

Session #2 with Miško Šuvaković:

## Method, format, strategy, tactics, practice, procedure, protocol, platform and other exam questions for the professor

January 29, 2010, Belgrade  
Magacin u Kraljevića Marka

Siniša Ilić: After watching the Video Glossary you may ask questions related to the program or we may continue to discuss the terms from the last session.

Tamara Đorđević: I would like to hear definitions of all the terms: method, protocol, procedure...

Milena Bogavac: ... format, practice, strategy, process, technique...

Katarina Popović: Can you tell us why you are interested in this? As a group, we are concerned with all that, but I would like to know why you are asking this question.

TD: I am interested because I read art theory and those terms arise all the time, so I would like to have some more specific definitions.

MB: For instance, last time we agreed that definition was determination. I am interested in the platforms underlying each of those terms.

Miško Šuvaković: One by one, please. Does anyone have a more general, a gentler question? Namely, questions on procedures and protocols are tough. Which is the first term? We may commence with methods

and actions. You should avoid the term method if you do not work in atomic physics. This is, certainly, a serious joke. As such, the notion of method was established in philosophy, in theory and epistemology of science, and it implies a sequence of actions. Those are normally verified in two senses: in the sense of consistency of use and in the sense of empirical evaluation. These basic assumptions refer to the natural sciences, primarily the ideal among the natural sciences: namely, physics. Thus, for instance, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in almost every interview, foreword and afterword of his books, explicitly insisted that deconstruction was not a method but a sequence of actions, approach, platform, way of seeing and recognition. A method implies a basic procedure, grounded and referentially accountable in two ways: in terms of internal consistency of use, and empirical verification or experience of this verification. I think that in all humanities and social sciences – though all the scientists and theorists of humanities and social sciences would disagree – one should avoid the notion of method, instead of using it to describe actions or hybrid actions. The term action, now introduced, has three levels. It implies a platform, a procedure and a referential object.

What is a platform? Platform implies what in philosophy of science Thomas Kuhn called the paradigm. Paradigm is a body of convictions, expectations, knowledge, ways of posing problems, or ways of typical problem solving shared by a community of practitioners and theorists. In that sense, paradigm may be equaled or identified with the notion of platform. Platform is a starting point. Epistemological starting topos. Let us clarify this. If we introduce deconstruction in our game, we could claim that platform is something else in turn. Platform is an oil platform in the sea. Platform is a launching pad. Platform is a landing ground. The word platform also implies topology – topology we seize, appropriate, identify with, and perform certain actions thereupon. Platform, in such generalized terms, is a topological site of the episteme. What does that mean? Platform is an epistemological site of establishing knowledge and, more importantly, a way in which that knowledge is applied. That is an important determinant, and thus I always feel uncomfortable in the realm of humanist social sciences, because here one assumes the notion of possessing knowledge. We chart the episteme and through this charting we appropriate it. Meanwhile, this other idea of a platform... The very word platform strives to say something more. That platform is a launching pad. Have you ever



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jumped from a trampoline into a pool, water – river or sea? I was forced to do this once in my lifetime... And this was most horrible... Usually, you are forced to do the most horrible things by your parents. Nobody else could force you. In the times when they still could force me to do something, they made me jump from a trampoline. And I have to confess that this was one of the most horrifying experiences I ever had. I flew through the air. I found myself in water, upside down. Even worse, I had a swim ring that went up with my legs, and my head went down. This was a fantastic situation. Trampoline is a true example of a platform we need. Not that I am now encouraging you to jump from trampolines. You do not have to jump. However, a trampoline is a platform for starting an action – an epistemological one. What have I demonstrated here and now? I spoke a slightly different language than I usually do. I spoke a language of metaphors of the French philosopher-theorist Jacques Derrida. This means not to speak literally in the system of definitions, indexation of concepts and terms, but to try to conceive a range of metaphorical images, representations through which we want to describe a situation or a state of affairs. Our question in this case is how to acquire certain epistemology, and – as Ana Vujanović precisely implied – not to possess it and not to perceive it as hierarchical knowledge. And that means: to have an action platform. This is a typical term of Bolshevik rhetoric implying that you have a launching pad with a purpose – from there, you can perform an action. This topology activates you to apply your knowledge. But, to apply your knowledge - what does that mean? It does not mean only to possess knowledge, brought to something that lacks it, but to demonstrate that there is knowledge in everything you deal with; to show that knowledge is a precondition of action. There is one terrible thing in all art schools – visual, music, or performing art schools. This is the ultimate conviction that art is a matter of sheer experience, a pure heart, aroused genitals, strong intestines. The thing you do, you do in such a way that you do not need to know anything about it. Through the thing you do you will open and demonstrate to the others how you will conquer the world with your exceptional work, as Heidegger wrote, set-upon the world. He forged a fantastic word, ge-stell. It implies enframing. The problem arises with the following: what I just said about the guts, genitals, intestines, the pure heart as the origin of all things, Roland Barthes blew up in one sharp statement a long time ago. He said the following: words like heart, soul, love, sincerity, spirit etc. are merely metaphorical substitutes for something else – the body.

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When he put this forward, he said that when we talked about creating art from one's depth, truthfulness and sincerity, sexuality, unconscious, soul or spiritual reunion with God, we outlined a theory. In other words, the very idea of denying theory or denying knowledge in artistic creation is a historically derived theory. What does that mean? It means that the purpose of introducing a concept of a platform is to show that a platform of creation is not a pure creative act in itself. It is situated in a web of meanings and knowledge (we may call it a discursive web) where creation is brought about and motivated by specific private or public interests. In one historical moment, which was perhaps one of the most important ones, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans felt the need to relieve art of any knowledge and awareness of a platform. They wanted to create an indeterminate space of freedom. Why? Well, because this period was one of the most utilitarian periods in European history. One of the most horrible periods, when you had to work from 12 to 15 hours a day, like today, to be able to survive. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an extremely private, personal operation on one's body called masturbation was a private affair – a thing concerning one's privacy. Eventually, certain clerics called it sodomy, while most of the people thought that this was a normal practice of sexual intercourse in army barracks, monasteries and similar places. To the contrary, the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the first treatises and, until the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were dozens of thousands of treatises scientifically explaining to us the horrors of such bodily actions. Horrifying things: how the spine dries out and how, in fact, ears fall off. I was at class in elementary school in 1961/62 (this was before any of you were born), when doctors came and gave us pupils a serious lecture on spine drying – a terrible disease which, however, could be prevented. A variety of constructions was raised, aimed against the idle work of autoeroticism. Masturbation is useless work – if we consider pleasure within an indeterminate realm, in fact closer to theology than sexuality. As I am getting older I increasingly tend to believe that pleasure has more to do with theology, and less with sexuality. I am joking, of course. However, idle work was possible only in an allegorical, metaphorical space – and that is the space of art. Space of art was the only space where you could create something you do not need for practical purposes. And that space was claimed not by any social class, but by the one which at the time sovereignly commanded and appropriated the public space – namely, the middle class. Dedicated to utilitarian work, it needed a space of identification that art embodied. Through



identification, art was conceived as a realm of freedom relieved from all the practical, social and cultural functions. The aim was to acknowledge art as something that is beyond saying, beyond words, something emerging spontaneously, something coming out of idleness, something coming out from that creative spasms we shall never be able to fully grasp. However, literally all the words and concepts I mentioned so far were thoroughly explained by the Western aesthetics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and established as a paradigm of art which colonized every form of human expression outside the European culture in a historical or modern sense. This is the era of great colonization. By conquering other cultures, the Europeans applied this concept of autonomous art to everything they could not identify. You wonder what is such a long story about, taking us away from the platform? Well, it does outline a platform, and what appears and is demanded in the principles you adopt in Deschooling Classroom or in certain aspects of TkH's (Walking Theory) work, is a demonstration that this negation, disposing or suspension of a platform is always another platform which should be conceptualized and discursively disclosed. Its interests, causes and conditions of origin should be accounted for. In other words, a platform is not a methodological basis in the strictly scientific sense. It is a loose body of knowledge, convictions, feelings, matrixes of identification, obsessions, fascinations – including everything that we do not accept in a straightforward epistemological way. Roughly speaking, I have visited a large number of art classes, but I never experienced that a professor would come, stand in front of the student painters, directors, or violinists and say: “Kids, from now on, in this class we play by the rules a), b), c) and d). You play by the rules, and if you don't, you are kicked out of class”. This would be the best class in the world, if it ever existed. But, such a class does not exist. There is a professor who professes from his vast experience the truth of life, what real life is about, what real art is, how it is created, experienced, displayed – confronting you with all those rules that you have to follow in a most rigid way, without being told any of them. This may be called atmosphere or discourse in Foucault's terms. Majority of platforms in the art world exist as loose atmospheres of recognition, association, half-intentional or unintentional identifications and, finally, literal implementation. This is why, I think, our theatre is the worst thing in the world. If you start from any theatre, for instance, National Theatre and end somewhere in the alternative, you will see that everyone plays by the same rules. And all share the same conviction that they are endlessly authentic or

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creative, imaginatively open, that they pronounce the truths that we rational, politicized types can never grasp. But, in fact, a platform they apparently refuse is the one they identify with, because they accept it as a normal or 'taken for granted' atmosphere. There is a demand put forward by critical epistemology or critical pedagogy, that a platform should be demonstratively acknowledged. Everyone who enrolls in a school, formal or informal, does this. The problem is to be able to perform what Louis Althusser, in strictly Marxist terms, called self-criticism. Self-criticism does not merely imply justification or confession, but recognition of a platform most favorable to me, platform I identify with, platform I adopt, and this means – rules, convictions, relations, atmospheres, suggestive motivations and solutions. After the stage of acknowledgment we enter the realm of critical analysis, which always demands from us to define or at least identify or demonstrate the potentiality of a platform we refer to in the first instance. We should not feel free to operate without a platform, tied to a certain methodology. In that sense, a platform should be perceived as a critical, self-reflexive and self-critical position or topology, launching pad for appropriate action. And this would be a slightly more elaborate answer.

☞ Questions, critiques, comments... ?

☞ ID: Then, in terms of definition of a platform, a procedure would in fact be the course of application of specific paradigms and specific platforms?

☞ MS: Procedure is implementation of the conception of a platform, to borrow a term from TkH's vocabulary – this “performing of a platform” in given conditions, circumstances and specific contextualizations. Procedure is something that can be performed, something that has this potentiality. The very process of conception refers to a more important notion from this sort of vocabulary, and that is a protocol. I think that protocols are extremely important, because we always behave like they do not exist, or as they belong only to the realm of diplomacy or some grand ceremonial political contexts. And protocol is a way in which a procedure is performed in reference to a platform. At this place, the protocol is: Now you sit over there. I sit here and you are supposed to ask me some questions. Another protocol would demand that we all sit in a circle and hold hands, shouting “Omm”, and then



start to talk. A third, fourth or fifth protocol would be completely different from those already mentioned.

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**KP:** And doesn't a protocol imply some kind of immutability? When it's once established – it is what it is.

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**MŠ:** No. Every execution, and every deviation from a protocol is another protocol. Protocols are open to interpolations, changes, but also to self-preservation. If you conceive a protocol in a canonic sense, you say: for a certain discipline a protocol is this and that, given as a canon – that would be one dimension. Speaking of protocols, however, we address a sequence of steps by which a procedure or conception is effected. This sequence of steps is changeable, open to interpolations and different forms of presentation. However, each of us displays a tendency towards the protocol that you mentioned. We tend to set up a fixed protocol, once and for all, although this eternity constantly escapes us.

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**KP:** May we claim then that in certain times, conditions, contexts... such rigid protocols display a tendency to remain the same?

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**MŠ:** Not only the rigid ones – all protocols have this tendency to remain stable, invariant, and dominant. Every user of a protocol favors this. For me, this is a point of disagreement with the TKH. I do not agree with their belief in horizontality of a protocol, and that a protocol may exist without aspirations to hegemony or domination. To the contrary, I think that every protocol has this potentiality in itself. Namely, every social act bears such a claim. It does not necessarily mean that every human act will do that, but there is a potentiality...

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**KP:** It seems to me that this was an attempt at establishing horizontality, and not verticality of protocols of action. I think it is all about trying to do as much as one can.

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**MŠ:** A. J. Cronin, a Scottish writer that my mom read, so I read him too when I was little, wrote a wonderful and dangerous sentence: "Road to hell is paved with good intentions". Miklós Jancsó, the Hungarian experimental director, made a film some 30 years ago about the assassination of Julius Caesar (*Roma rivuole Cesare*, 1974). That film stunned me when I first saw it. I watched it afterwards at least ten times. In

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that film a group of young men (unfortunately those were the times without girls), in the Libyan Desert, plots to kill Gaius Julius Caesar in Rome. But, they are three months of sailing away from Rome. And none of them will ever get to Rome to kill Caesar. However, one day, after three or four months, there comes a galley with news that Caesar was murdered. And those boys leave that night for the desert, light a great fire, dance and sing around it and shout: "The tyrant is dead!" In six months, there is a new galley carrying a message to one of those boys (Ottavius) that he was summoned to the triumvirate to replace Caesar. And he spends all night riding a wild horse across the Libyan Desert, wondering what to do. The next day, he gathers his friends and tells them: "I have decided to go to Rome. I will be a good Caesar". His friend, played by a Polish actor (Daniel Olbrychski) who spoke a bad mixture of Italian and English, falls on his knees, clings to the folds of his cape and begs him: "Don't go to Rome. Because, if you go to Rome you will become another Caesar". He replies: "No, my friend, I will be a good Caesar". Claudius: "You know, we haven't fought against a good or bad Caesar, but against all Caesars". In other words – in every human being there is a Caesar, and everyone must face this protocol of good and bad intentions. Both lead us in different directions. This thing is called preaching, like protocol. You are right, Katarina, a critical dimension and regulation of not shifting from a horizontal level to the vertical are always useful for such kind of pursuits, I think. This is all and always about singular events.

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**KP:** What I think is useful, lastly, is an attempt at a change – to see simply in practice how things transform...

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**MŠ:** There is one problem. If you do not impose hegemony, nobody will listen to you, nobody will read you, nobody will watch your shows; if you impose hegemony, you control other people's lives – and you have let your ideals down. How do you strike a balance between those things? This, precisely, is a revolutionary problem. It is easy to lead a revolution and become Robespierre, it is hard to lead a revolution and not become a Robespierre. In order to be heard, you must have an affinity for establishing a thing called influence – let's not use the word hegemony. But, on the other hand, how to regulate that influence, how to submit it to critique – that also falls under the protocol of what we would call self-criticism. Individual and collective self-criticism is important, but one should always beware, as self-criticism might



turn into exorcism, purges or something similar. You, Katarina, for instance, might look suspicious to me today. And from that moment on I begin to harass you, I begin to know that I am the one who possesses the truth. I demand from you to perform self-criticism. What does this line of thought, generally termed anarchist epistemology, wish to say? It wishes to tell us that there are no such things as "holy cows" or "holy lands" in neither procedure and in neither platform. Self-criticism is an important operation, but it may also become a witch-hunt or purge, it can become monstrous and, yet, without self-criticism, critique of influences, you cannot establish this influence. These matters are, therefore, extremely subtle and extremely difficult to deal with.

☞ Someone from the audience: I would like to ask something about the notion of method. You confronted the notion of method with post-structuralism and Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstruction. I am interested in the relation between the notion of method and the structuralist perspective – namely, structural analysis. Is this analysis a method or an activity and why? Could you explain that?

☞ MŠ: Derrida was quite explicit on this matter. Indeed, in every statement he made he denied that deconstruction was a method. I had a quite personal experience with deconstruction, slightly painful, slightly scary, but... I wrote a book, a glossary for a repressive, vertical institution, and in that institution they replaced the term deconstruction with a Serbian word (razaranje – destruction). And I got angry. At the time, I was still young and I would get angry more easily. I got angry and said 'no way'. They said this was an appropriate word, and if I found a better one in the Serbian language, they would gladly replace it. Fortunately, in my bag I had a copy of a magazine featuring the translation of Derrida's "Letter to a Japanese friend". And in that text Derrida explicitly stated that the word deconstruction cannot be translated with words implying destruction, dissolution, dismembering etc. and he gave some 35 suggestions of what deconstruction could be. Besides, he put forward another claim. He said that the greatest enemy of deconstruction was the verb to be. When I say deconstruction is X, then I already translated deconstruction into a method, from an indeterminate, open and flexible platform – what Morris Weitz would call theory for individual use. In other words, Derrida here explicitly confronted the notion of method with the potentialities of deriving a procedure.



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In another case, for example, when Derrida had an argument with John Searle about the concept of performative, he said that performative was impossible. What does impossible mean? If this colleague here was a Spanish knight from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and if I accidentally passed by her and pushed her with my shoulder and said: "O, illustrious knight, I apologize for my shameless impertinence of pushing you". What would she do? Normally, she would not accept my apology because she would not know what it meant, and she would challenge me to a duel. And, probably, I who am not a knight would not have much of a chance in that duel. Derrida wanted to say that performative existed only if we fixed the signification – relations, habits, customs and conventions with the verb to be. If we haven't fixed the verb to be, there is no performative. It fails – my apology doesn't count. Derrida, or deconstruction, or post-structuralism, stood for loosening, relaxing of such a procedure as methodological. Structuralism in the strict sense, as established by Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, and in early semiotics of Barthes or Umberto Eco, pursued the ideality of a scientific method. It had a tendency of establishing itself as an assumed, accepted and, in a way, universal method, which should be applied by different users in an almost identical manner. Here is a banal example. You study physics, or biology, or medicine... You will not study medicine from original sources. You will study medicine from textbooks. If you study psychoanalysis, everyone will force you to read Freud. I recently bought a book about psychoanalysis of music. When I came home, and discovered that there was not a single book by Freud in the references, I thought 'what is this?' In social sciences and art theory we have those expectations from an original text, the primary source. I will not read the same text that some of you wrote – I will read something written by a particular author who introduced it in the game. It means that I do not trust a single method, like science. It is that essential difference between an action comprising a platform, procedure and protocol, and method as an established technical device. I think that the English word device is appropriate in this case.

☞ KP: Let us say something about the strategies, tactics and techniques...

☞ MŠ: Strategy and tactics – those are two related terms coming from the military jargon. Many terms we use today come from the military vocabulary. And this appropriation from a military vocabulary



is interesting because it is normally not direct, but goes through organizational sciences. Why? Because those sciences, today essential for running the Western neoliberal society, comprise management techniques adopting military terms – like strategy and tactics. What would that mean? We may say in the first instance that strategy is general tactics. Or, that strategy is a range of similar types of tactics. Or, in the very old language of hermeneutics, we may say that strategy is a horizon of reflection and experience of the world, and that tactics is an individual realization. According to Saussure, we distinguish language and speech. Language implies a language system; speech implies individual speech acts in the frameworks of that language system. When I say “napolju je hladno”, you know that I am speaking Serbian, but if I say, “it’s a could” you know that I am speaking a bad and clumsy English. What does that mean? It means that every language has those two levels, the system level and the statement level. No mother in the world has taught her child to speak by perching it on her lap, with an orthography and grammar book, and saying: “Look, kiddo, there are seven cases in our language”. No, she leads him through speech towards inclusion in the system. We may say that strategy is an analogy of a language system, and that tactics is individual speech. Those are merely analogies. As strategy, we may consider general plans of action, reflection, understanding or assuming positions in the world, while as tactics we may consider concrete sequences of procedures, actions, and approaches to solving actual problems. Example: we seize a new institution and we want to organize lectures. This is tactics. And why we seize it – that is strategy. We seize it because we want to keep all knowledge in Belgrade under control. That is one good cause. There is another one. We seize the institutions that disseminate knowledge in order to liberate knowledge and make it horizontal. But, we do this, we seize an exclusive position. Strategy is a general plan. Tactics is how we seize a certain institution. Museum is seized differently than a publishing house, publishing house differently from a university department, university department from an NGO, NGO school from a bank. All these actions govern us and differ in their strategy and tactics. If we introduce the questions of platform, procedure and protocol into references to strategy and tactics, we may say that strategy is a platform. But, this platform is usually hybrid enough to include different platforms which can be identified with that strategy. Here, for instance, we have the relation of the magazines like Maska, Frakcija and TkH to the global strategy of change in the field of performing arts in

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southeastern Europe. And tactics is how each of those magazines puts that into effect.

**KP:** And what would a work format represent in all that? Like, for example... a workshop.

**MS:** Work format? This is another parasite NGO term invented for acquiring new projects. Work format, if we abstain from such naughty claims, can be a way of rendering certain tactics through forms. The older term than work format was work mode – that one, at another time, in the socialist era assured grants from ministries. But, each of those techniques is one of the ways in which you shape a certain kind of work as such. Meaning, our work format now is a different kind of cross examination, which is still not a dialogue. In a true dialogue, we would have to spend at least six, seven to one hundred years to enter the possibility of exchange through conversation. Here, the work format is cross examination and answering, with a potentiality of a dialogue format.

**KP:** Perhaps you can give us some examples of work formats in the field of visual arts, performance – for instance, laboratory...

**MS:** You mean, in art education or in contemporary artistic practice? If I refer to visual arts, and I think that performance will assume this direction in a few years, it is characteristic that there are work formats for artists and work formats for curators. This relation used to be hierarchical, a relation between an artist and a critic. Today it is horizontal and implies two different kinds of authorship. Today, artistic work and curatorship are equally important formats of creative work in the art world. We may cite two completely different examples, for instance, with Siniša involved. A vertical format would demand that he does an exhibition, he produces it, invites the critic XY and say: I need a text for this exhibition. The critic looks at his work, discusses it with him and writes the text. This is a format of the artist as an author, and the work of the critic is a second degree, intermediate intervention – the critic is, as Braco Rotar wrote, a mediator between the audience and the work. There is another scenario – the curator makes the concept, for instance, of a dynamic drawing which would stretch across the gallery space and in the frameworks of his project he conceives the format of realization with a certain number of art-



ists. He invites the artists, Siniša among them, and gives them a task to accomplish this. In return they receive some financial support. This format, Siniša, is horizontal in relation to you as an author, because the curator comes with a creative concept and demands its realization. Nevertheless, things are usually not that simple.

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**MB:** As far as I understood, format is a kind of plan.

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**MŠ:** Format is a modality, meaning – a potential plan implying a certain procedure of realizing an art work, or a situation, or an effect in the world. For example, there is a format of a small cinema. This is what I miss in Belgrade – there is the one in the Ethnographic Museum, but that one is, in fact, a joke. So, there is no cinema where you can watch an experimental film in Belgrade. Illegalni bioskop is also a format. So is the cinema in a shopping mall, where I can go after I finish my work at 11 o'clock to see a movie. Those are cinema formats. Formats of artistic work may be those associated with its production, but also those related to articulation of the world of art. For instance, I currently find more interesting the formats of artistic work which articulate a specific art world then those delivering consistent and coherent pieces. There are formats of pedagogy: formats of vertical pedagogy, formats of horizontal pedagogy, active, passive, in terms of the mode of artistic work. Art in the middle 1940s and 50s, featured coherent and closed formats. Today it does not have a coherent format and you cannot make a clear distinction between a Derrida's lecture and an art work. It is quite clear that Derrida was a philosopher and that he worked in a philosophical context, but certain aspects, articulations and presentations of his work had something to do with performance and performativity of theory. Today, the question of format is ubiquitous. And if the notion of format would be addressed in those terms, it would be interesting for you to pay attention to the theory of closed and open concepts by Morris Weitz. Why is today a concept of art an open concept? Because it is realized through open, unstable, hybrid formats. Why was the format of high modernist theatre, or high modernist painting in the 1950s – note, for instance, Ionesco or Jackson Pollock – a closed concept? Because it claimed a fixed concept of the work as a whole. Today you do not deal with a work as a whole. You can deal with the work as an index. One of the most beautiful and high profile examples is Eduardo Kac's fluorescent rabbit. Why? Because today you cannot quite tell what exactly is Eduardo Kac's art.

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He is a Brazilian-American artist who had this idea – he wanted to produce a rabbit with glowing fur. He did not know how to accomplish this, either technically or artistically, or in terms of technology used. He addressed a laboratory which came out with a project to produce fluorescent fur on a live organism. Another laboratory conceived a protocol, procedure and platform, and a third one implemented them and delivered a live rabbit whose fur, when the lights are off, glows with green light. What does that mean? It means we got the bunny. But is a bunny an art work? Eduardo Kac made an effort to prepare a web page with images and data on his bunny, to do an advertising campaign in shopping malls, and to make sure that all kinds of displays and screens for commercial and financial purposes in Florida feature the rabbit. Finally, he made small porcelain figures with himself holding a rabbit – for vitrines, and some big ones – for public display. In the end, we ask ourselves what exactly is this rabbit? What is an art work? We do not deal with a format of an art work, but with different use of formats, which are indexed and assembled into something we may call an art project. Instead of an art work we got an art project. And this project was realized through different formats: of a live fluorescent bunny, porcelain bunny, web page etc. We may perceive the format as specific technical tactics by which a project is realized in a specific way, as opposed to other realizations. You may – today it is allowed, in high modernism it was impossible – realize a protocol in different formats. Today you are expected to use different formats for realizing a platform. For instance, highly commercial opera directors like Peter Sellars or Peter Greenaway do the same opera productions in three completely different versions or formats. It means that they produce a stage version, a TV film, a DVD, or a CD ROM presentation. This is not a case of one stage piece rendered through three informational models, but three completely different formats of presentation and use.

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**TD:** May we claim that the question of format can lead us to the question of status of an art work?

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**MŠ:** We came to the question of format many decades after the question of status of an art work. The question of status of an art work came in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, when this Weitz's idea of an open concept of art was the key to interpretation. Today, however, it is considered that the question of format is a question of a post-production strategy, to borrow from Nicolas Bourriaud. Have you read his book



Postproduction? It would be extremely important for you to read it. Because, in this book he pursues the idea that we no longer have fixed works of art as pieces.

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Someone from the audience: Is the notion of art piece already obsolete?

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MŠ: Instead of the term art piece, we often use the terms project or format... We use the term art work/piece habitually and by inertia, but then it does not signify a coherent ultimate composition of phenomenalities, but only one instance in the web of differing cases. It means that we do not have a centered work in that sense, fulfilling a single criterion of ontological phenomenality and presence.

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KP: Why post-production, and not simply production?

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MŠ: Why not production? Well, that term was adopted from cinema, as far as I know, and is applied inconsistently, like most of the terms – because here we escape the notion of method. You use or distort something, in Derridean terms introduce it opaquely into the discourse, term it post-production, and in the end you do not get a piece that is final. You do not get a piece that is produced or manufactured. Perhaps it is not a bad thing to go through those terms – creation, making, production, manufacturing and post-production. Five terms. Now when I list them like this, I commit an anti-Derridean act. I fix a platform, a system, a hegemony.

☞  
Creating an art work: creation is a Judeo-Christian concept implying an act of transformation of something that is not into something that is – strictly speaking, non-being into being. Here I do not use the word 'being' in terms of creation, but in terms of what is. Meaning, creation implies that something that is not becomes something that is. Heidegger has resolved this in his "Question Concerning Technology" where he says that it means "setting something upon the world". God has set our lives upon the world out of nothing. The idea of creation is based on this miraculous turn from nothing into something. The very word creation is therefore endlessly problematic, endlessly dubious, devastated by the endless inflation of use since the late Romanticism until the present day. In our current law on university and art education, instead of creation the term research is in use. Art professors

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went mad – I was present when the law was discussed. And what is most peculiar, those I expected to go nuts did not – and those were painters, sculptors, directors and composers – but editors, cameramen, accompanists, conductors. Why? Because they were deprived of this exceptionality that creation brings along: recreation of a divine act. Creation is one such illusionist show. What is behind it? The English have a nice word making – a term which implies producing something physically. If you do something with your body, that is action. If you produce something with your body, that is making. In her book Vita Activa Hannah Arendt made an excellent distinction between action, production and work. Work is making. You, for instance, made this chair with your own hands. Siniša made this or that painting. A violinist plays his instrument with his bare hands. Making implies a kind of bodily action or bodily accumulation bringing about a product.

☞  
TD: Can you tell us the difference between Heidegger's 'setting upon the world' and Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming' in a philosophical sense.

☞  
MŠ: That is a big question. There is a difference. According to Deleuze 'becoming' implies that nothing is given in itself, and everything is in a process wherein it becomes, but has not become yet. Therefore, in Anti-Oedipus he puts forward the notion of machine. Machine is in constant becoming. Machine works, but with a purpose. What it produces falls out. Machine is in constant becoming. A man and a woman are in constant becoming. If you meet a three year old missy or mister, and you meet this person again as a seventeen year old or a hundred years old, you will see that those are utterly incomparable persons. Look, people force me to deal with my past. That is horrible. You see something you have nothing to do with, and again you have some sort of sentiment or a relation, and you are not at all what you used to be. It's that idea – in most simple terms – becoming. And Heidegger's Ge-stell is a great metaphysical story which has to be observed from the perspective of creation, Greek term techne etc.

☞  
KP: What would be the appropriate Serbian term for a maker, a person that makes things.

☞  
MŠ: Pravljiač. We have to learn to use those scabrous words. Serbian language now goes through a fantastic phase, when it wants to retain





only the clean, habitual words and therefore eliminates everything that might sound strange. For instance, in the last few years I have been struggling for a word that all proof readers correct in my texts, all professors criticize me for and all the people I know make fuss about – and that is kulturalno. Why? Say, for example: Katarina's design is cultural (kulturalan). In Serbian, literally, it would mean that Katarina's work is introduced into the work of culture. It is nice, polite... But, actually, it does not. It means that her design is associated with cultural practice. This is why I use the anglicism – kulturalan. I had a lecture in Zagreb where a colleague told me – gosh, why are you making up new words, what's going on in Serbian language now? When I publicly used this expression in Belgrade for the first time, two colleagues told me that this was a croatism. Kulturalan is an anglicism, both in Serbian and Croatian language. It means that it is an invented word, a scabrous one. Many people will tell you that Serbian language knows no female gender for writers. I was stunned – several feminist theorists of literature claim that Serbian language has no term for a woman who writes. She is a writer (pisac). I said 'spisateljica', but they insist that it is a Croatian word.

¶ From the audience: piskinja, proizvođačica tekstova.

¶ KP: Textmaker. I went to the 13th Belgrade Gimnazija (High School) and I obtained there a job title of 'assistant culturologist'.

¶ MŠ: Use of the word kulturološki (culturological) in the Serbian language is usually a jargon mistake. For instance, you say yesterday an exhibition opened – a great culturological event. In a correct reading where words are apprehended with certain consistency, this sentence does not mean anything. Culturological would imply that someone has studied the exhibition from the platform of cultural theory. It implies that you are a culturologist because you have competencies and a job title concerned with culture, but a cultural phenomenon is not culturological if it is not some kind of output of cultural theory. Therefore, in the last few years, this omnipresent word has been used with a slight deviation. I think that distorted use of words is much better than the correct one, because the correct one implies that there is always someone who uses the words wrongly and is therefore suspicious. How would you call a woman who works in architecture? Arhitektica – croatism, arhitektkinja – I think it is quite allright, but

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it sounds scabrous because we are not used to it. But which words are scabrous, anyway? Those I am not used to. Now we drifted away... Where were we? At making.

¶ What is production? Production is making something, not directly by means of your body, but by means of intermediate work. Intermediate means – machine work. Namely, I may do a painting using the airbrush, or a film using a computer, but I do not make all that directly with my body. In the times when I filmed stuff with a Super 8 I had a machine 'cutter' and with some glue I made films. Today, when I film digitally, I produce a film. Production necessarily implies such a process. There is a fantastic work by the Serbian-Hungarian-Austrian-German-English-American artist László Moholy-Nagy. I tagged his identity with the countries he lived in. Today, his birth place Moholy is called Mol, and is located in the north of Serbia. He was educated in Budapest, started his artistic career in Vienna, became the famous professor of Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau, briefly lived in England, and in America he founded the most important school for modern design. In 1936 he produced paintings over the phone. This is one step from manufacturing to production. In a way, he was the first art producer, but also a manufacturer. What did he do? He wanted to show that a painting is not expressive because of the painter's bodily inscriptions. We normally say that a painting is expressive, we gaze it as we recognize the traces of the painter's hand. Moholy-Nagy wanted to show that a painting he did and paintings other people would execute instructed by him, would have the same optical effect. He did this in America. And what did he do? He took a catalogue of colors, some grid paper and over the phone he dictated instructions to the manager of the workshop how the paintings should be executed by the craftsmen, and this workshop manager passed them on. At the time billboards were done manually, there was no such thing as photo-processing. He gave instructions that the other man received over the phone and passed them to other people who carried them out manually. This, in a way, was a production process. At the beginning of this process is the artist, at the end of it is the man whose body does the job. But that work also comprises elements of production. He had to organize the process of producing the piece. Production terms the process of making an art work where the artist assumes the role of an author, and not the person who organizes the process of production or realization. The artist conceives the process on the level of management, economy, project tasks, institu-



tional association of those who will produce his work, and its positioning in the art world. The physical does not have to be involved in any phase of such work. For example, some time ago, I saw in a private collection in Berlin some huge paintings by Andy Warhol. Those were painted portraits of Chairman Mao and Lenin, canvases of the size 6x7m. Accidentally I knew, because I studied the matter, that Warhol never painted such huge canvases, but I asked the curator in charge and he replied that those were Andy Warhol's works. Then I looked into the date on the painting – three years after his death. What does that mean, that it is a forgery? In such a big collection they would not make such a mistake. This is production, or rather, manufacturing. Warhol launched and left behind an agency and a production company under his label, which operate according to commercial demands. Those works are marked by his brand name, his realization, his concept and, lastly, by his reputation in art history, and they are produced and distributed as such. That is not much different from what Rubens did in his time, few centuries ago, but completely differs in the fact that the author does not participate in manufacturing and production of the work – he only made the infrastructure grounding the production of the work as such. A segment of the work by Matthew Barney in his films falls into this category.

¶ Postproduction implies a kind of expansion or hybridization of production. It means that you don't deal with one Warhol – one painting, one photography, film, new work – a whole range of cultural production, cultural work associated with one brand is being introduced into the system. Like in the case of Eduardo Kac's bunny. Postproduction is no longer tied to fixed works, but to market distribution of art.

¶ KP: I keep being suspicious about the term postproduction – I consider it production.

¶ MŠ: You know – one should be able to enjoy difference. We can say that this form of creation is creation in the last instance, but we split hair in many parts in order to show minimal differences. The difference between production and postproduction lies in non-existence of a realized work as complete and whole, but as a multiplicity of media presentations and their potentialities. Generally, this falls under production, but differs from production resulting in one coherent artwork. Namely, those are nuances in pursuing difference.

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¶ KP: While producing his work, the artist is an author because he creates infrastructure.

¶ MŠ: Production implies creation or use of infrastructure.

¶ KP: Does he have to create at all, or perhaps he can only come up with the concept – his involvement may practically end there, and everything else may be done by the others?

¶ MŠ: Yes. Those are all different possibilities...

¶ KP: Which is, I suppose, more typical for certain elite artists.

¶ MŠ: But in popular culture this is a common thing.

¶ KP: We haven't mentioned one more term, and that is practice. And technique.

¶ MŠ: Practice is a philosophical, materialist, Marxist term. In the form that we use today, in the form I use, or in the form the TKH people use, with small nuances in difference it was established in Marxist philosophy by Althusser, in his book For Marx, in the chapter concerned with the problem of theoretical practice. We might claim that practice is a form of human activity that displays its material determination. However, the term material should not be perceived in a way of naïve materialism, implying that my practice is material because I move this microphone, and microphone is a thing; but to conceive practice as materiality of human actions in respective social relations. In other words, non-naïve materialism considers every human relation as material, because a condition of materiality is human relation. Therefore, when someone says – my spiritual practice opposes the material world – then, in a material practice, he denies the materiality of that very practice. For instance, a church practice concerned with the question of God is, likewise, a social material practice, as a practice involved in manipulating people by means of advertising. Or, a practice concerned with liberating people by means of advertising. In other words, practice implies a materiality of action, procedure, while materiality implies a social relation as such. Since I work in theory, I was told many times "you will see how that comes out in practice".



Precisely these people had a wrong attitude, according to Althusser, because every theory is a specific material practice, because it is a human social activity. Because every practice is a material action in the physical world, associated with certain theoretical platforms, and we already addressed that. 'Opposition' of theory and practice is a contradiction one should take into account seriously. Besides, the notion of practice featured prominently in the Italian art criticism of Germano Celant. In the Yugoslav art criticism of the late 1960s, the concept of new artistic practice was introduced by Jerko Denegri, and it referred to the artists concerned with social and cultural conditions of artistic work. Why? Because, for instance, a great artist of Picasso type would say "it is irrelevant how I did the painting – what counts is that I created a master piece". Some artists show how the master piece works, and this demonstration how a master piece works, how it emerges, is a social relation and is called practice. In that sense, this introduced the new artistic practices as, on the one hand innovative (which is a late-modernist demand), and on the other auto-reflexive as they demonstrated the importance of working conditions. This would be the shortest story about practice, without dwelling on the more complex philosophical framework. In Althusser's book *For Marx* published in Belgrade in the 1970s there is a chapter on theoretical practices.

¶  
SI: Only technique has remained to be discussed.

¶  
MŠ: We must start with the Greek word *techne* (τέχνη) – craft, skill, ability, instrument of making... all those terms refer to this indeterminate Greek word *techne*. Nevertheless, I have to say, when I use Greek words I am with those who suspect that ancient Greeks ever existed. Everything about Greece was invented by the secret services of the Roman Empire. I use the term *techne* as it was in use from the Renaissance on, until the German age of enlightenment and Lessing. It signifies technique, skill, craft, ability... It can be defined in one more way I consider appropriate, and that is as 'making of the artificial'. Why making of the artificial? You see, you have this term for art in the Serbian language, *umetnost*; you have the same term in the Croatian language, *umjetnost*. Those two terms may be considered synonymous, or as a translation of the term from one language into another, and we may, as I like to do, observe them as two different concepts and terms, with completely different interpretations and connotations. Last year I had a lecture in Banja Luka and for this theory they were

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about to kill me – how could I make such a huge difference between the words *umetnost* and *umjetnost*? Why? Here I explicitly construct and improvise, this is a strictly artificial construction. The word *umetnost* implies knowing how to make things. I recently sat with one painter in a *kafana* (cafe), we all drank, ate, and then he said he would pay for everything. And I know that he doesn't have a dime in his pocket and I told him: "you're not paying, it's on me". He tells me: "pass me the cash under the table so no one can see", and then says proudly: "I am an artist because I know how to manage". This know-how Serbian word (*umeti*) implies that *umetnost* means *umeti*. Now we go to Croatia. This is also a construction – the words *umjetno* and *umjetnost* imply artificiality. They imply making artificial things, if we associate *umetnost* and *umjetnost*. This again is a pure construction, an instance of constructivism, but it implies knowing how to make artificial things. In that sense, making artificial things is a good definition for technique. There is another distinction between technique and technology made by the British cultural theorists Raymond Williams and Stewart Hall in some sporadic footnotes. According to them, technique implies skill and means of creation, making, producing things. And technology represents the institutionalization of various techniques in accomplishing specific aims. In other words, a video player plus recorder, in this sense is technique. A TV station is technology. And, finally, if we shift to that notion of methodologies, procedures, use of military technique as use of skill, ability or format, we have this setting up of a platform, conceiving of a procedure based on a plan. Meaning – instead of technique, I could use the term procedure. However, the word technique implies some analogies with format, in the sense we already discussed.

¶  
MB: Coming back to the format... sometimes when we discuss some art forms, we say 'form-wise' or 'or in formal terms', and when it comes to some rigid formats that everyone knows, we use the term 'format'. How does form differ from the format?

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MŠ: The concept of *form* is something I dislike. It is a great fairy tale, which was necessary in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of the notion of form in visual arts, in music... It emerged in theatre slightly before with Lessing, for example, although he never used the term 'form'. Meanwhile, the notion of form has become so omnipresent that we came to identify artworks or their phenomenal-



ity with the notion of form. However, that is not form. Artwork is not a form. Form is something that does not exist. Form is an artificial interpretative model we use to describe the way in which an artwork, in sensuous terms, is set upon the world. It does not tell us how an artwork appears in the world, but how we posit an artwork in our interpretations to appear in the world. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the romanticist aesthetics was so powerful, so grand, and it involved merciless chatter about everything: you create your art because you have lofty feelings; art is a language of emotions; art is communication with God, the Devil and other creatures coming from this or that world; art is an expression of your unconscious, your repressed sexual desires, etc. Most of the people had a problem with the fact that you can say almost anything on those subjects. And people did speak and write anything. Those romanticist protocols were losing momentum by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they blended into popular culture, became universally accepted, and a number of aestheticians wanted to introduce compulsion into the interpretation of art. They put forward the claim that those concerned with art should deal with something concrete, and that is an artwork. However, in order to interpret artworks they had to find an object of consideration – namely, every science constructs its ideal object of consideration. Look, for instance, I spent a part of my life studying the atom. When someone in my proximity mentions the atom, I close my eyes and see a big billiard ball encircled by little billiard balls. Many people will tell you nowadays with such confidence – you know, this is a genetic problem; this is caused by the genes... On such occasions, like Goebbels, I would immediately pull out a gun if someone mentioned the genes, because behind the discourse of the genes I see Auschwitz. In other words, the gene does not exist. What exists is a biological model of organizing matter that we call gene, and we do not exactly know what that is. The atom does not exist. What exists is a model we ascribe to phenomenality or existence of the matter at certain levels. There is no form in an artwork, what exists is an ideality of a formal principle, the sensuous phenomenality of the artwork. However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, by introducing such an ideality – like the atom in physics, or gene in microbiology – there was a new possibility of scientific advance. For example, in 1875 Eduard Hanslick introduced the concept of form in music, and three or four years later Guido Adler introduced the concept of science in music – because it got an object. While there was no object, he could not found a science. In that sense, the notion of form is a hypotheticalal

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construction. Through its habitual use, especially in scientific theories of music or architecture, music pieces or architectural structures came to be identified with form. Visual arts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Expressionism, did away with form, but also with technique. In his work published in 1920, Roger Fry (aesthetician from the Bloomsbury group) wrote that “we no longer need technique, knowledge and form, because art is expression”. Shape is model and form is model, format is model. However, format and form are not concepts of the same kind. Format implies media presentation. Form is essentially tied to the senses, to the sensuous phenomenality that informs our work.

If we are done with the questions, I would like to add few words. Today we defined a large number of terms, but you have to be aware that those are technical definitions. We have not established a matrix of canonic terms valid in any case and situation, but a possibility of constructing and conceiving terms. Of greater importance is the dialogue, for example, with Katarina, Tamara, Milena – the process of constructing the term than its appropriation. In other words, conception and production are more important than possession.

Well, that is self-criticism.

**KP:** That's the horizontal thing.

**MŠ:** That's the horizontal thing. Let's keep it that way. Thank you very much!

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