

This writing is not supposed to work as a conventional dissertation. Instead of the classical thesis structure, I applied a more playful form, similar to the hypertext. There is no dictated chronology, the hierarchy depends on reader's choice. The text can be rearranged according to your preference, I endeavoured to create a network of associations and illustrations that refer to my research on impossibilities and archiving. The Impossible Archive consists of five parts, each has from three to four interrelated subchapters and some topics conduct to the others. After each subchapter you may decide if you want to continue reading or if you prefer to jump to the next closely related subject from the other category.

The part **'Time'** is about correlation of the past, presence and the future. Starting from the concept of linear model, through the means of measuring, pre-emptive social tendencies and Afrofuturistic speculations about alternative past. **'Suspension of Disbelief'** examines the boundaries between fictional, factual and simulated using narrative and lens-based media as examples. **'Value of Evidence'** questions authenticity and what is considered as truth in terms of museological display, archeology and artifacts that represent reality and how do they influence history. **'Impossibilities'** discusses what could be beyond known or expected. Finally **'Preservation'** is dedicated to problems of a deep time, storage, material decay and the hopes of resurrection, behind archiving and collecting.

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The conventional depiction of time is primarily based on the form of a line. Not only in the visual sense, but also in the everyday language we use words, such as before', 'after', 'short' or 'long', that suggest chronology or length that belong to the concept of a linear format. Also models built on the repetition, like seasons, day and night are based upon the 'one path' idea. There is a range of instruments used to define the time, to measure and restrict it: an attempt to make something abstract more tactile.

[more in Depicting Unknown]

It's perhaps banal, but still important to point out for the further discourse, that similar to the economy, or units, the linear form is just an abstract human-created measuring system, to make our interactions and organisation easier. I'm not trying to show the vices of this system (the system fulfils its purpose), but to search for the aspects that are not included in the linear notion of time and the casual-pragmatic thinking.

Just adding the concept of space (which is actually hard to separate from the experience of time) spreads the timeline into tangled threads that are crossing, winding and branching between each other, in the whole new dimension, that would be impossible to track for an individual from his physically-limited perspective. The time model expands to something more similar to a map-grid, with the plots, events or coincidences that depend on the relationship between time and space. The geographer Doreen Massey emphasised this tight correlation, by describing space as dynamic and non-repetitive:

[...] space, then, cannot be a static slice orthogonal to time and defined in opposition to it. If movement is reality itself then what we think of as space is a cut through all those trajectories; a simultaneity of unfinished stories. Space has time/times within it. This is not the static simultaneity of a closed system but a simultaneity of movements. And that is a different thing altogether. It means, for one thing, that you can't

go back in space: the myth of the return. [...] You can't hold places and things still. What you can do is meet up with them, catch up with where another's history has got to 'now', and acknowledge that 'now' is itself constituted by that meeting up. 'Here', in that sense, is not a place on a map. It is that intersection of trajectories, the meeting-up of stories; an encounter. Every 'here' is a here-and-now¹

One can argue that we can easily track what is happening in the opposite part of the world with global media, but it's only information that is provided to us and not subjective participation. The individual's presence can't be divided and belongs to one space at a time.

[more in Map and Territory]

If we would follow the idea that ‘the chronology and geography are the two eyes of history’ we would still end up being satisfied with a very poor concept of time, that would consider mankind past and fit into the human scale only. Perhaps that would be enough for our Anthropocene based perception, but the ancient statement that ‘man is the measure of all things’ is not so current in the epoch when technology became the ‘prosthesis’ of our senses and the individual perception has no longer priority over the evidences provided by lenses and computing. In the essay ‘Orders of Magnitude’ Villem Flusser describes the ‘inhuman’ dimensions that man advanced to. The ability of measuring things, without being able to perceive them without certain technological instruments, enabled us to see things below and above the human scale.

‘The lens is to blame. It made visible small things on the surface of the moon, so that it became difficult to admire the size of the moon. It made visible great things in human semen, so that it became uncomfortable to hold it in disgust and contempt.’²

Flusser illustrates it by the metaphor of Russian dolls. Our ‘human world’ is somewhere in the middle, but since we know about atoms and we can track planets in other galaxies, which we can’t see with the naked eye, we’re able to jump to the other dolls. The number of dolls will continue to remain indefinite, but what Flusser finds more important is how our values will change, like for instance the ethical aspects, through this kind of ‘inhuman’ jumps.

‘It is not in question whether the earth spins around the sun or—to put it in a more modern way—whether mental processes can be reduced to quantum leaps of particles between nerve synapses. It is in question what we are actually doing when we jump from doll to doll, from measure to measure, from scale of values to scale of values.’²

[more in Through the Lens]

It seems like we can’t afford to keep things uncanny, everything needs to be counted and specified. We created the concept of time, then clocks and stopwatches to measure it, in order to make it ‘visible’. Digital media theorist, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, pointed out that when a computer allows us to see what we usually wouldn’t or serves as transparent medium, for example by video talks, it actually doesn’t show what is on the other side, but instead calculates it.³ We need systems to measure reality, everything has to fit the standards and norm. It’s not enough to estimate, we aim for more precise predictions, the unknowns are scary or exciting enough to reveal them. The things to come should be plausible, so we have to measure the time and make calculations about the future.

[more in Implausible Possible]

To go further than a technologically magnified perception of time, we should move to the sphere of 'speculative time-complex'. According to Armen Avanessian, who is following one of Flusser's ideas, that it is not the past that is pushing us forward, but quite the opposite; 'the future happens before the present, time arrives from the future.' It's the 'call' from the future, or more precisely our image of the things to come, that is shaping the present. The historical-drawings (such as the series 'En L' An 2000') imagining the future are not predictions- these are wishes for the things to come.

[more in IRL and Decay and Resurrection]

Avanessian gives an example of the 'preemptive' tendencies in society, that are supposed to forestall or encourage some actions. It could work on the consumption level;

'Algorithmic procedures give us recommendations for books we might be interested in, but the preemptive personality is one step further than this: you really get a certain product which you actually want. The companies' algorithms know your desires, they know your needs before even you know them.'

but also political:

*'You bomb somewhere and then afterwards you will find the kind of enemy you expected. It's very different to the twentieth century logic of the balance of the threats or prevention. Rather, what happens in the present is based on a preemption of the future.'*⁴

It may give the impression that we're in charge of our fate, though in fact it's a result of anxiety about the future and the illusion of control. The unknowns frighten us, to fight it, is for some same as seeking to be one step ahead, through decisions based on 'predictions'. Perhaps that's why the preemptive model seems so attractive.

To sum up, we do (using the trendy, almost cliché expression) 'design future', by stating our desires within the speculations. The question is as always about lack of awareness or wrong intentions, that can with incredible ease turn utopian into dystopian.

*'Science fiction is now a research and development department within a futures industry that dreams of the prediction and control of tomorrow. Corporate business seeks to manage the unknown through decisions based on scenarios, while civil society responds to future shock through habits formed by science fiction. Science fiction operates through the power of falsification, the drive to rewrite reality, and the will to deny plausibility, while the scenario operates through the control and prediction of plausible alternative tomorrows.'*⁵

[more in Implausible Possible]

On the other hand, speculations do not consider the future only. The 'speculative time' is also a step to blend future, past and present. It opens up the whole range of parallel universes, that may exist outside of continuous time. The possibilities of the past are no less broad than of the future. Alternative combinations of events, so beloved in time travelling scenarios, are overwhelmingly infinite. The fantasies about alternative history are not just a form of entertainment or a highly 'intellectual-philosophical' issue. Re-interpretation of the history could be the way to re-examine the existing models and possibilities beyond the present circumstances.

Critical or utopian comparisons can express the wish for substitute solutions or imaginary compensations for reality's flaws, like for instance in the case of Afrofuturism, where the sci-fi motives are assorted with Egyptian mysticism, creating the feeling of 'no-time'. The 'outer space' (wherever it could refer to) is the place of escape from slavery trauma, racism, 'nuclear war' or any other terrestrial concerns. As the filmmaker and member of the Otholith Group, Kodwo Eshun writes:

*'Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken.'*⁵

Kodwo Eshun imagined a future where African archaeologists are dealing with the remains of 20th and 21st century. This perspective switch questioned not only the institutional knowledge, but also the past-future relation and its significance. He emphasised the importance of the speculations about the future and the memory about the past.

*'In the colonial era of the early to middle twentieth century, avant-gardists from Walter Benjamin to Frantz Fanon revolted in the name of the future against a power structure that relied on control and representation of the historical archive. Today, the situation is reversed. The powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past. The present moment is stretching, slipping for some into yesterday, reaching for others into tomorrow.'*⁵

[more in Truthfulness of Objects]

Suspension of Disbelief

Foley

The Foley artist re-creates sounds for films using everyday objects. The sounds that are produced in the post-production have better auditive quality and seem 'more real'. The goal is to make them believable and unnoticeable to the audience. Using a frozen cabbage, heavy phone-book, canned dog food or corn starch in a pouch, Foley artists can simulate the sounds of bones breaking, bodies falling or footsteps in the snow. They can make a pair of gloves sound like bird wings flapping. They make us hear the walk of ants or a candle burning. There are no unconventional solutions. The process will not be seen. The only part that counts is the effect and the impression that it leaves.

During her visit in a film Studio in Sheppertone, Tacita Dean asked one of the Foley artist known as 'Stan, Stan, the footsteps man' about the making of '2001: Space Odyssey'

'How did you do the sound of the ape with the bone, Stan?'

*'Oh, we brought in a dead pig and hit it with sticks, Tacita.'*⁶

[more in Map and Territory and Depicting Unknown]

The lens-based images used to bring a certain feeling of credibility or at least validity. The original intention was to capture the reality as it is. Eventually the intention changed, whereas the concept stayed the same- to make everyone not question what they see on the picture, which turned out to be a perfect tool for reality manipulation and censorship.

How much people were aware of the manipulation wasn't only depending on their knowledge about photographic techniques. Sometimes the audience was conscious about the bluffs, but what counts is the 'documentation' and a 'photographic proof' for the historical records.

The paradoxes and 'fakeness' of the Soviet Union's government weren't really unnoticed by the society. However no one would risk to point out that some people 'are missing' on past photographs, like in case of the retouched ex-friends of Stalin that were removed from the image after they fell out of favour or died under mysterious circumstances. The concealing wasn't only about political figures. The story of Valentin Bondarenko, a cosmonaut who died during a training accident, is an ironical example how the authorities' 'discretion' can do the opposite of what was intended. For propaganda reasons the government hid his death and even his membership in the space corps by 'removing' him from the official crew pictures, which were previously published with Bondarenko in them. The unexplained disappearance triggered rumors about his death in failed launches.

[more in Forgery and Hoax]

Today's global availability of post-production techniques, also for the non-professional users, made it clear that media such as video or photography are easy to manipulate. Most of the glossy magazines readers are not just aware, but they take it for granted that pictures of models or celebrities have been edited. We're so used to the 'hyperreal' quality of what we see, that unretouched pictures are considered to be bold or provocative.

Nowadays, even 'live streams' don't heave the notion of documentation, but some kind of graphical simulation of reality. Failures such as glitches and time-delays (previously could have been celluloid grain texture) create the illusion of authenticity, but don't provide the transparency of the medium, that is edited by someone who, similarly to the Foley artist, stays 'invisible'.

[more in Map and Territory]

Digital-media sceptics have been always concerned that we won't be able to recognise the manipulated images from the actual ones. In his series 'Dioramas' the photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto took pictures of an exposition in the Natural History Museum in NY. The set-ups with the stuffed animals, which usually look artificial and rather unnatural, seem like a documentation of actual sites on Sugimoto's pictures. On two-dimensional photographs, the creatures and figures suddenly appear more convincing, just the hyperrealistic photographs of dinosaurs provoke the logic to disbelieve. However, the authenticity of the images, lies in the fact, that they capture dioramas as they are, with no use of CGI, photomontage or more manipulation than in any other documentary photography.

Suspension of Disbelief

The Fluid Boundaries between Factual and Fictional

A great example of playing between 'real' and 'fiction' can be seen in the films by Omer Fast, which often deal with topics such as memory loss, collective consciousness, traumas and identity. Using the interviews conducted with Polish extras from Spielbergs' 'Schindlers' List' (who actually survived WWII and compare their experiences it with the Hollywood version) or funeral home directors talking about how they conceal the corpses lifeless faces, by applying make up, to make them appear as if they are 'sleeping' as a starting point, he manipulates the plot by adding surreal-fictional parts or combining the stories told by the interviewed with additional visual narration.

In '5000 Feet is the Best' Omer Fast questions a drone operator about his profession. In the film we don't actually see the 'real-life' pilot, we can only see his blurred face for few seconds and hear him talking about his experiences, while watching the birds-perspective camera shots of American housing estates or Las Vegas at night. He tells about the view of his target, the recommended height to see more details, such as hair color or shoe type of the observed people. He describes his routines, saying that after being in the base for twelve hours, they usually play video games in their quarters during free time.

*'His whole life is a multi-user game, a role-play spread out over virtual global space, a consentinent, if not consensual, fiction. Which doesn't mean that no one's getting killed'*⁷

Although he never faced the battlefield in 'real-life' he suffers from PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) and anxieties tied to the responsibility for the target's 'real death'. The monologue of the pilot alternates with scenes from a hotel, for which Omer Fast involved actors to stage 'the interview'. Instead of the q&a format, it's a collage of anecdotes about role playing (another fictional world combined with actual events) and strange dialogue, which is always repeated in the same way:

'- What's the difference between you and someone who sits in the airplane?

- There is no difference between us, we do the same job.

-But you're not a real pilot.

*-So what? You're not a real journalist'*⁸

In the fictional narrative the status of the drone operator as a 'real pilot' is constantly questioned- an allusion to the 'real-life drone operators' not being physically present at the war. The interview scene repeats three times, always begins in the same way and ends with the pilot leaving a room to take a break after which he will re-enter to start the dialog from the beginning.

In Fast's first feature film 'Reminder', based on the novel by Tom McCarty, the main character is trying to deal with his complete amnesia by recreating, with maniacal obsession, blurry memories (or perhaps just his fantasies). His reckless urge to make the experience of the past as authentic as possible, becomes more and more brutal and stops being only reenactment, turning into real actions (including a murder and a bank heist) which leads to the incident from the beginning of the story which causes the loss of memory.

There is no beginning and no end. The feeling of time is completely distorted. The stories are running in loop, so the chronology becomes no longer relevant. This non-linear, ambiguous style of story telling pushes the viewer's credulity by playing with uncertainty and possibilities. The difficulty of separating fictional from factual brings the notion of simulated reality.

[more in Forgery & Hoax or Depicting Unknown]

The difference between virtual and simulated reality is that in the case of the first one, the participants can easily separate it from actuality, whereas the second one is rather impossible to distinguish from what is considered as truly 'real'. Getting involved in fictional universes and narratives is somehow natural, but since contemporary society is quite blasé, a more extreme form of excitement is needed to immerse the audience. We seek for qualities more flavourful than what reality can provide and expect our requirement to be fulfilled. Some individuals may find themselves more attracted to the hyperreal and begin prioritising their life in cyberspace, so it's not just a matter of entertainment. As Baudrillard suggests, hyperreality goes even further than virtual and simulated reality- it creates the symbols and representations for the non-existent, that embed themselves in the collective consciousness, which makes it more fluid and blends it with the 'actual world'.

[more in Map and Territory]

As the Thomas theorem states: 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.' The actuality is the result of our beliefs or statements. We're actively directing reality and influencing its shape, even if we're not fully aware of these decisions. Of course it's not that we control everything that is happening, but our attitude can evoke or change the meaning of certain events.

Hyperstition is a term which describes a similar concept as Thomas theorem, though in a more obscure way. It was coined by Ccru (Cybernetics culture research unit) and it refers to ideas which come from fiction and transform into truths in the collective consciousness and general beliefs. Because of cyberspace, hyperstitions can easily be spread and it's hard to pinpoint their origin, they just suddenly become present. This results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, same as in case of future predictions.

The accessibility of knowledge that is provided through the Internet, doesn't make it easier to reveal the veracity. The value of false is no less important than of the real. The real is no longer possible to prove.

[more in Invisibility and Hyperobjects]

*In Internet chat-rooms IRL stands for 'in real life'- the abbreviation used to differentiate the cyberspace from the 'real world'

We're more willing to believe in stories or events that can be supported by tactile proofs. This is how the law determines the 'truth', that's how 'history' is constituted and why films use props. The museums wouldn't be convincing without the glass cabinets full of rusty swords, broken hair combs, remains of ceramic vases or faded maps that confirm the existence of certain tribes, countries or customs that are dead/extinct for a long time. *'[...] the fact of being exhibited in a museum confers on an object an aura of importance and authenticity, endowing whatever is presented with a sense of significance.'*⁹

[more in On Collecting and Archiving]

Explanations about the past can be 'read' from the shapes, materials or signs, that together contribute to the speculative system of deduction. However careful this forensic way of building narration could be, the subjective elements of interpretation can not be avoided. It's not my intention to point out lies of 'common historical knowledge' or any conspiracy behind it, but just to underline that something like 'objective common historical knowledge' doesn't even exist.

An essay film by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais 'Les Statues Meurent Aussi' (eng. 'Statues also Die') which depicts the African art in the context of Western museums and culture was banned in France for years because of its critical approach towards colonialism. Places such as British Museum and Musée de l'Homme (anthropology museum in Paris, which actually commissioned 'Les Statues Meurent Aussi') were (perhaps still are) the main 'hosts' for African art. Western 'curating' reduced African art to the ethnological context without getting into original meaning of the crafted objects. It seems as if they would be artificially displaced and behind the glass showcases brutally remind of trophies rather than art exhibits. African contemporary artists such as Georges Adeagbo and Meshac Gaba or Fred Wilson (who de-

scribes himself as 'of African, Native American, European and Amerindian' descent), try to deal with the injustice of the museological representation and institutional authority by creating their own art museums and collections or rearranging the existing ones. As Gaba claimed he couldn't imagine how his works could be integrated within European museums and that served as his main motivation to create his own space. The artists examine the lack of objectivity in displaying, through imitation or deconstruction of conventional set-ups thus providing alternatives by giving the artifacts new meaning.

[more in Space is the Place]

There are different 'versions' of history being taught at schools depending on geographical region. The American depiction of Cold War will not match the Russian version. The history of the Second World War in Japan is being presented differently than in South Korea or China. It is not only an act of propaganda, but also the an attempt of caching faults or guilts. In the classic Japanese movie, 'Rashomon', Akira Kurosawa uses a crime story told from the perspective of four witnesses as an excuse to examine the nature of truth. The brutal murder of samurai and the rape of his wife was described by the woman herself, a bandit who raped her, the dead samurai (talking through medium) and a woodcutter, who initially didn't want to admit that he was in the woods when the crime happened. All four protagonists were hiding certain details in order to protect themselves or their honour. Each version was different, often contradicting, leaving the incident uncanny.

The human memory is very fragile and flexible. Not only we tend to forget, but we can also easily produce false memories. Perhaps, that is the reason why we collect evidence of certain events, especially those that are meant to stay 'unforgettable'. But what if the collection of souvenirs would also be fake? What would be the value of the non-existing events' memories? Or on the contrary, what could be the value of things that were produced with the intention that they would never be unrevealed?

[more in IRL]

The work of an archaeologist is similar to the one of the futurist, with the 'minor' difference that the first one is using findings buried deep in the soil to recreate the past whereas the other doesn't need to use the artifacts as a starting point to create a future-prognosis. In the end, both are working using speculations and both influence the present. In archeology any kind of absence, has to be explained through tactile objects, like for instance in the case of negative-fossils. Matter is the basis required to justify the speculations. That of course doesn't prevent forgeries and frauds. Quite the opposite. The motivation doesn't even need to be a financial gain. 'Proofs' could be also faked to support personal theories, religious histories, gender or racial-superiority.

[more in Deep Time or On Collecting and Archiving]

A story of a Japanese archaeologist who after 30 years of 'successful' career, was caught planting 'Palaeolithic findings' himself, is a disturbing example, taking into account imperial tendencies, that can be noticed among some of the Japanese. The controversial ethics of gaining prestige through forgery, may have an impact on the general beliefs (and that applies not only to the archaeologist, but also the institutions that supported him to provide 'historical attractions' to gain tourists). If the finding would be valid it could have contributed to the extreme-nationalistic notion of Japan being superior country and the belief that the Japanese civilisation developed independently from other Asian countries. The list of archaeological or scientific hoaxes is pretty long, some of them exist as urban myths, some are still hard to erase from the collective consciousness.

As juxtaposition to the 'Japanese Palaeolithic Hoax', here is an example of an artwork that was also supposed to be never uncovered. In 2016 a conceptual artist Pierre Bismuth completed his search for Rocky II, a never exhibited piece by Ed Rusha, which is a huge artificial rock made out of resin, hidden in the Californian desert. The work had a mysterious aura around it- apparently it didn't appear on the Rusha's artworks index and not many art historians or curators knew about. Since it was placed in the desert in 80ties, it remained there, undistinguished from other rocks around. The result of a 10 year hunt is what Bismuth calls a 'fake-fiction' film, which is a document, that gives the impression of fiction. For the production of 'Where is Rocky II?' he hired a retired homicide detective, two Hollywood scriptwriters to film their work while looking for the spoof-rock. Bismuth claims that the most intriguing part is the motivation of an artist to create something that is supposed to be never shared. Something that was meant to stay undetected and therefore unknown.

*'What is an art piece that nobody can see? That's already quite an interesting statement. But more than that, what is an art piece that nobody knows about? I mean, this is really pushing it. I understand that an artist can do an invisible piece, but a piece that no one knows is kind of weird. It's beyond any kind of conceptual statement you can have.'*¹⁰

Historical artifacts, artworks or any other iconic objects work similarly to Macguffins- the narrative devices that trigger the plot in movies. (As Hitchcock explains:

'It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men on a train. One man says, "What's that package up there in the baggage rack?" And the other answers, "Oh, that's a MacGuffin". The first one asks, "What's a MacGuffin?" "Well," the other man says, "it's an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands." The first man says, "But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands," and the other one answers, "Well then, that's no MacGuffin!" So you see that a MacGuffin is actually nothing at all.')

Either fake or real, the objects simulate the awareness and artificially build the cultural significance, which doesn't need to be necessarily bad, as long as it's not manipulative. We don't have to touch a movie prop to believe in its purpose.

[more in Fluid Boundaries between Fictional and Factual]

Jorge Luis Borges' 'On Exactitude in Science' is a short tale about an Empire, in which cartographers created a map so detailed that it became as big as the world it was trying to document and covered up the Empire's entire territory. It's a twisted allegory of the relation between reality and its representation. Eventually the map is destroyed with the collapse of the Empire- the imperial pride is vanished, the document that became reality doesn't exist any longer, which makes the time of Empire less relevant.

[more in Decay and Resurrection]

Maps serve as accessible proof of existence of places, even if the most of them will never be visited by majority of users. Judith Schalansky's 'Atlas of Remote Islands' is a collection of stories about small, isolated islands, that the author will never physically visit, but can find them on a map and imagine how they could be like. The nostalgia of unreachable sites reminds of mythological places and the impossibility of experiencing them. We wouldn't be able to locate the Atlantis, whereas in case of Easter Islands we can specify its coordinates and point it on the map, which makes it factual, regardless if we would ever have the chance to see it in real life or not. Map is a document, its validity is rather not questioned. The beautiful graphical forms bring the feeling of accuracy and exclude the possibility of error. Yet maps are not free from manipulation, myths or lies, like anything that could serve as political or historical device.

The 19th century maps of Africa contained the of Mountains of Kong- a huge massif across the whole continent, that turned out to be fake only at the end of the century. The reason for the mistake was not necessarily the lack of topographical knowledge. The fake mountain chain could have been a part of 'colonial-diplomacy', dictating the division by making certain areas less accessible. The origin and intentions of creating phantom spots are not always clear and even though we do not rely on paper-maps anymore, the cartography is not free from fictitious geography. GPS, Google Earth or Maps seem 'divinely' omnipresent and give the impression of boundless access to every corner of the Planet. The situation seem a bit reversed though. Fictitious entries such as 'trap streets' work like copyrights 'watermarks'. The non-existent villages, towns, streets, mountains included on the maps serve as evidence against unauthorized use. Something fake becomes a guarantee of authenticity.

[more in IRL or Fluid Boundaries between Fictional and Factual]

How to describe something invisible, for instance, a fictional colour that we're not able to see, is one thing, but to imagine a world, that can't be described by any colours is much harder. How to escape the things we know by moving to a higher level of abstraction and speculate about the things we're not able to experience or perceive? We tend to simplify our speculations by depicting them using familiar elements. It's still impossible to completely give up on that. Quentin Meillassoux in his writing 'Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction', criticises the traditional sci-fi approach and encourages to enter the 'extro-' sphere that exists beside the known, but also unknown universe, moving to the field of the impossible, where the relation between science and reality hasn't been established.

*'The guiding question of extro-science fiction is: what should a world be, what should a world resemble, so that it is in principle inaccessible to a scientific knowledge, so that it cannot be established as the object of a natural science?'*¹²

However, even if we would manage to avoid referring to science, as soon as we use language, it automatically 'kill' the possibility of escaping the 'known'. The 'known' is too present in our subconsciousness, which makes it difficult (if not impossible) to exclude completely, especially in case of narrative genre, that is based on language. On the other hand, even though the imitation of reality is unavoidable, as Anthony Dune points out in his book about speculative design, trying to rationalise speculations can turn them into 'clumsy use of parody and pastiche.'

*'To maintain links to the world as we know it, designers try too hard to reference what is already known. It is not a case of mimicking other design languages but the language of everyday design, whether it be corporate, high tech, or high style. It comes from an overeagerness to make speculations seem real.'*¹³

[more in Fluid Boundaries between Fictional and Factual]

But the question stays the same; how to depict the unknown? One way to deal with it would be to provoke speculations without trying to explain the 'unreal'. The unreal can not be explained, which is why it is so fascinating. Trying to make it convincing using scientific facts or any kind of rationalisation, makes it unintentionally dull. Using laconic semantics, leaving hints and floating in ambiguity in order to trigger narration in the spectators mind, seems more convincing than wrapping everything in silver aluminum foil to make it look 'alien'.

While working on '2001: A Space Odyssey', Stanley Kubrick asked the astronomer Carl Sagan how he should depict the extraterrestrial beings. Sagan advised Kubrick against showing 'aliens', since they're 'unlikely to bear any resemblance to terrestrial life' and instead only suggest their existence. Fortunately in the Space Odyssey we see only black-shiny blocks, called monoliths, instead of silver-painted actors or skinny latex-creatures with widespread eyes. Following the idea from Arthur C. Clarke's novel, monoliths are immortal machines made by the extraterrestrial super-intelligence. In literature it's easier to keep things uncanny, since it doesn't use a visual language which is often more revealing. The reader needs to construct the fictional world in their imagination. Therefore, the mystical black plinths, with their unclear insides, purpose as well as origin, are a very sophisticated film-prop that triggers viewer's speculations and avoids over-explanation.

[more in Foley or Forgery and Hoax]

Impossibilities

Invisibility and Hyperobjects

To illustrate the hypothetical limitation of perception and awareness of the 'invisible', Edwin A. Abbott in his novel 'Flatland' used the allegory of geometrical figures and dimensions. In the reality without third-dimension all that could be seen are lines, points and blurry colours, that indicate social status, gender or age of Flatland's inhabitants. The squares, circles, triangles and lines are not aware that things can have volume, they can't even imagine that there could be more dimensions than two. The main character, 'A Square' travels to one-dimensional lands, where he fails to convince them of a second dimension. Later, he is visited by 'A Sphere' who shows him a three-dimensional Spaceland, that 'A Square' understands only after experiencing it himself. Excited about what he has learned 'A Square' makes speculations about higher dimensions, which are despised by 'A Sphere'.

The story suggests that similarly to the Flatlanders we are unaware about what lies outside of our 'box'. Restricted by what we experience, we're not able to fully realise what lies beyond our recognition. If we dare to sacrifice realism and follow intuitive abstraction, then we may be able to at least think of the hypothetical unknowns. It's not about finding solutions. The purpose is to develop critical insights and to abandon the comfort of familiar, in order to be more open and sensitive to alternative possibilities.

[more in Matter of Measures]

The acknowledgment of the 'invisible' doesn't only consider the sphere of speculation and abstraction. Danger, global warming, market economy are the things we definitely experience, even though we can't necessarily see them. The invisibility doesn't make them non-existent, just overlooked or miscomprehended. Timothy Morton brought the term of hyperobjects to describe the human-started phenomenons 'massively distributed in

time and space to extent that their totality cannot be realised in any particular local manifestation. 'Hyperobjects' transcend an individual's experience of time, their existence is much longer than a human life span, in fact most of them are expected to last longer than the whole history of mankind. The dimensions of hyperobjects are also hard to grasp and because of their intangible characteristic, they are not always fully recognised. They're not reducible to a one single object, as it could be a whole range of components that interact between each other. Regardless hyperobjects' 'invisibility', their impact is massive and their consequences have without a doubt an enormous effect on the reality.

[more in Deep Time or IRL]

The tendency to 'control tomorrow' seems to be on the rise, rational thinking and statistics are supposed to form a base for more reliable scenarios. Perhaps because of the fear of uncertainty, forecasting is so desired. Even though the speed and expanse of 'techno-eco-social' changes contributes greatly to contemporary anxieties about the future, the paradoxes and problems of certainty are nothing new at all.

[more in pre- post- everything]

A metaphor of a 'black swan' used to indicate something impossible. In the times when the expression was invented, black swans were presumed not to exist. Eventually it turned out that not all swans were white, so the term gained a new meaning. Black Swan theory refers to events that come as a surprise, not fitting into what is commonly expected and are rationalised only post-factum. The importance of the swan anecdote lies in its correspondence to uncertainty of knowledge.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who developed the 'Black Swan' theory, gives three criteria to identify a Black Swan event:

- 1 *The event is a surprise (to the observer).*
- 2 *The event has a major effect.*
- 3 *After the first recorded instance of the event, it is rationalized by hindsight, as if it could have been expected; that is, the relevant data were available but unaccounted for in risk mitigation programs. The same is true for the personal perception by individuals.*

First associations of 'Black Swans' are natural catastrophes, terrorist-attacks or other crises, though it doesn't need to refer to negative events only. It just indicates a frailty of truth based on some number of observations and how suddenly this truth can become false and dramatic in the consequences. David Hume's problem of induction also mentioned by Quentin Meillassoux in 'Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction' deals with infinity of solutions, regardless of previous experience. Hume uses the example of one billiard ball striking another to question whether we can rely on any rule involved in their collisions in order to predict the future ones.

As Meillassoux writes *'experience by definition can only tell us about the present (what I am experiencing now) and about the past (what I have already experienced); there is no experience of the future. How can we then ground within experience the certainty that tomorrow nature will obey the known constancies it obeys today?'*¹²

[more in Matter of Measures]

During the 18th century the Earth turned out to be much older than the commonly-believed 6000 years, based on what was written in the Bible. Natural history expanded to millions and billions of years, which in comparison with the human-timeline appeared enormous and hard to grasp. It seemed obvious that the 'exciting geological discovery' became an object of study for another revolutionary discipline at the time: photography. One of Louis Daguerre's first photographs captured a collection of fossils. Perhaps, it wasn't intentional, but the combination of the prehistorical object with a modern time-based, ephemeral medium, was a very metaphorical juxtaposition of deep time and the Anthropocene, the start of which start (or at least the beginning of an intensive expansion) could be dated from the Industrial Revolution, around 100 years before Daguerre's picture was taken. It was a documentation within a documentation, suggesting a contrast between the geological and the time of exposure, which could be also understood as a question about the durability of an human made artifact, (which could be in this case the photo-print) versus natural formation, the fossil.

[more in Through the Lens]

We tend to be melancholic about the fragility of mankind's remains. The thought that things we manufacture are temporary was always a bothering one, when in fact, we've already produced the traces of our existence, that are going to last until the distant future, probably beneath humanity's existence and ironically, exactly that should be the thing to be concerned about. So far we're struggling with more than 250 000 tones of nuclear waste, which will stay toxic for another 100 000 years. The documentary 'Into Eternity' from 2010, depicts the dilemmas around the construction of Onkalo; a massive, spent nuclear repository in Eastern Finland, which should 'hide' the radioactive waste until it decays. Nothing human-made lasted for even a tenth of the time required for the waste to become harmless to life. Taking into account that mankind is relatively 'young' in terms of deep time, an attempt to create a completely resistant storage space for such an enormous time span, seems pretty naive. It's not only an issue of the construction's durability, but also factors like natural disasters, changes in tectonic formations, biological evolution, even wars or

man-made catastrophes, that are impossible to predict. Another problem that researchers and engineers try to confront is how to communicate the danger of the nuclear-waste places to the future beings? The long tunnel guiding to Onkalo doesn't seem to be an effective protection from human curiosity. The symbols of radio-activity may not be understood in a next century, not mentioning the thousands years that it should be valid for or the case when it's not only about the human species' safety.

[more in Invisibility and Hyperobjects]

The media that we're using now to store the information, is tightly depending on the other components starting from the right electricity socket. Just going to a different continent or country requires an adapter for plugs. The life span of computer is very limited, the industry standards, software upgrades are constantly changing. How many times have we lost valuable for us data by not having backups? We got so used to being constantly online, that not having access to Internet seems like improbable or rare situation, even though in the face of millennial-time the cyberspace as we know it now, most likely won't exist. The ephemeral character of digital tools doesn't seem like a solid guarantee.

We rely on the progress that can be considered as the contemporary image of the future, but in the scale of 100 000 years (if the civilisation would be even present at this point) technological development may turn into an unexpected regress and a take completely different turn than we imagine now.

[more in Depicting Unknown]

One of the current ideas how to solve the Nuclear Semiotics and long-time communication issues, is to make an archive, that would be constantly updated, so that the knowledge about Onkalo would be passed from generation to generation. But again, the randomness of fate makes permanency of the archive doubtful, so the only certain parameter is the risk that wouldn't be actually taken by us. The time-capsule that we're leaving behind as our 'legacy' is in fact a new Pandora's Box.

The material world is very dynamic. Transformations, chemical reactions, physical changes are in continuous state of impermanence. Intangible thoughts, words or numbers are transferred onto paper, sound-recordings, video or photographic-documentation, which are presumed to guard the memory of the original records. Fading ink, ripped paper, scratches on the discs, dust on the tapes makes it a much harder task. The fragility of materials is not beneficent for maintaining archives. The complex prevention plans and metadata systems are designed additionally for the archives to restore what could have been lost. Since we live in a pre-emptive society, precautions seem natural. We take actions, similarly to prophylactic drugs, without the actual symptoms of disease, trying to be ahead of potential problems.

[more in pre- post- everything]

An agricultural project- Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a seed bank in Norway, which is supposed to work as a backup to recreate the flora after a crisis or apocalypse. Commonly it's called the 'Doomsday Vault'. Ironically, it reminds of the Onkalo repository (please refer to Deep Time), mostly because of the struggle with durability and the future prediction of a nuclear Armageddon. However the 'Doomsday Vault' carries the idea of revival, its main concept is to provide nutrition after human-caused disaster or a particular plant species extinction. The first withdrawal from the Svalbard has already taken place in 2015, in order to supply Syria. The Aleppo's seed bank (Icarda), which used to be the main deposit of the Middle East, due to the civil war, had to be moved. The samples from Norway were needed to recreate some specimens. The global network and distribution is one of the ways to secure archives and prolong their existence. Constant minus temperatures, as well as a secluded location, are hoped to protect the collection and keep the life inside of the seed-shells hibernated. They're resting deeply frozen until the time when they will be needed to regrow.

Ice brings a notion of temporality. It melts, evaporates, eventually disappears, but in this case it should work as a solid preservative.

In contrast to the notion of permanence, Allan Kaprow used ice as a material for temporary sculptures in his happening called 'Fluids'. According to Kaprow instructions *'During three days, about twenty rectangular enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long, 10 wide and 8 high) are built throughout the city. Their walls are unbroken. They are left to melt.'* Unlike the conventional, public space or outdoor constructions, the duration of rectangular ice blocks is extremely limited. The intervention celebrates non-resistance and ephemerality, leaving only Kaprow's score how to reinvent the sculptures as a trace of their existence.

[more in Map and Territory]

The severe urge to preserve, create taxonomies, keep archives is a quite peculiar phenomenon among humans. Even more bizarre are the items that belong to some of the collections and the hope for an extended existence that the objects are loaded with. Excluding the concept of 'after-life', no one doubts that our earthly time has its end. Perhaps because we don't want to agree for having no control over 'THE INEVITABLE' we try to prolong it by creating archives or museums, that are supposed to remain as both evidences and memorials.

*'Archiving evokes the idea of important, official records, which even if hidden from view or forgotten, may be preserved for posterity'*⁹

It sounds quite pompous and as in a case of archeology, selecting, labeling and capturing the 'present' is very subjective and often in the archival-heaps the place for personal stories is taken over by the 'general history'.

[more in Timelines and Space is the Place]

In a performative installation 'The Maybe', Cornelia Parker in collaboration with Tilda Swinton, displayed a selection of objects that she borrowed from various museums, including the inventor of the computer, Charles Babbage's brain, a stocking worn by Queen Victoria and Tilda Swinton herself, who remained 'asleep' in a showcase, during the exhibition opening times. As Cornelia Parker noted:

*'...because the experience or history of the object had been confronted by someone else, my role was to isolate these objects and put them together like a sculptural material.'*⁹

Through careful choice and juxtaposition of the living human together with the relics of historical figures, she questioned what could be the object of collecting and pointed out the hope of 'preserving' memory about a certain persona. What kind of motivations are behind keeping an organ of a person considered as a genius or underwear belonging to a member of royal family?

Is it just a fetishisation or also a naïf wish of resurrection? How is the aura of the object predetermined by its owner and how does it establish the object's importance?

[more in Truthfulness of Objects]

The tradition of collecting is very tightly related to artistic practice. Not in terms of the art market, but as a medium. Artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Sophie Calle or Christian Boltanski are classic examples of shifting the means of archiving, by introducing their own narratives, criticising a museum's sacred character, rearranging found objects or their personal belongings. Following the idea behind capturing objects not meant to be displayed, Taryn Simon created a series called 'Contraband', which consisted of 1075 photographs of prohibited items confiscated from either passengers or Express Mail at the JFK Airport. It's a strange collection of items that were never allowed to get to their final destination. Among detained goods, there was a whole range of fake-designers' bags, perfumes, insects, cigarettes, drugs, pharmaceuticals, animal corpses and matryoshka dolls.

The items labeled as forbidden, dangerous or illegal were documented and catalogued according to their category. Some objects were already decaying, some were still encased in their wrapping- their owners remain anonymous, unlike the objects considered historically valuable. The huge amount of collected items from around the world looks like an archive of 'contemporary commodity' or 'duty-free loots', which probably after being photographed were destroyed.

[more in Invisibility and Hyperobjects]

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