

Legitimising the Ephemeral

The Exhibition Magazine as Epitome of the Contemporary

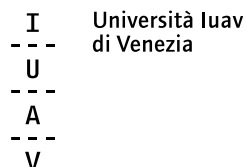
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A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Culture through the Double Doctoral Programme at the Università Iuav di Venezia and at the University of Aberdeen

Submitted in February 2021



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Abstract English

The dissertation focuses on the magazines published by biennial exhibitions, herein called exhibition magazines. Departing from the analysis of the periodic relationship between magazines and biennials, I look at the two formats in tandem, as temporal constructions—whose existence extends between the past and the future, whilst existing in the present—in a continuous tension between becoming (ephemerality) and unbecoming (institutionalisation), which is, I argue, the very feature that allows them to engage with contemporary art and contemporaneity's own becoming.

Representing the dual drive between becoming and unbecoming, the exhibition magazine serves to disseminate the biennial through space and time, acting not only as a promotional tool, but as a vehicle through which the exhibition's temporality is narrowed and transformed to engage with contemporaneity and audience.

I depart from an historical-chronological perspective to consider the first three exhibition magazines: *la biennale* published by the Venice Biennale between 1950 and 1971, the *documenta* journals which have been revived with different formats at every new iteration of the show since 1997, and the *Manifesta Journal* published by Manifesta between 2003 and 2014.

Building on the case studies, alongside a practice-based approach comprising of the development of an art periodical database and the launch of a journal devoted to the study of art's ostensivity and exhibitions, titled *OBOE (On Biennials and Other Exhibitions)*, I have been able to demonstrate the intricate—at times submissive, at others mutinous—relationship between magazines and biennials and how they both come to define contemporary art and engage with contemporaneity's demands. Indeed, I argue that while these magazines are a niche within the niche of art periodical studies, they have become exemplary in representing the relation of mutual servitude between magazines and the art system at large.

Abstract Italiano

La tesi si concentra sulle riviste pubblicate dalle mostre biennali, qui chiamate exhibition magazines. Partendo dall'analisi del rapporto periodico tra riviste e mostre biennali, si analizzano i due formati, in tandem, come costruzioni temporali—la cui esistenza si dilata tra passato e futuro, sussistendo nel presente—in continua tensione tra effimero e istituzionalizzazione. Questa tensione è la caratteristica che permette a riviste e mostre biennali di rappresentare l'arte contemporanea e il divenire stesso della contemporaneità.

Rappresentando la duplice spinta tra il divenire e il non divenire, l'exhibition magazine funziona come organo di diffusione della mostra biennale, sia attraverso lo spazio che attraverso il tempo, agendo da un lato come strumento promozionale, dall'altro come veicolo attraverso il quale la temporalità della mostra si restringe e si trasforma per coinvolgere la contemporaneità e il pubblico.

La ricerca, partendo da una prospettiva storico-cronologica, considera le prime tre riviste pubblicate da mostre periodiche: la biennale pubblicata da la Biennale di Venezia tra il 1950 e il 1971, le riviste di Documenta che sono state riproposte con formati diversi ad ogni nuova iterazione della mostra a partire dal 1997, e il Manifesta Journal pubblicato da Manifesta tra il 2003 e il 2014.

I casi studio sono stati accompagnati da un approccio pratico che si concretizza nello sviluppo di un database di periodici d'arte e nel lancio di una rivista dedicata allo studio del carattere ostensivo dell'arte e delle mostre, dal titolo *OBOE (On Biennals and Other Exhibitions)*, grazie al quale ho potuto dimostrare il complicato—a volte sottomesso e, altre volte ammutinato—rapporto tra riviste e mostre biennali, e il modo in cui entrambe arrivano a definire l'arte contemporanea e a confrontarsi con le esigenze dettate dalla contemporaneità.

La tesi infine sostiene che, pur essendo una nicchia nella nicchia dei periodici d'arte, queste riviste sono esemplari per rappresentare il rapporto di reciproca dipendenza tra le riviste e il sistema dell'arte in generale.

Declaration

I, Camilla Salvaneschi, hereby declare that this dissertation “Legitimising the Ephemeral. The Exhibition Magazine as Epitome of the Contemporary” undertaken as a part of the Double Doctoral Programme at the Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia and the University of Aberdeen, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Culture, is entirely my own work and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or any other qualification.

I also declare that where I have used or consulted published or unpublished (conversations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) work of others, this has always been clearly attributed through quotation marks and the sources have always been specifically acknowledged.

Finally, all ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed properly while preparing the thesis and comply with both the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice and the University of Aberdeen’s Ethics Code.

February 22, 2021

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Camilla Salvaneschi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'C' and a long, sweeping tail.

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Practice-Based Projects

OBOE Journal On Biennials and Other Exhibitions: www.oboejournal.com

Art Periodicals Database: www.artperiodicalsdb.com

Introduction

“Contemporary art, by its own constant definition, is an art of becoming, of happenings, occurrences and occasions”.¹

With these words, art historian Terry Smith describes contemporary art as something in flux, in movement. The choice of the word ‘becoming’ bridges art history and theory with the philosophy of time. It recalls Heraclitus’ *panta rhei* doctrine, in which everything flows and nothing is permanent. In philosophy, for instance, the idea of becoming, of becoming ‘in time’, is connected with movement and evolution.² Becoming demands change and transformation into something else. It is the process that allows things to come about in time and space. According to Smith, contemporary art is an art of becoming, an art of transformation and change that depends on the specific time and space, the here and now, it engages with. Contemporary art is also made of events and moments that punctuate and define its very existence. These moments are those in which the artwork manifests itself: circulating between museums, galleries, exhibitions or publications. Throughout this dissertation I will analyse two of the mediums in which contemporary art manifests: magazines and periodic exhibitions. I will demonstrate how their ephemeral nature makes them particularly adept at engaging with contemporary art’s state of constant becoming, allowing them to define and legitimise it. Indeed, it is no coincidence that these two formats, symptomatic of the becoming of contemporary art for their periodic nature, have become amongst the major defining forces of the contemporary art system over recent decades.

¹ Terry Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition,” *Stages*, 6 (April 2017), <http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-6/biennials-within-the-contemporary-composition>, accessed June 2020.

² On the notion of becoming see also Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [1911], trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover, 1998); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* [1972], trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983; and *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Premises, Focus and Aims

With their recurring formats, magazines and biennials have become the spaces which intermittently define the latest trends in art. Recurring exhibitions, hereafter called biennials as this is the most common format, can take place every two, three, four, five or even ten years. Each time they take place, these mega-shows, or “hegemonic machines”³ as political theorist Oliver Marchart defines them, taking into account philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony as dominance of the *senso commune*⁴ tend to establish international discourses, rooting them in local cultural specificities and thereby becoming tools for nation building and economic growth. These exhibitions are created to boost the region’s economy and touristic attractiveness. They offer viewers ways to understand the world—the time and space—we live in both locally and globally, at times contesting the geographic boundaries of a Western-centric art world.

The exponential growth in the number of these institutions worldwide has led theorists and philosophers, like Peter Osborne, to emphasise the increasingly important role held by the biennial exhibition in the process of defining art as art and as contemporary. He claims that “Art today lives [...] in ‘the age of the biennial’⁵ and that these recurring formats have overturned Tony Bennett’s museum-centred “exhibitionary complex”⁶—an institutional power network which, like Foucault’s panopticon, assigns a place to the audience within its established order—becoming the quintessential space for legitimising contemporary art

³ Oliver Marchart, “Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization: The Case of Documenta (2008)” in Elena Filipovic, Solveig Øvstebø and Marieke van Hal, *The Biennial Reader* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 2010), 466-490. See also “Contemporary Art Biennials—Our Hegemonic Machines in Times of Emergency”, *oncurating.org*, 46 (June 2020), <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-46.html#.X-mkvOlKhsM>, accessed December 2020.

⁴ On his understanding of hegemony see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 263; and Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity”, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, 5 (1986): 15.

⁵ Peter Osborne, *The Postconceptual Condition* (London: Verso, 2018).

⁶ Ibid. For Bennet’s postulations of the “exhibitionary complex” see Tony Bennet, “The Exhibitionary Complex”, in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.), *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 81-112; and Bennet, “Exhibition, Truth, Power: Reconsidering The Exhibitionary Complex”, in Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyc, *The documenta 14 Reader* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz: 2017), 339-352.

beyond the market.⁷ Similarly, in *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta: The Exhibitions that created Contemporary Art*, the two art scholars Anthony Gardner and Charles Green state that “these regularly recurring exhibitions have come, since the early 1990s, to define contemporary art”.⁸ Yet as Terry Smith remarks, biennials are certainly an “essential component of any such definition”⁹, incorporating factors such as the increasing number of museums, galleries, and fairs, as well as the flourishing of magazines globally. Indeed, alongside biennials, magazines may be understood as another periodic platform capable of transforming our definition of art.

Since the 1960s, magazines have grown into gatekeepers of the art system, both empowering and legitimizing art as well as its institutions, through the opening or closing of the art world’s doors.¹⁰ According to British critic Lawrence Alloway’s 1972 definition of the art world as a “communication network”,¹¹ magazines became privileged sites for organising and mediating communication with its various publics. Over the years the magazine evolved into a powerful means for increasing the economic value of an artwork or artist, publishing exhibition reviews and/or images of the work. Reproductions of an artist’s work would allow it to be seen by a wider audience than the one that would visit the exhibition, and would document the artwork when it was no longer exhibited.¹² Hence, the magazine’s influence included not only the moment in which the artwork was shown and written about, but also its afterlife, and how it allowed the latter to circulate beyond the spatiotemporal boundaries of the exhibition. Certainly, the importance of the format does not have to do only with the

⁷ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), 158-168.

⁸ Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 3.

⁹ Terry Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”.

¹⁰ On the gatekeeping function of the magazine see Octavian Eșanu and Angela Harutyunyan, “Art Periodicals Today. Historically Considered”, *Art Margins* 5, 3 (October 2016), 3-10.

¹¹ Lawrence Alloway, *Network: Art and Complex the Present* (Ann Arbor, [MI]: UMI Research Press, 1984), 4-5. See also Lawrence Alloway, “The Network: The Art World as a System”, *Artforum* 11, 1 (September 1972), 29-32, accessible online at the link: <https://www.artforum.com/print/197207/network-the-art-world-described-as-a-system-33673>, accessed December 2020.

¹² See amongst others, Dan Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages: ‘A History of Conceptual Art’.” In *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*, Alexander Alberro ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 10-17. For an account on the various theories on the matter see Gwen Allen, *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2011), 1-41.

exponential growth of the artworld, but with the “gerundive nature of artworks”,¹³ which are in themselves constantly becoming and (re)making.

In fact, the fluid nature of contemporary art makes magazines and biennials the perfect embodiments of this continuous stream, and indeed art has been privileging practices that engage more closely with time and process, such as performance, video and installation. Indeed, from the early avant-garde movements artworks were no longer defined as a unique media-oriented composition, and instead privilege the idea of open processes of becoming, including a disparate number of mediums such as performance, video, VR and installations...¹⁴ More than a single and unique project, the artwork needs to be conceived as a number of possibilities and opportunities. Throughout this dissertation, I will argue that within the continuous and transformative present, the evolving nature of magazines and biennials makes them perfect for mirroring and reflecting the changed equilibriums between art and the art system at large, and thus capable of engaging with the continuously evolving demands of the audience and contemporary art.

The empowerment of the magazine also corresponds with Walter Benjamin’s statements to a similar effect in his treatise on “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935) in which the German philosopher argues that as soon as art is mechanically reproduced, in particular through mass media, it loses its aura, which refers to the uniqueness and originality of its being art. In these changed conditions the work of art becomes a qualitatively different form of communication, one with strong aesthetic, political and social concerns and possibilities.¹⁵ Indeed, according to Benjamin, these possibilities, connected with the new conditions of production and circulation, would entail a structuring of the social relationships between author or artist and audience, anticipating the important role of magazines in the history of art¹⁶ as ideal vehicles for circulating art and communicating theories around it.

¹³ Angela Vettese, “Why OBOE? The Gerundive Nature of Artworks”, *OBOE Journal* 1, 1 (Summer 2020): 3-5.

¹⁴ Angela Vettese, *Si fa con tutto. Il linguaggio dell’arte contemporanea* (Bari: Laterza, 2010), V. See also Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2009) and Michael Archer, *Art Since 1960* [1997], (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015).

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 234.

¹⁶ See Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Understanding Brecht* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1998), 85-103.

Magazines have become important for their capacity to disseminate these artworks to multiple audiences and heterogeneous readers, while sharing with biennials their role as legitimising tools of the art system, alongside a number of peculiarities that characterise them as such, including their intent to educate and entertain. That said, the main focus of the present examination is their periodicity as it allows them to adapt to art's becoming and grow into two of the major forces of the artworld.

Art Historian Gwen Allen concisely and effectively describes the magazine as “a type of periodical: it is issued at regular intervals, and exists serially across a span of time”.¹⁷ A similar definition can be applied to the recurring exhibition since it also takes place at regular intervals and exists serially across a span of time.¹⁸ This shared temporality enables us to understand both magazines and recurring exhibitions as ephemeral media. Each issue is rendered transient by a subsequent one, ensuring the magazine is current and updated. Significantly, it is their very ephemerality that has arguably allowed magazines to observe and engage with art's perpetual flux. The magazine and the biennial are current not only because they select, display and publish what curatorial groups and institutions consider the latest trends in art, but also because their periodicity allows them to directly interfere and transform our understanding of art, by privileging particular artists or movements within the becoming of art itself.

Through an analysis of three case studies and a practice-based approach that includes the development of a database of art periodicals and an academic journal on biennials, titled *OBOE On Biennials and Other Exhibitions*, this dissertation contends that magazines and biennials, as ephemeral and periodic formats, are entities in becoming and are thus ideally situated to engage with contemporaneity and transform our understanding of contemporary art. In particular, focusing on the hybridisation of the two formats, and looking at the magazines published by perennial exhibitions, which I herein define ‘exhibition magazines’ I

¹⁷ Gwen Allen, “Introduction,” *The Magazine* (London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2016), 12. On the peculiarities that characterise the magazine see also Megan Le Masurier, “What is a Magazine?”, *TEXT Special Issue 25: Australasian magazines: new perspectives on writing and publishing*, eds. Rosemary Williamson and Rebecca Johnke (April 2014): 1-16, <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue25/LeMasurier.pdf>, accessed December 2020.

¹⁸ See Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”.

will demonstrate how the interlacing of the biennial's periodicity with the tighter temporality of the magazine, has enhanced their dissemination and transformed their temporality to enact new and more durable relationships with the audience and respond to shifts and changes in contemporary art and contemporaneity at large. Indeed, I argue that the importance of these periodicals lies not in their capacity to develop a history and study of these exhibitions, but rather in the pivotal role they play in the creation of a new temporality for which they transform the time of the interval, no longer into a dormant time, but rather into an active one. Similarly to Jonathan Crary's theories on the erosion of time devoted to sleep in a capitalist and global society in his book *24/7. Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep*,¹⁹ the art system seems to no longer contemplate the idea of the pause, privileging instead visibility, movement and action at all times. The examination of the biennial's temporality, will show how the birth of these periodicals seems to be symptomatic of these transformations, as with their existence they facilitate an ongoing exhibition and institution, as well as a continuous conversation with the audience, composed of the visitors to these shows and the readers of the magazines. They also provide the space to look at how curatorial strategies have projected themselves in time, continuing to evolve and improve the very act of exhibiting and giving primary importance to process. By focusing on the exhibition's overall structure, and not specifically analysing artists and artworks, I will show how these magazines accompany and at times move alongside major shifts in art, as art is in itself the departing point from which the whole system, comprised of magazines, biennials, galleries and museums, emanates. Finally, while the magazines discussed here are a rather small niche in the wider panorama of art periodicals, they prove exemplary for demonstrating the ways in which the magazine adapts to serve an institution and posit itself at the centre of the art system and its communication streams.

Exhibition magazines—periodicals published by periodic exhibitions like biennials—thanks to their altered temporality, also function as historic lenses for studying the exhibitions themselves. They are a vital part of the publication apparatus accompanying catalogues and guidebooks. Since making a periodic exhibition takes several years, after the late 1990s, a handful of dedicated institutions and curators began publishing magazines to keep audiences from the shows and returning visitors to the biennials engaged, to research the exhibition or

¹⁹ Jonathan Crary, *24/7. Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013).

to document the process of making the show. With the awareness of art being in a constant state of becoming, and the growth of discursivity in curatorial practice, the catalogue became insufficient for discussing both the art and the exhibition, as it is generally planned in advance and gives only a partial view of it. As the two scholars Bruce Ferguson and Milena Hoegsberg put it,

in the worst case scenario, [catalogues] become little more than visual memory aids for the visitors, or stand-ins for the experience of the real thing for those who could not attend. [...] Even if a catalogue has substantial essays by insightful writers, there is a strong likelihood that their texts will not, or truly cannot, address the actual experience of the exhibition, and thus amount to little more than an incomplete archival record, or, quite often, an academic conceit.²⁰

The necessity of the magazine publication is a response to this gap, a lacuna which would otherwise strip “the curator of a chance to learn from the exhibition itself and share that knowledge with the visitor. [...] in the catalogue the curator can state only a belief about the *subject* of the exhibition. No claim to be able to share its *exhibitionary content* can possibly be made” (emphasis in original).²¹ As Terry Smith points out in *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (2013) the catalogue of a show is sent to a printer long before the opening night, which leaves several months of the process excluded from its pages. As he states, a “widely shared solution” to this inherent conundrum has yet to be found, although throughout this dissertation I will argue that the exhibition magazine, adopted by a small number of exhibition curators, can be seen as one possible answer. Indeed, accepting the magazine’s constant evolution and unique temporality as its specific points of reference it is able to engage with contemporaneity at a faster pace than a biennial, especially when this is contended between the spheres of time (their ephemerality) and space (their institutionalisation).

The second intention of this dissertation is to create a profile of the exhibition magazine while focusing on the relationships between magazines and their parent institutions, biennials and their transformed temporality. I will thus look at the many strategies with which the magazine is able to legitimise and serve the exhibition’s brand and institution, since these are relevant not only to the biennial but to the wider context of the artworld.

²⁰ Bruce W. Ferguson and Milena M. Hoegsberg, “Talking and Thinking about Biennials: The Potential of Discursivity”, in *The Biennial Reader*, 360.

²¹ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2013), 45.

The three selected case studies, the Venice Biennale, Documenta and Manifesta, deal respectively with these three discourses and demonstrate how the exhibition magazine has been able to anticipate and participate in some of the major shifts that have occurred in exhibition and art world history, proving to be, at times, more receptive to change than the institution itself. While the selected cases represent three of the most established and renowned exhibitions in the Western context, the intent is also to shed light on the intricate—at times submissive, at others mutinous—relations with the biennial. By comparing the three cases with one another and relating them to *OBOE Journal*, which I launched as methodological practice for this study, I will show how the medium has evolved, adapting to the exigencies and transformations of the biennial primarily, but also of art and its system of legitimisation.

Despite the focus on this niche of periodicals, these examples will show the complex relationship between the magazine and art's representation and dissemination, where the first could not exist without the latter, and vice versa. It shows that the exhibition magazine, even if born under the auspices of a mega-exhibition, suffers from similar problems to a number of other 'autonomous' periodicals, providing a reading of these magazines that can be applied to other art periodicals worldwide. Finally, the research provides a point of reflection on the evolution and recent phenomenon of the hybridisation of the art system, showing that both the magazine and the biennial—in their separate or interrelated formats—are a crucial avenue for the study not only of their respective fields and for Art History, but also of the complexity of the present, with the potential to ask resonant questions about the contemporary.

Literature Review

The magazines promoted and published by recurring exhibitions have come to constitute a small yet growing part of the overall art publishing and exhibitionary panorama, and although there has been a reviving of its format, scholarly research has not granted them the attention they deserve. As I will show in the next paragraphs, most studies have focused on either one or the other case, but none of these examinations have looked at them in relation to one another, as examples of a trend that interlaces studies on temporality and

contemporaneity, art publishing, exhibition history and curating. Indeed, studying the periodical related to an exhibition, means uniting the periodical and exhibition fields under the same umbrella, finding space for the analysis of their specific periodicities, curatorial innovations, the tensions between promotion and critique and the evolution of the art system in toto.

The gap of studies around this niche of periodical publishing is testimony to one in the study of contemporary art magazines more generally. In the *Routledge Handbook on Magazine Research*, scholar Sheila M. Webb outlines the many avenues open for research in the field and highlights that the study of magazines provides a space for a multifaceted and non-repetitive analysis of contemporary art and its system of legitimation. In her chapter, Webb reports that in the studies published since the 2000s, there is a four-decade long gap since most studies stop at periodicals published in the 1970s, but as she affirms “developments in the 1990s and early 2000s deserve the same careful eye as, for example, artist’s periodicals of the 1960s have received”.²² Scrolling through the articles of academic journals on periodical studies, such as the *Journal of European Periodical Studies*,²³ it becomes quite evident that the attention given to contemporary art magazines still needs to grow. My research aims to engage with this gap, and, while analysing a small group of art periodicals, consider the phenomenon from a broader perspective, that of the role of the art magazine in the contemporary art system. For this reason, the magazines studied herein are related to biennials, as another major component of the art system, in order to understand their periodicity from diverse angles, as well as what are the implications of their temporalities and how these two periodic formats are connected within the heterogeneous field of study that is art history.

The first relevant studies of the contemporary art magazine after 1945 begin in the 1960s and 1970s with the catalogue of the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London *The Art Press. Two Centuries of Art Magazines* (1976), which presents an historical overview of the medium, and the survey issue “Art Magazines” (1976) published by the London based magazine *Studio International*. Both publications investigate the role of art magazines, and

²² Sheila M. Webb, “Magazines and the Visual Arts”, in *Routledge Handbook on Magazine Research*, (New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 356.

²³ See the journal’s website at: <https://ojs.ugent.be/jeps/index>, accessed June 2020.

how art is conditioned, compromised and affected by the magazine medium in multiple ways. The survey published at the end of the issue, in which art magazines were asked to respond to a questionnaire on their structure, focus and economic profile, was particularly informative. The same questionnaire was re-proposed thirty years later, in 2006, by *Frieze*, on the occasion of its 100th issue, and titled “Periodical Tables”.²⁴ These two cases are neither the first nor the last of a number of periodicals which have devoted entire issues to analyse and deepen the understanding of their format. The editors were searching for moments of dialogue and confrontation in response to problematics faced on a daily basis for the survival and success of their publications. These special volumes, together with anthologies, conferences and seminars on the topics, are a way to self-historicise and respond to the general lack of studies on art periodicals. As ephemera, it is one of the main concerns of a magazine to have a legacy, to be remembered and remain accessible once the publication ceases existing.²⁵

A recent contribution to the field was *Art Margins’* special issue *Art Periodicals Today, Historically Considered* (2016), curated by Octavian Esanu and Angela Harutyunyan.²⁶ A number of global periodicals participated, contributing with important essays on the origin, nature and role of the art periodical today. Gwen Allen, guest contributor to the issue, published an essay divided in two parts. The first, *Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds (Part 1): A Historical Exploration* examines the history of the contemporary art magazine and looks specifically at *Artforum* (1962-) and *October* (1976-), journals which have shaped the art magazine field since the 1960s and 1970s. The second part, *Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds, Part 2: Critical Publicity in a Global Context*, focuses on more contemporary and global examples that adopted the magazine medium to question the art system, challenging its limits and institutions. In this second contribution,

²⁴ See *Frieze* (June 7, 2006), “Periodical Tables. Part 1” <https://frieze.com/article/periodical-tables-part-1>, “Periodical Tables. Part 2” <https://frieze.com/article/periodical-tables-part-2>, and “Periodical Tables. Part 3” <https://frieze.com/article/periodical-tables-part-3>, accessed June 2020.

²⁵ On the magazine’s self-archiving practices and on the magazine as an archival form: see Camilla Salvaneschi, “Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive”, in Meghan Forbes (ed.), *International Perspectives on Publishing Platforms: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 151-173.

²⁶ *Art Margins’s* issue “Art Periodicals Today. Historically Considered” had its premises in the conference *Critical Machines: Art Periodicals Today* was held in collaboration with the University of Beirut: https://www.aub.edu.lb/art_galleries/Pages/Conference.aspx, accessed June 2020.

Allen comments on two of the magazines published by Documenta, the Magazine Project of documenta 12 and the Journal published by documenta 14, understanding these as vehicles for promotion and publicity. These reflections have been further developed in an essay published after a conference on the hybridisation between biennials and art fairs and the role of the media.²⁷ In the essay, Allen focuses her attention on two main examples, *Frieze* and *documenta 14 Journal*, to show the ambivalences and incongruities of the art magazine and how these actively posit themselves between market-oriented contents and processes of legitimisation.

Allen's publications have been fundamental in providing a genealogy of the contemporary art magazine and the history of the medium in the 20th century. Her examinations range from experimentations in artists' magazines to considerations of contemporary art magazines from around the world. Her most significant contributions to the field include the volume *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (2011), in which she examines a number of artists' periodicals, published between the 1960s and 1970s, that challenged mainstream magazines, provided criticism and interrogated the art market system, becoming alternative spaces for the display and creation of art. A more recent edited book, *The Magazine* (2016) draws together a collection of essays that contextualise the potential of the magazine as a vehicle to foster critical dialogue and create networks of exchange around art and criticism. Both volumes give a thorough and impeccable analysis of the art magazine, but only briefly touch upon its relationship with the institution and the exhibition, which instead are at the core of this thesis.

Alongside Allen, edited volumes on Italian art magazines like *Riviste d'arte tra ottocento e novecento. Forme, modelli e funzioni* (2003), edited by Gianni Carlo Sciolla, have proved particularly inspiring for the in-depth analytical approach they have provided on the topic. Especially significant were Giovanni Bianchi and Giuseppina Dal Canton's examinations of the magazine *la biennale*, which is the first of the three case studies of the present dissertation. *Arte moltiplicata. L'immagine del '900 italiano nello specchio dei rotocalchi* (2013), together with other pivotal studies on the field of Italian art periodicals developed through the so-called Prin's—research projects of national interest—like the Capti

²⁷ See Gwen Allen, "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition: Art Magazines in the Context of Art Fairs and Biennials," in Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese (eds.), *Double Trouble. Exhibitions Facing Fairs in Contemporary Art* (Milano: Scalpendi, 2020), 141-156.

(Contemporary art archives – periodicals, texts, illustrations)²⁸ have provided insights into the subject of the study but also on the many methodologies that can be adopted to pursue this highly specific yet heterogeneous field. In other cases, surveys like *Riviste d'arte d'avanguardia. Gli anni Sessanta e Settanta* (2005) and *Revue d'artistes. Une sélection* (2008) have provided further knowledge on the magazine medium on a more regional level, as well as being useful examples for developing the *Art Periodicals Database*.

All of these thorough examinations of the art magazine, and how it evolved in terms of format and structure, have been of substantial importance for the present research; which, departing from the premises laid out by these studies has investigated the reasons why and how the magazine has become one of the major components of the art system. Indeed, shedding light on the very periodicity that characterises the magazine, and relating this to the biennial, has allowed me to understand its becoming in time and how through this never-ending motion, these periodic formats engage with art's perpetual flux. As I argue, it is this distinctive feature of periodicity and time that may help understand the recent evolutions and power of the art magazine in the system of contemporary art.

The study of the magazines and biennials periodicities and their relation with contemporaneity and time, has been inspired by the readings of topical philosophical contributions that include, amongst others, Giorgio Agamben *Che cos'è il contemporaneo?* (2007), Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907), Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) and Peter Osborne's *Anywhere or Not At All* (2013). Another fundamental volume on non-chronological temporalities, which has informed my most recent thinking on the subject, but that is not included in the dissertation, is Victoria Browne's *Feminism, Time and Non-Linear History* (2014).

These readings are intertwined with several other crucial studies for understanding the temporal dynamics of serial publishing practices. While the majority of writings from this field of study focus on 19th and 20th century periodicals, these models have been useful for elucidating: temporalities, structures, open and closed types of periodical formats, the role of the reader, and the tension between becoming and unbecoming as it is discussed in the first two Chapters of this dissertation. Of these contributions, Margaret Beetham's "Open and

²⁸ To access the research project see the webpage: <http://www.capti.it/static/uru.php?lang=IT>, accessed April 2021.

Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre” (1989) and “Periodicals and the Time of the Now” (2015), both published in the *Victorian Periodicals Review* have been especially relevant as they clarify the temporal construction of the periodical publication and its relation with contemporaneity. The latter article in particular focuses on how periodical publications give meaning to the time of the now, an elaboration that while applied to early periodicals of the 19th century by Beetham herself, remains highly relevant to this study.

The second field at the core of this dissertation, exhibition studies, contrarily to the existing scholarship on the art magazine, has seen a great flourishing over the last few decades, particularly concerning museum and curatorial studies. The wave began with studies such as *Avantgarde in Exhibition* by art scholar Bruce Altshuler (1994) and the collection of essays *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by art historians Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (1996). Alongside these tomes, *The Biennial Reader* (2010), published on the occasion of the first Bergen Biennial, has been particularly relevant for this study. It comprises contributions by scholars, curators and artists on the phenomenon of “biennialization”, i.e. the global proliferation of biennials. Green and Gardner’s *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta* (2016) sheds light on the global development of the format in comparison with major exhibitions like the Venice Biennale, Documenta, and Manifesta, to illustrate the trajectories of developing biennials and their growing influence on artistic practices. Even though it only mentions some of the publications herein discussed in passing, Gardner and Green’s analysis has been particularly important for understanding the histories of these biennials, also with a global perspective.

Another significant volume which analyses biennials and devotes time to the analysis of these mega-exhibitions’ publication apparatus is Panos Kompatsiaris’ *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacles of Critique, Theory and Art* (2017). The scholar, as will be discussed later on, brilliantly examines the catalogue of documenta X in relation to documenta 9, but omits discussing the magazine that was published before the exhibition.

These are only a few cases that span almost thirty years and document the gap in studies around the publication apparatus of perennial exhibitions. While the literature on these mega-shows continues to grow, it is evident that the study of the periodicals and publications pertaining to these exhibitions remains sporadic and fragmented.

This chasm also remains in the literature concerning the discipline of curating, in, for example, curator Paul O'Neill's volumes *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010), and *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* (2016), as well as in Terry Smith's comprehensive and fascinating examinations of contemporary curatorial practices (2010 and 2015). Indeed, it is quite significant that even the editors of the exhibition magazines herein discussed said they neither knew about nor looked at precedents or similar publishing ventures.

That said, there are different reasons for this lack of detailed study. The first is the niche quality of these publications, even more pronounced than the art magazine (itself a niche area of periodical studies). Secondly, these publications are often seen as appendixes to the exhibition, leading scholars to privilege other aspects in the study of these recurring shows. Throughout the thesis I demonstrate that the study of these periodicals is vital for understanding perennial exhibitions and that by analysing the exhibition magazine, it is not only possible to study both exhibition and attendant periodical, but also how the intertwining of their periodicities makes these publications epitomes of the becoming of contemporaneity and art in the context of the mega-show. Engaging with the aforementioned literature gap in the fields of art periodical and exhibition studies, the thesis, through the identification of the niche of the 'exhibition magazine', shows how in an extended chronological timeframe that goes from the mid-20th century to the 2010s, during which period biennial exhibitions themselves became protagonists of the panorama of contemporary art exhibitions, periodical publications have contributed to the definition of the biennial's identity and mission. Furthermore, by bridging the two fields and demonstrating parallels between periodical publications and recurring exhibitions, the research aimed to present new perspectives to understand the temporalities of these two formats, how they engage with art's perpetual flux and with the becoming of contemporaneity, but it has also provided the occasion to ask bigger questions around the role the issues at stake when discussing about temporality in a capitalist-driven society. Overall, the analysis sheds light on a new perspective to understand the role of the art periodical, inextricably linked to the exhibitionary and art system, no longer conceived as a communication and circulation tool, but as a transformative element of their intrinsic temporality.

In addition, these magazines provide fruitful avenues to reflect upon how capitalism and globalized processes of production and consumption have inserted themselves in the art

system. Indeed, these magazines, interfering with the biennial's slower temporality and shortening the gap in which the biennial is silent, become themselves epitomes of a system that celebrates speed, ephemerality, novelty and change, and in which dormant time is no longer accepted or contemplated. While I will show that these magazines are born out of very diverse needs, it is undeniable that they are part of this accelerationist moment.

Finally, since the dissertation presents only a selection of these periodicals—providing an overview of the origin of these types of magazines in the context of European exhibitions and how they relate to the institution—it would be paramount for future studies which seek to comprehend the role of these magazines in the contemporary moment, to research other biennial-launched periodicals (including Athens, Liverpool, Gwangju and Sao Paolo) and trace a global history of this type of publication. Certainly, opening such research to less renowned and perhaps more peripheral biennials, compared to the hegemonic cases herein discussed, would contribute to the study of the legitimisation processes enacted by counter-hegemonic biennials and how art worlds are formed outside the North-Atlantic axis, giving the periphery a centre stage.

Methodology

While approaching the study of exhibition magazines, contemplating how to determine their role in the art system and investigating how they contribute towards defining contemporary art, I came to realise that the study of these publications—much like that of the art magazine—escapes a fixed definition.²⁹ Considerations of the medium and the acknowledgement of uncharted territories in the scholarship, have therefore urged the conception of a methodology that could help understand and research, firstly formats, and then, by bridging exhibition and periodical studies, the exhibition magazine.

The methods developed for this study include diverse yet overlapping approaches: from the archival research on primary sources and specific magazine titles, to interviews with the editors-in-chief of the selected magazines, to the practical outputs that comprise the compilation of a database of art periodicals and the launch of *OBOE*, an academic journal

²⁹ See Allen, "Introduction" (2016), 12-13; see also Margaret Beetham, "Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, 3 (Fall 1989): 96-100.

on contemporary art and exhibitions. The latter two, in particular, became an occasion to think of this study from a practice-based approach, which would not only result in the compilation and writing of this dissertation but also in the creation of two durable projects that could contribute to the study of magazines, exhibitions and the art system.

While thinking about the most apt method for the study, I passed through the innumerable methodologies for observing and analysing the art magazine, from the relation with the reader, to advertising, from the artists included and discussed within its pages, to the transformation of art criticism, the evolution of the format, the role of the editor-in-chief, its network and promotional circuits, the presence of feminist perspectives, and the possibilities of expression that have made a number of artists adopt the magazine format. From this non-comprehensive list, it became clear that producing a magazine would offer a number of unique approaches for investigating the format as well as experiencing the broader considerations related to the art and time in which magazines are published.

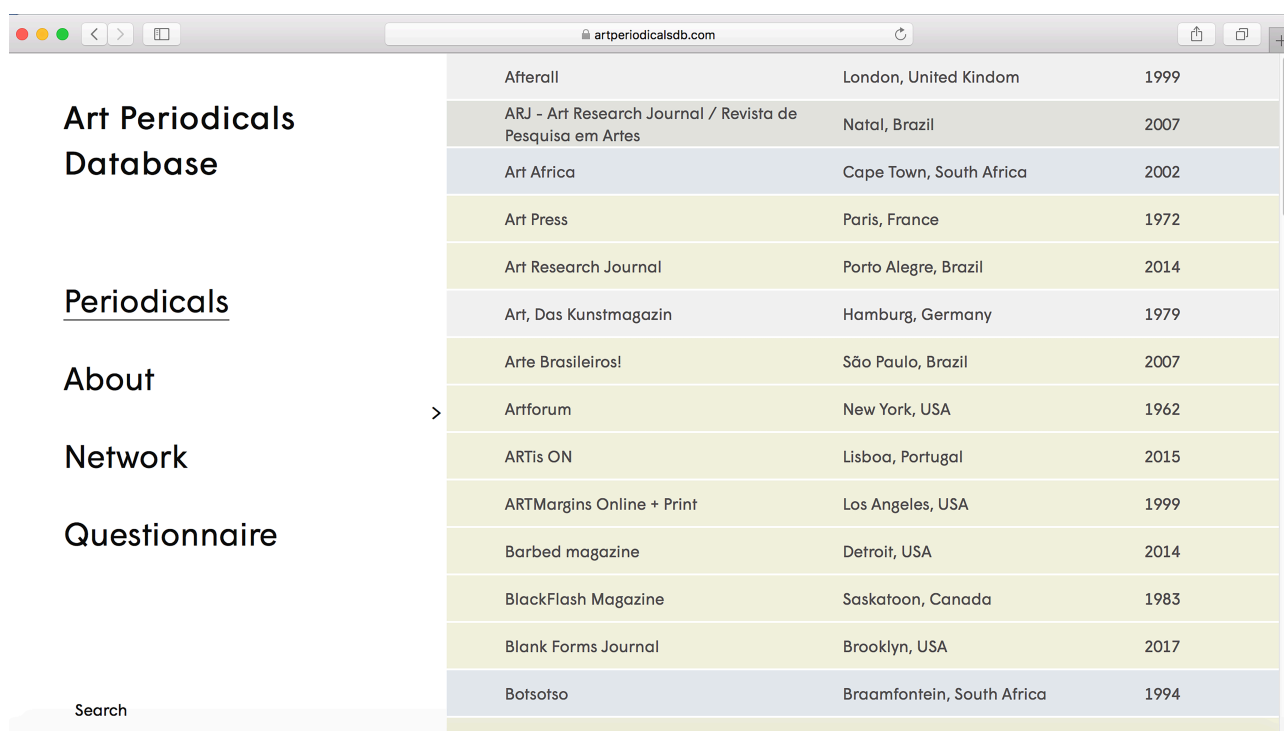
The choice of the practical component was determined by the urge to understand the dynamics as well as the mechanics of production, experiment directly with the format and periodicity of the magazine, and understand its positioning in the system and in the becoming of art from a direct point of view. This is why throughout the pages of this dissertation there are often parentheses on the practical components of the thesis, which show how the methods interlaced with the theoretical analysis and vice versa. Indeed, over the years, each one of these approaches helped the others to mature and become more consistent with the overall project. For this reason, while writing the methodological approach I found it more useful to delineate a sort of timeline of the research conducted, rather than a schematisation of the methods undertaken.

The Art Periodicals Database: The Archive as Research

www.artperiodicalsdb.com

Initially my research project aimed to detail a history of the contemporary art magazine from the end of the 20th century to today, beginning the examination from where the scholarship rarefies. I selected a number of case studies that included *Art Africa*, *ART Margins Online*, *Cabinet*, *e-flux* and *Parkett*. The selected cases were to provide an overview of the innovations in art magazine publishing and how the medium transformed in the last three decades, but it soon became clear that the area of study was too wide and needed narrowing

down. This first research, which has been published in the form of papers,³⁰ was a fundamental introductory step towards exploring the bond between magazines and the art system and investigating an adapt methodology to pursue the study. Some of these magazines, due to their undeniable importance in shaping the field, are mentioned throughout the thesis, and some of them have been crucial in conceptualising the *Art Periodicals Database* [fig. 1] and *OBOE Journal*.



Art Periodicals Database	Periodicals	About	Network	Questionnaire	Search
Afterall	London, United Kindom	1999			
ARJ - Art Research Journal / Revista de Pesquisa em Artes	Natal, Brazil	2007			
Art Africa	Cape Town, South Africa	2002			
Art Press	Paris, France	1972			
Art Research Journal	Porto Alegre, Brazil	2014			
Art, Das Kunstmagazin	Hamburg, Germany	1979			
Arte Brasileiros!	São Paulo, Brazil	2007			
Artforum	New York, USA	1962			
ARTis ON	Lisboa, Portugal	2015			
ARTMargins Online + Print	Los Angeles, USA	1999			
Barbed magazine	Detroit, USA	2014			
BlackFlash Magazine	Saskatoon, Canada	1983			
Blank Forms Journal	Brooklyn, USA	2017			
Botsotso	Braamfontein, South Africa	1994			

Fig. 1. Art Periodicals Database “Home” page. Courtesy: Art Periodicals Database.

While conducting the research on this first selection of magazines, I started developing the first practical output of my research: a database of art periodicals.³¹ This database was a compilation and listing of current art periodicals, produced after 1945, the time in which the art magazine begins to take shape in its current format. This crystallisation occurred in terms of an expansion of its economic base and networks of distribution, increasing internationalisation, and specialisation in the field of contemporary art. This date

³⁰ Part of the research on these publications has been published in Salvaneschi, “Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive”, and in Camilla Salvaneschi, “Magnifying the Margins: Art Magazines in the Contemporary Art System” in *Double Trouble. Exhibitions Facing Fairs in Contemporary Art*, 157-174.

³¹ Cf. Appendix, 217-248.

also allowed me to include publications like *Artforum* and *Flash Art* in the survey, which strongly influenced the field of art periodicals and could not be omitted from such an analysis. In terms of other criteria, for the time being, I have excluded artists' magazines, zines, and other hybrid publications that focus on other fields, alongside historical examples, which have ceased publication.

Inspired by Sean Latham and Robert Scholes fundamental essay "The Rise of Periodical Studies" (2006), alongside Gwen Allen's appendixes to the volumes *Artists' Magazines* and *The Magazine*, the *Contemporary Culture Index* (www.ccindex.info), and the *Chimurenga Library* (<http://chimurengalibrary.co.za/>),³² the database was conceived as an attempt to record and map the art magazine field and provide as global and as comprehensive an image of the territory as possible.³³ During the research period, I have managed to gather over 200 publications that focus on contemporary art, criticism and theory of art in the database, although the number is increasingly growing. At the time of the launch of the website (February 2021) I published a small percentage of the entries, as I envisage the number will grow in time alongside the audience, through a dissemination programme built with newsletters and social media.

The initial list was compiled thanks to the collection of the Chelsea College of Arts in London, and online archives such as the Art Asia Archive (<https://aaa.org.hk/en>) and Art Book Fairs, which have an increasingly broad section dedicated to independent art magazines. Likewise, the archive of *e-flux's* announcements, with its advertisements of magazines' latest issues, proved fundamental for finding publications to include in the initial list.

While collecting data around these magazines (year and place of founding, circulation and readership, periodicity, language, format, business type, editors and editor-in-chief, and so on), and mindful of the experimentations of a number of periodicals with their archives, I realised that rather than a compilation of information, the database had the potential to become an active site of networking for art periodicals. I invited an advisory board composed of scholars, editors and librarians, including Gwen Allen, Lori Cole, Meghan Forbes, Maria Fusco, Cornelia Lauf, David Senior, Theophilos Tramboulis and Sven Spieker.³⁴ The board

³² At the time of competition the name of the library changed into "Periodicals": See *Chimurenga's* website at the the page: <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/periodicals/>, accessed February 2021.

³³ For an overview of the periodicals collected and contacted at the time of the launch of the database, cf. Appendix, 237-244.

³⁴ See "About" page: www.artperiodicalsdb.com, accessed January 2021.

contributed on different levels, from the initial list of periodicals that had to be contacted, to the growth and impact of the project. From the initial phase, I contacted over 200 magazines and requested if I could submit a questionnaire to them with questions around their structure, their partnerships and networks.³⁵ In this phase, Lori Cole's volume *Surveying The Avant-Garde: Questions on Modernism, Art, and The Americas in Transatlantic Magazines* (2018) was of great inspiration for the thorough analysis of the questionnaire in art periodical publishing.

The idea of showing the networks of these periodicals proved to be absolutely crucial for this research as I understood that a history of art magazines should not be seen only through a chronological or linear lens, but also through their relationships to one another, to the art system of their specific region and beyond. On this matter, Didier Schulmann, curator of the Kandinsky Library, notes that a pivotal factor when studying the history of a periodical publication, is to consider if that magazine has been created in reference, in reaction, in response, in dialogue, in struggle with another journal, or else, to fill a gap.³⁶ The database aims to show these resonances, affinities and distances and to provide a history of the medium through its network. This was motivated also by the models I looked at when thinking about *OBOE*. So, each periodical was asked to name up to twelve international magazines that were important for their editorial approach and up to twelve that were relevant in their geographical region. This last question acknowledged the field as a geography of connections, and by doing so, contributed to the growth of the database, particularly for the periodicals that rarely circulate in Europe.

Throughout the years of research, my liaison with the journal *ARTMargins Online*³⁷ was especially significant. Since the journal was one of my initial case studies, it led me to an interview with the editor-in-chief Sven Spieker in 2017.³⁸ During the conversation, I discovered that the journal was doing a project similar to the *Art Periodicals Database*, with a focus on Eastern Europe, as the journal's geographic area of expertise. Their idea was

³⁵ See Appendix for a few examples of the responses of the questionnaire, 226-236.

³⁶ See "L'Art en Train de se Faire," interview with Didier Schulmann and Agnès de Bretagne, <http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-revues/ENS-revues.html>, accessed December 2020.

³⁷ See website: <https://artmargins.com/>, accessed September 2020.

³⁸ Skype Interview with Sven Spieker, June 28, 2017. Recordings available upon request.

reminiscent of the aforementioned special issue “Art Periodicals Today”.³⁹ According to Spieker, the issue shed light on the need for a systematic study of art periodicals in the region, as these often go unnoticed in the Western-centric art system.⁴⁰ The interview was the beginning of an extended collaboration and dialogue. I cooperated with the journal for the following years, setting the selection criteria, preparing the questionnaires for the periodicals (slightly different from the ones for the database), contacting the periodicals and editing the information. The collaboration will become an official partnership, so that each Eastern European entry in my database links to the *ARTMargins* website as soon as this goes online. *ARTMargins’* project, though, differed in terms of visual output and on the methodology of the initial compilation of the magazines. While the database’s initial list was based on research conducted first-hand, *ARTMargins’* was compiled through another questionnaire sent to critics and scholars of the region, who were asked to list the most influential publications for their practice and of the region, and thereby initially limit the list to the network of these selected critics.

The database, while reflecting the connections and interests of the editors who produce the journals and showing the production of intellectual networks, has the potential to be continued and improved in future studies, tracing trajectories between these periodicals and the growth of art fairs and biennials, and showing how the multiple art worlds that now compose this global panorama are formed.⁴¹ Due to the ephemeral nature of the periodical, the database will remain a work in progress. New publications are born every year while others might cease. Indeed, the global Covid-19 pandemic that we have recently been living through has tested a number of these realities, and many of the magazines included herein may have changed their format, or may no longer exist in the near future. At the time of writing, it is too early to predict, but a number of independent art magazines, like the New York based *Convolution*, when responding to the questionnaire in this time of crisis, have announced the possible ceasing of the publication.⁴²

³⁹ Cf. footnote 10.

⁴⁰ Sven Spieker, Skype Interview, June 28, 2017.

⁴¹ See Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, exh. cat. (ZKM/Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2012).

⁴² See *Convolution’s* responses in the Appendix, 231.

OBOE Journal: The Magazine as Research

www.oboejournal.com

The initial research and compilation of the database led to the second practical output of the research: *OBOE Journal*. The idea of launching a periodical publication was motivated by the gap in studies on contemporary art magazines and the system in which they act, on the mechanics behind the making of the journal but also on the desire for a “practice as research” approach. In its early stages, the database revealed gaps and unexplored territories in art magazine publishing, and after an initial survey, it appeared that a magazine focusing on exhibitions did not exist. There were a number of curatorial magazines, but none focusing exclusively on exhibitions and on the sites where artworks and artistic practices come to life.

With the support of my advisor Angela Vettese, who was to be director of the journal, the choice was soon confirmed. The topic strongly appealed to her also, especially in relation to the conference she organised in 2009 with Clarissa Ricci on the Venice Biennale, *Starting from Venice*.⁴³ Also Ricci—whose research focuses on exhibitions and in particular the Venice Biennale—joined the editorial team, to later become co-editor of the journal. Keeping in mind their enthusiasm we decided that the journal would focus on the study of exhibitions, not solely biennials, and that we would dedicate a number of issues to Venice, as the first one demonstrates. The title itself, *OBOE* is an acronym for “On Biennials and Other Exhibitions”, and by recalling a musical instrument is a reference to the potentially playful and malleable nature of the magazine, which is itself in a state of continuous becoming and flux.⁴⁴

In terms of methodology, the project of the journal found support in scholar Simon Sheikh’s reflections on the exhibition as research. In the essay “Towards the Exhibition as Research”, the scholar defines research as in-between the German terms *Forschung* and the French *recherché*. The first represents scientific research, while the second signifies literary investigation, and places the curatorial within this conundrum, re-considering it as substantially research-based. As Sheikh argues:

the curatorial project, [...] the exhibition – should thus not only be thought of as a form of mediation of research, but also as a site for carrying out research, as a place

⁴³ Clarissa Ricci (ed.), *Starting from Venice. Studies on the Biennale* (Milano: et.al, 2010).

⁴⁴ Clarissa Ricci, Camilla Salvaneschi and Angela Vettese, “Editorial”, *OBOE Journal* I, 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.25432/2724-086X/1.1.0001>, accessed December 2020.

for enacted research. Research here is not only what comes before realisation but also that which is realised throughout actualisation.⁴⁵

The “research exhibition” becomes not only a site where the results of research are shown but also a platform to analyse the format and thematic concerns of the exhibition. The founding of a journal aims to do something methodologically similar, only in the field of magazine studies. As a sort of meta-publication, the journal became a site for performing research on exhibitions, and, through its founding, on the magazine itself. Not only a platform for researching exhibitions, then, but also a means through which I could demonstrate that creating and editing are themselves a form of research, as they allow for studying and experiencing the complexities of a periodical publication from multiple angles.

The magazine is not just a periodical publication, but should be understood with Walter Benjamin’s term “apparatus”, with which he refers to the totality of the social, material, economic, discursive and institutional aspects of a determinate practice.⁴⁶ In the essay *The Author as Producer*,⁴⁷ Benjamin departs from the assumption that publications produce meaning not only through published content and editorial structure, but considers also their physical form, use of advertising, and graphic layout. Apparatus is a term that conveys also the production, distribution, and circulation of publications, while giving a sense of temporality (intrinsic to the periodical nature of the magazine).

The methodology adopted aims to contribute to the understanding of the magazine as an apparatus, providing a broader view of its structure and not privileging one aspect over another. The creation of a periodical publication contributes towards understanding the behind-the-scenes of magazine publishing: what it means to publish a magazine, what the mediations that need to be performed are, how to sustain a publication in the long-run, how the temporality and periodicity of the journal affect the editorial choices, and so on. This practice-based methodology offered a unique insight into the mechanics and dynamics of a periodical publication, however it cannot be considered an exhaustive approach to answer for a whole range of magazines—from mainstream to more independent ones—because *OBOE* was conceived as an academic publication with different norms, editorial procedures,

⁴⁵ Simon Sheikh, “Towards the Exhibition as Research”, in Paul O’ Neill (ed.), *Curating Research* (London: Open Editions, 2015), 39-40.

⁴⁶ On Benjamin’s understanding of the difference between medium and apparatus, see Antonio Somaini, “Walter Benjamin’s Media Theory: The Medium and the Apparatus”, *Grey Room* 62 (Winter 2016): 6-41.

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer”, 85-103.

economic structure and publics than some of the cases mentioned throughout this dissertation. For this reason, in the following Chapters, differences between *OBOE* and the case studies will be noted alongside those similarities and affinities which provide the means to understand and study art periodicals under the broader umbrella of art history, while simultaneously elucidating how periodicals investigate and write about exhibitions.

The decision to publish an academic journal and not an art magazine—more similar to those studied here—accompanied a greater vision, that the journal would become a platform for research, discussion and confrontation around art and exhibitions, encountered not just as places where art is shown but as venues that generate culture. The choice of the academic publication was also dependent on the necessity to build the scientific grounds on which a durable and structured study of periodic exhibitions as part of the larger history of art could take place. It also seemed to fill another gap, as at the time I started conceiving the journal, academic open-access publications were still very few in number in Italy.

Since the journal was to be published in Venice, I started looking at the criteria for reaching scientific quality and the rules set by ANVUR (the Italian rating agency for scientific journals) using the VQR (Research Quality Evaluation) system.⁴⁸ This gave the initial structure to the journal, the boards, and the double-blind peer-review process, while the software OJS (Open Journal Systems) on which the website is developed, guided the editorial process. [fig. 2]. The design was a very important component of the process and encompassed a constant dialogue and negotiation between our ideas, the designers' layouts and what OJS could facilitate. [fig. 3]. Most of the conceptualisation was characterised by a mediation with what the norms and OJS would allow us to do. For instance, journals like the *Journal of Art Historiography*⁴⁹ have decided to adopt open, rather than blind, peer-review processes, as they believe the direct dialogue between reviewer and contributor is more effective in terms of getting the article ready for publication and in a better shape. This may discount the publication from being scientifically accredited, but we are still in such an initial phase with the publication that we have not yet seen these issues arise. The process of peer-review is

⁴⁸ See the regulations of the ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) at the link: https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Allegato1.-Linee-guida-regolamento-riviste_2019_9-ottobre-2019_def.pdf, accessed December 2020.

⁴⁹ For the journal's peer-review process see the link: <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/peer-review-process/>, accessed April 2021. I would like to thank Dr. Victoria Horne for making me aware of the editorial procedures adopted by this journal.

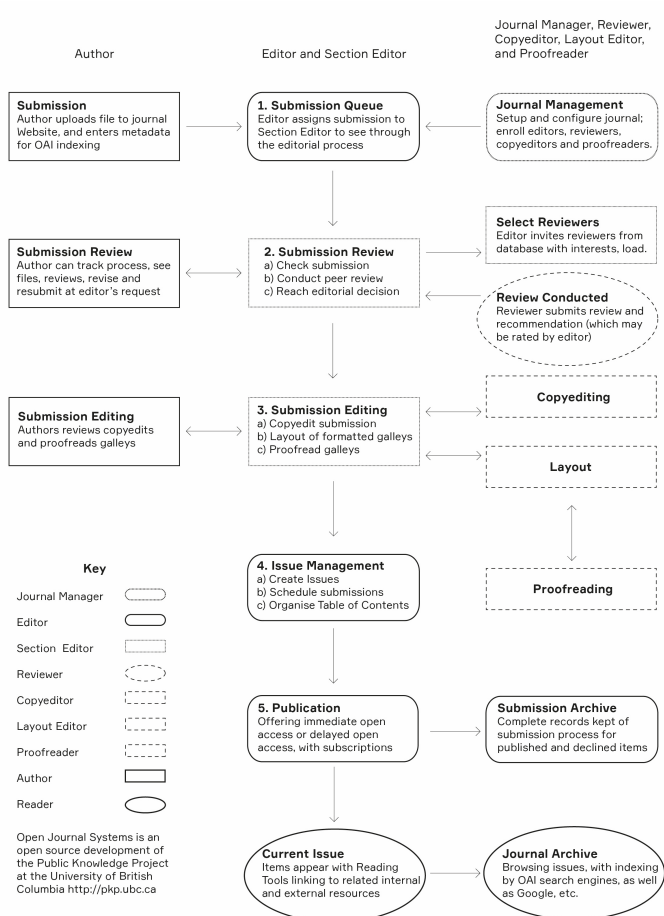


Fig. 2. OJS editorial and Publishing Process. Image from *OBOE Journal's* "About" page. Courtesy: *OBOE Journal*.

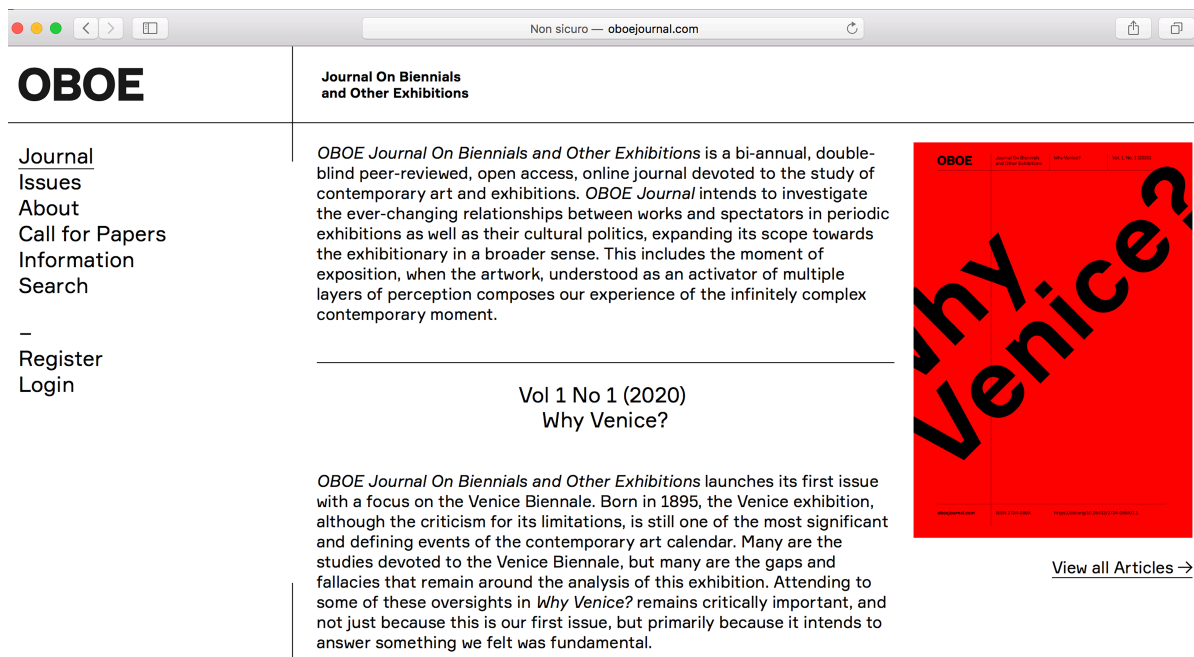


Fig. 3. Screenshot of *OBOE Journal's* "Home" page. Courtesy: *OBOE Journal*.

certainly a challenge, but we are still in a test phase, experimenting with different strategies to adopt in the long run.

After giving the journal its initial structure, I started looking at other academic and open access journals, such as the aforementioned *ARTMargins*, but also *e-flux*, *Third Text*, *The Journal of European Periodical Studies*, *The Journal of Visual Culture*, *Art History Journal*, *Parse Journal*, *piano b.*, *Ricerche di S/Confine* and others, to get a better sense of how they acted online, as well as their editorial structure, publishers, sponsors, contributors, periodicity, publishing schedules, copyright, layouts, and so on. It was a process of comparison, selection, and adaptation to *OBOE*'s mission and vision, but also of differentiation, of how we could distinguish our publication from the varied and heterogenous milieu into which it was inserting itself. These processes will be made visible over the following chapters and especially in the case studies, where parentheses on the publications will engage and interact with the arguments discussed, showing the importance of the methodology for the research practice.

The same process of selection, comparison and differentiation was applied to the content of the publication. I surveyed a number of periodicals that focused on exhibition making and curating, such as *oncurating.org*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, *The Exhibitionist*, *Stages* and *Manifesta Journal*, amongst others. These periodicals were essential for deciding on the editorial approach, identifying avenues for further study and analysis, and for drafting the publication schedule. It was while looking at these periodicals for *OBOE* that I realised the importance of the connections between periodicals, something which inspired the database in its actual form, as not just a list of magazines but a network of connections and influences.

Of all the periodicals mentioned above, *Stages* and the *Manifesta Journal* were the ones that drew me to research the periodicals published by exhibitions, prompting my examination of how these exhibitions are studied in the pages of the magazine, how the exhibition narrates itself, and how the intertwining of the two formats relates to contemporaneity. My reading of *Stages*'s issue "The Biennial Condition" (no. 6, April 2017) was fundamental for paving the way to the present dissertation. I thus moved backwards to see which examples, if there were any, had preceded *Manifesta* and *Stages*. I chose three case studies from a wide chronological and historical base because they are highly indicative

of three important phases in the history of these biennials and the magazines they promoted: from a focus on the institution and its promotion, to a site of research and of the exhibition, to a curatorial project in itself.

The first was *la biennale*, published by the Venice Biennale between 1950 and 1971. The choice of this magazine was guided by the fact that it may be seen as the first exhibition magazine and because *OBOE*'s first issue focused on the Venetian exhibition. Indeed, the editorial work on the issue was crucial for the research on the exhibition, which has a history of over 125 years. The investigation of *la biennale* was adapted to be published in the form of a peer-review essay in the first issue of the journal and developed and defined itself thanks to this process. The other two case studies were the *documenta X documents* published by Documenta under the curatorship of Catherine David in 1996 and 1997, and the *Manifesta Journal* published between 2003 and 2014. Throughout the analysis of these case studies, there will be references in the chapters to considerations, thoughts and ideas that arose while scrutinising these magazines and relating them to *OBOE*. Many of these parentheses may be understood as reflections on the production and creation of a journal. At times they may appear as direct comparisons, yet it is important to note that the publications herein discussed and *OBOE* are completely different structurally and born in diverse contexts. Comparisons may not always function productively, despite demonstrating commonalities. At other times the differences between these periodicals and *OBOE* highlights the diverse conditions of production and the contexts in which each are active, and thus comments on the evolution and transformations that the periodical field underwent in the timeframe taken into account. From the opposite point of view, *OBOE* helped to garner insights into these publications, and comprehend their complexities, like the role of the interval and the becoming of the periodical, two themes that remain central throughout this dissertation.

There were other exhibition magazines that could have been added to the examination, such as the aforementioned *Stages* (2013-) published by the Liverpool Biennial, which I draw attention to in the first chapter for its profound understanding of the nature of biennials and magazines as episodes of contemporaneity. Other examples, included *Noon: An Annual Journal of Visual Culture and Contemporary Art* (2009-2016) launched by the Gwangju Biennial, or the *Athens Art Review* which originated thanks to the vision of editor and curator Theophilos Tramboulis with the intent of showing an active art scene before the Athens

Biennial in 2006. These periodicals have been excluded from this analysis, firstly because they are all successive to the ones herein discussed and I was attempting to lay the foundations for a study of magazine typology, and secondly because they had shorter runs than the ones selected, which instead offer the possibility for more in-depth analysis of the evolution of the medium. These periodicals provide a time lens for looking at the evolution of the magazine of course, but also of the exhibition, which is usually studied through a single exhibition or unit. That said, the opportunity to study these global and more recent examples, and enrich the investigation, has presented itself thanks to *OBOE*, within which an issue on the relation between magazines and exhibitions will be soon taking shape.

Since each of the selected magazines is from a different time and is thus representative of a diversity of moments in the history of the art periodical, I have enmeshed, whenever possible, research on primary sources which encompassed the study of all issues of the publication, archival materials, and interviews with the editors with secondary sources and the establishment of the journal as methodological approach for the study. I have also included previous research conducted on the art magazine, as well as the analysis of the magazines from my initial case studies: *Cabinet*, *Chimurenga*, *Flash Art*, and *Frieze*, that compared with those discussed here, provide key moments of productive confrontation and understanding of the medium of the magazine and how it evolved in the over 60 years taken into consideration by this study.

The different methods that have been adopted for the project, from the compilation of the database, to the experiment of making the journal and the analysis of the materials, have all been essential in the elaboration of the thesis and the arguments that compose it. They have enmeshed and overlapped with each other, bringing new insights into exhibitions and magazines, and allowing me to bridge the two fields together. While the dissertation is the space where the three projects come to life, it will be worth seeing how they transform in time—as much as it has been interesting seeing how much they have changed from germinal idea to final output—adapting to the notion of becoming central to this dissertation.

Chapter Outline

The materials, sources and methods all intervened and contributed to the development of both the practical and theoretical parts of this dissertation. On the one hand, experiencing the multifarious complexities of the periodical medium would have proved impossible if utilising only the available research on the topic; on the other hand, each case study and each chapter has been conceived to trace a history and provide an overview of the evolution of the exhibition magazine, over almost seventy years. The choice of selecting such a broad historical framework helped narrate the evolution of the medium, due to the needs of the institution, the changes in the exhibition's audience and magazine's readership or in the medium itself, whilst not excluding the important shifts that occurred in the art world during the same period.

The chapters are laid out chronologically to give a sense of the evolution of the exhibition magazine, except for the first and the second chapters, which analyse the periodical formats of magazines and biennials more generally. The examination of the two formats provided an opportunity for confrontation and comparison, where several similarities emerged, especially those concerning their relationship with temporality and their contemporaneity.

The first Chapter centres its attention on the features that characterise the periodicity of the two formats, in order to understand their similarities and differences, and demonstrate how they become epitomes of contemporaneity, able to grasp the current momentum and at times anticipate it. I will argue how, thanks to their nature in becoming, magazines and biennials are able to foreground discourses about art, exhibition making and curatorship.

The second Chapter focuses on the interlacing of the two periodicities and the formation of the exhibition magazine, which is analysed for its dual drive, one privileging ephemerality, the other institutionalisation. The second part of the chapter offers a brief overview of the origin of this niche of periodical publishing, looking at three different magazine types, the first academy-born magazines, the contemporary art magazines and the artists' magazines of the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter Three, Four and Five focus on the case studies, which put great emphasis on the magazine but also on the exhibition that promoted it.

Chapter Three focuses on the magazine published by the Venice Biennale, the first biennial exhibition launched at the end of the 19th century. The examination takes off from the analysis of the Biennale's initial idea to launch a magazine concurrently with the birth of the archive, and spans over thirty years, during which time the magazine, as an entity in becoming, changed its structure three times, evolving from mere instrument of promotion, to a critical organism able to engage with the debates and theories of the time, and finally to a tool to document the activities promoted by the institution.

Chapter Four moves forward in time, to Catherine David's documenta X in 1997. In the context of the German quinquennial show, the French curator published the magazine *documenta X documents* for a year and a half before the opening of the exhibition. The magazine became a key component of the theoretical apparatus of the exhibition. While analysing the innovations of the exhibition in relation to the history of the institution, the Chapter reflects on the role of the magazine for curatorial practice. It also considers the magazine as a record of the exhibition taking into account the publication choices enacted by curators of the following Documenta exhibitions.

Chapter Five discusses the *Manifesta Journal* on curating published by the Manifesta Foundation between 2003 and 2014. The journal also evolved several times during its existence. Throughout the Chapter, I analyse these changes and the importance of the Journal as example and inspiration for the curatorial magazine, which saw its climax between 2008 and 2009. The journal, following—and at times anticipating—curatorial trends, shifted from being a vocabulary and grammar on exhibition making, into a critical agent capable of investigating the role played by exhibitions and Manifesta in the exhibitionary system.

The dissertation ends with Chapter Six devoted to *OBOE* to show how the journal and the publications discussed herein helped me in the understanding of the potentialities and challenges of publishing a periodical publication, as well as its relation to art and contemporaneity.

Finally, after the conclusive reflections, there will be an "Appendix" of visual and other materials collected over the years for the two projects.

All case studies, and more broadly the dissertation itself, have been analysed with the overlapping lenses of periodical and exhibition studies, in an attempt to demonstrate that exhibitions, but also art history, visual culture, and the art system can be studied through the alternative and less canonical lens of the magazine.

Chapter 1

Magazines and Biennials: Comparing Periodicities

Art magazines have always been vehicles for promoting and disseminating art and critical dialogue. Today, however, they are becoming active participants in the art system⁵⁰: they have expanded their margins, becoming promoters of biennials, museums, galleries and fairs, and thereby obtaining a higher visibility and central position in the global art world's stage.⁵¹

From the opposite point of view, art institutions have tried to publicise themselves by publishing and distributing well edited and beautifully designed magazines. This tendency has as its protagonists the magazines generated directly by an exhibition or art institution. These periodicals serve the artistic chronicle but most importantly their parent institution, as a periodic accompaniment and narration about the institution promoting it.

Throughout this chapter I will look at some of the similarities between magazines and biennials. As both formats are ephemeral and periodic in nature, I will study them comparatively, through their being composed by repetition and difference, events and intervals, and paying attention to how the concept of becoming mentioned in the incipit of this thesis adapts to their particular temporality, understood here as favouring constant flux and evolution. Even if they strongly differ for their accessibility, their form, their ties to space and how they carry art into the public, they have intrinsic and systemic similarities. These stretch from their scope as both educational and entertaining, to the tension they present between the local and the international and the specificity of their temporal nature. This examination will focus on the latter as the main feature that allows them to represent

⁵⁰ The notion of art system has its origin in Arthur Danto's first definition of "artworld" and has evolved into a system to convey the complexity of the social-economic dynamics behind it and for its expansion into a global art arena. On this matter see Pamela A. Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2017) and Howard C. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). For Danto's earlier understanding see Arthur Danto, "The Art World", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61 (1964), 571-584. For a throughout account on the theories on the art world see Hans van Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds: On the Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), and in particular Part 1 "The Art World as a System", 17-82.

⁵¹ For a recent literature on role of the contemporary art magazine as a central player of the art system see the earlier mentioned: Eşanu and Harutyunyan, "Art Periodicals Today"; Gwen Allen, "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition", and Salvaneschi, "Magnifying the Margins".

contemporaneity, herald multiple temporalities and foreground discourses about art, as these are directly linked to the fluidity of the artwork considered itself as an historical construct neither fixed nor immutable. Readings of contemporaneity by Giorgio Agamben and Peter Osborne will lead into the core argument of magazines and biennials being entities in becoming. As I will show, it will be their capacity to become in time that allows these two formats to evolve alongside art, and by doing so become two of the preferred media capable of transforming our understanding of contemporary art.

1.1. Multiplicity, Repetition and the Notion of the Episodic

Magazines and recurring exhibitions, as periodical formats, are ephemeral media. Their ephemerality is determined by the fact that each issue of the magazine or each exhibition is followed by the coming out of a newer one. Since the issues or exhibitions exist in a consecutive progression, they are part of a sequence, in a state of balance which oscillates between being a single unit and a multiplicity. This oscillation allows them to be looked at sequentially, but also non-sequentially, as the different issues/editions can be related and juxtaposed to create new narratives, parallelisms and comparisons. Sequentiality determines, on the one hand, their periodicity, and on the other, the fact that magazines and biennials offer continuity and innovation, repetition and difference, with each new iteration.

According to Henri Bergson's "tendency theory" in which he examines the phenomenon of change and its causes, difference and diversion play a fundamental role, as they are the very principles that describe evolution.⁵² As philosopher Elisabeth Grosz explains, Bergson's difference involves "ever-more variation or differentiation. Difference generates further difference because [...it] inheres the force of duration"⁵³ which in the philosopher's view is the conundrum between becoming and unbecoming, which as I argue later is what motivates the exhibition magazine's tension between ephemerality and institutionalisation. As I will argue throughout this and the next chapter, the tension between becoming and unbecoming is also at the core of the exhibition magazine's dual drive, made

⁵² According to Bergson tendency theory signifies that which is precluded from representation within the duration of information being elaborated. Bergson used it to say that a scientific (biological) understanding of "tendency" needed to be complemented by a philosophical one. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*.

⁵³ Elisabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming", *Parallax* 11, 2 (2005): 7.

on the one side by ephemerality, on the other by institutionalisation. Taking Bergson's understanding of durational difference as his point of departure, Gilles Deleuze's own analysis of difference and repetition is one in which nothing is ever identical, nothing is the same. Even in repetition, there is always difference.⁵⁴ Since everything is constantly changing it becomes intrinsically impossible to pursue an identical copy of something, just as happens when re-enacting a performance or an exhibition. The time or context in which it takes place will make that performance, or exhibition in this case, similar yet completely different from its first or previous presentation.⁵⁵

Similarly, philosopher Giorgio Agamben interprets repetition as one of the two fundamental possibilities of montage,⁵⁶ which makes anew the potential of what has already been. In the case of magazines and biennials, with each new edition or exhibition there is a repetition in terms of format, medium, time-period and location, but each one is also intrinsically different from its predecessors. Firstly, it takes place at a different historical time and for this the artworks displayed and the contents published will necessarily be perceived differently from preceding ones. Art and contemporaneity between one exhibition and the next, as well as between magazine editions, will have changed and evolved in the interim, as understood through the notion of art in becoming. In between two editions of a magazine or biennial hundreds, or even thousands, of events will have taken place in every corner of the globe and the art will have necessarily transformed and evolved – along with our understanding of art and its place in the world. It is because of magazines' and biennials' durational and liminal nature—between difference and repetition—that they become in time, and for this they are able to move alongside the becoming in time of art and contemporaneity itself. Indeed, the durational aspect of these periodical formats, is made of a multiplicity that unravels at specific intervals of the present, which shows their capacity to

⁵⁴ See Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁵⁵ On the re-enactment of an exhibition like Szeemaa's 1969 "When Attitudes Become Form" (Kunsthalle Bern) at the Prada Foundation see Boris Groys, "Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtkunstwerk", *e-flux journal*, 50 (December 2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/50/59974/entering-the-flow-museum-between-archive-and-gesamtkunstwerk/>, accessed December 2020. For the catalogue of the show at Prada Foundation see *When attitudes become form. Bern 1969/Venice 2013* (Milano: Fondazione Prada, 2013).

⁵⁶ See Giorgio Agamben, "Repetition and Stoppage. Guy Debord's Technique of Montage", *documenta X documents*, 2 (1996): 68-72.

present the newest artist, artwork or exhibition. For instance, when Documenta or the Venice Biennale open their doors, most art magazines will have reviews, articles and special features on the shows and the artists presented. This will allow these magazines to keep their readers updated on what is going on in the art world and demonstrate their close relationship with the facts surrounding art. However, this does not imply that they are cognisant of comprehensive happenings in the artworld, since magazines are always a selection, an edited version of the present. Their being updated on the latest trends often refers to the latest news in a specific area or region, and in a specific moment in time i.e. the one in which the issue/exhibition become public.

With that said, the duration of these periodic formats, consisting of this balance between repetition and difference, was analysed by magazine designer Jeremy Leslie as a balance between “familiarity and change”⁵⁷, involving especially the equilibrium between the aesthetic choices of magazines. He explains that with each issue magazines build a long-lasting relationship with their audience, by combining innovative content with familiar design, and without abrupt changes or redundancies that would have the opposite effect of estranging their readers. Similarly, Beetham discussed this tension between continuity and change in her touchstone essay “Open and Closed: the Periodical as a Publishing Genre”, in which she states that:

the regularity of the periodical’s appearance is matched by the continuities of format, shape and pattern of contents from number to number. The form is mixed and various, but each individual periodical has to maintain a certain consistency of mixture. Each number is different, but it is still “the same” periodical. This consistency is necessary so that the reader keeps coming back to buy.⁵⁸

It becomes clear, that discussing the medium is not far removed from talking about commercial products, as British critic John A. Walker defined them.⁵⁹ Any analysis of the relationship between familiarity and change, such as Leslie’s, certainly recalls the treatments

⁵⁷ Jeremy Leslie, *The Modern Magazine* (London: King, 2013), 6.

⁵⁸ Margaret Beetham, “Open and Closed: the Periodical as a Publishing Genre”, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 98.

⁵⁹ John A. Walker, “Art Periodicals Since 1945,” in Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*. Essays Published for the Art Libraries Society on the Occasion of the International Conference on Art Periodicals and the Exhibition ‘*The Art Press*’ at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (London: Art Book, 1976), 45.

of logos and the coordination of merchandise, which guarantee a product's quality and excellence.

Recently, though, magazines have been playing with this unwritten rule, perhaps to challenge the scarcity of attention that characterises our daily lives⁶⁰ or as a response to the readers' requests for novelty. In the last few years, *Flash Art* an Italian magazine born in 1967 in Milan under the directorship of Giancarlo Politi, always careful and consistent about its aesthetic layout, has moved in the opposite direction. While the cover's layout and logo have remained quite the same over fifty years of existence, since 2018 and under the editorship of Politi's daughter Gea, the logo and cover design changed twice, becoming bolder each time. The last change aims to return to a previous version, and by this emulates and potentiates the boldness of the character by reinterpreting it in a more current key [fig. 4]. The magazine, from being a space for a monthly newsflash and a simple yet elegant aesthetic, has become a bold, glossy magazine with a biannual periodicity. This is, of course, evidence of an editorial choice to demonstrate the magazine's strength and ability to adapt to an increasingly competitive field. It shows their knowledge of the graphic design realm whilst maintaining a link with their tradition, and a capacity to engage with the demands of contemporary magazine design without the risk of outdatedness. As Helena Kontova, previous editor of the magazine explained to me when talking about the editorial decisions of the new editor, it is also a way to remember the name of the magazine, to shout it out loud with the intention of transforming it into a "360° brand".⁶¹

I was particularly attentive to these issues when working with *OBOE*'s designers to conceive the first issue's cover [fig. 5]. This was one of the moments, described in the introduction, in which I felt the need to do the opposite of what *OBOE* currently has on the cover: a bigger and more visible logo while making the title of the issue smaller.⁶² This was one of very few battles I let the designers win. They convinced me that in the case of an

⁶⁰ On the concept of "attention economy" see the study by Herbert A. Simon, *The Bottleneck of Attention: Connecting Thought with Motivation* (Pittsburg: Carnegie Mellon University, 1992), <http://digitalcollections.library.cmu.edu/awweb/awarchive?type=file&item=46997>, accessed December 2020. See also Georg Franck, "The Economy of Attention", *Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 1 (March 2019): 8-19; and Ally Mintzer, "Paying Attention: The Attention Economy", *Berkeley Economic Review*, (March 31, 2020), <https://econreview.berkeley.edu/paying-attention-the-attention-economy/>, accessed December 2020.

⁶¹ Helena Kontova, email conversation with the author, May 8, 2017.

⁶² For more designs of the cover cf. Appendix, 274.



Fig. 4. *Flash Art* Covers: vol. 50, no. 336 (2017); vol. 53, no. 330 (2020); vol. 53, no. 350 (2020). Photograph Courtesy: Piero Demo.

online journal like *OBOE*, the logo on the cover is a repetition of the logo on the website, and since it is repeated in every article, it maintains its presence and thus is remembered. Unlike paper magazines that only display the logo on the cover page and have to be eye-catching in a bookshop or newsstand, *OBOE* shows itself in different venues. More importantly, since it is an academic and scientific publication, not a glossy art magazine like *Flash Art*, it was the title of the issue that had to create impact, becoming itself an image. It had to catch the attention of new readers, both in academia and beyond; attention had to go towards the theme and the contents. The choice of the single colour was made for two different reasons: the first so as to associate each issue with a colour, and thus not necessarily remember the issue number but the colour 'blue oboe, green oboe, red oboe, etc.', the second more pragmatical involved funding and budgetary constraints.



Fig. 5. Cover of *OBOE Journal* I, no. 1 (2020). Courtesy: *OBOE Journal*.

Arguably, in magazines the logo, alongside the repetition and the progressive numbering of issues/exhibitions give a sense of continuity to the readership. There is a sequentiality at work which simultaneously yields a sense of the past, of the current moment and of what is to come.⁶³ Each edition and exhibition may be seen in this progression as an episode, a separate yet connected chapter of a serialised story, which in this case is that of contemporary art.⁶⁴ In similar terms, Margaret Beetham argues that “the periodical is a kind of book and the numbers are incomplete sections of the whole”,⁶⁵ albeit in the case of contemporary art, where the whole is in continuous evolution. Of particular interest for this thesis is Beetham’s argument that the form of the periodical as both open and closed. Indeed, the fact that each issue can exist in itself renders the magazine (or in our case the biennial) a

⁶³ Cf. Margaret Beetham, “Time: Periodicals and the Time of the Now”, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 323-342.

⁶⁴ On the exhibition as series see Joasya Krysa ed., *Systemics (or, Exhibition as Series)* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2017).

⁶⁵ Beetham, “Open and Closed”, 96.

closed form, yet its sequentiality, its existence within a multiplicity, will always make it also an open form, determined in time by moments of now and by intervals in which time unravels. In fact, the episodes that represent contemporary art, and which comprise a documentation, a book of what contemporary art is, in the case of art magazines and biennials, are determined by time itself. At times they are scripted and decided beforehand; at other times, they are invested with the duty of overseeing the becoming of contemporary art, which is determined in the very instant in which contemporaneity is perceived.

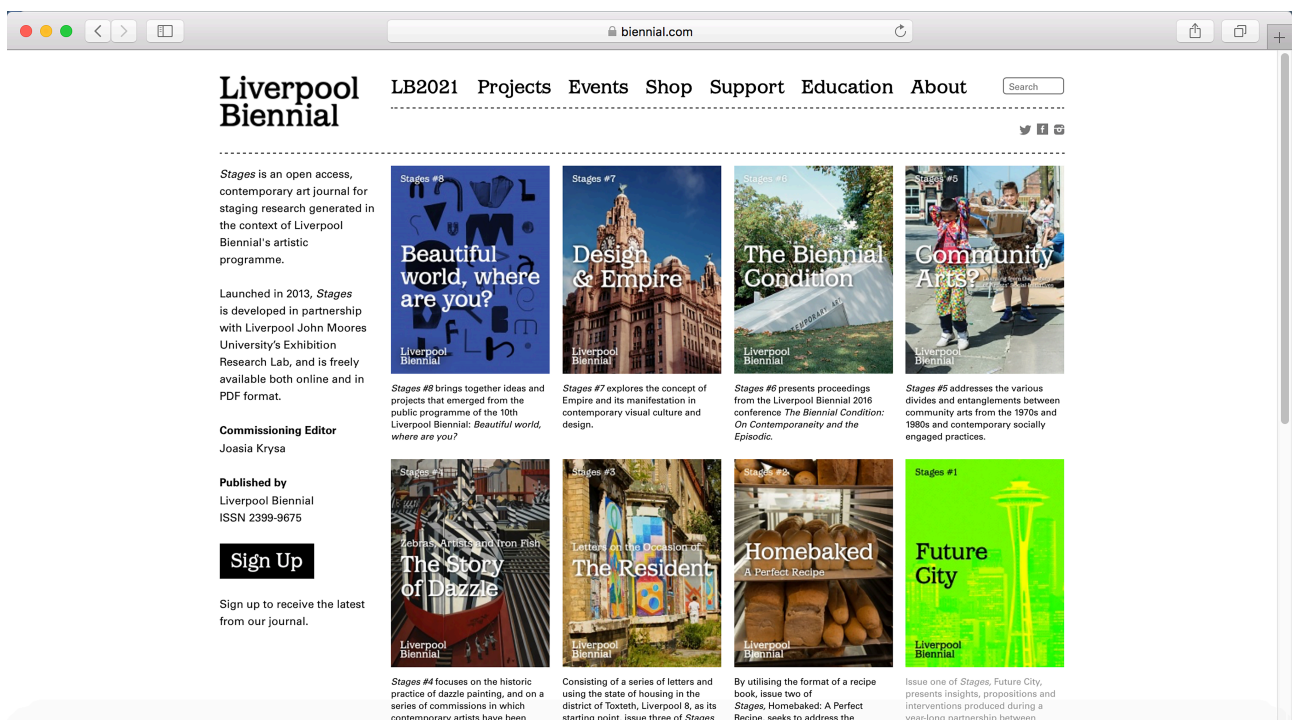


Fig. 6. *Stages Journal's* "Issue" page. Source: *Stages Journal*

Stages [fig. 6], the online journal founded and published by the Liverpool Biennial since 2013, has brought the notion of the episodic in magazines and biennials to the core of the discussion. First of all, in the journal's editorial they define their temporality as "episodic",⁶⁶ in avoidance of giving a predetermined periodicity, and detailing that the issues should function as episodes of the institutions' history. In the words of the editors, the journal acts as

⁶⁶ Brent Bellamy, Vanessa Boni, Rosie Cooper and Laurie Peake, "Editorial", *Stages*, 0 (November 2013), <http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-0/editorial>, accessed June 2020.

a “container for staging content generated from the Biennial’s year-round programme, thinking and research”.⁶⁷ The term episodic returned in October 2016, when the Liverpool Biennial organised the conference *The Biennial Condition: On Contemporaneity and the Episodic*⁶⁸ to reflect on biennials “as privileged sites for the production of contemporaneity in art and exhibition making, and as episodic instances of contemporary art on a global scale”.⁶⁹ This statement reiterates the idea that recurring biennials are one of the main motors behind the definition of contemporary art and that they condition the ways in which contemporary art is perceived and experienced. The proceedings of the conference were published in the earlier mentioned sixth issue (April 2017) of the journal titled “The Biennial Condition”.⁷⁰ In the introduction to the issue, the editor of *Stages*, Joasia Krysa, points out that both the conference and the journal take into account the notion of the episodic as something that goes

beyond the specificity of the biennial itself, and considers the wider issue of how the transnational biennial format represents the world as an amalgamation of different cultures, operating episodically across times and places in a dynamic relation between the local and the universal.⁷¹

The biennial’s format, able to adapt across time and space, is characterised by a tightened relationship with globalisation and by the tension that stretches between the regionalisation and internationalisation of the city in which it takes place, combining different cultures, discourses and practices.⁷² Indeed, the fact that the format has been able to adapt itself to a number of disparate regions from Venice to Gwangju, from the Svalbard to Johannesburg, is indicative of how its flexible and malleable structure can be adapted to a heterogeneity of contents and contexts. It may do so because of the “amalgamation” and overlapping of different contemporaries that compose our globalised present or because of its ability to

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ For the proceedings of the conference see “The Biennial Condition”, *Stages*, 6 (April 2017), <http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-6/introduction-the-biennial-condition->, accessed June 2020.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See the issue “The Biennial Condition”, *Stages*, 6 (April 2017), <https://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-6>, accessed June 2020.

⁷¹ Joasia Krysa, “Introduction: The Biennial Condition”, *Stages*, 6 (April 2017), <http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-6/introduction-the-biennial-condition->, accessed June 2020.

⁷² On this matter, see amongst others, Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”; see also Terry Smith, “Biennials: Four Fundamentals, Many Variations”, Biennial Foundation (December 7, 2016), <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/2016/12/biennials-four-fundamentals-many-variations/>, accessed December 2020.

become in time. What is only implied here, is that as episodes, biennials are comprised not only from the instants in which they take place, but also by the time between one exhibition—or in the case of the magazine, edition—and the next: the interval.

1.2. Intervals, the Futural and Periodic Temporality

In *The Shape of Time*, art historian George Kubler describes the state of existing as something made of intervals between different moments or events:

Actuality is when the lighthouse is dark between flashes: it is the instant between the ticks of the watch: it is a void interval slipping forever through time: the rupture between past and future: the gap at the poles of the revolving magnetic field, infinitesimally small but ultimately real. It is the interchronic pause when nothing is happening. It is the void between events. Yet the instant of actuality is all we ever can know directly. The rest of time emerges only in signals relayed to us at this instant by innumerable stages and by unexpected bearers.⁷³

In this excerpt, Kubler suggests that actuality is the interval between events, which in this case are the episodes of biennials and magazines in the history of art. Kubler understands actuality as sporadically punctuating a dark and unperceivable time. Being episodic and periodical in nature signifies that the event/edition is the instant between two intervals, but also that each issue of the magazine or each exhibition is preceded or followed by a period of silence or 'down-time'. This time, which relates to the dormant phase of the institution, is as crucial as the instant, or the sum of instants, in which the exhibition takes place. First of all, it is longer than the exhibition, and secondly, it is the time of making, of conception and actualisation. During the interval the next issue or exhibition is created. The interval between the events, as the time of a re-writing is also the time of the magazine's and biennial's duration. Here, it is important to recognise that the temporal actualisation of the magazine differs somewhat from the exhibition. It is always characterised by intervals, but it might be possible to say that the issue's ability to represent the moment of contemporaneity lasts until the next one is out. The magazine's interval differs also in the fact that in the time in-between events the reader comes to play. For instance, the reader might take the whole time between two issues to read it, or return to it in different moments of that silent time. With digital and

⁷³ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* [1962], (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 17.

communication technologies, the time between the issues—just like that between the different iterations of a biennial exhibition—is increasingly interrupted by events, presentation, podcasts, social media, and so on, bringing further reflections on the contemporary perception of time as a continuous and open ended stream of information and communication.

In *ARTMargins'* issue "Art Periodicals Today" the editors analyse the magazine's periodicity from the point of view of these pauses, borrowing the German word *Zeitschrift* (magazine or periodical) and identifying the magazine as a process of "writing in time", namely a time composed of distinct moments of publication punctuated by intervals.⁷⁴ I understood the importance of the interval while preparing *OBOE's* second and third issues, when I noticed that the six-month interval between two issues is rather short for everything that happens behind the scenes (editing, peer-review process, layout, etc.), and that one needs to be working on several issues concurrently.

This process of writing in time, which defines the magazine as a temporal construction, can be adapted to the biennial itself as a process of "exhibiting in time". Indeed, the alternation between exhibition and interval constitutes the pace at which art is made and defined in the global art world. As much as the events and issues themselves, this time in-between, which is often perceived by the viewers as a dormant time, is also crucial for understanding and elaborating the complexity of the notion of contemporaneity as a globalised phenomenon. As *Stages* journal defined above, the urgencies of the present and the spirit of this time are becoming increasingly amalgamated, homogeneous and shared. It is impossible to separate one event from the constellation of other events taking place concurrently in different locations around the world. Within this constellation, the interval is what allows you to perceive, contain and engage these contemporary events. This is certainly true, although it is also true that the accumulation and amalgamation of all these events, make the interval, as a time in-between, a pause, almost imperceptible .

Interestingly, the issue of the interval is acknowledged in an interview between philosopher Paul Virilio and Catherine David, published in the first issue of the *documenta X documents* (Chapter 4). Virilio recognises

⁷⁴ Esanu, Harutyunyan, "Art Periodicals Today": 5.

The problem of the interval. The interval of space, of time, and the third interval, according to physicists, the interval of light, the zero sign. This third interval is what brings ubiquity into play. It's what allows you to be the contemporary of an event that happens on the other side of the world.⁷⁵

The interval becomes the time in which contemporariness, as the being contemporary of someone or something else, takes place. Contemporaneity is thus the time of ubiquity and of the globalisation of our present as scholars Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund understand it.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the time of the interval that occurs between two exhibitions or magazines permits differences in the periodical's repeating format. It is considered a problem not only because of the overlapping of multiple moments and events, but because the institution/exhibition struggles to keep the audience engaged during this time, as if this time of elaboration is no longer allowed. In accordance with Bergson's postulation on the conundrum between becoming and unbecoming, duration needs to be perceived as such and not as a number of disparate yet connected events.⁷⁷ To remedy this, and to enter a capitalist and globalised system in which a dormant institution cannot be envisaged, biennials have attempted to change their temporality, becoming promoters, alongside their exhibitions, of conferences, workshops, symposia, etc. and at times, of magazines. In fact, rather than a setback, the interval offers a unique opportunity, becoming a para-textual element of the magazine and a para-exhibitionary element of the biennial. It is the time in which it is possible to project into the future, to research, think and evaluate how art is evolving, in which institutions, and curators can observe the emergence of new inclinations and exhibitions, and study more profoundly artistic production on a global scale.

Once again, the interval between *OBOE's* first and second issues was highly relevant for my understanding of this concept. At the time of writing, the editorial team and I had the opportunity to rethink the publication schedule in light of the current moment. This does not mean that the interval is reduced to a time for second-guessing the future, but it can give a sense, a perception, even a set of possibilities, as Franco 'Bifo' Berardi put it in his volume

⁷⁵ Catherine David and Paul Virilio, "The Dark Spot of Art", *documenta X documents*, 1 (1996): 46-55.

⁷⁶ Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity and Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2017), 17.

⁷⁷ On the concept of duration in contemporary art, see Georges Didi-Hubermann, "Costruire la durata", in Federico Ferrari ed., *Del Contemporaneo. Saggi su arte e tempo* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2007), 21-52.

Futurability,⁷⁸ of how art and contemporaneity will manifest when the next exhibition or issue takes place. The interval is in fact the moment to investigate these possibilities.

Obviously, this in-between time is different for magazines and biennials, as the exhibition usually has a longer gestation period. The magazine, depending on its periodicity—weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, biannual, annual or other—will have tighter deadlines and shorter intervals, but this does not imply that its intervallic evolution is any less relevant. It is imperative to consider that the editing of an issue might begin one or two years before its actual publication, which means that inside the interval there might be different levels and even lengths of temporal parentheses devoted to a certain topic. In the magazine, as much as in the biennial, there is a projection towards the future, since each issue is conceived and edited in anticipation of the time in which it will be published.

Futurity is unquestionably more relevant for understanding magazines/biennials that are concerned with current events, although the magazine/biennial always shows the varying degrees of its extension towards a time that has yet to come. Extension towards the future is also influenced by the biennial's and magazine's unique performance of temporality, which may be comprehended thanks to philosopher Martin Heidegger's postulations on time and the present.⁷⁹ Here, time, understood as temporality, is the constitutive component of human existence which is not fixed in the punctiform actuality of a static present, but is extended in time, towards its own making.⁸⁰ Thus, the primary phenomenon linked to time, is the future, as the present is always projected towards a time to come, or as he defines it, the *futural*. He emphasises that the present exists in its being projected towards a moment or something that is yet to happen, although it will become present only in the moment in which it is happening, or better so, has happened. Arguably, the fact that magazines and biennials unravel alongside a present understood in these terms, is precisely the feature that makes them the ideal mirrors of the making of contemporary art and its process oriented nature.

With the fast pace that distinguishes our present, it has become increasingly challenging to foresee the state of contemporary art two years after an exhibition. What is certain is that it will be different from the current state of things: artistic production, choice of

⁷⁸ Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (London: Verso, 2019).

⁷⁹ For Martin Heidegger's concept of time, see his masterwork *Being and Time* [1927], trans. Joan Stambauch (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 219-221.

media, curatorial decisions, and the contemporary time it engages with, will all be otherwise. This is why the biennial and the magazine more than moments in time have to be understood through their duration, which is what makes them capable not only of adapting to contemporaneity, but also to show us what contemporaneity and contemporary art is. By actively participating in making contemporary art public, they move the legitimising pendulum from one artist to the other, from one artwork to the other, in order to transform our understanding of contemporary art at each new iteration. If we adapt Heidegger's understandings of temporality to these two media, allowing for their sequentiality and their balance between episode and interval, it can be argued that they are continuously projected towards the future, towards their becoming.

1.3. Epitomes of the Contemporary and Entities in Becoming

In recent years numerous scholars, artists and writers have questioned the significance and nature of contemporary art, understanding it as more than simply the term that was substituted for what was called 'modern art'.⁸¹ After the discrediting of postmodernism as a critical concept, the notion of the 'contemporary' as something up-to-date has taken over, but the actual meaning of the term contemporaneity still leaves several questions unresolved.

For Agamben the contemporary is a discrepancy, an anachronism within one own's experience of time. His postulation entails that the present is continuously escaping our comprehension of it and only those capable of dividing it into different times, and stepping outside of them, are able to grasp it. His idea requires that "[the person who is] contemporary is not only the one who, perceiving the darkness of the present, grasps its inexhaustible light; it is also the one who, dividing and interpolating time, is capable of

⁸¹ On the many questionnaires and debates in the art periodical field on the contemporary see Lori Cole, *Surveying the Avant-Garde: Questions On Modernism, Art, and The Americas in Transatlantic Magazines* (Pennsylvania: PENN State UNIV Press, 2019). See Hal Foster, "Questionnaire The Contemporary", in *October*, 130 (Fall 2009), 3-124. See also Sohyun Anh, et al., "The And: An Expanded Questionnaire on the Contemporary," *Field Notes*, 1 (June 2012): 11-90. Another important contribution to these debates is Terry Smith, *What is contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2009).

transforming it and relating it to the other times".⁸² Because biennials and magazines have this unique temporality, their existence, like Agamben's contemporary man, extends from past to present and into the future. This means that while they come to exist in the precise instant of the now, they contain and relate these multiple times. Existing within a temporal extension of many times, they are able to foresee shifts, changes and events beforehand. This perception and awareness towards time and the *futural* is the very essence of their being contemporary.

However, there is another point that needs to be considered here since such a formulation posits the risk of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. As legitimising tools of the art system, magazines and biennials partake in the shaping and defining of contemporary art. Both, in fact, might predispose the contemporary towards a preferred artist or artwork, moving through trends like in fashion, although the ubiquity, accessibility and spreading of the format has allowed more marginal artists and practices to find their exhibitionary platform. So, on the one hand, they are able to appreciate and take on emerging artistic tendencies and practices. On the other hand, they are also those whose exhibiting and publishing about emerging art influence the audience by labelling art as contemporary.

This conundrum might find explanation in Osborne's postulations, who understands contemporaneity as a condition rather than a critical concept,⁸³ defining it as the "coming together of different but equally 'present' times, a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times".⁸⁴ For the philosopher, the only time capable of providing an idea of contemporaneity is the time-of-the-now, which as contemporaneity he sees as rather elusive and fictional.⁸⁵ He claims that it is nearly impossible to determine contemporaneity's periodisation because the "durational extension of the contemporary [...] imposes a constantly shifting periodising dynamic that insists upon the question of when the present begins".⁸⁶ In his view, the contemporary is not simply synonymous with the present, but rather an "inherently problematic but increasingly inevitable way of referring to

⁸² Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è il Contemporaneo?* (Milano: Nottetempo, 2008), 24. Here quoted from Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 53.

⁸³ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁵ See chapter "The Fiction of the Contemporary" in Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 15-35.

⁸⁶ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 25.

the historical present".⁸⁷ The historical present might serve to indicate events prior to the exact time of the now, or the moment of its becoming public. It is a metaphorical use of the present that is employed outside its function of expressing or articulating contemporaneity. It brings a perspectival approach in which the events narrated are actualised, meaning that while belonging to the past these events are presented *as if* they were contemporary.

Osborne's articulation of contemporaneity, while including different temporalities only insofar as they are present, brings to light another inner feature of biennials and magazines. This is the awareness that they may be understood as platforms that shape the historical present. The constantly shifting dynamic that Osborne associates with contemporaneity may be associated with contemporary art and mirrored in the biennial's and magazine's periodical nature. Since each exhibition/edition is contemporary in the exact moment in which it becomes public, and considering the ubiquity of art in a certain instant, the periodisation of contemporaneity and contemporary art moves from one exhibition/issue to the next one. This ability to move the periodising pendulum from one moment to the next is what allows them to epitomise contemporaneity. Taking a picture at every movement of the needle involves creating that history of art which shows the becoming of art.⁸⁸ Every issue/exhibition that has preceded the one nominated as 'contemporary' becomes part of the past of the magazine/biennial and of contemporaneity in general. Yet it is important to note that, much as this dynamic functions with artworks, which when first coming to light are always already contemporary, so too has each issue of a magazine and each exhibition of a biennial, even if that issue or exhibition is now part of the past of the medium, been contemporary. The last point, brought up by Osborne, which refers to the understanding of the contemporary as a synonym for the historical present, is expressed in biennials/magazines by the fact that while each issue is contemporary in the moment of its event/publication, it immediately becomes present in the incontrovertible fact that it is something that has happened.⁸⁹ Therefore, whenever we think of the art presented in a biennial or published in a magazine, the fact is that the biennial has already happened, and the magazine has already been published and is now part of the historical present. It is not contemporaneity as such.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁸ On the periodising of contemporary art see also Alexander Alberro, "Periodising Contemporary Art" in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Conflict, Migration and Convergence. The Proceeding of the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2009), 935-939.

⁸⁹ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 23.

Contemporaneity is then the ungraspable and intelligible moment of the now. These phenomena, as part of the historical present, are allowed to define and legitimise the becoming of art in the precise instant of the now, and right afterwards as platforms of the historical present. While the application of Osborne's understanding of contemporaneity may seem applicable only to the moment in which magazines and biennials become public, I believe this not to be true. Indeed, as argued, magazines and biennials exist for our perception not only in the moment of their becoming public but also during their intervals. On this matter, Beetham claims that:

The periodical, simultaneously proclaiming itself of the moment and of a series, structures both the present and the gaps between one number and the next. These gaps, whether days, weeks, or months, offer different times both as serial and as punctuated by the "now" of the publication, a succession of "present moments". That present was often fictional. Copy always had to be written in advance and sometimes, as Kate Jackson has observed of the *Strand Magazine*, would be prepared for press a month in advance, making the magazine's claim that it was of the moment a "peculiar ahistorical contemporaneity".⁹⁰

The idea of an ahistorical present as discussed by Agamben and the fiction that is contemporaneity as proposed by Osborne return here in the periodical format, in its nature, this time determined not by the fact of the impossibility of being present, but rather in the magazines' movement towards the futural as understood with Heidegger. What should be investigated at this time, is the magazine's capacity of investigating the future, and to what point that future is determined by the magazine or biennial to be contemporary once the issue or exhibition become public.

As I will argue below, it is in the intertwining of their twin temporalities in the "here" of the "exhibition magazine", and the possibility of visualising the time in between events as contemporary, that magazines and biennials are shown as epitomes of contemporaneity. The exemplification of their being a sum of instants, of nows, and of the intervals between them, is what makes them able to incarnate the becoming of contemporaneity. As art, they are in constant evolution, and for this reason may be understood as entities in becoming, that like Smith's definition of art,⁹¹ *become* in time.

⁹⁰ Beetham, "Time: Periodicals and the Time of the Now": 327.

⁹¹ Cf. "Introduction" of this dissertation, page 1.

In terms of magazines' and biennials' becoming, it is essential to return to Alloway's aforementioned study of the Venice Biennale, in which he defined the perennial exhibition as an "entity in time" for its innate ability to react, change and adapt to the urgencies of the present.⁹² His examination narrates the Biennale's history, from its inception in 1895 to 1968. Alloway identified three critical transitions—touched upon in the third chapter—that remark upon how in the history of the Venetian exhibition it is possible to see the articulation of a model which moves away from a nationalist display of visual arts, towards an international framework and survey of current trends in art. These include an allusion to the idea of global culture while maintaining a national pavilion structure. Alloway's definition of "entity in time" is fundamental for this dissertation because it characterises the biennial both as a stable and grounded institution, which has been often criticised for its musealisation and its rigidity when engaging with the contemporary, and as an entity in progress embracing its ephemerality; an "unstable institution" as defined by curator Carlos Basualdo in 2003, intended as an institution able to change, develop and evolve over time, and engage with the urgencies of the present.⁹³

The three cases herein discussed, while comprising a small number of exhibitions—between institutionalisation and ephemerality, or unbecoming and becoming—make it possible to see how they have each been the protagonists of different shifts that have reshaped their structures. Similarly, the magazine—with its shorter time-frame—may be considered as an entity in time, one that is able to adapt with each new issue to the changes and urgencies of the present. The distinctive temporality of magazines and biennials grants that they can adapt to shifts in the contemporary—through the intervals and the events they exist within—and in the public's taste. This is perhaps one of their strongest validations, as either one would not have a purpose in the absence of an audience. Indeed, biennials are mainly born for political reasons, for the prestige of the country fostering it and to promote the site as a touristic attraction. This entails that there is absolute necessity of an audience. It is for this reason that, on the one hand, they function as influencers and guides leading the

⁹² Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 14. On the Venice Biennale as an entity in time, see also Vittoria Martini, "The Evolution of an Exhibition Model. Venice Biennale as an Entity in Time", in Federica Martini and Vittoria Martini, *Just Another Exhibition* (Milano: Postemediabooks, 2011), 119-138.

⁹³ On this matter see Carlos Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution," in *MJ - Manifesta Journal*, 2 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004), reprinted in *MJ - Manifesta Journal* nos. 1-3 (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2008): 138-149.

audience towards the appreciation of contemporary art, while on the other they are vehicles, driven by the requests and changing tastes of an increasingly wide, heterogeneous and fragmented audience.

As entities in time, or entities in becoming, magazines and biennials link to the notion of contemporary art as an art in becoming and to the fluid and mobile nature of the artwork itself. As stressed throughout this chapter, and as I will show in the chapters devoted to the case studies, it is their similar nature in becoming that accommodates magazines and biennials to the processual and evolving nature of art. Arguably, this is the feature that has allowed them to grow into the art-defining forces they are today. The ability to adapt and evolve in time, to the urgencies of the present, of art, but also of the system that absorbs it, and take advantage of it, has allowed them to climb up, step after step, to the highest positions in the system, almost competing with art itself and obscuring the fact that this system has been created to give art a chance to become public. It is no coincidence that often the exhibition is remembered more than the art displayed in it. *OBOE* is born from these reflections, from a perceived need to put the artwork and its manifestation at the top of this legitimising structure. Initially it wanted to look at periodic exhibitions and how these come to define art, which is partly the scope of this thesis, but together with Vettese and Ricci, we soon realised that what has to be studied is the exhibitionary in a broader sense, which includes:

the moment of exposition, when the artwork, understood as an activator of multiple layers of perception – sensory, ideational, bodily, spatial, temporal, memorial, cultural, economic, political, and more – composes our experience of the infinitely complex contemporary moment.⁹⁴

Looking closely at magazines and biennials and how they interrelate with each other was fundamental for reaching this understanding. Aside from *la biennale*, produced at a time when the curator had yet to rise as the undisputed star of the artworld, the magazines promoted by exhibitions are intended to discuss the exhibition and the art within it, but only partially, even though neither art magazines nor biennials would exist without art. So *OBOE*

⁹⁴ Ricci, et al., "Editorial", (2020).

wanted to move away from this trend, and not become another magazine talking about curating without considering art's power and the central role of the artistic act.⁹⁵

This does not mean that the magazines inaugurated out of perennial exhibitions, the exhibition magazines themselves or the magazines about curating, are irrelevant. On the contrary, these magazines have been an important departing point for the conceptualisation of *OBOE*, but the urgencies and times that led to the launch of *OBOE* are very different from the ones attested in the following chapters.

⁹⁵ Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2008).

Chapter 2

The Exhibition Magazine: Interlacing Periodicities, Audiences and Hybrid Formats

The exhibition magazine is a hybrid periodical which embraces two temporalities, that of the magazine and that of the periodic exhibition. As argued above, these temporalities, punctuated by events and intervals, by repetition and difference, allow the two media to become in time and engage with the present becoming of art. Indeed the very notion of becoming is the one that has allowed these two formats to grow in time, potentiating themselves into two of the primary legitimising forces of the art world.

As I will argue throughout this chapter, two opposing forces exist within this becoming. The exhibition magazine may in fact be seen as driven by two competing motivations: the first one, which I have emphasised thus far, privileges constant flux and evolution in order to respond to the contemporary, whilst the second attempts to create and order a history, an archival record. In this chapter the former, following the argument in Chapter 1 is further analysed as the force, or drive, which allows the magazine to legitimise the biennial, as a dissemination tool capable of engaging with the widespread and fragmented audience of the exhibition. The second drive, instead, entails the actions of collecting, recording, documenting and archiving. These magazines embrace their ephemerality while continuously attempting to defy it. It is the same drive that characterises biennials, which on the one hand are transient and become in time, and on the other are increasingly institutionalised. This second drive is crucial for understanding the historicizing trend: the creation of situations that are either stable and fixed or that highlight the historical contribution of this ephemeral medium. It operates through the publication of online archives, anthologies, special retrospective issues in the case of magazines, and, in the case of biennials, with the founding of institutions, physical archives and magazines.

Although there are multiple associated motivations for the establishment of this particular niche of periodicals—exhibition magazines—this thesis contends that there are three main reasons. Firstly, they respond to the urgency of engaging with contemporaneity and with the notion of becoming; secondly, they self-historicise the institution and attempt to defy their own ephemerality; and thirdly, they disseminate the biennial and the research

undertaken by the exhibition during its interval, in an overcoming of local dynamics. Tertiary motives run from legitimisation, promotion, and curatorial innovation—which proves the importance of recognising how the two media function when they blend, whether that be for institutional or curatorial reasons—to considering how their periodicities interlace with one another and give birth to the exhibition magazine.

In the second part of the chapter I will engage in an historical survey that will take into account three different types of periodicals—the academy periodicals of the 18th century, the contemporary art magazine born in the second half of the 20th and the artist magazine of the 1960s and 1970s—that have contributed to the shaping of this unique niche of magazines related to perennial expositions. This historical survey, which functions as an anticipation and introduction to the historical analysis that will follow in the case studies, has proven particularly fruitful for understanding how the exhibition magazine changed from its first case to more recent examples, and demonstrating how they have acquired a certain structure thanks to their becoming.

2.1. The Exhibition Magazine: Disseminating Education and Spectacle

Representing determinate instants during the interval when the exhibition is in the making, the exhibition magazine has the aim of promoting the exhibition, or its parent institution, all year long. Since the interval between one exhibition and the next is normally longer (two or more years) than the one between issues of a magazine (from weekly to annually), the latter provides the exhibition with a novel and narrower temporality, which enables the exhibition to document and record shifts in the present while the exhibition is running. This feature provides exhibitions with the opportunity to maintain communication with their audiences during the interval, further enhancing the sense of anticipation towards the exhibition and its dissemination outside the boundaries of the region in which it takes place. It also shows the change of pace in the contemporary art system, which in adopting capitalist strategies and emulating the time neutralisation of digital technology and communication, attempts to avoid the closure of the institution or its possibility of having a dormant time in which processes of production might remain invisible to the viewer. Reconnecting these ideas, once again, to Crary's analysis of capitalist society in *24/7* as an ever-awake society, with the stream of

publications, events, talks and symposia organised by these periodic institutions, it seems that the interval is being continuously broken into pieces, even erased, to leave space to action, speed, novelty and change. In light of these considerations, the exhibition magazine becomes a vehicle for the biennial's dissemination in time and space, privileged for its ability to move across diverse geographies and time-zones, and which aims to expand the biennial's public and foster engagement during its downtime. The relation with the audience, which is increasingly eager to see and experience newness, and sustained by the periodicity of the two formats, is certainly one of the distinguishing features of magazines and biennials, and by association also of the exhibition magazine, which itself is the connector between the two and between their audiences.⁹⁶

Magazines and biennials emanate from a similar context, that of the 18th century French Salons,⁹⁷ and one of their primary ambitions, is that of making art public. Both terms, exhibition and publication, entail a relationship with the public; the 'exhibition' is the act of displaying something for an audience, while 'publication' means making a book, theory, idea, or in this case an artwork, available to the public. It derives its name etymologically from the Latin term *publicus*, public. According to the etymology of the term, the relation with the audience is central, to a point that either format would not exist without the other. The exhibition magazine has its premises in this idea, conceived as it is by the exhibition as an instrument for engaging the audience in a time-extended conversation that also includes the interval between exhibitions.

This audience of the exhibition magazine is rather peculiar as it is neither limited to purchasers of a specialised art magazine, nor to visitors to the show, but incorporates both.

⁹⁶ The magazine's ability to engage with the audience over time, to create a long-lasting relationship is considered, by most periodical scholars, one of its distinguishing features. See Allen, "Introduction" (2016); Beetham, "Open and Closed"; and Simon Sheikh, "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation", *e-flux Journal*, 62 (February 2015), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/62/60945/circulation-and-withdrawal-part-i-circulation/>, accessed December 2020, and Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.

⁹⁷ The *Salons* were free public exhibitions of art, promoted by Colbert, Minister of Finance during the reign of Louis XIV. They were held every year after 1737, when for the first time the Louvre hosted this exhibition and opened its doors to the public. See Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions That Made Art History. Salon to Biennial*, Vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2008); and Thomas Crow, "Diderot's Salons: Public Art and the Mind of the Private Critic", in *Diderot on Art, vol. I, The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, John Goodman ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix-xix.

The magazine appeals to a wide number of readers, viewers and visitors, thanks to smaller formats, contained numbers of pages (an average of 150 against the 800-1000 pages of a catalogue), cheaper cover prices (10-20 euros against 50-80 euros) and less institutional or scholarly discourse. To this it should be added, that unlike a book or catalogue, the magazine allows the reader “to construct their own order, [as] they will select and read only some of the text. The periodical, therefore, is a form which openly offers readers the chance to construct their own texts”.⁹⁸ This is not always the case when a viewer visits an exhibition: there may be, for instance, a certain path to follow to view the artworks. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Catherine David attempted to change this in her documenta X, curating her show as a manifestation in many venues and moments, and thereby rendering it almost ungraspable in its entirety, so that the viewer could feel more free to follow her/his own order. Arguably, she was retracing the experience of the magazine and its reader in the space of the show.

Unlike other types of magazines, the exhibition magazine—despite being considered a niche in art periodical publishing—has a much wider readership. Its symbolic and economic value is countless compared to other magazines because of its connection to a large-scale exhibition, which is a guarantee of success and influence per se. In terms of numbers, an exhibition like the Venice Biennale or Documenta attracts between 600,000 and a million visitors,⁹⁹ while a mainstream magazine like *Flash Art International* reaches a maximum readership of 175,000, with a circulation of 55,000 copies, a number that in my opinion has been slightly inflated in their media-kit to encourage sponsors and advertisers to buy spaces on their pages.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, on this matter Sheikh highlights that these figures, circulations and readerships, compose the symbolic capital of a magazine, since “a high number of readers [... means] great importance and influence” and this influence means “increased revenue in the form of advertising”.¹⁰¹ Exhibition visitors, instead of buying the weighty and scholarly catalogue, often choose to buy the cheaper, lighter and more popular

⁹⁸ Beetham, “Open and Closed”, 98.

⁹⁹ The numbers of visitors of the Venice Biennale and Documenta can be found online, in their website pages. See for instance the last two editions of these shows, respectively at the links: <https://www.labiennale.org/en/news/biennale-arte-2019-came-close-confirming-expected-600000-visitors>, and <https://www.documenta14.de/en/news/25596/closing>, accessed October 2020.

¹⁰⁰ The figures around *Flash Art International's* readership have been taken from their “2018-2019 Media Kit”.

¹⁰¹ Simon Sheikh, “Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation”.

magazine. This “souvenirish” side of the publication, though, is accompanied by many others that engage with the exhibition/magazine’s commodification and institutionalisation, and the relation with its audience.

The exhibition magazine works to tempt the audience to programme a visit and create hype and expectation for the perennial exhibition that is to come. It presents educational prerogatives as it becomes a space where the audience can get closer to the behind-the-scenes of curatorial practice and start understanding what the exhibition will deal with. The pragmatics of the encounter between reader/visitor and exhibition magazine enables learning about the artworks or artists that will be displayed, accounting for how these art works and the show containing them evolve, while also introducing the curator who orchestrates the *mise-en-scène*.

There has been a highly fruitful discussion of the educational turn in curating in the 1990s,¹⁰² but it is important to note that exhibitions, as much as magazines, have always aimed to educate their audiences. What has changed with the birth of the exhibition magazine are the discourses and practices that are now shared with the public and the involvement of the latter in the production and creation of art. The public is increasingly aware and open-minded towards the arts and cultural fields, in which it is actively involved, and with a greater power than ever before, as recognised by philosopher Jacques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*.¹⁰³ His theories, akin to those expressed in Roland Barthes’ postulations on “the birth of the reader”¹⁰⁴ and Umberto Eco’s *Opera Aperta*,¹⁰⁵ show the intense transformation in art and in the audience/public since the theorisation of the role of magazines and criticism by sociologist Jürgen Habermas, whose famous, yet contested,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² See Paul O’Neill ed., *Curating And The Educational Turn* (London: Open Ed., 2010). On this matter see also footnotes 296 and 303 in Chapter 4.

¹⁰³ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” [1967], reprinted in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

¹⁰⁵ Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta: forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milano: Bompiani, 1962).

¹⁰⁶ Simon Sheikh, “Once Upon a Time in the West: Or the Rise and Fall of the (Bourgeois) Public Sphere, as Told by Jürgen Habermas”, *Art & the Public Sphere* 3, 2 (2014): 151-160. See also Peter Uwe Hohendahl, “Recasting the Public Sphere”, *October*, 73 (Summer 1995): 27–55. Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the public sphere”, and “Further reflections on the public sphere”, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992), 33-48, and 421–61; and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 121–22.

analysis of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in 18th century Europe,¹⁰⁷ stressed how art criticism (and the art periodical as its vehicle of distribution) was intrinsically linked to the collective experience of the exhibition space of the *Salon*.¹⁰⁸ As spokesmen for the public, critics and magazines, were considered vital to help viewers to think and engage in critical debates in the public sphere, defined as the social arena where public opinion is formed.¹⁰⁹

On the matter, Allen notes that the periodical had the ability to extend the “thread of the conversation through space and time to be picked up by different groups of readers”,¹¹⁰ thanks to its unique circulation and its ability to connect a wider public that might have not had the opportunity to discuss it face to face. Shorter than a book, and with a modern and catchy layout, magazines presented a more colloquial and open style through the presence of columns and letters to the editors. All these features, together with the lower cover prices and the popularity and familiarity of the medium, were able to attract a wider readership. Due to their easy circulation and ability to create communities of readers sharing similar interests and subscribers, magazines became a privileged media for distributing and moving the artwork through different localities and audiences.

After over two centuries and the recent flourishing of magazines and biennials, the educational and disseminating function of these two formats remains of paramount importance. Arguably, the great proliferation of these two components of the art system has demanded an even higher preparation on the topics surrounding contemporary art from the public, as increased competition accompanies the need for the audience to be better informed and prepared about art (and not only). It is for this reason also, that the art critic and former editor of *Frieze* magazine, Jörg Heiser, claimed that the audience still has a great need for criticism and discursivity about art, especially since the rise and proliferation of the mega-exhibition circus. Almost returning to Habermas’ postulations on the role of the art

¹⁰⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1989), 41.

¹⁰⁸ On the public in the context of 18th century exhibitions see Thomas Crow, “The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art”, in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 1-8.

¹⁰⁹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Gwen Allen, *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2011), 17.

critic as spokesman, Heiser highlights the role criticism plays in helping audiences navigate the surfeit of events and biennials, providing ways of understanding exhibitions and the curatorial choices informing them.¹¹¹ It is no surprise, in this context and with these premises, that a handful of perennial exhibitions have produced exhibition magazines, although the texts published within their pages, being discursive extensions of the exhibition and sites of exhibition making, might not be considered as *critical*. Indeed, while these publications provide the reader/viewer with a guide and an understanding of the exhibition, they will never achieve the critical potential of other art magazines, and rarely will they attempt to. They will not review the biennial's show, exceptionally they will review other exhibitions and include critical texts about artists or artworks presented in the exhibition. If they do so, they will use these moments of criticality to publicise their institution. Criticality hardly co-exists with their promotional intents.

Rather than in the style of writing, in its non-existent criticality or in the contents, the key to understand the birth of the exhibition magazine stands in the need to create a *rendezvous* between viewer and exhibition and allow for this encounter to be extended in time: before, during and after the visit. The periodical prepares the reader/spectator for the visit, revealing parts of the curatorial process, the evolution of the exhibition towards its final format, and the artwork and its reshaping in a new context. When visiting the show, readers will experience a sense of familiarity, potentially recognising some of the topics they have read about, and may feel the satisfaction of already knowing something about the exhibition, receiving insights about what they will encounter there, and what their experience of visiting the show will be like. These magazines become a preview, a taster of the exhibition's experience. Today's media have had to adapt to the so-called experience economy, which contends that "commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences

¹¹¹ Jörg Heiser, "The Exhausted Spectator: Criticism Amidst Mega-Exhibitions in the 21st Century", in *Double Trouble. Exhibitions Facing Fairs in Contemporary Art*, 125-140.

memorable”,¹¹² so that at each iteration visited, the exhibition becomes an experience to be remembered and cherished, also through the magazine it publishes.

Over the last fifty years, with their high quality printing techniques and inserts of site specific works from artists, magazines have become luxurious and collectable items.¹¹³ This trend had already been noted in the 1960s when librarian Stanley T. Lewis affirmed that “art periodicals...[are] being designed to be ‘seen’ rather than to be ‘read’”.¹¹⁴ Part of their attractiveness is also that the exhibition magazine’s contents have been edited to become measuredly informative and more pleasurable and entertaining to view and to read, once again anticipating the experience of the exhibition. For this reason, together with their contents, clarity and fluency, magazines are increasingly preferred over complex and scholarly writing, but also for their interdisciplinarity, incorporating topics such as cinema, fashion, design and visual culture. They aim to interact with an even broader and increasingly heterogeneous audience, albeit this mostly remains a privileged one, as visiting these shows often entails travel and accommodation costs. The audience that will buy these magazines is often the same one visiting these exhibitions, or other art spaces, as their circulation and distribution is usually limited to specialised bookshops and libraries, including those of the exhibitions promoting these publications. It is usually constructed by the curator’s network, and therefore consists of professionals in the art field, but also art lovers, designers, creatives, collectors, upper class people and, only rarely, a more general audience. The birth of these magazines might have been ascribed to the need to engage with these disparate audiences, and not only the elitist one. Indeed, since these large-scale exhibitions are born with the intentions of boosting the economy of the city, their aim should be also that of attracting and involving local audiences in their activities, but as art critic Boris Groys points out, these often feel excluded due to the elitist nature of these events.¹¹⁵

¹¹² On the experience economy see Pine B. Joseph and James H. Gilmore, “Welcome to the experience economy”, *Harvard Business Review* 76, 4 (1998). For an updated version of this article see <https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>, accessed June 2020; see also *The Experience Economy. Work Is Theater & Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999). On the experience factor in biennials see Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art: World’s Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹¹³ See Aniello Russo, *The Magazine as an Art Form* (MA diss., Venice: Iuav University, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Stanley T. Lewis, “Periodicals in the Visual Arts”, *Library Trends* 10, 3 (January 1962): 334.

¹¹⁵ Boris Groys, “Curating in the Post-Internet Age”, *e-flux journal*, 94 (October 2018), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219462/curating-in-the-post-internet-age/>, accessed December 2018.

Recently biennials have started adopting, alongside the exhibition magazine, other formats like art schools, artists' residencies and children's educational programmes to involve these local audiences and encourage them to participate in their activities.

With that said, the dependence and need for an ever-growing audience, goes hand in hand with the commodification of both magazines and biennials, whose fortune and success is measured in numbers rather than in their critical potential. For the exhibition to remain a success the number of visitors should rise each year, with the intention of attracting more investors and funding at each new iteration.¹¹⁶ Significantly, the global proliferation of biennials has opened the biennial discourse to hundreds of regions and localities which previously might have been in the shadows. This has given space and opportunity for new publics and reading habits to emerge,¹¹⁷ and magazines and biennials have made it even more important to keep them engaged in a productive and temporally-extended dialogue.¹¹⁸ The biennial's need to stimulate diverse audiences—that are both local and international—to participate in their activities, is aimed for its survival, to legitimise and defy its own ephemerality.

In light of this, the experiential factor becomes paramount. The legitimising, education-based purposes of the biennial are intrinsically tied also with forms of spectacle,¹¹⁹ the same that have invaded the art world and the abovementioned economy of experience. Many recent biennial curators have struggled with the idea of educating the audience whilst

¹¹⁶ See Documenta's website on this matter, each exhibition shows an increasingly higher number of visitors, from the 130.000 of the first exhibition in 1955 to the over 1.000.000 of documenta 14.

¹¹⁷ On the expansion and fragmentation of the magazine's public see amongst others the proceedings of the round table were published in the 100th issue of the journal; see George Baker, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Andrea Fraser, David Joselit, James Meyer, Robert Storr, Hal Foster, John Miller, and Helen Molesworth, "Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism," in *Obsolescence: A Special Issue, October*, 100, (Spring 2002): 200–228. On the acknowledgment of the changing habits of readers see Parkett's editors "Letter to Our Readers," www.parkettart.com/media/homepage/Letter_to_Our_Readers.pdf, accessed December 2020.

¹¹⁸ An interesting, yet highly contested operation to engage readers and visitors of the exhibition was done with the documenta 12 magazine project, in which 90 publications were invited by Georg Schöllhammer to discuss and publish around the themes of the exhibition. Together with the authority these periodicals would also bring their readers and followers. For more about this edition of Documenta and its criticalities cf. Chapter 4, 132-134.

¹¹⁹ Peter Schjeldahl, "Festivalism: Oceans of Fun at the Venice Biennale", *New Yorker*, July 5, 1999.

entertaining it,¹²⁰ with creating a spectacle for all and providing counter-hegemonic arguments and structures, and with bringing a larger number of visitors to the exhibition's doors without forgetting its 'agency' towards art.¹²¹ Guy Debord's philosophical theories of the *Society of Spectacle* in which the presentation of art to the public and educational intentions have become mere representation and appearance, have also entered the discourse around biennials from their beginnings.¹²² It is noteworthy that the biennial format often rises from the need of marginal cities to boost their economic and tourist sectors. Biennials become part of the city's rebranding strategy¹²³ and interfere with the way in which a city is perceived by foreigners and visitors. They are born out of promotional needs and create a spectacle for transforming the city into something else: be it a mundane centre with VIPs meeting from all over the world, a way to create attractiveness in a city with limited places to escape, or a way, indeed, to soften political and social tensions. The magazine showcases these promotional and spectacularising intentions, with photographic records of the show, with the authorities that have written in it, with interviews with the artists about the works displayed in the show, and so on.

Certainly, the magazine is not spared by these criticisms. Philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's treatise on "The Culture Industry" considered magazines as devices for manipulating audiences into passivity.¹²⁴ This is a position sustained later on also by art critic Benjamin Buchloh, who claimed that European art magazines as legitimising

¹²⁰ Cf. Chapter 4. See also Panos Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacle of Critique, Theory and Art* (London: Routledge, 2017); and Kompatsiaris, "Curating Resistances: Ambivalences and Potentials of Contemporary Art Biennials", *Communication, Culture & Critique* 7, 1 (October 2013): 76-91.

¹²¹ The agency of the artist was previously discussed by Adorno in his fundamental volume *Aesthetic Theory*, see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). A more recent account is Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2013).

¹²² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* [1967] (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

¹²³ On the branding strategies for local cultural development, see Pier Luigi Sacco, Giorgio Tavano Blessi and Massimiliano Nuccio, "Cultural Policies and Local Planning Strategies: What is the Role in Local Sustainable Development?", *Journal of Art Management, Law, and Society* 39, 1 (Spring 2009): 45-64; with Giovanna Segre, "Creativity, cultural investment and local development: A new theoretical framework for endogenous growth", in Ugo Fratesi and Lanfranco Senn (eds.), *Growth and Innovation of Competitive Regions. The Role of Internal and External Connections* (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 281-294.

¹²⁴ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in Gunzelin Schmid Noerr ed., *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1972], (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

tools and handmaidens of the art system, have “their raison d'être [in the] culture industry”.¹²⁵ With these criticisms in mind, we might venture to state that the mere extension of the biennial's temporality, thanks to the exhibition magazine, is nothing but a form of legitimisation as it provides an image of the show not just as an event that takes place every two years but as a more complex and lively institution, with an active calendar all year round. Indeed, since the appearance of the city in which a biennale is launched is perhaps the first reason for its opening; the magazine, whilst being considered for its other potentialities and dissemination possibilities, remains a means through which it is possible to publicise the biennial, circulate it internationally, keep it active also when its doors are closed, narrate stories about it and legitimise it as an institution, beyond its ephemerality.

2.2. Contrasting the Ephemeral: The Exhibition Magazine's Archival Drive

The tension between ephemerality and institutionalisation, central to this dissertation, is also discussed in terms of becoming and unbecoming within Bergson's philosophy. His conceptualisation of difference and repetition, as mentioned in Chapter 1, indicates that becoming and unbecoming may be perceived only in duration, which is composed by past, present and future—temporalities that co-exist also in magazines and biennials. The philosopher argues that the tension between becoming and unbecoming is the cornerstone for life and matter.¹²⁶ Life, or the “becoming”, is the magazine/biennials' ephemerality, which is expressed in its periodicity, in its continuous flux and evolution. Matter, or the “unbecoming”, is the magazine/biennial's institutionalisation and historicisation, taking the form of an archival drive. This means that on the one side there is the periodical nature that allows magazines and biennials to become in time, and thus respond to the urgencies of the present; on the other there is the need to defy this ephemerality, as it also always contains a certain precariousness within it.

This precariousness has always accompanied periodicals since their early days and without distinguishing between periodical types. Indeed, mainstream magazines and zines

¹²⁵ Benjamin Buchloh, “Magazine Mentality and the Market (European Regions)”, *Art Monthly* (October 1976): 4-5.

¹²⁶ Cf. Gilles Deleuze's reading of Bergson: Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands of Other Texts 1953–1974*, trans. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2004), 45-47.

are both affected by the same sense of instability. The latter, for instance, while completely different from the magazines discussed throughout this dissertation, for their do-it-yourself approach grounded in the idea of challenging mainstream institutions and narratives, perfectly exemplify this ephemerality and the magazine's archival drive as a response to it. Zines, in fact, with an aesthetic emulating pamphlets and paper newsletters, printed in small editions and print-runs, normally had short lives. However, as discussed by periodical scholar Janice Radway, during those short lives, zine-sters adopted a number of strategies such as the creation of archives, websites and collections, that would prolong the zines' existence into the future, often after the publication itself had been interrupted.¹²⁷ In contemporary and mainstream periodicals this afterlife is ensured, at times, through the development of anthological publications, online archives created by the magazines themselves, websites or through the digitization of the publication by a library – as has recently happened with the Swiss art magazine *Parkett*.¹²⁸ In the biennial this precariousness is at times defied through the development of rigid institutions or museum-like structures, at others through archives and self-historizing publications like the exhibition magazine.

Indeed, with their mission to transform the biennial's temporality and legitimise its ephemerality, the magazines published by biennials continue to benefit from the aesthetics of the printed or online medium, as an immediate vehicle to interact with diverse audiences, but also from the magazine's easy circulation and low production costs, its capacity to exceed geographic boundaries and to extend the conversation over time, both when the exhibition is open and when it is closed to the public. Moreover, to overcome its criticisms as an entertainment device, and reinvigorated by the educational turn in exhibition making, the magazine has become a means to investigate the biennial from within, as specific "sites of local knowledge production",¹²⁹ as Allen puts it. Magazines are sites where research around art and contemporaneity is conducted and made public, but they are also places where the processual idea of contemporary art and the exhibition may be contained, recorded and archived. This signifies that the exhibition magazine is not adopted only for its capacity to

¹²⁷ See Janice Radway, "Zines, Half-Lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change", *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 140-150.

¹²⁸ On *Parkett* see issue 100/101 (December 2017) and Salvaneschi "Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive". For a list of digitizing projects see, amongst others, Latham and Scholes "The Rise of Periodical Studies", *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (March 2006): 517-531.

¹²⁹ Allen, "Between Page, Market and Exhibition", 154.

move alongside contemporaneity and the making of art, but also for its innate tension between becoming and unbecoming, for its dual periodicity and for its intrinsic archival capacities.

Relatedly, it is noteworthy that the word magazine derives from a conjunction of the Arabic words *makhzan*, meaning depot or storehouse, and *khazana*, meaning to store up. The French word *magasin* (store) first appeared in the 15th century, as an adaptation of the Italian *magazzino*. In both etymologies, the shared meaning relating to the storage of disparate items or collections or, for the sake of the present argument, the archive, is evident. The significant archival role of the magazine was recognised in the 1970s by Walker, who stated that

because of their periodicity, [art magazines] are single issues devoted to contemporary art which provide 'snapshots' of art at particular moments. The back runs of such magazines themselves constitute a history of art, albeit an unrefined one.¹³⁰

Here Walker acknowledges that it is through the collections of these snapshots that the issues of a magazine form a type of archive of contemporary art. As he suggests, the magazine can only form a limited archive of contemporary art, as multiple exclusions to its history need to be taken into account. Indeed, the archival limitations of the magazine go hand in hand with the limitations of the archive itself, which, as philosopher Jacques Derrida thoroughly explained in *Archive Fever*, is contaminated by the "malady"¹³¹ determined by the impossibility of collecting, cataloguing and preserving everything.¹³² The same archival limitations are applied to the exhibition magazine, which provides edited contents and selected events in its pages, those necessary for engaging the audience and preparing it for the show that is to come.

While only privileged moments of the exhibition's history are represented, these articles, photos and contributions are fundamental for retaining part of the exhibition's history and recording some of its ephemeral moments. Indeed, these publications attempt to create contents also for the time in between the events. It goes without saying that these "collateral" registered moments, informal discussions and unfinished businesses, would

¹³⁰ John A. Walker, "Art periodicals since 1945," in *The Art Press*, 45.

¹³¹ Derrida talks about the archival impulse as the fever (illness/malady) that threatens the archive. Cf. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression", *Diacritics* 25, 2 (Summer 1995): 9-63.

¹³² *Ibid.*

normally not be included in the main narrative of these large-scale exhibitions, but they can be registered because the magazine is particularly apt for this kind of content.

As I will show in the next chapters, these contents, while not being official documents and speeches, acquire a new weight in the pages of the magazine as they become a tool for studying the exhibition. Furthermore, the periodicity of the magazine, extended over a longer timeline, provides a lens to look at these shows, not reduced to a single exhibition or year, but takes into account multiple manifestations as well as an edited narration which, over the years, shows how these exhibitions have become in time, and adapted their structures to the current momentum.

Also the biennial provides a ‘snapshot’ of art at a specific time and place, but it is not in its ephemeral nature to form an archive of the publications, materials and images it produces, since the exhibition is more focused on the present and the time that is to come.¹³³ Rosa Martinez, curator of the 2005 edition of the Venice Biennial argues that:

A [biennial] looks beyond the present and into the future [...] Biennials are the most advanced arena for this expanded field precisely because they do not function like museums. Museums are temples for the preservation of memory [...] whereas] Biennials are the context for the exploration and questioning of the present.¹³⁴

Undoubtedly, recurring exhibitions are ostensibly more concerned with the present and the anticipation of the future than the past, although the establishment of archives, and the growth of publications—magazines, guidebooks, Readers and catalogues—suggests the opposite.¹³⁵ This might be indicative of an anxiety about their precariousness, their desire to construct a history for themselves and have their contribution to the development of art history recognised, but also of their future. Indeed, history, as artist Hito Steyerl suggests, “exists only when there is a tomorrow”,¹³⁶ so it may be argued that the exhibition magazine,

¹³³ Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”.

¹³⁴ Rosa Martinez interviewed by Carolee Thea, in *FOCI: interviews with 10 international curators* (New York: Apex Art Curatorial Programme, 2001), here cited from Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art*, 88.

¹³⁵ I have argued this also in the article for *OBOE Journal* on the Venice Biennale’s periodical as a prototype of the exhibition magazine. See Camilla Salvaneschi “The Magazine *la biennale*: Articulating a Model for Periodicals Published by Recurring Exhibitions”, *OBOE Journal* 1, 1 (2020): 46-61.

¹³⁶ Hito Steyerl, “A Tank on a Pedestal: Museums in an Age of Planetary Civil War”, *e-flux journal*, 70 (February 2016), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/70/60543/a-tank-on-a-pedestal-museums-in-an-age-of-planetary-civil-war/>, accessed December 2020.

similarly to the archive, is more concerned with the future than it is with the past. To this, Derrida's postulations should be added, as he states that "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory".¹³⁷ With the global proliferation of the format, and in order to avoid succumbing to their precarity, taking control of their memory has become an imperative for most large-scale exhibitions. In relation to this last point, it is noteworthy that a wide number of biennials have succumbed to their unbecoming by promoting institutions or foundations, open all year long, and thereby encouraging a far less ephemeral structure. What is singular to their situation, however, is that if the recurring exhibition is attempting to defy its own ephemerality it seems an odd solution to adopt the magazine, which is in itself another ephemeral medium, unless it is for the permanence offered by the printed medium and the opportunity of recording "edited" moments and conversations that would have otherwise gone forgotten.

This, as Allen observes, recalls earlier examples of magazines when, subject to artists' experimentation:

the magazine served as an archive, capturing ephemeral events and conversations in the more permanent medium of print, [while] it was also a document that was itself highly transitory and unfixed, capturing the informal, unguarded quality of the dialogue between artists that had inspired it.¹³⁸

Hence, if the same applies to the recurring exhibition and curatorship, one may contend that the exhibition magazine similarly helps capture conversations between curators and artists while also recording the process of making the exhibition. Certainly, it offers a more organic and polymorphous way of narrating the recurring exhibition and the different moments that punctuate its history and its becoming in time. By capturing the intervening time the exhibition magazine informs the audience about the upcoming show: from its development, to the thematic discussed, the curators' choices, the artists' intentions, and any other component the editor-curators¹³⁹ wish to share.

¹³⁷ Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression": 11.

¹³⁸ Allen, *Artists Magazines*, 178.

¹³⁹ I use the combination of editor-curator to exemplify how the once two distinct roles have recently become intertwined. See Isabelle Graw, "In the Grip of the Market? On the Relative Heteronomy of Art, the Art World, and Art Criticism" in Maria Lind and Olav Velthuis eds., *Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets. A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2012), 183-208. Cf. also Chapter 5 and the Conclusions of this dissertation.

Whether considered as promoting the institution during the downtime, serving as a site for the production of knowledge and research around the exhibition, a tool to disseminate the exhibition's content, or a mnemonic device, exhibition magazines maintain an important legitimising function that is siphoned back into their parent exhibitions. Within the context of analysing magazines and biennials as formats in becoming—not only for their ephemeral nature but also for the way they have evolved since the notion of the public emerged—the exhibition magazine may be understood as evolving not only from the time its first exemplar originated, but as originating from a longer history with its roots in the very origin of the formats. This once again exemplifies the shifting nature of the medium and its becoming one of the major legitimising forces in the art world, emphasising why it has been adopted.

2.3. The Historical Roots of the Exhibition Magazine

The origins of the exhibition magazine link back to the idea of the first pamphlets and newsletters born in the context of the *Salons*. These media shared the intention to connect the exhibition with an informed commentary about the art shown and extend the conversation to reach a wider public beyond exhibition visitors. While these pamphlets were not a direct reference, the exhibition magazine looked to its immediate successor—18th century periodicals emanating from the art academies—alongside influences from the mainstream art magazines that emerged in the 1960s and the artists' magazines published by conceptualists in the 1960s and 1970s. The latter in particular, with their attention to processualism and the evolving nature of the artwork, have been greatly inspiring to the curators of contemporary mega-exhibitions, who as I will show in the case studies, have evolved into becoming authors and artistic agents themselves.

The first periodical publication that specifically links to the exhibition magazine may be found after the second half of the 18th century. Periodical scholar Ernst Herbert Lehmann wrote a comprehensive account¹⁴⁰ in which he identified *Die reisende und correspondirende*

¹⁴⁰ Ernst Herbert Lehmann, *Die Anfänge der Kunstzeitschrift in Deutschland* (Leipzig: K.W. Hiersemann, 1932).

Pallas oder Kunstzeitung (1755-56) as the first art periodical: a weekly magazine published by the Kaiserliche Akademie der Freien Kunste und Wissenschaften in Augsburg, Germany.¹⁴¹ The magazine was edited by Daniel Herz, son of the academy's founder.¹⁴² Periodicals such as these, which were for the most part sponsored by art academies¹⁴³—centres devoted to teaching the figurative arts and exhibiting—were principally concerned with providing news and information around the artists and programmes of the academy. They were vehicles for gathering and distributing information and artistic agendas, and for circulating ideas. They ranged from specialist art historical and connoisseurship journals to others devoted to a more general readership, and normally contained articles on art history and aesthetics, alongside artists' biographies, news and reviews of exhibitions.¹⁴⁴ The academy periodicals shared the mission to facilitate the reception of art, and as discussed previously, were deeply linked to the institution and to its public perception, rather than fostering critical debate around art. This had to do with the censorship criticism was subjected to during the decades in which these periodicals emerged. Similarly to what happened with art critic Denis Diderot's *Correspondence Litteraire*,¹⁴⁵ which was illegally distributed, criticism had been suppressed for the fear it would cause an endless number of insults to the artists and for the threat it posed to the established equilibrium between artists, their patrons, and the institution. Since academies were devoted to maintaining liaisons within the system of patronage, criticism was considered dangerous and thus avoided in the periodicals. It is significant that these periodicals were already so rigidly controlled by the publishing institutions, as part of an early promotional and market-oriented strategy. There was doubtless an ancestral idea of the brand of the academy at work. These magazines are fundamental examples for the exhibition magazine for their promotional character, the link with their parent institution and the lack of

¹⁴¹ Cf. Anthony Burton, "Nineteenth Century Periodicals", in Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines* (London: Art Book, 1976), 3.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ For a definition of the 18th century academy see <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/art-academies#:~:text=Academies%20for%20painting%20were%20established,Paris%2C%20was%20founded%20in%201648>, accessed December 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, "Nineteenth Century Periodicals", 3-4.

¹⁴⁵ *La Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* was published between 1753 and 1790 by Friedrich Melchior, baron von Grimm, and included contributions from Denis Diderot on the *Salons*. For a complete access of the *Correspondance littéraire* see <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/grimms-correspondance-litt%C3%A9raire>, accessed September 2020.

critical and judgemental contributions. They are also the direct antecedents of the museum magazines that have been published over the years by institutions such as the Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, and the Witte de With,¹⁴⁶ to name but a few; and of the gallery magazines which have been recently adopted by the colossal Gagosian, Hauser and Wirth and König.¹⁴⁷

The second model to inspire the exhibition magazine is the contemporary art magazine. Generally, this type of magazine, with its many different formats and features, escapes a single definition. It can be said, though, that the contemporary art magazine is a periodical publication which participates in multiple ways in sustaining the art system, and it has slowly become a part of that system, rather than a privileged and distanced observer.¹⁴⁸ It is worth briefly acknowledging that 'contemporary' in this case does not refer only to the magazine's engagement with contemporaneity, as I have emphasised thus far, but also to the frame within which contemporary art internationally is perceived and legitimised. In relation to this latter understanding, Osborne remains highly critical of the system of contemporary art, considering it as a term adopted in recent times to accompany the transformation of the art world into a commercial and globalised system.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the term contemporary has been slowly incorporated, following this perspective, both to legitimise the art presented in the art system and as a label for categorising art institutions as new and cutting-edge, in terms of their formats as well as in their contents. The same understanding of the word may be applied to the contemporary art magazine, which on the one hand utilises the term for the temporal connotations which bind it to the current moment, while on the other hand legitimise it in a system identified by this very terminology.

¹⁴⁶ On the "Witte De With Cahiers" see *ccindex's* listing at the link <https://www.ccindex.info/iw/witte-de-with-cahiers/>, accessed June 2020.

¹⁴⁷ For an overview of some of these different magazines see Salvaneschi, "Magnifying the Margins".

¹⁴⁸ This issue has been debated at the panel "Art Magazines: Privileged Observers or Instruments of the Institution," part of the conference *Between Exhibition and Fair: Entry Chien et Loup*, <http://www.artefiera.it/en/media-room/news/between-exhibition-and-fair-entre-chien-et-loup/8243.html>, accessed December 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Osborne, *Anywhether or Not at All*, 17. On the globalisation of the art world and contemporary art see: Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2004); and Jonathan Harris, *Globalization and Contemporary Art* (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

The art magazine usually consists of writings about art and reproductions of artists' works,¹⁵⁰ alongside a conspicuous amount of advertisements by galleries, museums and lately a high number of fashion brands.¹⁵¹ They are a very particular kind of art publication as they have the power to instantly affect the market values of the artists and works published in their pages.¹⁵² As legitimising tools, art magazines have often been considered one of the most powerful components of the artworld, as Walker acknowledges when contending that: "the power of the art magazine to define and legitimise new developments in art has become greater than that of the art gallery and museum".¹⁵³ His reflections on the promotional capacity of critique and the magazine resonates with other famous theorisations by art critics Arthur Danto and Lawrence Alloway and artist Dan Graham, that as earlier mentioned have also recognised the escalation of the magazine to the highest ranks of the system for its ability to increase the value of an artwork or artist.¹⁵⁴ Their legitimising power, their liaisons with the art system and market dynamics, as well as their role as mediators in the hands of art institutions, have all been absorbed and potentiated by the aesthetically appealing exhibition magazine, becoming themselves an updated model for the art magazine's relation with the art system.

The third model is the artist's magazine, and specifically the conceptual artists' magazine.¹⁵⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, while hegemonic magazines like the New York based

¹⁵⁰ See Walker, "Internal Memorandum" in *Studio International* 193, 983 (September/October 1976): 118.

¹⁵¹ Numbers of advertisements have grown so much that these magazines devote almost half of their pages to them. During the Covid-19 pandemic the number of advertisements decreased exponentially due to the fact that most museums and galleries were closed. To survive without this source of revenue, mainstream magazines like *Flash Art* have started publishing fashion adverts with one fashion brand per issue. The last issue for instance was entirely advertised by Bottega Veneta, with the exception of a page dedicated to Marian Goodman.

¹⁵² Important examples are *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Flash Art*, which have overturned the role of the magazine from observer into active participant and promoter of the art market.

¹⁵³ Walker, "Internal Memorandum": 113.

¹⁵⁴ For an account on these theories see amongst others, Esanu and Harutyunyan, "Art Periodicals Today", and Allen, "Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds, Part I: A Historical Exploration," *ARTMargins* 5, 3 (October 2016): 37-39.

¹⁵⁵ A comprehensive account on these magazines is Allen's volume, *Artists Magazines*. This part of the analysis draws heavily on Allen's thorough examinations.

*Artforum*¹⁵⁶ were beginning to establish themselves, a handful of artists saw the magazine as an alternative showcase for their art.¹⁵⁷ These experiments owe their origins to the magazines published by the modernist avant-garde movements as extensions of their artistic practices, from the 1910s to the 1930s.¹⁵⁸ They were vehicles through which artists and movements could circulate ideals and artistic agendas beyond their region. They had no specifically commercial intent, since, as Allen emphasises, “artists’ magazines were produced and distributed not according to the motives of profit but according to the artistic, social, and political ideals they sought to convey”.¹⁵⁹ They functioned as spaces that enabled exchanges and debates about art. The same remained true with conceptual artists, with the proviso that they were also attracted to the medium for its popularity as an everyday and accessible media. The magazine had become an alternative space for the display of art, a vitrine for the artists’ works and thoughts.¹⁶⁰ It also offered an exceptional opportunity to collaborate at a distance with a dispersed group of artists and writers. While facilitating these conversations, they also acted as records of those very discussions and debates, alongside functioning as mnemonic devices for ephemeral moments like openings and parties.

Enthusiasm towards the medium of the artists’ magazine was shared by art dealer and curator Seth Siegelaub with his innovative curatorial strategies in the 1960s. He saw the medium as a new arena for displaying the works of conceptual artists, but his interests included other print media: books, posters, and catalogues. Keeping in mind art theorist André Malraux’s concept of the “Museum without Walls”¹⁶¹ Siegelaub recognised that the printed page was becoming an important space for showcasing an artist’s work. He

¹⁵⁶ For a history of *Artforum*’s first period, see Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962 -1974* (New York: SoHo Press, 2000). On *Artforum*, see also Allen, “This is Not to Be Looked At: Artforum in the 1960s and 1970s” in *Artists Magazines*, 13-41, and “Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds, Part I: A Historical Exploration”: 35-61.

¹⁵⁷ See Allen’s volume *Artists Magazines*, and Gwen Allen, “Magazines as Alternative Sites of Artistic Practice”, in Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (eds.), *The Handbook of Magazine Studies* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2020), 263-277.

¹⁵⁸ See Clive Phillpot, “Movement Magazines. The Years of Style”, in *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Periodicals* (London: Art Book, 1976), 41-44.

¹⁵⁹ Allen, *Artists’ magazines*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ See for instance Howardena Pindell, “Alternative Space: Artists’ Periodicals”, *Print Collector’s Newsletter* 8, 4 (September/October 1977): 96-121.

¹⁶¹ André Malraux, *Museum without walls* [1965] (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967).

understood it as a “primary information”,¹⁶² with a unique circulation and ability to transcend the space and time of the traditional exhibition in a museum or gallery.¹⁶³

Siegelaub experimented to the point where the magazine morphed into an exhibition site, as he proved with his famous “July/August 1970” exhibition, held in the forty-eight pages of the July/August 1970 issue of the British magazine *Studio International*¹⁶⁴ and featuring works by conceptual artists at the level of Giovanni Anselmo, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven and Sol LeWitt, amongst others,¹⁶⁵ made specifically for the pages of the magazine.

These experimentations have not gone unnoticed in contemporary curatorial practice. In light of the tendency to be conceived and designed as collectable items, many magazines have paid homage to conceptualist practices by including artworks, projects or exhibitions specifically designed for their pages.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, a number of curators, sustaining the view that editing and curating are methodologically similar apart from the format in which they operate, have been involved in editing an art magazine or have launched one themselves as part of their curatorial practice.¹⁶⁷ These magazines would be worth investigating in future research in relation to the exhibitions curated by their editors.

Since the exhibition magazine is conceived neither as catalogue nor as exhibition, it shares only some of the concerns with the conceptualists’ magazines and Siegelaub’s practice. These include: utilising the magazine for recording ephemeral moments like conversations and discussions, openings and events that would otherwise be known only to

¹⁶² Charles Harrison and Seth Siegelaub, “On Exhibitions and the World at Large”, in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 199.

¹⁶³ Ibid. See also Howardena Pindell, “Alternative Space: Artists’ Periodicals”, *Print Collector’s Newsletter* 8, no. 4 (September-October 1977): 96-121.

¹⁶⁴ For information about the issue and to view it online see <http://www.primaryinformation.org/product/julyaugust-1970/>. On Seth Siegelaub’s adoption of the magazine medium as a showcase for Conceptual artists, see Gwen Allen, *Artists’ Magazines*, 202-203. For a comprehensive account of Siegelaub’s work see Leontine Coelewijn, Marion Benoit, Marja Bloem, and Patrick Kremer (eds.), *Seth Siegelaub: Beyond Conceptual Art* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König; Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 2016).

¹⁶⁵ For a complete list of the artists in the issue/exhibition *July/August 1970* and the six critics named by Siegelaub himself see <https://primaryinformation.org/product/julyaugust-1970/>, accessed December 2020.

¹⁶⁶ Clive Phillpot, “Art Magazines and Magazine Art”, *Artforum* 18, 6 (February 1980): 52-54. See also Anne Rorimer, “Siting the Page: Exhibiting Works in Publications – some examples of conceptual art in the USA”, in Michael Newman and Jon Bird, *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 11-26.

¹⁶⁷ Examples of this trend are Okwui Enwezor and his *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art* founded in 1994 with Salah M. Hassan and Chika Okeke-Agulu and Viktor Misiano’s *Moscow Art Magazine*, mentioned in Chapter 5.

the few that were present, documenting the process of conception of artworks and exhibitions, bridging the periodical publication and the exhibition, investigating the nature of art and creating a context of research around it, while simultaneously being able to self-reflexively comment upon the ephemerality of the media of magazine and exhibition alike.

These three typologies of magazines are different in their editorial structures, scope and intent, but they share the aim of moving the artwork into the public realm and fostering a strong connection with their respective audiences. The 18th century academy magazine can be distinguished by its need to inform the audience about the ongoing activities of the institution; the mainstream art magazine aims to legitimise art while notifying art professionals about artists, exhibitions and events happening locally and internationally; while the conceptual artists' magazine adopts the format as an art object, but remains attentive towards its eventful and exhibitionary character. This last type circulates its art among a broader audience, and as a record of their discussions and thinking processes. My brief commentary does not aim to provide a full history of the evolution of the medium, but rather to trace the origin of the exhibition magazine and show the inextricable link between exhibition and commentary. It also endeavours to elucidate how the magazine's format has evolved in time, adapting to the needs and urgencies of art and its system of legitimisation, and in doing so has taken on multiple models and examples, like the magazines and their networks that have been included in the *Art Periodicals Database*.

Overall, these publications serve to indicate the idiosyncrasies of their relation with the art institution, at times as promotional tools, at other times as critical organs attempting to alienate themselves from their legitimising function. The peculiarities attending the mix of these different types of historical magazines, have shown how the magazine has been able to adapt in time, and how its malleability and its multiple structures may also comply to any occasion or request by the institution, audience or art alike.

The analysis of these first two chapters, the first with the overview of the main features of biennials and magazines, and this one in which the various features are reunited into one, alongside my brief historical survey of the art periodical, have provided me with a lens through which to look at *OBOE* with an historical and critical eye. As an academic and online periodical not linked with a biennial, *OBOE* is quite far from the cases herein discussed, but as a magazine with a focus on art's ostensive conditions, with a desire to

understand and study the manifestation of the artworks displayed in biennial exhibitions, this examination proved foundational. It provided the premises and background for sustaining my work in the future. It allowed me to understand the long tradition of art periodical publishing, and the many ventures that have been undertaken, as well as help me view the journal as a construction which, like those others discussed in these pages, will evolve in time.

The examination of the conceptualist magazines made me also realise that the journal lacks original contributions by artists. Investigating the case studies, and analysing these periodicals and their tradition led to a new project for the periodical, where for each issue an artist will be asked to create an artwork for our website. Curated by Benjamin Weil, one of *OBOE's* advisors, the project will be launched with the journal's third volume. This is just one example of the importance of these reflections, which emphasise the fact that when a journal or periodical publication is launched its original form will quickly mutate in a process of becoming and transformation in time. This understanding of the ephemeral nature of the exhibition magazine also allowed me to reflect on its precariousness as a publication. While those discussed in the following chapters are backed by powerful institutions—all three case are amongst the principal perennial exhibitions worldwide—it made me consider *OBOE's* fate without such institutional support, a facet of the project I will discuss in Chapter 6.

Finally, while these chapters have provided a more general understanding of the formats under investigation, the following ones will be fundamental for the comprehension of the relation between magazines and biennials, and magazines and the institutions of the art world. In what follows I will consider how they have served the institution and how the magazine has contributed towards the evolution of biennials into their contemporary formats, as my first case study on *la biennale* will demonstrate in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

The Magazine *la biennale*: Articulating a Model for Periodicals Published by Recurring Exhibitions¹⁶⁸

When the Biennale was in its 55th year of existence, it finally succeeded in realising one of the projects, which had been in different periods encouraged, but which for different reasons could not be realised: that of giving life to a periodical that was the official body of the institution.¹⁶⁹

These were the words that, in the year 1950, Giovanni Ponti, the president of the Biennale, used to announce the launch of the Biennale's new periodical publication: *la biennale di Venezia. Rivista trimestrale di arte cinema teatro musica moda dell'ente biennale*.¹⁷⁰ It was the first magazine published by a biennial exhibition, in this case the Venice Biennale, also the first of its kind, founded in 1895.¹⁷¹ The magazine was published from July 1950 until 1971, when the Biennale started its process of renovation and restructuring away from its fascist statute, whose legacy it had been carrying on without any modifications since the end of the 1920s, despite the official end of fascism in 1945. During its lifetime *la biennale* pursued the same international intentions as the exhibition, and aimed to become a site of network and exchange between different nations, as well as a means of fostering local and international critical dialogue. It was initially conceived as a means to keep the audience of

¹⁶⁸ This chapter was adapted for publication in the first issue of *OBOE Journal*, "Why Venice?". It was modified to fit the publication criteria of the journal. After the double blind peer-review the chapter was changed to follow some of the suggestions of the peer-reviewers. This chapter retains the title of the article published in *OBOE*. See Camilla Salvaneschi, "The Magazine *la biennale*": 46-61.

¹⁶⁹ Giovanni Ponti, "Inizio*", *la biennale*, n. 1 (July, 1950): 4. Translation by the author. All texts, notes, documents, and articles, are translated by the author, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁷⁰ For the sake of consistency throughout this article I have chosen to keep the title of the magazine *la biennale* in lower case, as presented on the cover and first page of the magazine.

For literature on the magazine *la biennale*, see Giovanni Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta: 'La Biennale' ed 'Evento,'" and Giuseppina Dal Canton, "Riviste d'arte a Venezia negli anni sessanta: 'la biennale di Venezia' e 'la vernice,'" in Gianni Carlo Sciolla (ed.), *Riviste d'Arte fra Ottocento ed Età Contemporanea* (Milano: Skira, 2003), respectively 251-270 and 271-281. See also Francesca Castellani, "Keywords on *la biennale*: The strategies of a journal in the Rodolfo Pallucchini years," in Ricci, *Starting from Venice*, 179-184.

¹⁷¹ On the foundation of the Venice Biennale, see the manuscript notes from the first meeting of April 19, 1893, *Serie Scatole Nere, Box 1= Periodo dell'Organizzazione 1894-1895*, ASAC - Archivio Storico Arte Contemporanea (Historical Archives of Contemporary Art).

the show informed about the activities of the Biennale during the year.

The magazine *la biennale*, throughout its two distinct periods under the directorship of two different editors, Elio Zorzi and Umbro Apollonio, exemplifies the magazine's shift from promotional tool into a means to critically analyse art and its becoming in time. The texts published by the magazine, initially short and rather descriptive, became critical surveys about the contemporary art field and the work of acclaimed Italian and international artists working at that time.

Throughout this chapter, I will propose a reading of the magazine *la biennale* looking at its deep links to the Biennale institution, and demonstrate how their histories—the magazine's and the institution's—intertwined for the entire lifespan of the magazine.¹⁷² The examination will take into account three distinct periods of the exhibition magazine, demonstrating how it has developed in time to engage with the requests of its audience and with the urgencies of the contemporary.

Historical research on primary sources was conducted mostly at the Biennale's archive,¹⁷³ accompanied by the reading of two important contributions by Giovanni Bianchi and Giuseppina Dal Canton, which focus on *la biennale* in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. While these two studies focus on two distinct moments in *la biennale's* history, associated with the major transformation that the publication underwent from promotion to criticism oriented, and the change of editor, almost treating them as two different publications, this study necessarily aims to address both decades to better understand the concepts of becoming and unbecoming in this early example of the exhibition magazine. Furthermore, this chapter proposes a reading of this periodical in connection with an earlier example of a periodical promoted by the Venetian exhibition to arrive at a posthumous publication promoted by the archive but that has its premises in the biennale itself. The decision to study the longer history of the publication aims to reveal it not simply as a phase but as a whole and how it has evolved in time to respond to the urgencies of its time and the requests of its audience.

¹⁷² The exhibition was declared *ente autonomo* (autonomous institution) by the City of Venice in 1928. See Enzo di Martino, *History of the Venice Biennale: 1895- 2005: Visual Arts, Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music, Theatre* [1995], trans. Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005), and di Martino, Paolo Rizzi, *Storia della Biennale 1895-1982* (Milano: Electa, 1982).

¹⁷³ The research was conducted at the ASAC archive in Marghera (Venice) between June and September 2017.

The overall argument was further developed thanks to the process of editing and conceiving the first issue of *OBOE Journal*, dedicated as it is to the same Venetian exhibition. The editing of the issue and the accepted contributions have been essential in the research and development of the topics herein discussed, and for this reason there are several mentions of essays published in “Why Venice”. Indeed, while the magazine *la biennale* perfectly functions as a precedent case to trace the origins of this type of periodical, the research on the magazine was crucial in bringing me closer to understanding the complexity of the Biennale’s institution, the oldest and perhaps more controversial biennial in the history of these exhibitions. In fact, as artist Jonas Staal argues, its national pavilion structure has over the years become a model of “capitalist democracy” re-enforcing “the idea of an alternative world map”¹⁷⁴ which exemplifies how geopolitics have developed since its launch in 1895.

As the first case study it was also particularly important for the development and initial considerations of *OBOE Journal*, as it provided moments of reflection on the interdisciplinary character of the magazine, on its economy, on the relations with publishers, on the challenges that a periodical faces even if under the protection of a major exhibition like the Biennale, and on how to engage with developing changes to the audience. This chapter, like those that will follow, will thus provide not only an historical and critical analysis of the publication but will also place an accent on the ruminations that led to the conception of *OBOE*.

3.1. The Birth of *la biennale*: The Magazine as Official Promotional Tool of the Institution

The first Venice Biennale opened its doors to the public on April 30, 1895, to celebrate retrospectively the Silver Anniversary of King Umberto I and Queen Margherita di Savoia. The idea for the exhibition dates back to 1893, when the monarch’s twenty-fifth anniversary was announced, and all of Italy contributed to the festivities. The City of Venice decided to partake in the celebrations on a cultural level, promoting a national art exhibition that would

¹⁷⁴ Jonas Staal, “Art. Democratism. Propaganda”, *e-flux journal*, 52 (February 2014), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/52/59931/art-democratism-propaganda/>, accessed December 2020.

take place every two years and would be called *Esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia*.¹⁷⁵

The exhibition promoters, city officials and a group of local artists and intellectuals drew inspiration from the *Esposizione Artistica Nazionale* in 1887, which had been assigned to Venice in 1883 by the 8th Artistic Congress in Rome. This was the first time, according to art historian Margaret Plant, that Venice had the opportunity to become a showcase for national art.¹⁷⁶ However as Alloway argues in his history of the exhibition, there were other exhibitions that inspired the organisers. There were Munich's international exhibitions in 1886 and 1888,¹⁷⁷ alongside the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 and the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.¹⁷⁸

The organisers' ambition was to position Venice at the same level of those European cities and their manifestations, and while the idea of opening the show for the celebrations of the monarchs' anniversary was indisputably a marketing strategy,¹⁷⁹ the founding of the Biennale was ultimately motivated by the need to arrest the decay of the city. The exhibition, alongside the recent opening of casinos and luxurious hotels, had to boost Venice's economy,

¹⁷⁵ 1° *Ordinamento della Biennale di Venezia, Indagine conoscitiva, Raccolta di Atti e documenti, Ufficio di Segreteria della VII Commissione permanente, Senato della Repubblica, XIV*. On the origins of the exhibition see Alessandro Stella, *Cronistoria della Esposizione Internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia 1895-1912* (Venezia: G. Fabbris, 1913); Rodolfo Pallucchini, "Significato e valore della Biennale nella vita artistica veneziana e italiana", in *Storia della Civiltà veneziana III (Dall'età barocca all'Italia contemporanea)*, (Florence: Sansoni, 1979), 387-402. Giandomenico Romanelli, "Biennale 1895: nascita, infanzia e prime imprese di una creatura di genio", in Romanelli and Jean Clair (eds.), *Venezia e la Biennale. I percorsi del gusto* (Milano: Fabbri, 1995), 21-25; and Chiara Rabitti, "Gli eventi e gli uomini: Breve storia di un'istituzione", *ibid.*, 26-38.

¹⁷⁶ Margaret Plant, *Venice: Fragile City, 1797-1997* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 215. See also Caroline A. Jones, "Event Structures and Biennial Culture: Oreste at the Biennale", *OBOE Journal* 1, 1 (Spring/Summer 2020): 7-9.

¹⁷⁷ For the models that inspired the founders of the Venice Biennale, see Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 33; Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art*; and the Bruce Altshuler's *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions That Made Art History*.

¹⁷⁸ For more information about these exhibitions see Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851, A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Louise Purbrick (ed.), *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New interdisciplinary essays* (Manchester: Manchester university Press, 2001).

¹⁷⁹ See Maria Mimita Lamberti, "International Exhibitions in Venice", *OBOE Journal* 1, 1 (2020): 26-45, and Vittoria Martini, "How La Biennale as a Brand was Born: Venice as the Archetype of a Biennial City", in *Ibid.*: 99-107.

promoting it as a city of refined culture as well as a tourist attraction.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the strong bond between the city and the exhibition set the example for all those cities that since the 1980s (and sometimes earlier) have partaken in the global proliferation of biennials, bringing cities at the outskirts of the artworld to the centre of the global art arena. Over the years, in order to continue the branding strategy of both the city and the exhibition, the Biennale searched for what could be an ideal vehicle of promotion and communication, one that could accompany the activities of the Press Office in publicising the event. It soon became clear that this vehicle was the magazine.

Before *la biennale* launched, there had already been an attempt to maintain a magazine publication. This antecedent, in the late 1920s, came soon after the declaration of the Biennale as an autonomous institution through the law passed by Mussolini's government¹⁸¹ which was the first step towards its transformation into a multidisciplinary institution.¹⁸² Interestingly, the birth of this early periodical was also coterminous with the founding of the *Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee* (Historic Archive of Contemporary Arts)¹⁸³ in 1928, as testimony to what discussed in Chapter 2 on the biennial's and magazine's "unbecoming", or their archival and historicising drive. The publication was a bimonthly newsletter titled *La Biennale. Bollettino dell'Esposizione internazionale d'arte nella città di Venezia* (La Biennale. Bulletin of the International Art Exhibition in the city of Venice) which

¹⁸⁰ Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin, "Art Biennales and Cities as Platforms for Global Dialogue," in Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty eds., *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: New York, Routledge, 2011), 48.

¹⁸¹ The law passed by Mussolini's government in 1928, changed the name of the exhibition in *Esposizione biennale internazionale di Venezia*. This law preceded the Royal Decree no. 33 of 13 January 1930, converted into law on April 17, that constituted *la Biennale* as autonomous. See Carlo L. Raghianti, "Per uno statuto costituzionale dell'ente autonomo 'Biennale di Venezia'", in *Rassegna Parlamentare*, Milano, 10 (October 1960), 1682.

¹⁸² After the declaration of the Biennale as autonomous institution in 1928, the annual International Festival of Contemporary Music was launched in 1930. In 1932 the first edition of the *Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica* (International Film Festival) took place, and finally, in 1934 the International Theatre Festival was opened.

¹⁸³ The ASAC – *Archivio Storico Arti Contemporanee* was established by Domenico Varagnolo in 1928. See the website: <https://www.labiennale.org/en/asac/history-asac>, accessed November 2020. See also Domenico Varagnolo, "L'Archivio Storico d'arte contemporanea", in *Catalogo della XVIII Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, (La Biennale di Venezia, maggio-ottobre 1932), exh. cat. (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1932), 55-72.

focused on contemporary art. The *Bollettino* promoted the biennial owing to its mere existence and circulation. It published news about the exhibition even when there was none and presented the Biennale as an authority in the many fields it promoted.¹⁸⁴ This may be understood as a first attempt to engage with the Biennale's interval and increase its dissemination during downtime.

While the *Bollettino's* project spanned less than a year of publication, its idea was adopted and published in a similar form in 1934 by the Biennale's Archive as the *Bollettino dell'Archivio Storico dell'Arte Contemporanea (L'Arte nelle Mostre Italiane)* (Bulletin of the Historical Archives of Contemporary Art [Art in Italian Exhibitions]). Documenting the solo shows held by Italian artists and the prizes won in Italy and abroad, it was sent to embassies, museums, galleries, and art academies all over the world. This *Bollettino* created an international network of institutions for the Biennale and its artists, the development of which was certainly a great advantage for *la biennale* itself, not only in terms of contributions, but also for its international distribution. After seven years of publication, the bulletin was suspended—because of the Biennale's closure during the Second World War—between 1941 and 1948, but, much as its predecessor, it was crucial for opening the roadway for the magazine, which would continue to host the *Bollettino* in a dedicated section.¹⁸⁵

la biennale was born in 1950, as a revision, continuation and potentiation of the two earlier attempts to publish a periodical tied to the Biennale. The publishing situation in Italy was thriving at that time, although there remained a gap in periodicals devoted to contemporary art that had yet to be filled.¹⁸⁶ Most magazines did not look abroad and only focused on Italian artistic treasures. *L'Arte*, founded in 1898 by renowned art historian Adolfo Venturi, was the most important academic art journal of the time. In 1935 art critics Bianchi Bandinelli and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti started *La critica d'arte* which was recognized as

¹⁸⁴ Letter by Maraini to Zorzi, Florence, November 15, 1928. ASAC, Carte del Capo Ufficio Stampa Elio Zorzi, b. 01, "Venezia Opuscoli" (1928-1946).

¹⁸⁵ See Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta", 260-261.

¹⁸⁶ The gap was filled in the 1960s and 1970s, with a number of art magazines and periodicals produced by artists and art movements. See Giorgio Maffei and Fabrizio Peterlini, *Riviste d'arte d'avanguardia eseditoria negli anni Sessanta e Settanta in Italia* (Milano: Bonnard, 2005). For a more specific account on art critical magazines, see Maria Teresa Roberto, "Bit", "Flash Art", "Data" e la situazione artistica in Italia tra anni sessanta e settanta", in *Riviste D'arte Fra Ottocento ed Età Contemporanea*, 299-305.

one of the most informed journals of the 1930s. Additionally, Italy specialised in a highly particular genre, that of the regional art periodical, such as *Arte Veneta*, a journal started in the Veneto region just a few years before *la biennale*, in 1947. After *Arte Veneta* and *la biennale*, two other magazines—compared by Bianchi and Dal Canton to *la biennale*—were published in the Venetian area: *Evento* (1956-1964)¹⁸⁷ and *la vernice* (1962-1982) which unlike the preceding cases were focused on the contemporary Venetian art scene of the time and the events it promoted. From the very title, meaning ‘event’ and ‘opening’, the strong focus on the act of participation and on not missing out on news from Venice is apparent, and not coincidentally they often featured the events and exhibitions promoted by the Biennale in their pages.¹⁸⁸ As librarian Trevor Fawcett recognised of Italy:

no other European country has been able to sustain such a range of general and local art periodicals. For some countries it has been a question of one or two art history publications, often based on a museum or other institution.¹⁸⁹

It is from within this regional flourishing of periodicals that *la biennale* emerged. Through my investigations with the *Art Periodical Database* I noticed that this early trend of regional art periodicals has become increasingly rare and most contemporary art magazines are published in cities with vibrant art scenes from which they attempt to access the global marketplace. They are increasingly accessible to broader audiences, through distribution and events, establishing partnerships with local and international galleries, and as a result find easier advertising revenue.

la biennale, then, was a quarterly magazine which had to serve as a tool for information and propaganda about the Biennale and its manifestations. It was edited by the Biennale’s Press Office, and was initially directed by Elio Zorzi.¹⁹⁰ It is no coincidence that the magazine came into being in the 1950s. The decade represents a moment of great cultural and artistic ferment in Venice, in large part thanks to the exhibitions promoted by the general secretary

¹⁸⁷ Bianchi, “Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta”.

¹⁸⁸ Dal Canton, “Riviste d’arte a Venezia”.

¹⁸⁹ Trevor Fawcett, “Scholarly Journals,” in Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines* (London: Art Book, 1976), 18.

¹⁹⁰ Elio Zorzi, was a journalist and writer, expert in Venetian history and periodicals. He held the position of Head of the Press Office from the end of the First World War to 1955, year of his death.

Rodolfo Pallucchini,¹⁹¹ who was trying to restore and improve the Biennale's glory after the years of darkness brought by the War.¹⁹² As Pallucchini explained in "*Funzione della Biennale*" (Function of the Biennale), published in the first issue of the magazine, the aim of the exhibition was to open Venice and Italy to an international debate:

The Biennale is not just an exhibition where artists are invited to exhibit what they are creating. It is not only a mirror of current affairs, but a cultural instrument of artistic information for the Italian and foreign public, in a city loved by tourism, [...] After the liberation, those who found themselves at the head of the organisation of the Biennale, i.e. the members of the Committee for the figurative arts, played the only possible card to give this old and glorious organism a new lease of life, focusing on the criteria of qualitative rigour and of international comparison.¹⁹³

It is clear from these words that the pillars on which Pallucchini intended to lean were the informational and the didactic, as he states in the opening letter of the 24th exhibition's catalogue:

[We] will have to attract the public even more with the fame of the illustrious foreigners who will compete, [...] and] enrich the intellectual heritage of young artists.¹⁹⁴

Certainly the importance given to the Biennale's publications—catalogues, magazine and bulletins, targeted towards different types of audiences (artists, collectors, diplomats, intellectuals)—was a sign of the institutional attempt to move in this direction, alongside the previously mentioned need to historicise itself. The General Director of the Biennale understood the importance of didactics for cultivating an intellectual and urbane audience which, functioning as a legitimising network, would show that the institution was perfectly able to compete against other European or Italian art institutions. In fact, Pallucchini's second pillar of this new Biennale was 'international comparison'. The Biennale was to show the latest trends in Italian and international art, as well as some of the lesser known art movements, and thus engage with contemporary art and its discourses on an international

¹⁹¹ On Rodolfo Pallucchini see Giuseppe Maria Pilo (ed.), "Omaggio all'arte veneta per ricordare Rodolfo Pallucchini a dieci anni dalla sua scomparsa", in *Arte Documento. Rivista di storia e tutela*, 13 (Monfalcone: Edizioni della Laguna, 1999).

¹⁹² Maria Cristina Bandera, *Le prime Biennali del dopoguerra, 1948-1956: Il carteggio Longhi-Pallucchini*. Milano: Charta, 1999.

¹⁹³ Pallucchini, "Funzioni della Biennale", in *la biennale*, 1 (June 1950): 5.

¹⁹⁴ Pallucchini, "Introduzione", in *La Biennale di Venezia XXIV Esposizione internazionale d'arte* (Venezia: Edizioni Serenissima, 1948), XII.

level so as to motivate more foreign visitors and encourage states to build pavilions of their own. The latter might be seen as another motivation (alongside increasing the readership and attracting visitors) to distribute the magazines in embassies and foreign cultural ministries.

Since the turn of the century the Biennale had further invested in its international scope, transforming the *Giardini* (gardens) into an international arena of comparison and debate. Since 1907, alongside the Central Pavilion built in 1894, a number of the exhibiting nations had begun erecting their own buildings.¹⁹⁵ In 1950, when *la biennale* was born, there were fourteen, a number which continued to grow until 1995-6,¹⁹⁶ when the last one—Korea—was erected in this space. Afterwards, the remaining pavilions took over the Arsenale and the many palaces and churches scattered around the city. In the *Giardini*, these peculiar spaces became the property of the nations who erected pavilions there, and during the time of the international exhibition hosted shows promoted by the nation itself, with complete freedom from the Biennale.¹⁹⁷ These national spaces were, and still are, intended as an international display of the nations' best artistic practices. *la biennale* endeavoured to mirror the international aspirations of the exhibition and create a link with the national pavilions that were fast becoming part of the Biennale. In order to support the international exposure of the exhibition and publication, *la biennale* re-adopted from the *Bollettino* the format of adding summaries of each article in English, French, and German at the beginning of each issue.¹⁹⁸ The re-use of this format, alongside taking advantage of the channels of distribution established by the *Bollettino*, demonstrates how these magazines are all connected, both as singular identities in continuous evolution and flux, but also in servitude of the exhibition,

¹⁹⁵ For a history of the constructions of the national pavilions in the *Giardini* see Marco Mulazzani, *Guide to the Pavilions of the Venice Biennale since 1887* [1988], (Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2014).

¹⁹⁶ While 1995 is the year in which the last pavilion was erected in the *Giardini*, it is important to mention that the number of national pavilions continued to grow, leading to the actual form of the Venice Biennale, with over ninety national pavilions spread throughout the entire city.

¹⁹⁷ On the specific case of the Venice Biennale and its pavilion structure as public spaces see Angela Vettese, "The National Pavilions at the Venice Biennale as a Form of Public Space", in Gediminas Urbonas, Anne Lui, and Lucas Freeman eds., *Public Space? Lost and Found* (Cambridge MA: MIT School of Architecture and Planning; and London: SA+P Press, 2017), 211–221; for another insight on the Pavilion structure as a diplomatic space see Angela Vettese, *The National Pavilions of the Venice Biennale: Spaces for Cultural Diplomacy* (Venezia: Monos, 2014). The Pavilion structure has also been defined as a "Multicellular structure" by Alloway in *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 153; and later on by Vittoria Martini, "The Space of the Exhibition. The Multi-cellular Structure of the Venice Biennale", in *Pavilions. Art in Architecture*, eds. Robert Irland and Federica Martini (Brussels: Muette, 2012), 145-167.

¹⁹⁸ On *la biennale* German translations were added from issue 11 (December 1952).

which narrowing its intervallic time, demands that they change more promptly to adapt and respond to the needs of the time and context in which they are produced (in this particular case, Venice).

The publisher Vittorio Alfieri¹⁹⁹ considered these “resumes” in other languages fundamental for the international circulation of the magazine despite the fact that many countries remained excluded from the discourse. Ultimately, the chosen languages became those of the ‘colonialist’ countries with whom the Biennale wanted to compete at an artistic and cultural level: France, Germany and the UK. In this instance, the expansive multinational “becoming” of the institution was not really reflected by *la biennale*, as the publication clearly owed its fidelity towards the most powerful countries at the time, and perhaps respecting the same constraints of the Western art world.

With that said, *la biennale* fit the purposes of international comparison set out in Pallucchini’s statement quite well since it could broadcast the works shown in the Biennale to an international public of artists, critics, collectors and dealers, at a time when works of art and exhibitions would travel infinitely less than today. The magazine was to become a means to legitimise the institution internationally and to encourage a dialogue between nations just as the institution it was mirroring did through its national pavilion structure. As Venice became a vibrant cultural centre, able to participate in the national and international cultural scenes, so too did the Biennale and its newly strategically distributed and visible magazine.

¹⁹⁹ Son of Bruno Alfieri, Vittorio Alfieri was the owner and director of the Venetian publishing house Alfieri Edizioni d’Arte, which was the first publisher of the magazine *la biennale* (1950-1955). It was also the publisher of the Biennale’s catalogues of 1948, 1950 and 1952.

3.2. Inextricably linked: The Highs and Lows of *la biennale's* Relation with the Institution

Since the launch of its first issue *la biennale* was a large format luxury magazine²⁰⁰ with glossy paper, a bulletin curated by the Biennale's archive and printed on removable inserts, and a steadily increasing and impressive number of colour reproductions. The photos reproduced in the magazine were carefully selected and refined, and included photographic reproductions of the artworks and portraits of the artists.²⁰¹ The typography and overall feel of the magazine was state of the art. It had to distinguish itself from other publications of the time and attract only an elite audience. In many ways *la biennale* was anticipating the trends that have been taking over the publishing field since the advent of digital technology, thanks to which the magazine has become increasingly more an art object than a cheap and popular publication.

The opening editorial, interestingly signed not by the editor himself but by Ponti, the President of the Biennale, read:

I always thought that the Biennale ought to be in contact with the public, not only through the news released by the Press Office, but directly, through its own publication. The audience needs to be informed, to be continuously updated on the multiple activities of the Biennale, and of its various manifestations, not only when they take place, but also when they are in the project phase; [...] hence they ought to be called to participate directly in the life and activities organised by the institution [...] This direct contact between the public and the intellectuals, and in particular, with the Biennale itself, is now entrusted to this magazine, which will boast the well-known and ancient title of the exhibition, and which will be published every three months.²⁰²

In this letter, titled "*Inizio*" (beginning), it is clear that *la biennale's* purpose was to keep the audience engaged in a conversation around the many activities of the Biennale's calendar.

²⁰⁰ It was a luxury magazine not only for its aesthetics but also for the cover price which at launch was 800 lire, which if converted into euros would be approximately 15 euros/12 pounds. While this is the normal price for an art magazine today, at the time it was particularly high. The price changed several times, as did the number of copies printed to increase sales. See Marco Borghi's indexing of the magazine *la biennale di Venezia* <http://www.unsecolodicartavenezia.it/archivio/view/schede/c28.html>, accessed January 2021.

²⁰¹ See Mauro Perosin, "L'uso della fotografia d'arte nella rivista 'la biennale di venezia' negli anni di Rodolfo Pallucchini: indagini e percorsi narrativi a partire da alcune fotografie", in Francesca Castellani and Eleonora Charans eds., *Crocevia Biennale* (Milano: Scalpendi, 2017).

²⁰² Giovanni Ponti, "*Inizio**": 4.

Ponti foregrounded the conversational and boundless nature of the magazine, and its ability to maintain a conversation with a larger and more widespread public. The statement of intent reveals how the audience was the principal factor taken into account for every decision concerning the magazine's (and the biennial's) becoming. It had to be updated on the activities of the Biennale directly, involved in a conversation in and around its manifestations, even when they were still in progress, and of course attract them to visit the Biennale's venues in Venice. The conversational aspect of the publication, on the one hand reprinted the conversational nature of those 18th century periodicals discussed in the previous chapter, and on the other anticipated a practice which became more common within curatorial discourse, where the magazine would be adopted as a tool to keep the audiences' interest alive during the intervals between one exhibition and the next. However, this conversational aspect was more fictitious than real. The conversation between institution and audience was unidirectional, as there were rarely features that included readers opinions or comments. It was the biennial informing its community about what was going on during the year. The conversations between readers and editors were behind-the-scenes with letters written to Zorzi and later to Apollonio around the magazine, and often came from the contributors themselves rather than the readers. It was as if the authority of the biennial could not be disturbed in the pages of the magazine, not even by the very selected audience it was trying to create, and in order to avoid complications they decided to not include them *tout court*.

This self-same audience of *la biennale*, elite and cultured in character, was described in the first issue in an article by Irene Brin: "*Le Biennali nel bel mondo*" (The Biennials in the High Society).²⁰³ Situated right at the top of the essay is a photo of the first exhibition of 1895, capturing King Umberto I and Queen Margherita in attendance. Other images in the article portray the nobility and political Italian figures, with the evident intention of highlighting the institution's prestige.²⁰⁴ This article visualises Mimma Lamberti's statement that "the presence of the sovereigns in Venice at the height of the social calendar by means of successful

²⁰³ This detailed description of the opening event of the 25th Biennale may be seen as an anticipation of the importance of the openings and party events at the Biennale. Alloway considers this account in a paragraph which he entitles "Biennale as Party," see Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 23-24.

²⁰⁴ The importance of this elite audience is highlighted also in a letter from Elio Zorzi to the General Director of the Bank of Venice, dated November 29, 1950, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

publicity [...was] a promotional stroke of genius".²⁰⁵ Indeed, thanks to the ploy of the Silver Celebrations, the Italian and International elite were gathered in Venice for the opening of the show. The presence of the establishment was used by the Biennale to legitimise itself. Publishing an article with archival images about the opening of the show after fifty-five years is rather indicative of the strategic move to legitimise the institution, and with the glamour of the opening demonstrating how prestigious the institution was. The article is also indicative of the importance of the archival drive to the exhibition magazine, of its ability to move across different times while invested with the authority of contemporary contributors. Through this, it becomes possible to record the glory of the institution and, by publishing it in another moment in time, highlight its continued relevance to the formation of the contemporary artworld. In time, this manoeuvre became counterproductive as it was also a way to close off the institution to a wider audience—a more popular and increasingly local one—which would be dissuaded from visiting the show on account of its elitism.

Nevertheless, glamour, both in the publications format and in its contents, was also helpful for attracting collectors to the show, individuals who played a crucial role in the art system in general and for the biennial and the magazine specifically. In fact, until its renovation in 1973, the Biennale could be seen as an hybrid between an art fair (the domain of the collector) and the recurring exhibition itself.²⁰⁶ There was a sales office in charge of sales at each exhibition, directed by Milanese gallerist Ettore Gian Ferrari.²⁰⁷ Keeping in mind the importance of the magazine as a tool for propaganda, Zorzi was conscious of the importance of sales for the Biennale and used the pages of the magazine to highlight the role of the collector. From its first issues a sales report was published in the *Bollettino*, but Zorzi wanted to sell a more romanticised view, one that encompassed the passion around collecting art, in a quite straightforward attempt to increase sales.

²⁰⁵ Mimita Lamberti, "International Exhibitions in Venice": 28.

²⁰⁶ On the origin and context of birth of the Venice Biennale's exhibition model see Jones, *The Global Work of Art*, and "Biennial Culture: A Longer History" in Ricci, *Starting from Venice*. For a brief account on how *la biennale* posited itself in the Biennale's hybrid structure between fair and exhibition, see Salvaneschi, "Magnifying the Margins", 160-162.

²⁰⁷ On Ettore Gian Ferrari and the history of the sales office see Clarissa Ricci "Breve Storia dell'Ufficio Vendite della Biennale di Venezia 1895-1972. Origini, Funzionamento e declino," *Ricerche di S/Confine* 8, 1 (2017): 1-20. <http://www.ricerchedisconfine.info/VIII-1/RICCI.htm>, accessed January 2020. On the sales at the Venice Biennale see Marilena Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel - esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea* (Venezia: Franco Angeli, 2002), 21-113.

The sales office was a central source of income for the exhibition, and Zorzi understood that they needed to encourage readers of the magazine to buy art. He wanted to detach the figure of the collector from the nakedly market-driven capitalist perspective—of which it was openly a part of—and create an idealistic narrative around it. In compliance with the editor's request, Ferrari invited some of the Biennale's collectors to write about their acquisitions and collections. As he explains in a letter to Zorzi, it was not easy to convince them to write; some were afraid of showing off, while others did not feel comfortable writing about their possessions.²⁰⁸ In the end, though, they were able to gather some important contributions by collectors that included Peggy Guggenheim's "Come è nata la mia collezione" (How my collection was born) in the fourth issue (April 1951) and Domenica Jean Walter's "I quadri che vorrei portare con me" (The paintings I would like to take with me), published in the second issue (October 1951).

Even if these contributions were crucial in Zorzi's eyes, the magazine was not, however, solely intended for an audience concerned with collecting or with the figurative arts. It aimed to comprehensively cover the diverse fields of the Biennale, such as cinema, dance, theatre and, initially, fashion. The interdisciplinary character of the recurring exhibition had to be reflected by its magazine and appeal to the audiences of these various fields. In order to show the multidisciplinary approach the editorial board was composed of members from each of the Biennale's disciplines. This was very inspiring during *OBOE's* conception, since I thought that although the majority of biennials are focused on art, there are a growing number of perennial exhibitions or festivals centred on other disciplines like architecture and cinema.²⁰⁹ For this reason I chose to invite two architects and a cinema theorist to the editorial board. Due to recent considerations on the journal that I discuss in Chapter 6, i.e. the broadening the focus from solely biennials to the ostensivity of art, I envision the board growing further to include art historians, and scholars from other disciplines like new media, visual culture and theatre.

²⁰⁸ See letter from Ettore Gian Ferrari to Elio Zorzi, dated April 9, 1951, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

²⁰⁹ On the role of the editorial board and the other Journal's members see for instance the dedicated page of Springer: <https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/editors/editorial-boards/32688>, accessed June 2020. See also Elsevier's dedicated page: <https://www.elsevier.com/editors/editorial-boards>, accessed June 2020.

Returning back to *la biennale*, the first editorial board was active until 1953.²¹⁰ Every member of the board was curating the news that concerned their specific field.²¹¹ Each issue was dedicated to one or more of the disciplines the Biennale was concerned with. The cover changed with each issue, depending on the ongoing exhibitions, or on the assigned prizes. For instance, the cover of the first issue *Il Barcaiole* (1930) by artist Carlo Carrà [fig. 7], put a visual emphasis on the figurative arts, due to the fact that the first issue was published in conjunction with the 25th Art Exhibition. The choice of Carrà for the first cover was also due to the fact that he was part of the editorial board of the magazine and had won the Venice City Prize reserved to an Italian painter in the year 1950.²¹²

At first the disciplines were also listed in the full title of the magazine which read *la biennale di venezia. Rivista trimestrale di arte cinema teatro musica moda dell'ente biennale*. During its lifespan, the subtitle of the magazine changed several times, together with the aesthetic of the cover; and in 1960 it would become *Rivista trimestrale dell'ente autonomo "la biennale di Venezia (Quarterly magazine of the autonomous institution "la biennale di venezia")*.²¹³ The disciplines at this point of the magazine's lifetime were implied, and there was a stronger hybridisation between the different fields at the core of the Biennale, with thematic issues that would analyse the chosen topic from multiple perspectives. In time, the covers changed giving greater space to the images, increasingly colourful and impactful, by international artists like Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, or designers like Gio Ponti, etc. and the title would change colour and position to better match the colours of the picture on the cover. Looking at such changes to magazine titles and covers in itself demonstrates how the magazine and its relations with art, institution, and audience changed over time.

The founders of *la biennale* believed that the interdisciplinary approach that had characterised the magazine since its launch would ferment interest from the largest audience possible, but a letter from the publisher of the magazine, Vittorio Alfieri, said otherwise. He lamented the low sales of the magazine after the first year of publication and blamed "the very structure of the magazine, [which he considered...] not specialised enough to arouse

²¹⁰ Members would consult around their specific field, and the board would change when new directors or secretaries were appointed. See Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta", 255-256.

²¹¹ For the composition of the various boards and its members, see Borghi, *la biennale di Venezia*.

²¹² Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta", 255.

²¹³ For a listing of the titles that *la biennale* changed over the years see Borghi, "La Biennale di Venezia".

azine, Vittorio Alfieri⁴⁹ says otherwise. He laments the low sales of the magazine after the first year and blames “the very structure of the magazine, not specialised to arouse the interest of artists and critics, and too expensive and luxurious for the general public”.⁵⁰

fig. 1
Cover of the first issue of the quarterly magazine of the Venice Biennale, *la biennale di Venezia* (July 1950).
Courtesy: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia - ASAC.



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Vittorio Alfieri was the owner and director of the Venetian publishing house Alfieri Edizioni d'Arte, which was the first publisher of the magazine *la biennale* (1950-1955). It was also the publisher of the Biennale's catalogues of 1948, 1950 and 1952. Alfieri and the Biennale, stipulated a five year contract that ended in 1955: "the convention May 1, 1950 the publisher Alfieri (Venice) takes on the role to publish, print and distribute, at its own expenses, the magazine *La Biennale di Venezia* which has the aim of publishing all the events of the institution, and simultaneously carrying out tourist propaganda. The direction and editing of the magazine are held by the Biennale". Document dated 1955, edited by the Biennale, and summarizing the five years with Alfieri as publisher. *la Biennale di Venezia - ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 (1950-1956).

Fig. 7. *OBOE Journal's* article page with image of the cover of *la biennale*, no. 1 (1950).
Source: *OBOE Journal*.

the interest of artists and critics, and too expensive and luxurious for the general public".²¹⁴ The elitist approach chosen by the editors and directors of the Biennale was beginning to show signs of inconsistency and crisis. This strong connection to the exhibition and an inability to detach the two enterprises (magazine and biennial), resulted in the alienation of a part of the public, the very same that could have been attracted to the magazine.

Even when the editors decided to drop fashion²¹⁵ from the disciplines at the core of the magazine, sales and the interest in the publication failed to improve. In a letter to Zorzi, Pallucchini wrote that he believed the magazine

could do well without the pages dedicated to fashion. I do not think these pages are that useful to sell a magazine such as ours. There are other magazines, much more documented in the fashion field, that ladies can buy and actually buy.²¹⁶

Unfortunately, Pallucchini did not envision that the withdrawal of fashion advertising revenue would leave the magazine and its publisher in an even worse economic hole, putting the very existence of the magazine at risk.²¹⁷ Already at that time, the importance of fashion pages and advertising should not have been underestimated. Indeed, while this might not have been felt as a bold move by the editors back then, today it would be inconceivable. We need only consider how, since the 1980s when *Artforum* published the cover with Issey Miyake's dress, many mainstream art magazines have welcomed inputs from the fashion field, including not only features from the fashion industry, but also advertisements of luxury and fashion products and brands.²¹⁸ Most of these adverts are on the inside and back covers of each issue. The first pages are usually dedicated for the most expensive products, being visible as soon as the magazine is being opened. This shows, on the one side, the hybridisation between the two fields, and on the other the economic unsustainability of

²¹⁴ Letter from publisher Vittorio Alfieri to Zorzi, May 21, 1951, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 (1950-1956).

²¹⁵ Fashion, initially included with a column edited by Misia Armani, was abandoned with the 5th issue published in August 1951.

²¹⁶ Letter from Rodolfo Pallucchini to Elio Zorzi, dated May 30, 1951, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

²¹⁷ See letter from Alfieri to the President of "La Biennale", dated Venice, April 28, 1954. ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956), and letter from Alfieri di Massimo Alesi, Venice, March 9, 1955, *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ On how the artworld has been fascinated if not colonised wholesale by VIP and celebrity culture see: Isabelle Graw, *High price: art between the market and celebrity culture* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010). Cf. also the footnote 152 on *Flash Art's* advertising.

publications reliant on advertising revenue from art galleries and institutions alone. Yet, at that time, removing fashion and the non-specialisation of the magazine were not its only problems. Alfieri saw a further problematic in the sales of the publication. This was the request for a restructuring of the Biennale's format and renovation of its statute²¹⁹, as "the campaigns conducted by various parties against the Biennale could be causing mistrust and disinterest in the magazine",²²⁰ since it remained its organ of promotion with a voice still entirely dominated by the Biennale.

To this, it should be added that Alfieri also lamented the complaints surrounding the irregular periodicity. In *la biennale's* editorial letter Ponti refers to the frequency of the magazine "which will be published every three months".²²¹ The periodicity of *la biennale* changed several times, shifting from quarterly to bimonthly and occasionally forced to condense two issues into one. Nonetheless, in the first years, *la biennale* was criticised by both its readers and its publisher (who bemoaned the continuous delays and the irregular publication schedule²²²), unable as it was to provide precise updates on the events promoted and thus at times incapable of representing a lively institution, even when its doors were closed.²²³ These criticisms were pointing out a failure of the magazine, for which it needed to transform, to become something else to obtain again the audience's respect and attention. In a letter from Alfieri to Zorzi, the publisher rued that the time that ran between the issues, the interval, was too long and had the disadvantage of losing the audience's attention, reason for which, he believed, the sales were so poor.²²⁴ Indeed, both the irregularity of the interval and the pauses between issues disrupted readers' attention, demonstrating once again the importance of this in-between time not only for the institution but also for the readers. The

²¹⁹ For the history that led to the Biennale's restructuring from its fascist statute see Vittoria Martini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1968-1978. La Rivoluzione Incompiuta* (PhD diss., Venice: Luav University and Ca' Foscari University, 2011).

²²⁰ Letter from publisher Vittorio Alfieri to Zorzi, May 21, 1951, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 (1950-1956).

²²¹ Ponti, "Inizio*": 4.

²²² Letter from Alfieri to Zorzi, dated May 20, 1952, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

²²³ See letter from Pallucchini to Zorzi, Venice January 28, 1952; letter from Zorzi to Pallucchini, Venice February 2, 1952, in ASAC, Prof. Pallucchini, b. 08 (1952). See also letter from Pallucchini to Ponti, October 10, 1953, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Rapporti con le tipografie.

²²⁴ Letter from Alfieri to Zorzi, dated May 20, 1952, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

interval between issues, and the interval of the exhibition magazine, becomes the time in which the reader is attentive to what the Biennale is producing and publishing. Irregularity of publication renders the magazine's role of conversational tool with the audience pointless. Starting with the first issue, which was supposed to be distributed before the opening of the show in May or June 1950, but was published only in July, meant losing the opportunity to circulate during the vernissage, the moment in which the magazine's intended readership was usually the elite partaking in the opening of the exhibition.

Poor sales and the difficulty in covering expenses soon induced Alfieri to ask the Biennale to help sustain the production costs. In the event that the Biennale could not contribute, he expressed his intention to cease the publishing agreement.²²⁵ On December 22, 1953, Alfieri received a letter from Ponti, President of the Biennale, confirming that due to the economic incapacity of the institution to help the publisher cover the expenses, the reciprocal obligation to publish the magazine would expire in July 1954, four issues before the end date of the contract.²²⁶ In the end, in order to avoid ceasing the publication while the 27th Biennale was ongoing, the two parties decided to continue the magazine for four more issues.²²⁷ Hence, the five-year contract stipulated with Alfieri was upheld until the summer of 1955.

Before suggesting to cease the contract, Alfieri proposed to change the format of the magazine and make it more appealing for the audience. He suggested either making it an even more luxurious annual publication, almost an art object or collectable item, similar to the French magazine *Les Cahiers D'Art*,²²⁸ or the exact opposite, to make it bimonthly, less luxurious, and to reduce its dimensions, so that production expenses would drop considerably. Institutionalisation and the unbecoming won over the becoming. Neither of the two proposals was accepted by the editorial board, which following the ceasing of the

²²⁵ For the contract see ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Rapporti con le tipografie.

²²⁶ Letter from Giovanni Ponti to Alfieri, dated December 22, 1954, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Rapporti con le tipografie.

²²⁷ Letter from Alfieri di Massimo Alesi, Venice, March 9, 1955, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

²²⁸ For a history of this publishing house and magazine see <https://www.cahiersdart.com/history>, accessed June 2020.

contract with Alfieri searched for a new publisher, soon to become Sansoni in Florence.²²⁹ It is interesting, when looking at the last issue of the magazine published by Alfieri, that at the end of the issue a general index of the previous 24 editions was published, foreseeing the end of the publication and thus giving a final overview of what had been achieved thus far. At the time, it might have been seen as a eulogy to the publication, but in the end it only represented the closure of *la biennale's* first phase, and the beginning of a long interval crucial for its becoming in time.

The persistence of the editors in maintaining the publication as fixed and deaf to those critics resulted only in a postponement of the magazine's becoming, since a failure to engage with the audience, with contemporaneity, would have only resulted in its termination.

3.3. New Editorial Policies: International Network and Critical Dialogue

Problems aside, during the first years of its existence the magazine *la biennale* fulfilled its role as the institution's official organ of promotion. As early as 1952, Pallucchini began pushing for the transformation of the magazine, strongly convinced that *la biennale* had already sufficiently established itself in the public realm to become a critical authority in the artistic and cultural fields.²³⁰ These years were an important moment for the evolution of the art magazine in general, as from 1945 it had started to develop some of the physiognomies it still carries to this day. Aside from innovations in printing technologies, there is an increasing specialisation of periodicals, an international expansion of expertise, and in the case of the art magazine, criticism starts taking on the position it would hold in the 1960s and 1970s. This was one of the first occasions when the editors of *la biennale* explicitly viewed the magazine as a space for critical debate, and not simply one concerned with the promotion of the institution. This realisation led to the publication of special monothematic issues focusing on the work of a single artist or movement, often analysed from the multiple perspectives at the core of the Biennale's institution.

²²⁹ On the new relations with the publishers and the agreements see ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Rapporti con le tipografie.

²³⁰ Letter from Rodolfo Pallucchini to Elio Zorzi, dated May 30, 1951, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 bis (1950-1956).

In 1953, a double issue (no. 13-14, April-June 1953) dedicated to Picasso appeared.²³¹ The issue was published to coincide with an exhibition of the artist's work in Rome, at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.²³² It was a completely Italian issue with contributions by illustrious writers such as Umbro Apollonio, Carlo Argan and Ettore Brambilla, but also Pallucchini himself, Gian Francesco Malipiero who wrote about the relation between Picasso and music, and artists such as Carlo Carrà, Enrico Prampolini, Gino Severini, and Renato Guttuso. Although this was a step towards the magazine as a space capable of hosting a broader analysis of contemporary culture, it should not be forgotten that its first aim was to serve the Biennale's needs. As noted above, the Picasso issue aligned with the Rome exhibition, but in 1948 and 1950 respectively, twenty-five and thirteen of Picasso's works were also shown at the Biennale. The issue was strategic since it attempted to create a network with another Italian institution, whilst legitimising the critical-artistic authority of the Biennale itself as the first to identify trends and exhibiting them before other renowned Italian institutions.

Although Pallucchini was hoping the magazine's focus would shift from being chiefly informative to in-depth readings of contemporary artistic trends, in the 19-20th issue (April-June 1954), dedicated to the 27th Biennale, a change had not been registered yet. In the editorial Pallucchini confirms that the magazine remained consistent with its initial mission:

la biennale, which is now four years old [...] keeps faith to its mission, as it was defined since the beginning by Giovanni Ponti: a continuous update on the facts of art, a turn of the horizon from this Venice, that periodically is at the centre of the world's attention with its figurative arts exhibition.²³³

During his editorial tenure, it was largely Zorzi's strong ties to the press office and subsequent focus on the magazine as informative device and promotional tool which prevented it from transforming into a self-reflexive critical organism. He was more focused on serving the institution, on documenting its activities, than listening to the requests of the audience, and just as the Biennale, had to wait for more than substantial critiques and protests before

²³¹ This is the first of a series issues dedicated to one specific artist or movement. Other issues are the ones dedicated to Henri Matisse (26, December 1955), and the double issue dedicated to Futurism (36-37, July-December 1959).

²³² The exhibition was titled "Picasso". It collected 200 works produced between 1920 and 1953, and was held at the GNAM - Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (May-June 1953).

²³³ Pallucchini at the time was the Vice-President of the magazine. He wrote the editorial letter, dated June 8, 1954, published in *la biennale*, 19-20 (April-June 1954).

considering change. Neither one of the media were actually serving contemporary art's becoming and were limited to focusing only on the Biennale's own interests and power. Indeed, whilst being two ephemeral media, the exhibition, perhaps due to its long history or the fact that it had been strongly institutionalised, was rather rigid, or using Bergson's terms anticipated in Chapter 2, was more concerned with the unbecoming, less inclined to change and adapt in time. Its becoming was only oriented towards certain art trends and not towards its own structural becoming, for which its credibility as a magazine should have been its primary motor. Rather than a biennial exhibition it was becoming closer to a museum mixed with an art fair and thus losing the ephemeral character that allowed it to engage with the contemporary. The magazine initially behaved rather similarly, but the change of editor provided with the perfect opportunity to modify its structure and fulfil its nature as an entity in flux.

This gradual shift would commence only in 1955, a crucial year for the magazine. Art critic and curator Umbro Apollonio²³⁴, who was also director of the Biennale's archive and a well-respected intellectual, became the new editor-in-chief after Zorzi's sudden death.²³⁵ Apollonio had been involved in the magazine since its inception as member of the advisory board and as a regular contributor to its pages, so he knew the magazine and its editorial approach quite well. The moment in which Apollonio became editor of *la biennale* was a particularly delicate time. A renovation was also needed in the institution itself, because the Biennale was no longer the only European periodical exhibition: the quinquennial Documenta²³⁶ had opened its doors in Kassel.²³⁷

la biennale's new editorial approach would gradually begin in 1957, with the 28-29th issue, a few years into Apollonio's editorship, and after a year-long interruption to the

²³⁴ Apollonio had been part of the editorial team since the magazine's first issue, and was a regular contributor. He was also curator of several exhibitions of the Biennale and director of the Biennale's Archive between 1949 and 1972.

²³⁵ See "Elio Zorzi è morto", *Porto di Venezia* (October 1955), where it is explained that the director of the Biennale's Press Office died due to a sudden heart attack. See ASAC, Carte del Capo Ufficio Stampa Elio Zorzi (1924-1952), b. 05.

²³⁶ Before Kassel, the only other biennial worldwide aside from Venice was the Sao Paulo Biennial that opened its doors for the first time in 1951. Kassel, for its European origin and the importance it acquired over the years, remains today the direct competitor of the Venice Biennale. Cf. Chapter 4.

²³⁷ Giuseppe Marchioni, "Arte Moderna a Kassel" (Modern Art in Kassel), *la biennale*, 27 (March 1956): 30. On the birth of Documenta cf. Chapter 4.

publication during which its structure was reviewed and renovated. While discussing the interval in Chapter 1, I stressed the importance of these moments in-between, considering them not as voids or periods of crisis but as a time of possibility, of rewriting and rethinking the magazine according to the current moment. In the 28-29th double issue Apollonio wrote “La Biennale e la Critica” (The Biennale and the Critics) in which he illuminated the Biennale’s need for change (while perhaps tactically also deploying the exhibition as a stratagem to explain the changes he would make in the magazine):

The Biennale like any other public institute that wants to resist to the wear of time, has to modify, from time to time, its structure, in order to meet the exigencies, imposed by experience and the passing of age. It has to keep faith to its delicate function of serving the artistic chronicle.²³⁸

The first lines of this excerpt, aside from almost being a justification text, epitomise one of the main points of this dissertation, as they explicate the need for any institution to adapt to the current time, to the changes dictated by the present and thereby escape the risk of obsolescence. Apollonio emphasises the Biennale’s need to serve art and its presentation, to move alongside the changes and contribute to them rather than just being a passive witness.

At that time, more than ever before, *la biennale* needed to become a space for criticism and for the study and analysis of art, not just a mere propagator of old ideals and past good fortune or a device for the Biennale’s spectacularisation. Indeed, while this short excerpt refers to the criticisms given to the Biennale’s timeworn structures, it is interesting to note how Apollonio’s words might also be used to discuss the magazine and how it could serve the biennial in this process of change. As previously mentioned, both the magazine and the biennial can be seen as ‘entities in time’, and both need to understand and adapt to the present, following the guidance of contemporaries. The editor, attentive to what other periodicals were doing at the time, becomes aware of *la biennale*’s possibilities as a space for criticism and reflection, both on the Biennale and on the magazine itself. It is not just a mirror of the institution, but a tool for self-reflection capable of analysing the Biennale’s own potentialities and criticalities.

While the criticisms towards the exhibition were manifest and open, the ones towards the publications were more internal, between Apollonio and the magazine’s contributors, like the ones with art historian Sergio Bettini. In a letter to Bettini, Apollonio describes the

²³⁸ Umbro Apollonio, “La Biennale e la critica”, *la biennale*, 28-29 (June-September 1957): 6-7.

new magazine as “intelligent, updated and lively, compatibly with the official obligations of the Biennale”.²³⁹ Obligations to publish articles about the Biennale, or the opening speeches in issues 28 and 29, would be gradually replaced by investigations into the structure of contemporary art, aesthetic and the critical opinions and theories that are related to it. The ideals and intentions of the new editor were clear, but the magazine remained pragmatically anchored to the Biennale. In Bettini’s response, he affirmed that it was necessary for the magazine to “free itself from its old, overtaken structures, to make it a vital organ, possibly of prominence; otherwise this would reflect, worsened, the deficiencies of the biennale itself”.²⁴⁰ According to Bettini, the magazine had to detach itself from its parent institution to fulfil its role as a critical and unbiased voice on art, accounting for its many forms and contributing to a more articulate comprehension of it. While this might have been impossible, for the nature of the periodical and its inextricable links to the institution, in time Apollonio tried to reduce the features that were strictly tied to the exhibition. A point in his favour is that moving the discussions around the new *la biennale* to the intellectuals and historians, those on a par with Apollonio and the magazine’s potential readers, rather than the directors of the institution, could grant the magazine the authority it needed to establish itself as an Italian intellectual point of reference. These conversations also demonstrate how the magazine is not solely the result of a few individuals’ work, but of a group, and that readers (and visitors) are important participants in it. After all, they drive the magazine’s choices and determine its fortune by buying or not buying the publication. As previously mentioned, the complaints of the audience were the ones that determined certain changes in the magazine’s structure, such as its urge to maintain a regular publishing schedule. From Bettini’s words, it becomes clear that formal changes are no longer the only ones needed, but rather what deserves greater attention are the contents published in the magazine’s pages that can no longer be simply devoted to promotion.

The 30th issue (January-March 1958) of *la biennale* registered a further important change for the magazine’s becoming. For the first time the magazine was officially published by the Institution. Until that moment the Biennale’s editorial office was only in charge of content,

²³⁹ Letter from Umbro Apollonio to Sergio Bettini, dated April 10, 1958, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

²⁴⁰ Letter from Sergio Bettini to Umbro Apollonio, 11 November 1958, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

while production, publishing, distribution and sales were outsourced to the publisher.²⁴¹ Apollonio strongly sustained the independence of the magazine from an external publisher as he explained in a letter to the President of the Biennale, Massimo Alesi²⁴²:

given the unhappy initiatives with two publishers and the continuous discussions that this system causes, [...] I would propose [...] that it was the same biennial to become publisher of the magazine, limiting itself to entrusting to an external publisher its distribution and sales.²⁴³

It was Apollonio's belief that the Biennale should be in charge of both editorial decisions and publication, because many of the criticisms directed at the magazine and the Biennale, in particular those regarding publication delays, could have been avoided. While this was not always true during Zorzi's editorship, and it might seem like a setback in terms of the magazine's becoming and independence from the institution, Apollonio's intuition proved to be right. Indeed, being published by the Biennale would have been easier in practical terms, including work organisation, sales and distribution.

With Apollonio's reform of the magazine and its decreased emphasis on the informative character of the publication, the *Bollettino* was dispensed.²⁴⁴ The magazine's new role was outlined in a draft invitation letter for potential contributors, in which Apollonio presented his vision for the new *la biennale*:

The magazine is not meant to be a means of propaganda for the various events of the Biennale, but a publication which makes known and discusses the problems of contemporary art history in all its aspects [...]. It is our constant duty to avoid giving the magazine a purely informational character, but to place it on a level of deeper critical values, contemporary artistic phenomena, or those immediately precedent, are not met with only information or exalted celebration, but with severe methods of historical investigation, from the point of view of cultural influences and linguistic structures, and also with relation to the poetics of the work of art.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Letter from Apollonio to Massimo Alesi, dated June 13, 1957 in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

²⁴² Massimo Alesi was an Italian politician who held the position of President of the Biennale between 1955 and 1957.

²⁴³ Letter from Apollonio to Massimo Alesi, dated June 13, 1957, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

²⁴⁴ It would be revived a few years later, in the 36-37th issue (1959) in a column titled "Osservatorio", on the national and international contemporary art scene

²⁴⁵ Draft letter for International contributors, signed by Apollonio, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

Apollonio's editorial approach completely distanced itself from the informative and propagandistic approach of his predecessor, Zorzi. The editor is highlighting how the magazine would be invested with the duty of analysing the evolution and becoming of the work of art itself, rather than serving the exhibitions' needs for dissemination. Apollonio's words emphasise the importance of the magazine as an ideal tool to understand and epitomise contemporaneity as argued throughout this dissertation. As an "historian of contemporaneity"²⁴⁶—as art historian Giuseppina Dal Canton defined him—who understood and often anticipated present trends, Apollonio was able to open *la biennale* to a range of renowned national and international contributors, like critics, art historians, and scholars with different backgrounds and modalities of enquiry, who gave life to debates around art criticism and its methods, contemporary art, aesthetics and judgement.²⁴⁷

In accordance with this, from the 30th issue (January-March 1958), the names of the contributors to the issue were published on the cover. This was intended to emphasise their role and make them more visible to the reader who, by that time, had become more conscious of what *la biennale* represented. As stated by Walker in *Studio International's* issue "an art magazine gains authority from the expertise and specialist knowledge of its contributors and in this way it establishes itself as a standard source of reference".²⁴⁸ This statement shows Apollonio's understanding of, and capacity to anticipate, these dynamics. He reduced the number of contributions per issue to give its authors greater space for analysis and discussion. The scope of Apollonio and his team was to educate the readers around the latest artistic practices and inclinations. Critical essays, like "Dei valori nelle tendenze," (Values in trends) by Apollonio²⁴⁹ were published in order to deepen the knowledge of the work of artistic movements and artists displayed in the show, and keep the audience's interest engaged and lively. While the complete transformation had yet to take place, the magazine was finally moving towards the fulfilment of its role as a critical organism that, while promoting the institution through its mere existence, would be able to

²⁴⁶ Dal Canton, "Riviste d'arte a Venezia", 273.

²⁴⁷ See, for instance, Sergio Bettini, "Arte e Critica" in *la biennale*, 30 (January-March 1958): 3-12; and "Possibilità di un giudizio di valore sulle opere dell'arte contemporanea" *la biennale*, 56 (March 1965): 3-17.

²⁴⁸ Walker, "Internal Memorandum": 115. I posed the question about the key factors for a magazine's success in the *Art Periodicals Database* and almost half of the responding magazines stated that good contributors and writers are amongst the most important elements.

²⁴⁹ See Umbro Apollonio, "Dei valori nelle tendenze", *la biennale*, 35 (April-June 1959): 25-26.

understand and engage with the discussions around contemporary art and culture. This criticality would reach full expression in the 1960s, the same decade that saw the evolution of the art periodical into one of the key elements of the art world.

Sustaining its new role, *la biennale* published surveys with in-depth readings of international and national artists, dedicating covers to international artists, such as Hans Richter (no. 54, September 1964). Apollonio and his co-editor Wladimiro Dorigo edited important retrospective issues such as the survey on futurism (no. 36-37, July-December 1959), which would be highly visible at the 30th Biennale in 1960, or the one on realism (no. 46-47, December 1962).²⁵⁰

From the end of the 1950s to the mid-1960s, the magazine reached its apex as a vehicle for international and critical dialogue and was now on a par with other contemporary international art magazines. It is interesting to note that *la biennale* reduced those “high class advertisements” mentioned in the press release accompanying the magazine’s launch, and used advertising instead as a strategic connector. With Zorzi advertising was meant to show the cultural elite that Venice was a tourist and cultural attraction, while Apollonio was interested in cultivating an audience of intellectuals and cultural affiliates, who could discuss the latest artistic and critical developments. The spectacularising intention remained, but with changed perspectives and audiences. For this reason, *la biennale* started exchanging advertising space with other European magazines which fostered the creation of an international network. This was as strategic a move as was the one by Zorzi when distributing the magazines in all the foreign embassies. Apollonio wanted the magazine to be associated with other important critical publications of the time to show that it was establishing itself as a critical organism rather than the Venice Biennale’s promotional magazine. The magazines involved included: *Kunstwerk*, *Art International*, *Magnum*, *Zodiac*, *Werk*, *Aujurd’hui*, *Journal de L’amateur d’Art*.²⁵¹ A similar strategy had already been adopted in the 1920s and 1930s, when art magazines, edited by artistic movements like surrealism, dada and constructivism, would exchange advertisements in order to promote each other and create interrelated

²⁵⁰ For a thorough description of this issue and its relevance see Dal Canton, “Riviste d’arte a Venezia”.

²⁵¹ See document “Rivista *la biennale di Venezia*. Scambio di pubblicità con altre riviste”, date N/A, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., b. 16 (1963-1971).

networks of connections.²⁵² For *la biennale* it was a way to legitimise itself and construct a different readership than the one it was initially striving for. No longer the political elite, but an elite of intellectuals that would give rise to lively debates in the pages of the periodical. This attention towards liveliness in the magazine is certainly connected to recent developments in the field of art periodicals. The 1960s saw the emergence of a number of Italian and international publications, from *Artforum* (1962-) to *Flash Art* (1967-) alongside the avantgarde magazines that were adopting the format for its popularity, its capacity to record informal conversations, and its ability to extend beyond their geographic region.

With that said, considerations of *la biennale's* advertising policies, albeit occurring seventy years before the launch of *OBOE* and in a completely different publishing context from that in which *OBOE* has its roots, became quite relevant in the early days both for thinking about the journal's economic survival and also in terms of networking. Since advertising is not used in academic journals, which are for the most part supported by institutional or university funding (not *OBOE's* situation), I had to investigate other venues of income. I was not seeking a constant income, but rather a flexible amount of money that could cover the costs for the launch and survival of the journal, expenses related to the website's maintenance and proof-readers. Furthermore, as *OBOE* is a gold open access journal it is completely free.²⁵³ As a PhD student I disagreed with the editorial policy of having authors pay for the submission and publication of a paper, since there are many other expenses authors need to cover. The only solution I could envisage before the launch and that did not compromise the scientific character of the publication was finding private donors who believed in the project. They each donated a small amount of money for the launch of the project, enough to guarantee its publication.

Going back to *la biennale*, during the second half of the 1960s, the magazine published

²⁵² On the strategy of exchanging advertisements in avant-garde magazines, see Meghan Forbes, "Advertisement As Collaboration In the Central European Avant-Garde Magazines," *Post. Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art Around the Globe*, published online on March 22, 2016, https://post.at.moma.org/content_items/769-advertisement-as-collaboration-in-the-central-european-avant-garde-magazines, accessed June 2020.

²⁵³ On Open Access Policies see Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities* (West Nyack: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Terence McCann and Meg Polacsek, "False Gold: Safely Navigating Open Access Publishing to Avoid Predatory Publishers and Journals", *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 74, 4 (2018): 809-817.

articles and essays on the relationship between the arts and communication theories and the methods of art criticism. Worthy of mention is Umberto Eco's *"Teoria della comunicazione e arti visuali"* (Theory of Communication and Visual Arts), published in 1966.²⁵⁴ With this 60th issue the subtitle of the magazine changes into *"Rassegna delle Arti Contemporanee"* (Contemporary Arts Review) emphasising how it was transforming into a contemporary art magazine, on a par with titles like the interdisciplinary magazine *Marcatré*,²⁵⁵—founded by art critic Eugenio Battisti, published between 1963 and 1970 and focused on contemporary art, literature, architecture and music—or *NAC* (Notiziario di Arte Contemporanea)²⁵⁶ founded by art critic Francesco Vincitorio and published from 1968 to 1974. Indeed, this was the time in which the magazine had finally reached its mission to become a critical authority in the field of art, whilst simultaneously pursuing the legitimising function of the institution. Unfortunately, this was also the beginning of its decline and eventual dissolution.

3.4. The last years of *la biennale* and the birth of the *Annuario dell'ASAC*

By the mid-1960s, after these exciting and fruitful years, the magazine was already reaching the end of its life. The folding of *la biennale* was linked to the aforementioned crisis that hit the Biennale and led to a complete restructuring and renovation of the Institution at the beginning of the 1970s.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ See Umberto Eco, "Teoria della comunicazione e arti visuali", 60 (December 1966): 5-6.

²⁵⁵ On *Marcatré*, see Andrea Chiurato, "La fabbrica del Dissenso. Le riviste dello sperimentalismo italiano dal 'Verri' a 'Quindici'", in Paolo Giovannetti ed., *Periodici del Novecento e del duemila fra avanguardie e postmoderno* (Udine: Mimesis, 2018), 141-169; Renato Bertacchini, *Le riviste del Novecento: introduzione e guida allo studio dei periodici italiani. Storia, ideologia e cultura* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1980), 228-229

²⁵⁶ For a history of *NAC* see the website: <http://www.notiziarioartecontemporanea.it/larivista.php>, accessed November 2020. See also Gianni Contessi, "NAC, un caso italiano", in *Riviste d'Arte fra Ottocento ed Età Contemporanea*, 307-310.

²⁵⁷ Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 22. See also Vittoria Martini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1968-1978*.

An attempt to confront the problems surrounding the Biennale motivated the conference “La Nuova Biennale” in 1968.²⁵⁸ Artists, thinkers and critics, including Bettini, Dorigo²⁵⁹, and Apollonio, were called to debate the Biennale’s need to abandon its old structures and methods. The proceedings were published in issue 64-65 (January-June 1969), which in many ways marked another shift in the magazine. The frequency had already slowed down since the 63rd issue (January-March 1968), when it became an annual publication. Issue 66 (September 1970) was, according to the magazine’s administrator Douglesse Grassi, the last edited issue of the magazine:

because of technical difficulties, and the pending reorganisation of the Biennale, it is not possible to guarantee the regular periodicity of the magazine. Thus, it will be published once a year, in the form of a ‘book’ and will be normally dedicated to a single theme in order to constitute a monographic volume.²⁶⁰

Once again, the magazine is in its process of becoming, it is evolving according to the needs of the Biennale and the audience’s demands. It is clear that in the Biennale’s process of renovation there could no longer be a magazine that functioned as a publicity tool, it had to either engage with the criticisms that were moved to the Biennale or free itself from its links to the institution to really fulfil its role as a critical authority in the art and visual fields. Unfortunately, this could not be maintained and the final issue (no. 67-68, December 1971) followed the model of issue 64-65 and published the proceedings of the conference “Arte e Didattica”, held in May 1970, as part of the research activities organised for the 35th Art Exhibition. This was another moment in the magazine’s becoming, although it should be considered as more of an involution than an evolution as it was slowly returning to its role as promotional and documentary tool for the institution. The magazine had become monothematic, and rather than a vehicle to analyse visual culture it had been demoted to be a space to report about the Biennale’s activities. The becoming of the journal was almost an unbecoming, once again linked not to the nature in flux of the exhibition and the magazine but to its materialisation as an institution. The magazine had consequently become a form of

²⁵⁸ See *la biennale*, 64-65 (January-June 1969). The conference was held between November 15-17, 1968 at Ca’ Giustinian in Venice. It was organised by the City of Venice. The same year another conference on the topic took place in Venice. This was organised by the publisher Alfieri. For an overview of the points discussed see Bruno Alfieri, “Proposte per la Biennale. Progetto,” in *Metro*, 15 (1968): 55.

²⁵⁹ Wladimiro Dorigo was co-editor of *la biennale* with Apollonio from 1958.

²⁶⁰ Letter by Douglesse Grassi to the subscribers of the magazine, dated 1972, in ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B, corrispondenza, b. 16 (1969-1972).

documentation, and had gone back to fulfil the second drive—historicising—of the exhibition magazine.

In 1971 the Biennale still had constitutive problems to solve; the new statute would be approved only in 1973.²⁶¹ In 1972, when the publication had ceased existing, the archive's directorship passed into the hands of Dorigo who focused almost entirely on the archive's organisation and documentation of the Biennale's activities. In 1975, after four years of silence, the magazine was resurrected, with a new title, subtitle and format, running another four years as the *Annuario dell'ASAC* (ASAC's Yearbook) before ending in 1979. It was an encyclopaedic volume²⁶² curated by Dorigo, publishing the events of the previous year and once again privileging the informative and documentary character of the publication rather than the critical and contemporary one. These weighty volumes had a hard cover, a case binding and presented a very simple aesthetic dominated by the biennale's black and red colours on a white cover.²⁶³ The first edition, the *Annuario 1975 Eventi 1974* was published the year after the rebuilding of the Biennale and contained a number of legislative and regulatory documents surrounding the complete restructuring of the Biennale. Inspired by the tradition of the English *Yearbooks* and by the German *Jahrbücher*, it was meant as a way to inform the audience by documenting everything that happened in the nine months after the reopening of the institution. Carlo Ripa di Meana's introduction summarises some of the intentions of the *Annuario*: to inform about political and social upheavals, to attempt to write the history of a break with the past, to compose a corpus of news, a bibliographic apparatus and a theoretical elaboration of the relationship between art and culture in contemporary society.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ On July 8, 1971 the reform law was approved by the parliamentary committee of Palazzo Madama. This law was definitively approved by the Parliament on July 26, 1973. The law was reported in *La Biennale di Venezia-Annuario 1975 Eventi 1974* (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1975): 15-22. On the history of the Venice Biennale's statute see Giorgio Di Genova, *Periplo delle peripezie del cosiddetto ente autonomo La Biennale di Venezia* (Roma: Officina edizioni, 1972).

²⁶² See Wladimiro Dorigo "Nota di Edizione", *Annuario 1975 Eventi 1974* (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1975): 12.

²⁶³ The same red and black colours were used for OBOE's issue "Why Venice?" on the Venice Biennale as a way to create a connection with the exhibition also in the cover.

²⁶⁴ See Carlo Ripa di Meana, "Presentazione", in *Ibid.*: 9-11.

In two decades *la biennale* proved its ability to adapt to the becoming of its time, often even anticipating the changes that needed to occur within the Biennale itself. It evolved from a mere instrument of promotion into a platform for the contemporary debate of art and culture, and then again into a tool for documentation. This evolution/involution, becoming/unbecoming is evident at three levels: a straightforward one that may be traced through the very evolution of the format, from the first *Bollettino*, to *la biennale*, to the *Annuario*. The second level is visible in the transformations in design, contents, subtitles and all that concerned its structure. Finally, enclosed within this one, is a third kind of evolution, one that goes from issue to issue, which presents *la biennale's* evolution from the Biennale's official organ of promotion to an instrument of criticism and analysis, and then goes backwards towards being an instrument of promotion and documentation. The pauses, the moments of reflection, the changes of editors and editorial approaches, have all been part of the continuous tension between becoming and unbecoming of the two formats as they engage with the demands of a continuously changing art world and audience. These very transformations are also those that, if applied to other kinds of magazines, have allowed it to adapt and become one of the major components of the art system. For the purpose of the present analysis it serves as an important example to understand the need to study *la biennale*, its predecessor and its successor as part of a unique history, made of singularities and multiplicities that taken together compose the exhibition magazine as an open-ended form, to be understood in terms of duration and continuous evolution, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation and further analysed in the next case studies.

With its various shifts, *la biennale* succeeded in furthering an ancestral model that would define the features of the exhibition magazine and those magazines born out of other institutions within the art system. On the one side, it shows the magazine's ability, during its multiple lifespans, to capture the fluctuations dictated by contemporaneity and those in public taste, while on the other it highlights the intrinsic difficulties of doing so. These problems might have been caused by the drive towards institutionalisation, or by the relation of subjugation between the two, or simply owing to the impossibility of synchronising their temporal timelines. The delays and the changes in the publication's frequency never really allowed it to find a pace to engage with the biennial's activities. It was a chasing after and reporting, rather than a structuring together, as is testified by the fact that the Biennale

restructured itself after the magazine ceased publication and right before the coming out of the *Annuario*.

Finally, the magazine reached its climax as a critical publication, on a par with other independent magazines, only when it tried to remove itself from the obligations towards the exhibition or when it was attempting to privilege an approach *a priori* rather than *a posteriori* around art and its evolution, which will not be fulfilled until the launch of the exhibition magazine as a tool for research, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Not a chronicle, but a moving alongside art, understanding and at times anticipating and defining new trends and movements. It is the very inability to adapt to the contemporary, and to audience demands—which often also results in lack of funding—which leads to the dismissal of these publications. Complicating matters even further, the relation with the institution should be added. This case, for instance, exemplifies the important role played by the institution in the promotion of the publication. The latter is born to promote the institution and in the moment it fails to do so—when it becomes more concerned with articulating the concerns of contemporary art than promoting its host exhibition—it is felt as no longer necessary and either transformed into something else or discontinued.

In this case the failure stands in the fact that, while Apollonio was well aware of the institution's need to change, the Biennale never really took advantage of the magazine's potential to anticipate shifts and trends, instead utilising it as a promotional tool, a vitrine that could show the outside world the glamour of the Venetian exhibition. Whilst I strongly believe that the magazine's straightforward embrace of market dynamics, advertising and promotion of the city is more interesting than the gesture of hiding these intents behind critical and political discourses (as other publications are), the Biennale failed in taking advantage of the self-reflexivity the magazine offered.

In sum, the history of *la biennale* has allowed for a wider reflection on the possibilities of the magazine medium, and how often the magazine served as means through which the exhibition could be studied and analysed. For *OBOE* this was certainly fundamental. Indeed, this case, while providing a space to study the Venetian exhibition for the first and future issues of the journal, has also shown the need for institutions to: disseminate their name and the activities related to it, investigate and control the contents around the exhibition, create their own means to methodologically understand and document the present and, finally, to

produce new knowledge, fulfilling the initial educational role of the magazine and the exhibition.

The diverse editorial periods of the magazine, under Zorzi and Apollonio, and later under Dorigo, launched editorial initiatives still practiced by current exhibition magazines. These include promoting an institution, emphasising the contributions of curators, and creating spaces for the display and discussion of contemporary art and culture. These three commonalities are part of the attempt to transform the magazine of a biennial exhibition into a critical authority, and in doing so, turn the biennial itself into a platform able to simultaneously generate culture, document it and legitimise it. All this anticipated emerging needs in exhibiting and curating that reached their full expression only in the 1990s, as I will explain in the next chapter devoted to documenta X.

Chapter 4

documenta X documents: The Tension between Documentation and Process in the Making of an Exhibition

After *la biennale*, the exhibition magazine was particularly fortuitous also in the context of the quinquennial German show Documenta. In the two decades which passed between the final issue of the Biennale's *Annuario* and the launch of the first issue of *documenta X documents*—hereafter *dXd*²⁶⁵—in anticipation of documenta X (dX) directed by French curator Catherine David in 1997²⁶⁶ both the art world and the art periodical field had undergone profound changes. Innovations in the technological and travel industries, the globalised proliferation of biennials, the strong mediatization and participation of the artworld in the society of spectacle, and the rise of the professional curator, had all started the transformation of the artworld into the globally connected arena that it is today.

Occurring at the end of the 20th century, at a specific historical juncture, dX radically moved away from the exhibitionary structure of the preceding exhibitions, proving itself fundamental in spreading the models of the discursive exhibition and the exhibition as laboratory. It is within this context and mindset that the *dXd* were born. Conversely from *la biennale* that was born to promote the activities of the institution, the *dXd* were intended to substantiate the theoretical background of the curator of the exhibition, and the exhibition itself, embracing the opinions of a number of other intellectuals and scholars as significant to the curator's practice and artwork's choices.

Since the magazine was published in only three issues, the analysis of this periodical will be quite different from the previous and following case studies. I will begin the examination by highlighting some of the structural changes brought about by David's curatorial practice and compare them with both previous and posthumous editions of the show, in order to emphasise how the history of the exhibition can be understood through its duration, and through the tension between continuity and rupture, intervals and events. dX

²⁶⁵ I refer to the *documenta X documents* as the *dXd*.

²⁶⁶ documenta X took place in Kassel between June 21 and September 28, 1997. From now on I will refer to documenta X with the short version dX. See documenta X's website: https://www.documenta12.de/archiv/dx/english/frm_home.htm, accessed January 2020.

was the first documenta to promote the publication of a magazine connected to the exhibition as a preparatory instrument, but it also paved the way to the gradual process in which the catalogue is fragmented into multiple volumes including readers, guidebooks, catalogues and magazines.

The chapter is divided into three main parts: the first focuses on the exhibition, the second on the periodical *documenta X documents*, while the third offers a brief overview of the periodical publications of the four following exhibitions of Documenta from 2002 to 2017. The last part of the chapter provides an insight and a time lens through which it is possible to view the heterogenous and multifarious periodical publication panorama of the last twenty years at Documenta. I believe it would be worth investigating these periodicals in another research project, taking into account the whole publication apparatus of each Documenta, as another way to narrate the history of the Documenta institution and of the art publication. Up to now researchers have approached this history through the singularity of the exhibition, but it is certain that after twenty years these singular editorial ventures might be seen as episodes of Documenta's institutional magazine.

This Chapter is sustained by archival research conducted at the Documenta archive, an interview with the curator of the exhibition, Catherine David, and secondary sources.²⁶⁷ Overall, the analysis of these exhibition magazines, inspired the author to think about the different approaches through which a complex exhibition like Documenta can be understood. The analysis of these magazines, for instance, has aided in understanding *OBOE* as a unique temporal-lens for observing exhibitions as entities in continuous flux. Taking into account the first exhibition magazine of Documenta's history, I was able to grasp the complexity of these periodic formats and understand that even when analysed as single units, they comprise multiple iterations, and may be perceived as episodes in a unique history, consisting of events and longer intervals. Since Documenta has a temporality of five years, diversely from the biennial, it allowed me to think more openly about the importance of this time in-between, as a time of becoming for the periodical also, and about the need for institutions to engage with faster temporalities to keep viewers and visitors attentive to their programmes.

²⁶⁷ The research at the documenta archiv was conducted in two separate moments, in June 2018 and in March 2019.

4.1. A Break with the Past: Articulating documenta X as “Cultural Manifestation”

Documenta was founded in 1955 by German painter and architect Arnold Bode.²⁶⁸ The exhibition was initially conceived as a temporary museum lasting 100 days with the intent to bring new life to Kassel, the city hosting it, which had been destroyed during the Second World War.²⁶⁹ Documenta itself is an invented word that derives from the Latin word *documentum*, which may be translated as ‘documentation’ or ‘to document’ and may reveal meanings such as ‘inventory’, ‘exhibit’, or ‘manifest’.²⁷⁰ It is clear from the meaning of the term that the show had the initial intention of demonstrating how every exhibition is a documentation or a record of the state of art in a specific time and space, evincing my argument in Chapter 2 about the magazine’s and biennial’s ability to take pictures of a precise instant of the present.²⁷¹ In just a few decades Documenta became the most “distinguished exhibition venture of the post-war era that [...] continually survived its own difficulties”²⁷² thanks to its periodicity which allowed it to reinvent itself every five years. Diverging from the biennial format, which engages with a faster notion of becoming, the longer interval between one exhibition and the next characteristic of Documenta allows for a slower and more meditated engagement with the problematics of one’s time, and a reconceptualisation of the show’s very format at each new iteration. Thanks to its peculiar periodicity, Documenta is also perceived as an exhibition able to impact the fields of art and

²⁶⁸ Arnold Bode (1900-1977) was a Kassel-born painter and an architect. After founding Documenta he organised the exhibition until the fourth iteration in 1968.

²⁶⁹ For a history of the institution see: Anna Cestelli Guidi, *La Documenta di Kassel, Percorsi dell’Arte Contemporanea* (Milano: Costa & Nolan, 1997); Walter Grasskamp, “For example, documenta, or, how is art history produced?” in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, 67-78; and Grasskamp, “To Be Continued: Periodic Exhibitions (*DOCUMENTA*, for Example)”, *Tate Papers*, 12 (Autumn 2009); and *oncurating.org*’s issue 33 on “documenta”, <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-33.html#.X-pMyelKib8>. For an overview of Documenta and its tension between exhibition and museum see Kathryn M. Floyd, “The Museum Exhibited: documenta and the Museum Fredericianum”, in Eva-Maria Troelenberg and Melania Savino eds., *Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 65-90.

²⁷⁰ See <https://www.documenta.de/>, accessed December 2020.

²⁷¹ See Chapter 2, footnote 131.

²⁷² See Walter Grasskamp, “For example, documenta, or, how is art history produced?”: 71. Likewise, Klaus Sieberhaar affirms that “no other major cultural event in the world stands in the light of the historical momentum as does documenta”. See Klaus Sieberhaar, *documenta. A brief history of an exhibition and its contexts* (Berlin and Kassel: B&S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2017), 11.

exhibition making, both in terms of how they are being practiced and how they will develop in the future. Multiple shifts of direction arrived from within the institution and from the curators of the show, who felt the need to experiment with new practices and methods.

The first of these shifts occurred with Harald Szeemann's *documenta V* (1972).²⁷³ According to Gardner and Green, this exhibition was decisive as it saw "the rise of the star-curator".²⁷⁴ Szeemann acted as an author with an unprecedented amount of creative agency. He transformed the one-hundred days museum proposed by Bode into "The 100 Day Event" so that the exhibition could be "a place for programmed events, as spaces of interaction, [and] as a walk-through event structure with shifting centres of activity".²⁷⁵ After Szeemann, curators from the 1970s onwards began conceiving curatorial practice under a whole new light. As O'Neill argues the curator went from "carer and behind the scenes arbiter" to a "more centralised position on a much broader stage, with a creative, political and active part to play in the production, mediation and dissemination of art itself".²⁷⁶ By the 1990s curating was recognised as a discipline in itself.²⁷⁷ It is in this curatorial turmoil that David started working on her 1997 show, as the first Jewish woman ever to direct the German exhibitionary colossus.

1997 was a year of great exhibitionary excitement. dX was competing against a plethora of exhibitions, both locally and globally. Concurrently with the opening of dX, in the summer of that year, the 3rd *Skulpture Project* in Munster and the 47th Venice Biennale were opening their doors. To these should be added biennials opening in Cairo, Havana, Istanbul, and

²⁷³ *documenta V* took place between June 30, and October 8, 1972. On Szeemann's *documenta*, see Cestelli Guidi, *Documenta di Kassel*, 49-74.

²⁷⁴ Green and Gardner's chapter "1972: The Rise of the Star Curator", in *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta*, 19-47. On Szeemann's practice see Florence Derieux ed., *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (Zurich: JPR Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2007).

²⁷⁵ Media release, *documenta 5*, may 1970, reproduced in Michael Gasmeier and Karin Stengel (eds.), *Archives in Motion 50 Jahre / Years Documenta 1955-2005* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 252.

²⁷⁶ Paul O'Neill, *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007), 12.

²⁷⁷ For the establishment of curating as a discipline cf. especially Chapter 5. See also O'Neill, *Curating Subjects; The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2016); and O'Neill and Mick Wilson, *Curating And The Educational Turn*. Other pivotal volumes are Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating; Talking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2015); Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Lionel Bovier, and Birte Theiler, *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2018); Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Asad Raza, *Ways of curating* (London: Penguin Books, 2015).

Johannesburg.²⁷⁸ The latter was organised by Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor, who would be entrusted in 1998 with the direction of documenta 11 in 2002.²⁷⁹ Within this panorama, David decided to approach the institution confrontationally, with her exhibition interrogating its relevance in the changed global climate and considering whether it was still capable of responding to the urgencies of the time. In the introduction to dX's *Short Guide* the curator invited a critical look towards the exhibition and the current state of things:

It may seem paradoxical to envision a critical confrontation with the present in the framework of an institution that over the past 20 years has become a mecca for tourism and cultural consumption. Yet the pressing issues of today make it equally presumptuous to abandon all ethical and political demands.²⁸⁰

First and foremost, this statement, while formulated as a question, recognises the need of the exhibition to evolve. In particular, criticisms were directed towards the documentas of her predecessors, whose emphasis was on the spectacularisation of the arts rather than on the problematics of the present moment, which included, amongst others the recent unification of Germany, historical reflection, decolonization and “what Wolf Lepenies calls the ‘de-Europeanisation’ of the world”.²⁸¹ David was evidently concerned with the exhibition’s mutation and incorporation into the society of spectacle,²⁸² and wanted to reconnect the hegemonic exhibition, colonised by market-value dynamics, with the goal of the first documenta articulating it anew as a space for research, documentation and exchange of knowledge.

²⁷⁸ The Johannesburg Biennial took place in 1995 to celebrate the end of Apartheid, and again in 1997. It was held between October and December, 1997 and titled “*Trade Routes: History and Geography*”. See “Okwui Enwezor - Interview, 1997”, in *Universes in Universe* (June 1997): <https://universes.art/en/magazine/articles/1997/okwui-enwezor>, accessed December 2020. See also Sabine Marschall, “The Impact of the Two Johannesburg Biennials on the Formation of a ‘New South African Art’” [1999], in *The Biennial Reader*, 454-465.

²⁷⁹ Enwezor’s documenta 11 signed documenta’s shift towards the global. See, amongst others, Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta*, 183-206.

²⁸⁰ Catherine David, “Introduction,” in *Documenta X Shortguide = Kurzführer* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz 1997), 7.

²⁸¹ David, “Introduction”, 12. On David’s attempt to defy the spectacularisation of documenta and transform it into a more political exhibition see Masao Miyoshi, “*Radical Art at documenta X*”, *New Left Review*, 1/228 (March/April 1998): 151, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/1228/articles/masao-miyoshi-radical-art-at-documenta-x>, accessed December 2020. See also Mónica Amor, “Documenta X. Reclaiming the political project of the avant-garde”, *Third Text* 11, 40 (1997): 95-100, doi: 10.1080/09528829708576689, last accessed December 2020.

²⁸² David, “Introduction”, 7.

David had to resist easy directions, and perhaps also reject those paths opened by the previous curators of Documenta, even though following them would guarantee a general consensus by audience and critics.²⁸³ On this same matter, in an interview with me, the curator explained that

dX was moving differently from the previous documentas, in particular from documenta IX. I wanted to show the audience the potential of the exhibition, and that Documenta wasn't only a list of names. dX was the process of creation of a platform.²⁸⁴

While reconnecting with Debord's, and Adorno and Horkheimer's theories discussed in Chapter 2 on the spectacularisation of the arts, these words also narrow the attention towards one specific case: documenta IX of 1992, curated by Belgian art historian Jan Hoet.²⁸⁵ The break with her predecessor's documenta was so neat that art theorist Claire Bishop defined it as an "aesthetic and intellectual chasm",²⁸⁶ as it exemplifies the shift of the exhibition from mere spectacle into a platform for social and political dissent.²⁸⁷ This chasm may be identified as the moment in time, identified in Chapter 1, in which the exhibition is loosening its fixed institutional nature, and evolving into a critical media (much as *la biennale* had done with the Venice Biennale in the 1960s and 1970s).

As explicated in the introduction to the *Short Guide*, David was very aware of the problematics surrounding Documenta's institution, and unlike her predecessor, recognised how the times had changed since the institution's founding. dX was taking place in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification. It was the last Documenta of the 20th century and it had to update itself to lead the audience through the doors to the 21st. So, with her show, David had to fulfil three different imperatives: present a critical

²⁸³ See Catherine David and Denys Zacharopoulos, "A propos de la documenta X", re-transcription of the conference-discussion organised by Geneve Art Contemporaine at the Hotel du Rhone, Sunday June 2, 1996 in Geneva. documenta archiv, Mappe 175 - Catherine David - Interviews/Gespräche

²⁸⁴ Catherine David, phone interview, April 15, 2019. No recording available.

²⁸⁵ Jan Hoet was a Belgian art historian and curator. He was the founder of SMAK (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst) in Ghent, Belgium.

²⁸⁶ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and The Politics Of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2014), 194.

²⁸⁷ On the chasm between the two exhibitions, see Kompatsiaris analysis of their catalogues, in *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, 49-55.

review of Documenta's past, provide an interdisciplinary look into the future of the exhibition and art at large, and represent the current moment, or as she called it, the "here and now"²⁸⁸ of the exhibition.

David's gaze was placed on the political and economic backdrop that encompassed the fifty years preceding the exhibition and comprised the history of Documenta²⁸⁹ and on the visual culture of the time. In fact, while keeping in mind this history, she had to engage with the present, the "momentum", as she put it,²⁹⁰ and to do so, she chose to renovate the exhibition's structure. As explained in the *Short Guide*, "Today's creative practices no longer match outdated exhibition forms, making it necessary to react to the new conditions within the visual arts".²⁹¹ In this sentence the curator is claiming that the exhibition is incapable of engaging with new artistic practices, and that it is essential to change the conventional curatorial method to embrace the becoming of art itself. While the exhibition's ephemeral nature allowed it to be in a state of constant becoming, the push towards institutionalisation and historicization, which is what motivates its unbecoming, as happened with the Venice Biennale, risked rendering it less able to participate in the present.

For these reasons, David's exhibition could not limit itself to a traditional display contained in the walls of a gallery or a museum; it had to move away from the old exhibitionary formats to become a multidisciplinary exhibition including art and visual culture, with an emphasis on artistic practices that questioned the status quo. Hence, dX was conceived as a "*manifestation culturelle*", "where traditional categories no longer apply".²⁹² The event expanded beyond the confined space of the museum and spread all around the city of Kassel. [fig. 8] The urban apparatus became part of the display; a route for viewing the exhibition and for connecting the various sites, titled *Parcours*, was created. Spreading the exhibition throughout the city allowed the audience to experience the exhibition on a different level, forcing it to think about the conditions in which art is made manifest and about the diverse connections taking part in an expanded field of culture.

²⁸⁸ David refers to the here and now, as the "*hic et nunc*" in the editorial of the first issue of *documenta X documents*: 1.

²⁸⁹ David, "Introduction", 12. See also page 9 for an overview of the themes that were at the core of dX.

²⁹⁰ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

²⁹¹ David, "100 Days – 100 Guests", in *documenta X Shortguide*, 258.

²⁹² David, interview, April 15, 2019.

latest trends in curatorship, riding the 1990s wave of New Institutionalism²⁹⁴ as well as the educational turn.²⁹⁵ According to cultural theorist Elke Krasny though, the talks programme is also reminiscent of Joseph Beuys' 1972 *für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung* (Organization for Direct Democracy Through Referendum) presented at documenta V, in which the German artist engaged in discussions with the public for the entire duration of the event.²⁹⁶

The talks were David's attempt to open the discussion to the analysis of post-colonialism and non-Western-centric thoughts. However, the programme was criticised for remaining tied to a Eurocentric vision.²⁹⁷ It was not until Enwezor's documenta 11 that the exhibition would have a properly global and post-colonial spirit, although David's *manifestation culturelle* was undoubtedly a clear influence on the Nigerian curator.²⁹⁸ Despite these criticisms the *100 Days – 100 Guests* programme served as a model for future curators, opening the route for the transformation of recurring exhibitions into discursive platforms able to produce knowledge and to "gain access to an understanding of the world we live in".²⁹⁹ These programmes, like the magazine, are yet another way to disseminate and modify the temporality of the biennial, extending the experience of it in time, although in this case it remains secluded to the 100 days in which the exhibition is open. It will be with Enwezor's documenta that these programmes will constellate also the time before the exhibition disseminating it through time and space. The multidisciplinary manifestation was

²⁹⁴ On New Institutionalism see *oncurating.org*'s issue no. 21 "(New) Institution(alism)", published in January 2014: <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-21.html#.Xp2ctdMzZn4>. See also Jonas Ekeberg's volume: *New institutionalism* (Oslo: Office for contemporary art Norway, 2014).

²⁹⁵ O'Neill and Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn*; Kristina Lee Podesva, "A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art", *Fillip*, 6 (2007), <http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>, accessed June 2020. It is also worth looking at the volume *Notes for an Art School* (Amsterdam: The International Foundation Manifesta, 2006), <https://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf>, accessed December 2020.

²⁹⁶ Elke Krasny, "The Conversational Turn in Curating or Let's Twist and Talk", <http://www.openspace-zkp.org/2013/en/journal1.php?a=2#bio>, accessed April 2020.

²⁹⁷ For a recount on some of the criticisms and on David's work at an institution like documenta, see Dorothee Richter, "Being Singular/Plural in the Exhibition Context: Curatorial Subjects at documenta 5, dX, D12, d(13)", *oncurating.org*, 33 (2017), <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-33-reader/being-singular-plural-in-the-exhibition-context-curatorial-subjects-at-documenta-5-dx-d12-d13.html#.Xp3J39MzYcg>, accessed April 2020. See also Miyoshi, "Radical Art at documenta X".

²⁹⁸ Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and documenta*, 202.

²⁹⁹ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

her attempt to involve the audience as a participant rather than a passive spectator. As art historian Michael Brenson stated, David “approached art and art exhibitions as forms of engagement in which everyone who participated had an opportunity to better understand and take on intellectual, cultural, and political challenges of the world”.³⁰⁰ Decisions such as these reflect how the exhibition site as well as the curatorial process were becoming more inclusive and participatory, shifting from sites of display into active organisms, open for research on contemporaneity, dialogue and the exchange of thoughts and perspectives.

As Oliver Marchart notes, following dX, exhibitions were irrevocably consolidated as platforms for exhibiting discursivity: “before documenta X, it was rare for exhibitions to open up such a large space for theory”.³⁰¹ This new exhibitionary mode was symptomatic of the curatorial turn towards education which began in the mid-1990s,³⁰² and has since been adopted by most recurring exhibitions, to the point that Ferguson and Hoegsberg call them “discursive biennials”.³⁰³ These exhibitions, as Kompatsiaris explains through O’Neill and Mick Wilson, refer to “the post-1990s curatorial emphasis on the exhibition as a site of semiotic production, dialogue, conversation, exchange, education, pedagogy and open-ended encounters, through symposia, events, participatory artworks, guided tours and lectures”.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile, also the entire apparatus of editorial production began to contribute towards producing discursivity as this provides curators with the opportunity to raise awareness in viewers, pose questions without having to foresee the answers, and leave the process open for participation. The exhibition, as a discursive act, has become a shared enterprise. From the opening of the show towards the urban city, to the programme of talks and debates during the 100 days of the institution’s open doors, the audience was invited to

³⁰⁰ Michael Brenson, “The Curator’s Moment: Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions” [1998], in *The Biennial Reader*, 239.

³⁰¹ Marchart, “Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization”, 496.

³⁰² According to O’Neill a predecessor of the educational turn in exhibition making may include Daniel Buren and Pontus Hultén’s *Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques*, 1996. O’Neill and Wilson, “Introduction”, in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, 13.

³⁰³ Ferguson and Hoegsberg, “Talking and Thinking About Biennials”, 361. On the role of discourse in curating see also Smith, *Talking Contemporary Curating*, 13.

³⁰⁴ Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, 40. See also O’Neill and Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn*.

actively take part in the exhibition, participate in its events and contemplate the current moment and the way in which art should engage with it.

The curatorial team's idea of having the audience participate was in evidence before the opening of the show, with the creation of the magazine *dXd*. Through its pages the team provided the audience with insights, suggestions and triggered thoughts on what would be at the core of the show in terms of structure, outputs and content. The shared experience of the exhibition entailed not only an expansion in space but also in time. The latter would become visible in the exhibition with *100 Days – 100 Guests* and in the publication of the magazine as an embodiment of the thinking processes involved in its making. For the first time, in dX's history the dilated timeline was to include the downtime of the exhibition, the interval, a time devoted to researching and examining the concepts and ideas at the core of the exhibition so that they could be thought through and unravelled. It was rather different from that of *la biennale*, which used the downtime and the magazine's temporality to disseminate the many activities, reports and initiatives that were promoted by the biennial's manifestations. Nevertheless, David still used to promote the exhibition (and the institution behind it) but it was primarily a tool for research on the theories and ideas that would compose the show. With that said, and in line with the arguments in Chapters 1 and 2, David's magazines also aimed to engage with Documenta's quinquennial temporality, extending the duration of the show during the time of the interval, and by doing so, present a more process oriented exhibition.

4.3. documenta X's Publication Apparatus

The publication apparatus was another crucial component of dX. It consisted of the *Short Guide*, the *Catalogue*, and the *dXd*, three issues of the periodical launched in anticipation of the exhibition. This was the first time in the institution's history that the exhibition would be accompanied by more than the catalogue.

The Short Guide, [fig. 9] a format which has become ubiquitous in contemporary mega-exhibitions, was a 300 page book with the list of artists in alphabetical order. Each artist was given two pages. It provided visitors with information about the show, but since it was printed months before the exhibition (just like the catalogue as argued in the



Fig. 9. Cover of "*documenta X - The Short Guide*" (1997). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

Introduction), the pictures did not always correspond to the works on display. Rather than focusing on the work of art specifically, the *Guide* provided information about the artists and their practice, and how their work fit in with dX's concept.

While the *Short Guide* was a small and cheap book which could be easily carried around, the catalogue was a heavy volume titled *Politics Poetics* [fig. 10] with an imposition game reminiscent of the one on the logo where the d is superimposed by the red X of the exhibition's number.³⁰⁵ This superimposition was intended to self-consciously show David's break with the past, as if the old *documenta* was to be deleted to give space to a newer one. In the catalogue an "e" imposes itself on the "l" (el) and the "i", making *politics poetics* to underline the strong link between aesthetics and politics both in the show and the artworld at large. *Politics Poetics documenta X – the Book* attempts to defy the traditional role of the

³⁰⁵ For *documenta X*'s logo see fig. 9. On the history of *Documenta*'s logo see Kathryn M. Floyd, "d is for *documenta*: Institutional Identity for a Periodic Exhibition", *oncurating.org*, 33 (2017), <https://www.oncurating.org/issue-33-reader/d-is-for-documenta-institutional-identity-for-a-periodic-exhibition.html#.Xp35adMzYcg>, accessed January 2020.

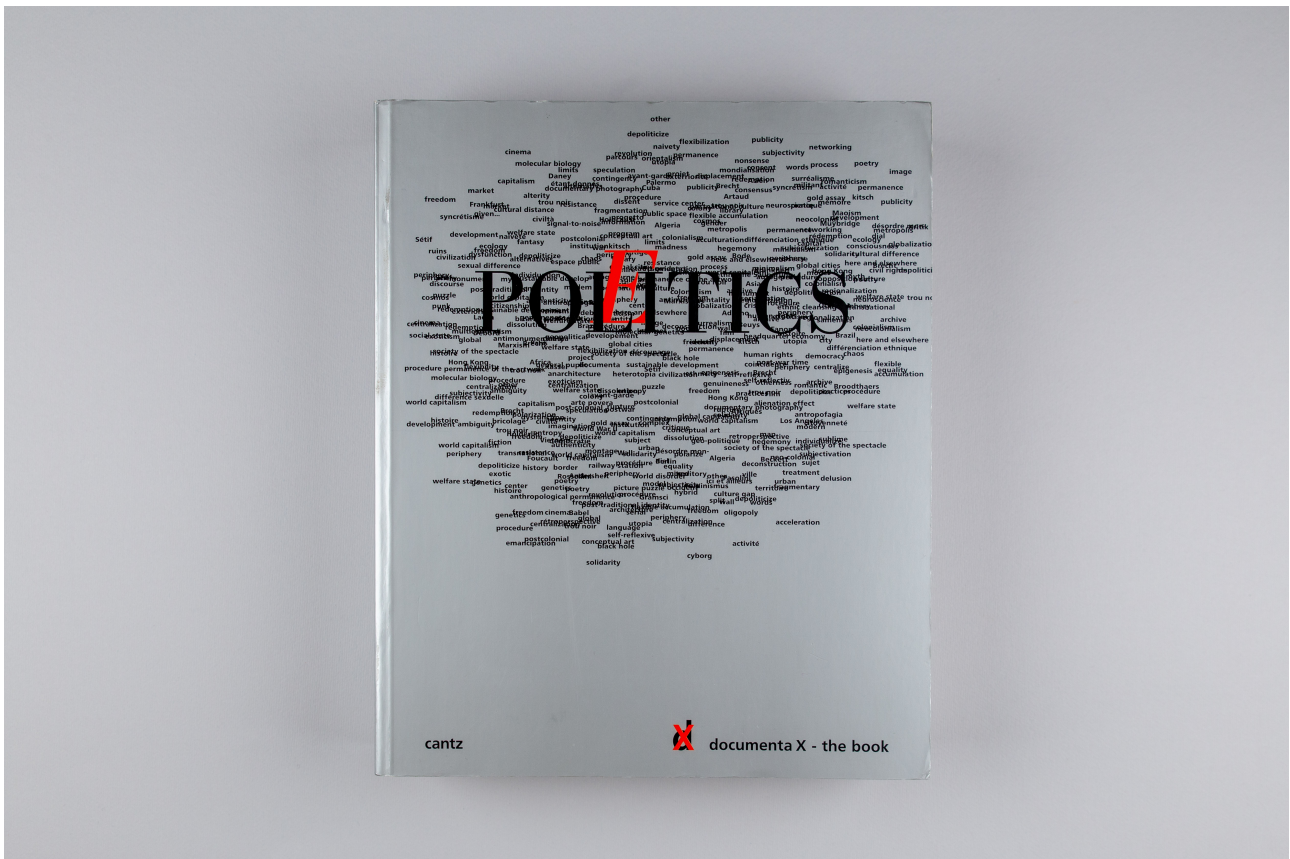


Fig. 10. Cover of “Politics Poetics. documenta X The Book” (1997). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

exhibition catalogue as a supplement and annex to the exhibition.³⁰⁶ In fact, the book was conceived to be an actual part of dX, and as a “site of the exhibition”.³⁰⁷ Allen used this definition for the documenta 12 magazine project, although, arguably, it is already applicable to this case. Both dX’s *Book* and the periodical were conceived as parts of the exhibition, extensions of it, that needed to be viewed and experienced to grasp the full extent of the dX’s perceptual and educational experience. On the back cover the catalogue claimed to “indicate a political context for the interpretation of artistic activities at the close of the 20th century through a montage of different images and documents from the immediate post-war period to the present”.³⁰⁸ In sync with *100 Days - 100 Guests*, in the catalogue’s 830 pages artist’s works and photographs of their works are collaged to reflections on some of the

³⁰⁶ For an analysis of the catalogue see Amor, “Documenta X”: 97-98; and Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, 49-58.

³⁰⁷ On the idea of the magazine as a site of the exhibition see also Allen’s analysis of the documenta XII Magazine Project, “Between Page, Market, and Exhibition”, 152-154.

³⁰⁸ Catherine David, et al., *Documenta X The Book* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 1997), backcover.

major philosophical and political texts of the second half of the 20th century.³⁰⁹ The editors of *Former West* assert that the book works as an “object that performs a political statement”.³¹⁰ Developed through a chronological lens that begins in 1945, the book provides an interdisciplinary and critical anthology of visual and cultural theory, with a strong Western-centric accent. These juxtapositions and montages, as explained by the editors, were intended to “upset the strict divisions between work, document and commentary, creating a multifaceted, polyphonic structure”.³¹¹

Cornelia Barth, editorial coordinator of dX publications, in a letter to art critic Benjamin Buchloh, explained that a reference for the catalogue and its rhizomatic structure was architect Rem Koolhaas and designer Bruce Mau’s book *S, M, L, XL*.³¹² Borrowing the term “rhizomatic” from Deleuze and Guattari³¹³ the volume allows the reader to engage with it from multiple points, emulating the way in which thought can be envisioned.³¹⁴ This rhizomatic experience in some way recalls the way readers experience the magazine. As Beetham argues, the periodical does not require to be read “from front to back in order. [...] and] Most readers will construct their own order, they will select and read only some of the text”.³¹⁵ Thanks to this liberty readers approach the magazine by constructing it anew, creating their own texts while entering the volume from multiple points. Koolhaas and Mau’s huge book, of more than 1300 pages, was a sort of monolithic diary notebook, containing a collection of twenty years of essays, reflections, excerpts from notebooks and diaries, sketches, photographs, and architectural drawings and plans produced by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) founded by Koolhaas in Rotterdam in 1975.

Another reference point was the catalogue of documenta V (from 1972). Szeemann had always been particularly attracted by the book form and the possible experimentations it

³⁰⁹ See Kompatsiaris’s analysis in *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, 50.

³¹⁰ Former West’s website: <https://formerwest.org/ResearchLibrary/PoliticsPoeticsDocumentaXthebook>, accessed April 2020.

³¹¹ David, *Documenta X The Book*, 13.

³¹² Fax from Cornelia Barth to Benjamin Buchloh, dated March 22, 1996. Documenta archiv, Mapped 181 Mitarbeiter DX.

³¹³ Interestingly an excerpt of *A Thousand Plateaus* was also republished in the catalogue, see pages 466-471.

³¹⁴ For an understanding of the term “rhizomatic” in Deleuze and Guattari, see the volume *A Thousand Plateaus*.

³¹⁵ Beetham, “Open and Closed”: 98.

could entail.³¹⁶ Instead of a traditional bound book, Szeemann wanted dV's catalogue to be unfixed, mobile and even participatory in nature, so that the reader could engage with it, modify it by adding inserts, taking them out, rearranging the order of the chapters, etc. Once again, the latter goes on emulating the role of the reader in the magazine, as active constructor of the order of the text. Arguably, these models, with the active participation of the reader, will not only engage in the publications devoted to dX but also in the very experience of the show as a cultural manifestation. The orange cover had the number five made by a small army of ants designed by artist Ed Ruscha.³¹⁷ It was designed as a ring binder, filled with pages with two punched holes that could be inserted in the metal rings. This concept implied that the show and the curatorial activity were a work in progress that would continue after the opening of the exhibition. Szeemann's catalogue was already attempting to engage with the gap between the publication and the opening of the show pointed out by Terry Smith,³¹⁸ and to make it durational and process oriented, meaning that it could still be compiled and completed after the opening of the exhibition.³¹⁹ While in 1972 the catalogue's imposing size was criticised for being over-designed and not user-friendly, documenta V's catalogue definitely changed the course of the Documenta publication's history and was pivotal in paving the way to David's vision of the periodical *dXd* which could better engage with the becoming in time and process-oriented nature of the exhibition.

In an interview David affirmed that the publications aimed to highlight "that we are working on something new and not departing from flat traditions [...] I wanted to show the awareness around the departing point of the research and the exhibition".³²⁰ Hence, even though the two books together would have been more than comprehensive, they could not reflect the processual and transformative nature of the exhibition, its becoming in time, as the magazine

³¹⁶ See Anna Sigríður Arnar, "Books at documenta: Medium, Art Object, Cultural Symbol", *oncurating.org*, 33 (2017), <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-33-reader/books-at-documenta-medium-art-object-cultural-symbol.html#.Xp39T9MzYcg>, accessed March 2020. To view the catalogue online see: Harald Szeemann et al., documenta V the catalogue: https://monoskop.org/images/0/02/Szeemann_Harald_et_al_Documenta_5_A.pdf, accessed December 2020.

³¹⁷ The image of the catalogue was the same used for the poster of the exhibition. For images of the catalogue see documenta's website: <https://www.documenta.de/de/publications>, accessed June 2020.

³¹⁸ Cf. Introduction at page 7.

³¹⁹ Sigríður Arnar, "Books at documenta".

³²⁰ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

instead could. It is in light of this that the ideas for the *Short Guide* and the *Book* were followed quite soon and organically by the publication of a magazine.³²¹ David intended the publications to exist in a way that everything overlapped and became integrated.³²² Each publication had a purpose. The periodical would, in fact, precede the *Book* and *Short Guide*, without creating repetitions and redundancies.³²³ As the curator mentions:

In the magazines there were pieces that couldn't be found in the book. They were another space of the exhibition. Obviously there were resonances between the magazines and the catalogue, some contributors for instance wrote for both publications, but the editing of the two was completely different. With the periodical we were almost at the beginning of the process, we had time to research, debate, change, and then as we moved forward we started condensing for the catalogue. The editing of the catalogue is a work of summarising, of choices, and of definition. In the periodical you are conceiving, in the catalogue you are finalising.³²⁴

This statement strongly links to the idea of the magazine as the epitome of the contemporary, and of the evolving nature of contemporary art. The periodical, as conceived by David, and opposed to *la biennale*, is a space of research, projection and anticipation of the art that will be comprised in the show. A multiplicity and not a single unit like the catalogue, the exhibition magazine fulfils its role as a tool for tracing the processes that lead to the making of the exhibition, maintaining the multiple connections that form the show, so that they might be reviewed and transformed in future iterations (issues). The *dXd* becomes a moment of the entire experience of the exhibition, itself composed by a multiplicity of events in time and space. Since both magazine and exhibition are in constant becoming, contrarily to the catalogue (which, as David notes, "finalises"), the magazine has the ability to retain the flavour of art and its system of legitimisation as seemingly contemporary.

The magazine, according to the curator was a "way of putting things together",³²⁵ of putting the research they had done for the exhibition into order. Indeed, the magazine's

³²¹ David confirmed that the idea of the magazine came out during a meeting in which the team was discussing the catalogue and its structure. Ibid.

³²² The only element of the show that David said came later was the *100 Days-100 Guests* programme. She initially proposed that it took place outside Kassel, but the institution did not accept this. Ibid. They wanted the audience to come to Kassel and not be spread around Europe. This would only start with Enwezor's documenta in 2002 and reach fulfilment with dOCUMENTA(13) and documenta 14.

³²³ David, interview, April 15, 2019. See also notes from meeting May 30-31, 1996. Documenta archiv, Mappe 241 Katalogredaktion-Documents.

³²⁴ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

³²⁵ Ibid.

ability to document the traces of a process, of a research, proved essential for *OBOE* and the writing of the chapter devoted to *la biennale*. Alongside the research for the Chapter on the Venice Biennale, the editing of the issue “Why Venice?” provided a much deeper understanding of the transformative nature of the show and its complex history.

In the statement, David is explaining that the *dXd* functioned as an organisational system, a diary that kept the traces of the progress and development of exhibition, and for this had the ability to represent the moment in which they were edited and published and, consequently, convey the exhibition’s link to the present and its becoming in time.

4.4. *documenta X documents: The Magazine as Process*

In February 1996, more than a year before the opening of the exhibition, David launched the first of three issues of the periodical *dXd*. The black and white design, the uncoated paper and the staple-binding, reminded one of a *cahier*, or a notebook. The only colour is found on the spine of each cover, where the title is laid out on a band of the same red-orange that is used in the whole graphic output. [fig. 11, 12, 13] With the design of the magazines, antithetically from *la biennale*, which wanted to create a luxurious object, David was trying to counter the notion of the magazine as a publicity and promotional tool. The title, while being a playful reference to the documentary function of the periodicals, is also testimony to the fact that the editor wanted to distance the periodical from the commercial and mainstream glossy art magazines that had become so popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, innovations in printing and digital technologies had brought a smoothing of production processes and a lowering of costs. Internationalisation and distribution had become much more reachable thanks to the exponential increase of the travel industry. After the 1960s and 1970s, the time of the great proliferation of artist’s magazines, there was a greater acknowledgment of the accessibility of the media, and that anyone with a good content idea could start her/his own magazine publication. The same is even more true today, with the possibilities the internet offers in terms of production and distribution.

The aesthetic simplicity of the publication was intended to evoke focus, concentration, in-depthness and perhaps even allude to Adorno’s ideal of blackness, for which “radical art today is the same as black art. [...] Much of contemporary art today is

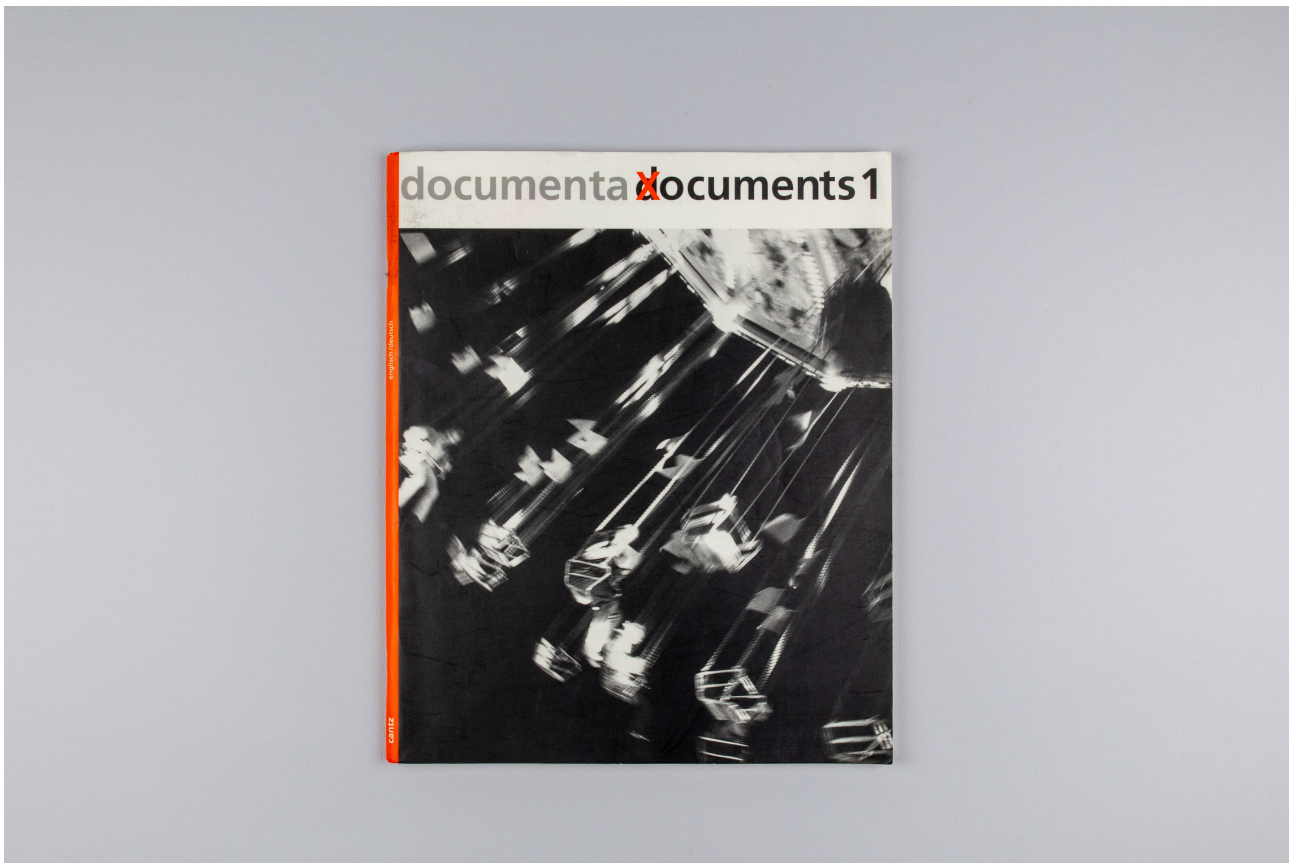


Fig. 11. Cover of *documenta X documents*, no. 1 (1996). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

irrelevant because it does not take note of this fact, continuing instead to take a childish delight in bright colours".³²⁶ Indeed the philosopher's influence is quite evident not only in the overall design, but also in David's attempt to create a chasm with Documenta's past, with her advocacy to move against the culture industry and the exhibition as mere spectacle. David did not want to run that risk and instead created an increasingly documentary and theoretical profile for the show, also through her aesthetic choices for the publication apparatus.

The three issues of the journal were published with an irregular periodicity, in February 1996, June 1996 and March 1997 respectively.³²⁷ Conversely to *la biennale* which rarely managed but always attempted to maintain a regular periodicity, these magazines

³²⁶ Theodor Adorno, "Black as an Ideal", in *Aesthetic Theory*, 58.

³²⁷ There are no publication dates on the issues themselves, and there is no official document in the Documenta archiv providing the exact dates of publication. The dates were recovered through articles and press releases and an archival document which shows the press coverage and the orders of each publication release. Documenta archiv, Mappe 273 a Cantz Verlag - Bestellungen "Documents".

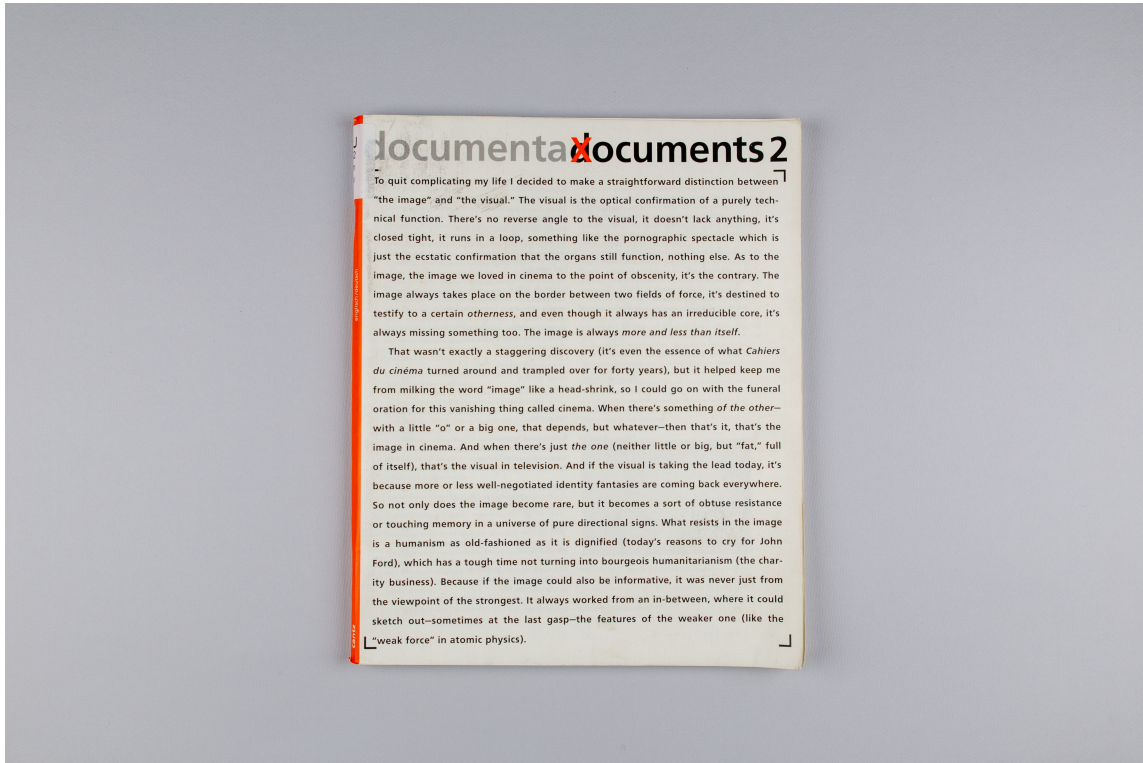


Fig. 12. Cover of *documenta X documents*, no. 2 (1996). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.



Fig. 13. Cover of *documenta X documents*, no. 3 (1997). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

came out when they were ready, according to the schedules of the curatorial team. The dates of the publications were also anchored in process.

The *dXd's* had different topics for each issue and were published both in English and German. The contents included different disciplines to better represent the cultural manifestation curated by David. Art, cinema, visual culture, photography, theatre and music, were associated with topics related to the socio-political and economic context, and each issue dealt with these fields through a thematic lens. The first focused on issues related to cultural identity and the state of art, the second on the relation between art and images in the contemporary visual culture, while the third analysed the cultural, urban and political notion of territory. Two more issues were scheduled to be published during and after *dX*, but they never saw the light of the day.³²⁸ They were to focus on theatre and the last one was supposed to be dedicated to the *100 Days - 100 Guests* program. Since all the talks were registered, the editorial team had in mind to transcribe all the discussions and create a document that would collate them all. This last issue could have been a way to allow the visitors to access these talks even if they were not present throughout the entire duration of the show. It would have been a means to contain the temporality of the show and make it accessible, rather than ungraspable in its entirety, as it revealed itself at the end. Perhaps the choice not to publish these two issues was because the moment of documentation was over, or because the curator wanted to maintain the open-ended spirit of the exhibition. With that said, all the topics were relevant to the exhibition and functioned as a space for research, discussion and documentation. Nonetheless, without considering the fact that they were linked to the themes of the exhibition, they were unable to continue the conversation in time, one of the prerogatives of a periodical publication as defined in this thesis.

Conceiving the publication for only a limited number of issues deprived the curators of the chance to return to a certain topic or issue and critically debate it. This was not opening a conversation but rather providing a peep-hole on what the show would become, a diary of decisions and actions. Rather than a participatory tool it might be seen as a device for the dissemination of curatorial thoughts and perspectives. This analysis of the monographic issue conditioned my thinking about *OBOE*, which will often have

³²⁸ See notes of the meeting held May 30-31, 1996. Documenta archiv, Mappe 241 Katalogredaktion-Documents.

monothematic issues, like the inaugural one dedicated to the Venice Biennale. However, since there is no end-date as such, I have already been thinking in terms of publishing other issues on the Venice Biennale and treat this topic as one of a series³²⁹ that will bring further aspects of the exhibition into the conversation, such as the National Pavilions structure.³³⁰

The first two issues of *dXd* came out almost one after the other, with only four months separating them, entailing that they were edited almost contemporarily. Issue one presents five contributions, and one artist's intervention by Erik Steinbrecher, who took pictures to recreate a walk through the city of Kassel and thus anticipated to the audience the idea of *Parcours*. [fig. 14]³³¹

The most controversial contribution to the issue, strongly questioned in the specialised press, was David's aforementioned conversation with philosopher Paul Virilio, in which the philosopher stated that since everyone was becoming an artist "the plastic arts are finished, it's over, *alles fertig*".³³² This statement, was probably one to justify the choices of the participatory exhibition, where art was only one of the aspects of the show. The contestation of this statement by other art magazines, like Isabelle Graw's *Text Zur Kunst*, proved vital for its success, placing the periodical on a stage from which it was much more visible than through publisher Hatje Kantz's distribution channels.

The second issue contained a number of contributions about the cinematographic image, which resonated with David's metaphor of the curatorial process as montage. In this issue, alongside a contribution by the film critic Serge Daney³³³, Agamben analyses the processes of montage, repetition and stoppage in Debord's movies. His understanding of

³²⁹ I was particularly inspired by this idea of the series by *e-flux journal*, which often divides longer issues in two or more parts, or publishes series of essays from the same author that unravel through different issues. See for instance the earlier mentioned essay by Simon Sheikh "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation" and "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 2: Withdrawal", published respectively in *e-flux*'s issue 62 (February 2015) and 63 (March 2015), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/63/60924/circulation-and-withdrawal-part-ii-withdrawal/>, last accessed January 2021.

³³⁰ Cf. *OBOE*'s "Call for Papers" page: <http://www.oboejournal.com/index.php/oboe/announcement/view/5>, last accessed January 2021.

³³¹ See also image 8 with the spread of *documenta X documents 1* with the map of Kassel's city centre and the different venues of the show.

³³² David and Virilio, "The Dark Spot of Art", 46-55, in particular 54.

³³³ Serge Daney's (1944-1992) texts, as those of many other authors, were published on both the magazine and the catalogue. He was founder and critic of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*.



Fig. 14. Spread of *documenta X documents*, no. 1 (1996) with Erik Steinbrecher's work "documenta Parcours / documenta itinerary". Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

these dynamics were rather important also in Chapter 1 for the analysis of repetition and difference in magazines and biennials.³³⁴ Artists' works become more visible and the reader finds contributions by Olaf Nicolai and Michelangelo Pistoletto, alongside contemporary photographers Helen Levitt and Lois Weinberger. Finally, with the third issue the editors had more time to edit as it came out nine months after the second issue. It is certainly the most structured of the three, with the last part of the issue devoted to artists' interventions and works designed specifically for the magazine, taking from the previously mentioned conceptualist artists' periodicals and Siegelau's curating practices in 1960s.³³⁵ Since the date of publication of this last issue was closer to the opening, David could finally disclose the names of some of the artists who would be in the show. Remarkably, the number of artists presented in the issues increases as they get closer to the opening of the exhibition, and the processual nature of *dXd* becomes a metaphor for the choices of the curator in terms of the

³³⁴ Cf. Chapter 1, footnotes 54 and 56.

³³⁵ Artists include, in order of appearance Ulriche Grossarth (78-79), Gabriel Orozco (80-81), Jean-Marc Bustamante (82-83), Reinhard Mucha (84-87), Martin Walde (88-91) and Jordan Crandall (92-95).

artists present in the show and the development of their works. It is yet another incarnation of the magazine's and exhibition's becoming. The increasing number of artists' interventions is evidence of David's choice to say who the artists were and what they were working on only when the show was being finalised and about to become public. This decision led her to fall into the same criticisms she moved towards her predecessor, of opening the show as if they were fireworks, without showing all the process of selection, mediation and research that was behind it.

In an interview David stated that the title paid homage to Documenta's initial purpose, to the documentary ability of the periodical, but most importantly to the famous Surrealist art magazine, edited by French intellectual and writer Georges Bataille³³⁶: *Documents: doctrines, archéologie, beaux-arts, ethnographie*.³³⁷ Whilst concentrating on cultural traditions with a multidisciplinary focus, Bataille's journal attempted to challenge the surrealist dogmas championed by André Breton.³³⁸ This heated exchange between avant-garde movements gave the journal its character as a means of staking a claim, and as an attempt to go against the grain. Conceived in such a different context from that which informed Bataille's *Documents*, in a hegemonic exhibition like Documenta, David stresses that Bataille's journal was relevant only for the choice of the title, although few commonalities can be found in the multidisciplinary approach, and in the attempt to provide a view of what is often overlooked in the traditional narration of art.

An important element David emphasised about Bataille's periodical is that *Documents* was in fact, rather than a magazine, a '*revue*' in the French sense. Unfortunately, the term does not have an exact correspondence in English, but it signifies a specialised periodical publication which strives to discover and re-evaluate artists and their works. The term was in

³³⁶ George Bataille (1897-1962) was a French writer, anthropologist and philosopher. His writing would span several fields, as *Documents*, the publication he edited, demonstrates.

³³⁷ The journal was published between April 1929 and January 1931, and ran for a total of 15 issues. For images of the first two issue covers see <https://monoskop.org/Documents>. For more information about the journal see John Phillips and Ma Shaoling, "Undercover Surrealism: Picasso, Miro, Masson and the Vision of Georges Bataille 11 May–30 July 2006, Hayward Gallery", *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, 7–8 (2006): 253–262; Dawn Ades, Simon Baker (eds.), *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006).

³³⁸ André Breton (1896-1966) was a French writer, poet and the leader of the Surrealist movement. He wrote the Surrealist Manifesto and edited the periodical *La Révolution Surréaliste* between 1924 and 1929.

vogue for the early 20th century avant-garde movements, whose *revues* provided a forum for discussing new orientations, propositions and works with the public.³³⁹ They had a slower temporality than mainstream art magazines and functioned as spaces of reflection and analysis.

Although *dXd* drew a direct link with the idea of the periodical as document, the journal was not intended to report facts, but rather to trace the thinking process behind the making of the exhibition. The temporality of the exhibition was an essential point of reference, underlined by the ideal of a never-ending programme of talks that were to accompany the audience for the entire duration of the show. All these times and places where the exhibition was supposed to take place were to be filled with art and theory. Even the bookshop planned by artist Vito Acconci is a testimony to this: an object, a labyrinth and a transparent structure within which the only visual obstacles were books and artworks. The visitor had to pass through this space or right next to it to arrive into the hall, where above Franz West's chairs, Heimo Zobernig had reinvented the entire space. This path had to be perceived by walking through space, but also with the passing of time. Time was one of the constitutive elements of the exhibition, at the centre of the talks and of the magazine itself. The subtitle to all this was that the show was never visible in its entirety and complexity, because of which the magazine was titled "Documents" and the catalogue was called "The Book". No publication could have had the ambition of providing a complete survey, an archive, an order of a show which was based on an ongoing and not always predictable process. The process must be accepted as something a-systematic, made of fragments, pieces that helped hold together the curatorial act, and which opposed itself to the very concept of the catalogue. The *dXd* became deposits of information and research about the show:

The idea, initially, was to document the making of the exhibition, rather than that of creating a magazine. We wanted to engage more directly with the audience, and show that Documenta is not something that comes out magically after five years, but something more systematic. We wanted to put the process and research first.³⁴⁰

dXd had the potential to be both a-systematic and systematic, capable of engaging with the making of contemporaneity while preserving records of this making. In the second chapter I discussed the dual drive of the exhibition magazine, on the one side its privileging constant flux and its becoming in time, on the other the need to create an order and preserve the

³³⁹ On the model of the Conceptualist magazine see Chapter 2, pages 61-64.

³⁴⁰ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

memory of the show. This notion returns again to Walker's understanding of the magazine as a way to capture pictures of the present, so that the sum of the pictures would then form a partial history of art. In a similar manner, *dXd* would take pictures of precise moments of the making of the exhibition, highlighting the time-oriented and processual nature of the show, composed of the various instants in which contemporaneity and the becoming of art reveal themselves.

For the purpose of this thesis' argument, these issues, divergently from *la biennale*, are more concerned with the becoming of the show and the methodological approach involved in making the exhibition. As exhibition magazines, they were focused on the becoming of the present and of the exhibition, rather than of art and artistic practice. *dXd*'s first issue investigates the current possibilities of the visual arts, the second moves towards the cinematic and moving image as both a way of structuring the exhibition in its becoming and as a way of looking at the world, while the third goes towards the opening of the exhibition to space, no longer contained in the walls of an exhibition but in the city. Furthermore, *dXd* seemed to have no direct relationship with the institution insofar as the production expenses were taken from the budget devoted to the entire exhibition's organisation. David affirmed that she had total freedom as long as she didn't exceed the amount devoted to the show.³⁴¹

All this considered, *documents* remains a choice to officialise, heighten, promote and disseminate the research for the show. While these publications are supposed to be working notes, they function more as official records, a diary of the curatorial process. The thinking and research that led to the final output of the exhibition was edited, corrected, arranged to be coherent and adapted for circulation, to be a "*revue*" on art and culture, in every sense of that term.³⁴² Here, the exhibition magazine becomes not merely a record of the curatorial process, but an instrument of storytelling in the hands of the curator. The performance of this storytelling was therefore "staged" behind the scenes.

The intention behind this unveiling of the exhibitionary process was to encourage the audience to "feel that the aesthetic experience belongs to them, as much as to anyone

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

else”,³⁴³ but it was also about unveiling the role and figure of the curator, and legitimising the curator as educator.³⁴⁴

At the time of David’s dX this trend had just started taking foot, but as Brenson explained discursivity was already as intrinsic and necessary to the curator as a space of self-consciousness, an awareness about the implications of curatorial practice and audience’ response. He argued that opening this type of discursivity by declaring one’s intentions and modes was also a way of justifying oneself, one’s choices, as a manner of “recognising our own fallibility” and “creating a space of vulnerability”.³⁴⁵ While preparing the audience for what was to come, she opened a space of vulnerability and criticism not only towards herself, but towards the institution, questioning its very premises and searching for a way for it to fulfil its potential as a “contemporary” art exhibition capable of reading and adjusting to its own time.

This idea of declaring oneself, of being self-conscious and revealing the decision making process while in the making, on the one side demands involvement from the audience, and on the other it also prepares it for what is to come, safeguarding the curators from criticisms. This notion could be accepted as plausible, but as mentioned above, the phase of unveiling, of showing what is happening during the downtime of the show is itself intentional, edited and staged. It fails to account for the problematics, difficulties and refusals that happen during the immanent preparation of the show. The same problems and difficulties that are rarely visible in a magazine. And while this might have been intended as a method to reduce criticism, David’s curatorial choices were actually strongly criticised at the time, for giving too much space to theory and too little space to the artists and artworks which were supposed to compose the show. The periodical therefore visibly functioned as a legitimising tool for the curator and exhibition, limiting its ability to exemplify the becoming-contemporary of artistic genesis as such.

Self-declaration and links with the audience were only two of the reasons that induced David to publish an exhibition magazine, as explained by the editors in the editorial statement:

Like a film, documenta is a long and patient process of montage. With the publication of these ‘working papers’, the documenta team hope to indicate this process of

³⁴³ Brenson, “The Curator’s Moment”, 226.

³⁴⁴ Smith, *Talking Contemporary Curating*, 14.

³⁴⁵ Brenson, “The Curator’s Moment”, 227.

montage. These 'documents' will appear sporadically, accompanying the preparation of documenta X until June 1997. They are conceived as a practical tool for discussion within the project and as a public manifestation of its overall spirit. [...] In each issue ideas will be thrown out, questions posed; and working hypotheses tested; together they will form a kind of rough draft of the exhibition process, defining the *hic et nunc* of documenta X.³⁴⁶

Similarly to the attendant publications and talks programme, the magazine was a manifestation of the exhibition, and as much as the exhibition dX, it was concerned with process and the exhibitionary format.³⁴⁷ An unprecedented amount of space was given to the research, theory and preparation for the exhibition.

documents was intended to precede dX as a kind of propaedeutic insight into David's documenta philosophy, which was—as stated above—based on the concept of the montage, of piecing together different fragments to tell the story of the exhibition, its becoming, and how the art will evolve before it. While there have been various recent curators and scholars who have theorised on the technique of montage in contemporary art³⁴⁸ (some mentioned throughout this Chapter), I think it noteworthy that a cinematic vocabulary and model was used years later for another magazine on curating, established in 2009 by curator Jens Hoffmann and titled *The Exhibitionist – Journal on Exhibition Making*.³⁴⁹ [fig. 15]

Since this journal is more attentive towards creating a historical foundation for the curatorial discipline, the reference does not concern itself with process. In this case, the editor draws from cinematic vocabulary to discuss the nature of the author as well as using the *Cahiers du Cinéma* as an aesthetic model for the journal [fig. 16].³⁵⁰ Both the *dXd* and *The Exhibitionist* seem to demonstrate the lack of a curatorial vocabulary for elucidating a history of curating, an aporia engaged with for the first time by the Manifesta Journal, and treated in the following chapter.

³⁴⁶ Catherine David, et al., "Editorial", *documenta X documents*, 1 (1996): 1.

³⁴⁷ Brenson, "The Curator's Moment".

³⁴⁸ See Marco Bertozzi and Cristina Baldacci, *Montages: Assembling as a Form and Symptom in Contemporary Arts* (Milano: Mimesis international, 2018). See also: Nicholas Bourriard, *Postproduction. Culture As Screenplay: How Art Re-programs The World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010); Germano Celant, *Artmix: Flussi Tra Arte, Architettura, Cinema, Design, Moda, Musica e Televisione* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2008).

³⁴⁹ For a short description of the magazine since the announcement of its launch: <http://moussemagazine.it/the-exhibitionist/>, accessed December 2020.

³⁵⁰ Jens Hoffmann "Ouverture", *The Exhibitionist: Journal of Exhibition Making*, 1 (2009), here cited from Jens Hoffmann (ed.), *The Exhibitionist: The First Six Years* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2017), 29.



Fig. 15. Cover of “*The Exhibitionist: The First Six Years*” (2017). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.



Fig. 16. Cover of “*The Exhibitionist: The First Six Years*” (2017). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

Returning now to the above editorial statement, these *documents* were also defined as “working papers”. Working papers would have given a stronger idea of the processual nature of the exhibition, but ultimately the decision was made to stress the documentary nature of the periodical while paying homage to the famous surrealist journal and to the exhibition itself.³⁵¹ On the processual role of these documents, the curator clarified that they became “a meeting point. It gave us (the curatorial team) ideas, deadlines, and it was a way to really work on the show from the beginning”.³⁵² The magazine works to tight deadlines and time-frames that allow the editorial team to project, set goals and evaluate these objectives along the way. Nevertheless, the “sporadic” nature of the magazine loosens these deadlines. In the case of *documents* it remained crucially important to be able to publish three issues before the opening of the show as a way to engage with the periodicity of the exhibition itself. Unlike biennials that only have two years, Documenta curators are granted time for articulation, time to distance and review decisions, but some ideas, inspirations and conversations might be forgotten in the process. As argued in the chapter on the exhibition magazine, this kind of publication has proven itself helpful for keeping thoughts in order, establishing priorities, and organising ideas, texts and memories. The magazine, considered here as a working document, serves almost a pre-archival function, reminding us of Sigmund Freud’s *Note Upon a Mystic Pad*:

If I distrust my memory—neurotics, [...]—I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. In that case the surface upon which this note is preserved, the pocket book or sheet of paper, is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemonic apparatus, which I otherwise carry about with me invisible.³⁵³

The magazines became the space, the notepad, where these memories or fragments of them were preserved so that they could be accessible to an audience. Through theoretical texts, interviews and works by guest artists, *documents* was able to create a memory of the process of selection and organisation (montage), while simultaneously annotating the debates,

³⁵¹ David, interview, April 15, 2019.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ See Sigmund Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIX (1923–1925), *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, 2001). Here cited from Charles Merewether, *The Archive* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press and Whitechapel, 2006), 20–24.

authors, and in rare cases even artists, included in the many manifestations promoted by the show.

Antithetical to the writing of a review, and thus, *a posteriori*, these magazines changed their perspective to discuss the exhibition *a priori*, before it happened. In doing so, they evoke Heidegger's concept of the *futural* and countered Osborne's notion of the historical present, while engaging with the multiple temporalities of the show and its becoming rather than its being. It was only while visiting the show that the notions, ideas and subjects discussed in the magazine would become clear. The editing of the issues was meant to show the becoming in time of the curator's philosophy and of the exhibition. The audience would read these fragments while the exhibition was in process, and understand how it came to be only once they had seen it in its entirety. Yet once again this proved quite a conundrum, because, as mentioned previously, the exhibition remained impossible to grasp in its totality and complexity because of its high number of outputs and its time-based nature. While maintaining its role as a vehicle for retaining audience engagement during the interval and educating it for the exhibition, it also resulted in a kind of alienation. This limit to linear participation, which was one of the leitmotifs of the show, was recognised by the curator as follows:

Adopting the single logic of a 'work in progress', these papers will necessarily be a site of debate, of controversy, and possibly of contradiction; they stand little chance of tracing a straight line from publication to publication [...resulting in] a healthy dose of the unforeseen and the incalculable.³⁵⁴

There remained, therefore, a chasm of sorts between the demonstrable intentions, missions of the curator in the editorials, the possibilities of the audience and the actuality of exhibition and magazine as interrelated experiences.

Indeed, this chasm characterises not only the issues but the very premises from which it departs. As notes of the curatorial process, the editors believed that the magazines would mirror, not so much a linear way of thinking, but a rhizomatic,³⁵⁵ broad-minded and loose spectrum of ideas, notion and concepts, that would only take form in the exhibition. The "unforeseen and the incalculable" become a visible part of the process. The unexpected turns out to be as important as the expected, if not more so, as the a-systematic becomes as much a protagonist as the systematic. *dXd's* focus was strictly on the contents the exhibition would

³⁵⁴ David, "Editorial": 1.

³⁵⁵ Cf. footnote on the term rhizomatic, 315.

address and the methods with which it was conceived. The process of montage, heavily stressed in the periodicals, does not reveal itself as conclusive for conceptualising the entirety of the exhibition, which includes the periodicals, the various books, the exhibition and the talks programme. Even in terms of the relationship between audience and curator, the dialogue remains fragmented and interrupted. Once again, an element of failure permeates the becoming of the exhibition, and the periodical that preceded it, and may be grasped only through the disparate fragments that compose the show. Similarly to the archive, the exhibition magazine (and the art magazine in general) lives the impossibility of preserving the entire becoming of the show, and contemporary art even more so. Its articles, as fragments of the exhibition process in this specific case, form a history that may be accessed through multiple points, pages and images. The reader may engage with the process of the show at different times and from different points of view. The rhizomatic reading experience offered by the magazine returns in the exhibition, as a way to sustain the the notion that there is no single direction through which processes pertaining to the visual arts can be engaged in. After David's show other curators have attempted to record the becoming of the show and its expansion in time and space through the magazine with substantial increases to their publishing apparatus. *dXd* and David's exhibition remain significant precursors to the journals on curating and exhibition making that would start emerging in the first decade of the 2000s in the context of Documenta and beyond, and are therefore essential for understanding how these two phenomena have legitimised their ephemerality and epitomised the current momentum.

4.5. In the Aftermath of dX: Publications at documenta³⁵⁶

Since 1997's paradigmatic shift with David's dX, magazines have become so important for Documenta that its curators have, one after another, either adopted, engaged or reacted to its format. As Marchart points out in relation to the exhibition, "every hegemonic shift leaves behind an altered terrain from which every opponent has to proceed".³⁵⁷ This was undoubtedly the case following the publication of dX's magazine.

³⁵⁶ This last part of the chapter was published in a shorter version in Salvaneschi, "Magnifying the Margins", 165-167.

³⁵⁷ Marchart, "Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization", 472.

4.5.1. Documenta 11 and *Point d'Ironie*

When it was his turn, partly inspired by David's discursive exhibition, Okwui Enwezor launched a project titled *Platforms*³⁵⁸. The project was divided into five stages, or to use the eponymous term, platforms. The first four *Platforms* consisted of lectures, debates, and panel discussions organised in a range of different cities around the world between 2001 and 2002,³⁵⁹ while the fifth one consisted of one-hundred days of public events and the expected mega-exhibition spread across the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel. As one of its main objectives, Enwezor's documenta pursued an expansion of documenta's temporal and spatial realms, successfully dismantling the Western centric axis that had characterised the show since the first documenta in 1955. The results of the first four platforms were published in four clearly designed volumes of theory and discourse, and accompanied the catalogue, the short guide and a publication focusing only on the images of the display of the exhibition. Furthermore, in 2001 Enwezor began a collaboration with the hybrid free press periodical (half newspaper, half poster) *le Point d'Ironie*, founded by artist Christian Boltanski, curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and the French fashion brand agnès b.³⁶⁰ Published ten times a year, the editors invite artists, architects, filmmakers and photographers to design the magazine's 8 pages. The format of the periodical makes it very inexpensive: it is only 8 pages, printed double sided, and without binding. The pages may be read as a newspaper or viewed as posters. The flimsy format, though, is counteracted by the fact that each edition is conceived and designed by an artist, which makes them collectable publications. For seven issues starting with its 23rd, *le Point d'Ironie* was published in collaboration with documenta 11 and presented some of the artists exhibited at the quinquennial exhibition. The first one, published in October 2001, was designed by artist Thomas Hirschorn who was present at

³⁵⁸ On Enwezor's *Platforms* for documenta 11, see Okwui Enwezor, "The Black Box" in Okwui Enwezor et al. (eds.), *documenta 11, Platform 5*, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 42-55; Tim Griffin and Okwui Enwezor, "documenta's New Dimension", *Art Press*, 280 (June 2002), 24-32. For a comparative analysis of documenta X and 11 see Garder and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta*, 183-206.

³⁵⁹ For the publications of the *Platforms* see: Okwui Enwezor, et al., *Democracy Unrealized: Documenta 11, Platform 1, Experiments with Truth. Transitional Justice and the Process of Truth and Reconciliation*, (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2003); *Documenta 11, Platform 2; Créolité and Creolization* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002); *Documenta 11, Platform 3; Under Siege, Four African Cities: Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002); *Documenta 11, Platform 4* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002); *Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition*, exh. cat. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002).

³⁶⁰ See *Point d'Ironie's* website: <http://www.pointdironie.com/>, accessed June 2020.

documenta with the *Bataille Monument*.³⁶¹ [fig. 17] The ensuing issues were designed by architect Yona Friedman, followed by artists Matthew Barney, Christian Boltanski, Hanne Darboven, Raqs Media Collective and philosopher Édouard Glissant. While these issues were unconcerned with the making of the exhibition unlike *documents*, they became a display tool, so that the audience could begin familiarising themselves with the artists in the show.



Fig. 17. *Le Point d'Ironie* website with images from Thomas Hirschhorn “The Spinoza Monument”, no. 23 (2001). Source: *Le Point d'Ironie*.

Enwezor’s editorial approach moved in a direction almost opposite to David’s. While dX’s curator tried to avoid giving away the artists in the show until the very last minute, Enwezor wanted to display their work in dedicated issues and have the audience acquaint themselves with their work before the opening of the show, in the same way he did with *Platforms* in preparation for the exhibition. The becoming of the exhibition was theoretically unravelled through these platforms, and visually through these publications—despite their

³⁶¹ For an analysis of the monument, see Green and Gardner, “Post-North? documenta 11 and the Challenges of the “Global” Exhibition”, *oncurating.org*, 33 (2017), <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-33-reader/post-north-documenta11-and-the-challenges-of-the-global-exhibition.html#.Xp6sytMzYcg>, accessed May 2020. See also Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and documenta*, 193-196.

small number due to the frequency of the periodical itself—thereby demonstrating the thinking processes and premises that would lead to the artists' final work in the show.

Another important point to consider here is that *le Point d'Ironie* was launched in 1997 and had a circulation that went from 800 to 100.000 copies. For the partnership with documenta the number increased to 300.000.³⁶² The editors' aim was to reach a great number of readers. So, contrarily to a periodical that had just been launched like *documents*, *le Point d'Ironie* already had a network of distribution via art institutions and Agnès b.'s boutiques, and it could count on a community of enthusiastic followers spanning the fields of art, fashion and design. As stated in the website *le Point d'Ironie* was "used as a tool to enlarge and continue the visibility of a local and punctual project".³⁶³ Similarly to the Platforms preceding the exhibition, the co-venture with the French periodical was meant as a tool to disseminate documenta both spatially and temporally far beyond the German city of Kassel. A small number of documenta 11 artists could be discovered and viewed beforehand by an even more heterogeneous audience than that reached by the exhibition, communication and advertising campaigns.

4.5.2. The Magazine Project at documenta XII

By the time of documenta XII (2007)³⁶⁴ the curators had decided to deepen their engagement with the magazine as a means through which they could grapple with debates in the art world and society at large, and at the same time communicate their findings. It was a tool for researching and recording the processes of the exhibition, but also a means of advertising, with the magazine heightened to the status of art, becoming part of the exhibition. To this end, the curators Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack, together with the Viennese editor of *Springerin* magazine,³⁶⁵ Georg Schöllhammer established "The Magazine Project", a meta-magazine, a "magazine of magazines".³⁶⁶ [fig. 18] For this project, the editors invited ninety publications including journals of art, culture and politics, as well as online media platforms, from fifty different countries to take part in forums around the world and contribute to three

³⁶² See *le Point D'Ironie's* website on the page dedicated to Thomas Hirschhorn: <http://www.pointdironie.com/in/23/23.php>, accessed December 2020.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ documenta XII was held between June 16 and September 23, 2007. See documenta XII website: <https://www.documenta12.de/en/about-documenta.html>, accessed December 2020.

³⁶⁵ See *Springerin's* website <https://www.springerin.at/en/>, accessed December 2020.

³⁶⁶ For this term, see <https://www.documenta12.de/en/about-documenta.html>, accessed December 2020.

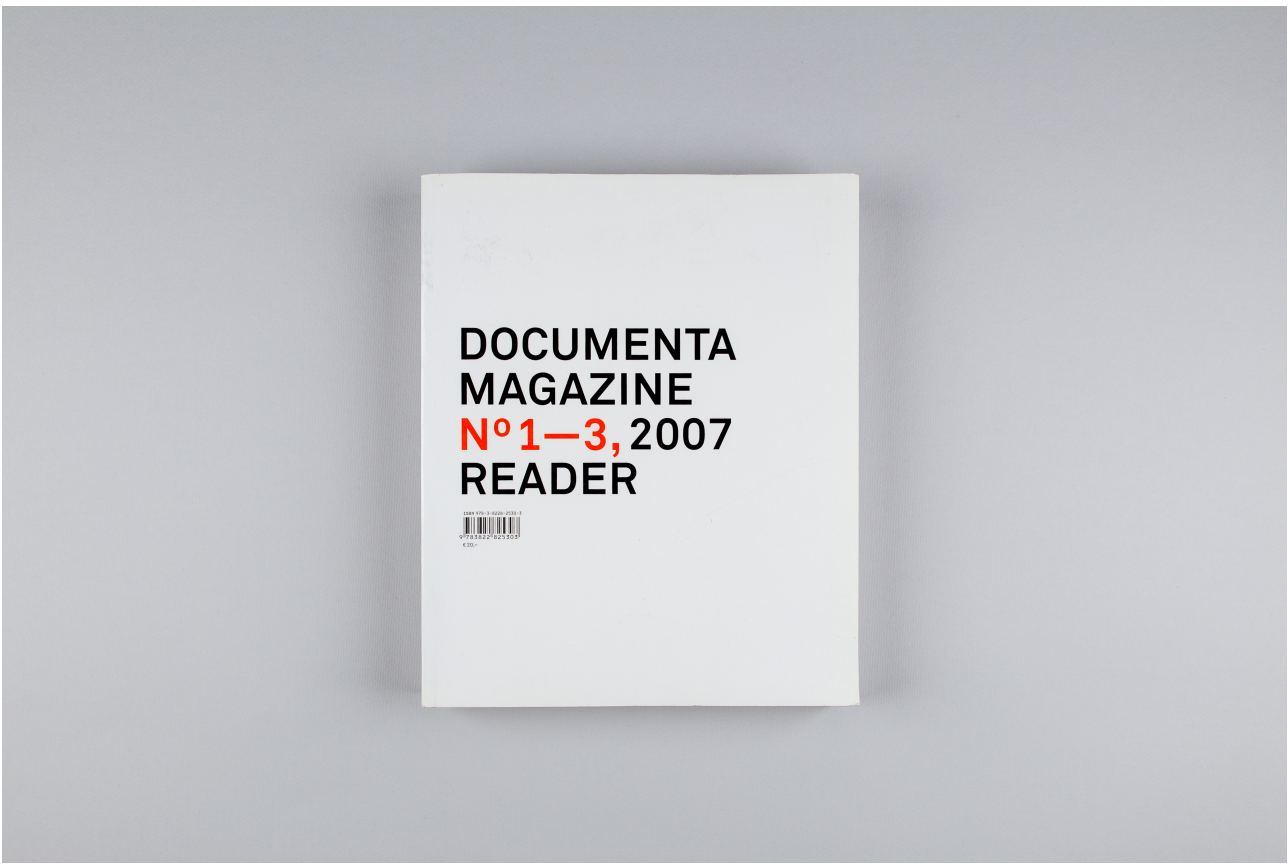


Fig. 18. Cover of the *documenta magazine Reader*, no. 1-3 (2007). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

separate issues entitled *Modernity?*, *Life?* and *Education?*.³⁶⁷ The magazines and journals had to ideally “serve as navigators that guide and connect the public and artists, art works and projects, theory and practice, specific local interests and the international arena, while creating a forum for contemporary discourses, both aesthetic and conceptual.”³⁶⁸ This global network of periodicals operated similarly to David’s *dXd*, and Enwezor’s *Platforms*, in that they were preparing the grounds and research for the exhibition in its preliminary stages. Taking the idea of the fragmentation of the exhibition into multiple formats further than before, the participating periodicals have become part of the becoming of the exhibition, spreading and disseminating its thoughts and theories through their platforms and thus becoming accessories to the exhibition and to its very becoming. While some of these ideas

³⁶⁷ The three issues were collected into the *documenta Magazine Reader n. 1-3*, (Koln: Taschen, 2007).

³⁶⁸ Keiko Sei, “Report on the South East Asian Tour of *documenta 12 Magazine*”, *Art Asia Archive* (1 February 2006), <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/report-on-the-south-east-asian-tour-of-documenta-12-magazine>, accessed April 2020.

and reflections sustaining the show may be found in the three magazines produced, a further constellation of articles and features on the show and the project that anticipated and followed the unravelling of the show also exists.

The periodicals invited would in fact play a crucial role in generating dialogues and discussions between the audience and the exhibition, but also in connecting theory and practice, whilst highlighting a new factor; compared to documenta X's process and bearing in mind the shifts brought by Enwezor's documenta 11, the curators here demonstrated the importance of a dialogic progression, a dialectical one in the Marxist sense of the term. The show was meant to grow upon a structure in which the author/curator would always launch his ideas to an arena where every concept could be discussed and even dismissed. That being said, the curators were strategic when inviting these periodicals and deciding to explore this medium, which had been proliferating in every corner of the globe since the early 2000s. It was a means through which they could access and engage with specific knowledge in the world, reach their readers, and at the same time use their very pages or spaces to communicate the topics and themes at the core of documenta XII. As Osborne put it, art periodicals and magazines had by this time consolidated their role as vehicles of legitimisation, and were adopted here to legitimise documenta XII as an exhibition.³⁶⁹ Through this process, the niche publics of these disparate journals were brought together under the umbrella of the Documenta magazine.³⁷⁰

The magazines that contributed were displayed in the show alongside an online archive that traced the networks formed by these publications—an important reference point for the *Art Periodical Database*—becoming the protagonists of a series of discussions and conversations. While the project may be praised for putting some small and unknown publications under the spotlight of an international exhibition and audience,³⁷¹ the overall concept was strongly criticized for its use of these periodicals to promote documenta XII as a

³⁶⁹ Peter Osborne, "Documenta 12 Magazines Project Debacle", *Radical Philosophy*, 146 (November/December 2007): 39.

³⁷⁰ On the relationship that was created between the magazines and invited and documenta's "power machine" see Sheikh, "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation" and "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 2: Withdrawal".

³⁷¹ See Gwen Allen's analysis in "Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds, Part 2: Critical Publicity in a Global Context", *ArtMargins Online*, 22 October 2016, <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/featured-articles-sp-829273831/784-art-periodicals-and-contemporary-art-worlds-part-2>, accessed June 2020.

knowledge producer³⁷², and for erasing the differences between the various publications that participated.

4.5.3. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's dOCUMENTA(13) and the 100 Notebook Series

For dOCUMENTA(13)³⁷³ Artistic Director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev chose to distribute her documenta even further, both spatially and temporally, compared to her predecessors. This time, instead of spreading the exhibition in the outskirts of Kassel only before it officially opened its doors, dOCUMENTA(13)³⁷⁴ would have an outpost in Kabul, Afghanistan with works of approximately 30 artists, and another concurrent exhibition at the former Benedictine Monastery in Breitenau, just outside Kassel.

The logo of the show was meant to be as flexible as possible, while remaining complex in its simplicity. It was supposed to be a resumé of the idea of the show itself, able to conquer the most diverse forms of art, whilst remaining firm in maintaining the exhibition's main principles. The logo reversed the conventional capital/lower case sequence of characters, symbolising an upside-down revolution. Two parentheses were added to keep the progressive number inside, as a form of mathematical formula, which gave participants the opportunity to convert it with any possible font.³⁷⁵ This same flexibility, in conjunction with a rigid rule, may be found in the series of booklets which were published before the show, throughout a period of three years. These booklets had to use the same font, the same monochrome cover, with the only changing elements being the cover's colours and dimensions.

With the series of notebooks, titled *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, Christov-Bakargiev had the intention of framing and exploring the thinking process that led to the exhibition and the

³⁷² Cf. Osborne, "Documenta 12 Magazines Project Debacle"; and Allen, "Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds". See also Gwen Allen, "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition".

³⁷³ dOCUMENTA(13) was held between June 9 and September 16, 2012. For more information about the show see documenta's website: https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_13, accessed May 2020.

³⁷⁴ For a review of the exhibition see: Roberta Smith, "Art Show as Unruly Organism", *New York Times*, June 14, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/arts/design/documenta-13-in-kassel-germany.html>, accessed December 2020; and Daniel Birnbaum, "Documenta 13", *Artforum* 51, 2 (October 2012), <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201208/documenta-13-34514>, accessed December 2020.

³⁷⁵ For the design of the logo see the Leftloft (the designer's) website: <https://leftloft.com/case-study/documenta-13/>, accessed December 2020.

collaboration with the artists.³⁷⁶ They were a prelude to the exhibition, published eighteen months before the opening, but functioned as a central element of it, since they would allow the public to anticipate the developing ideas and participants of dOCUMENTA(13). The staple-bound notebooks, in their different sizes and colours, and combining writing and drawings, were to provide insight into the concept of the exhibition, its fields of research and its methodologies, similarly to those intentions set by David for her *dXd*. Each notebook was focused either on an artist, thinker, scholar or curator, or on conversations and interviews. Short and usually only containing one piece of writing, they cannot be considered magazines in themselves. They became a moment of the exhibition, one that would help contain and record the thoughts and ideas at the core of the exhibition. Christov-Bakargiev states that in these notebooks “the archive and the artist book, collapse and recovery all come together here”.³⁷⁷ Once the 100 notebooks were published, they were comprehensively collated in the catalogue, entitled *The Book of Books* [fig. 19, 20].

The title is certainly a reference to David’s catalogue for documenta X, *The Book*, but while in the former example the contents of the catalogue and the magazines were only partially connected in order to avoid repetitions, *The Book of Books* republished the entire *100 Notes* series in a single volume, alongside references to all the participants, introductory essays, a reading list and an index for navigating the contents. The volume documents the time and the enormous process of thinking and production that is woven into the exhibition. Publishing the collection of notebooks in a single volume was probably an attempt to defy as well as deny the seriality and ephemerality of Documenta’s recent periodical ventures and to react to the tendency David began in 1997.

The number of publications promoted by dOCUMENTA(13) was without precedent, surely due to the evolving nature of printing and digital cultures, which have allowed for the emergence of a great proliferation of online and print publications, alongside their own legitimising system made up of exhibitions and fairs. This proliferation and fragmentation of the catalogue in a surfeit of texts, is perhaps nothing but a way of showing the unfixed nature

³⁷⁶ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Letter to a friend = Brief an einen Freund* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011). See also See Angela Vettese, “Cento libri spiegano documenta”, *Il Sole 24 Ore* (May 27, 2012), https://st.ilssole24ore.com/art/cultura/2012-05-27/cento-libri-spiegano-documenta-081852.shtml?uuid=Abbsz6iF&refresh_ce=1, accessed May 2020.

³⁷⁷ “Interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev,” *Hatje Cantz Magazine*, June 5, 2012, www.hatjecantz.de/carolyn-christov-bakargiev-5197-1.html, accessed December 2020.

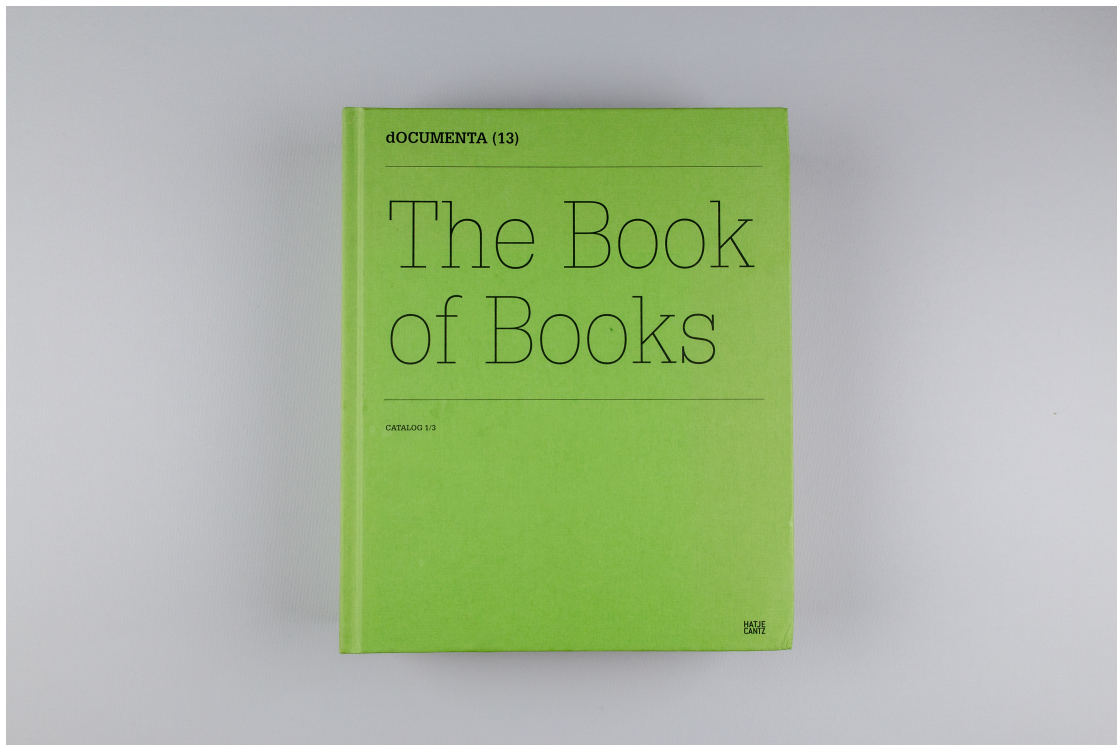


Fig. 19. Cover of “dOCUMENTA(13) The Books of Books” (2013). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.



Fig. 20. Index of “dOCUMENTA(13) The Books of Books” (2013). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

of the present, that all in is flux, open to change and in becoming. In the years that preceded the exhibition there had been a number of events, from the global financial crisis, to the Arab spring, the Occupy movement and the migrant crisis, that had disrupted the current status quo and these changes had to be mirrored and engaged with in the exhibition itself. There was a crucial sense of urgency and the need to review the ways in which art and culture were being represented. By fragmenting in 100 pieces and later uniting them in the catalogue, Christov-Bakargiev is on the one hand showing the impossibility of collecting the becoming and heterogeneity of this tumultuous present in a single catalogue, while on the other she is discrediting it and finding a new practice, for which the catalogue simply becomes a binder holding together these notebooks. This action may be seen under the light of its unbecoming, since, in doing so, Christov-Bakargiev is reinstating the catalogue as an appendix of the exhibition, rather than a part of the exhibition itself, as dX's catalogue had been. The open form of the periodical is closed into a volume collecting all the publications. There is no longer the sense of a becoming and a smooth shifting in time. The history of the years before the opening of dOCUMENTA(13) had been written. They had to be historicised so that a break with the past could take place and a new time could be engaged with, as a new beginning.

4.5.4. Documenta 14 and *South as a State of Mind*

The most recent exhibition, documenta 14 (2017), curated by Adam Szymczyk, followed the trend set by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in being split between two cities. The difference this time was that the show was not open concurrently in both cities, but was open half of the time in Athens and the other half in Kassel,³⁷⁸ prolonging the length of the exhibition by 63 days. The show also involved the cooperation with a magazine beyond the institution's boundaries, the Athens based magazine: *South as a State of Mind*,³⁷⁹ which it "reconfigured

³⁷⁸ Documenta 14 took place first in Athens, from April 8 to July 16, 2017 and in Kassel from June 10, to September 17, 2017. On the exhibition see T. J. Demos, "Learning from Athens: Athens, Post-Democracy, and Decolonisation", *Third Text*, <http://thirdtext.org/demos-documenta>, accessed September 2020.

³⁷⁹ To view *documenta 14 Journal's* issues see: <https://www.documenta14.de/en/publications/15732/south-as-a-state-of-mind>, accessed May 2020. For an analysis of *documenta 14 Journal* see Allen, "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition", 152-156; and Camma Juel Jepsen, "South", in Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund (eds.) *Contemporary Research Intensive* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2018), 19-22.

temporarily”.³⁸⁰ *South* was originally founded in 2012 to address the global South as both a geographical area and “a set of cultural ideas and mythologies rooted in the legacies and conditions of colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism”.³⁸¹ In 2015 the editor-in-chief of the magazine, Marina Fokidis, hosted and gave space to documenta’s editorial team for four issues, spanning two years before the opening of the show in Athens until the final month of the show in Kassel, succeeding where David failed in 1997 with *documents* 4 and 5. *documenta 14 Journal* [fig. 21] was the first periodical to cover the time before, during and after the exhibition. With a new design, consistent with all of the exhibition’s communication material, the journal was described by the editors as a “manifestation” rather than a “discursive lens” through which to discuss and analyse the key topics addressed in the



Fig. 21. Cover of *South as a State of Mind / documenta 14 Journal*, no. 2 (2016). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

³⁸⁰ Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk, “Editor’s letter”, *documenta 14 journal*, 1 (October 2015), http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/12_editors_letter, accessed May 2020.

³⁸¹ Allen, “Between Page, Market, and Exhibition”, 154.

exhibition.³⁸² The role of the magazine as a primary site of information about the exhibition was emphasised, paying homage to David's dX, since they were taking place at an exact distance of 20 years from one another.

Without adopting a new method of investigation, the editors of the journal, Szymczyk himself and art critic Quinn Latimer, recalled the role the journal had performed in David's dX: a vehicle for showing the process of making the exhibition. Involving a pre-existing magazine, and 'occupying its pages' for two years was more than a strategic geographical move. On the one side it entered in direct contact with the local and international audience, and on the other the editors avoided the time-consuming process of conception and creation of a new magazine, departing from the name itself, which allowed them also to publish the journal over a broader span of time as it includes also the time after the opening. This time is also crucial as it is the only one that allows the possibility of a conversation and reflection *a posteriori* on the exhibition, but also of taking a picture of the entirety of the exhibition, of how it was formed, what its reception has been, speculate on how it will evolve, and not limiting it only to what precedes it. Furthermore, as Allen claims, "the exhibition instead became a guest, inhabiting a single pre-existing magazine, and adopting its format, perspective, and readership".³⁸³ These were also the premises of documenta's presence in Athens, as a form of respect towards the hospitality of a pre-existing culture of the contemporary, and an attempt to avoid any form of colonialism. By adopting the space of an already existing magazine, documenta's team accepted being "invaded by" a host publication, instead of "invading" a collective identity with a new publication not linked to the city's artistic and cultural scene. Indeed, there were several conveniences in doing so, and from *South's* point of view, the publicity and visibility acquired partaking in documenta 14 was unprecedented. After documenta, the journal reviewed its design once more, partly maintaining its first aesthetic and partly holding onto the one from the *documenta 14 journal*. What happened was somehow similar to the idea of writing the captions in the show by hand, half in roman and half in Greek characters, putting them on the floor and blocking them with a piece of Greek marble on which was written the name of the artist. However,

³⁸² Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk, "Editor's letter", http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/12_editors_letter, accessed May 2020.

³⁸³ Gwen Allen, "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition", 155.

this attempt to respect local materials and language turned out to be more of a plagiarism of ancient commemorative stones than an innovative curatorial act.

What documenta 11, 12, 13 and 14 prove is that in the aftermath of David's *dXd*, the periodical remained in the spotlight, albeit with some contradictory aspects and novel tensions. These periodicals serve as testimonies of the increasing role of discourse, the importance of process and the direct dialogue between the curators of these mega-exhibitions and their audiences. As Marchart states "it was impossible for any curator who came after documenta 10 and documenta 11 to curate a documenta without a certain minimum of intellectual and theoretical ambition",³⁸⁴ and the consistency of the magazine format or the fragmentation of the publications in the last twenty years are proof of the shift begun by David in 1997. The later Documentas demonstrate how, no matter how disparate, publication enterprises may be seen as continuums for their institutions, becoming not only the magazines of the single exhibition but of the institution itself. So, while *dXd* has been treated as the periodical curated by David for her documenta, it is also the first series of the Documenta magazine, whose life will account for twenty years of the institution's lifetime. Therefore, it would be invaluable for future research to consider not only one case in isolation, but to compare all of them and create a longer history of this kind of magazine in the context of Documenta.

In conclusion, *dXd*, whilst visualising shifts in the history of Documenta in magazine form, also demonstrates how the exhibition magazine partakes in the becoming of the exhibition. Considering all the different periodical ventures produced in the context of the show together offers a lens for observing the interrelated becomings of the magazine, the exhibition, the curation, and the institution. Even the three issues promoted by David's *dX* make visible, in an extremely condensed time period—when compared to *la biennale* for instance—the dual nature of the exhibition magazine: on the one side the need to adapt with an a-systematic approach to the ephemerality and processual nature of the media, on the other to create a more systematic method for archiving this continuously evolving organism. Once again, they exemplify the tension between becoming and unbecoming that characterises the exhibition magazine. With this second dynamic, as argued in the chapter on the exhibition magazine,

³⁸⁴ Marchart, "Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization", 487.

the periodical becomes an instrument for conducting research into the exhibition, for annotating and recording conversations and moments, in defiance of the transience of the medium.

The analysis of this publication has been particularly relevant in terms of *OBOE's* conceptualisation as it proved the potential offered by the magazine as an instrument of research, albeit fragmented, on the exhibition, showing the weight given to curatorial decisions rather than to artistic perspectives. Indeed, the latter led me to reflect on the fact that in many curatorial publications the central role of art is substituted by that of curating, which should itself not forget that it functions in service of art and the artist. These publications, with their focus on curatorial process, are a proof of this statement. This is one of the reasons why instead of maintaining a journal centred on exhibitions, *OBOE's* focus was broadened to encompass the ostensive in art and its manifestation. It is also one of the reasons for inviting artists to the advisory board of the publication.

Finally, conversely from *la biennale*, which as previously argued was inextricably linked to the institution publishing it, the magazines promoted by Documenta are linked with the curator who has chosen to publish them, even though they remain sponsored by Documenta's institution. Looking at the various editorial ventures together we can arguably understand these magazines and their institutional sponsorship, as promotional and publicity tools, changing editorial structure and format every five years and existing in intervals of two or three years. This moving and unfixed structure was further developed in the "anthology series" of magazines that will characterise the *Manifesta Journal*, which will be investigated in the following Chapter.

Chapter 5

Manifesta Journal: From Exhibition Magazine to Curatorial Magazine and Return

In the context of Documenta the magazine—whilst indirectly serving the institution as a promotional tool—remained deeply connected to the curators of the exhibition, following their thinking process and the making of the show. The magazine, thanks to its temporality in becoming, and its composition from multiple units and voices, became a helpful resource to research the becoming of the exhibition, the curatorial, and the contemporary moment. With their vocation for theory, these magazines constructed and published the theoretical background against which the show was developed, emphasising the in-depth nature of the research and shedding light on the ideas that would later come alive in the exhibition.

After Documenta, though, it wasn't until 2003 that another magazine appeared in the context of a periodic exhibition. It would rise under the auspices of the young European Biennial exhibition *Manifesta*.³⁸⁵ At this point, six years after David's show and one after Enwezor's 'Platforms', a whole new spectrum of activities was being encompassed by the curatorial. Discursivity had become praxis, and curators felt more than ever the urge to share, explain, experiment, and debate about their past, present and future experiences in the field.

As noted above, the role of the curator shifted around the mid-1970s, and a decade later, in the late 1980s, a handful of publications started appearing alongside conferences to discuss this rising figure of the art world and its role. Concurrently with this proliferation of the theory and practices of curating, the first schools of curatorial practice started opening their doors in Grenoble and later in London and New York.³⁸⁶ Today there are countless courses and schools on the subject, and the term has a more accepted and recognised meaning.³⁸⁷ This cannot be said for the years at the turn of the century, when the role of the

³⁸⁵ On *Manifesta*'s history see Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (eds.), *The Manifesta Decade. Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005); and, Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta*, 149-155.

³⁸⁶ The first curatorial school was the International Curatorial Programme of the École du Magasin in Grenoble, founded in 1987. It anticipated the MA Contemporary Curating Art course at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London in 1992 and Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, which was founded in 1990 as a research centre and offered courses from 1994.

³⁸⁷ See David Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

new curator was still obscure to most and remained majorly concerned with the practical skills that characterised the job.³⁸⁸

At that time, there was a great desire to historicise and transform curating into a proper discipline and to lay the foundations for a history of exhibition making. The creation of a “vocabulary”³⁸⁹ was considered crucial. It was from these premises that *MJ - Manifesta Journal of contemporary curatorship* (hereafter *MJ*) was born. It was published by Manifesta between 2003 and 2014, and over the years it contributed towards building a grammar of exhibition making. In this chapter I will examine the birth and history of the *Manifesta Journal*. I will shed light on the importance of its contribution to curatorial discourse and exhibition making, whilst looking at its ambivalent relation with its parent institution, the International Manifesta Foundation. The journal, in fact—conversely from Venice’s *la biennale* linked to the institution and the Documenta magazines tied to the curators—claimed to maintain a critical independence from the Institution, despite reflecting similarities with the exhibition’s format, such as Manifesta’s mobile structure, and, of course, its funding by the institution.

Throughout this chapter, I will examine two major shifts in the magazine’s history, and determine how it evolved from a space for networking and self-examination on curatorial practice, into a curatorial project in itself, demonstrating a new awareness of the medium. While I have mentioned *OBOE*’s detachment from magazines strictly devoted to curating, the journal has been a useful example for understanding the temporality of the magazine, the possibilities that the online format provides and the approach curatorial magazines take when studying art’s manifestation.

The chapter, owing to the inaccessibility of Manifesta’s archive, is supported by secondary sources and interviews with the editors-in-chief, Viktor Misiano and Nataša

³⁸⁸ Rafal Niemojewski, “The Aspirational Narrative of the New Curator”, in Coline Millard (ed.), *The New Curator (Researcher), (Commissioner), (Keeper), (Interpreter), (Producer), (Collaborator)*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 9.

³⁸⁹ Viktor Misiano uses the term “vocabulary” to refer to Manifesta Journal’s contribution to the curatorial discipline. Viktor Misiano, Skype interview with the author, 11 June 2019.

Petrešin-Bachelez; and Lisa Mazza, managing editor of the publication between 2009-2014.³⁹⁰

5.1. Manifesta: The Itinerant Exhibition and the Concept of Collective Curating

Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, is undoubtedly a unique case in the biennial system. From its very subtitle it claims to be linked to continental Europe, rather than a determined location, and every two years it takes place in a different European city. As pointed out in the Biennial Foundation's website "inherent in its nomadic character is the desire to explore the physiological and geographical territory of Europe, both as expanding topography and concept".³⁹¹ For this reason, the founders of the exhibition decided that an unfixed residence would be the best way to investigate this newly united Europe.

Founded in Rotterdam in 1996 by René Block, Hedwig Fijen and Henry Meyric Hughes,³⁹² Manifesta wanted to question and subvert some of the assumptions of the biennial format that had become prevalent at the time. The founders decided to posit themselves and Manifesta in open and somewhat paradoxical juxtaposition with the institutionalisation of the biennial. Nonetheless, aside from the aim of innovating the biennial's very structure, there was more that Manifesta wanted to adjust. Periodic exhibitions, while proliferating all over the planet, had mutated from being open and flexible into structures similar to the stiffness and rigidity of the museum.³⁹³ In the organisers' minds, Manifesta was supposed to be an alternative to those hegemonic exhibitions that had and still have recurrently come to define and determine our notion of contemporary art.

³⁹⁰ The interviews were either via Skype or by telephone. With Viktor Misiano because of its centrality in the development and launch of the journal I was able to speak twice. The interviews to Misiano and Lisa Mazza were conducted in Italian, while the conversation with Petresin-Bachelez was in English. Notes from the interviews are available upon request.

³⁹¹ See Manifesta's page on the Biennial Foundation website: <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/biennials/manifesta-european-biennial-of-contemporary-art/>, accessed April 2020.

³⁹² Hedwig Fijen, "How a European Biennial of Contemporary Art Began", in *The Manifesta Decade*, 195.

³⁹³ Manifesta was born at the time of the New Institutionalism wave discussed in the previous chapter. See Chapter 4, footnote 295. On Manifesta's criticisms towards other biennials see also Stefania Zuliani, "Manifesta - The European Biennial of Contemporary Art", *Ricerche di S/Confine* VI, 1 (2015). <http://dspace-unipr.cineca.it/bitstream/1889/3271/1/ZULIANI-manifesta.pdf>, accessed July 2020.

Regarding this, the Manifesto of the Advisory Board³⁹⁴ of Manifesta “*Why Another Biennial Called Manifesta?*” states:

Concepts from exhibiting contemporary art in the West also seemed worn out; particularly the large scale international bi- and triennials, always increasing in number, came under pressure. Hovering somewhere between the average art fair and the *sacro sanctum* museum [...] memory is short when it comes to these exhibitions – after all, there’s always a next time.³⁹⁵

According to the board, the Western exhibitionary system had reached an impasse and Manifesta was presenting itself as an alternative to exhibitions like the 19th century idea of the Venice Biennale³⁹⁶—recognisable in the articulation of the show through national pavilions³⁹⁷—but also Documenta, which had adopted the singular curator’s view of art and contemporaneity. These two exhibitions, according to Manifesta’s founders, due to their rigid and outmoded structures, had become incapable of responding to the exigencies of a changing world and art system, one that was no longer centred in Western Europe. They were also considered rather insensitive to new currents and young artists, and inadequate to grasp the momentum.³⁹⁸

While these proposals and criticisms depart from a noble standpoint, and over the years Manifesta has been essential in giving prominence to younger artists and Eastern European countries that had been excluded from the main narratives of art history, it has nevertheless remained a Western exhibition. Its focus on Europe and ties to European cities evince its lack of success in adapting to a changing context and opening itself to a globalized world. It is noteworthy that in the advisory board’s manifesto it is asserted that the periodic and ephemeral nature of these older exhibitions is almost an excuse to avoid addressing pressing contemporary issues, because as soon as the next exhibition opens its doors, the previous one is forgotten. Yet the major changes and transformations both the Biennale and Documenta had to undergo to reach their contemporary formats, are a testimony to the incorrectness of this statement. This is without even returning to the notion of the exhibition

³⁹⁴ For the composition of the first advisory board see Manifesta 1’s website: <http://m1.manifesta.org/advboard.htm>, accessed November 2020.

³⁹⁵ Rosa Martínez, et al., *Manifesta 1: Foundation European Art Manifestation*, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 9 June-19 August 1996, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Manifesta, 1996), 14.

³⁹⁶ See Rosa Martínez, *Manifesta 1*, 16

³⁹⁷ Cf. Chapter 3, pages 73-74.

³⁹⁸ Camiel van Winkel, “The Rhetorics of Manifesta”, in *The Manifesta Decade*, 219-230.

in becoming, which is not to be seen in its single manifestation, but in the multiplicity and extension in time of its exhibitions (as discussed in the previous chapters). In fact, just one year after Rotterdam's opening, Catherine David proved the opposite in the context of Documenta.

Nevertheless, without knowing what would have happened the year after its launch, it might be argued that in the time of its conceptualisation, Manifesta's most defining and innovative feature was its itinerancy, which brought the tension between centre and periphery into focus, together with the political tensions that characterised a newly reunited Europe. According to art historian Stephania Zuliani, it is unclear whether the idea of an itinerant exhibition pays homage to the deceased artist Robert Filliou and his project for a nomadic exhibition: *Art of Peace Biennial*, launched in 1985,³⁹⁹ or whether it came during a discussion involving contributions from the first exhibition's curators and organising committee. Either way, as Zuliani affirms, it was a courageous choice to launch a "homeless European Biennial".⁴⁰⁰ This is particularly true considering the very nature of the biennial that, conversely from the magazine that by nature exceeds geographic boundaries to engage with dispersed publics and create communication networks, remains tied to the context in which it takes place, where the audience is gathered to view the show in the moment in which it opens its doors. However, the itinerancy may be seen as a potentiated strategy to disseminate the biennial departing not from its programmes or publications as other biennials have done, but from its very structure.

Since its launch the exhibition kept moving every two years to a different city, occupying art spaces, museums and unused palaces, some of which were opened for the occasion and at times restructured, with the unspoken hope that they would experience a rebirth. As the title chosen for the exhibition, Manifesta "manifests" itself in a new city every two years and becomes visible for the duration of the show, only to leave it empty and abandoned after its closing, almost like a nomadic circus travelling from one city to the next.⁴⁰¹ What can certainly be praised is the ability to create a new European art geography,

³⁹⁹ This was suggested by René Block in a conversation with Hedwig Fijen and Henry Meyric Hughes. See Hedwig Fijen, "How a European Biennial of Contemporary Art Began", in *The Manifesta Decade*, 195.

⁴⁰⁰ Zuliani, "Manifesta - The European Biennial of Contemporary Art".

⁴⁰¹ It's no coincidence that the mega-exhibition circuit is often called a circus. See Heiser, "The Exhausted Spectator", 126.

understood as the exhibition's attempt to redefine the notion of periphery⁴⁰² and respond to the need of developing an alternative "European Network",⁴⁰³ putting under the spotlight the creative realities of decentralised cities and territories, and taking into account European geopolitical transformations after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Indeed, as the Biennial Foundation's website reads, Manifesta "strives to stay at a distance from the dominant centres of artistic production and looks for fertile grounds for the mapping of new directions".⁴⁰⁴ On the reasons that led to these choices, director of the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana Igor Zabel stated that Manifesta's

conceivers believed that a changed social, as well as artistic, landscape in Europe demanded a different form of biennial exhibition—one that was less rigidly structured and also more open, changeable, experimental, and mobile. They were prudent enough to develop a form which, while answering the needs of their time, remained undetermined enough to be used successfully in very different circumstances in different host cities.⁴⁰⁵

Against the more rigid structures of other biennials, then, Manifesta had to be volatile, mutable and unfixed, taking into its core the nature of episodic becoming that was previously analysed in Chapter 1 as a possibility for narrating the history of art, in this case contemporary art, through those episodes that would be Manifesta's exhibitions. Inscribed within the curatorial intentions, though, there is another type of becoming, one that is broader and encompasses the exhibition format in itself. Taking into account the Venice Biennale and Documenta and their histories, Manifesta's curators were trying to transform the biennial's format so that it could engage with the new (European) conditions of contemporaneity.

The curatorial statement, published throughout the pages of the first Manifesta catalogue, emphasised the desire to create a new biennial several times, a laboratory where the curators could discuss, evaluate, adopt and experiment with new artistic and curatorial methods.

⁴⁰² This idea is discussed and attested further by the focus of the first exhibition on issues like migration. See "Manifesta 1. Migration as a point of departure: A discussion", *Witte de With Cahiers*, 5 (October 1996): 145-153.

⁴⁰³ In the website, the question "What is Manifesta?" is answered "Manifesta is a network and a process." See <http://m1.manifesta.org/advboard.htm>, accessed July 2019.

⁴⁰⁴ See "Manifesta" on the Biennial Foundation's website: <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/biennials/manifesta-european-biennial-of-contemporary-art/>, accessed January 2021.

⁴⁰⁵ Igor Zabel, "Manifesta 3", *Art Journal*, 59, 1 (Spring 2000): 19.

Curators and artists from different European nations were able to collaborate, create connections, and develop networks, both political, institutional and discursive ones. The idea of the network was central in the conception of the exhibition, as a way “to create a new means of communication in the visual arts”.⁴⁰⁶ The foundation of a network was rather strategic as it was attempting to defy, through another ephemeral structure, the transient nature of the show, which was linked neither to a space nor a city in which it would return, and was instead grounded in the knowledge and expertise of the professionals who would participate in it. Rather than talking about the art at the core of the show, the emphasis on Manifesta’s network may be seen as exemplary of art historian David Joselit’s claims that “after art comes the logic of the networks where the links can cross space, time, genre and scale in surprising and multiple ways”.⁴⁰⁷ The space of the magazine, thanks to its ability to create communication networks, publics and readerships, as well as extend in time and space, is one of these ways. Indeed, for Manifesta’s mission, the creation of a network was pivotal, especially considering that unlike Venice or Documenta, which would become the meeting point for the artworld every two or five years, Manifesta had to find a solution to remind the artworld to accompany the exhibition to a different city every two years.

The networking intents of the exhibition were also evident in the founders’ decision to invite a group of curators to organise the show. The confrontation of a curatorial collective⁴⁰⁸ would result in a dialogical space,⁴⁰⁹ where the curators would discuss their backgrounds, experiences, doubts and methods. Indeed, as Zabel explains

Since the idea of Manifesta does not imply one strong curator or selector but a larger curatorial team, such a challenge also includes the process of reconciling viewpoints inside the group...⁴¹⁰

The curators had to work together to be able to create an exhibition that could draw together the multiple visions and spheres that had just been united in the European continent. The

⁴⁰⁶ See website of Manifesta 1, <http://m1.manifesta.org/advboard.htm>, accessed April 2020. See also Rosa Martínez, “Manifiesto of the Advisory Board of Manifesta” in *Manifesta 1*.

⁴⁰⁷ David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 89.

⁴⁰⁸ The idea of a collective of curators was yet another response to Documenta’s decision to invite a single curator for each exhibition. This changed with documenta 11, when Enwezor invited a team of six co-curators composed by Sarat Maharaj, Octavio Zaya, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez and Mark Nash.

⁴⁰⁹ Misiano, Interview with author, 11 June 2019.

⁴¹⁰ Zabel, “Manifesta 3”: 20.

approach would privilege communication and cooperation rather than separation, with all the criticalities this instance might hold in the context of an exhibition like Manifesta. As I have already mentioned, both the Biennale and Documenta were born out of promotional and spectacularising concerns. The first was intended to create hype and glamour around the Venetian city, forgotten by the main art circuits and ignored by tourism as a place with rats and plague; while the second, Documenta, was born with the intent of giving a renaissance to Kassel, destroyed during World War II and afflicted by the horrors of the same, providing a moment of escape for its citizens. It was an area without attractions, and the exhibition Bode launched had to engage with these issues, while creating attractiveness around the show, bringing the world to its doors every five years. Manifesta does not escape this exigency, and it is perhaps the most contradictory in pursuing its spectacularising needs not so much in relation to a geographic city or area but rather in terms of problems and contradictions intrinsic to this new idea of Europe. All the cities chosen for the exhibitions were places of moral and social tensions, borders and interstices, with insurmountable problematics. Creating news and interfering with how these places are perceived is a way of creating a spectacle around them. So, while being overtly critical towards their predecessors, Manifesta's founders also fell deep in the chasm of contradiction, taking advantage of and spectacularising the problems afflicting Europe at the time.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s these proposals seemed to respond to the demands of an ever growing network society⁴¹¹ comprised of a highly fragmented and dispersed audience, and the need to redefine the objectives of a biennial exhibition in light of the global proliferation of the format. The free spirit of the exhibition was soon reassessed in light of the necessity of maintaining a stable and fixed institution, that on the one side would provide a hub for the curatorial and artistic network of Manifesta, and on the other preserve the history of the institution. It is from this contingency that the Manifesta Foundation was born, entering a trajectory that would associate it with those same "stiff" institutions it had so strongly criticised.

⁴¹¹ The term was coined by Manuel Castells in 1996 in *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). See also Manuel Castells, "The Culture of the Network Society", in Frank Boyd (ed.), *New Media Culture in Europe. Art, Research, Innovation, Participation, Public Domain, Learning, Education, Policy* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Balie & the Virtual Platform, 1999), 14-16. For a more recent analysis of the reasons and implications of the network in the art world, see Bruno Latour, "Some Experiments in Arts and Politics", *e-flux journal*, 23 (March 2011), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/23/67790/some-experiments-in-art-and-politics/>, accessed December 2020.

5.2. The first issues of the *Manifesta Journal* and the development of a curatorial vocabulary

The *Manifesta Journal* materialised three years after the third *Manifesta* exhibition that took place in Ljubljana (2000), thanks to the vision of Igor Zabel,⁴¹² and Viktor Misiano, one of the curators of *Manifesta 1* and founder and editor of the *Moscow Art Magazine* (1996-).⁴¹³ According to Misiano there was a great impetus amongst curators to launch a periodical publication that focused on exhibition making and curating as a discipline. *MJ* was to become the first magazine to centre its attention on the subject,⁴¹⁴ as the editorial of the first issue, “*MJ Debuts*” states:

While there are numerous magazines, newspapers, and other publications dedicated to contemporary art, relatively few deal systematically with the issues of curatorial work, its strategies, conditions, dilemmas and contents. This is the main scope of *MJ*.⁴¹⁵

Before *MJ*, art magazines published articles by curators, on curators and about curatorship, but a publication entirely devoted to curatorship was lacking. Even in the many periodical publications promoted by Documenta, the focus was never on curating as a discipline, but rather on the research that the curatorial project entailed. The magazine’s editors and *Manifesta*’s institution were taking advantage of the centrality of the curator’s position, and the fortune a network of curators could bring to the institution. The journal’s role is clarified in *Manifesta* director Hedwig Fijen’s introduction when she states that “*MJ* aims for curatorial self-reflection and self-examination”,⁴¹⁶ with the emphasis on the curatorial rather than on *Manifesta*’s self-reflection.

The journal contained varied contents, encompassing essays and interviews, documents, and transcriptions of round tables and conferences, and was edited with a thematic approach. As already mentioned, *OBOE* has also chosen to adopt a thematic approach, although I envision having one contribution per issue that is not completely

⁴¹² Igor Zabel was also a writer, literary and art critic, columnist and essayist.

⁴¹³ See the website of the *Moscow Art Magazine*, <http://moscowartmagazine.com/>, accessed December 2020.

⁴¹⁴ Misiano, Interview with author, 11 June 2019.

⁴¹⁵ See Viktor Misiano and Igor Zabel, “*MJ Debuts*” in *Manifesta Journal*, 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 12.

⁴¹⁶ Hedwig Fijen and Zdenka Badovinac, “Preface”, *MJ: Manifesta Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, 1 (nos. 1-3), (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2008).

related to the topic and every now and then an issue that does not have a predetermined theme. Each issue of *MJ* had a specific theme that was examined through multiple lenses and perspectives, while remaining centred around curating.⁴¹⁷ Contributors were mostly curators themselves, although occasionally critics and scholars were invited to consider the shaping of the field from their own perspectives.

The first issues were co-published by the International Manifesta Foundation and by the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana. They presented a very simple, yet elegant, aesthetic. Completely printed in black and white, the covers mimicked blackboards on which chalk-drawn stylised elements evoked the topic of the issue. The first issue, for instance, had a white cube drawn on the cover and was titled “Revenge of the White Cube” (Spring/Summer 2003). [fig. 22, 23, 24] The second featured two arrows meeting one another and was centred on “Biennials” (Winter 2003/Spring 2004) while the third depicted a sort of cartoon



Fig. 22. Cover of *MJ - Manifesta Journal*, no. 1 (2003). The page is taken from the reprint of the *MJ – Manifesta Journal nos. 1-3* (2008). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

⁴¹⁷ Misiano and Zabel, “*MJ* Debuts”: 12.



Fig. 23. Cover of *MJ - Manifesta Journal*, no. 2 (2003/2004). The page is taken from the reprint of the *MJ – Manifesta Journal nos. 1-3* (2008). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.



Fig. 24. Cover of *MJ - Manifesta Journal*, no. 3 (2004). The page is taken from the reprint of the *MJ – Manifesta Journal nos. 1-3* (2008). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

cloud and focused on “Exhibition as a Dream” (Spring/Summer 2004). Similarly to *dXd*, the editors of *MJ* wanted to give the flavour of a *cahiers*, a notebook containing reflections, annotations and thoughts on the curatorial enterprise, while the image of the blackboard emphasised the pedagogical aspect of the publication. It was conceived not so much as a tool to research the exhibition, but as an instrument for learning the fundamentals of curating with a vocabulary that was missing at the time of David’s show. The choice of the black and white cover, while most certainly tied to cost, recalls a Moleskine notebook with its serious matt black cover. In these magazines, distinct from the exhibition, there was supposed to be no space for spectacle, as testified by identifying it a “journal” for specialists and scholars in the subject, rather than a magazine per se, even though as previously argued the magazine itself was a spectacularising device, aimed for the dissemination of the biennial.

The journal became a means to pose questions and re-examine new and old trends. For instance, the first issue is devoted to the inquiry about the possibilities of the white cube⁴¹⁸ and current curatorial approaches towards it. The second issue, opening with an essay on mega-exhibitions by star curator Okwui Enwezor,⁴¹⁹ focuses on the growing number of periodic exhibitions, and on the role of biennials. Attention is placed on the structure of this exhibition type, and on how it has reshaped the very conditions of production and dissemination of contemporary art. The third issue, meanwhile, concentrates on the traditional affiliation between art and dreams and whether this could be applied to exhibitions more broadly. Interestingly, the editorial references the 2003 Venice Biennale curated by Francesco Bonami and titled *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*.⁴²⁰

As is quite evident from the titles of these first issues, the goal of the journal was to create a vocabulary for investigating terms and concepts related to the new practice of

⁴¹⁸ On the white cube see Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* [1987], (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁴¹⁹ Okwui Enwezor, “Mega-Exhibitions and The Antinomies of a Transnational Global Form”, *Manifesta Journal*, 2 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004): 94-119.

⁴²⁰ See Viktor Misiano, Igor Zabel, “Exhibition as Dream”, *Manifesta Journal*, 3 (Spring 2003/Summer 2004): 228-231.

On Bonami’s exhibition see Clarissa Ricci’s dissertation *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003*, in particular Section II, Chapter 9, 431-499. See also the catalogue of the exhibition, Francesco Bonami and Maria Luisa Frisa eds., *50. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte La Biennale di Venezia. Sogni e conflitti. La dittatura dello spettatore* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003).

curating. It did so through an unprecedented attention to other exhibitions. The editors privileged inspiring exhibitions, even though these were not directly related to Manifesta. This was evidence of the independence they advocated when conceiving the journal, but it was also strategic for them to become the networking platform that Manifesta had pursued since its launch. Publishing on these major exhibitions and their curatorial innovations was a tactic for the journal to posit Manifesta at the same level as these exhibitions, and it only had one precedent in the Venice Biennale's *Bollettino*, which published the reviews of international exhibitions as well as a few articles on the newly found Documenta in 1955.⁴²¹ *MJ* had to be an open platform just like the exhibition from which it was born, and to fulfil this mission it was compelled to maintain critical autonomy from its parent institution. There was no better way for doing so than by discussing other exhibitions, including those of their major competitors.

In terms of its confrontation with the Venice Biennale and Documenta it is quite telling that while initially Manifesta attempted to move away from the existing canon, it adopted the same strategy of publishing a magazine as site of networking, which would serve as a promotional, legitimising and archival tool for the institution. As much as *la biennale* and the Documenta journals, *MJ* was to show the strength of the exhibition as a site of analysis and research, as well as being an instrument for the production of knowledge. Nonetheless, unlike the other journals herein discussed, throughout its life *MJ* did seem to maintain an ambiguous independence from the foundation. This was likely a strategy undertaken by the Foundation and the editors to avoid criticism. Taking on the important role of creating one of the first publications on curating and a vocabulary for the practice, meant that the editorial voice had to be as unbiased and autonomous as possible. As I have demonstrated in my previous case studies, such independence is rather difficult to obtain when the parenthood between exhibition and magazine is so strong. On this matter, Misiano explains that:

MJ had its intellectual identity. It was somewhat separate from Manifesta. In fact at the time in which we were deciding the title, we were very doubtful about naming it "*Manifesta Journal*". We didn't want people to think it was a sort of bulletin of the exhibition, that it was just an informative tool around the activities promoted by Manifesta.⁴²²

⁴²¹ Cf. Chapter 3, footnote 238.

⁴²² Misiano, Interview, 11 June 2019.

This concern was shared amongst the directors of the exhibition, as the curator continues: “Hedwig Fijen thought that the journal shouldn’t be too close to the exhibition, and that it would be more consistent if it reflected on other themes more tied to curatorship as a discipline”.⁴²³ While this idea is commendable, inconsistency lies in the editorial statement of the first issue which says otherwise:

MJ Manifesta Journal is the international journal of contemporary curatorship, based on the ideas and aims developed over the course of the consecutive Manifesta biennials and all related activities.⁴²⁴

In these sentences it is clear that the themes at the core of each issue would be decided depending on the exhibition and its activities. This might be due to an indecision by the editors, as they sought a more malleable structure for the magazine, able to become in time, just as the exhibition it was promoted by. On the one hand, this was because, at the journal’s launch, the publication would have been heightened by its alleged autonomy in the eyes of writers and readers alike (antithetically from *la biennale*, for instance). Yet on the other, emerging under the umbrella of an institution like Manifesta would have made the journal more visible and marketable, contributing to sales and its own survival. The link between the journal and the exhibition was a *do ut des*. Both were offering something to the other, and both were taking something: in this case, publicity and visibility.

The journal became a catalyst for a recurring exhibition—happening every two years—with no link to a predetermined place. The establishment of the Manifesta Foundation and the creation of a network were two fundamental premises for the survival of the exhibition against its own ephemerality. It is harder to understand the becoming of a show when its context changes at every iteration. It was through their network of curators and contributors that the becoming of the exhibition, and its legitimisation on the art world’s stage was enacted. This was another clever move by the curators, as they knew that each city would have singular problematics. If one edition was less successful than others it might be attributed to the location, but this was also a tactic to avoid reminiscing over past editions and placing greater emphasis on the new.

Another way to understand the link between the journal and the institution may be found in the archival nature of the exhibition magazine, which has already been discussed in

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Misiano and Zabel, “*MJ Debuts*”: 10.

Chapter 2 and later in reference to both *la biennale* and Documenta. *MJ* was a tool for recording the history of Manifesta, by giving voice and space to the people involved and by narrating their practices, models and ideas. While in Venice *la biennale* was initially meant to promote the activities of its institution by narrating them *a posteriori*, and Documenta's journals were concerned with the process of making the exhibition, and an *a priori* narration, *MJ* used the stratagem of a magazine on curating to narrate its network and connections, and by doing so, show its strength to the world.

Igor Zabel and Viktor Misiano edited the first six issues of the journal with the intention of making it a useful instrument for curators to investigate and discuss their discipline. It was a means through which "to professionalise our [the curatorial] profession".⁴²⁵ Arguably, though, while it was the first curatorial magazine, the reflections published in *MJ*'s pages around the professionalisation of the curator came rather late in curatorial practice in general. Indeed, as mentioned in the chapter devoted to Documenta, it is possible to trace the rise of the figure of the curator from the 1970s with Harald Szeemann,⁴²⁶ alongside numerous other curators born between the 1930s and 1940s who contributed to the fortune of the position: Pontus Hulten at the Centre Pompidou, Pierre Hubert Martin with his pivotal exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*,⁴²⁷ Kasper König and Germano Celant, just to name a few. Hence while the first issues were meant to engender a vocabulary of curating, they did not engage with the tradition that already existed (as *The Exhibitionist* did later), they only needed to put it in the form of a magazine which would be written and collected every three or four months by curators in the art field.

The first four issues were printed as they were edited, while the fifth and sixth issues, although edited in 2005, were printed a few years later due to a lack of funding and Zabel's sudden death. The last two issues were published posthumously in 2008, as part of a reprint of the first six issues by the Italian publisher Silvana Editoriale [fig. 25],⁴²⁸ with whom the

⁴²⁵ Hedwig Fijen, "Introduction", *Manifesta Journal*, 7 (November 2009), 3.

⁴²⁶ Cf. Chapter 4, footnotes 274 and 275.

⁴²⁷ For a little insight around this pivotal exhibition see Benjamin Buchloh, "The Whole Earth Show. An interview with Jean-Hubert Martin by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh", *Art in America* 70, 5 (May 1989), 150-213.

⁴²⁸ Hedwig Fijen and Zdenka Badovinac, "Preface", *MJ - Manifesta Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, 2 (nos. 4-6), (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2008).



Fig. 25. Cover of the reprint of the *MJ – Manifesta Journal nos. 1-3* (2008). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo.

biennial had already worked for the publication of the catalogue of Manifesta 7, held in Bolzano, in the North-Italian region of Trentino Alto Adige.⁴²⁹

The posthumous printing of the two issues of the magazine evinces Manifesta's desire and intent to make these issues into a foundation for curatorial studies. Indeed, the ephemerality that characterises magazines and their temporality is defied by the fact that these issues remain relevant two, ten or even fifteen years after their publication.⁴³⁰ Although they were entering an already established debate on curating, the issues were edited with the aim of becoming indispensable volumes to learn about what was being said and done by the very practitioners who were currently establishing the field. Indeed, these volumes, albeit distributed mostly in specialised bookshops, were intended not only for an art professional

⁴²⁹ The exhibition was held between July 19 and November 2, 2008. For further information and to access the catalogue see Manifesta 7's website: <http://www.manifesta7.it/>, accessed April 2020.

⁴³⁰ The same was done by *The Exhibitionist* in 2017 which collected the twelve issues in the monolithic volume: *The Exhibitionist: The First Six Years*.

readership, but also for students and teachers, who could use them as pedagogical instruments for the teaching of the new discipline of curating. It should be noted that the complete reprint of the issues in two volumes also introduced a new feature in the magazine's publication, its subdivision into series, which is perhaps the most innovative feature of the magazine.

5.3. Introducing the 'Anthology Series' in a Serial Publication

The publication of the two volumes by Silvana Editoriale in 2009 was a pivotal moment in *MJ*'s history.⁴³¹ First of all because the magazine reappeared after an interruption of about four years and secondly because the editorial concept and even the nature of *MJ* had changed. The magazine was seen for the first time as a series composed of six issues; it had a new publisher and the agreement between the two was supposed to guarantee a more widespread distribution of the publication. Additionally, from 2008, *MJ* was co-funded by the Culture 2000 Framework of the European Commission.⁴³² These funds lasted until the third series which determined a further new shift in the publication's life, which exemplifies another major moment in the becoming of the publication.

In the introduction of the seventh issue, the first of the second series, Fijen explains:

In 2005, after publishing the first so-called "six-pack" of half a dozen volumes together with the Moderna Galerija (Museum of Modern Art) in Ljubljana [...] a new Manifesta began. This includes the rebirth of *Manifesta Journal*—a new format that rotates its team of editors, including designers, for the next six issues. The nomadic character of Manifesta Biennial itself has served as an inspiration to find a format that could reflect the diverse elements of a constantly changing cultural discourse.⁴³³

The idea of publishing the magazine in different series was on the one hand intended to challenge the very nature of the magazine as an open form—as discussed earlier on with Beetham—and on the other to form a correlation with the nomadic structure of the

⁴³¹ See *MJ - Manifesta Journal: Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2, 3 (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2009) and *MJ - Manifesta Journal: Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, vol. 2, no. 4, 5, 6 (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2009).

⁴³² For information about the funding programme under Creative Europe see the link: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/previous-programmes/culture-2000_en, accessed April 2020.

⁴³³ Hedwig Fijen, "Introduction", *Manifesta Journal*, 7 (November 2009): 3-4.

exhibition. Deciding that a group of publications will be part of an 'anthology series' completely changes the mindset of a periodical publication. An anthology series is a definition more common to TV and cinema than to publishing, and it mostly refers to TV and cinematic series that present a different narrative or cast in every new iteration, be it an episode, season or movie. While these series have recently been revived in television, after previous incarnations in the 1950s and 1960s,⁴³⁴ they were cutting-edge and experimental in periodical publishing.⁴³⁵ The anthology effect changed the perception of the publication from what was a continuation in time, into a predetermined history, set to modify its nature also in predetermined moments (every 6 issues).

Working on three, six, or twelve issues radically changes the editorial perspective. There is an inception, but there is also foreknowledge of a conclusion. The tension towards the future is not indefinite and infinite. It becomes a project with a beginning and an end.⁴³⁶ In the case of the *MJ* and its "six-pack" it means that the editors need to schedule almost all the issues beforehand so that they are able to cover the contents they feel relevant without leaving the conversation bereft of the possibility of continuing it, as would be intrinsic in the nature of the magazine. With *OBOE* for instance, I realised that the editorial time is slow. The preparatory time of an issue, from invitations/calls for papers, to the reception of the final manuscript and layout, takes about a year, if not more, all of which makes it necessary to move ahead of schedule. The editorial process is completely different from an art magazine, which has a faster pace and ability to engage with contemporary art's becoming. Indeed, this slowness, unfortunately, is problematic when attempting to engage with the contemporary, as what has been written as early as six or eight months before a publication risks losing relevance or contemporaneity. This is why it is crucial firstly to envision topics that will be relevant at the time of publication, but also to open the possibility of returning to a topic or

⁴³⁴ Michael Malone, "Anthology format gets a 'true' rebirth: AMC is the latest of many nets modeling shows after True Detective and Fargo", *Broadcasting & Cable* 146, 17 (May 2, 2016): 24 (1).

⁴³⁵ After the first twelve issues of *The Exhibitionist*, editor Jens Hoffmann considered transforming *The Exhibitionist* into an anthological series. His idea was to maintain the title and broaden the focus to make it less US centric and less tied to the history of exhibitions. Email conversation, April 10, 2019. Now, however he is in the process of launching a new periodical with a new mission and titled *Duchamp's Socks*.

⁴³⁶ Magazines discussed herein that exemplify this concept are the experimentations of the Documenta magazines, which begin and end their lives under a single curator, albeit being considered here as a single manifestation of a longer periodical.

issue in a second moment. Such considerations allowed me to evaluate whether to stick with monothematic issues or to have some free ones without a specific topic. A further factor affecting periodical publishing, discussed above through the case studies examined in the previous chapters prove the importance of creating an ongoing conversation with the reader as well as examining the argument from more than one perspective.

The conversation with the reader, already interrupted with the monothematic issues of Documenta's journals, should entail the possibility of publishing, reviewing and re-examining contents that had not been fully examined or that could not fit in one issue, in a following one. On the one side the postponement of the publication of some contents would allow the editors to keep the contribution, on the other, that they would be able to look at a certain topic anew, from another perspective, while devoting more research to it. Having a shorter time frame and a preset number of issues on which to work, however, does not entail that luxury. It is preferable in this second case to cover more topics rather than to go back to one and examine it in two issues, unless this has been decided beforehand. Indeed, the downside of having an indeterminate existence for the magazine is the risk of losing a coherent identity. Just as the biennial needs to undergo major changes to readapt its format to the contemporary, so too does the magazine. In an interview with the editor of *Cabinet* magazine, Sina Najafi affirmed that in their twenty years of existence they felt they had lost some of their experimental character to become more scholarly. They were happy with how *Cabinet* had transformed over time, but they nevertheless felt it was a completely different publication from the one it was intended at the beginning.⁴³⁷ A predetermined time for publication, especially one as short as six issues, does not allow for this possibility either. It becomes a focus-oriented publication, with an objective to accomplish.

In the case of *MJ*'s second series this is quite evident. Misiano, who remained editor-in-chief, wanted to continue developing a vocabulary of curating. The first issue of the new series is quite eloquent in its inquiry into the fundamental features of curating begun by Misiano and Zabel. Titled "The Grammar of the Exhibition" (no. 7– 2009/2010) [fig. 26] it forms an evident connection with the previous issues, since it can refer either to the vocabulary of curating or to a methodology to understand curatorial choices. It has a broader focus than previous iterations and shows how now accepted terms have come together to create a

⁴³⁷ Sina Najafi, Skype Interview, April 6, 2017. Excerpts of interview are available upon request.

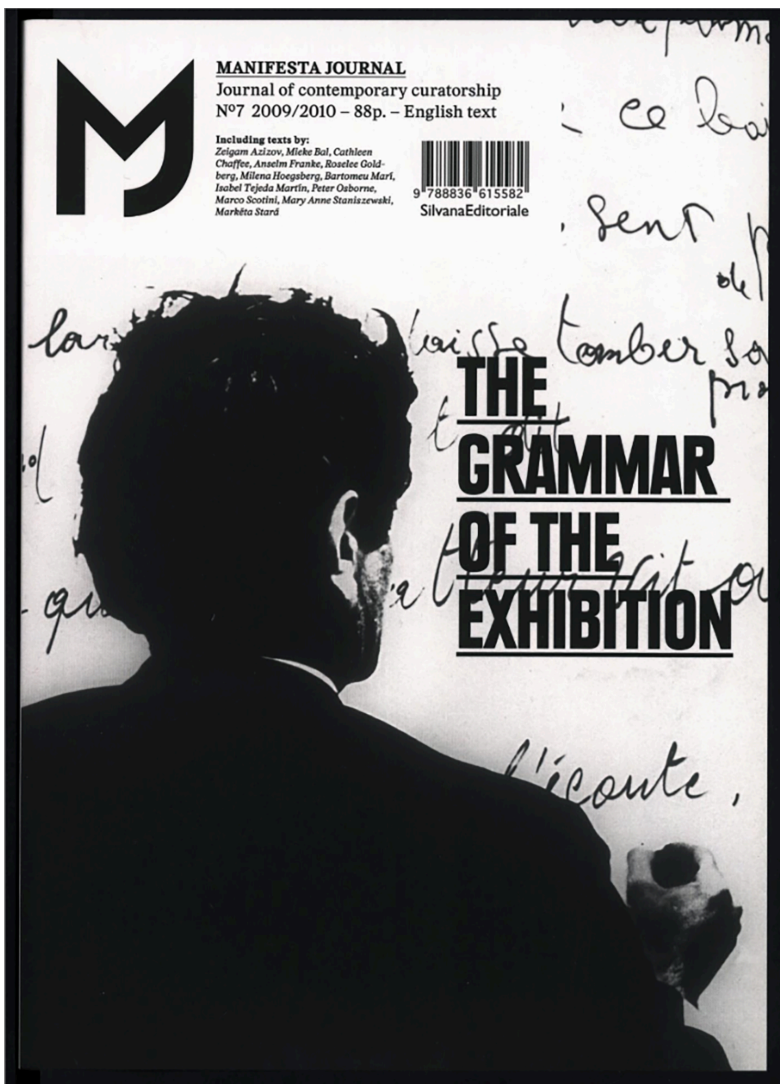


Fig. 26. Cover of *MJ - Manifesta Journal*, no. 7 (2009). Source: Manifesta.

syntax and a semantic for the exhibition. Other issues continued the focus on these methods and structures of the curatorial profession, such as “The Curator as Producer” (no. 10 – 2009/2010), “The Canon of Curating” (no. 11 – 2009/2010) and “Ethics” (no. 12 – 2009/2010). “Collective Curating” (no. 8 – 2009/2010) instead focuses on the innovations brought by Manifesta in curating, privileging a plurality of voices in “reaction to the traditional ‘documenta model’, that is, ‘one curator—one show’”.⁴³⁸ This issue is a clear way of legitimising Manifesta’s curatorial choices and strategies as an example to follow in curatorial practice. The ninth issue “History of the Present” investigates the temporality of the exhibition, its ephemerality and memory. It is clear from these topics that Misiano was continuing what he began in 2003 with Zabel, only with a stronger awareness on what was being discussed, and the terms with which it was being discussed.

⁴³⁸ “Editorial. Collective Curating”, *Manifesta Journal*, 8 (2009/2010): 3.

The topics, as much as the structure of the issues and the design, indicate a rupture with the past. This new series is significantly more self-conscious. As the editor explains in the editorial of the seventh issue “Manifesta Journal 7 has become a platform for theoretical debate, which is the highest justification for a theoretical publication”.⁴³⁹ Alongside changes to content, renewed funding from Creative Europe allowed for investment in design, which was developed by the Amsterdam graphic firm COUP.⁴⁴⁰ As their website explains, the layout consisted of two different grids, one for the theoretical texts which was printed in black and white, the other for the reviews section, which had a high number of colour reproductions. The sections became an essential component and endured in every issue. At times they composed the theoretical framework of each issue, at others they were used by the editors to orchestrate debates, confronting and juxtaposing divergent opinions to exhibit multiple points of analysis around curating. The sections were quite malleable, in the sense that they were not necessarily always present and each issue added new ones depending on the contents published.

The major restructuring of the *MJ* explains the long interruptions between the series. The different series are divided by an interval of more than a year, almost two.⁴⁴¹ This is because the journal needs to be re-contextualised, its mission needs to be re-adapted and updated to remain relevant—in this specific case—for the study and analysis of contemporary curating and the current moment. This was similar to what happened for contingent reasons with *la biennale* when the editorship passed first into the hands of Apollonio and then Dorigo who both restructured the magazine according to the current needs of the institution and the time in which they were published. It also holds for the various reiterations of Documenta magazine by the curators who maintained the magazine’s concept while renewing its format according to their visions and ideas. Given these previous examples this can only make sense, although as we have seen with *la biennale* and the Documenta journals, the magazines transformed into a completely different publication,

⁴³⁹ “Editorial. The Grammar of the Exhibition”, *Manifesta Journal*, 7 (November 2009): 5.

⁴⁴⁰ For the designers website, and the page dedicated to the design of the magazine see: <http://www.coup.nl/wordpress/2017/03/03/journals-for-manifesta-foundation/>, accessed April 2020.

⁴⁴¹ Here I am discounting the one between the first series in 2005 and the two volumes published by Silvana in July and November 2008 respectively and instead focusing on the gaps between the reprint and second series in November 2009, and between the second series in 2010 and the launch of the third one in 2012.

albeit maintaining the same overall purpose and mission: legitimisation of the publication and the parent institution in the art world. Indeed, these longer intervals and the subsequent “rebirths” of the journal evidence its becoming alongside curating. Manifesta’s second and third series in the general renewal undergone by the publication coincided with the rotation of the editorial team. The longer intervals between one series and the next also served this purpose: allowing enough time for the new editor to familiarise themselves with the publication and decide which editorial endeavour to pursue.

It is significant that in the introduction to the seventh issue, Manifesta’s director adopts the term “rotate” whilst referring to fact that for each series, the journal would be overseen by a new editor-in-chief, rotating and moving the positions internal to the team. This idea was meant to methodologically relate the publication to the exhibition, and treat the magazine as a biennial, inviting an editor to curate the six issues of the magazine within the time frame of two years (although the publication would have a quarterly periodicity).⁴⁴² As already mentioned, the exhibition magazine adds a new periodicity to the biennial, a narrower yet extended temporality, but in this case, it is also the biennial that is adding a periodicity to the magazine, extending it. It may have been to emphasise this idea that the second series was dated 2009/2010 in its entirety.⁴⁴³ The periodicity of the single issues was substituted by a periodicity for the series, and with this idea the magazine was slowly reshaping itself as a curatorial project rather than just a periodical publication.

The changing model, though, did not come without complications. In the context of the exhibition a new curatorial team is invited for every biennial, but in the case of the magazine this was almost impossible. Proof of this difficulty was the fact that some elements of the team had to remain fixed. For instance, Misiano maintained the position as editor-in-chief, although he had already shared it in the first series with Zabel. Therefore, between the first and second series there is an allusion to the rotation but the role of the editor remains in the hands of Misiano. This would only change with the third series when Misiano stepped down from his position as editor to become chair of the Manifesta Foundation.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Misiano, Interview, January 19, 2020.

⁴⁴³ The only exception to this is the first issue of the series “The Grammar of the Exhibition”, *Manifesta Journal 7*, which states on the colophon that it was printed in November 2009.

⁴⁴⁴ Misiano held the position as Chair of the Foundation from 2010-2014. <https://manifesta.org/about-us/structure/>, accessed December 2020.

In agreement with Fijen, he invited Slovenian curator Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez to take the reins of the journal. Petrešin-Bachelez was already involved, after Igor Zabel's death, as managing editor for the fifth and sixth issue, making her the "ideal candidate".⁴⁴⁵ She knew about Manifesta, she had already worked for the exhibition and the journal, with experience both in curatorship and the editorial. As is quite obvious, the choice of the editor did not go to someone random or external to *MJ*, but to someone who had already worked on it and who knew how it functioned and what it stood for (and also because she studied with Zabel in Ljubljana).⁴⁴⁶ Rather than supporting the journal's becoming in time, the rotation of the editorial team was meant to preserve the essence and initial mission of the magazine.⁴⁴⁷

There is another point to consider here: the role of the editor-in-chief. In the previous case studies, the importance of the editor in shaping the magazine's nature, structure and mission was quite evident, especially in the shift occurred when *la biennale* passed from the editorship of Zorzi to Apollonio, and how the latter unlocked some of the latent potential of the magazine. It was the ability of the editor that made the magazine capable (or not) of engaging with the urgencies and concerns of its present. Good editorship is determined not by a singular figure, but by a plurality of voices partaking in the creation and editing of the magazine, which is something I came to realise also with *OBOE*.⁴⁴⁸ This is why the idea of changing not only the editor-in-chief, but the entire editorial team every six issues, while highly experimental as it entails an unforeseen and incalculable result in line with that mentioned for the *dXd*, it also appears quite impulsive, as it requires beginning almost everything from scratch and creating new equilibriums. A new team will analyse what was done by their predecessors and attempt to find new directions to investigate without destroying or forgetting the magazine's initial intention and maintaining the balance between familiarity and change discussed when comparing the magazine and biennial medium.

⁴⁴⁵ As she recounts, "The two issues were basically ready, but they needed some help finalising them", Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview with the author, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁴⁶ In an interview published on *Radicate.eu*, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez recounts Zabel's importance in her decision to become a curator, <http://www.radicate.eu/natasa-petresin-bachelez-from-paris-on-the-upcoming-triennial-of-contemporary-art-in-slovenia/>, accessed January 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ Misiano, Interview, January 19, 2020.

⁴⁴⁸ Matthew Philpotts, "What makes a great magazine editor? Seven theses on editorial plurality," in *Eurozine* (4 May 2018), <https://www.eurozine.com/makes-great-magazine-editor/>, accessed December 2019.

The fact that Misiano continued delineating a vocabulary for exhibition making in the second series is self-evident, but there is significantly more to consider. When a reader, or a group of readers, follow a magazine, it is for a number of factors, including the voice, the contents, the style of writing, the visual output and the design. Changing all these every six issues, on the one side brings great anticipation, expectation and curiosity, on the other might lead to the alienation or disinterest of the reader. This has not been the case in *MJ*. Each series has grown out of the other, keeping the things that worked and eliminating the ones that did not. Each series shows an evolution, a maturity towards the medium itself, that moves alongside the maturity of the reader, which was increasingly more accustomed to curating. Ultimately, however, this experimentation proves highly interesting for my specific field of study and for what relates to the understanding of *OBOE's* periodicity. In recent years especially for the velocity with which graphic trends take foot, there has been increasing freedom in this respect, as magazines can decide to either renew themselves with a faster pace and follow the trends and fashions of the moment, or slower and more gradually. The tension between repetition and difference, or familiarity and change as Leslie named it,⁴⁴⁹ is brought into focus in *MJ*. Its focus on what is contemporary is updated every two years and therefore it is more closely attuned to aesthetic becoming, rendering the becoming of the magazine much more visible than it would normally be. This certainly responds to a request for constant novelty, to an adaptation to the economic and capitalist system driven by constant speed and production. The slow movement needs to be a choice to counteract this continuous acceleration. In this it becomes again rather similar to biennials, which every two years or more revise the entire graphic layout of the show, evidencing how the journal is acquiring the temporality of the biennial rather than the other way round. The elaboration of this changing model was certainly a way to experiment with the magazine's nature, but also a way of conceiving the periodical as a recurring curatorial project, similar to the biennial, with a duration of two years, and approximately the same downtime.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Chapter 1, footnote 57.

5.4. The last shift and climax of the *MJ Manifesta Journal*

The third series of the *Manifesta Journal* launches in 2012, when the editorship is handed over to curators Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez as Chief Editor and Virginie Bobin as Associate Editor for six issues, which corresponded to almost three years of the magazine's life.⁴⁵⁰ It is under their editorship that another shift in *MJ* can be registered.

When the third series was set to launch, most of the prerogatives that were so dear to the editors of the first two series—the development of a manual for curators—felt fulfilled and less relevant. With the growing discourse around curating and the increasing number of publications, magazines, conferences and schools of curating, the practice had become familiar even to the general public. In the 2010s the times had changed and in the editorial of the thirteenth issue, the editors illustrated the motivations that led them to shift the focus from defining contemporary curatorship to the study of curatorial practices. As they clarify:

In this third series, *Manifesta Journal* intends to reconsider the notion of contemporary curatorship and focus on its (geo)political, social and controversial potentials, its ability to instigate fresh discussion, to observe its past and comment on its possible future. As a response to the consolidated understanding of the notion “curatorial”,⁴⁵¹ the subtitle of this series of *Manifesta Journal* will be *Manifesta Journal—“Around Curatorial Practices”*.⁴⁵²

From *Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, the periodical moved and broadened its reach using the term “around” as a method to engage with an expanded notion of curating. In the editorial, Petrešin-Bachelez and Bobin explain the choice of the subtitle and their editorial practice:

If we were to visualise our editorial logic, concentric circles would be most appropriate as they have in common one centre—curatorial practices, in our case.

⁴⁵⁰ The journal was published between 2012 and 2014. The periodicity went from quarterly in the second series, to biannual.

⁴⁵¹ For the term “curatorial” and its meaning see curator Maria Lind's edited volume: Maria Lind ed., *Performing the Curatorial* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2012). See also Maria Lind, “Active Cultures: Maria Lind On the ‘Curatorial’”, *Artforum* 48, 2 (October 2009), 103, <https://www.artforum.com/print/200908/the-curatorial-23737>; and Jean-Paul Martinon ed., *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁴⁵² Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Virginie Bobin, “Editorial Statement”, *Manifesta Journal*, 13 (2012): 9, http://www.manifestajournal.org/sites/default/files/issues-pdf/mj13-fungus-contemporary/MJ-13_3.pdf, accessed April 2020.

Thus the preposition “around” should be devoted to what actually moves subjectivities when they adopt the notion of curating as responding to their practices.⁴⁵³

From these sentences it is possible to deduce that the journal remained a platform for the discussion and examination of the discipline and the innovations in the field, but that it also aspired to investigate the potential of curating in a completely reshaped environment and how it could engage with the social, political and economic urgencies of the time. The journal was published during the Arab Spring uprisings and protests, while the Occupy movement was taking foot, and concurrently with destabilising perceptions of the Global South and North. It was a time of great geographic, political and economic turmoil, and in order to engage with this the journal had to modify itself into an activist and radical organism, which the exhibition was no longer perceived to be.

The magazine became “an occasion to talk about the practice, rather than the discipline and the object”,⁴⁵⁴ a research methodology that did not only entail a conversation once the issue was published, but evidences how the conversation *is* part of the editorial process. Since the first issue Petrešin-Bachelez and Bobin invited guest editors to curate one or more editions of the publication. In agreement with Manifesta’s practice of collective curating, the editor proposed a collective editorial practice to investigate the Europeanness of an exhibition never adept at engaging with the globalized artworld. For this reason, the editors invited a number of non-European guest editors: Mexican curator Cuauhtémoc Medina for the thirteenth issue; Canadian, Beirut-based curator Rasha Salti for issues 14-16; Nigerian curator, and founder of the Centre of Contemporary Art Lagos in 2007, Bisi Silva for the seventeenth; and for the eighteenth, David Riff. As artist, curator and member of the collective *Chto Delat?* Riff was invited to curate the issue for its concurrence with Manifesta 10 in Saint Petersburg (28 June – 31 October 2014).⁴⁵⁵ [fig. 27]

A further editorial strategy adopted to help disseminate the journal globally was to simplify the distribution process and consequently make it accessible to a wider audience. The choice

⁴⁵³ Ibid.: 9.

⁴⁵⁴ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020; and “Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez talks about the U3 Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia and the Manifesta Journal”, *Radicate.eu* (January 2013).

⁴⁵⁵ For further information about the exhibition see Manifesta 10’s website <http://m10.manifesta.org/en/home/> and the catalogue, visible online at the link: https://issuu.com/dmanifesta/docs/m10_catalogue_eng, accessed December 2020.

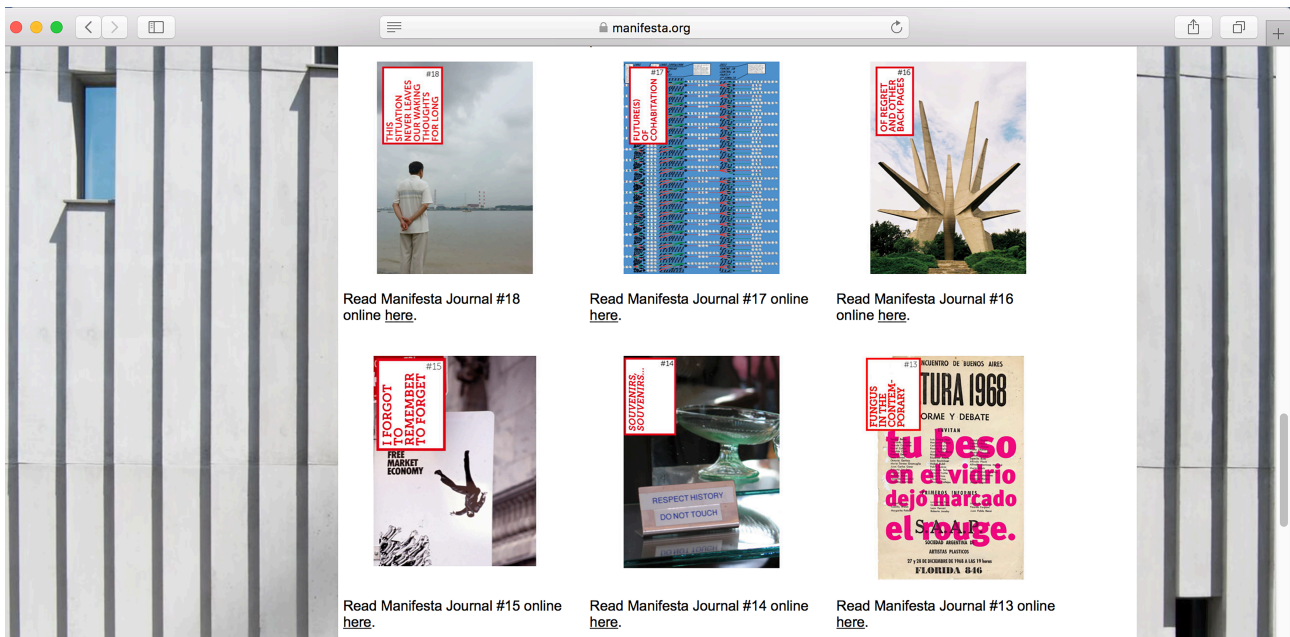


Fig. 27. *Manifesta Journal*, third series, issues 13-18 (2012-2014). Source: Manifesta.

was to transform it into an online and access free publication. The shift to the online format was a rather bold move in terms of the exhibition magazine's support of the institution and registers an important shift for which the magazine becomes more and more an instrument for research and fostering networks, rather than a souvenirish accompaniment to Manifesta's shows. It allowed the editors to invite guests from all the over the world to propose suggestions in terms of topics and arguments and for these guests to invite their own networks to participate and write in the pages of the magazine. It was another way to reach regions beyond Europe where the journal might have not been as well distributed as it was in the areas where the biennial took place. The decision of transforming the publication from printed to online was strongly supported by the Foundation and Misiano himself, who believed it was the "only sensible decision at the time, especially after difficult experiences with the publisher and the distribution of the previous series".⁴⁵⁶ On the one hand, the decision to go online was managerial, on the other economic. Aside from the initial investment in design and programming, the online publication was much cheaper in the long run, and eschewed costs related to packaging and postage.⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, the online format

⁴⁵⁶ Misiano, interview, January 19, 2020.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

was considered the future of art periodical publishing⁴⁵⁸ and there were already a number of successful cases of journals working with it. Petrešin-Bachelez revealed that there were two magazines they looked at while thinking about how to transfer *MJ*'s life and soul to the online platform: *e-flux journal* and *Oncurating.org*. *e-flux* was born as a communication enterprise in 1998 in New York by artists Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda, with the advice of curator Hans Ulrich Obrist.⁴⁵⁹ Initially it was conceived as a publicity page that once per day promoted an exhibition or event in the New York area. The cultural importance of the project was in choosing one event per day, performing criticism by subtraction and becoming archival records of these events.⁴⁶⁰ Ten years later *e-flux journal* was founded. [fig. 28] It came to light in the years of the financial crisis of 2007-2008, with the mission to reflect on profound shifts taking place in the art world at the time, including geographic dispersal and



Fig. 28. Cover of *e-flux journal*, no. 0 (11/2008). Courtesy: *e-flux journal*.

⁴⁵⁸ On the mutations of the magazine in the digital age see amongst others Alessandro Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print. The Mutation of Publishing Since 1894*. Eindhoven: Onomatopoe, 2012. On the passage from the printed page to the online format see Silvia Bordini, "Le riviste d'arts on line: della pagina all rete" in *Riviste d'arte tra Ottocento e Novecento. Forme modelli e funzioni*, 311-320.

⁴⁵⁹ "About," *e-flux*, <https://www.e-flux.com/about>, accessed January 2021. For a history of *e-flux* see Hans Ulrich Obrist, Anton Vidokle, and Julieta Aranda, "Ever.Ever.Ever", *e-flux*, https://www.e-flux.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Hans_Ulrich_Obrist_Interview.pdf?b8c429, accessed May 2020.

⁴⁶⁰ On *e-flux*'s idea of criticism for subtraction and on its possibilities as archival instrument see Cédric Vincent, "Friction in Benin", *e-flux journal*, 39 (November 2012), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/39/60295/friction-in-benin/>, accessed December 2020. See also Karl Lydén, "E-flux, Derrida and the Archive," *Site Magazine* 25 (2009):12–13.

the need to revitalise the critical vocabulary of contemporary art.⁴⁶¹ Since the launch of the first issue, *e-flux* adopted the online format. Each issue is accessible and downloadable via the website [fig. 29]. In terms of web usability and readability, *e-flux* has proved able to understand and even anticipate the latest trends in art publishing. When discussing the first proposals for *OBOE's* website with the designers and programmers, *e-flux* was also one of my main examples.⁴⁶² In agreement with *MJ's* editors, I was fascinated by the visual clarity of the layout of the contents on the pdf and online, and by its intuitive usability.⁴⁶³ Another model mentioned by Petrešin-Bachelez was *oncurating.org*.⁴⁶⁴ Launched in 2008 by Dorothee Richter, the journal is a curatorial publication that questions curatorial practice and theory, mixing a curatorial perspective with a scholarly one.⁴⁶⁵ Promoted by the Postgraduate Programme in Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts, the journal is in fact a hybrid periodical, half academic and half curatorial, completely online, that offers downloadable pdfs of the single articles or of the issues for free. [fig. 30]

To return to the editor's view of *MJ*, what really inspired her to adopt the online format for the periodical publication and envisage how it would function in terms of usability and interactivity, was the catalogue of the Slovenian Pavilion at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001. The pavilion titled *Absolute One*, was curated by Aurora Fonda at the Galleria A+A and presented works by three net-artists⁴⁶⁶ Vuk Cosic,⁴⁶⁷ 0100101110101101.org and Tadej

⁴⁶¹ Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle, "Editorial," *e-flux journal*, 0 (November 2008). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68454/editorial/>, accessed May 2020. See also, Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle "Editors' Note," in *e-flux journal Reader 2009* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2009), 5.

⁴⁶² Cf. Chapter 6, page 191.

⁴⁶³ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020. See also Misiano, Interview, 11 June 2019.

⁴⁶⁴ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁶⁵ See "About", *oncurating.org*, accessible at the link: <https://www.on-curating.org/about.html#.YDDUQy-h2CQ>; and "Thirty-one Positions on Curating", *oncurating.org*, 1 (2008), <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-1.html#.XjMAQhNKjwc>, accessed May 2020.

⁴⁶⁶ For more information about net-art and its artists see the Net-Art Anthology <https://anthology.rhizome.org/>, accessed May 2020. See also, Peter Weibel and Timothy Druckrey, *Net Condition: Art and Global Media* (Graz: Steirischer Herbst, 2001); Sarah Cook, *Information* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2016).

⁴⁶⁷ The website is still visible at the link: <http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/dx/> accessed January, 2020.

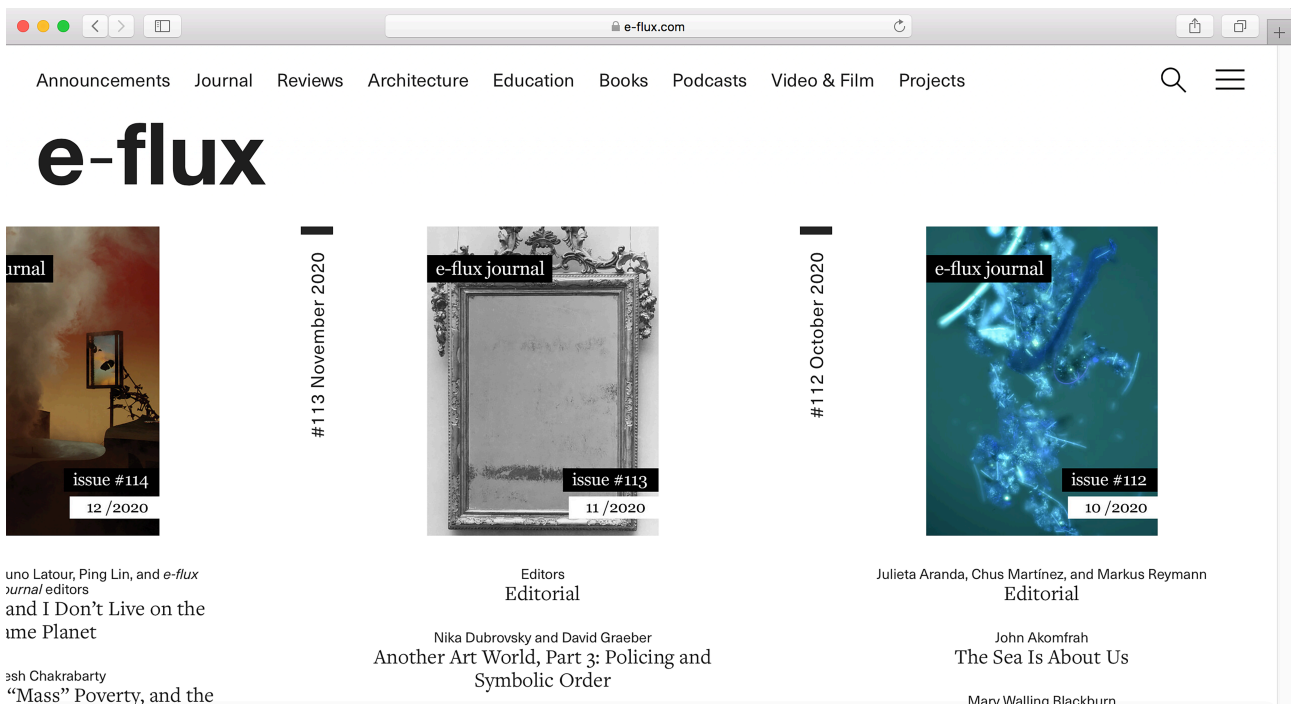


Fig. 29. *e-flux Journal's* Homepage. Courtesy: *e-flux Journal*.

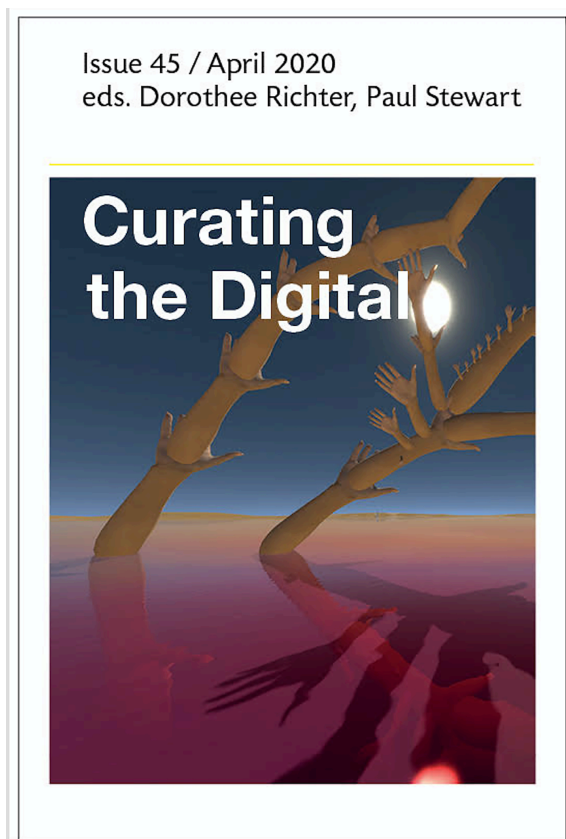


Fig. 30. Cover of *oncurating* issue no. 45 (2020). Courtesy: *oncurating*

Pogacar.⁴⁶⁸ The catalogue of the pavilion was published online on Vuk Cosic's server Ljudmila.org, which already contained dX's website, as the artist downloaded it before it was taken down at the end of the show.⁴⁶⁹ While in the initial discussions the editors were very interested in giving the publication an interactive quality, after various considerations with the team, Manifesta, and the designers,⁴⁷⁰ the editors opted out of it. *MJ* could be accessed and read on the journal's website or it could be downloaded as a pdf (similarly to *oncurating.org*, *e-flux* and *OBOE*, although in these cases the reader can download individual essays).

Alongside the changes in editorship (guest editors) and format (online), there was also a need to reframe the contents of *MJ*'s issues. Following Misiano's steps, and recent trends in periodical publishing, the editors of this third series of the journal divided the contents into sections and columns. As the magazines become more and more like art objects in their own right, and focus on monothematic issues, their format and structure has changed to increasingly emulate that of the book. This does not imply that the reader cannot access the publication from any article of her/his choosing, but that the editors give them an order and structure in terms of macro areas and themes. With the third series of *MJ*, as introduced in the editorial, the sections included more theoretical texts, while other types of texts foregrounded the positions of the invited curators, and finally there were the Sections that composed the visual apparatus of the publication, titled "Exhibition Room", "Materials" and "Game". This last section could be considered an attempt at encouraging reader participation, and perhaps play with the format of the periodical, recalling newspaper crossword puzzles. It was ultimately also a podium for artists' works alone. Indeed, in these volumes, while there is a sense of involvement in artistic practices and thinking from a curatorial perspective, the space for actual art production and artworks is very slim.

⁴⁶⁸ For a review of the exhibition see Sarah Cook, Steve Dietz and Sarah Thompson, "VUK ĆOSIĆ. The criteria of net.art in the economy of the Venice Biennale; Criteria (net.criteria); Art grows up?" http://www.hackerart.org/corsi/fm03/esercitazioni/pierigiulia/net_art3.htm, accessed January 2020. See also, Lina Dzuverovic, "Russell, Temporary Autonomous Pavilion (Net.Art At The Venice Biennale)", *Meta.Mute* (15 July 2001) <https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/temporary-autonomous-pavilion-net.art-venice-biennale>, accessed January 2020.

⁴⁶⁹ The catalogue is still accessible at the webpage <http://absoluteone.ljudmila.org/intro.php>, included in Vuk Cosić's server, accessed December 2020.

⁴⁷⁰ The designers were g.u.i., Paris: <https://g-u-i.net/>, accessed December 2020.

It is interesting to look at the index of MJ's last series of issues and see how each section returns in different moments of the publication. Sections in other periodicals, and even in the previous series of *MJ*, usually function similarly to the chapters where contributions that are similar or in dialogue are put together. In this case, however, the editors radically defy this idea. It is not only inside a specific section that contents are related, but there is a second level in which the sections are disposed in a way that they can engage in dialogues with other sections and contents. Even the way in which the index is displayed—not in the canonical printed way, as a vertical list with one contribution underneath or above the other that mirrors the order of appearance in the magazine—is an attempt to engage with the online browsing of the contents, which can follow the interests of singular readers. It mixes the vertical and horizontal axis, and on each line there are two or more labels for author, title of the contribution and section. [fig. 31]. The labels remind one of a loose flow chart, with no links between one box and the next. This indexing system reveals the amount of thought the editors put in developing the journal online, and while it

Hedwig Fijen Introduction to Manifesta Journal Series 3 P.7	Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Virginie Bobin Editorial Statement P.9		Cuahtémoc Medina Guest Editorial: The Fungus in the Contemporary P.11
Conversation between Roberto Jacoby and Ana Longoni With Uneasiness as the Starting Point P.13	CONVERSATION		Miguel López Back to <i>No-Objetualismo</i> : Returns of Peruvian Artistic Experimentalism (1960s / 1970s) P.21
Cuahtémoc Medina Retroactive Vampirism: On The Age of Discrepancies P.27	SPECULATION		Katerina Gregos Is The Past Another Country? P.33
Tomáš Pospiszyl Etude P.50	ETUDE	Narcisse Tordoír in Conversation With the Phantom of Allan Kaprow P.53	CONVERSATION
Mangelos Shid Theory P.67	MATERIALS	Raqs Media Collective Statement P.70	STATEMENT
Suely Rolnik Archive for a Work-event: Activation of the Bodily Memory of the Poetics of Lygia Clark and its Context P.72	SPECULATION		Erick Beltrán, Victoria Noorthoorn Mirlitonnades P.60
Dawn Ades Ludic Experimentation by the Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia, 1971–1985 P.82	GAME		EXHIBITION ROOM
Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer On Re-Act Feminism P.86	STATEMENT	Sven Augustijnen Fragment Spectres P.88	ETUDE
		Colophon P.98	
			Contributors P.99

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Fig. 31. Index of *MJ - Manifesta Journal: Around Curatorial Practices*, no. 13 (2012). Source: Manifesta Journal.

might be a remnant of the idea of the 'self-compositional issue',⁴⁷¹ or of the readers's experience of the magazine, it is certainly an interpretation of the internet's browsing system, through links and connections, rather than a pre-determined order. It might even recollect the way in which people view and experience exhibitions, from one room to the next, at times following the predetermined path, while at other times moving more freely in the spaces. Indeed the participation of guest editors and the subdivision into sections, with some entailing the conception of an exhibition, and others inviting artists to participate, show their vocation to conceive the magazine as a curatorial project. On this matter, Petrešin-Bachelez confirms that they "thought of the issues as exhibitions"⁴⁷² and that in her experience, as both editor and curator, the two are absolutely permeable.

This might be symptomatic of the curatorial mindset for which the work of curating can be applied to any kind of selective and organisational work, like curating music festivals, events, dinners, publications and so on, or it could be due to the transformation of the magazine into a publication that should be looked at more than it should be read. This tendency, as previously mentioned, was noted already in the 1960s, but with the advent of the internet and the lowering of the expenses related to publishing, printed periodicals have been increasingly privileging graphically beautiful aesthetics and layouts to the detriment of the quality of the contents. Criticism seems to be no longer read,⁴⁷³ and since the features published have become increasingly shorter and more promotional than didactic or analytic, to find detailed examinations, one must instead consult the scientific articles and journals that have recently seen the light of day.

With the changing of each series, the link with the institution became increasingly malleable. From its very first issues *MJ* advocated a certain autonomy from the institution. On the relationship between the two phenomena, Lisa Mazza, managing editor of the second and third series, states that "it has always been quite ambivalent".⁴⁷⁴ As promoter and co-publisher the Manifesta Foundation participated in major discussions concerning the

⁴⁷¹ By the term I refer to the readers' possibility to build their own issue, downloading or reading only the contents he/she is interested in.

⁴⁷² Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁷³ See amongst others James Elkins, *What Happened to Art Criticism?* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

⁴⁷⁴ Lisa Mazza, phone interview, February 20, 2020.

publication, mostly regarding the structure, format, divisions into series, relations with the publisher, distribution and sales, but it was not involved in editorial decisions. Periodical and institution may have been nominatively linked and both shared the intention of developing the Manifesta Network, but the exhibition was not supposed to be the inspirational agent for the journal's contents. This does not mean that the magazine did not intend to promote the institution. It merely did so more subtly than other publications of this type, demonstrating, for instance, the innovations that Manifesta brought in the curatorial field with the launch of the first publication on curating. It was its very existence and circulation that promoted the exhibition. Taking advantage of the fortune of the curatorial enterprise, *MJ* was spectacularising the biennial and legitimising it on the global stage, providing a list of names that, while not directly involved in the exhibition, which was and still is Eurocentric, orbit through the periodical.

When the third series saw the light of day, there were considerably more magazines focusing on curating including *The Exhibitionist*, *oncurating.org*, *Cura* and the academic *Journal of Curatorial Studies*. All these publications were born around 2008-2009, a time of great booming for art periodicals, for the possibilities afforded by the internet, and for a need to engage with a moment of great change and transformation in contemporary society. With this context in mind, it made sense for the directors and board of Manifesta to link it with the institution more evidently than ever before. The "Introduction" to the thirteenth issue by Hedwig Fijen states that "With this new series, the Manifesta Journal will become more integrated with other projects developed by the Manifesta Foundation".⁴⁷⁵ According to Petrešin-Bachelez, Fijen's idea was "to reconnect the journal with the exhibition, and situate the publication within its context",⁴⁷⁶ as a way to differentiate it from similar enterprises. Maintaining this circularity, the first and sixth publication of the series were linked with the exhibitions. In the first one they invited as co-editors the curators of Manifesta 9 in Genk (June 2 - September 30, 2012),⁴⁷⁷ Cuauhtémoc Medina, Katerina Gregos and Dawn Ades to investigate contemporary art through the re-contextualisation of artistic practices from the 1960s. Titled "Fungus in the Contemporary" [fig. 32], this first issue, aside from being edited by the curators of the show, did not engage with the themes of Manifesta 9, but rather

⁴⁷⁵ Hedwig Fijen, "Introduction to the Manifesta Journal Series 3", *Manifesta Journal*, 13 (2012): 8.

⁴⁷⁶ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁷⁷ The exhibition's website is accessible at <http://m9.manifesta.org/>, while the catalogue can be viewed online at the link https://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jpvolume_00192243.



Fig. 32. Cover of *MJ - Manifesta Journal: Around Curatorial Practices*, no. 13 (2012). Source: Manifesta.

functioned as an introduction to the discourse on contemporaneity developed in the following issues (no. 14-16) in collaboration with Rasha Salti on the theme of chronopolitics, the politics of time.⁴⁷⁸ It was through experimentation with diverse editorial modes that the magazine became a curatorial project. Issue seventeen, co-edited with Bisi Silva, focused on the contemporary global condition. Paying homage to post-colonial theory and criticism, the editors and contributors created “visions of potential and imagined futures to co-inhabit across space”.⁴⁷⁹ And lastly, issue eighteen reconnected with Manifesta, this time at its tenth edition in St. Petersburg.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Petrešin-Bachelez, Bobin and Salti, “Editorial”: 5.

⁴⁷⁹ Biennial Foundation announcement “To Celebrate The Release Of The Manifesta Journal 17 Future(S) Of Cohabitation Edited By Natasa Petresin-Bachelez (Chief Editor), Virginie Bobin (Associate Editor) And Bisi Silva (*MJ*#17 Guest Editor), *Manifesta Journal*, In Partnership With Tate Modern, Will Host A Panel Discussion And Seminar”, <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/2014/03/to-celebrate-the-release-of-the-manifesta-journal-17-futures-of-cohabitation-edited-by-natasa-petresin-bachelez-chief-editor-virginie-bobin-associate-editor-and-bisi-silva-mj17-guest-editor/>, accessed July 2020.

⁴⁸⁰ See the exhibition catalogue: König, Kasper, et al. *Manifesta 10: The European Biennial of Contemporary Art*, St. Petersburg, Russia, The State Hermitage Museum (London: Koenig Books, 2014).

On the occasion of the Russian exhibition, the editors invited David Riff as co-editor. The work group Chto Delat, of which he was a member, was supposed to take part in the exhibition, but decided to step out.⁴⁸¹ This was only one of a number of political tensions which arose before and during the exhibition,⁴⁸² and the issue engages with some of these. After Chto Delat decided not to take part in the exhibition a high number of concerns were voiced about Riff's editorship of the journal. Petrešin-Bachelez and Bobin, however, insisted he maintained his position. They felt it would have been a statement, first of all for the added value he would bring to the issue, and secondly to show the audience that the magazine was still a space which cultivated dissensus.⁴⁸³ After all, the magazine was promoting the institution talking about Manifesta, and it was a unique occasion for the institution to demonstrate their respect towards the editorial independence of the journal and its autonomous voice. Moreover, at this time the Foundation commissioned the editors to explore issues of censorship and self-censorship in a global context, and for this it could not be the one to censor or inhibit Riff's participation or editorial eye. The institutional "dependence" of the journal would have been revealed otherwise.

Interestingly, while the magazine reached its climax as a critical organism, it quite openly criticised its parent institution,⁴⁸⁴ highlighting the unaddressed problematics concerning the latter. Unfortunately, the editorial liberty taken by the editors in maintaining Riff as editor and in openly discussing the confrontations associated with Manifesta 10,

⁴⁸¹ Chto Delat collective, *Chto Delat withdraws from Manifesta 10*, <https://chtodelat.org/b9-texts-2/chtodelat-withdraws-from-manifesta-10/>, accessed July 2020. Hannah Yudkin, *Debating the Manifesta 10 Boycott in Russia* (October 3, 2013) <https://hyperallergic.com/86385/debating-the-manifesta-10-boycott-in-russia/>; Coline Milliard, "Controversial Manifesta 10 Organizers Condemn Artists Boycotts", *Artnet* (April 2014). <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/controversial-manifesta-10-organizers-condemn-artists-boycotts-13011>.

⁴⁸² Alexander Forbes, "Does the Russian Incursion in Crimea Threaten the Cancellation of Manifesta 10?", *Artnet News* (March 4, 2014) <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/does-the-russian-incursion-in-crimea-threaten-the-cancellation-of-manifesta-10-3888>, accessed July 2020; and "To withdraw Manifesta 10 would mean to ignore contemporary voices and emerging generations of Russia. A statement of the International Foundation Manifesta" (Released 30 August 2013), <https://manifesta.org/2013/08/to-withdraw-manifesta-10-would-mean-to-ignore-contemporary-voices-and-emerging-generations-of-russia/>, accessed December 2020.

⁴⁸³ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁸⁴ See in particular the two conversations: David Riff with Ketj Chukhrov, Viktor Misiano, Gleb Napreenko, Alexandra Novozhenova and Andrey Parshikov, "These are Still Open Questions..." and Riff, "Different Shades of Withdrawal: Conversation with Nikita Kadan and Joanna Warsza", *Manifesta Journal*, 18 (2014), respectively 9-22, and 78-84.

instead of helping the institution to improve and return to its initial critical status, might have caused, in the higher ranks of the Foundation, some mistrust, as it spectacularised not the magnificence of the institution but its downfalls.⁴⁸⁵ As it happened also with the previous cases herein discussed, the narrower temporality of the biennial has provided the means through which the biennial itself could engage and adapt with the contemporary at a faster pace, but this, at times, was insufficient, as the institutionalisation's drive (the unbecoming) overcame the ephemerality (the becoming) of the biennial, and slowed its ability to move alongside the becoming of time and most importantly of art.

During its decade of existence, the *MJ* lived many different yet connected lives, thanks to the visions and beliefs of the editors who directed it and the Foundation which promoted it. Over the three series the journal developed an increasing self-reflexivity towards its possibilities and potentialities. The magazine evolved from a space for theory, to educate the viewer, into a space of experimentation, a curatorial project in itself. Although the role of the editors in this evolution needs to be praised, it should not be forgotten that the decades of the 2000s and 2010s, were a moment of great experimentation in the periodical field which went hand in hand with the evolution of the audience. A large number of new art periodicals were born thanks to digital and technological innovations and lower printing costs. Evidence of this Renaissance of the field,⁴⁸⁶ as Allen defined it, is the emergence not only of all these new editorial ventures, but of a system that legitimises them. This occurred alongside the emergence of specialised bookshops, exhibitions⁴⁸⁷ and fairs for promoting and selling these publications, and the increasing numbers of stands at art fairs giving space to magazines and

⁴⁸⁵ Petrešin-Bachelez, Interview, January 6, 2020.

⁴⁸⁶ Gwen Allen, "Between Page and Exhibition: Art Magazines Today", keynote presentation at the conference *Between Exhibition and Fair: Entre Chien et Loup*, curated by Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese, Arte Fiera, Bologna, February 2-3, 2018: <http://www.artefiera.it/media/artefiera/2018/documents/ConvegnoAF.pdf>, accessed December 2020. See also Allen, "Magazines as Alternative Sites of Artistic Practice", 271.

⁴⁸⁷ More recent examples of periodical exhibitions, after the documenta XII Magazine Project, include amongst others *Millennium Magazines* curated by Rachael Morrison and David Senior at MoMA Library New York (February 20 – May 14, 2012), https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/millenniummagazines/?_ga=2.196084837.898409689.1588949281-1969815737.1588949281, accessed December 2020. See also *Paper Weight: Genre-defining Magazines 2000 to Now*, exhibition curated by Felix Burrichter at Haus der Kunst, Munich (July, 12 to October 27, 2013), <https://hausderkunst.de/en/exhibitions/paper-weight-stilbildende-magazine-von-2000-bis-heute>, accessed December 2020.

publishers. *MJ* had to engage with the public of the exhibition and the reader of the periodicals, and for this it needed to acclimatise to the requests of its increasingly heterogeneous, fragmented and cultured audience. The shift to an online and access free publication is symptomatic of an ever wider audience, interested in reading about the exhibition and curatorial practices. The magazine by nature is highly receptive to these changes and for this was able to evolve and improve more promptly, in advance of the institution. It is noteworthy that the exhibition's curve of existence went from the experimental to the institutionalised, while the magazine travelled in the opposite direction. From a classic editorial approach it became increasingly experimental, albeit always remaining in the field of curating. The serial structure, the changing editors and the interruptions between one series and the next provided the opportunity to look and analyse the publication at some distance, with critical eyes. It was also a unique moment to show the actual becoming of the journal, which—having the magazine's temporality substituted by the biennial's—was not really evident from issue to issue, as it is with other contemporary art magazines.

MJ remains a fundamental periodical, not only for curatorial magazines, but for the way the periodical engages, reinterprets and is colonised by the temporality of the exhibition, and how it transformed from exhibition magazine into a curatorial project in itself. These features have inspired multiple reflections about the online format of *OBOE*, of what could be done in terms of experimentations with the medium, the inclusion of artists' works and at times even curatorial projects, whilst remembering that the departing premises of *OBOE* aim to maintain a focus on art's ostensivity rather than on curating. With that said, there were several reasons that led to the end of *MJ* as a publication: the existence of a number of other journals that competed to create a discourse on curating; the suspension of funding from the European Union; and also because the foundation had established itself enough in the artworld to no longer feel the need for a platform where its network could discuss, debate and reunite when the exhibition was closed. Nevertheless, it could have also been because the journal, no matter its intentions and premises, like *la biennale* forty years earlier, was no longer capable of conjugating its promotional intentions with the spirit of the time, with the *Zeitgeist*, and with the impelling issues of globalisation.

To conclude this chapter, *MJ* may be praised for the editor's willingness to experiment and transform the publication into an interactive organism, and for the understanding and use of its becoming in time which became the motif of its subdivision in series, even if this was born out of the contingency of one of the editor's deaths and the long interruption between the sixth and seventh issue. The moment of this contingency, as it has been discussed throughout this chapter and previous ones, is the time in which becoming takes place. Indeed as we have seen this time of becoming is not only determined by the will of the institution, or by the becoming of art and time itself, but also by moments which are unpredictable; moments in which the institution lives a major crisis or when someone vital for the publication dies. In general, these moments of becoming are also permeated by a sense of precarity, as just another component of the magazine's and biennial's becoming, since it entails that its response is either unable to engage with contemporaneity and art, or that the format no longer sustains its purpose. Compared to Venice and Documenta it demonstrates a maturity and an awareness of the possibilities offered by the two media, for the biennial rather straightforward since its launch, for the magazine instead acquired in time through the series. This knowledge, nonetheless, less foregrounded than Venice for instance, has prevailed and found new outcomes for the ways by which a magazine helps the institution in terms of promotion, spectacularisation and legitimisation. Similarly to the previously discussed cases, it shows the difficulties and ambivalences of becoming autonomous and in distancing the voices of the editors from those of the foundation, and reveals how the parenting relationship between magazine and institution has not really changed.

MJ remains a pivotal example of the exhibition magazine for its ability to capture and record the ephemerality of the show, even when not discussing it directly, through its network of professionals, people and institutions. The platform created for Manifesta's network registered the many conversations that were held thanks to it, and the pages and features of the journal also served as a means through which Manifesta's curators could investigate and choose certain curatorial techniques rather than others. Finally, its serial character brings the understanding of the becoming of art to another level, for at each new series, the whole redesign and reconceptualisation of the journal showed the readers and viewers what was current at the time. What is interesting about this case in particular, compared to those previously discussed, is that while being capable of maturing an idea of

contemporaneity in its unfixed nature that emulated that of the show, the biennial itself, knowing its criticalities and limits, was the slowest one to understand the changes that it needed to undertake and adapt to the contemporary. It might be owing to its unfixed and itinerant nature that it has endured resisting to change, remaining tied to pre-Adornoian discourses without freeing itself from the spectacularising dynamics of the art world and the problematics afflicting Europe then and now.

Finally, researching *MJ* proved fundamental for *OBOE* in terms of understanding the magazine's intermittent periodicity and how to engage with this. I came to appreciate the importance of having a vision, even without a foreseeable end date to the publication. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, I also learnt that ephemerality may be understood in terms of precarity, and that there is no certain duration to a periodical publication. In fact, the three iterations of the magazine existed in a liminal space between experimentation and mere survival, and with each new series, the previous version of the magazine abated, giving way to a new and updated one.

Chapter 6

OBOE Journal: The Magazine as Practice

It lies in the nature of a magazine that it goes public, hence the term publication. At a certain moment, and with specific intervals, a magazine is made available to the public, whether on newsstands, in specialist bookstores, or online. [...] what happens in between—namely, the decisions on themes, articles, edits, graphic design, and, yes, adverts—is non-public. [...] in many ways, the main work of a magazine, of its production of meaning, is non-public.⁴⁸⁸

Throughout this dissertation and the study of the exhibition magazine, I have demonstrated and elucidated the importance of the interval and those moments in which the history, decisions and becoming of the exhibition and the magazine are invisible to the public. I have highlighted how the perception of the interval varies in who publishes the journal and who reads it. Indeed, the reader does not perceive the dormant time as such, since the interval between the coming out of the issues is the time for reading, experiencing and engaging with the publication. The time of the interval for the reader is the time in which the issue of the magazine is brought to life. From the opposite perspective, meaning that of the journal, what happens during the interval, i.e. the creation, editing and printing of the issues may be invisible to the reader. This interval, whether it be perceived from the point of view of the editor, or from that of the reader, is the very time of existence of the periodical, as the coming out of the issues are only the events that punctuate its periodicity, while its durational being is in the time in which the reader experiences it. The same cannot be said about the biennial. The time in between its editions is often imperceptible and this is why they have started punctuating that time with publications and events.

Through the readings of my chosen magazines, archival sources and conversations with the editors, alongside my own understandings of the media through the making of *OBOE Journal*, I have attempted to show the processes and dynamics behind the making of the magazine. These insights were not only devoted to the study herein presented but also enabled me to learn what producing a magazine entails, preparing me for the challenges and obstacles that I would encounter while creating a periodical publication.

⁴⁸⁸ Simon Sheikh, "Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation".

Through a dual approach, theoretical and practice-based, this thesis contributes to the understanding of both what an art magazine is and what it can do, explicating the features that characterise its temporality and becoming—including when this is non-public—and investigating its relationships with biennial exhibitions and how these examples may illustrate the role of the magazine as a “handmaiden” of the art system. While conducting the study, it became clear that—within the niche of the exhibition magazine—although there are some similarities between periodicals that allow for broader considerations and readings of specific phenomena, they diverge considerably. The same applies when considering the contemporary art magazine and its many formats and features. The classification of something that exists while continually evolving and changing entails accounting for a precariousness that is quite intelligible to those who create and study these editorial ventures, even though, as discussed earlier, precarity is but one side of its ephemerality and becoming.

Throughout the dissertation I have focused both on the public and non-public moments of the exhibition magazine. Therefore, it seems only natural to do the same with *OBOE Journal*, as one of the results of a thesis on art and exhibition magazines, and thus a sort of meta-discourse, intended as an attempt to concurrently study the art magazine and create one. Throughout this chapter I will narrate the process that led me to the finalisation of the journal: the choices made, the mediations and the compromises, the interruptions, the obstacles, the failures and the precarity of the whole enterprise, but also the successes which allowed *OBOE* to come to life. This chapter will complement the narration and many parentheses on *OBOE* that have permeated and returned throughout this dissertation to show the complementarity of the two approaches: on the one hand, the importance of *OBOE* in shaping and supporting the theoretical research, and on the other, the importance of the present study for the formation of the journal. I will attempt to catalogue the three and a half years that led to the preparation and launch of the publication, not with an impartial and objective eye, as this would be impossible due to my close attachment to the project, but as a self-reflexive account of the facts that brought me to publish the journal and experience it as an entity in becoming, even before its first public appearance.

6.1. Is There Space for a New Art Periodical? The Premises and Birth of *OBOE Journal*

OBOE is a bi-annual, double-blind peer reviewed, open access online journal devoted to the study of contemporary art and exhibitions.⁴⁸⁹ *OBOE* is not an art magazine, rather it is a means through which to study exhibitions as an apparatus, an attempt at writing contemporary art history, through the exhibition and the manifestation of art. While it is linked to a dissertation on the magazines launched by perennial exhibitions it is not an exhibition magazine per se, and it is not attached to a biennial institution. Since it is not linked with a biennial, it does not have to engage with a specific temporality. It does not have to disseminate the contents of a specific biennial, rather it wants to study their formats, features and implications for art and its system of legitimisation (alongside their histories). More broadly, *OBOE* wants to look at biennials as part of the larger phenomenon of art's manifestation.

With that said, *OBOE's* readership professionals of the art field, curators, artists and collectors, but most importantly as an academic publication, aims to attract a more scholarly readership. Considerations about the audience were accompanied by the fundamental question "Is there space and appetite for a new art periodical?" Indeed, after researching and working for a few years in this field of studies, and having started developing the *Art Periodicals Database*, the first answer to this question wasn't a positive one.⁴⁹⁰ There are countless numbers of periodicals, both regionally and globally, even though this expansion is only partially visible in the *Database*, as I have chosen to launch it with a limited number of periodicals, and allow it to grow in time alongside the audience. This, the audience, is potentially made of editors, graphic designers, curators and artists, but also the readers of the magazines included in the *Database*, as well as by scholars and students. Sustained critical thinking about the periodical nature of magazines—acquired through the publication of *OBOE* and the present study—has made me realise its importance, its capacity to engage with the audience at every new iteration of the publication and think about how to reflect this quality in the *Database*. The plan is to use social media, newsletters and the participating

⁴⁸⁹ "About", *OBOE Journal*, <http://www.oboejournal.com/index.php/oboe/about/index>, accessed December 2020.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. List of the Researched Periodicals in the Appendix, 237-244.

periodicals to spread the news on the new listings of the *Database* on a rolling basis. I believe this decision will endow the project with a periodicity for which the audience will expect to receive new contents and updates, becoming an edited digest for its readers.

While drawing up the initial list of periodicals to include in the *Database* I noticed that amongst the group of magazines that are intrinsically tied to curating and exhibitions there were no periodicals that put biennials and periodic exhibitions at the very core of their research. Biennials were often treated in an issue or a series of issues, but none of these fostered a systematic study of these exhibitionary formats. Strengthened by the support of my advisor Angela Vettese who often thought about launching a magazine with a focus on the Venice Biennale, I started looking at this gap from the point of view not of periodical studies but of exhibitions and curating, noticing that of the immense constellation of publications devoted to these themes, none were magazines. Or at least this was the case, until December 2018 when an *e-flux* announcement from the International Biennial Association⁴⁹¹ declared the birth of *PASS Journal*, a periodical on biennial exhibitions.⁴⁹² Fortunately, the latter journal's first issue clearly stated the aim of having the practitioners of the field narrate these perennial shows. It was once again a magazine written by curators, which left empty the chair *OBOE* was attempting to sit on. The birth of *PASS*, however, also came as good news: it became clear that a periodical on biennials was something that was felt as urgent and relevant to the field of study.

Before researching the exhibition magazine, while I was still in the process of searching for similar and 'competitor' publications for *OBOE*, I started looking at a number of curatorial magazines and chanced upon the *Manifesta Journal* and *Stages* (published by the Liverpool Biennial). In fact, it was the initial idea for *OBOE* that led to the focus of the theoretical research and in particular on the selected case studies, rather than the other way round. In the process of making the journal and analysing the periodicals it became useful for understanding the mechanics and features which characterise the magazine, such as its multiplicity, its being composed of events and intervals, its difference and repetition. It was a way to visualise the theoretical framework. After choosing the topic for the journal, for instance, I began focusing my attention on the magazines published by institutions,

⁴⁹¹ See <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/126008/pass-journal-of-the-international-biennial-association/>; and IBA's website: <https://biennialassociation.org/journal/>, both accessed November 2020.

⁴⁹² *Pass Journal* website: www.passjournal.org, accessed December 2020. See also *PASS*'s entry in the Art Periodical's database: , accessed January 2021.

exhibitions and in particular biennials. This encounter was rather fortuitous as I could not envisage a more fitting case of a magazine writing about an exhibition than one that was linked to and promoted by a biennial. While other magazines, like *e-flux* or *oncurating.org* might ostensibly be more similar to *OBOE* in terms of format and structure, I was interested in studying how the exhibition magazine discussed the exhibition in terms of narration, self-historicisation, and self-reflection, and not solely as a tool for promotion and dissemination. This relation became a research instrument for investigating the role of the exhibition for art and its system of legitimisation.

As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, I looked at all the aspects that made these periodicals, as evinced in Benjamin's idea of the magazine as "apparatus"⁴⁹³, from graphic design, editorial politics, publishing schedules, distribution, advertising and funding, to the changing presentation of the periodical. In the end, the exhibition magazines weren't the only ones I took inspiration from for their relationship with the institution, as the premises for *OBOE*'s birth, much like its needs and potential structure, were rather different. In terms of contents and nature, similarly to the exhibition magazine, *OBOE* may be seen as the progeny of traditional academy bulletins on the one hand, and the conceptual experimentations with the magazines of the 1960s and 1970s on the other, both of which were discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. From the former, *OBOE* draws its will to focus on exhibitions and institutions, privileging the role of the artist, and art's manifestation. From the latter, *OBOE* draws its interest in the magazine as a space of experimentation and investigation around the process of making a journal, its circulation and its popularity, but also on its being a site for institutional critique. Both parents are amongst the original models of the exhibition magazine, and the latter in particular has been attractive for biennial curators, not so much for their commitment to institutional critique, but as sites for exhibiting artistic practice and exhibition making. Drawing its origin from these early periodicals, *OBOE* becomes a testament to Allen's understanding of the history of artists magazines as "precedents and frameworks for current publishing practices, which may in turn reactivate this past and make it newly available in the present".⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, with their different models and parents, the exhibition magazines discussed here, alongside *OBOE*, bring back to life these practices with new missions and structures.

⁴⁹³ Benjamin, "The Author as Producer". Cf. footnote 16.

⁴⁹⁴ Allen, "Magazines as Alternative Sites of Artistic Practice", 275.

Relatedly, in terms of structure, I looked at other journals, most of them online and academic, to see how a number of journals were dealing with the regulations of academic and open access publishing.⁴⁹⁵ Some of these journals were mentioned in the introduction and include *Third Text*, *Art Margins*, and *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, all of which were under the umbrella of an important publisher. Others were the *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, *Ricerche di S/Confine*, etc. All of these periodicals were crucial at different stages of *OBOE*'s conception and continue to be relevant for its becoming.

Stepping back to three years ago, once I had the concept, I felt quite positive about the strength of the idea and that, if well presented, it would appeal to a number of scholars, partners and funders. The first period, the time of conceptualisation, went quite smoothly. I wrote a presentation and mission statement for the journal with the director to be, Angela Vettese, and made a list of important scholars in the field, most of them cited throughout these pages, including Bruce Altshuler, Terry Smith, Caroline A. Jones and Charles Green. I contacted them with a letter co-signed by Vettese,⁴⁹⁶ and aside from one scholar they all agreed to take part in the journal as they all felt it was something missing from the field. As advisors, I wasn't expecting them to actively participate in the journal, but it was quite providential that Caroline A. Jones accepted the invitation to write an article for the first issue, while the others demonstrated their openness towards guest editing future issues and agreed to collaborate in spreading the word about the publication. The editorial team, contacted at the same time, was instead composed of scholars with an interest in working on the publication, carefully selected so as to maintain a constant and constructive dialogue to work on the magazine, build a network of contributors and peer-reviewers, and help with the day-to-day organisation of the issues. Structuring the different boards and the operational team, together with the moments of confrontation that this entailed, helped me fully

⁴⁹⁵ On open access publishing see: Andrea Marchitelli, "Pubblicare in Open Access: Open Journal Systems e Open Conference Systems", Seminario AePIC-Cilea 54, (December 2007); Jevin West, Theodore Bergstrom, and Carl Bergstrom, "Cost Effectiveness of Open Access Publications", *Economic Inquiry* 52, 4 (July 2014): 1315-1321; Peter Weingart and Niels Christian Taubert, *The future of scholarly publishing: open access and the economics of digitisation* (S.l.: African Minds, 2017).

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Appendix, 251-252.

understand the idea that a publication is a “chorality” of voices,⁴⁹⁷ which I had discussed earlier with Ntone Edjabe, the editor-in-chief of the South African publishing platform Chimurenga.⁴⁹⁸

6.2. The Importance of Failure and Chance

I am extremely thankful to all the people, scholars and administrators alike, who helped and sustained *OBOE Journal* during its development. It takes a long time to see a journal published, and on reflection I realise how much I underestimated this. Because of this undervaluation I came to realise that in a periodical publication establishing proper time schedules with deadlines that cannot be postponed is fundamental. Indeed, for the collective quality of the magazine, with its dependence on many external voices, people and resources, it is pivotal to calculate the time correctly and keep everyone on the deadlines as much as possible.

Another point I feel I underestimated at the time was the difficulty of finding contributions for a journal that didn't yet exist. Even if the whole structure and our networks were quite solid, it was extremely challenging to obtain contributions for the issue. I was asking for an investment in time and perhaps money from people without their knowing how *OBOE* would position itself in the field of academic and art publishing (or indeed whether it would see the light of day at all). After learning from the difficulties accompanying the first issue, Vettese, Ricci and I decided that we would wait until *OBOE* was published before asking for contributions and sending Calls for Papers for following issues. This decision turned out to be quite fortunate, as the responses to the Call for Papers of the second and third issues were much higher than we expected. Indeed, we received proposals by a number of emerging scholars, by more established ones, as well as by curators and other practitioners of the field.

⁴⁹⁷ I have taken this term to express the multiple voices that partake in the magazine from Ntone Edjabe, editor-in-chief of *Chimurenga*, Skype interview with the author, December 22, 2017. Excerpts of interview available in the book chapter Salvaneschi, “Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive” and upon request.

⁴⁹⁸ See Chimurenga's website: <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/>, accessed December 2020.

With that said, despite the initial difficulties encountered, the first issue became a space to present the journal itself, the research interests of its editors and board, and the motives that led to the creation of the publication. It also immediately became a site for investigating exhibitions, like the Venice Biennale, through their longer histories and timelines. Following Vettese's introduction to the periodical, which emphasises the importance of such a publication, the first issue investigates different periods of the Biennale, from its early days onwards. It includes the translation of Maria Mimita Lamberti's foundational essay "International Exhibitions in Venice" (1982), which, although written several decades ago, remains a highly relevant study. Aside from the Lamberti translation and Vittoria Martini's article on the Biennale's brand, which are concerned with the first years of the Biennale, all the other peer-reviewed essays engage with different periods—the 1950s and 1960s (Salvaneschi), the 1970s (Tanga), the 1990s (Ricci and Jones)⁴⁹⁹—and provide an image of the historical complexity of the institution.⁵⁰⁰

Overall, the experiences that accompanied these three years—of which I am mentioning but a few—were helpful, as I could experience first-hand the importance of flexibility, mediation, compromise, but also of the unpredictable, precarious and transformative nature of a periodical publication. Throughout this dissertation all these aspects have been analysed and unravelled in reference to the exhibition magazine and the ephemerality that is linked to its periodical nature. Just as *OBOE* was vital to understand the mechanisms and dynamics behind a periodical publication, so were the case studies vital for understanding what was happening with *OBOE* with more critical and external eyes and for finding solutions that were innovative and creative.

The magazine *la biennale* was pivotal for understanding practical issues such as the economics, the importance of a publisher, the relation with the audience, as well as the component of failure and for navigating moments of crisis. The becoming of *la biennale* was often determined by failures, by moments in which it ceased existing in a certain form, no longer helpful to the institution, shifting instead towards responding more promptly to its own requests and needs, and continuing its function as official organ of promotion and

⁴⁹⁹ For a resume of the articles in the issue, see Ricci, et al., "Editorial".

⁵⁰⁰ A further contribution which discussed the 2010s, but required further work after the peer-review process, did not make it into the first issue.

dissemination for the exhibition. These failures, as I have argued in all the three case studies, though, should not be viewed only as such. They are better viewed as constructive failures, because they become potential moments of reconstruction in which the publication can strengthen itself, just as happened for *OBOE* during its three-year gestation period. The moments of stasis and failure allowed me to rethink and restructure the journal several times in light of the changes in regulations and further discoveries about the potentialities contained within the art magazine.

The second case study, the *dXd* and the future iterations of Documenta's magazines demonstrated the impossibility of looking at the magazine in terms of fulfilling preestablished expectations and instead promoted involvement in the process. Its ever-evolving structure does not provide any certainty, nor possibility of having expectations towards what the journal—or the issue—will become in its final output, which in fact is its coming into existence. There is a sort of chasm between what is initially envisioned and what will actually become. This is part of the transformative nature of the periodical, that begins even before the periodical has become public. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, *OBOE* began as a magazine strictly focused on biennials and became one that looks at the broader way in which art manifests itself to the public, as the second issue, the forthcoming "Opera-fania: On the Ostensive Conditions of Art"⁵⁰¹ testifies.

The decision to broaden the scope of the journal was twofold. A first moment of self-reflection came when considering the title itself. *On Biennials* was too tied to the format of the perennial exhibition and in agreement with Vettese and Ricci, we decided to reference Alloway's chapter "The Venice Biennale and Other Exhibitions"⁵⁰² to broaden the scope of the journal. *Biennials* became *On Biennials*, and *On Biennials* became *On Biennials and Other Exhibitions*. Unfortunately, this option was too long and difficult to remember, yet it was a necessary step which led to *OBOE*. As stated in the editorial

We chanced upon the title *OBOE* as an acronym for our subtitle 'On Biennials and Other Exhibitions'. [...] We were intrigued by the fact that it alluded to music, and the act of playing and performing, as something entailing participation and evolution.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰¹ Opera-fanía will be published in Spring 2021.

⁵⁰² Alloway, *The Venice Biennale*, 13.

⁵⁰³ Ricci, et al., "Editorial".

The acronym *OBOE* came at the end of 2018 and it was considered perfect for its playful meaning and the fact that at first sight it didn't seem to be overly tied to the biennial. We thought that this would allow us more liberty and would help the journal attract a broader readership, of scholars, professionals and a more general audience, interested not only in biennials and periodic exhibitions but also in art and its manifestation. Considerations about readership also entailed reflections on the possibility of receiving contributions and articles by established and early career scholars and professionals in the art field.

A second moment of reflection came fairly recently, during the first wave of Covid-19. Vettese, Ricci and I were in the process of writing the editorial of "Why Venice?" and started to think about the next issues, recognising how the pandemic had impacted our lives and the art world so much that we no longer knew if these exhibitionary formats would survive as the main showcases for contemporary art.⁵⁰⁴ It was in that moment that we realised the importance of broadening our gaze. This is explained in the editorial of the first issue and is being further investigated through the second issue "Opera-fanía", which will shed light on the importance of art's ostensivity and how the perception of an artwork changes depending on the context in which it is exhibited, whether this might be online, in a performance or on a pedestal.⁵⁰⁵

Finally, the last case study of the *Manifesta Journal* was crucial in leading me to think about the magazine itself as a self-reflective tool about the magazine format, in terms of content, schedules, experimentation, as well as visual output. Of the three case studies herein discussed the *Manifesta Journal's* last series was the one I also felt graphically closest to because of their use of the online platform and the simple yet elegant layout of the contents. As anticipated in the introduction, the platform on which *OBOE Journal* is constructed, OJS (Open Journal System)⁵⁰⁶ is based on a software for open-access

⁵⁰⁴ There have been many earlier reflections on the future of the biennial format, not linked with the pandemic. See for instance: Rafal Niemojewski, "Turning the Tide: The Oppositional Past and Uncertain Future of the Contemporary Biennial", *Journal of Art and Politics*, (December 2013), <http://www.seismopolite.com/turning-the-tide-the-oppositional-past-and-uncertain-future-of-the-contemporary-b>, accessed December 2020.

⁵⁰⁵ See "Announcements" page on *OBOE's* website: <http://www.oboejournal.com/index.php/oboe/announcement/view/5>, accessed December 2020.

⁵⁰⁶ On OJS see Andrea Marchitelli and Susanna Mornati, "Stare su Google ma non solo: OJS per l'Editoria Scientifica e Accademica Periodica", *Bollettino del CILEA* 114, (January 2009): 34-37; John Willinsky, "An Introduction to Use of Roles in Open Journal Systems", *Public Knowledge Project*, (2007), <https://pkp.sfu.ca/files/OJS%20User%20Roles.pdf>, accessed December 2020.

publications which strongly limits the aesthetic possibilities and the contents that can be included in a publication. Having researched and worked in the magazine and publishing fields for several years, I had very strong visions about this and wanted the journal to have high quality content, but also to be appealing in terms of aesthetics and navigation/usability. I have reiterated various times throughout this thesis the importance of design for attracting audiences and identifying different types of magazines. Design has become a statement to identify the magazine's brand in the publishing industry, but also in the very art system, as it can immediately identify a periodical as independent, mainstream or academic, amongst others, and engage a certain type of audience.

Even if *OBOE* was meant to be an academic journal, we still wanted it to be appealing for a more general audience interested in knowing more about art and biennials. The visual outputs of two online magazines in particular stayed with me: *e-flux* Journal⁵⁰⁷ and the New York based *Triple Canopy*, founded by art writer Alexander Provan [fig. 33].

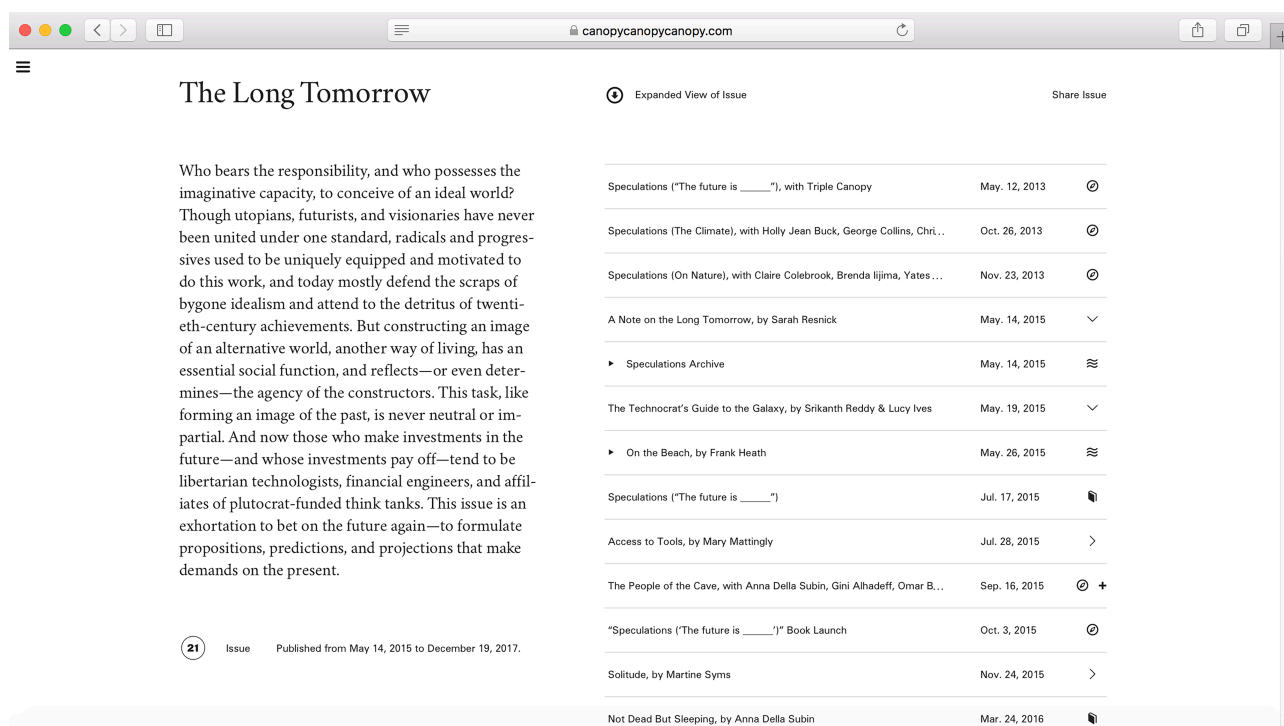


Fig. 33. Triple Canopy "Issues" Webpage, Issue no. 21 (2015-2017). Source: Triple Canopy.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. pages 169-171 of this dissertation.

Both magazines used the online format in interesting ways, experimenting with the reading habits of online users. From the latter we took the horizontal orientation of the homepage as well as emulating how the table of contents is displayed. From *e-flux*, as mentioned earlier, Zaven (the designers) took the use of the pdf and, initially, part of the design, which later changed to accommodate the length of scholarly articles and the strong presence of footnotes. All these influences have allowed me to construct *OBOE* as a unique publication while also helping me to understand the importance of models and references for a publication, be it historical or contemporary.⁵⁰⁸

6.3. *OBOE* Journal as an Entity in Becoming

As these paragraphs testify, at every stage *OBOE* was a work in progress. It was a work of mediation and compromise, of failures and unexpected opportunities for growth. The initial idea for the journal evolved several times, becoming in many ways something different from what was envisioned at the start and will continue to evolve in between predictable formats and unforeseeable futures. Unlike the magazines discussed above, *OBOE's* becoming in time cannot be seen yet, as it will take several issues and years before it will be possible to see how it has changed. From these years of making the journal and learning what periodical publishing entails, I foresee continuing what I have started with an open dialogue. I will proceed within the above mentioned “chorality” of voices that create the journal, emphasising the importance of listening, time management, compromise, flexibility, as well as attentiveness towards contemporaneity, the readership and the present we live in. There isn't much I would do differently, as all these moments, mistakes and pauses were part of the process of making the journal and thus essential components for its very becoming. For this, I foresee site-specific artistic projects made for the website or in specific publications that will accompany *OBOE's* presence, alongside a column with archival materials about specific historic exhibitions, to give a new life to these documents and become a new moment for discussion, debate and research about art and exhibitions.

At the time of writing, I don't know how *OBOE* will evolve in time, nor what other obstacles we will need to overcome, it will depend on the necessities of the field of study,

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Introduction of this dissertation, in particular page 16.

changes to the audience, and innovations in academic publishing, but I hope the journal will be able to continue to fulfil its mission and become an active site of research about art, particularly for young scholars, and I look forward to witnessing this and helping to make it happen.

Conclusions

Dancing the *Do Ut Des*

In a recent essay on the magazine's relation with fairs and biennials, Gwen Allen questions the relevance and criticality of the periodical ventures promoted by Documenta 12 and 14. In particular she wonders

How the specificity of the magazine as a form of distribution plays into their critical potential—or whether the magazine simply functions as an empty signifier of criticality, lending the exhibition superficial or even nostalgic associations with the modes of dissent and critique that publications have historically embodied.⁵⁰⁹

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated how this niche of magazines, exhibition magazines, function precisely as legitimising and disseminating tools for hegemonic exhibitions, moving them in space (beyond the city where the exhibition takes place) and in time (extending their temporality to include the interval as part of the show). By promulgating them through space and time they hope to attract a larger number of visitors to the show, engaging with them during exhibition downtime, and all the while promoting and spectacularising institutional activities. As I have argued, these have been, alongside the extension and transformation of the exhibition's temporality, their main *raison d'être*.

However, within these chapters, I have also delineated how both the exhibition and the magazine become in time, synchronising with the "flow of time"⁵¹⁰, as described by Boris Groys, to adapt to contemporaneity. I have shown how the magazine has sustained the exhibition from which it was borne, contributing to its transformation, at times even anticipating it, thanks to its narrower periodicity and its closer relationship with the present. Within this process of becoming, I have understood the exhibition magazine as being driven by two competing motivations, one which embraces the becoming (ephemerality), the other the unbecoming (institutionalisation). Being composed of these two drives, the exhibition magazine is capable of accompanying the exhibition's processual and a-systematic nature in

⁵⁰⁹ Allen, "Between Page, Magazine and Exhibition", 156.

⁵¹⁰ Boris Groys, "Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtkunstwerk", *e-flux journal*, 50 (December 2013): <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/50/59974/entering-the-flow-museum-between-archive-and-gesamtkunstwerk/>, accessed December 2020.

becoming, but also to archive it, translating itself into a tool of self-reflection, documentation and recording. Thanks to these two drives, the exhibition magazine, hybridising the two temporalities of magazines and biennials, overcomes its subjugation to an *a posteriori* narrative and jumps into the realm of the *a priori*, the time in which contemporary art or contemporaneity is being written rather than reported. Utilising the time of the interval between one exhibition and the next, it epitomises the becoming in time of art, of the exhibition and of contemporaneity, not only at the time of the event but also in the times proceeding and following it. By filling the time of the interval that would have otherwise been an empty moment, the exhibition magazine creates more instants for contemporaneity and art to be epitomised, and by doing so reminds the exhibition of its own ephemerality and legitimises it in the process.

Despite this, seeing that these periodicals are conceived with the scope of mirroring the goals of their parent institutions, it becomes quite natural to ask, in agreement with Allen, whether these periodicals are nothing but “empty signifiers” or meaningless vessels. Is their only function, then, to carry out the name and mission of the hegemonic exhibition promoting them, in a veiled pretence of being themselves critical organisms? Against these initial premises, I have established that no matter their promotional intents, these magazines are not, by nature, critical. They have no relevance to the market, and if criticism is absent in its pages, it is not because they are empty signifiers, but because their very existence is devoted to creating meaning, of interpreting the transient, frayed and multimodal aspects of the exhibition they are promoted by. The periodicals borne in the context of Documenta are an example of this: emerging as one moment of the exhibition, as a part of its vast, heterogenous and boundless organism, alongside its talks, conferences, art schools and other collateral events. With that said, there have been moments in which they have proven capable of eschewing their merely promotional function and questioning their institution and its relevance in the contemporary Western context. In these moments of clarity—albeit very few—these magazines have become motors and platforms requesting the institution’s transformation into contemporary formats, perpetuating the education and transformation of the audience’s understanding of art (itself in continuous evolution).

la biennale did so during Apollonio’s editorship, when it almost achieved autonomy, in terms of contents and editing, from the Venetian exhibitions, limiting to a minimum the

articles and features on the glorious institution and dedicating critical analysis on its need to change. *documenta X documents* was the first magazine to use both a systematic and an a-systematic approach to the exhibition, which allowed it to become a lens through which it was possible to debate the loopholes and restructuring strategies necessary to renovate the exhibition and immerse it into the current momentum. Finally, the *Manifesta Journal*, created to celebrate and engage with Manifesta's network of institutions and curators, reached its critical climax, like *la biennale*, at the end of its life, with its issue associated with Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg. The editors moved against the requests of the Manifesta Foundation to critically discuss thematics on censorship with one of the artists who withdrew from the exhibition, David Riff, and openly ignored the Foundation's request that he be removed as editor of the issue.

It becomes clear that aside from Documenta's journals that originate from the will of individual curators of each iteration of the show and thus change structure each time depending on the needs and expectations of the curatorial team, the exhibition magazine is destined to fail or cease existing if it is no longer of service to the exhibition. In the instant in which the magazine has acquired the taste to become autonomous, and thus ceases to exist solely at the behest of its parent institution, there is an immediate chasm—a failure—in which the precarity of the magazine comes to the fore. The exhibition does not depend upon a magazine with an independent and critical voice. With the financial and time-consuming investment it makes in the publication, it needs an organism that displays the institution as a knowledge producer, a vessel primarily concerned with the exhibition and its legitimisation. These biennials did not understand, what was later understood by younger exhibition magazines like *Stages*, that the mere existence of the publication was itself a means to promote, one that could contribute to the dissemination and legitimisation of the biennial, whilst discussing thematics that were important to the biennial but also to contemporaneity and art.

The subjugation to the institution and the precarity of these publications led me to think also about the similarities between these specific types of magazines and mainstream contemporary art magazines. In fact, the analysis showed how these exhibition magazines may prove to be models capable of representing the relations between certain magazines and the art system more broadly and questioning whether those mainstream magazines' alleged

“independence” (since they are not directly promoted by an art institution) still harbours space for criticality, not simply speculating upon or taking advantage of other art institutions to posit themselves amongst the highest ranks of the art system. The editors of the Spanish periodical *Brumaria* do not think so, stating that

We live in a world that is politically unidirectional, economically anarchical, and socially unfair, where the international art institution has become a circus. [...and] the hegemonic magazines (*Artforum*, *Parkett*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *October*) play a role that hardly questions the classist and perverse nature of the institution.⁵¹¹

While the exhibition magazine is by nature completely unequivocal about its dependence on the exhibition—testified by naming itself after the institution from which it emerges—the art magazine is less straightforward. Indeed, the legitimising power of a magazine is no longer involved solely in increasing the value of a work of art, but also that of the exhibition, gallery or museum they are publishing about. Publishing on a certain institution or artist guarantees advertising revenue, easy distribution of issues, and a wider readership. All these partake in creating the earlier mentioned symbolic value of the magazine.⁵¹² The editors of *la biennale* saw this already seventy years ago, when they stated that associating a magazine with a successful exhibition was one of the best auspices a magazine could ever have. They believed it could obtain immediate fortune and visibility and indeed, this rationale explains why a number of mainstream magazines have magnified their margins to become promoters of art spaces, exhibitions and fairs. This was on the one hand an economic necessity, while on the other it responded to the exponential growth of the global art system, for which art institutions have been in a constant rush for publicity and visibility. Arguably, the magazine has adopted the same strategy from the opposite perspective, all the while remaining at the centre of this visibility circle, just as much as it performs the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that characterise the artworld.

In a conversation I had in 2011 with Matthew Slotover,⁵¹³ founder and former editor-in-chief of *frieze* magazine [fig. 34], he mentioned that in a printed magazine there is rarely space for negative criticism. In my view, the same goes for online publications. The simple

⁵¹¹ Dario Corbeira and Irene Montero, “The Big Lie. Dossier: documenta 12 Magazines Project”, *Radical Philosophy*, 146 (Nov/Dec 2007), <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-big-lie>, accessed December 2020.

⁵¹² Cf. Sheik, “Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation”.

⁵¹³ Matthew Slotover, Interview with the author, London, April 7, 2011. Excerpts of the interview of available upon request.



Fig. 34. Cover of *frieze* magazine, no. 1 (1991), from *frieze: A to Z of Contemporary Art* (2016). Photograph courtesy: Piero Demo

fact that an exhibition is not included, and thus not written about or mentioned in a magazine, explains its ‘unworthiness’, and thereby its exclusion. This entails that when a magazine publishes an entire issue on a major exhibition like the Venice Biennale or Documenta they situate themselves at a similar level to the exhibition magazine, behaving not as critical organisms but as promotional tools taking advantage of the exhibition’s name and importance to obtain higher visibility for themselves. For the same reasons, they would also rarely write about an artist who has not been represented in a major exhibition, gallery or museum. The top league only engages with those players at the same level.

The power obtained by promoting a successful event will always be incommensurably higher than that obtained by being the editor of a mainstream art magazine. If we consider the highly contested “Power 100” list⁵¹⁴ published every year by *Art Review* magazine, it is possible to verify that Slotover entered this list only after 2004, one year after Frieze art fair

⁵¹⁴ For the Power 100 list see the link: <https://artreview.com/power-100/>, accessed January 2021.

was opened, yet twelve years after the founding of the magazine.⁵¹⁵ With this in mind, it is noteworthy that no editor has made it into the “Power 100” without first being the promoter of some other major event or enterprise. Slotover achieved this because Frieze jumped right into the artworld, becoming, after only one edition, a major competitor to the colossus art fair, Art Basel.

To these considerations it should be added that transformations in criticism have accompanied those attending the figures of critic and editor. In this instance, Isabelle Graw, director of the German magazine *Texte zur Kunst*, claims that the critic is not just a critic, but also an advisor, a consultant, a curator..., meaning that the gap isolating the critic from the market has certainly shrunk, if not disappeared completely.⁵¹⁶ Criticism itself has completely changed, becoming, as Allen lamented, more quantitative than qualitative,⁵¹⁷ especially when we keep in mind the notion of the magazine as a means of dissemination which fosters the movements of the art market as well as (power) networks with institutions and professionals in the art field. According to Sabine B. Vogel in *Bridging the World: The Role of Art Criticism Today*,

art critics are trained art historians, and unlike journalists it is not their remit to report on record figures and the art market but rather to theorise about art. [...] this has significantly changed today, as art and the market can no longer be separated, and the art market can no longer be ignored.⁵¹⁸

As aforementioned, in these magazines, just as in the earlier academy magazines from which both the exhibition magazine and the art magazine derive, criticism did not have a real space. These magazines tend to privilege a more promotional style of writing, one that engages with a new curatorial and market-oriented vocabulary, devoted to the promotion of

⁵¹⁵ See Matthew Slotover’s presence in *Art Review*’s “Power 100” list: <https://artreview.com/artist/matthew-slotover-amanda-sharp/>, accessed December 2020.

⁵¹⁶ Isabelle Graw, “In the Grip of the Market?”, 183-208. For further accounts on the changed role of criticism see also Newman, Michael, and James Elkins, eds. *The State of Art Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 2007; and Christopher Bedford, “Art Without Criticism”, *X-Tra*, Winter, 2007.

⁵¹⁷ Allen, “Between Page, Magazine and Exhibition”, 144.

⁵¹⁸ Sabine B. Vogel, “Bridging the World: The Role of Art Criticism Today,” in Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (Karlsruhe: ZKM/Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, and Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2012), 255-260, in particular 256.

professionals, as well as the ambitions of major art institutions to increase the sales of a handful of colossal galleries and artists.

Now, considering that the exhibition magazine and the art magazine have the same origins and shared history, I return to wonder to what extent, if any, these exhibition magazines differ from mainstream art magazines discussed in terms of their relationship with the market. That is, aside from the obvious difference in service to only one institution in the former case and the art system in the latter. Above I considered only a few examples of the magazine's servitude to an institution and vice versa, noting that their mutually beneficial relationship may be seen as a never-ending dance of *do ut des*. If the exhibition magazine is economically sustained by an institution, which is its promoter and publisher, the art magazine is also sustained by the advertisements of a group of institutions and galleries, which in exchange expect to obtain the visibility provided by the magazine and perhaps an article, review or mention of one of its programmes. Another example of this trend is when art fairs partner with magazines offering a free booth in the fair in exchange for an advertising page in its forthcoming edition. Both gain from the visibility obtained through this collaboration, which once again shows how closely related magazines are to the art system at large.

In slightly different terms, even scientific journals born from universities and other academic institutions, like *OBOE*, are unfortunately not exonerated from these dynamics, notwithstanding their completely different structures and missions. Whilst their devotion to education and to the free promotion of culture is their primary intent, they do also bring visibility and prestige to the institution, in this case the university, that is promoting or partnering with them. From this other perspective, it should not be omitted that the more important the institution publishing the journal is, the more visibility and fame the academic periodical will obtain.

In general terms, this is to say that the relation between the magazine and its institution should not be condemned as such, and that they should be investigated to understand how the medium has evolved to adapt to the contemporary art system (itself in a state of continuous evolution). Indeed, if these magazines function as mirrors of their institutions, and the institutions aim to bring art to the public, if we condemn all of these vehicles, what is left of art? Should art be condemned as well for aiding and abetting of a system whose values are

market and power driven? Ideally, yes. At the same time, the answer is also no, since many of these artists use the display platforms offered by this system to challenge contemporaneity, the art system and the market, and in doing so stimulate audiences to search for criticality and deeper meanings. Similarly, it is impossible to entirely condemn the large-scale exhibition or the magazine over the question of how their affiliated exhibition magazines manage multiple, often conflicting, objectives. Indeed, just as a number of independent and unconventional art spaces and counter-hegemonic biennials have surfaced, there are also magazines that, one way or another, try to overcome the dynamic of inclusion/exclusion and take advantage of the countless possibilities offered by the magazine medium to sustain artists, discourses and movements that would be otherwise neglected or ignored by the big players of the art system.

Final Considerations

Following these concluding remarks on how the exhibition magazine functions as a mirror for the magazine's complicated relationship with market dynamics, I will now reflect upon the practice-based component of my research. Throughout the research I have mixed various methodologies, from the founding of the journal *OBOE*; to the development of an *Art Periodicals Database* for which I came in contact with hundreds of global journals and their editors; to the case studies build with archival research, secondary readings, but most importantly with interviews.

The research around the magazines and institutions and the development of their networks, became an unexpected occasion to meet the people that were shaping the field, and indirectly contribute to building a network of professionals, magazines, editors, scholars, and curators of my own. This dialogue, together with my experience in building a publication, turned out to be a unique lens to understand the art system's "ecology", comprised of different actors, enterprises, strategies, as well as competing motivations. The latter, in particular, understood through a participatory and internal perspective, prevented me from imposing a critical or judgemental point of view. Once I acknowledged this fact, the pragmatics of the research became an occasion to delineate new avenues to study both the magazine and the biennial format and include both their critical authority and commercial

aspects. While most scholars see either one or the other possibility, but rarely both—similarly to what I mentioned in the literature review about the need of bridging exhibition and periodical studies—this dissertation positions itself in between, considering the two aspects equally relevant for the becoming in time of the two formats. In that respect, the *Art Periodicals Database* was fundamental, as it provided an image of the heterogeneity of the field, of the many ways in which criticality and market-oriented contents may overlap and defy each other.

Alongside the database, *OBOE* and the case study approach allowed me to experiment with different perspectives for studying magazines as well as exhibitions and their intricate relations with the art system. Indeed, becoming producer of a periodical publication and having to respond to similar problematics and demands, led me to adopt what might be seen as a more anthropological approach. Since I had to engage with similar contingencies in order to understand and study these unwritten and ambivalent stories, I have chosen not to take on a judgemental or critical approach, but rather an observatory one. Instead of directing criticisms to both formats, the present research has contributed to the scholarship firstly by recognising the existence of this niche of magazines, and secondly by proposing an alternative to these promotional and marked-driven publications. *OBOE Journal's* lack of a parent institution in fact aims to show an alternative path to study large-scale exhibitions as well as pose questions about how the magazine and the biennial will transform in time, and evaluate what an alternative publication or relation, no longer of subjugation to the market, might be. This is not to suggest that the path of publishing an academic periodical is smooth and unproblematic. On the contrary, the rules and challenges of the academic publishing system, the exponential growth of Internet based open-access journals, the precarity and the structure based on free labour are all downsides of this kind of publishing project. Yet, the idea of being able to create an accessible platform for studying these mega-exhibitions and the dynamics of the art system, while giving the opportunity to young scholars to publish in the journal without the need to have exclusively “big names”, goes a long way to compensating for some of the downsides. At the time of writing, I am still at the beginning of this venture, and only time will tell how it will evolve, and what further positive and negative aspects of this publishing project will be revealed.

While this thesis is majorly concerned with magazines, it soon became clear that it was impossible to fully understand their relation with the institution without first and foremost studying the origins and histories of the periodic large-scale exhibition, and treating them as two aspects of the same phenomenon. Regardless, the biennial's exhibition format—and that of the exhibition magazine—became global phenomena after the 1990s, biennials have been engines for the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art since the end of the 19th century, when the Venice Biennale, the 'mother of all biennials' as Szeemann named it, came to life. My experience producing *OBOE's* first issue, for instance, proved particularly fortuitous because it led me to fully understand the relevance of devoting a magazine for exploring the complexity of this 125-year-old exhibition. It is impossible to confront such a history in the space of one issue or book, and the fact that the magazine does not have an established ending, allows for the opportunity to dedicate as many issues as one pleases to uncovering the history of such an exhibition, be it Venice, Sydney or Gwangju. I use the term fortuitous because I realise that, if I had chosen another topic for the first issue, the clarity of this statement may not have been the same. As the magazine was itself born as an experiment, this was an experimental and unexpected result. Indeed, thanks to *OBOE*, the dissertation rather than being a *recherche* to be conducted through archival and fieldwork, evolved into a *Forschung*, understood by Sheikh as the spatial and temporal production of a specific avenue in which research about magazines and biennials is conducted and experimented.⁵¹⁹

Each biennial, as has been discussed in these pages, is the result of multiple local, political, diplomatic and artistic peculiarities, blended with international aspirations and a distinct periodicity. The latter, understood here through the notion of "entity in becoming", also thanks to *OBOE*, has been unravelled and adapted to the magazine as well, providing new avenues for appreciating these interrelated periodic formats and their continuous evolution. Whilst acknowledging the fact that biennials—just as magazines—are not just a single unit but a multiplicity of moments, I used the exhibition magazine as a lens through which to look at these exhibitions and their becoming, shedding light on the intervals between the events. These intervals, constellated by the coming out of the magazines have proven to be a particularly suitable instrument for witnessing the biennials' structural recalibrations, as well

⁵¹⁹ Sheikh, "Towards the Exhibition as Research", 39-40. Cf. Introduction page 18.

as attending to their moments of crisis, struggle, shifts and breaks with the past. These crucial intervallic moments, which I have described as the distinctive moments of their becoming, were the ones in which their ephemerality was being legitimised and in which, in absence of an event, contemporary art was still epitomised by the magazine promoted by the exhibition. Finally, while these intervallic moments, were not written about directly in the pages of the magazines, they could be understood through the renovations the magazine itself undertook. The research on the case studies then became a means through which I could understand and visualise the time in between as a time of existence, one that I could not fully understand before launching *OBOE's* first issue and moving towards the second. This shows also, how the different methodologies and outputs have all been relevant and helpful to construct the thesis.

Overall, since the two practical projects are still in becoming, the achievement of the methodology was not only on the “hands-on” approach, which has shown moments of transformation itself, but the proposition of a temporal lens for studying both magazines and biennials, one that discards the idea of looking at one specific exhibition, as most studies have done so far, to privilege instead an examination of the longer history of these institutions: how they have changed and which exhibitions determined pivotal moments, breaks with the past, and steps into new modes of existence.

These new modes of existence will inspire the new avenues for study that this research has disclosed. While I argued that the dissemination of these magazines is a fundamental consequence of their materiality—but most importantly their temporality, which provides the biennial with a unique ability to engage with contemporary art’s flow within the shorter time frame of the magazine—I came to understand that dissemination is also the catalyst that establishes this niche of periodical publications in the first place. In this sense, dissemination guarantees an opening towards the public, towards other institutions to create a network, as well as, ontologically speaking, an opening towards the time and space in which the biennial takes place. Indeed, dissemination—as it has been intended throughout this thesis—includes the temporal extension provided by the exhibition magazine, which allows futurity and the magazine’s anticipation towards the futural to come into play. A particularly fruitful area for further research in biennial studies, would be to look at other kinds of dissemination

strategies, and take into account a broader perspective than the one offered by the magazines promoted by these exhibitions.

Such programmes, understood, like the magazine, for both their dissemination and educative potential, include conferences, talks programmes, art schools, children's educational activities and artists' residencies. Since these programmes have been increasingly incorporated in the biennial's format from the 1990s onwards, and studies have limited themselves to the educational turn mostly in exhibitions like Documenta, Manifesta and the Venice Biennale, I believe it would be of paramount importance to offer a more substantial and wide-ranging study of these dissemination and education-based strategies. In doing so, future studies will move beyond the most well-known institutions in Western Europe and North America. Research into such programmes, which would develop and broaden the findings herein discussed, will become an important avenue to study how marginalised places are transforming the ways in which we think about global communications and contemporary culture. Big questions about the role of education and the global contemporary could be asked to shed light on the methods through which marginal biennials contribute to local and regional art production and circulation, how the networks built by biennials through these dissemination strategies serve to bridge periphery and centre in counter-hegemonic discourses, and most importantly, how these dissemination strategies and educational programmes stand in for normative modes of art history or cultural history in contexts that lack dedicated art historical education and infrastructure.

As I have mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, while this examination has selected a number of case studies that provide an historical and chronological lens to look at the evolution of this niche of periodical publications, it would be equally important to survey the more recent, short-lived and global experiences of the exhibition magazine. Interestingly enough, the same biennials which have been promoters of magazines have also been at the forefront of the organisation of these education-based programmes.

In conclusion, while opening new questions and new avenues for study, this dissertation has demonstrated the central role of the magazine's periodicity in the temporal transformation of the biennial, increasing its dissemination possibilities and extending its temporality to epitomise the contemporary. To this it should be added, that the transformation of the biennial's temporality, enacted by the magazine, has provided a venue to think about bigger

questions on the time we are living, on the temporality determined by never-ending processes of production, communication overloads and continuous consumption requests. Looking at the strategies, such as the magazine, adopted by biennials to reduce and almost extinguish their downtime, no longer as a time of elaboration, research and reflection but a time of production, emphasises the transformation of these large-scale exhibitions into the consumerist and spectacle driven machines that we described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The magazine has sustained the continuous movement of becoming and unbecoming of the exhibition, and in doing so, it has also assisted innovations in curatorial practice and in the liaison between the institution and its audience, as well as in the evolution of the biennial itself and in its engagement with contemporaneity and contemporary art's flux. Finally, analysing this niche of publications has proven crucial not just for the understanding of their relations with, and subjugation to, the institutions promoting them, but has become a point of reference for questioning and analysing the role of the art magazine in the global art ecosystem, providing a space for reflection, a departing point to open up the interrogatives and questions about the future of this relationship and of the magazine's role in the biennial system.

Appendix

This appendix functions as a visual accompaniment to the two practical components of this dissertation. It is a visual record of the decisions made on behalf of, and changes which affected, the *Art Periodicals Database* and *OBOE Journal*.

The first part of the Appendix is devoted to the *Art Periodicals Database* and shows the four different layouts proposed by the design firm Maxwell Studio. Of the four proposals, the last one was the one selected. In fact, every time there was more than one option, the final one was chosen for the identity/logo/design. The first two proposals of the *Art Periodicals Database* reflect its initial lack of a name, which the designer provisionally called “Table of Contents” to emphasise the nature of the website as an index. Together with the designs of the website, the first part also presents the project presentation sent to the advisory board. I have also included some of the completed questionnaires since I chose to publish only a fraction of the responses on the website. This was because initially the questionnaire contained a number of questions that certain periodicals failed to answer due to time constraints and/or inability to comprehend them. This was particularly true for the question on the role of magazines in the exhibitionary complex. Most representatives of the periodicals were unsure about the meaning of the phrase—itsself a rather technical and specific term coined by Bennet in 1982, as explained in the Introduction to this thesis—and avoided answering the question. Nevertheless, I will use the few answers I received for this question for an article or paper on the topic. The four responses give a sense of how disparate the answers and ways of responding to the questionnaire are, and how I proceeded to edit the various voices in the *Database*. At the end of this last part is the list of periodicals that over the next year will be included in the website.

The second half of this visual addendum is focused on *OBOE Journal* and shows the many changes to the name of the periodical, the many proposals for its logo and identity, the layout of the texts and how images and footnotes were handled during its development. It demonstrates how at the beginning the designers—Zaven—attempted to propose a catchier logo, but none of these early versions convinced me/us, as they were primarily copies of pre-

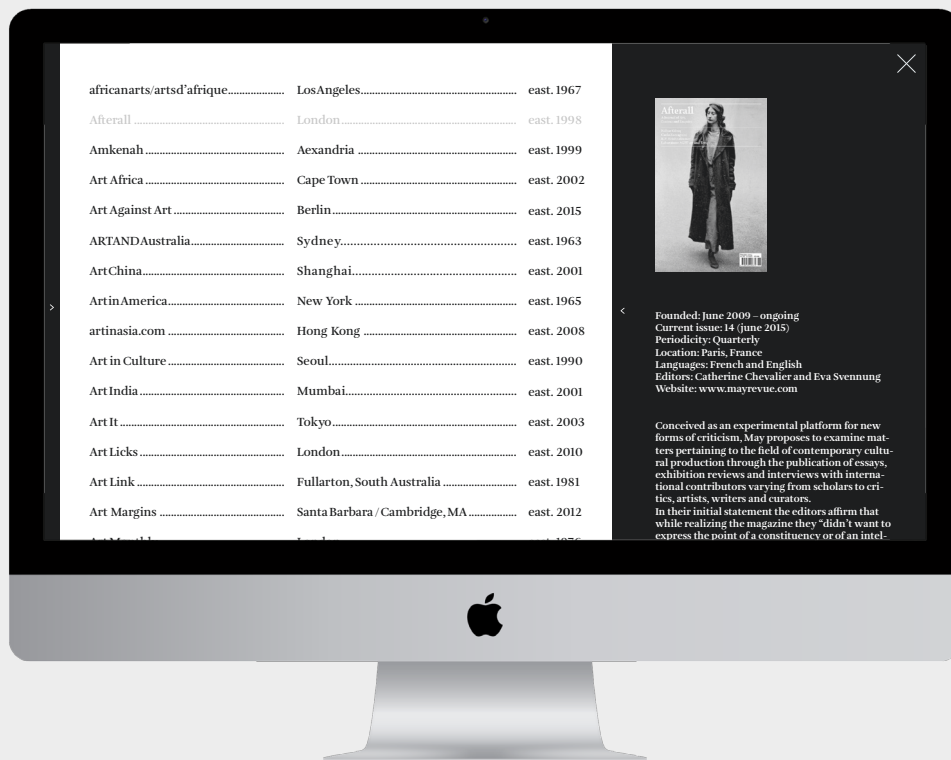
existing logos and designs. In the end the choice was simply that of selecting a font for the visual identity of the overall publication. I have added images of the covers of individual articles to show how they changed to accommodate the information needed for the metadata and for association with the dois (digital object identifiers), essential for indexing the journal within the library system. Notwithstanding the need to add that technical information, the design simply didn't feel right for *OBOE*. The name of the author was too big and there was no graphological balance between the different information represented. I was also concerned about the initial treatment of the texts, images and footnotes. The use of the FORMULAR font made the contents quite difficult and tiring to read, especially considering that academic publications like *OBOE* publish rather long articles, extending between 5000 and 9000 words. Footnotes are also an important component of these texts and I felt they needed to be on the same page as their accompanying references so as to avoid having to move backwards and forwards in the pdf of the article. This issue of the footnotes would have been approached very differently if *OBOE* were a printed publication.

The miscellanea of layouts and images collated herein aims to show how every small decision was important and reflected upon in the making of the journal, just as the choice of title itself. Furthermore, seeing the title of the journal laid out reveals a whole other perspective to the name that changed from *Biennials*, to *On Biennials* to *OBOE*. Finally, the intention of incorporating these materials will partially show the process behind the making of the two projects: a visual diary that leads from the first ideas to the final versions that can be viewed online.



ART PERIODICALS DATABASE
Graphic proposal no. 1 (December 2018)

Singola scheda on click



Pagina Editoriale



Nuovo menù

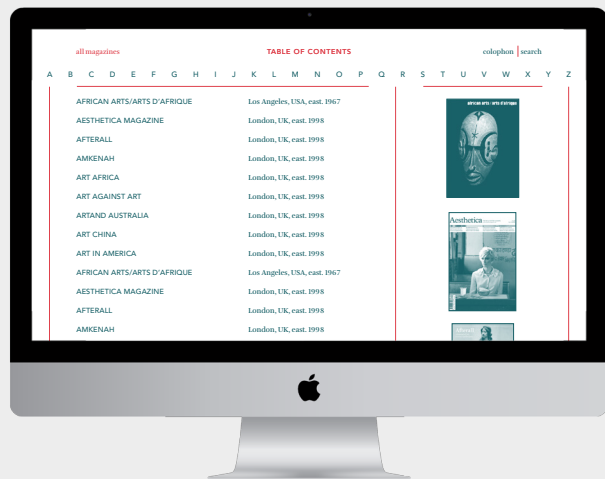


Homepage



ART PERIODICALS DATABASE
Graphic proposal no. 2
(December 2018)

All magazines



Scheda singola



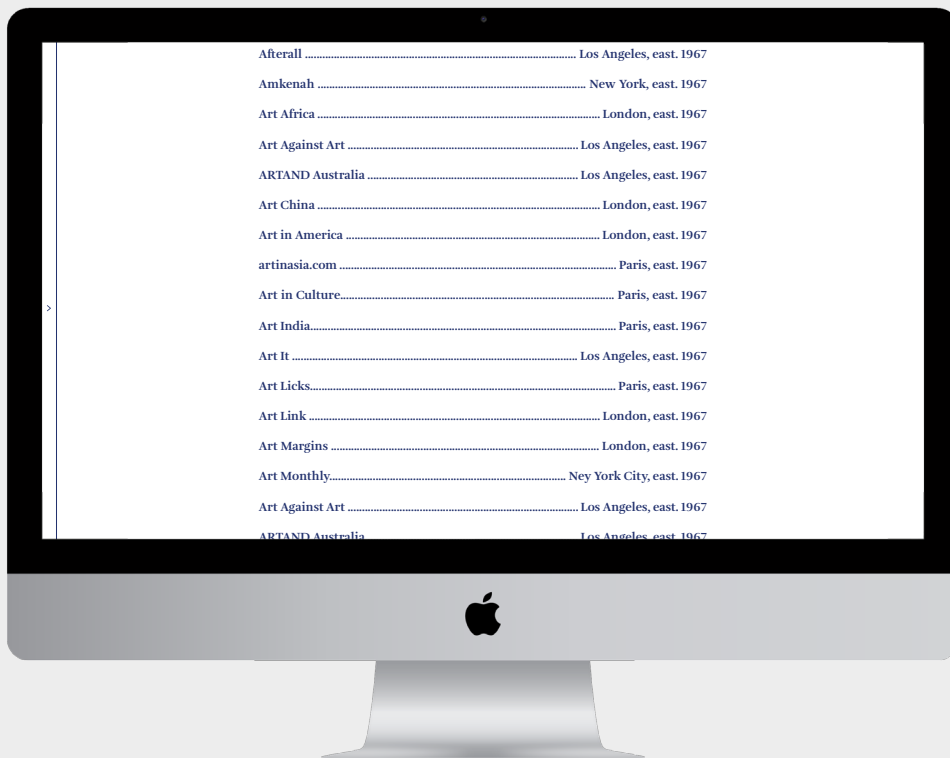
Homepage



ART PERIODICALS DATABASE

Graphic proposal no. 3, colour variation to proposal no. 1 (March 2019)

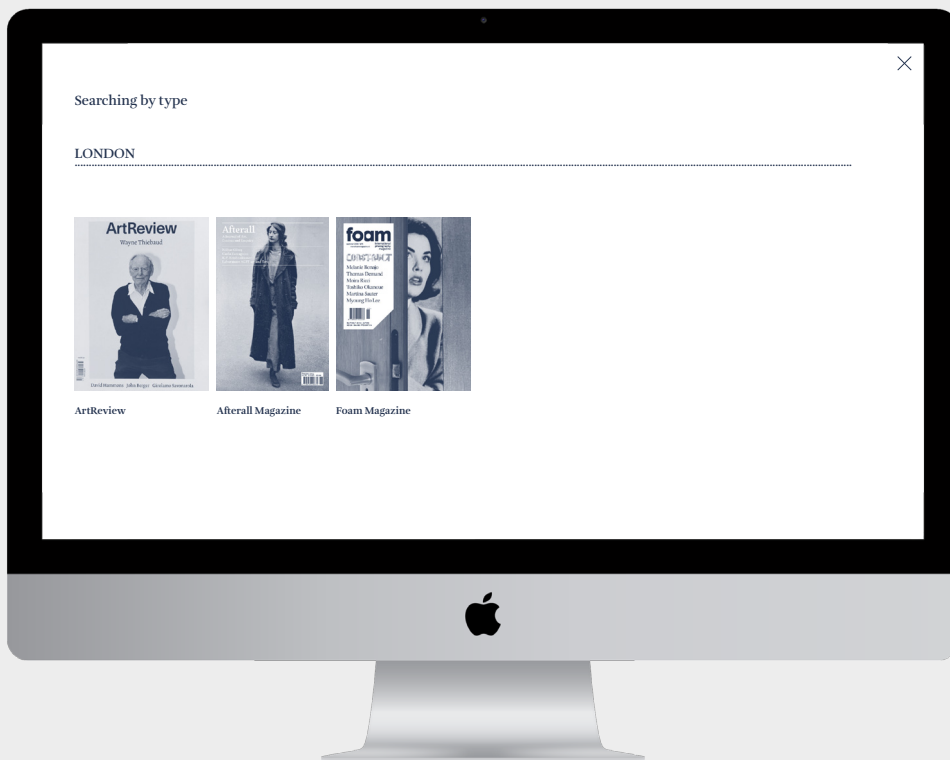
Pagina Magazines



Pagina Magazines / scheda singola



Pagina Search



ART PERIODICALS DATABASE

Project Description sent with invitation letter to advisory board members

Art Magazines Database&Map

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Project Description

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Project Description

The contemporary art magazine has become a major element in the art world. Not only as a means of achieving artistic and institutional legitimation or creating and distributing local and international critical dialogue, but also as a space for research and the formation of debate and discussion. By definition the magazine is a periodical publication, issued at regular (or irregular) intervals, and existing across a period of time. Its temporality is determined by recurrence and innovation; since each consecutive issue replaces a previous one, publishing a magazine also means entering in direct contact with the present.¹ It is this transience that allows it to question and react to specific concerns of our time, and which makes it an ideal medium through which to understand the contemporary moment.

In recent years, during a supposed crisis in the art magazine field, we have witnessed a global flourishing of periodicals. In a recent conference on the role of the magazine in the contemporary art network, scholar Gwen Allen defined this proliferation as a “Renaissance.”² Art magazines are no longer just magazines. Their margins have magnified and they have started encompassing new formats and economic strategies: the publishing house, the editions producer, the art space, the art fair, and the biennial. This worldwide phenomenon has brought new life to the magazine, whose role, together with that of art criticism, has never been more crucial in guiding and helping the audience keep track of what is happening in the art world and in defining contemporary art.

However, this actual increase has not yet been reflected by academic study. As Sheila M. Webb states in the *Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research* (2017), studies about magazines in the arts register major gaps for the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, during which many publications launched and thrived.

This project is driven by the need to expand our research into this heterogeneous and continuously evolving and expanding panorama.

¹ For a more comprehensive analysis of the features and ephemerality of the magazine, see Gwen Allen, *Artists Magazines. An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge [MA] and London: MIT Press, 2011), p. 1.

² Gwen Allen “Between Page and Exhibition: Art Magazines Today,” keynote lecture presented in the panel “Art Magazines: Privileged Observers or Instruments of the Institution” held during the conference curated by Angela Vettese with Clarissa Ricci *Between Exhibition and Fair: Entre Chien et Loup* (ARTE FIERA, Bologna, February 2-3, 2018). A volume, with the acts of the conference will be published in 2019. <http://www.artefiera.it/en/arte-fiera-42/internationalbrconference/8096.html>, last accessed December 20, 2018.

Premises and Intents of the Project

The project has two main aims: the first is to create a database and a map of commercial and noncommercial, online and offline art periodicals published after 1945 and still ongoing, that reflects their intellectual affinities and networks. As noted by Didier Schulmann, the head of department of the Kandinsky Library, a pivotal factor when studying the history of a periodical publication is whether the magazine has been created in reference, in reaction, in response, in dialogue, in struggle with another journal, or else, to fill a gap.³ A history of art magazines cannot be seen through a chronological or linear lens, but through their relationships to one another and how they have contributed to the development of new networks. The database&map aims to show these resonances. Since the connections on the database&map are based on the (self-) perception of the editors who produce these journals, the project also becomes a reflection of the production of intellectual networks today and in the past.

The second aim of the database&map is to survey the material conditions under which the indexed periodicals are being published. By supplementing the database with information concerning not only their mission and intentions, but also their frequency of publication, economic model, circulation, etc. (see questionnaire at the end of this presentation) the hope is to understand the material modalities of art writing and art publishing today.

The Database&Map as Archive

The database&map lists current periodicals published from 1945 onwards. This date was chosen in order to include periodicals like *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, etc. who have shaped and influenced the field since their heyday in the 1960s. John A Walker's essay "Art Periodicals Since 1945" has also been a major influence. Published in 1976 in the volume *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*, curated by Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, its analysis of the art periodical remains relevant to this day. Gwen Allen's "Appendix: A Compendium of Artists' Magazines from 1945 to 1989" in the key volume *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art*, published by MIT Press in 2011, also chooses 1945 as a starting date for her illustrated list, and as mentioned in the next paragraph is a major point of reference for the whole project. In this way, the map also fulfills an important archival function, providing the possibility to demonstrate how the networks of individual publications have shifted over time. Since the field is in a state of continuous evolution, the project should be seen as an archive in flux and a work in progress.

Models and Sources

The art periodical database&map was inspired by a number of diverse indexing projects. The first, mentioned above, is the "Appendix" in Gwen Allen's volume *Artists' Magazines*, which lists and describes the artists' magazines published between 1945 and 1989. Other online archiving and mapping projects such as the *Contemporary Culture Index* (www.ccindex.info), an online database

³ "L'Art en Train de se Faire," interview with Didier Schulmann, curator at the Musée national d'art moderne, and Agnès de Bretagne, librarian at the Periodicals Section of the Bibliothèque Kandinsky. <http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-revues/ENS-revues.html>, accessed December 5, 2017

of international journals and periodicals covering areas that span from architecture to cultural studies, art to design, have been important examples. The South African *Chimurenga Library* (<http://chimurengalibrary.co.za/>) has also been a key resource, defined by its editor as “an ongoing invention into knowledge production and the archive that seeks to re-imagine the library as a laboratory for extended curiosity, new adventures, critical thinking, daydreaming, socio-political involvement, partying and random perusal.”⁴ Archival research on the Documenta 12 Magazine project was fundamental to discovering art periodicals published globally and, finally, Art Asia Archive’s symposium and exhibition *It Begins with a Story: Artists, Writers and Periodicals in Asia* (<https://aaa.org.hk/en/programmes/programmes/it-begins-with-a-story-artists-writers-and-periodicals-in-asia#PreludeEvents>) was essential in furthering the research on Asian art periodicals.

Selection Criteria and Methodology

Due to the increasing number of periodicals all over the world, the initial magazines selected for the project focus primarily on contemporary art and criticism, mostly intended for a public of arts professionals. The first list was created thanks to the projects listed above, together with an extensive research in libraries, such as the Chelsea College of Arts London, which holds one of the most comprehensive art periodicals’ collections in Europe, and in some private collections. From the first selection, each magazine participating in the project has to respond to a questionnaire and name a number of periodicals most relevant for their editorial work, as well as the periodicals they consider to be the most relevant of the region (see questionnaire below). This will allow the project to gain a broader perspective and to reflect, through the eyes of those who comprise this field, on what the panorama is.

Visual Output

The database will resemble an index in alphabetical order with the information gathered on each periodical and an image of one of its issues, while the map will use single locations (cities) as placeholders for each periodical and link them directly to the information collected in the database. The place a periodical occupies is determined by where its editorial offices are. On the map, every publication will be represented by its name. While the graphic connections (intersecting lines) between the journals on the map will represent their network connections.

Knowledge Contribution and Other Future Outcomes

Since the database&map is seen as a departing point and work in progress the hope is for it to become a generator and to inspire further research and future projects.

⁴ “The Chimurenga Library: About,” *Chimurenga*, accessed March 2019, <http://chimurengalibrary.co.za/about>.

ART PERIODICALS DATABASE & MAP

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name of Publication: [Terremoto](#)
2. Could you please briefly state your current mission (3 sentences maximum) and provide a scan (jpeg, tiff or pdf, no less than 300 dpi) or link to the earliest editorial mission published in the first issue of the journal? (See also the 'Images' section below)

[Terremoto is an independent, bilingual, and free communication platform dedicated to the dissemination of critical thinking around contemporary art of the continent invented America. We focus mainly in the South: from the border states of MX, and USA to Central & South America and the Caribbean.](#)

[Our printed magazine is published quarterly 3 times a year, each one with a specific theme that offers a transversal point of view on current artistic practices and thinking in relation to the specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts the region through feminist, queer/cuir, decolonial and anti-colonial perspectives.](#)

[We try to invite women co-editors at least twice a year as a political bet on the decentralization of patriarchal monopolization of art narratives.](#)

<https://terremoto.mx/issue/first-issue/>

3. When was the journal launched? What is the current volume or issue number?

[The Journal started in June 2013 in its online version and the printed version started on June 2014. We are currently on our 16th Issue.](#)

4. What is your editorial structure?

[Founder and Director, Dorothee Dupuis and Editor, Diego del Valle define each theme together, around which an invitation to a guest co-editor is extended, only woman, as both an strategy to decentralize art narratives from the patriarchal monopolization, and too be able to get to know the diversity and plurality of practices around the continent.](#)

[In every issue there are included 12 contributions paid in \\$200 USD each. Contributions are open to essays, conversations, poetry, fiction and visual contributions.](#)

5. In which language(s) do you publish?

[We are a bilingual publication; we publish all of our contents in Spanish and English.](#)

6. Do you publish a print publication and/or online?

[We publish both, print and online.](#)

7. What is your economic model? Profit or nonprofit? Other?

[Non-profit working with a mixed economic model: advertisement sales and, the other hand, grants and philanthropy.](#)

8. What is your circulation? In which country or countries is your journal distributed?

[With a circulation of 6000 copies Terremoto reaches an average of 30,000 international readers, thanks to its distribution in +250 venues in the world. Present physically and free in more than 21 countries of the Americas through an ingenious distribution system, as well as in Europe in select bookstores.](#)

9. What are the biggest challenges facing contemporary art publishing in your country and/or region? How does your publication try to address these challenges?

The current art and culture media crisis is not limited to Terremoto, or to Mexico, for that matter. The panorama for most art publications is grim, and the challenge is to create sustainable economic models to keep our work afloat. This, coupled with the confusing geopolitics of the region, in this case the uncertainty of the new Mexican government, has us hanging by a thread, pushing us to rethink strategies to expand our network of contacts and accomplices to find the model that allows us sustainability. We address these challenges by continuing to publish, to print. By offering the stability of an archive facing this threatening uncertainty, and by providing necessary visibility in light of the fascisms that arise and that underestimate critical thinking.

10. What are the key factors in establishing a magazine's influence and success?

Since its beginning, Terremoto maintains a clear and strict editorial line, with a decolonial and feminist discourse. A key factor for our influence and success has been to not sacrifice our values or deviate from our mission for any reason, be it personal relationships, personal gains, monetary gains, etc. Our success can also be due to our transparency in our methods and how all of our content is available for free, online and print. Our readers and supporters can share our experiences and feel part of the process. We rely on our readers to share and expand our reach which, again, makes them as much part of Terremoto as our team.

11. Do you organize any other collateral events or projects alongside the publication of the periodical?

In our website, we also organize and commission other sections: Blog, Reviews, Reports, and Marginalia. In the last year, Terremoto has grown, either to expand our chances of fundraising—providing editorial services through Temblores Publicaciones, for example—or to continue with our mission of dissemination—as is the case of the exhibition program *La*

Postal, focused on curatorial and artistic research around archives.

12. Do you partner with events such as art fairs or biennials? What is the nature of the partnership?

Yes, we partner with such events. Depending on what the event can offer, we create an equitable partnership offering from our side a media partnership and advertisement. Sometimes we are present with an individual booth or part of the publications table and other times we have a more active participation. Our participation can vary from co-editing a catalogue or publication, creating content for a public program such as organizing debates and conversations to even hosting collaborative parties.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS:

1. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals which are closest and/or most relevant for your own editorial work?

Errata and esferapública(CO), GasTV, Onda MX, Código, and La Tempestad (MX), Piseograma and Contemporary& Latin America (BR); Artishock (CH); Tráfico Visual (VEN); Caiana (ARG); Hyperallergic, Burnaway, Frieze, eflux, Carla, and the Art Los Angeles Reader (US); Muse and Kaleidoscope (IT); OEI (SW); and Petunia (FR) all produce content we consider close to Terremoto's work.

2. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals relevant in your region?

Same as above

IMAGES

Alongside the link/scan of the editorial issue requested in question n. 2, could you please provide two cover photos of your publication with captions containing copyright credits. Please indicate your preference between the two covers provided, as this image will be displayed on the

website of the database and map of art periodicals. The two images should be no less than 300 dpi resolution and minimum 14 cm.

ART PERIODICALS IN THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX*

In your opinion, do magazines impact or shape the contemporary art network, comprised of galleries, museums, art fairs, and biennials? If so, how do they do it? (500-1000 words).

Throughout the history of art, we can identify the materiality of publications as the support of ideas, values and debates that brings together and articulate artistic and intellectual networks. The interlocution and exchange that magazines allow can impact or shape the contemporary network only if these are built as spaces of dissensus, not only by bringing together similarities and discrepancies regarding critical thinking, but also by discerning with certain power dynamics that condition the editorial exercise in a present that is lived in a contradiction that oscillates between hyperconnectivity and the lifting of borders framed by cis-heteropatriarchal colonial structures.

If art practice can be understood as a personal reflection on the individual experience and interests of an artist in a specific sociopolitical and cultural context through the audiovisual, then, writing around this could be understood as a practice of storytelling. As magazines we have the responsibility to question which art narratives are the ones receiving attention and visibility through asking: what stories are being told (both textually and visually), how these stories are being told and who is telling them?

This way, magazines allow to recognize the heterogeneity that forms an artistic community, by identifying its agents and spaces in relation to the proposals, problems and debates in which they register or activate. The visibilization of a

network in a globalized world, then, reveals gender, class and race dynamics that structure the contemporary art network allowing the possibility of a critical reflection of the social role of art thinking in the present we share.

ART PERIODICALS DATABASE
Questionnaire responses: Terremoto Magazine, Contemporary And, Convolution, SeLecT and OEI.

ART PERIODICALS
DATABASE & MAP

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name of Publication

Contemporary And (C&)

2. Could you please briefly state your current mission (3 sentences maximum) and provide a scan (jpeg, tiff or pdf, no less than 300 dpi) or link to the earliest editorial mission published in the first issue of the journal? (See also the 'Images' section below)

Launched in 2013, Contemporary And (C&) is an art magazine and a dynamic space for the reflection on and linking together of ideas and discourse on contemporary visual art from Africa and the Diaspora. Written by a global, constantly growing network of Black art writers, C& publishes weekly features, columns, reviews, and interviews in French and English on contemporaryand.com.

3. What is the current issue number?

We published in October 2019 our 10th print issue, and going to published #11 in May 2020.

4. What is your editorial structure?

Editors-in-chief: Julia Grosse and Yvette Mutumba
Deputy Editor: Will Furtado
Editor/coordination: Theresa Sigmund
Editor (News, Events) /Advertisement: Olivia Buschey
Editor / Assistant to the editors-in-chief: Mearg Negusse
C& Projects Coordination: Rose Jepkorir
Associated Editor: Elisabeth Wellershaus
Proofreaders and Translators

5. What is your economic model? Profit or nonprofit? Other?

Nonprofit, financed/published by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

6. What is your circulation? In which country or countries is your journal distributed?

Online magazine with two times a year print issues, distributed in many countries of Europa, Africa, North America, and Latin America, like Germany UK, South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Morocco, Ethiopia, USA, Cuba, Brazil

7. What are the biggest challenges facing contemporary art publishing in your country and/or region? How does your publication try to address these challenges?

To create a network, that supports a magazine on contemporary art from Africa and the diaspora. Finding these cultural producers, artists and art spaces around the globe, to connect and exchange.

We address these challenges through the publication of qualitative, original content, in digital and printed form, to make it accessible for everyone

8. What are the key factors in establishing a magazine's influence and success?

Originality, high quality of contents and a clear communication of what we want to support and achieve with our magazine. A team with open eyes for current developments in the art world and constant interaction and exchange with the agents of that art world.

9. Do you organize any other collateral events or projects alongside the publication of the periodical?

Events and exhibitions for our own projects and in collaboration with other art institutions, critical writing workshops, talks

10. Do you partner with events such as art fairs or biennials? What is the nature of the partnership?

Yes, for example, Berlin Biennale of Art, Art Basel Miami, Dak'art, ArtX Lagos, Lubumbashi Biennale, São Paulo Biennale, in form of media partnerships, and curatorial/content advisory partnerships

QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS:

1. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals which are closest and/or most relevant for your own editorial work?

ArtAfrica, Nka Journal, Hyperallergic, Frieze, Chimurenga, African Arts, Transition, Afrikadaa, Sleek, Third Text, gal dem, Aperture

2. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals relevant in your region?

(Berlin, Germany, as our head office is based here) Monopol, art, Kunst Mag, Art mag, Texte zur Kunst, Weltkunst, Mousse, artnet, Berlin Quarterly, Missy Magazine, Sleek Magazin, Blau

IMAGES

Alongside the link/scan of the editorial issue requested in question n. 2, could you please provide two cover photos of your publication with captions containing copyright credits. Please indicate your preference between the two covers provided, as this image will be displayed on the website of the database and map of art periodicals. The two images should be no less than 300 dpi resolution and minimum 14 cm.

ART PERIODICALS DATABASE & MAP

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name of Publication

Convolution

2. Could you please briefly state your current mission (3 sentences maximum) and provide a scan (jpeg, tiff or pdf, no less than 300 dpi) or link to the earliest editorial mission published in the first issue of the journal? (See also the 'Images' section below)

We publish experimental criticism and text art.

3. What is the current issue number?

5-7 (triple issue)

4. What is your editorial structure?

It has changed over time. Currently, Paul Stephens is the main editor, but the design collective We Have Photoshop also carries out editorial duties.

5. What is your economic model? Profit or nonprofit? Other?

For-loss (or ideally break even).

6. What is your circulation? In which country or countries is your journal distributed?

500-750. Mostly we distribute in New York and Berlin.

7. What are the biggest challenges facing contemporary art publishing in your country and/or region? How does your publication try to address these challenges?

Covid-19 has probably ended the journal. Our latest issue appeared in February and

we haven't sold enough copies to cover further print runs.

8. What are the key factors in establishing a magazine's influence and success?

Good contributions, good design, good editing.

9. Do you organize any other collateral events or projects alongside the publication of the periodical?

Occasionally, we host events in conjunction with art galleries and libraries.

10. Do you partner with events such as art fairs or biennials? What is the nature of the partnership?

New York Art Book Fair and Miss Read.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS:

1. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals which are closest and/or most relevant for your own editorial work?

Bulletins of the Serving Library
Dot Dot Dot
Counter-Statements
Strange Attractor
Bidoun

2. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals relevant in your region?

IMAGES

Alongside the link/scan of the editorial issue requested in question n. 2, could you please provide two cover photos of your publication with captions containing copyright credits. Please indicate your preference between the two covers provided, as this image will be displayed on the website of the database and map of art

ART PERIODICALS DATABASE & MAP

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name of Publication

OEI

2. Could you please briefly state your current mission (3 sentences maximum) and provide a scan (jpeg, tiff or pdf, no less than 300 dpi) or link to the earliest editorial mission published in the first issue of the journal? (See also the 'Images' section below)

OEI is a Stockholm based magazine for extra-disciplinary spaces and de-disciplinizing moments – experimental forms of thinking, montages between poetry, art, theory, film, and documents; critical investigations, editorial enunciations, aesthetic technologies, non-affirmative writing, speculative archaeologies, new ecologies, and counter-historiographies.

OEI started in 1999 and has published 89 issues, while the accompanying publishing structure *OEI* editör has released some hundred titles of investigative poetry, aesthetic documents, bookworks, theoretical and poetological essays. As part of its publishing practice *OEI* has also organized numerous events: from readings, presentations, lectures and talks to seminars, film screenings, and exhibitions.

3. What is the publication's periodicity?

4 issues/year usually in the form of 2 double issues

4. What is your editorial structure?

OEI is an artistic and literary publishing project run by Jonas (J) Magnusson (editor-in-chief) and Cecilia Grönberg (editor and image editor). We put together different editorial advisory groups for each issue, depending on its specific theme.

5. What is your economic model? Profit or nonprofit? Other?

Nonprofit

6. What are the biggest challenges facing contemporary art publishing in your country and/or region? How does your publication try to address these challenges?

The biggest challenge for independent or experimental publishing at this moment in Sweden is perhaps a lack of publishing infrastructures or 'ecologies' – in terms of distribution and in terms of reception (cultural discourse). As elsewhere, many of the physical sites for distribution and meetings with books are disappearing, while shipping costs are ever increasing. During the last ten years there has been a far-reaching privatization of many infrastructures for distribution in Sweden: library support has been outsourced, public funding for books has been opened up to more commercial interests, etc. At the same time the commercial online bookstores, lacking curatorial ambitions and

the will to highlight local selections and contexts, are accelerating a drive towards monoculture – more of the same things that already have a visibility.

Even though art publishing, non-profit publishing and independent publishing have long histories in Sweden, there is still a problematic lack of vocabulary for understanding and discussing these kinds of more investigative endeavours in a productive way. OEI is constantly trying to reflect on and counter-act this fact in different manners, for instance by bringing forward overlooked but generative historical and contemporary examples and by organizing numerous events. In the beginning of 2020 we published a 640-page issue of the magazine, *OEI* # 80-81, entitled “publishing practices, publishing poetics”, while *OEI* #77-78 was a double issue on mountains & infrastructure, with the section on infrastructure also including works on infrastructures of art and literature.

7. Do you organize any collateral events or projects alongside the publication of the periodical?

We organize a large number of events. However we don't consider them as collateral, but as integrated and vital parts of our publishing practices and reflections on them; as ways of creating new spaces for reading and viewing.

8. Do you partner with events such as art fairs or biennials? What is the nature of the partnership?

We have participated at many different art publishing fairs and events nationally and internationally, such as Melbourne Art Book Fair, Art Book in China (Beijing and Shanghai), Los Angeles Art Book Fair, Miss Read (Berlin), Friends with Books (Berlin), Tijuana (São Paulo), Multiple Art Days (Paris), Volume Montréal, Artists Print (Brussels), Offprint Paris, and Publish And be Damned (London). This is an important aspect of the distribution of the magazine and at the same time an opportunity to meet other publishers and readers.

Since we run the magazine as an artistic and literary project in itself – our issues are often a result of long-term research work – any collaboration with different institutions needs to be possible to realize within the logic of our core project. In 2012 we were invited by the São Paulo biennial to do a publishing project on site in connection to the biennial, which resulted in *OEI* #60-61: *Extra-disciplinary spaces and de-disciplinizing moments. In and out of the 30th Bienal de São Paulo*. In 2018 an invitation from Moderna Museet in Stockholm resulted in a special, spatial issue of *OEI*, # 79: *Edit / publish / distribute!*, 'published' only in the form of an exhibition.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS:

1. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals which are closest and/or most relevant for your own editorial work?

Some of the historical or contemporary magazines that have been important to us are: Afterall, Art&Language, Cabinet, Control, Fillip, Java, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, Parachute, Processo, Revue de littérature générale, SITE, and ZUK.

2. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals relevant in your region?

Relevant art magazines in Sweden/Denmark/Norway/Finland: *Konsten.net*, *Kunstkritykk*, *Monsieur Antipyrine*, *Pist Prota*, *Rab-Rab*, *Vagant*, *Walden*.

ART PERIODICALS DATABASE & MAP

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name of Publication

seLecT

2. Could you please briefly state your current mission (3 sentences maximum) and provide a scan (jpeg, tiff or pdf, no less than 300 dpi) or link to the earliest editorial mission published in the first issue of the journal? (See also the 'Images' section below)

Our current mission - to contribute to the education and information of the art public in Brazil; offering a curatorship of the most relevant topics to organize a critical thinking about contemporary times - it is still very much in line with the statements of the magazine's first editorial. I titled the editorial signed in August 2011 as "The Future is Transcriative". seLecT was born immersed in its present and eyes open for the next day: thus, we set out to decipher the new media landscape that had arisen in the first decade of the 21st century, and to participate in it. We affirmed, then, that "the future is trans: transversal, transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral." With this statement, we anticipated the strong transgender trend, which would extend from sex to all fields of life, including artistic and literary genres, etc. We have always been 'trans'.

Here's the link:

<https://www.select.art.br/edicao/edicao-1/>

3. What is the publication's periodicity?

Print: Quarterly// Website: Weekly

4. What is your editorial structure?

1 Editorial Director + 1 Editor in chief + 1 Contributing editor (change each edition)+ 1 Reporter + 1 designer + contributors (art critics, curators and artists invited to contribute with an article)

5. What is your economic model? Profit or nonprofit? Other?

seLecT has a hybrid profit / non profit model. As a cultural vehicle, the magazine benefits from Brazilian laws to encourage culture, and therefore has a large share distributed between libraries and schools. For 9 years select was distributed on newsstands and sold subscriptions to the print and digital edition. It reached 10,000 print subscribers and 9,000 digital edition subscribers. With the pandemic, we are changing the business model to digital. We are now producing around 5,000 printed copies for distribution at specialized points of sale (bookstores and museum stores) and among the last subscribers of the printed edition. Now we will guide the operation to prioritize digital.

6. What are the biggest challenges facing contemporary art publishing in your country and/or region? How does your publication try to address these challenges?

The main challenges are to achieve a model that is independent of the cultural incentive laws, so as not to depend on the marketing departments of large companies. The challenge is to train new readers and expand the reader community. For this, strategies include the development of new products, such as distance courses, lectures, debates. To transform the magazine into a think tank. It is quite a challenge!

7. What is your circulation? In which country or countries is your journal distributed?

The circulation today is 5,000 printed copies and 9,000 copies of the digital version. The magazine is distributed throughout Brazil, but mostly reaches São Paulo (51%) and Rio de Janeiro (16.5%).

8. What are the key factors in establishing a magazine's influence and success?

I believe that the key factor for success and influence (which fortunately seLecT managed) is to have an original project and having an affirmative social mission. seLecT has no similar in the Brazilian editorial market, because it is not an agenda of artistic events. It is a magazine of critical reflection on the expanded field of art, which aims to affirm the transversal importance of art over other fields of knowledge and society. Having the mission to educate and inform the art public in Brazil is the second and definitive aspect that gives credibility and strength to the magazine.

9. Do you organize any other collateral events or projects alongside the publication of the periodical?

Yes, we organize debates, courses and an Art and Education Award. The prize was created in 2017 with the purpose of valuing and promoting Brazilian schools, art institutions, teaching centers, study groups and collaborative art projects that benefit dialogue and bonds between art and education. Each edition awards the work of one activist in the educational field and one artist whose practices embody educational perspectives. One of the most important moments of seLecT Award is the Art and Education Seminar. It is an opportunity for the nominees to present their projects to the Jury and to an open audience. To expand the debate, the Seminar also presents a number of lectures by national and international guests who contribute to the subject by talking about their own works.

10. Do you partner with events such as art fairs or biennials? What is the nature of the partnership?

Yes, the magazine participates in the editorial sector of fairs such as Art Basel Miami Beach, ARCO Madrid, ARCO Lisbon, Frieze New York, SP-Arte and Art Rio. This is an important moment not only for the sale of subscriptions and the expansion of our community of readers, but to strengthen institutional ties with other agents of art. The partnership with the fairs takes place through exchanges: an advertising page in the edition in exchange for a stand at the fair. We also partnered with an edition of the São Paulo Biennial, curated by Luiz Perez-Oramas. seLecT conceived and produced the Bienal app for cell phones. We created a concept of constellation of works to stimulate public interaction with the contents of the biennial.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS:

1. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals which are closest and/or most relevant for your own editorial work?

ARS

Concinnitas

Arte!Brasileiros

Bravo!

Cult

Rosa

Unfortunately, we're not close to foreign periodicals by this time. I hope this will change soon. But Texte Zur Kunst, Frieze and After All, for example, are very relevant to us.

2. Could you please list up to 12 art periodicals relevant in your region?

ARS

Concinnitas

Arte!Brasileiros

Bravo!

Cult

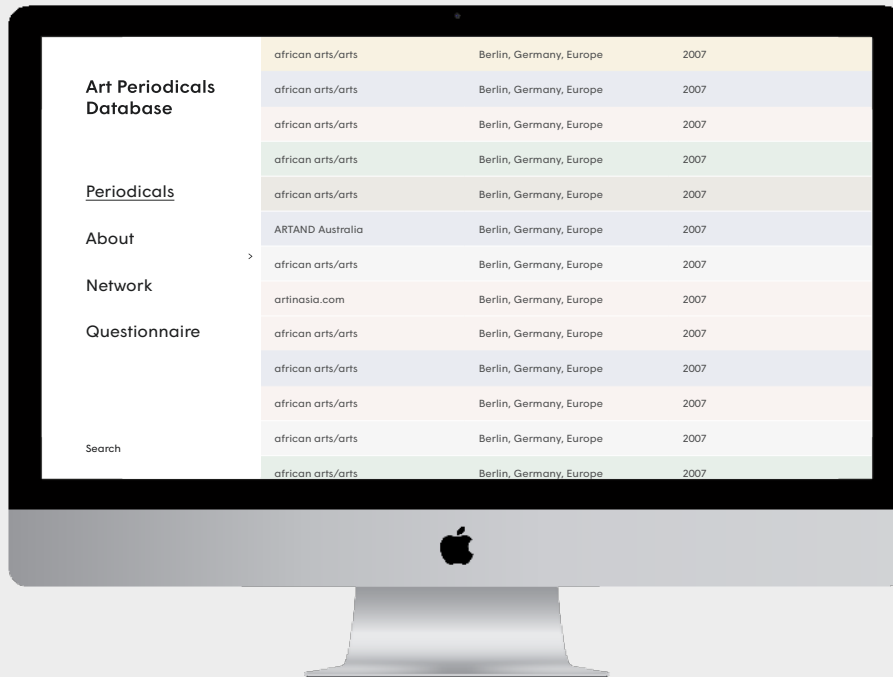
Das Artes

IMAGES

Alongside the link/scan of the editorial issue requested in question n. 2, could you please provide two cover photos of your publication with captions containing copyright credits. Please indicate your preference between the two covers provided, as this image will be displayed on the website of the database and map of art periodicals. The two images should be no less than 300 dpi resolution and minimum 14 cm.

Attached the last two covers: edition #46 and #47

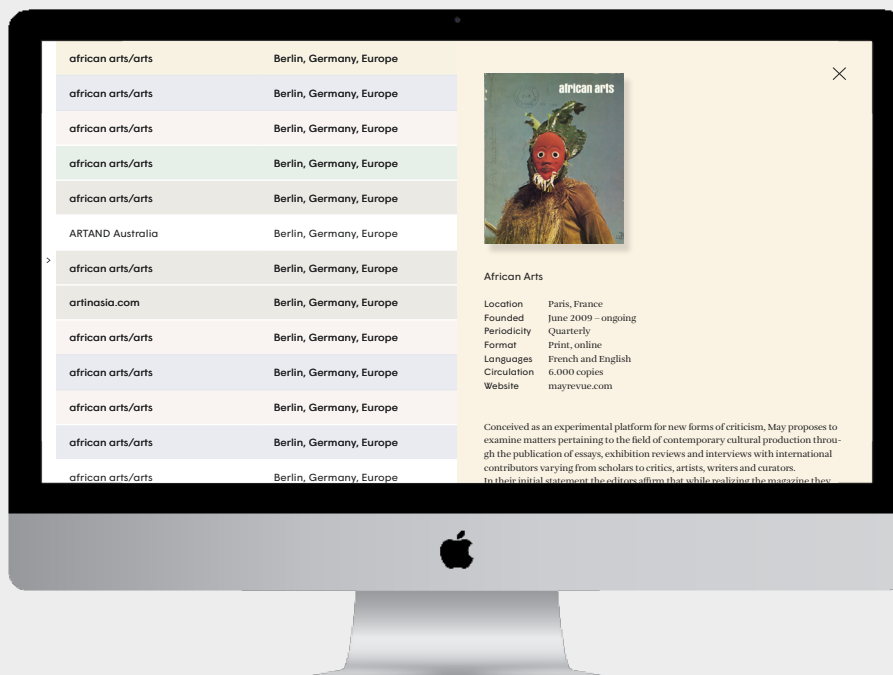
Homepage



ART PERIODICALS DATABASE

Graphic Proposal no. 4 (July 2020). Redesign, maintaining the same structure of Proposal no. 1 and 3 but changing the colours as a coding for the different regions of the periodicals. Other changes include the font used and adding the correct title.

Dettaglio periodicals



Fonts

Wigrum / regular + medium

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz

Amalia Pro / Normal

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
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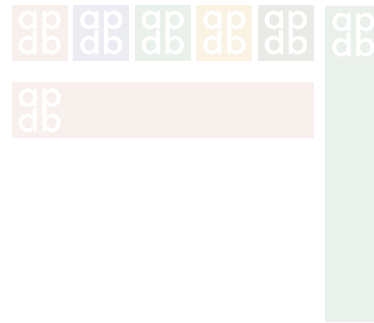
Logo / type

Art Periodicals Database

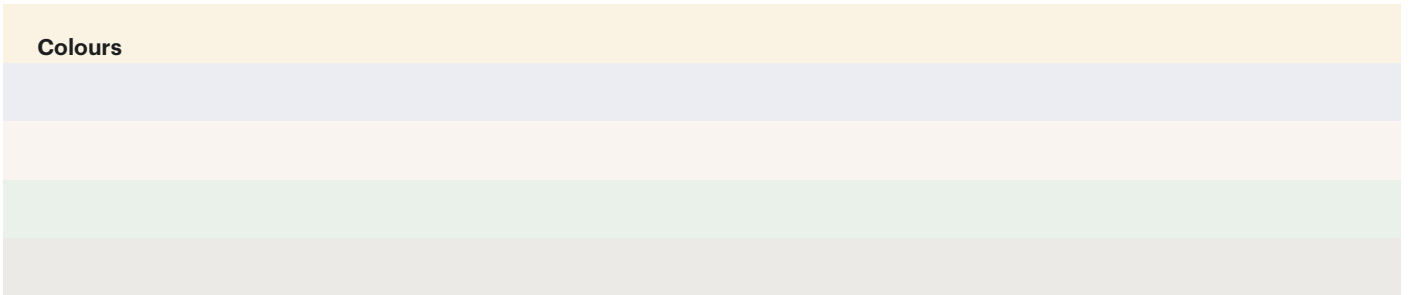
Art Periodicals
Database



Graphic elemens



Colours



North America

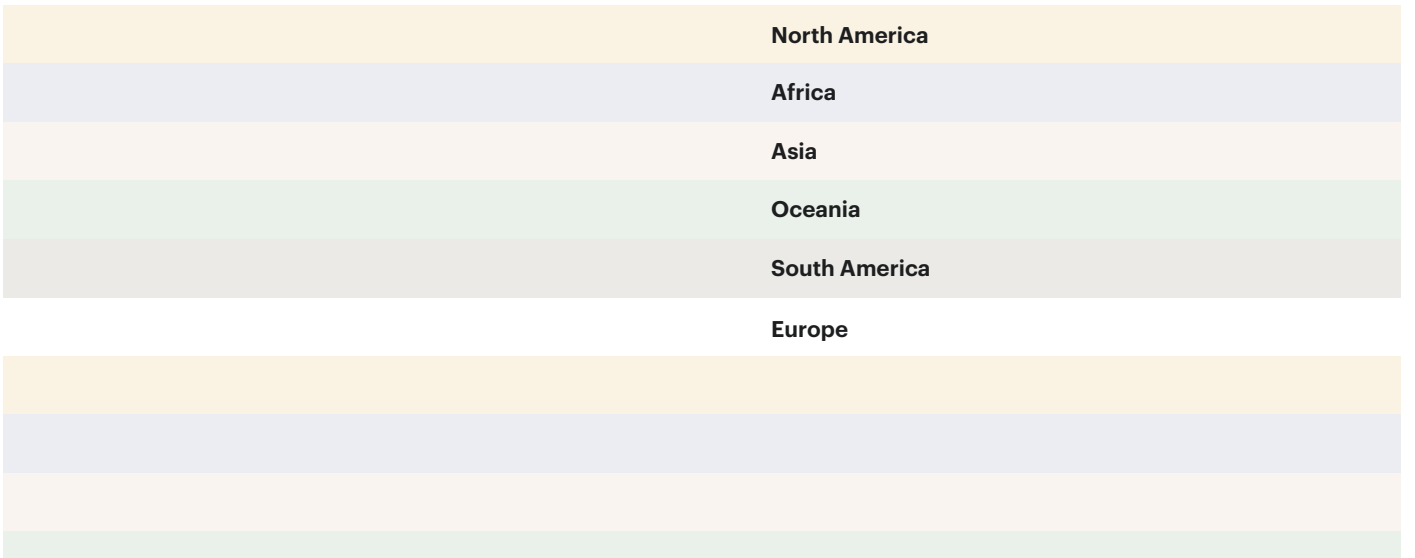
Africa

Asia

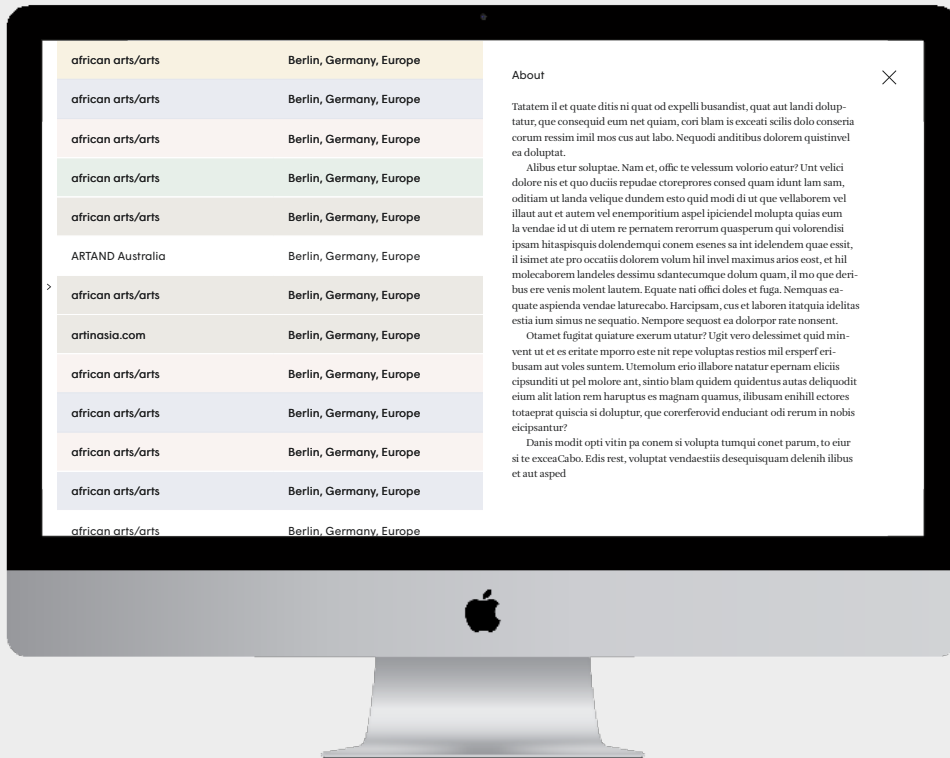
Oceania

South America

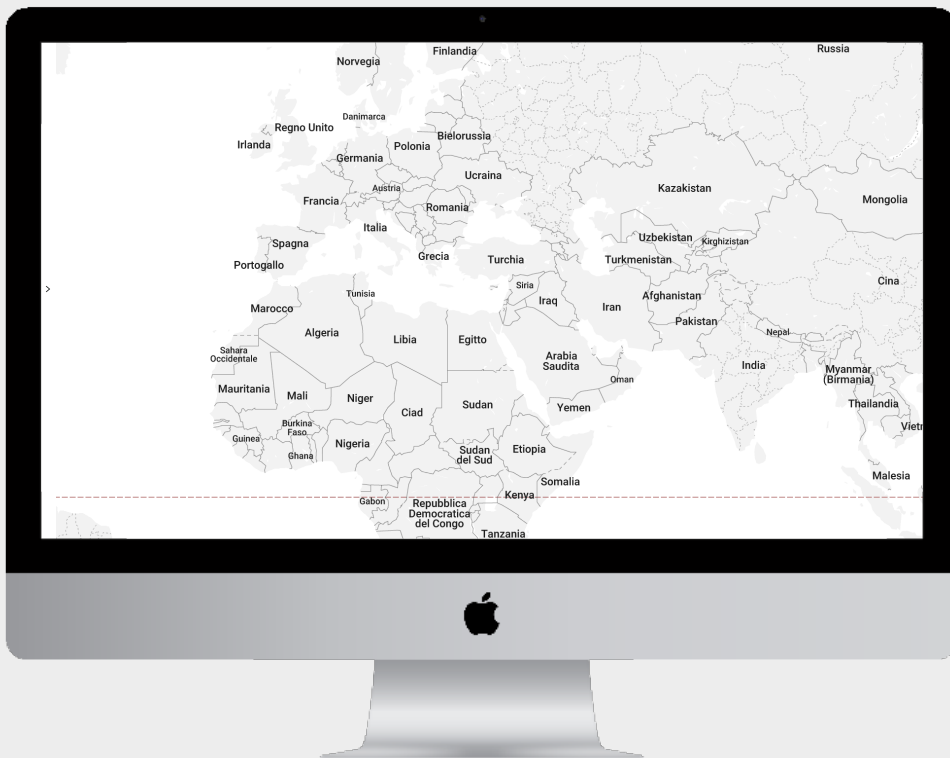
Europe



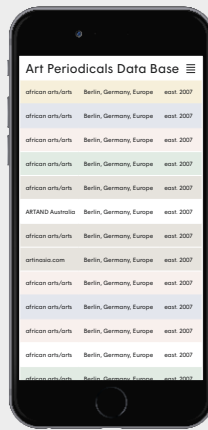
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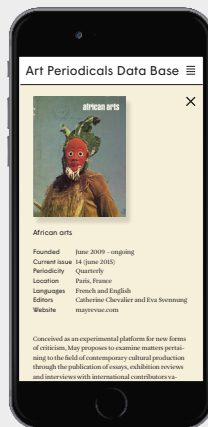
Network



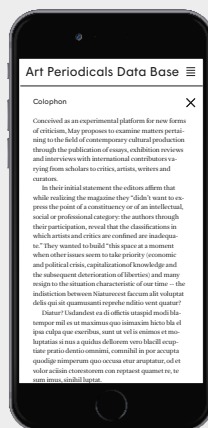
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Dettaglio magazine



Colophon



Biennials

BIENNIALS

BIENNIALS



OBOE JOURNAL

Mission statement sent with invitation letter to the editorial and advisory board
(written in February 2017)



Università Iuav di Venezia

Angela Vettese

Director
Graduate Course in Visual Arts and Fashion
Dipartimento di Culture del progetto
tel +39 3495452557
fax +39 041 257 1927
vettese@iuav.it

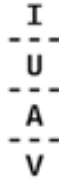
On Biennials

Biennials and other periodical shows have been spreading all over the world, turning into the medium through which most contemporary art becomes known, to the point they can be considered as dynamic alternatives to museums and other art institutions.

Biennials lay at the intersection between artistic, geographic, political and diplomatic space and despite the risk of their own dependence on trends, rules, and pressures from the market these exhibitions aim to become both experimental sites and platforms for the encounter and exchange of art practices and curatorial attitudes.

The first exhibition of this kind is the Venice Biennale. Born in 1895 from a hybrid of two different models, the exhibition sponsored by the State and the art fair, where the most influential foreign nations brought and showcased their most representative artistic contributions, it still gives voice to a chorus, perhaps off-key, but truly multifaceted. Over the years the Venice exhibition has been criticized of absolute inflexibility, of having an overly bureaucratic structure, and of costing more than any other exhibition elsewhere. However, despite its limitations and the disappointments it has engendered, the Biennale has continued to be attention grabbing and the number of invited artists and national pavilions has continued to grow.

One of our starting points lies in recognizing that, despite criticism, the Venice Biennale has brought vital changes to the city, helping it to find a new approach to contemporaneity: it has demonstrated to be a trigger for change, giving birth to private art foundations, a large choice of Visual Art courses in the Universities, of the opening of Palazzos on the occasion of special events, and a wide range of jobs related to all these activities.



Università Iuav di Venezia

Besides the Venetian case, the term 'biennial' wasn't used to classify any other art event until the fifties, when the São Paulo Biennial took place. It is from this moment onwards that the phenomenon slowly started to propagate coupling the transformation and growth of the art world-at-large, until the 1990s when it becomes viral.

We believe that studying biennials not only means detailing curatorial practices and their development, but also involves tracing trajectories and radical shifts of art practice, examining the relationship between art and the general public, discussing the art/market dimension, reflecting on the emergence of new cultures, understanding the politics of countries which look for an international recognition also from an artistic perspective, and so on.

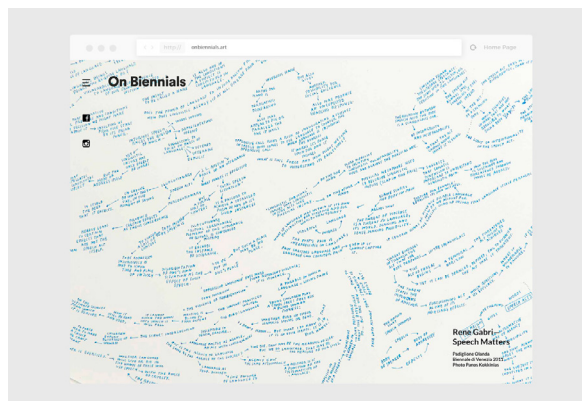
On Biennials is based at the IUAV University in Venice and aims to be an academic peer-reviewed journal, online and in print, devoted to research, theory and practice about biennials and periodical exhibitions in general.

On Biennials wants be an observatory. Our scope is to address and mobilize questions, not to promote or criticize. We think biennials should be regarded as worlds that generate culture rather than just places to exhibit. The essays and texts published will be written mainly by scholars. Our intention is to create an open dialogue and different perspectives to the chosen topic.

It is from these premises and with the desire to build a forum for scholars and critics that *On Biennials'* venture departs.

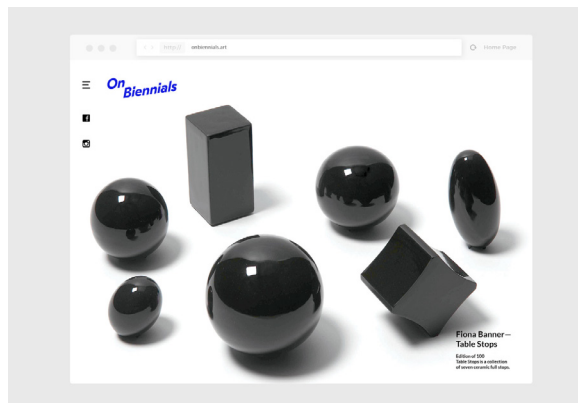
ON BIENNIALS: Three graphic proposals for OBOE's identity and coordinate image (logo, letterhead and website's homepage), (2018)

On Biennials

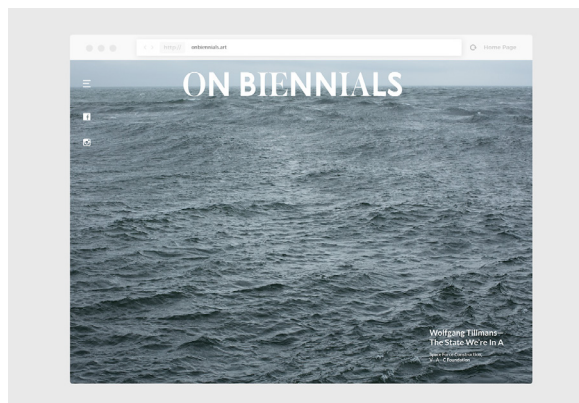


On Biennials

On Biennials On Biennials



ON BIENNIALS



ON BIENNIALS

OBOE JOURNAL

ON BIENNIALS: Other logo proposals (2018)

ON BIENNIALS

OBOE JOURNAL

OBOE: Four logo and font proposals. Proposal C was the accepted one, but the font was later changed from LLineto's Circular to Browbox's Formular (2019)

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Università luav di Venezia
Dipartimento di Culture
del Progetto

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Cotonificio veneziano
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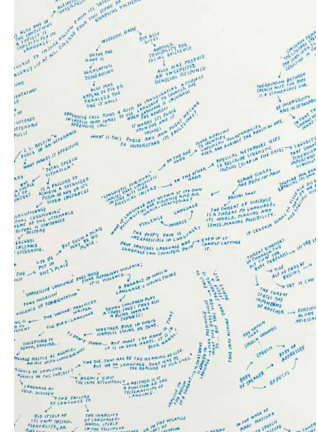
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Current Issue

Why Venice? Issue n°1 – 2018

OBOE Journal On Biennials and Other Exhibitions launches its first issue with a focus on the Venice Biennale. Born in 1895, the Venice exhibition, although the criticism for its limitations, is still one of the most significant and defining events of the contemporary art calendar. Regardless its long history and the existence of an archive since 1928, there are still very few studies about it. For this reason, OBOE intends to dedicate not only this first issue but an issue each year to the study of the Venice Biennale.

Why Venice? is the question we have asked each other when thinking of how to present to readers this new academic journal. Harald Szeemann called this exhibition the "mother of all biennials" but considering how the Institution changed over the years and that biennials around the globe don't have National Pavilions, what can we really say about this motherhood? What is her heritage and how does the Venitian show contribute to the History of Exhibitions? What is the novelty that makes it a competitive show? Which methodological issues does the study on biennials raise?



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OBOE JOURNAL

OBOE: Graphic proposal for website. This first version was built with the web-programmer and the designer, and thus it was immediately accepted (April 2019)

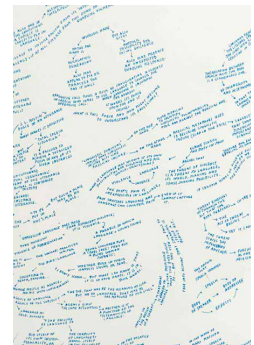
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Editorial

+

**How La Biennale as a brand was Born.
Venice as the Archetype of a Biennial City**
by Vittoria Martini

+

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it a competitive snow? which meteorological issues does the study on biennials raise?

Editorial +

How La Biennale as a brand was Born. Venice as the Archetype of a Biennial City +
by Vittoria Martini

La rivista “la biennale di Venezia” (1950-1971): The Magazine as Tool for Institutional Legitimation –
by Camilla Salvaneschi

–
When discussing the Biennale, it is impossible to ignore the particular importance of Venice as its host city. The history of the bond between Venice and the Venice Biennale has become an archetype for all those cities that, from the end of the 1980s, took part in the so-called ‘biennialization,’ namely the explosion of the phenomenon of biennials all over the world. Historically, the image of a decadent Venice was used as a means of regenerating the city and bringing it into the modern world. Its poetic qualities contained a universalism which opened the city up for international consumption. This appealed to universal myth and its appropriation for commercial purposes underlay the development of the early Biennali. The history, beauty and architectural singularity of Venice—which were born out of political and economic necessity—became the distinguishing attributes of the “Patrimony of Venice.” Despite the Venice Biennale has never changed its structure, mirroring a lost modern world with its national pavilions, it survived until the post-globalized world remaining at the centre of the art world, the place where the national/local identities still have a voice. The “Patrimony of Venice” is at the core of its success and Venice and its Biennale could be seen today as the archetype of a “brand” thanks to the specificity it preserved. In this text I will analyse the history of the bond between the city of Venice and the Venice Biennale to outline the reasons of a successful “brand”

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Why Venice?
Issue n°1 – 2018

La rivista “la biennale di Venezia” (1950-1971): The Magazine as Tool for Institutional Legitimation
by Camilla Salvaneschi

– DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21825/jeps.v2i2.7892>

– Abstack
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Keywords

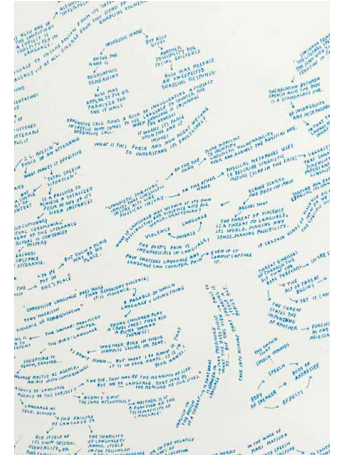
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Exhibiting Exhibitions
Issue n°2 – 2018

CALL FOR PAPERS

—
Exhibiting Exhibitions has recently become a frequent occurrence.



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Focus and Scope

OBOE Journal On Biennials and Other Exhibitions is a bi-annual, peer-reviewed, open access, online journal devoted to the study of exhibitions and biennials. In recent decades, an increasing number of scholars and theorists has been researching around exhibition making and formats, curatorial practices, and the role of these, and of biennials within the art system. Nevertheless, the study of exhibitions is still a fragmented field.

The journal is devoted to research, theory, and practice about biennials and other exhibitions, and aims to develop a thorough and methodological study of these contemporary exhibitionary formats.

OBOE aims to be an observatory, to address and mobilize questions. Exhibitions should be regarded as worlds that generate culture, as a node that interconnects many actors, rather than just places to exhibit. The journal departs from the key assumption that studying exhibitions does not only mean detailing curatorial practices and their development, but rather that it involves tracing trajectories in artistic practices, examining the relationship between art and the general audience, discussing the dimension of the art market, reflecting on the emergence of new cultures, as well as, understanding politics and governmental strategies.

The journal has the ambition to become a platform for discussion and research on the evolution, proliferation, and understanding of the exhibition as an apparatus, an attempt in writing art history, as display, event, and/or exhibition. In the wake of the rise of importance of the 'exhibition format', from museum to gallery, from biennials to artist-run spaces, it has become crucial to understand both from a methodological point of view and historical perspective what took place. The intent of the journal is to build a bridge between museum and curatorial studies, taking into account art history, visual studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and market studies.

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OBOE

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and Other Exhibitions

Event Structures and Biennial Culture: Oreste at the Biennale

**By
Caroline A. Jones**

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Astonishingly, in the founding documents of the Biennale di Venezia from 1893, the first intentions expressed were neither strongly “biennial” nor necessarily international.² The city officials and intellectuals who inaugurated the now perpetual infrastructure were inspired by the one-off national exposition held in Venice in 1887 after the city had been chosen for the honor by the eighth “Artistic Congress” assembling in Rome in 1883.³ The national exposition had been staged in a purpose-built pavilion erected in the public Giardini (still standing five years later, and begging to be used again). Documents from the earliest deliberations among Venetian city councilors from April of 1893 envision an exhibition like the national one, but *without* Rome’s authorization. As the minutes reveal, the councilors expressed an intention of “perpetuity” in honoring the king and queen’s wedding anniversary (a noble goal!) but only made passing reference to the idea that the show might be a *repeating* one (the key phrase is “ad ogni biennio”).⁴ It was not until 1894 that the imagined exhibition shifted from being implicitly *national* to explicitly *international* in scope.⁵

That change was registered in 30 March 1894, and the show’s opening was also postponed a year to allow the international “Comitato di patrocinio” to advise on the exhibition’s contents and spread news of the event.⁶ Yet the precise tempo of repetitions remained elusive. While it is perhaps only an accident of graphic design, the first exposition’s poster merely announces: “1895, Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della Città di Venezia,” corrected only in later posters and catalogue to read “Prima Esposizione Internazionale” What interests me further is what was printed underneath the poster’s heading: Serenate, Regate, Gare Sportive, Luminarie, Freschi, Concerti, Bacchanale Del Redentore, Torneo Internazionale Di Sherma, Gare Pirotecniche, Grandi Spettacoli Teatrali, Ed Altri Eccezionali FesteGGiamenti. These are the kinds of festive accoutrements which had, for centuries, adorned Venice’s civic rituals (such as the “Marriage to the Sea” of medieval times), but more proximately, these event-structures reveal the biennial’s debt to the exhausted machinery of the world’s fairs.

The constellations of boating events, sports, fireworks, theatrics, and refreshments made it clear that tourism was an important part of the mix, but unlike the omnivorous world’s fairs, the Venetians’ future-oriented recycling of the past would focus primarily on *art*. The first summary offered to the town by the three founders (poet and mayor Riccardo Selvatico, along with politician Antonio Fradeletto and philosopher Giovanni Bordiga) had married patriotic royalism to pragmatic hopes for a future “benefitting the reputation [of the city, and] creating an art market” (that is, a market for contemporary art) in a town long-famous for its picture trade.⁷ Thus the biennial would emulate the market competition staged by the world’s fairs, but rather than bring in foreign vendors, hoped to seed local ones.

in Rotterdam may have been the jolt that led once more to Szeemann, always reliable for putting an exhibition venue back on the map. This time fully in charge, Szeemann rendered the 48th Venice Biennial more open than ever before. At the cusp of the new millennium, he wanted it to absorb all the unsuccessful *Apertos* before it, reclaiming them for the theme of “dAPERTutto” — the word literally meaning “everywhere,” but with the word for “Open” functioning as a breath of fresh air in the middle of its curious orthography.²⁴ While Italian scholars interpreted “everywhere” to signal the new global vision Szeemann brought to the event, English-speakers were encouraged (by Szeemann’s own statements and texts in English) to think it was more of a democratic inclusion of all ages and genders — “open to all.”²⁵ Szeemann’s multi-lingual versions also condemned predecessor biennials by announcing in the catalogue that it would be “breaking [...] the Biennale’s self-imposed rules” with an aggressively transnational and socially networked incursion into the structure and architecture of the biennial system itself. That infiltration was a new viral organism calling itself “Oreste.”

Marking the shift from boat transport, postal mailings, fax machines, and long distance telephone calls sent through ocean floor cables and landlines, Oreste engaged novel infrastructures called email, listservs, and the “world wide web.” The loose collective insisted that “Oreste is nobody’s,” or “Oreste is nobody,” (*non è di nessuno* or *non è nessuno*), staging itself as a “general identity” with specific if anonymous ambitions.²⁶ Seemingly alluding to tragic epic (Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* describes the mythic cycle in which Orestes avenges his father’s murder by murdering his mother),²⁷ “Oreste” was in fact hilarious in the ears of its founders — simultaneously evoking a cheap Roman trattoria and the Italian term for “network” — *rete*.²⁸ Mindful of the (originally Italian) literary collective “Luther Blissett” (whose performative pranks were mostly aimed at a “homeopathic”

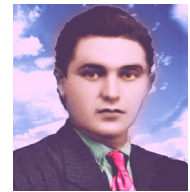


Fig. 1
“Luther Blissett,” the collective author, as visualized on www.lutherblissett.net/img/luther-blissett-300.jpg

injection of counter-information that could inoculate the public against fake news),²⁹ the “Orestians” decided to form a different kind of conduit for their collective energies. While the pseudonymous “Blissett” came to produce an eerie composite image for himself and author a prize-winning novel, Fig. 1 his was an identity theoretically open to anyone for prankish appropriation. Oreste, on the other hand, “while open, maintains its own organization (and decision-making co-ordination), clearly visible and with declared functions as clear as possible to everyone, along with a variety of activities that are also well-defined and recognizable.”³⁰



the beginning, many Italian cities were part of the Oreste mesh.

The meeting in October 1999 was in order to plan a post-exhibition publication that could document the blizzard of events (the biennale was to close November 7 that year): “The release of the book, which will be bilingual (or multilingual) is urgent, to give an internationally visible follow-up to the work done in Venice.”³⁶ The group had already published a booklet-type guide to their schedule during the Biennale; a year after the biennial itself they followed up with *Oreste at the Venice Biennale*. Published by Milan’s Charta, it was a trim compendium documenting the wide array of actions that marked “the rite of passage” for Oreste, from that nascent state to the collective identity” registered at the Biennale, now to be committed to print.³⁷ (While Giancarlo Norese was the book’s editor, his name is nowhere on the cover — reflecting the idea that sections would be given to the autonomous groups participating in events, who would, again, “curate” their own pages.) Fig. 4 The initial booklet had shown a hive of networked relations on its cover (taken right off the opening “page” of Oreste’s website as crafted by UnDo.net). The second more comprehensive catalogue features the smudged and suddenly archaic profile of a portable typewriter.³⁸

Fig. 4
Oreste: covers for publications relating to the 48th Venice Biennale. Top: home page of the online project <http://www.undonet.net/oreste>, reproduced on a booklet listing all activities hosted by Oreste at the 1999 biennale. Bottom: book, also designed by UnDo.net, edited by Giancarlo Norese, and published after the biennale (Milan: Charta, 2000).

- The author is deeply grateful to the critical readings of this essay by Emily V. Bonvino, Clarissa Ricci, and Camilla Salvaneschi. This new generation of scholars are contributing critically to the specification and theorization of the interface between Italy’s complex local politics, regional cultures, and the global artworld — I am thankful for the care they took, for their kind corrections, for their informative citations, and for their enriching ideas. I’m also in debt to Agnes Kohlmeyer and Pieranna Cavalchini, who introduced me both intellectually and literally to the founders of Oreste, and to Amara Antilla who widened the net
- Unless explicitly cited otherwise, all references and quotes from the founding documents come from the *Serie Scatole Nere*, Box 1 = *Periodo dell’Organizzazione 1894-1895*, Archivio storico delle arti contemporanee — [hereinafter ASAC / S.N. / Box 1], La Biennale di Venezia (Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts, Venice Biennial), accessed 6 October 2009.
- In her book *Venice: Fragile City, 1797-1997* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), Margaret Plant reports that “The first opportunity to offer Venice as a showcase for art occurred when the Esposizione Artista Nazionale for 1887 was assigned to Venice in 1883 by the Eighth Artistic Congress in Rome.” Plant (2002): 215.
- The phrase is in the manuscript notes from the first meeting of April 19, 1893, ASAC / S.N. / Box 1. So buried is the phrase that Plant asserts that the exhibition was not referred to as biennial until after the second world war! Plant (2002): 216.
- In the meeting of 30 March, 1894, the previous resolutions were amended to allow “Parte. I... modificazione della parte ... colla deliberazione 19 Aprile 1893, l’Esposizione di Belle Arti da inaugurare in Venezia nel 1895 sarà Nazionale ed Internazionale.” [emphasis added] In the meeting of 27 March, they were still debating

- whether to restrict the show to Italy only: “Gli studi della sotto-commissione confermarono il concetto che l’Esposizione non debba, per ragioni tanto artistiche quanto economiche, restringersi solo all’Italia.” ASAC / S.N. / Box 1.
- The “Comitato di patrocinio” or Patron’s council is mentioned in a folder of the “Scatole Nere” labeled “Relazione della Commissione consultiva, 1894,” resolving the question of internationalism toward the end of the meeting dated 27 March 1894; ASAC / S.N. / Box 1. The committee will help “distance [the selection] from the favoritism of a local consensus [...] so that our Venetian exhibition has from the first moment the best guarantee of a splendid success.” [...]dissanze al fervore del loco consenso, anche l’unico membro della Commissione che aveva manifestato dei dubbi sulla possibilità pratica dell’impresa si dichiarò vinto e possunso che la Mostra veneziana ha per se, fin da questo momento, le migliori garantigie d’uno splendido successo.”]
- Minutes of the town council for 19 April 1893, translated and cited by Enzo Di Martino, *History of the Venice Biennale: 1895-2005: visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre* [1995], translation into English by Barbara Trotto, Susan Candy (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005): 10.
- I am referring to *Il Supremo Convegno* (The Supreme Meeting), hung in Gallery “D” in the inaugural biennial. It had been submitted by Giacomo Grosso, famous professor from the prestigious Accademia Albertina in Torino, whose president had asked Biennale officials to place this work “of audacious and fantastical composition” in a good light. Grosso’s symbolist allegory of the death of a Don Juan-like character combined dark moralizing with lascivious babes in a quasi-Satanic ritual. The Catholic Patriarch of Venice (Giuseppe Sarto) was predictably outraged and demanded the work be taken down; the Biennale remanded the judgment to the “committee,” which refused. See “The Grosso case,” entry on the “History” section

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At least two event-structures were thus already present in the first iteration of the biennial show: tourism, with its penchant for Grandi Spettacoli, and a *contemporary art market* that would need to be continually refreshed. Events



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Flipping the Exhibition Inside Out: Enrico Crispolti's Show *Ambiente come Sociale* at the 1976 Venice Biennale

Martina Tanga

1

The painter Raffaele De Grada was also on the commission and in charge of the Italian Pavilion. He worked together with Crispolti on *Ambiente come Sociale*. De Grada's original exhibition idea centered on the theme Habitat. After Crispolti was commissioned to curate the exhibition in the Italian Pavilion in January 1976, De Grada took a secondary position and let Crispolti take the lead in terms the exhibition concept, content, and execution.

2

Stefania Portinari, "La Biennale di Venezia 1976: Ambiente/Arte," in *Anni settanta. La Biennale di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2018), 266. See also Maurizio Calvesi, "Polemica sulla Biennale," *Corriere della Sera*, July 1, 1976, and "Commissioni, dimissioni di S. Giannelli and M. Calvesi," Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts, Venice (ASAC), FS, AV, b. 225. Among other things, Calvesi resigned over the fact that he thought the general theme "Ambiente" was too vague, and he wanted a historical show about the history of the Biennale.

3

Martina Tanga, *Arte Ambientale, Urban Space, and Participatory Art* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

4

For an analysis of Enrico Crispolti's decentered curatorial projects and philosophy during the 1970s see Enrico Crispolti, *Arti visive e partecipazione sociale* (Bari: De Donato, 1977).

Just six months before the XXXVII Venice Biennale was scheduled to open in July 1976, art historian, critic, and curator Enrico Crispolti was unexpectedly called to organize the exhibition that represented Italy in this multi-national art world presentation.¹ Internal politics at the institution—which led to the resignation of the cinematographer Maurizio Calvesi and author Silvano Giannelli from the visual arts commission—fortuitously resulted in an opportunity for Crispolti.²

Not many curators would have had an exhibition concept, and a method to implement it, at such short notice. Crispolti, however, with his ear close to the ground, had been working tirelessly throughout the 1970s with artists—such as Ugo La Pietra, Franco Summa, Ricardo Dalisi, and the collective Humor Power Ambulante—supporting and promoting their projects that were participatory, temporary, and explicitly sited in the urban environment. Necessity is the mother of invention, and Crispolti, in an accelerated time-frame, seized the chance to reconceive the exhibition as a creative medium in order to introduce to Biennale audiences artistic experiments occurring in Italy's streets and piazzas.

The resulting exhibition, *Ambiente come sociale* (Environment as Social), was innovative both for its content and form. Crispolti brought artists, who, for the most part, skirted spaces of institutional display—such as galleries and museums—to the art establishment, specifically the Venice Biennale. These artists typically chose to inhabit a peripheral position vis-à-vis the art economy, operating in the social, urban environment. This enabled them to gain greater artistic autonomy from commercial and elitist structures that pervaded the institutional art system and to attain the freedom to engage directly with urban audiences.³ Crispolti's decision to bring these artists to the Biennale—a site, in many ways, at the center of the art world—was bold.

The question of how to present these artists' work authentically drove Crispolti to reconceive the exhibition format. Embracing the notion of decentralization—the recalibration of power from the center to the periphery—as an exhibition strategy, Crispolti did not show *any* original artwork in the Biennale galleries, and only displayed documentation of site-specific and ephemeral interventions that had taken place elsewhere across the country.⁴ While mounting an exhibition composed of documentation of large-scale,

19

Alessandra Pioselli, "Arte, politica e territorio: esperienze nella Milano degli anni settanta," in *Milano città d'arte: arte e società 1950–1970*, ed. Paolo Campiglio, Marilisa Di Giovanni, Cristiano G. Sangiuliano, and Alessandra Pioselli (Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2001), 97.

20

"La land art non è attiva, è molto romantica. Cioè, la misura della land art non è la città, ma il deserto. L'Arte ambientale si inserisce in un contesto urbano, la piazza dove c'è la gente, dove hai un contesto architettonico che voi confrontare. C'è una idea attiva. L'Arte ambientale tende a modificare lo spazio dove è messa." Enrico Crispolti, interview with the author, Rome, August 4, 2011.

21

Enrico Crispolti, "Preface," *Praticare la città: Arte ambientale, prospettive di ricerca e metodologie d'intervento*, Massimo Bignardi and Enrico Crispolti (Naples: Liguori Editore, 2013), xiii.

22

For example, the conference titled "Il decentramento culturale in Italia," October 1–3, 1976. The meeting included sociologists, artists, trade union members, representatives of grassroots associations, and local organizations. The common objective was to debate how to include, in the circuits of cultural production, those individuals who had traditionally been excluded, and to question the role of cultural institutions in this process. See "Attività del Gruppo permanente di lavoro per i convegni," reprinted in *Annuario 1977: Eventi del 1976: La Biennale di Venezia (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1977)*, 426.

23

See, for example, Martina Tanga, "Riappropriazione Dell'Ambiente: Ugo La Pietra's and Franco Summa's Urban Interventions" in *Arte Ambientale, Urban Space, and Participatory Art* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 106–141.

24

In general, curators and promoters of art practicing in the 1970s—Germano Celant or Achille Bonito Oliva—did not embrace radical social political art, like Environmental art into the mainstream art scene.

involved the expansion of aesthetic projects outside museums and galleries and into streets and piazzas.

This type of site-specific art engaged with the urban environment as a space of social relations.¹⁹ Crispolti much later defined "Arte Ambientale [as] part of an urban context, where there are people, where you have an architectural context. It [was] active in that it hoped to change the space in which it [was] situated."²⁰ Moreover, the art was intimately tied to its urban site, to its diversity, anthropological patrimony, social actuality, and political contingency.²¹ Participatory to varying degrees, it sought to engage citizens in the process of creation and, in turn, critical reflection. The goal of Environmental Art was to awaken urban inhabitants out of a state of passive conformity and into a new sense of civil and social consciousness. These artists' work, therefore, was necessarily based outside, in the urban sphere, as the site where they could unfurl creative activity with a different modality from gallery-based art, firmly rooted in the social context.

Environmental Art embraced a decentralized approach that could not have been more fitting to the Biennale's 1976 agenda. This year in particular, the institution was concerned with promoting democratic values and reaching working-class audiences beyond the famous exhibition venue of the *Giardini* (gardens). New initiatives involved programming in neighborhoods around Venice and beyond²². In other words, the Biennale wanted to extend beyond its institutional space—into the urban space—to reach broader publics.



fig.3
Franco Summa,
Un arcobaleno
in fondo alla
strada, 1975,
acrylic paint on
the ground
Image courtesy
of the Artist.

At the same time, however, positioned outside the traditional Biennale grounds, Environmental artworks inherently critiqued the spaces of aesthetic display of the art establishment, in both museums and galleries, in ways that related to Institutional Critique. Asserting autonomy, Environmental artists disengaged from the art institutional sphere to take up sociopolitical issues of the city, such as capital's territorialization of urban space, the uncontrolled growth of cities, rampant land speculation, and the desperate need for working-class housing²³. These issues were, perhaps, antithetical to typical art-world concerns, and Environmental artists sought—each to varying degrees—to find value for their projects outside of the art world economy.²⁴

The crux of the matter is that their presentation at the Biennale reveals a dynamic tension between the institution—and its goals to decentralize and democratize—and Environmental artists—whose projects sited in alternative locales were inherently critical of institutional spaces. The shifting contextual relationship between the artwork and its space of display—its location, but also narrative, politics, and framework—was complex, and challenged the traditional dichotomy of Institutional Critique. That is to say, at the 1976 Venice Biennale, critical artwork was presented at an institution that was itself

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Just six months before the XXXVII Venice Biennale was scheduled to open in July 1976, art historian, critic, and curator Enrico Crispolti was unexpectedly called to organize the exhibition that represented Italy in this multi-national art world presentation.¹ Internal politics at the institution—which led to the resignation of the cinematographer Maurizio Calvesi and author Silvano Giannelli from the visual arts commission—fortuitously resulted in an opportunity for Crispolti.²

Not many curators would have had an exhibition concept, and a method to implement it, at such short notice. Crispolti, however, with his ear close to the ground, had been working tirelessly throughout the 1970s with artists—such as Ugo La Pietra, Franco Summa, Ricardo Dalisi, and the collective Humor Power Ambulante—supporting and promoting their projects that were participatory, temporary, and explicitly sited in the urban environment. Necessity is the mother of invention, and Crispolti, in an accelerated timeframe, seized the chance to reconceive the exhibition as a creative medium in order to introduce to Biennale audiences artistic experiments occurring in Italy's streets and piazzas.

The resulting exhibition, *Ambiente come sociale* (Environment as Social), was innovative both for its content and form. Crispolti brought artists, who, for the most part, skirted spaces of institutional display—such as galleries and museums—to the art establishment, specifically the Venice Biennale. These artists typically chose to inhabit a peripheral position vis-à-vis the art economy, operating in the social, urban environment. This enabled them to gain greater artistic autonomy from commercial and elitist structures that pervaded the institutional art system and to attain the freedom to engage directly with urban audiences.³

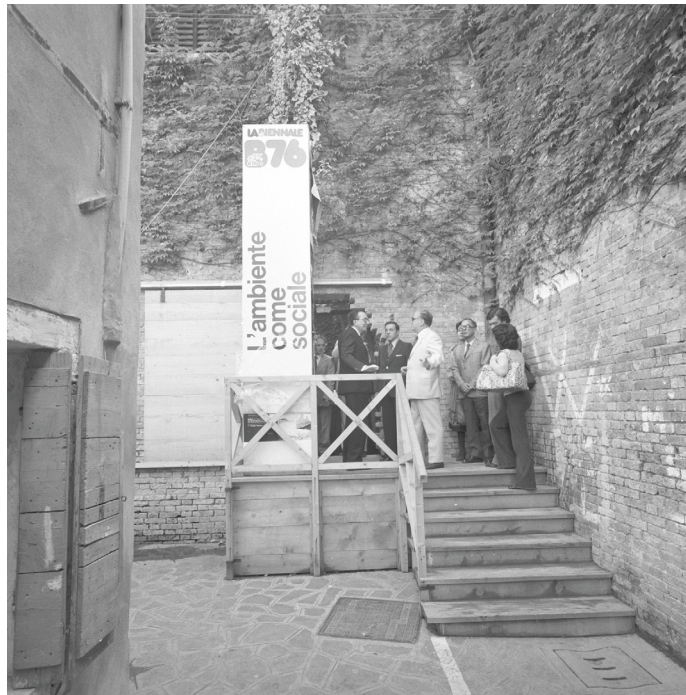
¹
The painter Raffaele De Grada was also on the commission and in charge of the Italian Pavilion. He worked together with Crispolti on *Ambiente come Sociale*. De Grada's original exhibition idea centered on the theme Habitat. After Crispolti was commissioned to curate the exhibition in the Italian Pavilion in January 1976, De Grada took a secondary position and let Crispolti take the lead in terms of the exhibition concept, content, and execution.

²
Stefania Portinari, "La Biennale di Venezia 1976: Ambiente/Arte," in *Anni settanta. La Biennale di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2018), 266. See also Maurizio Calvesi, "Polemica sulla Biennale," *Corriere della Sera*, July 1, 1976, and "Commissioni, dimissioni di S. Giannelli and M. Calvesi," Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts, Venice (ASAC), FS, AV, b. 225. Among other things, Calvesi resigned over the fact that he thought the general theme "Ambiente" was too vague, and he wanted a historical

show.¹⁰ The exhibition entrance, as we can see from this documentary photograph, was through a back door on the Calle Paludo, and there was little signage within the Giardini for the exhibition [fig. 1]. Not only was it hard to locate geographically, but the show also suffered from critical visibility, as it was omitted from the English press packet.¹¹ It is no surprise, then, that it received minimal press coverage.¹² Moreover, *Ambiente come sociale*, based entirely on projected images and ephemeral material, was hard to document, and installation photographs yielded very little information when it comes to aesthetic display and experience. All of these facts are obstacles to scholarship. Speculating further, none of the artists in the exhibitions have achieved renowned status, and their work from 1970s Italy is just now beginning to be studied.¹³ Nevertheless, Crispolti's 1976 exhibition is an important early example of curatorial practice as Institutional Critique. Its decentralized strategy, applied to many different facets of exhibition organizing, has much to offer with regards to democratizing the experience of art.

fig.1

Entrance to exhibition
Ambiente come sociale,
Venice Biennale 1976. Pictured
entering the exhibition: Prime
Minister Giulio Andreotti
with journalist Floris Luigi
Ammannati
© AAF – ArchivioArte
Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio
di Modena, FONDAZIONE
MODENA ARTI VISIVE



Ambiente

The term *Ambiente* (Environment), at the 1976 Biennale, pulls together various dimensions of understanding space in terms of art, politics, and social context. It was the overarching theme for the whole Venice Biennale, titled

10

Sara Catenacci, "L'ambiente come sociale alla Biennale di Venezia 1976: note di un libro mai realizzato," in *In corso d'opera: Ricerche dei dottorandi di Storia dell'Arte della Sapienza*, ed. Michele Nicolaci, Matteo Piccioni, and Lorenzo Riccardi (Rome: Campisano Editore, 2015), 321.

11

Patrizia Regorda, "Biennale di Venezia 1976: la sezione Italiana "Ambiente come sociale," MA thesis, Università degli Studi di Pavia, 2004, 87.

12

Sara Catenacci, "L'ambiente come sociale alla Biennale di Venezia 1976," 320. Most of the national press critiqued the 1976 Biennale for focusing on quantity rather than quality of exhibitions and directed specific critiques toward the exhibition *Attualità '72-'76*. What little was written up about *Ambiente come sociale* focused on the fact that it was an ideological exhibition only about social issues, and completely missing aesthetic innovation. See Regorda, *Biennale di Venezia 1976*, 60–62, and 90.



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OBOE: Three graphic proposals for the cover (February 2020). The third option was the accepted version.



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