

# Reconsidering Manifesta 10: Big Exhibition Project as Narrative

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the exhibition project of *Manifesta 10* (St. Petersburg, 2014) as a complex of narratives including media texts and artists' myths and stories. Two main, mutually affecting themes of the *Manifesta 10* narrative are defined as a dialog between classical and contemporary art and an idea of "total work of art" in the context of the theory of "Gesamtkunstwerk". The basis of the theory was laid by R. Wagner, and it had later continued in contemporary cultural studies in relation to interactivity of contemporary art. Big exhibition projects transform the idea of "total work of art" into the concept of unity of different artistic elements (artistic methods, media, art spaces, mythologies, commentaries, critical texts) in the whole of the exhibition. The curator's idea of dialog between classical art and contemporary artworks stresses the key role of the Hermitage in the project of *Manifesta 10* and demonstrates benefits and disadvantages of an exhibition mega-project in a classical museum. The "big story" about the opposition of contemporary art and tradition consists of minor stories of particular projects in the exhibition. In this regard, the criteria of *Manifesta 10*'s critical reception and interpretation are considered.

## KEYWORDS

exhibition narrative; Manifesta 10; Hermitage museum; curatorial conception; museum context; Gesamtkunstwerk.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the State Hermitage Museum was selected as the main place for *Manifesta 10*. Besides the Hermitage, the project of *Manifesta 10* was presented across the city of Saint-Petersburg, reaching the broader audience through events and exhibitions in historical buildings, streets and a row of art galleries. The variety of artistic means, exhibition spaces and artistic myths certainly gives *Manifesta 10* the qualities of a *big project*. Large-scale contemporary art exhibitions, like projects of the Viennese biennale, *documenta* in Kassel, or the European biennial *Manifesta* can be considered as *big curatorial projects*.

The *big curatorial project* definition will be as follows: it is a visual and contextual unity, which may be described as a cultural event representing a certain complex of meanings relevant to contemporary artistic paradigm. It is a visual demonstration of social, cultural and philosophical ideas in the context of a curatorial conception. The concept of *big curatorial project* is applicable to current issues of contemporary art, curatorial studies and exhibition history (Altshuler, 2013; Edmonds et al., 2009; Foci, 2001; Greenberg et al., 2002; Lockard, 2013; O'Neill, 2012; Rugg & Sedgwick, 2007; Thompson (ed), 2005; Vanderlinden & Filipovic (eds), 2005; Ventzislavov, 2014).

For understanding of a big exhibition project we require a certain context, which might take a form of narrative consisting of artworks' ideas, artistic myths and a curator's conception. Contemporary processes of narrative creation and reception are developing in the context of complicated interaction of different media. In art exhibitions, these are the media of artistic audiovisual means, exposition room

multimedia equipment, advertisement and mediation tools including audiovisual commentary to an exhibition such as audio-catalog, audio-guide and volunteer mediation practice (Danks & Rodriguez-Echavarría, 2007, pp. 93-106). The authors of the book *Narrative as Media* recognize that, “in a world dominated by print and electronic media, our sense of reality is increasingly structured by narrative. Feature films and documentaries tell us stories about ourselves and the world we live in. Television speaks back to us and offers us ‘reality’ in the form of hyperbole and parody. Print journalism turns daily life into a story. Advertisements narrativise our fantasies and desires.” (Fulton et al., 2005, p. 1). Many issues on museum, exhibition and curatorial studies are focused on the problem of using interactive multimedia tools for creating narratives helping visitors to understand the content of an exhibition (Booth, 1998; McKay, 2007; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Scott, 2012; Spierling & Iurgel, 2003). The aesthetic reception and interpretation of artworks in exhibition projects also requires a broader context in form of artistic myths, stories, comments and other kinds of narratives to create an illusion of understanding for a viewer. These aspects are broadly discussed in the issues dedicated to aesthetic evaluation and perception of art (Bourriaud et al., 2002; Carroll, 1988; Mateas & Sengers (eds), 2003; Mirzoeff, 2002; Smith, 2007; Stickley et al., 2007).

As confirm some issues in the field of narrative analysis and interdisciplinary cultural studies (Reese, 2003; Basu & Macdonald, 2007), creative possibilities and varieties of narrative as structural basis are especially visible in the context of big curatorial projects, as *Manifesta 10* analyzed in this article.

A big curatorial project of contemporary art is contextually connected to some global concept or idea. The *big project* is aimed at the embodiment of a certain universal idea, not always related to individual curatorial or artistic intentions, but rather being the product of some objective reasons, whether social, political, commercial, medial, etc.

Nevertheless, a curatorial conception in a whole is mainly personal discourse, a narrative of a curator or an artist, or a complex of narratives. Artists always have something to tell the public, though the visual expression of their works may be minimal in the *big*

*project*. Speaking about the global presence of ideas or tasks subordinating the concept of big curatorial project, we can note the loss of individuality of artists and artifacts involved in an exhibition. The denial of an artist's significance for *big curatorial projects* has become a rhetorical figure, in the spirit of R. Barthes' (2002) concept of the “death of the author”.

A universal statement, of course, can be integrated into other, smaller narratives (there is no doubt), but these individual discourses should be more or less holistic, able to resist the tendency of disintegration inside the big narrative, and particularly the loss of meaning. This is especially true for large-scale curatorial projects that are supported by extensive conceptual documentation and comments.

The curator's idea of a big exhibition project bearing the features of “total artwork” is, without a doubt, the main theme of *Manifesta 10* exhibition narrative, but different small stories accompanying the exhibition are no less important for its understanding and among them are artists' myths, critical commentaries, small narratives encoded in the meanings and interpretations of artworks. Narrative analysis in the field of art perception in the context of a big exhibition refers to different kinds of texts or speeches, which might have a story form.

## **2 | CONCEPTION AND STRUCTURE OF MANIFESTA 10**

Among other major exhibition institutions *Manifesta* has been initially presented as a unique mobile biennial and demonstration of “young art.” In comparison, the Venice Biennale was conceived as a display of modern cultural identity of different countries, *documenta* in Kassel — as an institution, presenting the state of contemporary art, documenting its phenomena and defining the vector of development for the next five years, and Art Basel as a show of art sold in art galleries. A project in St. Petersburg has been dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of *Manifesta* biennial. According to the curator Kasper König, “the emergence of the MANIFESTA was due to important political and cultural changes taking place in Europe in the late twentieth century. Now, after 20 years, it is time to look back, sum up the results and assess the overall achievements in the field of culture and art” (König, 2015).

Artistic and aesthetic evaluation of *Manifesta 10* has not yet received enough attention in scientific literature, though it has already appeared in a row of issues, including the catalogue of *Manifesta 10*, analyzing content and conception of this exhibition project. (Crichton-Miller, 2014; *Manifesta 10 Catalogue*, 2014; Zuliani, 2015;).

Though various places of Saint Petersburg were provided for the project of *Manifesta 10*, the context of the Hermitage Museum was the most significant. As the Director of the Hermitage, M. B. Piotrovsky said, "The State Hermitage Museum is glad to accept the *Manifesta* in 2014, the year of the museum's 250th anniversary. With the help of *Manifesta*, the Hermitage will remind you of tradition from the time of Catherine the Great's interest in contemporary art and of the role that museum collections and exhibitions have always played in the development of artistic life in Russia. For us, contemporary art is a natural, though complex, continuation of age-old traditions, and therefore the key to *Manifesta 10* in 2014 for us will be the theme of heritage in today's context" (Piotrovsky, 2014).

The conception of the chief curator Kasper König (German curator, art historian, professor, from 2000 to 2012 Direktor of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. In 1977, along with Klaus Bussmann, he organized the first *Sculpture Projects Münster*), was aimed at summing up the cultural outcome of two decades of the exhibition institution *Manifesta* and evaluation of the achievements of contemporary art. According to the curator, "St. Petersburg is a special place where these reflections take on new meanings and interpretations... seeing the city from different angles, *Manifesta 10* analyzes historical events and their influence on the development of art in the local and global scale. The biennial is to a certain extent intended to detect "gaps" in St. Petersburg ideas about the art and to fulfill them. Another objective of the Biennale is the development of individual aesthetic experience" (König, 2015).

The main venue for *Manifesta 10*, which took place from 28 June to 31 October 2014, became the State Hermitage Museum, i. e. the General Staff Building and the Winter Palace. The scope of the exhibition of *Manifesta 10* included:

- Public Program as a series of art projects which intervene Saint-Petersburg in its cultural and historical complexity.

- Parallel Program, which included a row of thematic and solo exhibitions, as well as other cultural events taking place in time of the main project.

- Education Program, which included free open guided tours in the context of mediation aimed to explain artistic concept of *Manifesta 10*.

- Art Laboratory as a series of local artists' workshops.

- *Manifesta 10 Dialogs*.

- The media channel *Manifesta 10 TV*.

Among these events especially remarkable in the context of narrative studies are *Manifesta 10 Dialogs*, a platform for discussion involving leading art critics, curators and artists. All these events demonstrated various kinds of narratives reflecting reception and interpretation of *Manifesta 10* projects. Though the main topic of the exhibition narrative has been based on its connection with the context of the Hermitage.

### 3 | DIALOG OF CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ART AS A MAIN THEME OF THE *MANIFESTA 10* NARRATIVE

Actualization of cultural heritage often involves the paradoxical juxtaposition of classical art and realities of today's culture. Contemporary art practices serve as the catalyst for cultural memory. In the project of *Manifesta 10*, a considerable number of artworks were exhibited in the buildings of the State Hermitage museum in a direct comparison with the works of the old masters. The motive of the dialogue between classical heritage and the art of today has become the main theme of the exhibition's concept. As the curator, Kasper König, said, "Visitors who usually come to the Winter Palace to admire the splendor of its ceremonial halls and join the world of classical art, and visitors who will come specifically for *Manifesta 10*, will be able to discover something that usually is beyond the scope of their interests, to see how art of the past epochs interacts with contemporary works of art" (König, 2015). Many of the objects looked as an obvious dissonance to the context of the museum. For example, in Francis Alys's *Lada Kopeika Project* (2014) in the Great Courtyard of the Winter Palace and the General Staff Building was depicted a journey in an old Soviet car from Belgium to St. Petersburg ending



Figure 1 | Francis Alÿs in collaboration with brother Frédéric, Constantin Felker, and Julien Devaux. *Lada “Kopeika” Project*. Brussels—St. Petersburg (2014). Commissioned by MANIFESTA 10, St Petersburg. With the support of the Flemish authorities.

with a scene of car crash in the courtyard of the Hermitage (Figure 1). Following a narrative about the “destruction” of the classical museum by means of contemporary art, the Belgian artist presented the broken *Lada Kopeika* in the midst of the Hermitage. The project was supplemented by documentation of the difficult journey and placed in the General Staff Building. We can also highlight the projects that provoked the primary visual impression as surprise or shock in the unusual context such as the work of a classic of postmodern art, Gerhard Richter’s “Ema. Nude on a Staircase” (1966) in the Winter Palace, Thomas Hirschhorn’s *ABSCHLAG* (2014) in the General Staff Building, *Living Room/So I Only Want to Love Yours* (2014) of Tatzu Nishi in the Winter Palace.

The sculpture from seashells of Katharina Fritsch’s *Woman with Dog* (2008) in the Winter Palace fit quite harmoniously into the interior of rocaille Boudoir of Empress Maria Alexandrovna, as might fit

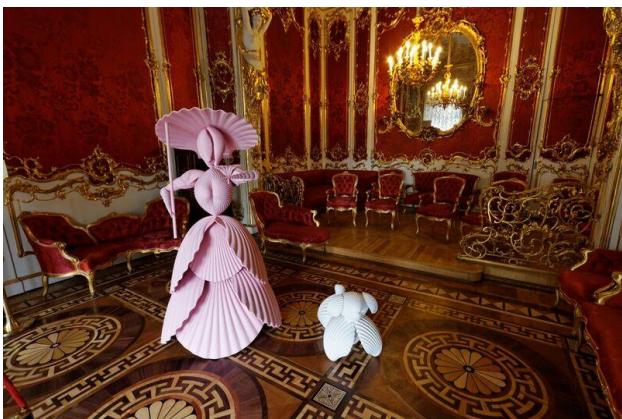


Figure 2 | Katharina Fritsch, *Woman with Dog* (2004). With the support of the Arts Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. Collection Stefan Edlis and Gael Nelson.



Figure 3 | Louise Bourgeois, Installation view, MANIFESTA 10, Winter Palace, State Hermitage Museum, showing *The Institute* (center), Collection of The Easton Foundation, New York, USA and *Nature Study* (right), Collection of The State Hermitage Museum, Saint-Petersburg.

any other object, representing a story of being, which may be taken for granted in the existing life and cultural paradigm. The reception of such projects by the public includes the understanding of certain narrative features such as plot (the work of Fritsch suggests a parallel to Anton Chekhov’s short story “Lady with a Lapdog”), individuality, mood, and point of view. The context of a big exhibition gives a possibility to show these different ideas and meanings and to address visitors in unusual ways (Figure 2).

The dialogue with classics was visualized in the curatorial project, in which Louise Bourgeois’ installation *Institute* (1984-1994) was demonstrated with engravings of Giovanni Battista Piranesi in the Winter Palace. One of the main motives of Bourgeois’ work was the placing of objects in a “cage” of wire. In her artwork on *Manifesta 10*, such an object was a model of the New York Institute of Fine Arts. Locked in the cage, it symbolically echoed the fantasies of the famous engraver of the 18th century, whose graphic legacy included bizarre, imaginary prisons in *Carceri* series. Besides the installation, graphics of Louise Bourgeoisie were shown, together with the engravings of Piranesi, however, not from the *Carceri* series, but from the *Grotesques*.

A metaphor of a cage, prison is not just a link between the artworks of Louise Bourgeois and Giovanni Battista Piranesi, but also a relation of signifiers, pointing at basic cultural meanings in connection to categories of loneliness, forcible confinement, lack of freedom, and isolation in the narrative complex of the exhibition (Figure 3).

The meaning of these projects is perceived mostly intuitively. Not everything turned out according to the plans of the artists themselves. Tatzu Nishi initially planned to build his installation on the street, or place it on the Palace square in St. Petersburg, around the Alexander Column or near the statue of Alexander III in front of the Marble Palace. Unfortunately, these plans proved impossible to coordinate with the city administration. As a result, Tatzu Nishi has made the project *Living Room/So I Only Want to Love Yours* (2014) in the Winter Palace, and it obviously appeared even more radical than anticipated. It is a replication of a room resembling a Soviet “Khrushchev flat” incorporated into one of the classical halls of the Hermitage. Exclusively alien in a classical environment, the object demonstrated, however, a consequence of “aesthetic violence” on the part of the museum as through the ceiling of the small room hung a giant chandelier, a part of the museum's interior. “Telling” or rather “imagining” his story about hypothetical inhabitants of this flat, the author unflatteringly juxtaposes their trite conditions to posh premises of

the Tsarists mansion (Figure 4). The narrative here is a form of representation in art. Michael Mateas and Phoebe Sengers argue that “when engaging in narratively-based work, artists rarely tell straightforward narratives employing the standard narrative tropes available within their culture, but rather ironize, layer, and otherwise subvert the standard tropes from a position of extreme cultural self-consciousness” (Mateas & Sengers, 1999). Every one of the artists' projects in *Manifesta 10* has its own small story related either to personal myths or to cultural realities shared with the supposed viewers. All the stories or narratives might certainly be understood in the context of the authors' intentions to ironize, layer meanings, rearrange accents, or to shock a visitor. The visitor who, along with critics, is one of the final interpreters might imagine a long row of interpretations, which actually have no end. The classical premises of the Hermitage and contemporary art are elaborately combined in the *Manifesta 10* project where hidden meanings and histories are made visible.

#### 4 | SMALL STORIES OF MANIFESTA 10

The first accent of the *Manifesta 10* critical narrative is its connection with the context of the Hermitage. In this regard, Tatiana Sohareva of Newspaper.Ru notes the lack of “contemporaneity” in the project, “Art here is relatively new, but not quite young. Instead of the desired freethinking, fresh forms and thoughts, a certain amount of eccentricities, - art experiences, which are already considered as classical: an installation by Joseph Beuys *Economic Values* (1980), documentation of performances by Elena Kovylna, seven-hour video of the great Bruce Nauman.” And further states, “In the General Staff Building and the Hermitage, in fact, there are two separate exhibitions. The exhibition in the General Staff is a utopia, reminding of the detailed, but randomly compiled archive. An inventory of the property accumulated by the mankind since the Second World War. The project at the Hermitage – a dozen of works of Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter and Maria Lassnig scattered among the permanent exposition: a rather tiresome quest, which turned into a game without rules” (Sohareva, 2015).

Certainly, the question of separating art from non-art, the definition of art as such always raises in the walls of museum. The Museum suggests important and sufficient conditions under which an object



Figure 4 | Tatzu Nishi, *So I only want to love yours / Living room (Russian house)* (2014). Commissioned by MANIFESTA 10, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 5 | Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, *The Handkerchief's Opera* (2014). Mixed media. Courtesy the artist. Commissioned by MANIFESTA 10, St. Petersburg.

becomes a work of art. As noted by Jeffrey Dean, these efforts are in the field of a certain belief system (Dean, 2003, p. 29). Such conditions might take a form of the possibility of “dialogue” between a contemporary art object and a classical museum. The installation of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster *The Handkerchief's Opera* (2014) in the General Staff Building was made in the form of huge handkerchiefs with reproductions of works of art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The work appeals to the classics of modern art such as reproductions of famous works, including those of Kazimir Malevich. It puts the question about the justification of the replication of “masterpieces,” the images of which haunt people in the most unexpected areas of consumer culture – from advertising to fashion accessories. The juxtaposition of banality and everyday life (because what could be more banal than handkerchief!) and elite art is the main intention of this work. The author's point of view here is based on juxtaposition of everyday goods and artworks of modern classics, and she boldly demonstrates the significance of an



Figure 6 | Joseph Beuys, *Economic Values* (1980), Collection of S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium. Photograph: Dirk Pauwels/S.M.A.K. © Joseph Beuys, Wirtschaftswerte, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2014.

ordinary thing prevailing over cultural heritage. Rhetorical figures here are the bold expansion of everyday life into the culture and vice versa. The visual demonstration of such intentions may be more effective and informative than hours of lectures about art, but it also serves as its final profanation, a certain loss of metaphysics (Figure 5).

Joseph Beuys's installation, *Economic Values* (1980), represented six shelves with different goods from East German department stores. Near the shelves stands *Plaster Block* of Beuys, made in 1962. According to instructions, left by the late artist, this installation was surrounded by paintings from the host museum collection dating from the years of Karl Marx' life. The metaphor of economic goods corresponded also to the obvious connection between money and the definition of artistic value of contemporary art (Figure 6).

The symbolic meaning of the work of Thomas Hirschhorn, *ABSCHLAG* or *Cut* (2014), in the General Staff Building certainly made it a central one in the Hermitage section of *Manifesta 10*. An impressive installation, filled with the spirit of catastrophe, so characteristic of modern art, is a ruined house with failures of walls, fragments of which are thrown directly into the hall. In gaping window openings, post-disaster household items are visible, among which hang pictures on the walls. The viewer does not immediately realize that they are originals of famous works of 20<sup>th</sup> century art, from Kazimir Malevich to Pavel Filonov, taken from the State Russian Museum. According to critic Elizabeth Shagina, “The cultural ‘cut’ here is the point that opens the movement back to basics, to the avant-garde of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from which modern art began. The work speaks about the abyss that separates us from the avant-garde, and “we” here are, of course, Western and Russian artists, before the face of the past we are equal and united. Strict classics and avant-garde, the collapsed utopia and a new history still warily stare at each other, but ready to start a conversation. I think, precisely for this historic cut *Manifesta 10* was initiated” (Shagina, 2015). The dramatic story of the *Cut* is about the happiness of remembrance and sadness of oblivion (Figure 7).

Artistic myths in such projects become a metalanguage, or a code, helping a visitor to find a way through the wilds of contemporary art paradigm.



Figure 7 | Thomas Hirschhorn, *ABSCHLAG* (2014). Commissioned by MANIFESTA 10, St Petersburg. With the support of the LUMA Foundation and the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

The literal and the symbolic levels of meaning, using the Barthesian terms, are in the structure of the exhibition's narratives, leading the visitor to direct and intuitive perception of artworks and the exhibition as a whole.

## 5 | THE IDEA OF TOTAL WORK OF ART AS A BIG PLOT OF MANIFESTA 10

There are many examples of an exhibition being a medium, with its own story and plot addressed to a viewer. The narrative elements of an exhibition represent the most meaningful component of a complex whole. In the previous part of the article, we considered several small narratives or "author stories" of different art projects represented in *Manifesta 10*. Furthermore, there was also a big, total plot related to the holistic view on art merits of the exhibition and not standing outside of numerous political, social, economic contexts certainly present in the interpretation of *Manifesta 10*. It is a narrative of the "total artwork" in the context of "Gesamtkunstwerk" ("total artwork") theory, the basis

of which was laid by R. Wagner in the essay *The Artwork of the Future* (Wagner, 1850). The idea later continued in contemporary cultural studies in relation to interactivity of contemporary art (Bermbach, 1994; Finger, 2006; Koss, 2009; Roberts, 2011).

Wagner used the term "Gesamtkunstwerk" describing the ideal state of art as synthesis of all kinds of art in the theatre. The post-Wagnerian concept of the "total artwork" implies not only synthesis of arts, but also the features of a single artistic and metaphysical entity, which might as well be called a narrative, referring to social, political and philosophical realities, cultural traditions and media (Smith, 2007).

Speaking about *Manifesta 10*, we may note that the variety of artistic methods and extraordinary expansion of exhibitions and events in the city of St. Petersburg. A motive of dialogue between classical heritage and contemporary art exists and all these aspects give *Manifesta 10* the quality of "Gesamtkunstwerk," a holistic view of a certain artistic and spiritual situation (Figure 8).

The main feature of *Manifesta 10* is to connect everything, tradition and modernity, the city and the museum, arts and media, various social and political contexts.

As mentioned earlier, the work by Francis Alys, *Lada Kopeika*, in the courtyard of the Winter Palace is clearly an aggressive expansion in the space of the classical museum. Contemporary art takes up such narratives of violence and oppression in its own way: exposing for execution our aesthetic perception. The role of criticism in this case is to identify possible

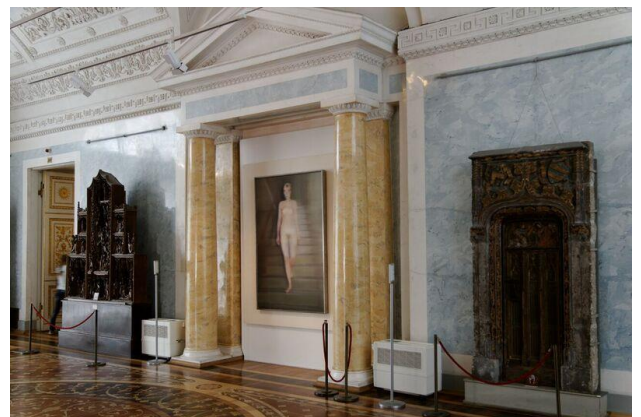


Figure 8 | Gerhard Richter, *Ema, Nude on a Staircase* (1966). Oil on canvas, 200 x 130 cm. Museum Ludwig (ML 01116, Cologne). Installation view, MANIFESTA 10, Winter Palace, State Hermitage Museum.

ways of objective and competent interpretation.

Richard Wagner was one of the first to develop this strategy and whose idea of the total artwork determined the direction of subsequent discussions about interactive art. Following the reasoning of Wagner, the tendency towards the total work of art revealed in the exhibition as a combination, sometimes not quite harmonious, of different manifestations of culture — music, literature, painting, architecture, and social, religious, and philosophical realities.

We should note the intensity of volitional intention to conquer the city and the museum (in disregard to the obvious dissonance of many art objects with classic works of the Hermitage). A question of will and strength plays into this process and has a crucial role. The internal structure of *Manifesta 10* was based on intentions of violence and repression: both in relation to the museum exhibits and halls, as towards the public and vice versa.

The most significant cultural outcome of *Manifesta 10* can be considered as an attempt to construct an ideal contemporary cultural situation of a “total work of art” with its contradictions, dissonance and rules. The desire for “total artwork” is an inherent characteristic for any large-scale exhibition project of contemporary art.

In this regard, we may consider the project of *Manifesta 10* in comparison with other major projects of exhibition institutions, i.e. the Venice Biennale, *documenta* in Kassel, and in the context of Gesamtkunstwerk idea by analogy with the exhibition *In Search of Total Art Work* (1983) of Harald Szeemann. In this exhibition, big utopian projects in Europe from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were shown, which included not only fine art or architectural projects, but materials of natural sciences, philosophy and history. The content of the exhibition was regarded from the position of everyday cultural and traditional realities being a considerable source of ideas and universal symbols.

Wagner, in his definition of Gesamtkunstwerk, denies as later avant-gardists and postmodernists did, the importance of professional art, craft, and the qualities of elitist art form. The most important for him is folk and common spirit of art. Wagner clearly disassociates himself from the imperative of aesthetic evaluation. Therefore, his theory of



Figure 9 | Laboratory of Poetry Actionism. Part of the “Apartment Art as Domestic Resistance” exhibition series curated by Roman Osminkin and Olesya Turkina for MANIFESTA 10 Public Program.

Gesamtkunstwerk seems so modern and so applicable to the situation of our time. A frightening confusion of different media and objects that fill “big projects” are a perfect illustration of Wagner’s idea. The art form here does not matter, the main thing is a kind of collective communication and narrative often declared in the concept of a curator.

According to Helen Fulton, “Postmodern media narratives, then, have their own structuring principles, a normative array of narrative strategies that overlap with those of realism. In the process of subverting the principles of realism, by rejecting closure or authority of genre, postmodernism still invokes a palimpsest of that which it subverts” (Fulton et al., 2005, p. 305). Palimpsests of past images, stories or ideas, which might be considered as a parody or deformed in the context of contemporary art, could as well be regarded as new methods of interpretation of old meanings. The idea of Gesamtkunstwerk is still vivid in big exhibition projects, though its representation can be blurred by complicated involvement of different media. This idea is the symbolic theme of the *Manifesta 10* narrative with reference to the contemporary cultural situation.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

We see that narratives visualized by means of artworks and projects are sometimes fragmented ones, which can nevertheless be understood in the context of big, structural narratives of an exhibition. In the case of *Manifesta 10* two big interpenetrating narratives are as follows: a dialog between classical and contemporary art and the idea of the total work of art as an idea, which unites disparate elements



(artistic methods, media, spaces, mythologies) into a whole of exhibition (Figure 9).

The main aspects of the *Manifesta 10* narrative are:

- Assessment of the key role of the Hermitage in the structure of *Manifesta 10*: a dialog between old masters and contemporary art showing the benefits and the disadvantages of an exhibition mega-project in a classical museum.
- The curatorial conception of Kasper Koenig in the aesthetic, social and philosophical context.
- The public perception of a big exhibition project as a *total artwork*.
- Artistic stories and myths.

The main cultural results of *Manifesta 10* might be the future theoretical tasks for the researchers of the big exhibition narrative, which is a complicated structure consisting of different smaller artistic and media narratives. According to the curator of *Manifesta 10*, Kasper König, "*Manifesta 10* has no manifest. Its aim is not to make a certain statement, to utter the truth. It is counter-cyclical, it opposes the inclusion of the usual temporal sequence. Sometimes it is consciously old-fashioned, because it defines itself through the correlation with tradition, not with social media... demonstrates the diverse ideas and positions, identifies and explores various possibilities" (König, 2014, p. 24).

Every form of narrative combines a life story and fiction. "Furthering a classical debate in narrative studies, the question of the borders between reality and fiction in narrative was a continuous issue among many papers and areas, showing the power of the narrative to describe but also transform reality, leading to a blurred but also highly creative area of human experience. And this blurring seems to come out of at least a doubling: between the one who lives and the one who tells" (Castro et al., 2015). So, in contemporary art we witness a mixture of real life processes (especially in the practice of performance or actions) and fantasies, which result in projects telling us about consequences of our hidden attitudes, intentions and desires. It is the main task of art to show these intentions. At *Manifesta 10*, the visitors could see the visualized consequences of oblivion of tradition in the *ABSCHLAG* of Thomas Hirschhorn, taste reduction in a kitschy figure of *Woman with Dog* by Katharina Fritsch, of strange

dependence to past rituals and things in the project of Tatzu Nishi, and other mythologies of today. A row of short and big stories encrypted in the authors' projects lead us to an understanding of the contemporary cultural paradigm. To decipher or decode the variety of these narratives in the context of contemporary mythologemes is a challenging task for critics and philosophers of art.

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