *Mußiggang* (“idleness”). For the prefix *dés-* signals here the negation of the *oeuvre*: a work that comes undone as well as the writer whose work paradoxically stems from the absence of work. It is striking how closely Benjamin’s statements resemble Georges Bataille’s contemporary notions of expenditure and unemployed negativity. In fact, Benjamin was scheduled to give a paper on Baudelaire, plausibly this very paper, at the Collège de Sociologie organized by Bataille and Roger Caillois in Paris, before the war cut things short. Moreover, Benjamin’s word play anticipates by nearly a decade Maurice

Blanchot's own formulation of *désœuvrement*, which would become one of his key concepts for tracing an antiwork itinerary of modern writing and would later shape numerous debates around the demand of a "literary communism" or an "inoperative community" (*la communauté désœuvrée*) no longer subordinate to work. In this talk, I propose to sketch the overlooked correspondences between Benjamin and Bataille within this nexus of antiwork writing. I will also bring them into conversation more generally with other approaches to inoperativity ranging from Blanchot to Jean-Luc Nancy to Giorgio Agamben, among others, all of whom broach a radical poetics characterized by unpropertied modes of creating, making, and doing in common.

Michael Krimper is a lecturer in French and the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University. His book, *Out of Work: The Refusal of Literature from Melville to Blanchot* (under advance contract with SUNY Press), examines how an antiwork aesthetics and politics emerges within a transnational spectrum of late modernist writing and theory in postwar France. He is also co-editor of a volume that revisits Samuel Beckett's poetics of failure, titled *Beckett Ongoing: Aesthetics, Ethics, Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). His writing has appeared in *New Literary History*, *diacritics*, *SubStance*, *parallax*, the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, among other venues.

Never Work Again: Creative Labor, AI and Radical Retreat

Amanda Wasielewski, Uppsala University

In 2023, Molly Crabapple released an open letter with the Center for Artistic Inquiry and Reporting against the use of generative AI. She describes how AI training sets are compiled from huge amounts of copyrighted artwork, writing, "This is effectively the greatest art heist in history." The use of artists' work to train AI has become a hot-button issue and lawsuits have been filed by illustrators, comedians, and large image rights holders against the major generative AI players. At stake in these debates is not only intellectual property but issues of labor. Will artists' labor be replaced by generative AI? Concurrent to this, social media trends such as "quiet quitting" and the "soft girl" have

arisen. They are an instinctive reaction against the 24/7 hustle culture that has become the hallmark of social media influencers. Content creation, in other words, seems to have lost its luster. What is the connection between the rise of generative AI and the rejection of contemporary work culture on social media? The tech industry has long led the way in valorizing lack of sleep and constant work as a virtue. Meanwhile the leftwing has revived the idea of “fully automated luxury communism,” i.e., the use of automation to facilitate a life free from work. Embodying the dream of automation in the 1960s, Constant Nieuwenhuys’s utopian project *New Babylon* (1959-1974) proposed a radical architecture where there would be no work—only play and freedom—thanks to automation. The idea was to rid us of the tedious chores of daily life. This logic seems to have been reversed in the age of AI. Today, automation promises to do the creative work while we continue to labor away at the grunt work. As one social media commentator aptly put it, “I want AI to do my dishes, my laundry, my taxes...not my art.” This talk reflects on the issues of labor, automation, and radical refusal of work at stake today in the age of generative AI.

Amanda Wasielewski is an Associate Senior Lecturer of Digital Humanities and Associate Professor of Art History in the Department of ALM (Archives, Libraries, Museums) at Uppsala University. Her writing and research investigate the use of digital technology in relation to art/visual culture and spatial practice. Her recent focus has been on the use of artificial intelligence techniques for the analysis and creation of art and other visual media. Wasielewski is the author of three monographs: *Made in Brooklyn: Artists, Hipsters, Makers, Gentrifiers* (Zero, 2018), *From City Space to Cyberspace: Art, Squatting, and Internet Culture in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021), and *Computational Formalism: Art History and Machine Learning* (MIT Press, 2023). Recent articles address the theoretical issues for photography, art and visual culture that have arisen after the advent of generative AI.

Gorgona Group: Inactivity as Resistance to the Socialist Regime

Josip Klaić, Croatian Academy of Science

After World War II, newly established socialist Yugoslavia underwent a period of great industrial, economic, and social growth during the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, especially in Croatian capital Zagreb, progressiveness manifested itself in the artistically dominant Modernism with the group EXAT 51 (1951-1956) and the New Tendencies exhibition movement (1961-1973). The Gorgona Group (1959-1966), on the other hand, consciously withdrew to the margin of such a society and cultivated a specific expression relating to resignation, pessimism, irony, and nostalgia. The proclamation of their spiritual father, Josip Vaništa, in 1964 was as follows: *Do a little. Do not write too much. Do not read too much. Do not do much. Do not try to know too many people. Do not try to know too much. Continuously reject.* Such an approach – very subversive at the time of socialism – was under constant supervision by the strict regime. Gorgona group members practiced meetings, walks in nature, correspondence and other forms close to the idea of art as life, which caused a lot of suspicion among the public at the time. In one note Vaništa also writes: *In their modest rooms, Gorgona members observe the passing of time.* Inactivity in the private sphere, often characterized by some contemporaries as decadent and bourgeois, was their main tool in resisting the collective socialist progress. Usually, the Group has been connected to Neo-Avant-Garde tendencies and parallel phenomena such as Nouveau réalisme, Zero and Fluxus in past art-historical interpretations. This paper will, however, attempt to accentuate its spiritual proximity to different artistic movement – German Romanticism. The Gorgona Group shares with the Romantics their wish to aestheticize life and blur the borders between art and life, a nostalgic view of the past (in Gorgona's case bourgeois 19th century) and the attempt to find solace by escaping to nature.

Josip Klaić received his master's degree in art history (2016) and archeology (2018) from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Zagreb). During his curatorial internship at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (2018/19), he participated in numerous exhibition projects. He cooperated with several associations

(Bukovac House; Art Workshop Lazareti Dubrovnik; Animafest Zagreb). In 2021, he worked in the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia. Since 2022, he has been an assistant and doctoral student (University of Zadar) at the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters (Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts). He is the author of numerous texts on modern and contemporary art and has curated a few exhibitions. His research area is modern art, Croatian Neo-Avant-Garde, intermediality in art.

Apathy, Inactivity, and Alienation: The Three Virtues of Neo-Liberalism

Renata Salecl, Birkbeck College

Apathy is not only a response to authoritarianism; it is very much linked to the *modus vivendi* of neoliberal ideology. Thus, it is unsurprising that we hear so much about the developed world's increased burnout and compassion fatigue. The lecture will question what is the logic of apathy today. It will analyse the types of apathy we observe in post-socialism and question the difference between apathy, inactivity, and alienation. In conclusion, the lecture will address the idea of the »right to apathy«, which was fashionable in the mid-20th century among some American political theorists and is becoming reinterpreted in our neoliberal times.

Renata Salecl is a Slovenian philosopher and sociologist. She is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, Slovenia and a Professor at the School of Law at Birkbeck College, London, United Kingdom. Renata Salecl has held numerous Visiting Professorships at Cardozo School of Law, New York, Humboldt University, Berlin and Duke University, Durham, among other institutions. Her work is very interdisciplinary and focuses on bringing together law, criminology, the study of political ideologies, and psychoanalysis.

Aimless Drifting and Slowness in Urban Films

Ellie Power, University of Gothenburg

Urbanisation, busy urban landscapes, and the temporalities of city life has perhaps counterintuitively become a common subject matter for filmmakers that have been associated with slow cinema and those who use slow aesthetics. Examining the use of slow aesthetics in cinema depicting urban environments, I will explore how filmmakers have addressed contemporary urban issues like gentrification, isolation, noise, light and air pollutions, and the temporalities of urban life. I argue films using slowness as a tool to depict urban landscapes and lives make visible forms of slow violence (Nixon 2011), highlighting unspectacular and unnewsworthy violence. These films capture dead time (Doane 2002), recording and making visible slow and dispersed form of violence, as well as slow death and decay (Berlant 2011). Moreover, these filmmakers often depict urban workers who are unproductive or underproductive, who respond to the demands of the speed of urban life through inaction, aimlessness, slow walking, and falling asleep in public spaces. While their passivity could be read as a disengagement from politics, such characters can also be read as subverting normative ideas of well-timed bodies (Schoonover 2012). Exploring how these films use slowness as an aesthetic tool to depict slow violence and problematising these aimless characters, I will ask whether slow aesthetic practices and characters in film can be read as a subversive resistance to the accelerated temporality of contemporary urban life.

Ellie Power is a first-year Doctoral Student in Film Studies at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, where she is also lecturing in Film Studies in the Department of Cultural Sciences. Ellie's PhD research project examines the use of slow aesthetics in cinema to represent urban environments.

(In)activity and Architecture: “doing nothing apart from...”

J. Igor Fardin and Richard Lee Peragine, Politecnico di Torino

In 1996, architects Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, were asked to redevelop a public square in Bordeaux. In a gesture picked up by architectural theory (Boano 2017), they refused to design a new square and suggested “doing nothing apart from some simple and rapid maintenance works” (Lacaton and Vassal). The architects refused activity, refused to do and, to recall Bartleby’s famous formula, decided “they would rather not”. This gesture is still relevant, if not more so, today. Faced with an ecological “crisis” it contributed to creating, architecture must question its relation to construction (Malterre-Barthes 2024).

At the same time, Lacaton and Vassal’s inactivity is not a retreat from practice, but rather a different way of doing: a form of unmaking (Neyrat 2019) that, instead of exhausting potentials in a specific act, remains in relation to its own potential-not-to (Agamben 2016). This resistance to the act is particularly important today because it foregrounds an ethics of architecture in the Anthropocene (Holm 2023). In other words, inactivity allows architectural practice to question its own presuppositions and means, rather than posit the climate “crisis” as a call for yet another historical task or project it is called upon to fulfill through the implementation of a will (Nancy 2014).

Given its positive potential, one wonders why Lacaton and Vassal’s inactivity has not become a key reference for architectural practice. Our wager is that it is because this project reveals architecture’s compulsion to do: its being grounded on foundational and programmatic acts. Indeed, severed from the centrality of activity and construction, architecture risks being subsumed by capital *qua* “work of Art” (Agamben 2019), as was the case for many projects of *Architettura Radicale*, thus losing its specificity (Goetz 2011). It is this constitutive limit that our contribution wishes to investigate considering Lacaton and Vassal’s project, its potential and the limits it brings to the fore.

J. Igor Fardin is a doctoral student at the Politecnico di Torino (Italy) in the program of Urban and Regional Development and a student-researcher in philosophy at GCAS. His PhD is dedicated to the study of play as a specific form of spatial use which remains in

relation to an inappropriable by focusing on skateboarding, children's games and the works of Ugo La Pietra. His interests include architecture and art history and theory, contemporary philosophy, theology and psychoanalysis.

Richard Lee Peragine is an architect and PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Development (URD) at the Politecnico di Torino. His doctoral work looks at the relationship between sovereignty and emptiness in the northwesternmost corner of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a way to address the ethics of the project of architecture. His research interests lie in the intersection of architecture, planning, political ecology and contemporary philosophy. Prior to research, he worked in architectural studios in London, Bologna, Berlin and Brussels.

Bad Sleep as Moral Good

Angelica Stathopoulos, ICI Berlin

Even though most people in late capitalism toil to increase both the quality and the quantity of their sleep, this talk suggests not only that sleeping bad could be morally good, but also that sleeping well might be morally bad. Engaging the ethics of good versus bad sleepers, it draws on the experience of bad sleepers (Anne Carson, Emmanuel Levinas, Bob Flanagan), as well as that of good sleepers (Christ, Alexander the Great) to develop an alternative account of the ethics of sleep. The bad sleeper struggles to let go of the other and the world, whereas the good sleeper effortlessly falls into sleep and away from the other and the world. As such, the sound sleeper who easily unties its relational bonds reveals a dubious morality. Since antiquity, sleep has been seen to be devoid of morality. Because active consciousness with its goal directed intentionality is not present in sleep, and because morality is tightly bound to agency, Western thought has assumed that ethics and sleep share no common ground. This talk challenges that presupposition by exploring the ethics of sleep through the lens of sleeplessness. By tending to the morality of bad sleep, it suggests both that there is such a thing as

an ethics of sleep(lessness), and that our understanding of ethics as such is altered when modeled on passive phenomena.

Contrary to what Maurice Blanchot calls the domestication of sleep, where sleep only exist for the sake of wake, this talk engages the importance of sleepiness for its own sake. In sleep, we are able to intimate another way of being in the world, a perceptive life that is different from the consciousness of the wakeful I. Sleep is not the opposite of consciousness, but instead opens up for an indeterminate form of perceptive life that also retains the sleeper's ability to think, to dream, and to be in relation.

Angelica Stathopoulos earned their PhD in philosophy from The New School for Social Research in New York. Their dissertation, "Passivity: Essays in Ontology and Ethics", defended the dignity of passivity and its importance for rethinking our way of being in the world and with others. Angelica is passionate about examining phenomena that belong to passivity, including boredom, sleep, and laziness, and how these experiences relate to femininity and queer life. In September 2024, Angelica will begin a postdoctoral fellowship at ICI Berlin.

Active Sleep! I'm Going to Rest

Anne Glassner

A nap is form of polyphasic sleep: during the nap state, the mind is "fluid and hyper-associative" and active, giving rise to images that can express layers of memories and sensations. After the experience people can do a protocol - there are various forms of naps (Coffee nap, Lucid Dream Nap, Micro nap) to be explored. Or people can just observe a moment of inaction. This experimental intervention is inspired by the interest in unconsciousness processes: whats going on in the brain while we sleep, why naps are so powerful, why without naps we feel exhausted, how sleep improves our memory but perhaps including things we would rather forget and how people can train themselves in napping.

Anne Glassner is a visual artist and performer based in Vienna. Her performances, videos, installations and drawings bear witness to intensive observations of recurring, every day and seemingly banal actions: Glassner studied painting at the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Diploma 2016 with Henning Bohl), the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Diploma 2008) and at the Accademia di belle Arti in Bologna, Italy. The theme of sleep has been a central focus of her artistic work for some time, which finds expression in "sleep performances", among other things. Characteristic of Anne Glassner's work is the constant questioning about self-perception and the perception of others, as well as the intersections of intimacy and the public sphere. She has been part of numerous exhibitions and performances in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Italy, the Czech Republic, Latvia, South Korea, Turkey, etc. She also organizes and curates numerous exhibitions at home and abroad. In 2016 she founded the collective Vocal Naps and in 2020 the association 4REST for site-specific art and culture in the Waldviertel.