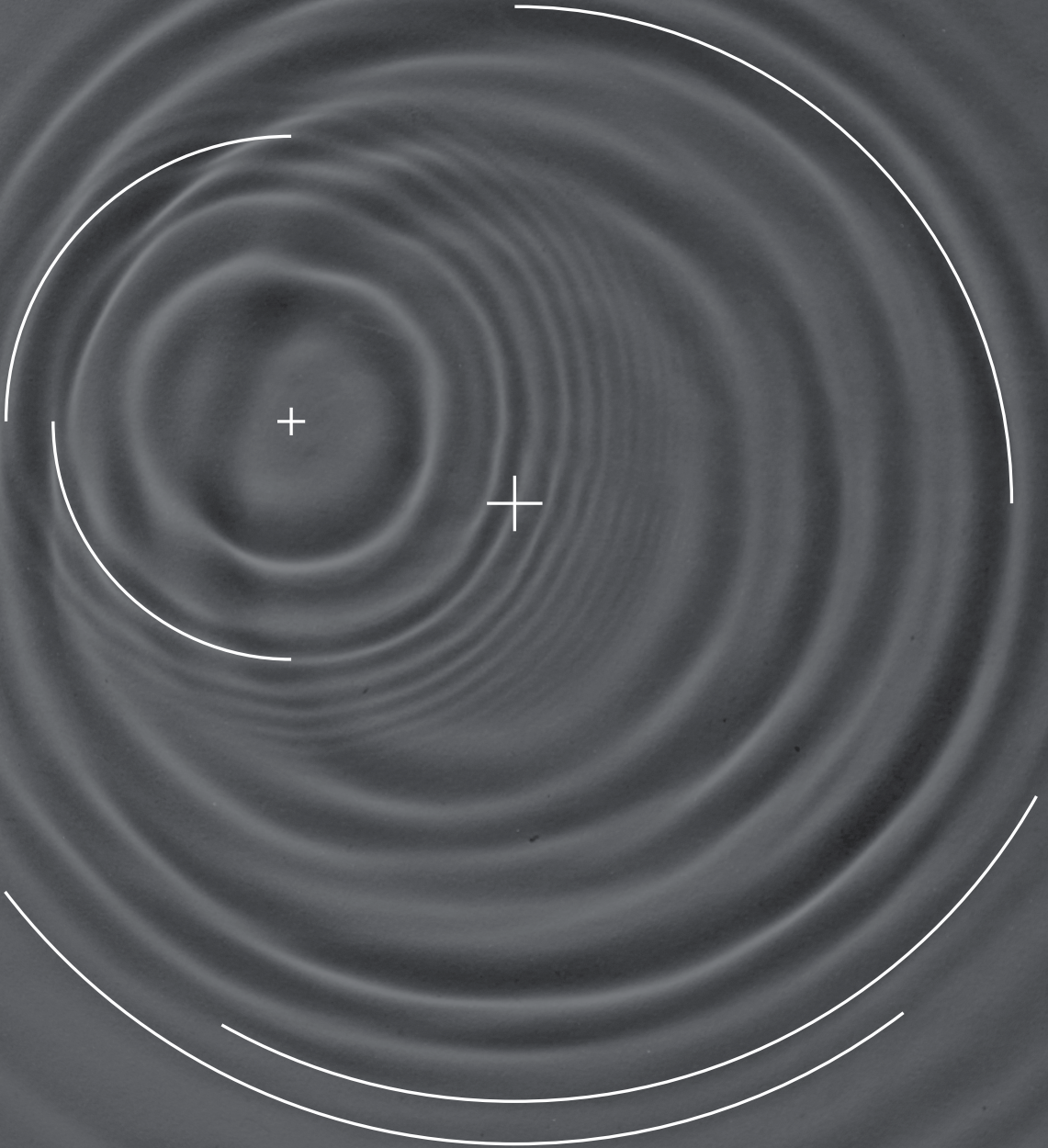


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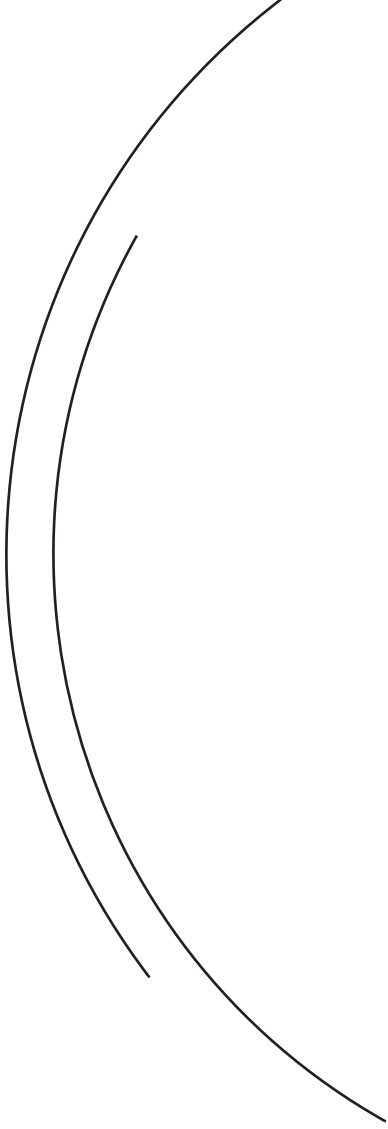
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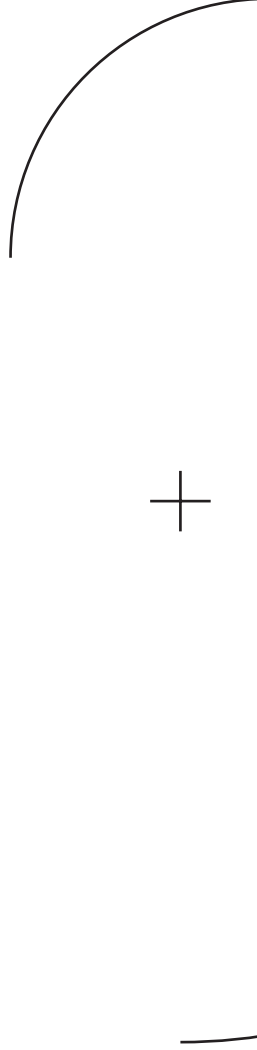
Aesthetic Histories of Design Culture



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Disegno

JOURNAL OF DESIGN CULTURE

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“BLACK HOLES” EXPLOITATION: A CENTRAL EUROPEAN CITY BETWEEN MONUMENT, DOCUMENT, AND MOCKUMENT

Barbora Kundračiková

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the lively urbanism of Central European historical centres in the second half of the twentieth century and, based on a private photo album, reflects on the processes of shaping local socio-cultural customs and practices. If the common features of these centres are the careful preservation of the historic core and the more or less systematic re-construction of residential districts or industrial complexes, it is the selective blindness to the gaps and spaces “in between,” escaping any coherent or consistent urban planning, where these processes manifest themselves most “naturally” and almost without any imposed control. Indeed, these imaginary “black holes” are where everyday experience unfolds. To this end, the current approaches of Central European Studies are connected with the history of art and visual culture. A specific triadic model of monument-document-mockument and the concept of the “living monument” are used to develop a crucial link between them all and contemporary urban studies. The theoretical insights are illustrated by the case study of the city of Olomouc in the Czech Republic, using the private photographic documentation of local artist and graphic designer Oldřich Šembera.

#private photography, #Olomouc, # Oldřich Šembera, #mockument, #urban studies

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Borrowed from astronomy, the term “black hole” is used in the international socio-political arena to refer to zones of collapsing state power. “Black holes” are structureless areas where a civilised, objectified order has not been established—or has been but not successfully. As stated in a 2011 report by The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, “(b)lack holes are usually thought of as rather remote areas, geographically far removed from national seats of power. Notorious examples are the Pakistani region of Waziristan and the tri-border area of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. However, as urbanisation continues to increase, the security threats posed by urban black holes are growing as well.” (Qasem, van Dongen, and de Ridder 2011) To be a “black hole” is to be “out of place” or “out of the norm”—not ordinary.¹

Nevertheless, as recent research led by the Urban Theory Lab has shown, in urbanisation today, *ordinary* cities are themselves not only producers of values but also “entropic black holes that consume the surplus produced elsewhere.” The so-called non-urban spaces in cities are the “metabolic bases of planetary urbanization.”² I would like to take advantage of this new usage of the term “black hole,” and examine the importance of these “reverse” spaces, whose potential for examining and shaping social conventions should not be underestimated. The question I will address here is whether spaces outside the framework of modernist “normality” are sites for emerging social systems. My answer to this in what follows is based on the analysis of a particular cultural material—the socio-cultural analysis of Olomouc as a historical site and long-term photo-project of Oldřich Šembera.

*

The notion of urban black holes in the world’s megapolises will serve here as an imaginary springboard for the study of “small town” agglomeration and the practices that are taking place at its borders. My real interest is in exploring the limits of theoretical frameworks concerning urbanisation processes and their supposed “externalities” in a non-global context, and thus trying to develop and apply alternative systems to decipher their conditions and the significant transformations that are taking place in the current Central European environment. To this end, I will discuss a series of related areas: (1) the area of personal, private, or family photography; (2) specific Central and Eastern European cultural histories based on the

¹ *It is this element that will be key for us later on.*

² *As was presented, for example, at the Urban Theory Lab: Data-Spheres of Planetary Urbanization, as part of the Venice Architecture Biennale. (Urban Theory Lab 2021)*

relationship of art and memory, time and history (i.e. the local tradition of monument conservation and the concept of “living monument,” and the triadic model of the document–monument–mockument); (3) and local “traditions” of architectural structuring as a formative socio-cultural and psychological element, termed as “outside architecture” or “in-between architecture.” As a result, we should be able to reflect the local socio-cultural reality and the concept of “everyday experience,” which is the final frontier of this study. As J. R. Short writes, “[g]lobalisation is an uneven process. Places are connected in different ways at varying rates.” (Short 2004.) Let us take one of these paths, but keep in mind the larger context.

PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE EPICENTRE OF INTERESTS

Historians have been very hesitant in the past to put photographs, especially private ones, at the centre of their research. Their reluctance was based on the view that handwritten and printed documents filed in state-run archives are more reliable than over materials. Only more recently, a “visual turn” has encouraged the exploration of how images worked in the past and how they can be used in interdisciplinary research. For our purposes, the most suitable material seems to be the *photo album*—personal, complex, and indicative of a narrative. However, we need remain aware of its status and nature, i.e. approach it with due caution.

A photo album can be loosely understood as a series of photographs collected by an individual or group of individuals to create a specific visual narrative. It includes forms of memoirs, scrapbooks, and digital albums, using photographs but also illustrations, postcards, digital and manipulated images, captions, notes, the accompanying commentaries, embedded letters, etc. It might take the form of a book, but also can be just a “box with photos.” It is therefore essential to grasp it from the start as a complex entity of aesthetic, informational, and communicative nature from the start.

The photographic process itself is similarly complex, involving many stages and actors. In the case of the photo album, it is not so much the production phase as the selection phase that appears to be essential, with images selected at several stages and by different actors—photographers, technicians, curators, or publishers (Mifflin 2012). Although it may seem absurd, it was on the basis of the photo album that all the major socio-cultural turns of modern times were shaped. The establishment of relations, hierarchies, conflicts of individual social classes, groups, or strata were formed on its pages as well as more general frameworks, such as the construction of individual society. What can be understood and perceived as a subjective game on the one hand, is an expression of a collective mindset on the other (Anderson 2006,

6–7). Thus, if we want to grasp and reflect on the specific nature of small-town “black holes,” i.e., the “in-between” spaces in an agglomeration, an elaborate urban plan, or their importance in shaping local everyday practices, private visual documentation offers a wealth of information that has not yet been sufficiently exploited. Let us therefore turn our attention to a specific situation—a long-standing and still unfinished photo album from the environment of Olomouc.

*

The painter and draughtsman Oldřich Šembera was born in the city of Rýmařov, one of the small centres of former Sudetenland. He has lived in Olomouc since 1951, and from 1963 to 1967 he studied at the Secondary School of Arts and Crafts in Brno. In 1975, he graduated from the Department of Art Theory and Education at the Palacký University in Olomouc, where he met with the painter Miroslav Štolfa (1930–2018) and the theoretician Václav Zykmond (1914–1984) (Daněk 2010). In the late 1970s Šembera moved with his family to Hodolany in the outskirts of Olomouc, where he had spent his childhood. The return to the place where he clearly perceived the transition of the city to the wilderness, caused him to turn his interest to the landscape, or rather to capturing the special tension between the “romantic” landscape and “cold” civilization, between the city and its outskirts. Among the most frequent subjects of his paintings, drawings, and photographs, were motifs of motorways, underpasses, greenhouses, reconstructed landscapes, landscapes with counter lights and rays, both natural and imaginary (Fig. 1).

FIGURE 1. Oldřich Šembera, *Walk II*, 1978, oil, pencil, hardboard, 90 × 80 cm, private collection; *Walk*, 1978, oil, hardboard, 65 × 68 cm, private collection; *Black Interior*, 1981, oil, hardboard, 95 × 106 cm, private collection



³ Roland Barthes (1981) for example believed that cameras are “clocks for seeing,” and that they can prove the passage of time. Also, Thierry de Duve (1978) was intrigued by photographic time, pointing to some inherent paradoxes, for example, that the photograph can be seen as the “witness [...] of a vanished past” as well as a “deadening artifact” or “suspension of time.” André Bazin (1960) added that the photography “is the object itself [...] freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it,” analogous to a “fingerprint,” an impression that captures and preserves a form of reality, a pictorial record made by the thing depicted.

The visually and emotionally striking contrast between classical oil painting and contemporary subject matter is perceived by critics as one of the distinctive manifestations of so-called ecological art (Valoch 1981). Around 1991 Šembera resigned almost completely from his work, only to return to it in the late-1990s, when he began working with photography, and produced digital prints (Figs. 2–3).

At first glance, Šembera’s images, paintings, and photographs of familiar surroundings are casual. However, the artist has good reasons for choosing each shot. Or rather, why he follows this and not some other situation. Šembera has been observing and documenting this one locality for a long time. Specifically, he was and is interested in the area on the edge of the populated areas between the Hodolany and Bělidla districts, through which one of the branches of the River Morava flows. It is a relatively large space interwoven with a tangle of paths and trails which people use for recreation, but also as shortcuts. It is not organised and dominated by suburban nature, which characterizes its liminality (compare with Thomassen 2018).

Liminality is perhaps the best descriptor of the character of an anywhere place—on the one hand highly “real,” almost physical, and specific, and on the other easily generalised. In the end, it is not only about the insignificance of the place but also about the social habits, activities, or processes that are developed there. Liminality describes the psychological process of transitioning across boundaries and borders. The term “limen” itself comes from the Latin expression for threshold. In the context of contemporary philosophy, but perhaps even more so in social studies and artistic production developing at the interface of the two, liminality evokes performativity. And performativity is of course also a crucial element in the case of forming social norms and conventions that are materialised in the urban structure of the modern city (Fig. 4).

Returning to the photo album as an individual’s means of expression, Martha Langford explains that “[f]or an art historian, the performative model is extremely instructive, even if the principal actors can no longer be assembled,” or if we do not know them personally (2001, 21). Although we can understand this approach quite well in general terms, she adds: “The album is what remains [...]. Our mimetic photographic memories need a mnemonic framework to keep them accessible and alive. The album reflects that need and preserves its evanescent conditions. To speak the photographic album is to hear and see its roots in orality.” (Langford 2001, 21) Performativity is a matter of continuity of existence “in time.” And photography is often perceived as a medium of “time.”³ It has its own social life and adopts something like a “social biography” (Appadurai 1986), since the ways in which people live their lives are entangled with the ways in which their lives are represented (Snyder 2006, 26). The gestation, evolution, and meaning(s) of albums are as complex as those of social lives. “As I turn the pages [of a pho-



FIGURES 2-3. Oldřich Šembera, *From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2020*, digital photography, private collection; *From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2006a*, digital photography, private collection

FIGURE 4. Oldřich Šembera, From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2006b, digital photography, private collection



FIGURE 5. Oldřich Šembera, From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2007, digital photography, private collection



tograph album],” says Barbara Levine, “I am activating a story. The pages [...] show the progression of time; they are not just about a single moment but rather are about the accumulation of time. A narrative is building, faces are aging” (Snyder, Levin and Stadler 2006, 17).” We can also discern narratives that speak to political power, economic ties, scientific networks, social conventions, cultural traditions, and personal relationships.⁴ Thus, cultural heritage experts, like folklorists and anthropologists, do not ultimately “discover” heritage themselves, but “constitute” it (Bartolotto 2006) using examples of private practices collected through carriers such as albums and diaries, and re-invoking them (Fig. 5).

BETWEEN REAL AND FICTIONAL/ ESTABLISHING THE EVERYDAY

The connection between visual aesthetics and everyday practices is, according to Yuriko Saito (2020), tight and direct: “(W)e are all implicated in the world-making project and aesthetics plays a surprisingly important role in this collective and cumulative endeavour.” This is also extremely important for us since, after Šembera’s work, we understand urbanistic “black holes” as places of “naturally evolving” everyday experience, which transcend the limits of aesthetic evaluation in favour of ordinary experience, suggesting that our habits and practices also have aesthetic dimensions and are often co-created with that in mind. This aspect is easily noticed if we focus on Šembera’s visual albums in more detail. Even within its segmented framework, the turns, gestures, and situations are repeated, taking on the features of collective ritual. This is even more the case because they take place with an awareness of the surrounding environment. Consider the highly sophisticated structure of the Baroque city, in which this liminal terrain suddenly presents a natural challenge to the concept of the “living monument.” What is it? What makes it significant for us? And how can we work with it in contemporary realities? These are just some of the questions that naturally come to mind, if we think about the situation, specifics, and real life behind a historical monument, a protected historical agglomeration, whereby the first condition is to stress the importance of social practice in commemoration.

During our lives, we establish, develop, and use imaginative or fictional worlds, such as, works of art, popular literature, or computer games. However, we also deliberately create situations or places that have a strong evocative potential and lead us to a similar type of “inter-play.” These can certainly be specifically equipped locations, but they can also be places without any filling or equipment. We can hypothesise that the attraction to imaginary worlds is inherently linked to the desire to explore new environments—but based on

⁴ We might also ask what happens to these narratives when archival holdings disperse, albums are broken up, and individual photographs are removed from their original presentation forms and documentary contexts to be sold, become art, or digitised.

familiar principles and under the influence of the same basic factors. It is noteworthy that interindividual and cross-cultural variation in the preference for imaginary worlds should follow the interindividual and cross-cultural variation in exploratory preferences. This at least, is the result of findings of an international team of researchers (Dubourg et al. 2023), who remind us that “(t)he cultural importance of imaginary worlds in contemporary societies cannot be overstated.” It is possible to say that imaginary worlds activate our exploratory preferences, help us navigate the real world, and find new relevant information.

Along with this, we should not downplay the importance of urban “black holes” either. Behind the field of entertainment, the success of imaginary worlds in modern societies reveals important changes in individual preferences and personality traits. Why might people now start to enjoy stories with imaginary worlds and not before? Dubourg et al. (2023) suggest that the appeal relies on growing exploratory preferences: “Humans universally become more curious and explorative as they live in more affluent ecologies, notably because the evolutionary costs of curiosity decrease in such environments.” From there, we can understand “black holes”—as they are understood and presented in Šembera’s documentation—as localities on the borders of clearly defined worlds that seem to have no identity or purpose of their own, but in fact represent a stimulating resource for their surroundings.

If the hypothesis that Dubourg et al. (2023) present is true, the economic growth of modern societies has “fuelled a bigger and bigger audience for stories set in imaginary worlds, and producers of fiction could therefore invest more and more in the creation and refinement of such worlds.” If the perspective of time and the depiction of moral issues so effectively draw us into a fictional world, it is often because narratives and plays choose memorable themes and events rather than predictable ones. Becoming immersed in a fictional world means getting close to the characters represented within its temporal perspective, acknowledging their destiny, passions and motives. We vicariously participate in their surrounding world; we fleetingly but vividly belong to their Umwelt. Once we arrive at this insight, we realise that it could apply to our own real world, to the everyday life we lead. This turn of phrase “applies,” however, is not quite the right. It is rather an approximate verbal translation of the awe-inspiring sense that, above the multitude of maxims for action and the hyper-goodness that directs them, there is a supreme level that opens, giving the whole space of human action not only shape and boundaries but also a more fundamental impetus. At this level the fictional and the real world become one, while the place of their clash is real space, defined by urbanism, by specific architecture (Pavel 2010) (Fig. 6).



FIGURE 6. Oldřich Šembera, From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2008a, digital photography, private collection

URBAN BLACK HOLES

As an urban as well as imaginative concept, architecture is ultimately a formative element in the shaping of socio-cultural relations. According to Reed (2017, 4) it helps us to understand not only socio-political or economical specifics of the given “terrain,” be they popular or forbidden, wealthy or deprived parts of cities etc., but also their inner structures. Reed’s (2017, 8) development of the term “black hole” is of particular interest to us: “Buildings are like black holes within the urban fabric, channelling us through to alternate built realities, helping to create a universe experienced as multiple viewpoints or ‘worlds.’” These worlds or realities are formed by a combination of our perception of the physical environment and how architects shape it through their interventions. Reed (2017, 8) continues:

Architects do not build representations of reality. Through the act of designing and building, architects disrupt and change the surface of physical reality. These multiple scattered objects are manifestations of the real, and form nodal points which can, on occasion, reveal aspects of reality. By changing the surface of reality, these architectural objects can shift our relation to, and awareness of, the real.

Aside from its astronomical use, the term “black hole” is also commonly used—for logical reasons—also in film or in the creation of fictional worlds. The reason for this is its immersive, liminal dimension, which can be easily traced in the “reality” of historical cities of medium size and specific aesthetic order, such as Olomouc, which are linked to the symbolic and aesthetic order of the Habsburg monarchy and to modern principles of monument conservation. This approach could help us to explore new ways of understanding the relations of semiotics, simulation, perception, and the relationship to reality itself in terms of architecture and urbanism.

Understanding “black hole” and related concepts figuratively is productive for other disciplines. For example, “event horizon” or “supernova” can be used to describe the surface layer between the outside field of reality and the internal experience of the object. The “vortex” is then an interior that plunges us from normal reality to a reality experienced as one type or another, usually an experience that provokes a contemplation of the nature of reality itself.

If we think about the universal aspect of our problem, we cannot leave out the effort of modern architects and urbanists to get rid of “black holes,” get rid of the debris. For example, Rem Koolhaas’s famous *Junkspace* describes the “proliferating debris of modernization” which fills our environment like expanding foam, polluting the world (2002, 17). The term also refers metaphorically to places that have lost their



FIGURE 7. Oldřich Šembera, *From the series Bynda River Peoples*, 2008b, digital photography, private collection

meaning and characteristics in the man-made environment and resist classification. Koolhaas' reflection is thus related to that of Marc Augé (2009) who calls this homogenised, ungraspable environment a “non-place” – describing it as an opposition to the traditionally perceived space, taking on all the ills and accompanies the super-modernity we live in. Non-places are airports, supermarkets, motorways, or global hotel chains. In the contrast to Michel Foucault's (1986) “heterotopias,” they are places of circulation, communication, and consumption that need no history, and even identity. Their main quality is their globalism, i.e. inner (habitual, emotional) emptiness (Fig. 7).

The power of Koolhaas's concept of junkspace also lies in its critique of architects who have resigned to becoming complicit in the large global project. Architecture is thus “in retrospect” driven back to its responsibility, as Monika Mitášová (2017, 10) explains:

Architecture is political, it enters and takes place in the political world, it provokes political incidents, it is politically evaluated, criticized and interpreted. Architecture as the cognition of the arché through the shaping of things and models of the world is political only in the fact that it affirms the architectonics of the world, society and culture. Architecture is the ordering of all that is permanent and changing: elements and force fields, the animate and inanimate based on boundaries (peras) and horizons, the peratic and the operatic on different levels: natural, social and cultural.

Hence the importance of the urban planning on a cluster basis, in which one segment complements the surrounding ones in its aesthetics, function and operation. The question is whether the correction of a spatial ballast can come through a more critical approach of architects. Is there a more effective means of rediscovering a place’s identity and meaning than an artistic expression that can give non-places a distinctiveness and the possibility of transformation?

As is well known, Koolhaas has focused on the ever-expanding connectivity of junkspace, and the need for cities that flow and transform in another book, titled *Whatever Happened to Urbanism* (1995). Exploring the metaphor of space junk allows us to understand how we can counter its proliferation on the scale of the city which expands with seemingly no rational logic outside political or economic gain. Junkspace appears disconnected—but it is all about connection, whereas space junk is about disconnection and dis-rupture—but can help redefine connection. It is precisely this device of space junk that allows us to suggest strategies for inserting nodes of consciousness within the mess of the post-cinematic urban environment (Willis 2019), allowing for an architectural confrontation with and investigation of reality.

As Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (1992) suggests, politics is substantially incorporated into the reality of the media-saturated world we live in. In particular for architecture, this brings up the issue of “buildings as image and spectacle” or rather—to what degree a building reinforces the dominant ideology through its relation to image and spectacle. How a building or object manifests as an image, as a spectacle, and how it can internally disrupt the spectacle are important design issues for our time (Steele 2010).

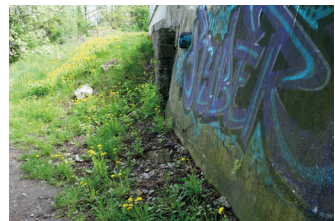
LIVING DOCUMENT—MONUMENT—MOCKUMENT

The historic central European city is a specific socio-cultural concept, which can be defined as a conglomeration of medium size with a population of one hundred to one hundred and fifty thousand with a historic centre, often including a secular or ecclesiastical seat of government and university, surrounded by residential districts massively built during the totalitarian era, as well as industrial areas dating back to the first wild years of the transition period (Sidorová and Lammelová 2018). Although attention is usually focused on two in many ways contradictory “zones” of urbanistic planning, centre and periphery, what in my opinion truly deserves attention is the “non-urban space” between them. This “empty” space not only connects those two better-defined domains but also the two modes of social existence. Moreover, as Oldřich Šembera’s work shows, it reveals the temporal aspect of their performative establishment and development.

The most important aspect of his work for us here is the ability to observe, document and present latent aspects of everyday life and aesthetics of our habitual practices, its so-called aesthetic regimes. One way to think about this “basic” (and paradoxically complex) experience is its relation to memory, time, and history. This relation is crucial, especially with the emergence, proliferation, and current spectacularising of modern institutions of cultural memory. In this context, the duality of monument and document emerges, with the latter parametrically describing the former (Le Goff 1978). Monument and document are distinct historical categories involving specific research material. Documents elicit historical narratives and the construction of arguments. It serves as evidence, presents the true, and establishes itself on the traces of history. The monument is a real, physical remnant of these events endowed with highly symbolic content. In many cases—not to mention only Olomouc, but also Polish Cracow, Slovakian Košice, or Hungarian Debrecen—it turns out that the historical centre is understood simply as a monument, while residential areas are a document of the social practices of a life lived in their background.

While the monument is the primary material or the extended embodiment of the socio-cultural values, the document is its informational background. Following crises of language, representation, and signification they both become problematic. Consequently, monuments and documents are no longer trusted. And thus, mockuments emerge as the new dominant (counter-)instruments—as a construction that “combines the free play of imagination with mnemonic elements from empirical reality” (Eşanu 2021). Unlike the previous categories, which concerned themselves with history “as it happened,” a mockument ignores traces or even the referent, emphasizing instead what might (have) happened or what could have been an alternative to the social status quo. A mockument plays with the features of both (permanence, information saturation, symbolic meaning, etc.), but tries to construct an alternative meaning based on lived experience. Among many other things, a mockument signals a refusal to engage in cognitive mapping—that is, the mapping of the acute social contradictions and inconsistencies of not just totalitarian practices (unification, conformity, self-observation) but also of market democracies (inequality, poverty, unemployment, exploitation), favouring instead detached witticism, sarcasm, and the free play of imagination. A mockument is a reaction to shared rules but does not conform to them—similar to the movement of black holes.

As Eşanu (2021) further explains, the rise of the mockument could be easily understood as part of a process of erosion of credibility of both the document and monument, and also of society—a sort of “cynical, ironic, and satirical corruption of these other two instruments of time.” It is thus very close to what Fredric Jameson (1992) famously called *pastiche* in the context of postmodernism (i.e. an empty parody, a statue



with blind eyes), but unlike pastiche, “which ridicules the modernist phantasms of artistic autonomy and essence and the bourgeois belief in a ‘unique self,’ what the mockument mistrusts and finds impossible is memory and ultimately modernist Truth.” (Eşanu 2021) A mockument is thus understood as “a sort of counter-instrument of time,” which for us means a void, a fabrication, a fiction that is often claimed to be lie—a sort of make-believe adjustment (Walton 1990), a role play for the real world. However, and here I refer to Rosalind Krauss’s (1985) critique of postmodernism, even this newly emerging category has precursors. It is not a direct opposition to them, but rather a revision, still working with previous experience and knowledge. Without them, the mockument, however intuitive, would have no meaning.

If we put the triad that Eşanu applies to Central-Eastern European art of the second half of the twentieth century in the context of the local tradition of monument conservation, further reinforced by the destructive experience of the two world wars and uncontrolled post-war industrialisation, a more complex picture emerges—one that is, among other things, saturated by Reed’s reflection on the modern architecture of the “post-cinematic world” (Melková 2022). Everything that happens in this newly established non-urban cinematic space is logically in the sphere of make-believe, a matter of process and permanent negotiation. It does not follow the rules, it has no precise goal, it does not produce profit or knowledge. In this discursive context, the credibility of all the activities, including ritual practices and everyday business, is based on their habitual unfolding within a space that can indeed be spoken of as outside or in-between—since this is what proves their significance and produces a new (aesthetic) regime. Furthermore, if a black hole is not a specific architecture feature, but the absence of one. Negative spaces tend to develop best in the realm of social practices. Via social practices negative spaces are also embodied and as such become autonomous entities. We can connect that with our need to give negative spaces names, personalise them and thus put them in a mode of relational aesthetics—physically as well as mentally and imaginatively (Fig. 8).

CONCLUSION

If we understand modern urbanism as an attempt to come to terms with the situation established by past periods, with belief in the monument and the document finally disappearing during the transformation period and being replaced by the “mockument” in the sense of a meta-mutation of both endowed with an internal critical position, the existence of black holes can be seen as a potentially positive aspect of the development of medium-sized historic centres. They are places the rational organisation of public space does not quite reach, yet it is nevertheless present there, and can be treated as the pragmatic basis for the formation of imaginative

FIGURE 8. *Oldřich Šembera, From the series Bynda River Peoples, 2008–2015, digital photography, private collection*

or fictional worlds. It is through these games that are played there that we test, develop, and adapt the practices with which we subsequently return to the central or peripheral sites. The rise of the mockument may therefore enrich the monument and the document, the traditional and stable components of Western civilisation. In addition to Oldřich Šembera, or Olomouc, other examples of local "black holes" can be studied. Moreover, they are also repeatedly reflected in contemporary artistic practices, for example, in the work of another Czech artist, Eva Kořátková, the daughter of a philosopher Tomáš Kořátko, who often works with the theory of fictional worlds in which the diverse games of adults are played out in the world of children, and vice versa. Its boundaries almost merge with ours, yet they are clearly visible in the liminal experience with which active participation in the game is associated. Although the parameters have changed, this cannot be overestimated. A game, after all, as Johan Huizinga ([1938] 2016) writes, "is a voluntary activity that is performed within fixed temporal and spatial boundaries, according to voluntarily accepted but unconditionally binding rules, that has an end in itself and is accompanied by a sense of tension and joy and an awareness of an existence other than everyday life."

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