

Actionism's Afterlife: Christoph Schlingensiefel Revisited¹

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The provocative work of German artist Christoph Schlingensiefel may seem to be not possible today. However, it developed an afterlife of its own. Against the backdrop of current discourse shifts and political developments my article historicizes this work from the early stage productions at the Berlin Volksbühne after the fall of the Wall to taking to the streets of Vienna at the turn of the millennium, when right-wing populism entered government politics in Europe. Determining the politicality of its fabrication of public tensions, the article calls for a closer consideration of concepts of affect studies in theatre and performance analysis and confronts the memory of Schlingensiefel's work with a more recent production and their reception in the context of current discussions on race and gender. Turning to Claudia Bosse's IDEAL PARADISE (2016), a street procession in Vienna, it suggests to locate Schlingensiefel's afterlife in new performative formats renegotiating contemporary affective politics.

Not long after German action artist, theatre and film-maker Christoph Schlingensiefel passed away in 2010, the weekend magazine published by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* interviewed the Austrian actor Sophie Rois for its April 2011 issue, in a recurring format called 'Interview ohne Worte' (Interview without Words), posing the question of just how much she missed his presence.² Rois had worked closely with Schlingensiefel at the Berlin Volksbühne during the 1990s. Instead of performing a gesture for the camera, she walked out of the frame to mark what she saw as the gap he had left behind.³

Yet Schlingensiefel's actions have developed a vital afterlife, as I would like to exemplify later with regard to Claudia Bosse.⁴ First and foremost, however, these actions have effectively been museumized. The same year as the 'interview' with Sophie Rois, Susanne Gaensheimer and Aino Laberenz won a Golden Lion for designing the German pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia as a show of Schlingensiefel's work.⁵ What remained of this work after his death then increasingly became canonized internationally. In 2014, the Berlin Kunstwerke dedicated another show to Schlingensiefel – conceived this time as a comprehensive retrospective.⁶ It included placing a container in central Berlin with a sign on its roof that said 'Ausländer raus' – 'Foreigners Out' – to commemorate *the* one Schlingensiefel action during the Wiener Festwochen in the year 2000 that had caused a hysterical mass uproar.⁷

By the time of their 2014 exhibition, the curators apparently considered Schlingensief's container action to be so canonical that they expected even this racist sign – which, taken by itself, now appeared to be an advertisement for the extreme right – to be recognizable as an exhibition piece. With the display of this 'Foreigners Out' sign, Schlingensief was in a sense posthumously mortified right out in the streets.

By claiming public space as a branch of an art institution, the curators ultimately deprived his work – and this is symptomatic for part of its reception – of precisely the dynamic that defined it: a public mobilization of circulating energies – that is, affects – that had been triggered by Schlingensief's own bodily performance. Yet from its earliest beginnings, his action art had always functioned through a staged, allegorical 'use of his own life'.⁸ The way in which he turned his lung cancer into art in the later 2000s was not the first instance of his work that can be read as a cathartic project experimenting with the 'production of affects'.⁹ At the turn of the millennium, his work was already concerned with the energetic dimensions of coming together. His interweaving of art and life aimed at letting different political positions collide, while confronting the local 'high-culture' scene with the culture of the streets.¹⁰

And this affective, enacted, mobilization of energies has, I would suggest, developed an afterlife, a posthumous life within performance art that differs from Schlingensief's musealization and shifts the focus from his agonistic aesthetics to more ambivalent and fluid forms of performative encounters. I will take an exemplary look at the work of Claudia Bosse, director of the Viennese theatercombinat, an independent group of the next generation of 'actionism'. Against the backdrop of changing political appearances in the public realm, the advent of today's political backlash, as well as the European border crisis, her Viennese version of *IDEAL PARADISE: eine nomadische stadtkomposition durch verschiedene orte in wien* (a nomadic cityscape composition through various places in vienna) (2016) seems to quote Schlingensief's *Bitte liebt Österreich*, one of his best-known productions from the turn of the millennium. However, *IDEAL PARADISE* indicatively stresses the affective dimension of co-presence and being together beyond notions of agonism – calling for different, less masculinist and less confrontationalist modes of choral assembly.¹¹

In what follows, I will first contextualize Schlingensief's early works, accompanied by an exemplary reading of his widely discussed so-called container action in Vienna, and then turn to Claudia Bosse, focusing on *IDEAL PARADISE*. Thematically connected to Schlingensief's container action, it exemplifies a current shift within performance art. Bosse's work makes clear that Schlingensief's time as a macho *enfant terrible* of action art is in fact over, but that there is still a subtle afterlife beyond the museum.

Nazi spectre

Schlingensief's theatrical work of the 1990s and early 2000s was situated in the collective experience of rupture as well as latent long-term continuities within German political history. After the fall of the Wall, the future seemed unpredictable and somewhat confusing, especially in the new German capital, Berlin. The first war on European

soil since 1945 had begun in the former Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union was disintegrating, the European Union had just been founded, and German asylum laws were being tightened. At the same time, the situation on the streets seemed out of control. These were the so-called *Baseballschläger-Jahre*, the 'baseball bat years', of the newly unified Germany, during which neo-Nazi thugs gained the upper hand to increasingly terrorize people on a massive scale in 'nationally liberated zones'.¹² In 1990, neo-Nazis had beaten Antonio Amadeu, a native of Angola, to death. In 1992, several people died in an attack on a building in Mölln where Turkish-German families lived. In Rostock-Lichtenhagen in the same year, the Central Refugee Shelter and an apartment block for Vietnamese contract workers was set on fire – also the work of neo-Nazis, this time applauded by a mob. In Berlin, Antifa organized buses to Rostock because the local police had failed to protect those attacked. A kind of voluntary security was set up for the buildings where asylum seekers lived in the area around Berlin. In the city district of Friedrichshain, neo-Nazis hunted down squatters and anyone who did not look 'organic German' enough to them. The left-wing activist Silvio Meier was killed in an underground station in the district by militant right-wingers. Unpaid Soviet soldiers were selling their weapons on the black market. Among Antifa groups, there were discussions about whether Michael Kühnen, a leader and spokesperson in the neo-Nazi movement, would have to be shot in order to stave off the beginnings ... It was precisely within this unsettling constellation, in which the spectre of Nazism was being discussed, that theatre became a vital space of working through the German past and present aesthetically. And in this context, Schlingensief made his stage entry.¹³

In 1993 he began to work at the Berlin Volksbühne, with *100 Jahre CDU: Spiel ohne Grenzen* (100 Years of the Christian Democratic Union Party: (A) Play without Limits), stressing West German continuities rather than rupture. The film *Terror 2000: Intensivstation Deutschland* (Terror 2000: ICU Germany) is 'dull, racist and sexist propaganda': this was the verdict given in a statement around the same time justifying the acid attack on the Sputnik cinema that initially prevented the Berlin screening of Schlingensief's trashy neo-Nazi parody, which seemed to overaffirm the afterlife of German fascism.¹⁴ Schlingensief became the talk of the town. After the attack, many people came to the Volksbühne to see his early theatre productions – questioning how the German political past was actualized under contemporary circumstances.

Coming from film, Schlingensief started working by thinking of the stage as a *Guckkasten*, a box for presenting an image – a frame. His plays were 'without limits' rather in the sense that they mashed up references to porn and Nazis, transversally queering, so to speak, the relation of past and present, not leaving one taboo unexposed onstage.¹⁵ However, they did not yet move performative action beyond the visual frame of the stage. Schlingensief himself increasingly performed in the role of the trashy *enfant terrible*.¹⁶ Today, his stage appearances may seem to be an artistically motivated reference to the avant-garde of the 1960s and a deconstructive parody of protagonism in drama.¹⁷ But in the context of the time, the significance of Schlingensief's work did go beyond a harmless citation, long since hackneyed, of artistic modernism within the parallel social reality of the art business. Rather, what

was at stake was the live wire he spanned between the art world and contemporaneous affect triggers within the political sphere.

This becomes especially clear with regard to Schlingensief's second production called *Kühnen 94*, in which he ran around onstage shouting, 'But your shoes are made of human skin', to the sound of what seemed to be gas flowing in. By many Schlingensief was regarded as a media-hungry shlock provocateur who exploited historical trauma and contemporary political conflict. His reception was long shaped by this image, before he increasingly became an avant-garde icon later on and was finally subjected to museum preservation politics.

At both the Volksbühne and the Berliner Ensemble political perspectives were the topic of post-performance discussions that carried on for nights. It was the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht's former theatre, where Heiner Müller responded to the fall of the Wall with *Duell Traktor Fatzer* (1993), flanked by interviews he gave in order to intervene in the debates of the time, and where he publicly reflected on the connection between the defeat of the workers' movement and the German present.¹⁸ The Berliner Ensemble was also where Einar Schlee, who had been scorned by the *feuilletons* of middle-class high culture as an apologist for 'fascist aesthetics', began directing again in 1993, addressing German history with rigid group figures; this work triggered the renaissance in the use of choruses in the German-language theatre that would later be called post-dramatic.¹⁹ But it was Schlingensief – an artist whose theatre works at the Volksbühne were hardly taken seriously – who possibly had a longer half-life because the provocative performance of his trash persona made it possible to come to terms with German politics and history affectively; because these performances increasingly drew from the specific potential of theatre as a live medium, carrying it into the public sphere, in order to lay bare circulating energetic forces in a temporary coming together.

Street ban-opticon

Toward the end of the 1990s, Schlingensief's actions first moved out of the stage box and into the streets, only to then later move back in, via his animatographs, walk-in stage constructions, along with his audience and public.²⁰ We can say that in the meantime he had discovered the street as a platform, and the Volksbühne's rotating stage as site for the public. Schlingensief took a leap beyond the line between the stage and the audience to then try out another way of dissolving boundaries, this time conceived from the perspective of form. In contrast to his earliest scenic works, he started to experiment with theatre as a spatial art, and this led him to examine the tension between performers and the audience as a creative field for reflecting on affect politics. The work that allows us to see why this could be relevant for today's issues, and specifically in light of today's panic about migration and the right-wing populist occupation of public space,²¹ is precisely Schlingensief's container action in Vienna. It has already been thoroughly researched as an intervention in the public sphere of the time.²² But from today's perspective we might be able to situate it in the broader context of the development of political aesthetics and their re-gendering. *Bitte liebt*

Österreich: Erste österreichische Koalitionswoche can be read as a millennial swarm counterproject to the revolutionary model of contagion and communalization we find in mass stagings of the early twentieth century²³ – yet exposing the agonistic appearance of the people and also the masculinist coining of a leading figure in the fascist refiguration of earlier revolutionary mass stagings.

For a week in the summer of 2000, Schlingensief locked twelve supposed asylum seekers in a container in the middle of Vienna – the container with the 'Foreigners Out' sign that later became a museum piece in Berlin. The asylum seekers could be watched through observation slits and surveillance cameras. Schlingensief called up and reversed Foucault's reading of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, organized around a central point of view: here, the many constituting the majority of society would subject the racialized few to surveillance.²⁴ Schlingensief cited 'Big Brother' – as a television format of scripted reality between fact and fake, still new at the time, in which the interweaving of art and life demanded by the historical avant-garde was being transposed into television culture. Seen thus, the action provided a preview of the forms of public staging that are indicative of populist politics and their capture economy today. This Big Brother citation was accordingly conflated with governmental practices and pointed to the emergence of the so-called ban-opticon – flexibilized control-societal practices of inclusion and exclusion by surveillance. According to Didier Bigo and Zygmunt Baumann the ban-opticon serves to segregate the surplus population by placing them in an outside position, and to prod the majority population, through its susceptibility to the exploitation of consumer capitalism, to voluntary self-control.²⁵ Schlingensief translated control-societal developments with regard to refugee politics into a setting in which opposing forces on the street actually spiralled out of control: the action called upon its spectators to dial in via the Internet or telephone and decide which 'asylum seekers' from the Big Brother container would be successively deported. The result was increasingly large protests on site: some against the action itself, which indeed played with racism, some against those in the container, and some against the German denigration of the image of Austria. Standing on the container roof next to the 'Foreigners Out' sign that would later be museumized, using a megaphone to provoke the crowds, Schlingensief kept stoking the fire.

At the time, the political situation in Austria had become particularly tense. Just one year earlier, Marcus Omufuma had suffocated while being restrained and gagged during his deportation. The blue-black coalition of the ÖVP (the Austrian People's Party) and the far-right FPÖ (the Freedom Party of Austria) had just taken office, paving the way for the right-wing populist government policies that currently prevail in a number of European countries. What may now – in the wake of an illiberal paradigm shift in European governmental politics – seem normal triggered weekly mass demonstrations at the time. Schlingensief envisioned a constellation that called for polarizations.

He made himself the target of outrage from all sides that grew increasingly palpable.²⁶ The action caused widespread controversy. Some of Schlingensief's team left the project because they feared for the safety of those in the container. Members

of the Viennese Antifa tried to 'free' those locked up inside and finally took down the racist sign that had adorned Vienna's city centre for days, accompanied by Schlingensief's constant and loud vocal polemics. Yet those involved in the 'liberation action' proved to be the most harmless faction amid the general confusion, which increasingly produced shouting matches and physical violence.

I would like to accentuate a reading that prefigured contemporary perspectives.²⁷ At the time, Marlene Streeruwitz read the action as a 'theatre of catharsis'.²⁸ In her *Tagebuch der Gegenwart* (Diary of the Present), she notes in disgust that this staging of affect was unpolitical precisely in its reference to masculinist avant-garde provocation art, because it only reinforced existing polarizations:

We have now witnessed over fifty years of provocation in art as a means of its political expression ... As a means that has been employed to cement political positions ... Art has remained this facile argument of provocation that plays on, that rehashes, old patterns. Schlingensief & the tabloid Kronenzeitung. This is a partnership that works ... From a historical point of view, it must be noted that the artistic means of provocation which have been employed for political ends have always remained closely related to the means of terroristic right-wing constructs of masculinity.²⁹

Streeruwitz has a point with her critique of the male avant-garde machismo that underlay this action, which Schlingensief himself called 'pretty swinish'. The action might in fact have made conditions more difficult for people who were working against the new right-wing government and to achieve an open migration policy because it overemphasized antagonisms and resentments. And it seemed to spectacularly exploit the supposed asylum seekers, some of whom were suggestively blackened up, and exposed them to the risk of assault. Still, we can also say that Schlingensief was able to seismographically address the contemporary neglect of the politicality of affect,³⁰ at a time when the critique of ideologies and the focus on meaning production dominated the reception of performance in the theatrical as well as the political realm. Indeed, Schlingensief's stress on affects, today increasingly a focus of discussions given the current shift to the right in post-political democracies,³¹ was anything but paradigmatic at the time. In a certain sense, Schlingensief's action already anticipated the later political discourse on art by Chantal Mouffe and others while exposing the pitfalls of agonistic politics based on identity production.

Affect and agonistics

Chantal Mouffe sees the task of present-day initiatives in art as uncovering the affective dimension of politics.³² The general politics of consensus has abandoned this terrain, she argues, leaving it to be occupied by the right and thereby also producing an anti-establishment movement that is reactionary and reflects the dominant culture. In her interview 'Populism Is a Necessity' Mouffe elaborates on her idea of counterhegemonic politics of affect:

it's important for left-wing populists to mobilize the passion of hope: to show that there is an alternative to the current situation with the growing gap between rich and poor and the destruction of the welfare state. Right-wing populists are very much aware of the importance of using this affective dimension. It is crucial for the left to acknowledge it and to intervene, to mobilize and foster affect in order to create collective forms of identification that could deepen democracy.³³

Since the affective dimension of politics lies at the origin of collective identity according to Mouffe, it touches upon the spurring of enthusiasm for another Europe that includes immigrants – and that identifies, in their places, its opponents as transnational corporations and forces of neoliberal globalization. Mouffe's radical democratic critique of institutions may, however, fall short in view of control-societal developments and the effects that financial capitalism has come to have on traditional state sovereignty and governmental politics,³⁴ but her plea for 'passion in politics' and for its aesthetic refashioning nevertheless points to a lacuna in the political debate that already played out in Schlingensief's time.

In his book *Retour à Reims*, published in 2009, which still reads like a response to current conditions, Didier Eribon describes the dangerous referential aberrations of the agonistic principle Mouffe proposes by examining the working family from which he comes, with its former affiliation to the Communist Party and its later support for the rightist Front national (FN). They, he argues, have redirected their resentment against 'those at the top', refocusing it toward the political establishment and consequently seeking the 'protection' of the FN from what they perceive as their new migrant competition. Unlike transnational companies, of course, migrants can be given a face. Here, counteridentity turns out to be a fatal gateway for racist projections.

In Schlingensief's work, the affects that today characterize right-wing populist provocative transgressions in public space became, as it were, the object of artistic intervention *avant la lettre* and more and more revealed the problem of the agonistic identity politics that Mouffe is stylizing today as the left's answer to right-wing hegemonies. Schlingensief publicly demonstrated the possible excesses of agonistic interventions. Instead of providing an opportunity for common identification charged with positive connotations, as Mouffe might imagine, it exposed distinct parallel social developments within increasingly escalating public debates of the time, as debates that held explosive affective power and were connected to the spectre of Nazi identitarianism. And in this sense the affective dimension of Schlingensief's performance art can be read in contrast to Mouffe's claims.

It was exactly for the harbingers of the problem of agonistics that Schlingensief created an artificial open space enabling a recognition of, and maybe a reflection on, what was to come. *Bitte liebt Österreich* was irresponsible because it endangered not only his own life but also the lives of the people in the container, and the daily political work being done by others. Still, it is precisely Schlingensief's engagement that points *ex negativo* to a possibly complementary depoliticization by those who would co-opt this work as museum pieces. The somewhat pornographical 'ban-opticon' staged by Schlingensief, which operated to magnify the ferocious

conflicts of its times, has long since become a definitive moment of our social reality. The creation of closed camps for migrants explicitly designed as deterrents or the illegal pushbacks of refugees, to name but a few examples, have become regular policies of European governments and are now translated into a decline of the right to political asylum once implemented as a response to the legacy of Nazism. At the same time, fierce confrontations, such as those that ignited on the street during the container action, have often shifted to other media and their triggers have also changed. So what might Schlingensief's contemporary afterlife beyond the museum look like?

Collective nomadizing (Claudia Bosse)

Since Schlingensief's death, parallel societies have solidified in the wake of the European border crisis, as the media have increasingly differentiated into separate worlds. Multiple catastrophes, culminating in the current proliferation of wars on resources and geopolitics – also an aftereffect of the territorial shifts since 1989 – have provoked a sense of insecurity. As Carl Hegemann has pointed out, Schlingensief's early works would be impossible today and rather be replaced by institutionally mediated pre-censorship.³⁵ This may be the demand of some leftist activists, while right-wing extremists are hijacking transgressional – that is, provocative – practices on the street. Most recently, this reversal of positions between provocation and policing could be seen in the carnival of right-wing cultures that emerged during demonstrations against the so-called Corona dictatorship.³⁶ This is where the gap that Schlingensief's death has ripped open comes into view. His political theatre played confrontationally with the danger of physical co-presence, enabling a kind of collective self-reflection about the affective dimension of social contexts that he had publicly allowed to spiral temporarily out of control with his actions against the backdrop of German and Austrian history.

Where might we today find an afterlife for the relevant aspects of Schlingensief's work? The path leads less to museums, or to institutionalized post-dramatic theatre, than back to the street. I would like to turn to a Viennese performance from the next generation, which played with the shifting political situation and the topic of forced migration almost two decades later, when the current development of European border politics had already begun while the manifestation of public antagonisms in the streets seemed to have faded. In *IDEAL PARADISE: eine nomadische stadtkomposition durch verschiedene orte in wien* (a nomadic cityscape composition through various places in Vienna) (2016), Claudia Bosse – a director who has been experimenting since the turn of the millennium with what she calls 'body landscapes' in cooperation with the Viennese theatercombinat,³⁷ in non-institutionalized spaces and on the streets – managed to trigger affects in a different way. *IDEAL PARADISE* was part of a production series on *catastrophies* (2015–20) later also produced in Jakarta, reflecting on an international context and thereby widening the horizon of historical-political references beyond Schlingensief's negative focus on Germany and Austria. Against the backdrop of the war in Syria and concomitant flight to Europe, *IDEAL PARADISE* was an intervention into an urban space that today is shot

through with video cameras and security services, and is increasingly regulated out of existence. Like Schlingensiefel, Bosse – one of the most interesting directors of the German-speaking independent scene and widely known for her staging of Aeschylus' *Persians* with citizen choruses in different European cities during the early 2000s³⁸ – often works in public spaces. In contrast to Schlingensiefel's agonistic, self-centred experimental set-ups, however, she makes the actors and the audience part of her choral body landscapes in order to allow for other forms of being together. Her work is less about confrontational discharge than about making post-identitarian energies tangible, as can already be shown with regard to her early choral adaptations of Brechtian *Lehrstück* theatre and ancient tragedy, such as in *Mauser* (Parochialkirche, Berlin 1999) and *massakermynke* (Schlachthaus, Vienna 2000). This has become defining for her more current work, *Thyestes Brüder! Kapital* (Kasino am Kempelenpark, Vienna 2019), a fusion of Roman tragedy and Marx's *Capital*; her rereading of the Paris Commune in *commune 1-73: the assembly of human beings 1-3* (Forum Freies Theater, Düsseldorf 2022); or her experiment with a more-than-human chorus in *ORACLE and SACRIFICE in the woods* (Prater, Vienna 2022). The use of environmental choruses also points beyond Mouffe's idea of art as the motor of a groupist populism on the left, but in a different way than Schlingensiefel's conceptualization. This becomes clear with regard to the work that thematically responds to Schlingensiefel's container action. While quoting Schlingensiefel's persona as master of ceremony, this action, however, rejects the role of the protagonist and its masculinist fashioning as agonistically triggering affects.

IDEAL PARADISE staged a form of contemporary urban nomadism. The performers first moved out of a wasteland in Vienna's sixth district to join the audience in a kind of demonstration or procession through the city. The audience was pelted with Bosse's live voice via portable speakers that had been dragged in, which recalled the use of monstres in Schlingensiefel's late works such as *Kirche der Angst* (Church of Fear), as well as ban-optic regimes of control. The voice initially occupied the urban space, aggressively commenting on passers-by and giving directions to the crowd – that is, quoting Schlingensiefel's persona – but then increasingly became lost in the events. The process was punctuated by activities at individual stations, with changing constellations: one part of the audience turned out to be a kind of chorus alternating between followers and performers until its members finally delivered a performance of their own: I am Haydar. I come from Iraq. I am an actor. And so on. They were figured as individuals with a specific story. In using autobiography, they gave themselves a face – for example by telling the story of their flight – that was aimed to elicit sympathy. At the same time, however, these stories were forced to fit a predetermined pattern, which gradually became recognizable as such through repetition. At the end, the performance took place in front of Belvedere Palace as a breaking of a fast, as a kind of picnic to which choreographers and performers invited the audience. Bosse's aesthetics – responding to the crisis of the European border regime and the advent of illiberal governmental politics on a broader scale – oscillated between an ironically kitschy gesture of communion and the possibility of exchanging more than predetermined patterns of interaction – of moving on, together, and

perhaps staying in contact. The relationship between the one and the many was translated into a fluid, open structure of shifting constellations, which let go of the principle of a single figure upstaging the rest.

The aspect of this action that corresponded with Schlingensief's, in spite of so many other differences, was its exposed affective dimension of co-presence. Here, however, opposition was not rendered hysterical and did not remain focused on a single persona as protagonist. In its place, it became possible to explore the potential of a loose, collective nomadism. Bosse's street work negotiated affective politics in a performative format that was, in a sense, complementary to *Bitte liebt Österreich*. Her action also made clear the extent to which Schlingensief's use of his own life in citing the avant-garde still functioned via the protagonistic principle of a provocateur that Streeruwitz had already tried to situate in the context of his masculinist casting. Today, its transgressive moment, formerly associated with the avant-garde, lives on in a ghostly way in the forms of public staging employed by a right-wing anti-establishment.

IDEAL PARADISE instead liquefied the boundaries between self, us, and others; between a performance space and a public space; between an audience and performers; and between ethno-European and 'Nafri' – that newly invented figure of the 2010s, emblematic of the current crisis besetting Europe's attempts to define its borders, of a Muslim Arab, male adolescent from the North African *lumpenproletariat* who serves as a projection for fears of potential threats. On the one hand, some elements of the action recalled practices that constitute control societies: some of the stories told by members of the chorus, Bosse's acoustic assaults on passers-by, the constantly mobilized police, and so on.³⁹ But on the other hand, the action served as a reminder that the co-performing refugees could be neighbours, could be just any people one might meet on the street. The governmental practices that today regulate inside and outside were tentatively countered by another, unsafe mode of being together – which the action allowed to be occupied, even as its permanent alienation also opened it up to reflection as a fantasy of longing. Bosse played with the utopia of a kind of non-agonistic microbiopolitics that implies a different understanding of the interweaving of art and life than the musealization of Schlingensief's actions imply today. Bosse's work suggests energetically (re)conquering public space for a different politics: a politics of encountering each other in defiance of ban-optical politics. It redresses – and re-genders – Schlingensief's earlier connection of agonistic affect and provocation and in doing so gives it a "queer" afterlife beyond its posthumous, nostalgic reframing in the museum. Sophie Rois may actually be happy to mingle.

NOTES

- 1 Translated by Michael Taylor.
- 2 See 'Sagen Sie jetzt nichts, Sophie Rois', *SZ Magazin*, 13 (2011), photograph by Tibor Bozi. Available at https://url.avanan.click/v2/ro2/___https://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/ein-interview-ohne-worte/sagen-sie-jetzt-nichts-sophie-rois-78038___YXAxZTpjYWicmlkZzVvcmc6YTpvOmMyMzljMGJmODcyNDRmZWJjMjgyODYwNzYyZDhiOTY4Ojc6NzBjODo3YzcyMjg5NGQ1ZWQxOGFm

MDhmNmUwNWQ1MWM1YjcXmU4MWU5NjhYmMxMzZjZTcwODg1Mzk3MGQ2NmIxZGZjOnQ6VDpG.

- 3 See also Vanessa Höving, Katja Holweck and Thomas Wortmann, eds., *Christoph Schlingensief* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2019).
- 4 On afterlife as posthumous, i.e. mortified, ruptured forth-living see Walter Benjamin's notes in his *Passagen-Werk*, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 574–5 nn. 2, 3, and p. 595 nn. 11, 3; see also Bettine Menke, 'Das Nach-Leben im Zitat: Benjamins Gedächtnis der Texte', in Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann, eds., *Gedächtniskunst: Raum – Bild – Schrift. Studien zur Mnemotechnik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 74–110.
- 5 See Susanne Gaensheimer, ed., *Christoph Schlingensief: German Pavilion 2011. 54. Internationale Kunstausstellung La Biennale di Venezia* (Cologne: Pöbneck, 2011).
- 6 See Klaus Biesenbach, Anna-Catharina Gebbers, Aino Laberenz and Susanne Pfeffer, eds., *Christoph Schlingensief: Exhibition Christoph Schlingensief Kunst Werke, Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 1 December–19 January 2014, Moma PS1, New York 9 March–31 August 2014* (Cologne: Walther König, 2013).
- 7 See Christopher B. Balme, 'Ludic Overidentification: Christoph Schlingensief's Please Love Austria', in Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 178–84; Ann-Christin Focke, 'Christoph Schlingensief, Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste europäische Koalitionswoche', in Focke, *Unterwerfung und Widerstreit: Strukturen einer neuen politischen Theaterästhetik* (Munich: Utz, 2011), pp. 85–132; Lore Knapp and Sarah Pogoda, 'Christoph Schlingensiefs Grenzüberschreitungen: Die Wiener Aktion *Bitte liebt Österreich. Erste österreichische Koalitionswoche* und Elfriede Jelineks Kasperlestück *Ich liebe Österreich*', *Germanistische Mitteilungen: Zeitschrift für deutsche Sprache, Literatur und Kultur*, 41, 1 (2015), pp. 75–89.
- 8 Evelyn Annuß, 'Unter Einsatz des eigenen Lebens: Christoph Schlingensiefs autobiografische Inszenierungen', in Pia Janke, ed., *Der Gesamtkünstler Christoph Schlingensief* (Vienna: Praesens, 2011), pp. 291–306.
- 9 Ibid., p. 293. On Schlingensief's latest works see Johanna Zorn, *Sterben lernen: Christoph Schlingensiefs autobiotheatrale Selbstmodellierung im Angesicht des Todes*, *Forum Modernes Theater* 49 (Tübingen: Narr Francke, 2017).
- 10 Because of this, Schlingensief's works are all too quickly put into the box of the artistic avant-garde and thus ultimately incorporated into the canon of an extended modernism. See Lore Knapp, Sven Lindholm and Sarah Pogoda, eds., *Schlingensief und die Avantgarde* (Munich: Fink, 2018); Sarah Ralfs, *Theatralität der Existenz: Ästhetik und Ethik bei Christoph Schlingensief* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2019); Anna Teresa Scheer, *Staging Chaos, Performing Politics and Theatrical Phantasmagoria* (London: Methuen, 2019). See also Tara Forrest and Anna Teresa Scheer, *Christoph Schlingensief: Art without Borders* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010); Catherina Gilles, *Kunst und Nichtkunst: Das Theater von Christoph Schlingensief* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009); Pia Janke and Teresa Kovacs, eds., *Der Gesamtkünstler Christoph Schlingensief* (Vienna: Praesens, 2011); Lore Knapp, *Formen des Kunstreligiösen: Peter Handke – Christoph Schlingensief* (Paderborn: Fink, 2015). Schlingensief himself related to Joseph Beuys's term 'social sculpture'. See Kaspar Mühlemann and Anna-Katharina Gebbers, *Christoph Schlingensief und seine Auseinandersetzung mit Joseph Beuys* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011).
- 11 On the affective turn in the humanities see – in the wake of Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Gutattari's critique of the focus on signficatory practices in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2nd edn, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) – e.g. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015); Nigel Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler*, 1 (2004), pp. 57–78.
- 12 The battle against neo-Nazi terror by the left in the early 1990s has gained contemporary attention, e.g. in the 2022 exhibition Tüntenhuis Forellenhof 1990: Der kurze Sommer des schwulen Kommunismus at

- Berlin's Gay Museum (www.schwulesmuseum.de/ausstellung/tuntenhaus-forellenhof-1990-der-kurze-sommer-des-schwulen-kommunismus).
- 13 See Brandon Woolf, *Institutional Theatrics: Performing Arts Policy in Post-Wall Berlin* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021).
 - 14 See Till Briegleb's portrait of Schlingensiefel at www.schlingensiefel.com/bio_goethe.php.
 - 15 On queer temporality and an understanding of queering unburdened from representational historicism see Carolyn Dinshaw *et al.*, 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 13 (2007), 177–95; Stephen Farrier, 'Playing with Time: Gay Intergenerational Performance Work and the Productive Possibilities of Queer Temporalities', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62 (2015), pp. 1398–418.
 - 16 See Peter Laudenbach, 'Ekel-Mix im Horrorladen: Christoph Schlingensiefel veranstaltete zum Jahresfinale ein Massaker; Kühnen 94 in der Volksbühne', *Berliner Zeitung*, 3 January 1994. Available at <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/christoph-schlingensiefel-veranstaltete-zum-jahresfinale-ein-massaker-kuehnen-94-in-der-volksbuehne-ekel-mix-im-kleinen-horrorladen-li.1343055>.
 - 17 See e.g. Knapp, Lindholm and Pogoda, *Schlingensiefel und die Avantgarde*.
 - 18 See e.g. Heiner Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht: Leben in zwei Diktaturen, eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992).
 - 19 See Einar Schleef, *Droge Faust Parsifal* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997); Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Evelyn Annuß, 'Alienating Choruses in German-Speaking Performing Arts', *Germanic Review*, 98, 2 (2023), pp. 158–69.
 - 20 See Roman Berka, *Christoph Schlingensiefels Animatograph: Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit* (Vienna: Edition Transfer, 2011).
 - 21 See, for instance, Zygmunt Baumann, *Strangers at Our Door* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).
 - 22 See footnote 7 above.
 - 23 See e.g. Arthur Holitscher's description of the *Storming of the Winter Palace* – the re-enactment of the Russian revolution – in the ninth chapter of his book *Drei Monate in Sowjet-Rußland* (Three Months in Soviet Russia) (Berlin: Fischer, 1921), available at gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/-5950/9. On the differing aesthetics of Russian revolutionary plays and Nazi mass stagings see Evelyn Annuß, *Volksschule des Theaters: Nationalsozialistische Massenspiele* (Paderborn: Fink, 2019).
 - 24 See Thomas Mathiesen, 'The Viewer Society: Foucault's "Panopticon" Revisited', *Theoretical Criminology*, 1, 2 (1997), pp. 215–34, who critically engages Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
 - 25 See Didier Bigo, 'Globalized (in)Security: The Field and the Ban-opticon', in Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, eds., *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 10–48; Zygmunt Baumann and David Lyon, *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation* (Cambridge and Boston, MA: Polity, 2011).
 - 26 See Paul Poet's film documentary *Ausländer raus! Schlingensiefels Container* (2002, in German).
 - 27 On its media ecology see Joseph Vogl, *Capital and Ressentiment: A Short Theory of the Present* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022).
 - 28 Marlene Streeruwitz, *Tagebuch der Gegenwart* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002), diary entry from 16 January 2000, p. 157.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9 (translation by Michael Taylor).
 - 30 See Nigel Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler*, 1 (2004), pp. 57–78, here p. 58.
 - 31 See Colin Crouch, *Post-democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).
 - 32 See Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London and New York: Verso, 2013).
 - 33 See Chantal Mouffe, 'Populism Is a Necessity', interview, *The European*, 2 May 2014.
 - 34 Cf. Joseph Vogl, *Der Souveränitätseffekt* (Berlin and Zurich: Diaphanes, 2016).

- 35 See Carl Hegemann, 'Kunst und Gefahr: Warum Christoph Schlingensief's Aktionskunst heute wahrscheinlich keine Chance mehr hätte', in Raban Witt, ed., *Everyday Live* (Berlin: Alexander, 2021), pp. 229–36.
- 36 See Oliver Nachtwey, Robert Schäfer and Nadine Frei, 'Politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste' (Universität Basel, 2020); Evelyn Annub, 'Affekt und Gefolgschaft', in Anne Ganzert, Philip Hauser and Osabell Otto, eds., *Following: Ein Kompendium zu Medien der Gefolgschaft und Prozessen des Folgens* (Berlin and Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter, 2023), pp. 251–61.
- 37 See Claudia Bosse, 'es gibt keine unschuldigen räume', in Norbert Otto Eke, Ulrike Haß and Irina Kaldrack, eds., *Bühne: Raumbildende Prozesse im Theater* (Munich: Fink, 2014), pp. 63–81. For an extensive overview regarding Bosse's work see Fanti Baum and Kathrin Tiedemann, *Claudia Bosse: Kein Theater. Alles möglich* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2023), on *IDEAL PARADISE* see esp. pp. 44–6.
- 38 See Ulrike Haß, 'Woher kommt der Chor', in Genia Enzelberger, Monika Meister and Stefanie Schmitt, eds. *Maske und Kothurn*, 58, 1, *Auftritt Chor: Formationen des Chorischen im gegenwärtigen Theater* (2012), pp. 13–30; Christine Standfest, 'Ergreifendes Sprechen: Zu Claudia Bosses Perser-Inszenierungen', in Heiner Goebbels and Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, eds., *Heiner Müller sprechen* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit 2009), pp. 215–28.
- 39 On affect, sound and politics see Ana Hofman, 'The Romance with Affect: Sonic Politics in a Time of Political Exhaustion', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 1–3 (2020), pp. 303–18.

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