



ŁÓDŹ
ASIAN
archive

Edited by Tomasz Załuski

Foreword by Tomasz Załuski

With the advent of what is generally known as ‘the archival turn’ in contemporary humanities and social sciences, the concept of the archive has been broadened to such an extent that it is now one of the ‘plastic’, potentially all-embracing, yet precise, notions or metaphors that can take on various meanings and refer to spheres of reality that are quite different from one another.

One such sphere is the city. Obviously, each city can be seen as an archive, or rather as a multitude of archives. What makes each city unique, though, is a singular configuration of its archives, the way they are – or are not – connected with one another, the way they intersect or overlap, form complex stratified structures or atomized archipelagos. They can be ‘actual’ archives: material and digital; printed, photograph, film, new media; artistic, cultural, socio-political, historical etc. that are located in the city and sometimes also represent it. They can also be the city itself: its urban and architectural tissue, artifacts in the public space, traces of social life and objects of cultural memory.

What makes each city even more singular and specific are the ways it manages, makes use of and performs its archives in the service of the present – and of the future. What politics of archiving and non-archiving, a politics of remembrance and forgetfulness, it is engaged in; how it constructs, collects, processes, distributes and exhibits archival materials and plays out the tension between institutional and non-institutional archives; what artistic, cultural and social uses of the archive it makes, especially in terms of a historical politics; how it reenacts the archive as a site of imagined, spectral, phantasmagorical community, but also of symbolic and real antagonisms; if it is receptive to forgotten or suppressed archives as well as singular testimonies and how it allows them to develop their counter-archival power and open new possibilities for the future.

This thematic section aims at exploring the possibilities afforded by treating the city of Łódź in terms of an archive. The section has been designed in connection with and so as to accompany the 9th Annual NECS (European Network for Cinema and Media

Studies) Conference “Archives of/for the Future”. The latter, organized by the University of Lodz and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, will take place on June 18-20, 2015, in Łódź, Poland. *Art and Documentation* is one of the media patrons of the event.

Amongst the archives that have contributed to the singularity of Łódź, there are ones generated by the extraordinary history of modernization and industrialization of the city in 19th and 20th century, its economic, material and technical transformations, social and political upheavals, habits of everyday life, popular cultures and avant-garde art. They have been all undergoing a major change due to the city’s rapid de-industrialization in the post-communist period and its search for a different economic, social and cultural identity. The search also entails inventing new functions for the city’s post-industrial heritage.

The artistic culture of Łódź has been an important point of reference and a subject of systematic research for *Art and Documentation* since the journal’s inception in 2009. There have been numerous articles and thematic sections devoted to a vast selection of artistic phenomena from Łódź, both belonging to the tradition of neo-avant-garde and to contemporary artistic movements. Even though *Art and Documentation* is open to contributions on different aspects of culture, the thematic and disciplinary profile of the journal is rooted in the study of the ‘visual arts’, in their 20th century conceptual, performative, media and documentalist transformations, ramifications and reembodiments. This is the reason why the main subject of research and analysis in the five texts gathered in this section is how “Łódź as an Archive” becomes embodied and represented in, or performed by, artistic practices, art institutions and their audiences.

Karol Józwiak looks at 70s-90s Łódź through the prism of art. He attempts to interpret a selection of neo-avant-garde media and installation works from the period outside their artistic or aesthetic contexts and treat them instead as a repository of urban, architectonic and social structures, a kind of visual atlas of Łódź. The examples he has chosen reflect various

artistic strategies and at the same time, a spectrum of inventorying functions of art: from documenting the city, through playing with its changing structure, to annexing urban spaces and using them as laboratories for analysis and imaginative re-creation of social life. By inventing a new usage for the artworks in question, the author discovers a new archive, another source of data for the historiography of Łódź.

Julia Sowińska-Heim shows the contemporary public space of the city to be itself an artistic-historical archive that also reflects the changing economic, social and political conditions of life in Poland. She examines the remaining material traces of three editions of the international art event *Construction in Process* that took place in Łódź in 1981, 1990 and 1993. These are: sculptures, objects and installations in the public space, most of which were improvised directly on the spot, often in direct relation to the existing context and were not meant to be permanent interventions, rather fleeting testimonies to the moment. Nevertheless, they have survived and the author follows their “biographies” by giving extensive historical information not just about the artistic context of their creation but also by reconstructing their afterlives, both in terms of their materiality and whatever changing circumstances they reflect. Sadly enough, the archive is dispersed, its elements hidden in different corners of the city, where they have often fallen into oblivion and been exposed to destruction.

Marta Ostajewska reports on her own artistic initiatives organized and performed in 2013 – 2014 in Księży Młyn, a post-industrial district in Łódź. In her projects, inspired by anthropological archive studies, object-ontology and psychogeography, she used contemporary oral histories – anecdotes, and interviews she has conducted with the district inhabitants – as well as the extensive archive of in-depth interviews with Łódź factory workers from the 1960s and 1970s from the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Lodz. Her text offers an opportunity to become informed about some of the cities histories and memories, as it is encrusted with fragmentary quotations from the archives, both past and present. Ostajewska’s

artistic projects were meant to fill in the gaps and remedy deficiencies in relation to the Księży Młyn neighborhood, give voice to its inhabitants and create with their participation a space for being-together. As those ephemeral activities are not sufficient, the author stresses the need for a more systematic revitalization practice.

Leszek Karczewski draws on the history of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, interpreting elements of the archive that it has become itself, in terms of new museology and audience development. His perspective is one of an active practitioner responsible for the educational program at the Museum. Karczewski gives a glimpse of the institution’s past educational ideas and activities, above all *Sunday at the Museum*, a series of mass meetings in the 70’s aimed at reanimating the Museum’s collection and performing it socially. In this context, some more recent attempts at deliberate audience development at the Museum are shown to be both intentionally and unintentionally rooted in the institution’s educational heritage. Moreover, the very socio-educational purpose was inscribed in the identity and functioning of the Museum already in the 1930’s, by avant-garde artist Władysław Strzemiński and the institution’s director Marian Minich. So early an origin and implementation of those ideas into practice casts into doubt the originality of the tenets of the late 20th century new museology.

Daria Kubiak and Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen take the analysis of audience development into a different direction. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of performance studies, they look at two attempts at deliberate audience emancipation through exhibition design. They analyze the performative ‘scripts’ inscribed in the way the Film Museum in Łódź shows its collection and in the exhibition *Atlas of Modernity* at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, and provide a critical assessment of their potential to act as repositories for local identity and generators of social and cultural capital. As several shortcomings are identified in the analysis, certain ideas and postulates are put forward to remedy them and contribute to designing exhibitions that would perform archives as “theaters for development”.