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ACROSS MANGELOS'S LANDSCAPE

Abstract:

The article puts in relation performatives of art works produced by Mangelos from 1940s until his death in 1987 with the theoretical writings he practiced as an art historian, critic and curator under his official name Dimitrije Bašićević. In the focus of such consideration is Mangelos's unique procedure of deconstruction of hegemonic (lethal) epistemologies that points at rigidity and limitations of disciplinary discourses, as well as at the performative power of language. For that reason, attention is paid to the artist's insistence on bastardization of language the agency of which is manifested in a gap that opens between the meanings of words and their sonority, the gap in which the collapse of sense occurs.

Key words:

critique of functional thinking, non-chronological time, bastardization of language, acousmatic voice, anxiety

In June 2011, twenty-four years after Mangelos's death, Georges Didi-Huberman visited the site where the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi extermination camp had been in operation from 1940 to 1945. In July of the same year, he wrote a text entitled *Bark* and published it in the form of a book that also contained several black-and-white photographs he had personally taken in the landscape of death. The text begins as follows: "I placed three small pieces of bark on a sheet of paper and looked. I looked, with the idea that looking would perhaps help me to read something that had never been written. I looked upon the three small strips of bark as the three letters of a script preceding all alphabets. Or perhaps as the beginning of a letter – but to whom? I notice that I've spontaneously arranged them on the blank paper in the direction of my written language. Each 'letter' starts on the left, where I dug my nails into the tree trunk to strip the bark away." (Didi-Huberman 2017, 25) The bark was stripped away from a birch, a tree whose name in German is *Birke* and after which the landscape of death in southern Poland had been named. In its format, Didi-Huberman's *Bark* is reminiscent of numerous works by Mangelos that today are referred to with the generic term "artist's book" and were made between 1949 and his death in 1987.

In his earlier book *Devant l'image*, groundbreaking for the discipline of art history, published in 1990 and translated into English as *Confronting Images*, art historian and philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman questioned "the *tone of certainty* that prevails so often in the beautiful discipline of the history of art" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 2) and asked the following: "[...] what obscure or triumphant reasons, what morbid anxieties or maniacal exaltations can have brought the history of art to adopt such a tone, such a rhetoric of certainty? How did such a *closure* of the visible onto the legible and of all this onto intelligible knowledge manage – and with such seeming self-evidence – to constitute itself? [...] In short, the said 'specific knowledge of art' ended up imposing its own *specific form of discourse* on its object, at the risk of inventing artificial boundaries for its object – an object dispossessed of its own specific deployment or unfolding. So the seeming self-evidence and the tone of certainty that this knowledge imposes are understandable: all it looks for in art are answers that are *already given* by its discursive problematic." (Didi-Huberman 2005, 3–4)

Dimitrije Bašičević, an art historian by education whose alter ego was the artist Mangelos, not only abolished in his work the imaginary boundaries of the objects of "kunsthistorical" interest, but above all generated a multidimensional field in which artistic production interfered with a completely non-canonical, performative discourse of/on art. The scepticism and resistance of this long-time curator of the Zagreb City Galleries, which later became today's Museum of Contemporary Art, and also one of the most lucid theorists and critics of visual arts in former Yugoslavia, regarding the "specific knowledge of art" and its hegemonic discourse whose tone of self-evidence and self-sufficiency would become the object of Didi-Huberman's critique, were not only the groundwork of Mangelos's *noart*, but

also the reason why in 1955 the Croatian Association of Visual Artists published a pamphlet demanding a ban on the public activity of the then young critic Dimitrije Bašičević.¹

Mangelos's self-denying artistic activity, which was barely presented to the public during his lifetime, has attracted adequate attention on the international contemporary art scene over the past two decades and is increasingly being the subject of curatorial and academic interest, mainly due to the many years of systematic research, publications, and exhibitions by the art historian and curator Branka Stipančić.² In scholarly literature on Mangelos, biographical data are scanty. One learns that he was born in 1921 in the Syrmian town of Šid, in a family of farmers, and that he attended high school in Sremska Mitrovica and Sremski Karlovci. After the establishment of the



Mangelos, *Antihommage [Račić Josip]*, m. 5 [1951–1956], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

Ustasha regime and the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 under the tutelage of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, which included Syrmia within its borders, Dimitrije Bašičević “took refuge in Vienna together with his father and younger brother, where between 1942 and 1944 he studied art history and philosophy.” (Šimičić 2007, 219) Austria, which had been annexed to the Third Reich in 1938, was a safer place for the Bašičević as ethnic Serbs than the Independent State of Croatia, where they fell under the Ustaschas' extended application of racial laws. In a text written by Bašičević's brother Vojin, one finds information that in Šid the father Ilija and his two sons had been “sentenced to death by a mobile martial court,” which means that they were on the list of hostages that “basically meant a death sentence without a specific time of execution.” (Bašičević 1996) The list also included painter Sava Šumanović from the same town, who was shot dead by

- 1 The statement of the Croatian Association of Fine Artists titled “On Some of Our Art Critics,” which called for a ban on the public activity of the young art critics Radoslav Putar and Dimitrij Bašičević, is quoted in Kolešnik 2006, 234–235.
- 2 In 1990, Branka Stipančić set up the first large-scale exhibition of Mangelos's art at the Gallery of Contemporary Art Zagreb. During 2003 and 2004, her authorial exhibition *mangelos no. 1-9½*, accompanied by a book of the same name, was presented at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serravalle in Porto, the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, and the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel. For the twentieth anniversary of Mangelos's death, she edited an extensive monograph that, among other things, includes her comprehensive study and chronology of Mangelos's oeuvre (Stipančić 2007).

the Ustashas in August 1942 and whose work would be the subject of Dimitrije Bašičević's doctoral dissertation defended in 1957 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Reviewing his personal employee file preserved at the Zagreb City Galleries, Branka Stipančić noticed that Bašičević left out from his biography the fact that he had studied art history at the University of Vienna, where his professors included Hans Sedlmayr, Karl Oettinger, and Fritz Novotny. Stipančić believes that the reason for this omission was Bašičević's presumption that in post-war Communist Yugoslavia, his stay in Vienna during World War II could be misunderstood (Stipančić 2017, 3). Namely, according to Mangelos's brother, their diligent and apolitical father was "first maltreated by the Ustashas and then almost destroyed by the Communists," (Bašičević 1996) who declared him a kulak and took away his land. However, another question arises for me here: what was the effect of the Viennese lectures of Hans Sedlmayr, a despiser of modern art and a member of the National Socialist Party even before the Anschluss, on the student Dimitrije Bašičević, who had fled Strymnia before the local version of the final solution? As for the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, where Bašičević graduated in 1949, as well as the general practices of the academic discipline of art history in Croatia and other republics of former Yugoslavia, Sedlmayr's theories were never (nor they are today) considered in the context of his National Socialist convictions. Consequently, an even more important question arises, that of the relationship between Mangelos's *noart* and Sedlmayr's derogatory terms *Unkunst* and *Nichtkunst*.

Dimitrije Bašičević aka Mangelos was a polyglot, a passionate reader of philosophical³ and scholarly literature, an expert in avant-garde movements and currents within national and international modern art. When asked why he used different languages in his work, Mangelos answered in 1982 that he did not know. (Stilinović 2007, 59) Hardly more informative is his *explanation of noart*, which reads: "the most philosophical / and most theoretical / explanation of noart / is / noart." (Stipančić 2007)⁴ In 1980, at the request of Goran Petercol, Mangelos wrote an *introduction to noart*,⁵ which was first published after his death in the *Quorum* magazine (No. 1) in 1989. The text is structured in chapters on the *triumph of instinct*, *triumph of war*, *triumph of doubt*, *self-confrontation*, and *September 18, 1980*, and starts like this: "there was a time when people were dying and there were no ideas. people were dying en masse, forcibly brought to an end. it was not literature. it was completely different. completely different from all literary dying. or natural. different from every picture, from every song, from every newspaper news, and it didn't look like history. not

3 According to Darko Šimičić, who after Mangelos's death took part in listing his legacy and preparing a symposium in 1988 at the Gallery of Extended Media in Zagreb, most of the books in Mangelos's home library were on philosophy.

4 It was a manifesto published for Mangelos's exhibition at the Dubrava Gallery in: *energija [no. 9]*. Zagreb: Narodno sveučilište "Otokar Keršovani", 1979.

5 Mangelos never capitalized words in his texts and therefore I do not do it either when referring to the titles of and quotations from his individual works.

at all. not even like the familiar life. it was the time of death. in dying, books smelled of death, and reading smelled of dying. the books did not agree with what was left of breathing, so that the rustling of their paper lies could be heard in the silence of the steps of truth that were disappearing in death.” (Stipančić 2007, 48–51)

When Mladen Stilinović asked him when and how the artworks titled *paysage de la mort* were created, Mangelos answered that in 1941, when a close relative was killed among many people from his surroundings, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, he was deeply shaken and in a way prompted to mark that death. “I made the mark so that in one of my notebooks, in which I wrote with black pencil or watercolour, or perhaps it was ink or ink wash, I made something like a stroke, as if he had been erased by that, or rather what was beneath him, although there was nothing beneath him, but that was my



Mangelos, *Négation de la peinture*, m. 5 [1951–1956], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

thought of that man who was now gone. He had been wiped out, and at the same time it was his grave, the sign of the grave. These were rectangular areas, at first very small and later they became large, so that they occupied a quarter, then a half, and sometimes the whole page, but the first ones were very small – they occupied one twentieth of the page. I recorded these deaths in 1941 and 1942, burying my childhood and youth in a way.” (Stilinović 2007, 53) From the same interview one learns that he was hiding these notebooks by burying them in the barn, and that the “graves” marked in them became a *tabula rasa* after Mangelos’s return from exile. *Tabula rasa*, a term understood in philosophical conceptualizations as an unwritten tablet, or a metaphorically expressed belief that there is no cognitive content in the mind before experience, originally denoted a scraped tablet, one from which the previous content had been erased by scraping the top layer of wax. Just like the erased people whose graves were marked in Mangelos’s *paysage de la mort*. In 1964, the sentence *I expect the resurrection of the dead* written in white and red would appear on a black-painted wooden board, and around 1977 one black globe with words inscribed between red lines such as the ones on school blackboards would become *la manifeste sur la mort*. In another work done on black-painted plywood, it was the word *memoria* that found its place between the red lines. Memory is a term that refers to a trace of what existed before the *tabula* became *rasa*. And what is remembered

escapes verbalization and visualization in Mangelos's case, so it cannot become a *tableau*. That is why it was necessary to annul the picture: to perform the *négation de la peinture*. Mangelos's works called *tabula rasa* were produced at the same time as those in which he negated painting, and were preceded by the *paysage de la guerre*: ink-covered, inverted geographical maps (including one depicting the territories of Croatia and Serbia around 1070), probably made between 1942 and 1944,⁶ while Dimitrije Bašičević was studying art history in Vienna. And philosophy.

Inspired by an exhibit from the Vienna Globe Museum, a completely black globe that once served as a teaching aid and could be written upon with chalk, Branka Stipančić has suggested that during his stay in Vienna, "Mangelos, then still latent within the young student Bašičević, might have come upon this globe that, as we were to find out many years later, was for him the perfect ground on which to write out the pithy thoughts and manifesto." (Stipančić 2007, 3–4) I would say: to reply to Professor Sedlmayr's interpretive models by invention of his own *noart* that erased the boundary separating art from discourse on art. In the 1970s, Mangelos was no longer latent in the curator and theorist Bašičević, so it is not surprising that the artist's manifestos, such as the one on photography, presented theses that were consonant with those elaborated by the theorist Bašičević in his text *Consequences of Photography: 11th Digression on Culture and Art in the 1970s*. (Bašičević 1982, 83–91)

In the *Consequences of Photography*, Bašičević wrote ten digressions. The absence of text of the 11th digression, which was announced by the title of the essay, amplified the echo of thought connoted by the empty space of the sentence that had been withheld. I am convinced that it referred to Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, which reads: "The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various way; the point, however, is to change it." Bašičević responded to it with silence while he wrote about the changed world. Like Walter Benjamin, whom he undoubtedly read, he rejected historicism and speaks from the position of historical materialism, as he understood that in a world constantly changing by technological revolutions, the extensions of the concept of art could not remain intact. That is why Mangelos in his manifestos, and Dimitrije Bašičević in his theoretical texts, persistently emphasized the difference between metaphorical (or naïve) and functional thinking: "Replacing the manual mode of labour with machines is most closely related to replacing the old, metaphorical way of thinking with instrumental, which was, on the one hand, a cultural revolution correspondent to the one by which work and thought had established the culture of our species, and on the other hand led to a division of the world into old and new, that is, into two civilizations; the civilization of manual labour and metaphorical thinking, and the civilization of mechanical labour and instrumental thinking." (Bašičević 1982, 83) Among Mangelos's *manifestos*, there is a globe dated between 1971 and 1977,

6 Branka Stipančić established the periodization or chronology of Mangelos's works on the basis of his *šid manifesto*, in which the artist accurately predicted the year of his own death. Cf. B. Stipančić, "Datacije kao umjetnički projekt" [Chronology as an art project], in: Stipančić 2007.

entitled *relations manifesto* (m. 4 – m. 8).⁷ Its northern hemisphere is painted over in white and the southern in black acrylic. The northern one has the black text *functional thinking* written between the lines, while the southern has the white text *paysage de la mort*. The title of this manifesto demands a reflection on the equator, that is, on the line where functional thinking touches the landscape of death. In Latin, the word *aequator* means equalizer.

At this point, I inevitably recall the sentence with which Horkheimer and Adorno opened their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written during their American exile at the same time as the young Bašičević was studying in Vienna:

“Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity.” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 17) The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explains in detail the genesis and destructive effects of rationalism and rationalization, that is, of functional thinking whose ultimate consequences would be manifested in the industrial production of death, more specifically denoted by the word Auschwitz. (Agamben 2007) At a time when the Fifth Mangelos⁸ performed his *negation of painting* and produced the works he called *tabula rasa*, including the book *les paysages de tabula rasa*, Alain Resnais articulated his cinematic reflection on the Holocaust, the essay film *Night and Fog*, finished in 1955. While editing the contemporary footage of desolate landscapes, railway tracks intersecting them, and the ruins of the architectural complexes of Auschwitz and Majdanek with archival footage produced by the Nazis themselves while documenting the technology of the final solution, Resnais raised questions about recognition. Do we see that the camp, like a modern city, has a precisely designed urban structure? Production facilities, apartment blocks, scientific research and hospital facilities, a brothel and a crematorium? Do we see that production there was rationalized and every substance suitable for recycling, that nothing was left to chance and improvisation?



Mangelos, *Relations manifesto*, [m. 4 – m. 8], 1978, Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

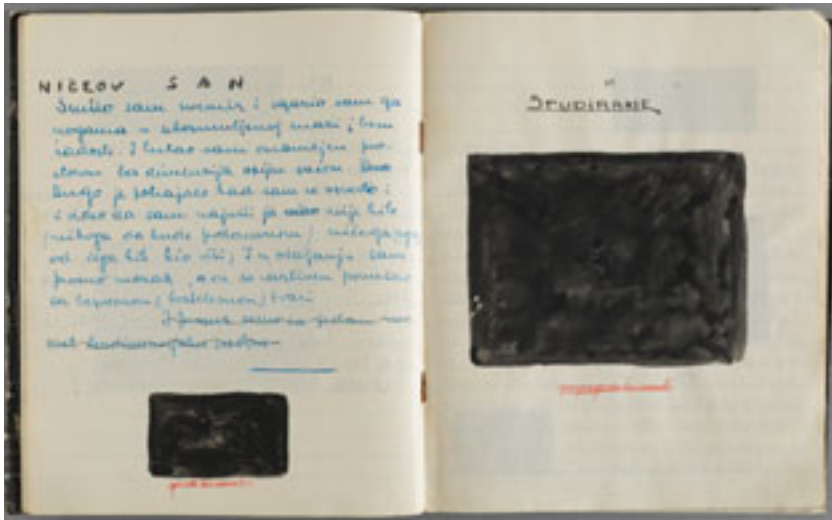
7 According to Branka Stipančić, the text written on the pedestal of the globe, which includes the mark *m.4 – m.8* as part of the integral title of the work *relations manifesto*, is of particular importance because it points to the developmental path from the concept of the landscape of death (m.4) to the concept of functional thinking (m.8). See more in: Stipančić 2007.

8 For the periodization of 9½ Mangeloses, see Branka Stipančić, “Datacije kao umjetnički projekt.” (Stipančić 2007).

As the film shows the landscape of death, the narrator's voice asks: "Is it in vain that we try to remember?" The Ustasha version of the final solution is specifically rendered by the word Jasenovac, and unlike the Nazi original, it does not belong to the civilization of industrial, but rather of manual labour. No metaphor. But here, too, the question should be asked whether our trying to remember is in vain. Analysing Resnais's film, Phillip Lopate has argued that *Night and Fog* is an anti-documentary film because this particular reality cannot be "documented", we are defeated in front of it in advance because it is too heinous. Wondering what can be done about it, he concludes that Resnais and his screenwriter Jean Cayrol (himself a former camp detainee) gave the following answer: "We can reflect, ask questions, examine the record, and interrogate our own responses. In short, offer up an essay." (Lopate 2022) Mangelos offered anti-painting. And anti-poetry.

Mangelos's works made between 1942 and 1944, entitled *paysage de la mort*, *paysage de la guerre*, or *paysage de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, in which a coating of black tempera covers the text of the printed matter that serves as a background for a particular landscape, are undoubtedly anti-paintings. These landscapes are places where a breakdown of sense occurs, including the meaning articulated by a newspaper or book text, which in Mangelos's landscapes serve as a ground for anti-painting. For "the books did not agree with what was left of breathing, so that the rustling of their paper lies could be heard in the silence of the steps of truth that were disappearing in death," as he wrote in his *introduction to noart*. Was his horror at these paper lies, or the ultimate outcome of the "civilization of functional thinking," analogous to the horror that Francisco Goya, "the last of old masters and the first modern painter," felt when he realized that the Enlightenment ideals ended in Napoleon's conquests? Mangelos's black leads me to Goya's black. The trajectory of the *Capricho 43 – El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*, *Los desastres de la guerra*, and *Los disparates* leads me to the globe entitled *relations manifesto (m. 4 – m. 8)*, whose equator equates functional thinking with the landscape of death.

El sueño de la razón produce monstruos (1797-1798) has also been interpreted as Goya's self-portrait, which "looks like a philosophical conception of relations between imagination and reason." (Didi-Huberman 2018, 101) This conception is analogous to Mangelos's conception of relations between pre-modern and modern, metaphorical and functional way of thinking, i.e. the civilization defined by manual labour and that defined by machine labour; by industrial, rationalized production. When asked by Mladen Stilinović about the works in which he wrote letters from different scripts, Latin, Cyrillic, Glagolitic, Gothic, or Greek, without omitting even the runes, Mangelos answered: "I should say that this phase, apart from those letters, included another problem or motif, which was the motif of non-painting or *antipeinture*, the negation of painting. And they get into a whole complex of problems, and I am in a way fighting against paintings, I create paintings from letters. I wanted to fight the irrational part of that which the painting brought with it. Believing that I would negate it with the letter, which is an element of rational



Mangelos, Fragmenti 3 2, m. 3 [1936–1942], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

thinking.” (Stilinović 2007, 54) In Goya’s *Capricho 43*, the text *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*, written on the side of the table at which a figure (the artist?) has fallen asleep, is likewise a manifestation of rational thinking and articulates the same problem that Mangelos referred to. And thereby sounds like one of Mangelos’s manifestos.

Mangelos’s works, which since the 1970s, in accordance with the changed artistic and theoretical paradigms, have been quite assuredly considered in the context of the notion of art, were not intended for an audience at the time of their making, nor did Mangelos ever call himself an artist. In his words, “it was a strictly private matter, because I didn’t bother at all to show things, nor did I bother to exhibit, although I did exhibit now and there. For me, they are still private.” (Stilinović 2007, 55) Goya’s *Pinturas negras*, which he painted on the interior walls of his house *Quinta del Sordo* on the outskirts of Madrid between 1820 and 1823, were also his private affair and not intended to be viewed by other people. They were created in the decade following Napoleon’s invasion of Spain. Napoleon’s “conceptualization of space” foreshadowed the twentieth century, in which the landscape of death, beyond all metaphor, would emerge as the cultural dominant. At the dawn of the modern, industrial age of rationalization, Goya’s “negation of painting,” more precisely his establishment of the category of counter-painting, was as radical as Mangelos’s *negation de la peinture* or *antipeinture* would be in the following century.

One of the very few books that Mangelos did not turn upside down while negating painting, and moreover left its text legible by blackening and only crossing out in red the reproductions published in it, is the catalogue of Sava Šumanović’s exhibition held at the New University in Belgrade in 1939. It was three years before



Mangelos, *Paysage de la guerre*, m. 4 [1942-1944], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

the painter from Šid was taken hostage, brought to Sremska Mitrovica and shot. In the blackened reproductions, the Fifth Mangelos (1951-1956) drew a set of red lines similar to the one used in *school tablets*, and over it a sign resembling Andrew's cross or the letter (or Roman numeral) X. The book *les paysages de tabula rasa* (1953) comes from the same period. In one of its pages, there is the same set of lines with the statement: *tabula rasa no. 1 is my school tablet*. That same year, art historian and critic Dimitrije Bašičević published his essay "In the Tradition of Josip Račić" in *Narodni list*, in which he articulated in words the meaning of the sign that appeared in Šumanović's catalogue, a ground for anti-painting, as an act of negating painting. He wrote: "Carrying in yourself abysses of obscure depths and a longing for unattainable heights, for which biblical allegory invented *the symbol of crossed lines* [my italics], a stubborn, innate and acquired faith in life and oneself, and a bleeding doubt – these two opposites, which ignite and suffocate each other, between which the figure of a man and artist rises, all this is an epic with the attributes of tragedy. We also have that little bit of information about the tragedy; is not that bitter cup of life, spilled over the edge, the truest page of our art? Didn't it ultimately allow for further steps? Aren't his canvases a true and profound experience of life in art for the viewer? And so many hidden unrests behind the greyness of these surfaces!" (Bašičević 1995, 67)

So many hidden unrests behind Mangelos's blackness! How many "crossed lines" that signify at the same time "a stubborn, innate and acquired faith in life and oneself, and a bleeding doubt" are expressed by the statement *il n'y pas de mort il s'agit d'une autre forme de la vie* (it is not death, it is about a different form of life) written on the globe called *la manifeste sur la mort*? A different form of life is also indicated by Bašičević's abovementioned text that begins as follows: "Our concepts are

regularly static in nature; their dynamism comes forth only in traffic, not in a mutual relationship but on the way to the source, i.e. from the place where they emerge to the place where they will be accepted. On these bridges, the created concept meets its own variation; from these encounters, new variants (nuances) emerge.” (Bašičević 1995, 66) Mangelos's concept of anti-painting emerged, among other things, from his encounter with Račić's painting. That is why he made him an *anti-homage* by blackening a reproduction of his painting on a page torn from a book, leaving visible only the painter's printed name, which he further emphasized by marking it with two “crossed lines” in red. In an essay outlining the transversals of the Račić tradition, Bašičević wrote on the life and work of Milan Steiner and thus came to Šumanović: “The reality is not all on one level and a work of art contains projections of all levels of reality. [...] Contemporanéité. Meier-Graefe has referred to it as the ‘zeitgenössische Elemente.’ Elements of the time, i.e. the reality, but always the ‘given’ reality. What is Milan Steiner's ‘contemporanéité’? – The core is certainly the time between 1914 and 1918. These numbers are symbols of countless facts that have the property of repetition: cannons, queues for meat, meat for the cannons, deprived childhoods, fears. This content is repeated even when the voices differ. [...] The whole answer is the answer to the question about the mediators of these conditions. So we come back to biography. Let us recall that Steiner's friend Šumanović, some ten years later, also fought against darkness with light from his fingers, with lyricism against drama.” (Bašičević 1995, 68–69)

Mangelos did the same within his own given reality, aware of the fact that both Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault would articulate in the 1960s by stating that there was no pre-discursive reality. And that is why discourse would become the subject of Mangelos's interest. Pictorial and verbal discourse, what shaped it and what undermined it: in short – the relationship between words and things. Probably that is why he called some of his works *paysage de mots*. In French, the difference between words (*les mots*) and death (*la mort*) is a single letter – *r* – and thus Mangelos focused on the performativity of words and letters, moreover on the irreducible difference between sounds and letters serving to transcribe sounds, the representations of sounds, so to say. On the difference between the living body and the dead picture, because voice is an effect of bodily events and is inseparable from



Mangelos, *Paysage de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, m. 4 [1942–1944], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

breathing, from life, while the written, immobilized letter can become a mortifying image. A particle of language that becomes law by being the fundamental social contract. That is why Mangelos stated in his *hammurabi manifesto* that “there is no data to confirm / the conclusion on the development of thought / between hammurabi’s code and the hegelian logic / leaving us with the conclusion / that the system of thought / was completed / before hammurabi.” The manifesto was dated *a.d. 2449 in anda u tonia*.

Both Hammurabi and the Roman settlement of Andautonia, whose ruins are located near Zagreb, as well as the year 2449 from which Mangelos announced his conclusion, point to the fact that the totality of his work articulates the concept of non-chronological time. In 1896, Henry Bergson published his book on *Matter and Memory: An Essay on the Relationship between Body and Spirit*, which in the 1980s became one of the pillars of Deleuze’s concept of non-chronological time, i.e. his notions of time-image and crystal-image. Bergson is mentioned in passing in Bašičević’s critical texts, and Mangelos wrote the following formula on a double page of his *anti-sketches* (ab. 1963): *the relationship of matter + memory + energy = the solution to the problem of the spirit*. The word memory takes up another double page of his *anti-sketches*: on the left, on a red-painted background, he wrote it in black, and on the right, on a black surface with a set of red lines, the same word written in white appears six times. In the same notebook, he specified matter, energy, and memory as super-categories, while in his *manifesto on thinking no. 1* (ca. 1977-78), he wrote: *thinking is a “form” of energy*. The idea of non-chronological time also permeates Rilke’s only novel, published in 1910, at the dawn of World War I: “The passage of time had absolutely no significance for him, death was a minor incident that he disregarded entirely, people he had once absorbed into his memory continued to exist and their death meant not the slightest difference. Several years later, after the old man’s own death, people talked of how he showed the same obstinacy with experiencing the future as the present.” (Rilke 2016) In the same novel, Rilke wrote the imperative “Take another name, any name [...] and hide it from everyone,” (Rilke 2016) as well as the sentence “Now I see it that way, but I used to be most interested in reading as they wanted it.” (Rilke 2016) It is impossible to assume that the anti-poet Mangelos had not read the poet Rilke. And it is indisputable that Dimitrije Bašičević took a new name under which he could stop reading in the way that an art historian was required to do.

I would say that Mangelos reads aloud. In voice, more precisely. Mladen Dolar claims that the voice is what does not contribute to making sense. It is the material element recalcitrant to meaning, and if we speak in order to say something, then the voice is precisely that which cannot be said. It eludes any pinning down as the non-linguistic, extra-linguistic element that enables speech phenomena, but cannot itself be discerned by linguistics (Dolar 2006,15) Faced with the voice, he writes, words structurally fail, (Dolar 2006, 13) because voice is a radical alterity of logos. (Dolar 2006, 52)



Mangelos, *Paysage hazard il n'y a pas*, m. 7 [1964–1970], Courtesy of Mangelos Estate, Croatia/Canada

The referential field of Mangelos's works is saturated with a wide range of meanings of the term *logos* and a multitude of manifestations of its signifiers. Thus, in his *jahresbuch* (ab 1970), the left side, at the top of which he wrote *a study of form* in Latin script, is dominated by the word *logos* written in Greek script, in which the same curve shapes the first and the last letter. On the opposite page, Mangelos wrote: "The solution to the problem of form / in art is not the solution to the problem / of form in the world of phenomena. / in physics." On a gold-painted board, the Seventh Mangelos (1963-1970) wrote in red letters: *am beginn war es kein wort* (ca. 1963-1970). This statement is radically opposed to the sentence that opens the Gospel of John, which Mangelos transliterated from Old Slavonic in his *anti-sketches* (ab 1963): *prežde je ubo slovo*, categorizing it as a *nostory*. Prior to that, the Sixth Mangelos (1956-1963) had written *non credo* in red letters on black-painted cardboard. The book titled *script* was made in 1949 by drawing signs resembling pictograms and ideograms on pages of the Holy Scripture painted in black, red, or white, and by writing and "redesigning" letters from various scripts of related and unrelated languages. In the process of producing these signs deprived of their signifier function, he discreetly introduced the form of the right-angled triangle, which even in the *script* connotes Mangelos's ostinato theme: Pythagoras.⁹

There is a book that Mangelos called *pythagoras 2*.¹⁰ In many other works, he wrote Pythagoras's name and drew right-angled triangles within which he occasionally wrote different words. Thus the word *pythagoras* also appears in his book *les exercices* (1961) on several pages, written in different scripts. On one of

9 On Mangelos's *pythagorases*, see: Stipančić 2012.

10 The title *pythagoras 2* indicates that there may have been several books with this title.

them, he added an *explanation of pythagoras* in a set of lines, which reads: “for the shortest / clear / and rational / formulation.” In the same book, the text *logos* = *praxis* is written across a double page. However, Pythagoras’s teachings were far from mere rationalism, so Mangelos’s “Pythagorean credo” is not based only on the functionality of a short and clear formulation of the basic trigonometric theorem, but above all on the imperative of a kind of thinking that is, according to Aby Warburg, not subject to border police restrictions. Before founding a school in Croton around 530 BC, Pythagoras lived in a cave on Samos with twelve disciples. This biographical detail is encrypted in one of Mangelos’s *nostories* titled *le konj*¹¹ *qui chante*: “it was quite late. they finally / came across the entrance and found themselves in / a magnificent cave where they / eagerly awaited a cure for their / anxiety. then that horse came / and said la marquise est sortie à cinque heures.” As in many other works, Mangelos here bastardized language¹² not only to subvert its function of the law with his typical wit, but also to emphasize the activity of spatial and temporal transversals in the process of thinking which is a form of energy. That is why Proust’s Marquise wandered in here not only as an expression of resistance to Valéry’s understanding of modern literature,¹³ but above all as a trace of the material presence of (un)lost, non-chronological time. Because *matter* + *memory* + *energy* = *a solution to the problem of the mind*. According to some opinions, Pythagoras introduced the Egyptian teachings on metempsychosis, transmigration of the soul, into Hellenic thought. Does Mangelos’s statement *I expect the resurrection of the dead* refer to that? Or the *dialogue mit dem tode*, an oil on canvas at the stage of the Eighth Mangelos, or the words *animal* and *anima* written one below the other in a black square on a red-painted page of his *gottschalksbuch* (1961-1963)?

Mathematics, astronomy, and music were studied at Pythagoras’s school, and it is believed that he was the first to connect numerical relations with sounds and establish mathematical theory as the foundation of Western music. Harmony. In Mangelos’s works, among others, the names of Bach, Beethoven, and Hildegard von Bingen appear. Pythagoras’s students, who were separated from the teacher by a curtain and listened to his teachings for five years without being able to see him, were called acousmatics. The French composer, engineer, and musicologist Pierre Schaeffer coined the term acousmatic sound, which the filmologist Michel Chion defined as sound that, unlike visualized sound, lacked a clear source in an image. Seemingly omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, such sound evokes anxiety.¹⁴ Mladen Dolar has introduced the notion of acousmatic voice, defining it as a voice whose source cannot be seen and whose origin cannot be determined, a voice that cannot be situated anywhere. It would be a voice in search of its origin, a body, which would not stick to it even if it found it. (Dolar 2006, 61)

11 Croatian for “horse”.

12 He regularly used words from different languages in the same phrase or sentence.

13 See Mangelos’s conversation with Mladen Stiliновиć.

14 <http://keystovoice.cdth.ucla.edu/terminology/acousmatic/> (last accessed on February 14, 2022).



Mangelos, *American poet Gertrude Stein often used to remind Picasso...*, c. 1967–1972, copyright Fondacija Ilija & Mangelos

Mangelos operationalized precisely this acousmatic voice. During the 1960s, in parallel with the *nostories*, he produced a series of *antiphons* in which the sonority, or phonetic rhythm, deprived the written words of meaning. Etymologically, being the practice of answering, the antiphon exemplifies Mangelos's theorem *logos = praxis*. An antiphon is not a practice of speech or language, but a vocal act that eludes linguistics. Its origin is in ancient Greece, while in Christianity it appeared as a liturgical musical-vocal form based on repetition. On the front cover of Mangelos's 1964 *antiphon*, there is a profile photo of Louis Armstrong singing. One of the very few images in his oeuvre. Within the book, among other things, the syllables of the name Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity of Zoroastrianism, are repeated: "mazda / ahura / ahura / ahurama / mazda." Written in white, they run across a double page in which they are a counterpoint to the red text "every seven years / protoplasm and all cells / a completely different person / every seven years / it could be quite serious / both temper and personality / theory." On another page of this *antiphon*, there are words written in a column: "bahi / buhi / urashumataro / bahiuri / buitur / torbobuhuri / urashimobahi / bahitur / buhi / bash" whose sonority, along with childish blabber, invokes some incomprehensible, living and extinct languages. On the next page, there is a text written in French: "ce n'est pas un chemin / c'est un cul-de-sac / non madame / au contraire / cul-de-sac est un chemin" (this is not a path / this is a dead end / no Madam / on the contrary / a dead end is a path). Is it a dead end of language at a time of the breakdown of sense? And is there a connection between the dead end and the end of art history, as considered by Dimitrije Bašičević alias Mangelos some ten years before Hans Belting?¹⁵ In his

15 Belting's book *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* was first published in 1983.

manifesto *ende der kunstgeschichte*, the Eighth Mangelos (1971-1977) wrote in tempera on cardboard: *ende der kunstgeschichte / wenn die geschichte / unumkehrbar ist / nach der historischen / aufhebung des bildes / ist kein weiterer bild / geschichtliche erscheinung* (the end of art history / if history / cannot go back to / a historical / abolition of painting / no further painting / is a historical phenomenon).

Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (*A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*) abolished the poetic image in 1896 and ended with a metaphor. In its making, homophony paved the way for metamorphosis, and metamorphosis is, at least according to Deleuze and Guattari, the opposite of metaphor, (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 22) abolished by the practice of Mangelos's *noart*. Mallarmé's poem, first published in book form in 1914, sixteen years after its author's death, is considered by Julia Kristeva to be the starting point of a poetic language revolution. In it, the phonetic rhythm in which the semiotic khôra resides dissolves what is symbolic, linguistic. Kristeva has identified the activity of the semiotic khôra in the stage that precedes language acquisition in children. (Kristeva 1979) The visual appearance of letters, words, and sentences in Mangelos's works, which can also be considered in the context of the category of visual poetry, is analogous to the spatial disposition of words in the manuscript of Mallarmé's poem, their different sizes within the text, and the unspecified reading direction. One of Mangelos's landscapes has the text *paysage / hazard / il n'y a pas* (landscape / chance / there is none), in which I recognize a doubtless reference to Mallarmé's abolition of the poetic image.

Furthermore, Mangelos's pulsations, phonetic rhythms in which language bastardization occurs, are akin to the procedures by which James Joyce articulated his untranslatable novel *Finnegans Wake* published in 1939. His *nostories* and *antiphons* "on a path to the source" or in "traffic" also encounter the phonetic rhythms of the untranslatable sentences by which Gertrude Stein, in the first decades of the twentieth century, having banished similarity from description and arguing that repetition was not a multiplication of the same but an insistence, revived words with which she portrayed objects, food, rooms, and people. In one of her lectures-performances she gave while touring American universities in 1934, she said: "Language as a real thing is not imitation either of sounds or colors or emotions it is an intellectual recreation and there is no possible doubt about it and it is going to go on being that as long as humanity is anything." (Stein 2004, 140) A reproduction of her famous portrait painted by Picasso during 1905 and 1906 found its way to the collage *American poet Gertrude Stein often reminded Picasso...* (ca. 1967-1972) in which Mangelos counterpointed the meta-language on that painting with his own comment, inscribed in a set of lines that connoted his school tablet. In another lecture, Gertrude Stein stated what, in fact, determined the origin of Mangelos's *noart*, in whatever form, or more precisely dimension, it manifested itself: "In 'Composition as Explanation' I said nothing changes

from generation to generation except the composition in which we live and the composition in which we live makes the art which we see and hear.” (Stein 2004, 98) Like for Gertrude Stein, language was for Mangelos an intellectual recreation, a re-creation. That is why it was necessary to negate every image of the world and start from the point where the *tabula rasa* occurred. Find one’s school tablet and generate a different writing. Writing anchored in the “composition in which we live and which makes the art which we see and hear.” Is that composition called functional thinking?

In a letter to his brother Vojin, written on July 22, 1977 in his apartment at Freudenreich Street no. 3, Mangelos said: “[...] however this / I must tell you in writing / namely the intellectual development / of your brother has been completed / these days. / that is in principle quite dismal / a point on the iota is still to be made./ that means summarizing in writing / something from the collected / and boiled material. / I have been aware for several years / that the “summa summarum” will be called / “functional thinking”. / but I did not have / the details of the construction. / [...] that same night I made the project construction / for an “introduction to the fumiš”¹⁶ / because I will not be able to write the “fumiš” itself/ even in ten years / and the question is whether I will have them. / – please save this paper / because all sorts of things get lost with me. / therefore, the “introduction to fumiš” has been planned / as a group of ten essays: / 1. culture and civilization / 2. singing and thinking / 3. practical and theoretical thinking / 4. civilization of manual work / 5. examples of thinking from the upanishads to heidegger / 6. heidegger’s way of thinking / 7. theses on philosophy / 8. machine civilization / 10. meaning and functioning of the world / 11. small encyclopaedia of words without function. / greetings to the whole family / m [inscribed in a set of lines]”¹⁷

Vojin Bašičević saved “this paper,” but it is not known whether the text of the *introduction to fumiš* that Dimitrije Bašičević (or perhaps the Ninth Mangelos) worked on during the last decade of his life has been preserved, and ever written at all. More than his answer to the Freiburg rector, I am interested in the *small encyclopaedia of words without function*. Was it similar to that of Borges, in which animals are divided into (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tamed, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et caetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies?

16 *Fumiš* is Mangelos’s neologism coined by abbreviating the phrase “funkcionalno mišljenje”, which means “functional thinking”.

17 Vojin Bašičević published the letter in his “Pogovor: Sećanje na brata (1921-1987)” [Epilogue: Remembering my brother (1921-1987)], (Bašičević 1997, 205–206).

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KROZ MANGELOSOV PEJZAŽ

Apstrakt:

Članak postavlja u odnos performative radova koje je umetnik Mangelos proizveo u periodu od 1940-ih do svoje smrti 1987. godine s teorijskim tekstovima koje je kao istoričar umetnosti, kritičar i kustos objavljivao pod zvaničnim imenom Dimitrije Bašičević. U fokusu ovakvog razmatranja je Mangelosov jedinstveni postupak dekonstrukcije hegemonističkih (smrtonosnih) epistemologija koji ukazuje na rigidnost i ograničenost disciplinarnih diskursa, kao i na performativnu moć jezika. Zbog toga se pažnja pridaje umetnikovom insistiranju na bastardizaciji jezika čije se delovanje manifestuje u procepu koji se otvara između značenja reči i njihove zvučnosti, procepu u kome dolazi do kolapsa smisla.

Ključne reči:

kritika funkcionalnog mišljenja, nehnološko vreme, bastardizacija jezika, akuzmatički glas, anksioznost