

## HAUNTS: What Haunts Contemporary Art?

Contemporary culture is somewhat uncontemporary. One can even say that it is anachronistic and filled with nostalgia and unexplainable longing for what has been recently alive and new in it. Its numerous references to the past, borrowings, interceptions, abuses and finally cultural recycling, i.e. creativity taking the form of processing, was perceived for a long time in terms of exhaustion, barrenness and the absence of ideological depth. It soon became clear that the lack of the expected novelty and progress was not caused by the meager condition of artists and thinkers, but it was rather the result of their disappointment with the utopian aspirations of modernity and reluctance to create the future understood as a better tomorrow and a completely new, ideal world, which has always turned out to be a nightmare in practice. The escape to the world of the past by re-consuming what was worn or old was initially not only a gesture of resistance to capitalist economy and its desire for novelty, but it also gave a sense of security from the uncertain and precarious tomorrow.

Artists soon began to resemble archivists intoxicated and overwhelmed by the past, who used the archive in a remarkably creative and uniquely disobedient manner, thus leading to the confusion of time and anachronism. Since that time, one can no longer speak of pure ideas and concepts, as well as original or completely new art, which always bears traces of the past. It has become clear that we live in a bygone, second-hand reality, which has little in common with the assumed, yet unachievable freshness, sterility and purity. To be haunted means, first of all, to be aware that someone was here before us, that the space we inhabit previously belonged to someone else and that everything that surrounds us bears traces of 'the other'. Therefore, the desire for novelty would be an attempt to erase or deny what exists in a weak, residual and vestigial form.

Melancholic aesthetics and nostalgic sensitivity to a large extent stem from the desire for survival and become ethical gestures performed to claim for otherness. The lack of a new, strong narrative that would organize the landscape of contemporary culture does not result from its secondary nature, but rather from the reluctance to bury and thus destroy the past with which we do not want to part. This is the source of all unburied, undead, ghostly and decaying cultural creations that return from the past. Contemporary and at the same time uncontemporary art has no intention to ask what is 'now' and what characteristic features it has. It wants to report on the weak, dim presence that does not let go, disappear and perish.

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