



On Missing Links and Object

*Yane Calovski in
conversation with
Başak Şenova*

Başak Şenova You follow different paths and readings in order to render them in your works. How do you perceive documentary narratives?

Yane Calovski Conceptually yes. I am drawn to the potential of revisiting “insecure” historical episodes that seem to open a possibility of re-examination and rewrite based on newly found information. These episodes can be personal or related to art history, or some other form of history. It is critical how this information relates to my interest of looking at the way narration may be told. In some traditional ways that may not be entirely accurate, that may seem “clumsy” in relation to the concept of truth. It is in this gap, or in the lapse, between securing facts as part of a legitimate narrative and producing a linear narrative, that I place my trust as a narrator, especially as I am not a great believer of narrative linearity. It is





the potential of assuming that histories, context and experiences transcend, meaning that in a given time each historical narrative suggests itself as a less conservative and more experimental conceptual form. I am not drawn to grand narratives. I am more interested in the accuracy of presentation and the elasticity of the form. Hence my interest in drawing from multiple sources to suggest semantic, intrinsic, as well as context-based, repossessed, and ultimately, relived narrations.

How do you articulate a relation between fiction and incomplete narratives in your works?

What I experience is very important for me; stories are very personal, the way works are constructed is a very personal process for me. I don't think I believe entirely in having a method in the way I research or relate to people and subjects. Goddard has taught us that fiction is a necessity. Curtailed narratives are complete in their incompleteness. Their sensibility is enhanced by the fact that they are intangible, escaping the fate of being locked in conclusion. I also like the promise of the first sentence of novels. I remember wanting to write a novel when I was younger that would consist of only the first sentences of all the books I had read and create a new fiction. Then I gave up on the idea as I thought it was not original enough. I do however feel the need to borrow words and images at times, and turn them into something else, build narratives out of promised beginnings.

In view of that, how do you cover the voids and broken links in your archive-based works?

When I sense an inescapable void I try to preserve it, to accentuate it. A void cannot be created on purpose; it is a result of some kind of time-based stagnation, at once physical and intellectual. The void has a great conceptual value, so I don't cover it up; I gladly expose its significance. I am also aware of the knowledge that is missing, of the unconnected dots, and I try to emphasize them if anything. I do, however, rely on my own subjectivity to make order, and thus orient myself within the broken links. When I attempt narratives that remain open or are considered unfinished, both emotionally and intellectually, I try to answer something that I have been questioning outside of a particular narrative, maybe a question that derives from a theoretical or art historical context. That is how most of my 'archives' have come to being by addressing multiple questions simultaneously and using a documentary frame for analysis.

Can you exemplify this course of action with the Master Plan (2008) research process?

Master Plan is a work that focuses on the way we miscomprehend grand narrative, and in this particular case, the plan of Kenzo Tange's vision of Skopje following the 1963 earthquake. I wanted to render a narrative that humanizes the project. This



large undertaking in Skopje becomes an entirely different story when you study the more intimate, private photo archives of the architects and others that have worked on the master plan, as well as when you add your own fiction. I wanted to rearticulate other factual documentation of the different stages of the process through some other forms of classification and articulation. Reimagining the atmosphere of Tange's studio became something of great value to the narrative. By returning to these scenes, I was able to challenge our collective memory. By providing additional texts and interviews, I was able to glue some parts into a sort of collage. There is always the opportunity of developing additional layers in the process of imagining and reconstructing a memory. Therefore, I made hundreds of drawings based on found sources, providing a certain alternative to the pre-approved official information. Looking back at the found documentation and what I did with it reminds me of the absurdity and the absorbing quality of that history.

In the case of Very Beautiful Name Piece (2011), how was it cultivated into an object?

This work originated from the need to demystify something personal. It was a work that somehow helped me in understanding the certain kind of void in the way I relate my personal narrative to a more universal idea of history. How I preserve the things I hide and neglect over time. The glass object, the container, is at once protecting and exposing particular intimacy with the act of production.

Is there a difference between the obsession of possessing objects and the unremitting act of archiving?

Maybe the difference is the methodology. In the obsessive act of possessing objects (or anything else), we are led by the compulsive need to be surrounded by some form of assurance that our pending insanity will somehow be cushioned by the fact that we 'own' something even if we don't understand it. Fear (combined with oblivion) is the persistent sensation in the obsessive act and assured to be the driving factor in relation to the act of collecting. The unremitting act of archiving is altogether a different methodology –not necessarily less manic, but somehow delineated in a way that becomes a contributing narrative in the sense of a larger collectivity. There is a potential for discovery of new knowledge and darkener links of how A relates to C, or how D manifests F. The similarity lays the unedifying qualities in the opportunity of making things public, open, visible, less weird, but more unceasing.



In this respect, how do you locate the viewer in the course of the presentation of the archives?

I know that the viewer has a difficult time relating to a project if he or she wants to understand the linearity of the narrative. I tried to divert the preconceived expectation that there is an A and then a B and a C point in the narrative, because, for the most part, it is not how things happen in reality. It is not the case as in a classic form of filmmaking or theater that relies on the viewers' potential for catharsis at the end of the story. For me, it is important to remain open and suggest that a viewer enters and exists in free will and that the work channels a non-linear opportunity. It is harder to declare independence from the logical way stories travel from the mediation of the 3-point rule: introduction, culmination, and resolution. I prefer to linger in-between the rules, to suggest a space that exists only when the viewer attributes his/her energy in creating that space. I try to make my installations perform, and give the viewer an opportunity in a way that cannot be measured entirely in quantity or quality, but is still there.

How would you describe your process of producing in relation to the spatial and perceptual input?

There is always a space to be considered: a real architectural input that becomes a conceptual element with its own identity, narrative, and physiology, or a larger social environment in which the work is situated. I get so involved with the way I originally realize some works that they become impossible to reinstall later on, both in terms of the physical and the contextual reality of the initial experience. Maybe it is for these reasons that I have recently tried to analyse some of my work and create new 'spatial/archival conditions' for them to re-exist. Most recently, this happened with the work *Tommy Rot (The Sublime Violence of Truth)*, which originates from 2002. The next work that will get this 'treatment' is *Everything is After Something* produced in Visby in 2004. And this is directly linked with the perception I have of the space in which I produced them and the spaces that can absorb them in the future.

How does a work contain others? What is the connection between your long-term projects?

Some works do not end when an exhibition opens or when they get published. The presumed closure of ideas, even when individual works are 'appropriately' finished, does not necessarily apply to every work. I respect the way things arrive to their natural closure regardless of assumed deadlines. In that sense, I am also quite aware of the problematic nature of keeping things open, suspended in the way of closure as in form and content. But maybe it is precisely that aspect that keeps me inspired about the prospect of the art practice.



So, some of your works remain open for a period of time.

Only if it is a quality, an added value in terms of the concept. It again relates to the question of archiving knowledge or adjusting knowledge.

Speaking of open projects, could you describe the operational logic and different phases of Obsessive Setting (2010) and as well as its relationship with Master Plan (2008)?

Obsessive Setting is an epilogue to *Master Plan* which was the “open” work. Both works are research-based and derive from the same concept of articulating the legacy of Kenzo Tange’s work in Skopje, but speak of different values of translating or repeating motives I had found, and have treated as documentation and artifact. I wanted to address the concept of rearticulating factual documentation of the different stages of the course of drafting additional layers in the process of imagining and reconstructing a memory. Therefore, drawings based on found sources provide a certain alternative to the pre-approved official photography. In *Obsessive Setting*, the found source, be it image or text or object, is given another spin, an entirely new dynamic and function, appropriating the logic of seeing and believing the fact of the possibility for fiction.

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