

Anna Jermolaewa
MONUMENT TO A DESTROYED MONUMENT

Körperliche Konditionierung, Selbstdarstellung und Positionierung zur Machtbestätigung und deren Erhalt ist an Monumenten eindringlich präsent. Dieser an öffentlichen Stellen aufgestellten Verbildlichung von Macht folgt an Zeitenwenden breite Zerstörung derselben. Wenn man aber die eigene Geschichte aus den Augen verliert, verdrängt oder deren Symbolik gewaltsam vernichtet, liegt in dieser Entsorgung keine Aufarbeitung, sondern sie ist Indiz für zukünftige autoritäre Regimes.

Geschaffen nach einem etablierten Kanon ist männlich dominierte Geschichtsschreibung begleitet von im öffentlichen Raum zentral positionierten Denkmälern, beauftragt von Machthabern zur Untermauerung ihres Ruhmes. Diesem Kanon gemäß sind im europäischen Kontext seit Marc Aurel Reiterstandbilder Heerführern und Herrschern vorbehalten, Standbilder Rednern und Politikern. Die Multiplizität, also Großauflage kopierter Standbilder ist kennzeichnend für restriktive autoritär geführte Regimes. Die Vernichtung solcher aber auch anderer religiös oder kulturell wichtiger Identifikationsdenkmäler als Zerschlagung eigener und Demütigung fremder Geschichte kehrt als Bildersturm immer wieder. „Generell“, sagt Anna Jermolaewa „führt wohl jede historische Umwälzung zu einem gewissen Ikonoklasmus. Aber das Aufleben eines neuen, zeitgenössischen Ikonoklasmus kommt laut Boris Groys aus Russland, wo man begann, die Lenindenkmäler zu stürzen.“

Durch die Amerikaner wurde dieser Ikonoklasmus in die arabische Welt transportiert, welche diesen in der postsowjetischen Ära gesehen hatten und als diese den Irak besetzten, ebenfalls begannen, die Denkmäler von Saddam Hussein zu stürzen. Der Sturz eines dieser Denkmäler wurde zur Ikone der amerikanischen Besetzung des Irak.



Auch ISIS, die zunächst noch von den USA gegen das Regime Assads, genau wie Al Kaida zunächst noch gegen die sowjetische Besetzung Afghanistans unterstützt wurde,

haben diesen zeitgenössischen, russischen und osteuropäischen Ikonoklasmus übernommen. Laut Groys sei daher der moderne Ikonoklasmus im Wesentlichen ein postsozialistisches Phänomen.*“

Anna Jermolaewa, 1970 in Leningrad, heute St. Petersburg geboren, musste ihre Heimat als Mitbegründerin der Zeitschrift *Demokratische Opposition* 1989 verlassen und erhielt politisches Asyl in Österreich.

In ihrer Arbeit verbindet sie eigene Erfahrungen mit analytischer Dekonstruktion totalitärer Systeme. Deren Strategien, Symboliken und Rhetorik, individuelle und kollektive Gedächtnisse werden untersucht, deren Indoktrination enttarnt.

Allein im Jahr 2015 wurden in der Ukraine mehr als 500 Leninstatuen gestürzt, eine davon, außen bronzefarben bemalt, innen hohl, brachte Jermolaewa in ihr Asyl und hinterfragt damit

bizarre Ausformulierungen des Anspruchs und des Scheiterns in entlarvender und ironischer Sicht.

Konsequent daraus resultierend errichtet sie nun im MONUMENT TO A DESTROYED MONUMENT einem zerstörten Denkmal ein Denkmal, in dem sich Tragik mit Komik verbindet. Konkret lässt sie Podest und verbliebene Reste des Dargestellten, also jene Teile, die nach dem Denkmalsturz bestehen bleiben, neu in Beton gießen. Damit wird die Absurdität imaginärer Machtüberhöhung, die nach wie vor bestehen bleibt ebenso erfahrbar, wie deren Intention trotz aller Gräueltaten totalitärer Regimes mit Witz untergraben wird.

Dem Paradoxon, demzufolge Menschen nach wie vor an den Resten der Monumente Blumen niederlegen oder vorhandene Beete pflegen, wird jenes der Errichtung einer Verdoppelung der Ruine einstigen Ruhms gegenübergestellt.

Unmittelbar vor dem Institut für Geschichte an der Karl Franzens Universität Graz aufgestellt verbindet sich in dieser Arbeit politische Kritik mit der Freilegung historischer Strukturen und menschlicher Grundmuster, die im Fehlen der dargestellten Hauptperson nicht nur als Gesellschaftsanalyse überall Gültigkeit hat, sondern auch Fragen nach Sockel und Kunstwerk, nach der Aura eines Ortes sowie der Produktionsstätte und der Bedeutung von Kunstwerken stellt.

Elisabeth Fiedler

* Boris Groys: «За пределами США нельзя объяснить ничего, кроме Супермена», Interview in Afisha, 25.03.2015



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Physical conditioning, self-presentation and positioning for the purpose of confirming and preserving one's power are factors that are forcefully visible in monuments. This visualisation of power erected in public places is followed by the destruction of the same at turning points in history. But if one loses sight of one's own history, represses it or destroys its symbolic value by means of violence, this elimination does not constitute a reappraisal of the past but is rather indicative of authoritarian regimes to come.

Created on the basis of an established canon, male dominated historiography is accompanied by monuments set up at prominent sites in public space, commissioned by those in power with the aim of buttressing their glory. In keeping with this canon, in the European context equestrian statues have ever been reserved for military commanders and rulers, statues of figures for orators and politicians since the times of Marc Aurel. A multiplicity of replicated statues is characteristic of restrictive authoritarian regimes. However, the destruction of these statues, but also of other monuments of religious or cultural importance in terms of identification with the aim of eradicating one's own and humiliating others' history is a recurrent phenomenon in the form of iconoclasm. "One may generally argue that all historical upheaval leads to a certain iconoclasm", says Anna Jermolaewa. "But according to Boris Groys, the resurgence of a new, contemporary iconoclasm hails from Russia, where people began toppling Lenin monuments."

The Americans, who had seen this in the post-Soviet era, exported this iconoclasm to the Arab world, also starting to bring down monuments to Saddam Hussein when they occupied Iraq. The toppling of one of these monuments became an icon of the American

occupation of Iraq. ISIS, initially supported by the USA in the fight against the Assad regime, just like Al-Qaeda against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, have adopted this contemporary Russian and Eastern European iconoclasm. According to Groys, modern iconoclasm is thus essentially a post-socialist phenomenon."

Anna Jermolaewa, born in Leningrad, now Saint Petersburg, in 1970, was forced to leave her home country in 1989 as cofounder of the Democratic Opposition magazine and was granted political asylum in Austria.

In her work she combines her own experience with an analytical deconstruction of totalitarian systems, examining their strategies, symbolisms and rhetoric, individual and collective memories and unmasking their indoctrination.

More than 500 Lenin statues were toppled in Ukraine in 2015 alone. Jermolaewa brought one of them, painted bronze outside and hollow inside, to her country of asylum, thus ironically unmasking and questioning bizarre formulations of pretension and failure.

Continuing on this basis, she is now erecting a MONUMENT TO A DESTROYED MONUMENT, combining tragedy with comedy. Specifically, she has the plinth and remains of the figure portrayed, i.e. those parts that survived the toppling of the monument, recast in concrete. This allows the viewer to experience the absurdity of imaginary inflation of power, that continues to exist, while at the same time humorously undermining its intention despite all the atrocities of totalitarian regimes.

The paradox of people still laying flowers or tending existing beds at the remains of monuments is contrasted with the paradox of erecting a duplication of the ruin of former glory.

Set up right outside the Institute of History at Karl Franzens University Graz, this work combines political criticism with an uncovering of historical structures and fundamental patterns of human behaviour. In the absence of the protagonist portrayed, this serves not only as a universally valid analysis of society, but also raises questions concerning plinth and artwork, genius loci, site of production, and significance of artworks.

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KUNST
IM ÖFFENTLICHEN RAUM
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 Universitätsplatz 3, 8010 Graz

Begrüßung Welcome
 Univ.Prof. Dr Helmut Konrad

Einführung Introduction
 Dr. Elisabeth Fiedler
 Institut für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Steiermark

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