

The Future of the New
An interview with Boris Groys
Thijs Lijster

Introduction

'New!' 'Improved recipe!' 'Now better than ever!' This much is clear: if you want to sell something, you have to emphasize its novelty. The driving force of history is innovation, constant progress and improvement. That is at least what we are made to believe; the dominant ideology of our times. This ideology was once most forcefully voiced and promoted by nineteenth-century artists and art theorists. *Make it new!* said Ezra Pound. *Il faut être absolument moderne*, said Arthur Rimbaud. 'And plunge to depths of Heaven or Hell, / To fathom the Unknown and find the *new!*' said Charles Baudelaire. After God, morality and even beauty had ceased to function as credible criteria for evaluating the arts, all that remained were novelty and originality. The shock of the new, as Australian art critic Robert Hughes later called it, became the primary characteristic of modern art, the first as well as the final criterion for its valuation.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, theorists of the postmodern argued that this final criterion now too failed us. In his essay 'The Sublime and the Avant-garde' (1984) Jean Francois Lyotard scorned 'the cheap thrill, the profitable pathos, that accompanies an innovation' (106), Fredric Jameson in his seminal essay 'Postmodernism

and Consumer Society' (1983) argued that our present day will no longer be able to invent anything new. Art critic Rosalind Krauss published a book *and Other Modernist Myths* (1986). Groys writes:

The present as such was more boring than anything negative, as something that had no future [...] Today, we are stuck in a dead end, not leading to any future. [...] It is a state of indecision, of delay—a boring

This boredom characterizes contemporary art. For Groys, the artist for him is like Sisyphus, who keeps rolling the boulder up the mountain, never reaching the glorious horizon of the future, but instead falling into a state of temptation and confusion. For Groys, art is a way to raise questions on the nature and function of the new.

These were questions that he already raised in his book *The New* (1990), which was published 25 years after the debates on art and theory.¹ According to Groys, with regard to the new: on the one hand, there is nothing above, no one 'believed' in the new, and on the other, we still expected to see or hear something new. For Groys, this meant that we had to create something new.

In order to do that, Groys first started to question the connotations of concepts such as utility and originality. Referring back to Nietzsche, he argued that we had lost our values:

Innovation does not consist in the emergence of something previously hidden, but in the fact that the value of something always already seen and known is re-valued. The revaluation of values is the general form of innovation: here the true or the refined that is regarded as valuable is devalorized, while that which was formerly considered profane, alien, primitive, or vulgar, and therefore valueless, is valorized. (10)

The exemplary work of art, to which Groys would return again and again throughout his oeuvre, is Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917). What Duchamp did, after all, was not to invent something that was not there before, but to place something from the domain of the profane in the domain of the sacred. In retrospect, argues Groys, this was what art and artists have always done. Duchamp, by stripping the act of artistic transformation down to almost nothing, shows us what innovation comes down to: cultural revaluation.

For Groys this meant that the answer to the question of innovation was to be found in a specific place: the collection or archive. To collect something, whether it concerns the library, the collection of immortal souls, or the museum of modern art, means to grant it importance, that is, to sanctify it. Hence, *Über das Neue* can be considered as the starting point of Groys' reflections on the function and status of the museum in our contemporary society, which he later developed in books such as *Logik der Sammlung* (1997) and *Topologie der Kunst* (2003). As the subtitle of *Logik der Sammlung* makes clear – *Am Ende des musealen Zeitalter*, 'at the end of the museum age' – Groys was already well aware of the waning influence and importance of the traditional museum, in the face not only of societal developments such as the suspicion of a supposedly elitist culture and the increasing power of private collectors, but also of artistic movements, which in several waves of so called 'institutional critique' tried to break out of, or emancipate themselves from, the museum. Still, as Groys emphasizes again in the interview below, without the museum, there can be no innovation.

Groys distinguishes the new from modernist 'myths' of historical progress and utopia, but also from contemporary myths such as creativity and the 'Other'. With

regard to the latter, he has always had to have something to do with it, and in having to be a 'reflection' of society.

When art relinquishes its autonomy and differences, it also loses the power of critique. All that remains for it is to be already leveled at or manufactured in the name of existing structures, an affirmation of the existing situation. (113).

However, this does not mean, for Groys, that he argues below, the revaluation of value, i.e. to value something that was not previously valued, is the political act *per se*. Household equipment, advertisement, and other things considered too base or banal for art, and even innovative artists, in much the same way as the realm strive to be heard, and as empires, politics and law gained rights.²

Born in East Berlin in 1947, Groys moved to Moscow, where he was also active in the 1970s. He later moved to West Germany where he later received his PhD. Today he is Global Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University, and travels around the globe for biennials, conferences, etc. His experience is crucial for his thinking, which is a mix of zing, and which occasionally leads to surprising and seemingly bizarre consequences, such as the one which he argues that Stalin completed. He also mentions artists like Malevich or Mayakovsky.

themselves did; or in *Das kommunistische Postskriptum* (2006), where he argued that the Soviet Union was the realization of the linguistic turn in the political realm.

Another aspect of his work and style that makes him both a fascinating and provocative thinker is his apparent nihilism. In this interview as well as in any of his other writings, he resolutely refuses to be nostalgic or moralistic. He registers the differences between, and historical developments of, the modern and the postmodern, between the East and the West, or between the museum and the supermarket, but he nowhere speaks of decline. Rather than passing value-judgments, Groys seems to be more interested in analyzing what has actually changed, and how this change allows or forces us to reframe our concepts and practices.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Über das Neue*, as well as, as it happens, that of the 100th anniversary of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, Krisis asked Groys to reflect on the legacy of this book, on the contemporary meaning of notions such as creativity, originality and novelty, and on the future of the new.

I. On the New, 25 years ago

Thijs Lijster: Could you tell something about the time in which the book was written? What was the situation in the art world, and why did you think it was important to write a book on the category of the new back then?

Boris Groys: That was the time of postmodern discourses: everywhere everybody was speaking about the impossibility of the new. That was a core belief of the postmodern mind-frame. At the same time, it was quite clear to me – I was teaching at the university and I was also, as a curator, participating in artistic activities – the factual criteria of the new were still valid. For example, imagine someone who has to write a doctoral thesis, saying: I don't say anything new, because we live in postmodern times and the new is impossible, so let me only repeat what was said before. It would not be possible for him to make his doctorate. So, to make the doctorate, he would have to prove that he said something new. It was the same

in the case of selection of artworks and views of the state of the art world. art work a new phenomenon, did th So, there was a kind of duplicity in theoretical level, everybody said th practice this requirement of the new was to try to reconstruct and to de this requirement. So: what does it became impossible? What is the co book was an attempt to reconstruct matic, presuppositions of the new, a ity.

TL: In order to do that, you rid the connotations, like 'utopia' and 'prog definitions of the new: "The New is "The New is not a product of hun 'rescue' the category of the new, by

BG: I wouldn't say I tried to rescue other concepts. I merely responded these connections, between the new lete, if we would take the postmod hadn't become obsolete; it remaine tried to do something - to disengage happened in culture. That was the s I just tried to phenomenologically d

TL: The new was, as you said, separ also from its temporal dimension. Y future as much as to the past" (2014, when an object is transferred from

possible to detach the new from its temporal dimension? After all, isn't the new what happens after the old?

BG: Again, I didn't detach it; it was detached *de facto*. So, I asked myself: What is the function of the new in this context? It became clear to me that the new, in the context of art, is related to what is already in our archives. Our culture is structured in the following way: we have the archives, and the world outside of the archives. The archives exist in the here and now, and the world outside of the archives also exists now, it is not the world of the future or the past; both worlds – that of the archives and the outside world – are contemporary to each other and to our own experience.

But what is their relation? My idea was that it is in the intersection between these two worlds that the new emerges. If I write a doctorate and I want to show that the doctorate is new I do not compare what I said to all possible opinions in the world I'm living in, because it can happen that some of these opinions actually are part of my world. I begin to compare this text, my own text, with the archives, with what is already accepted as valid in a certain discipline. So, I take some opinions or knowledge – my own opinions and those of my friends – from outside of the archives, compare them to what is already in the archives and precisely if some of these opinions are not in the archives I present them as new. The artist does the same. That is something already described very well by Baudelaire, in his famous essay on 'The Painter of Modern Life'. Baudelaire speaks about an artist who looks at the classical ideal of beauty and at the same time at what happens around him, and then what he tries to do is to combine them. The same can be said about the avant-garde. The avant-garde never ever indicated any future. If we look at the avant-garde writings, their programs and manifestoes, they tell you all the same: we have the museums, filled with ancient Apollos and so on, and outside of the museums and around us we have tanks, trains, airplanes, explosions and killings, industrial machines, and mathematics and geometry. Some kind of new order; these things are not precisely the things of the future, they are already around.

TL: All they did was implement them into the cultural realm?

BG: Precisely. That's it, and only that. The avant-garde always experiences that the people in their time are not ready to move into the space of the cultural archive precisely its ability to cross this border into the cultural space. It was not concerned with some senseless utopia, but with the actual state of civilisation. It is the same with Mallarmé and the avant-garde. The avant-garde doesn't invent anything. He just brings to the surface what is already there. Now imagine that you bring to the surface a different one, because it has a different function. I would say: it is irrelevant, because it is not new enough? It means that it might be the difference between art and life, between the archives and everyday experience. The effect of the new, and the effect of the new, is so different from the cultural archive and contemporary life.

TL: If the new is detached from the archive and human freedom, doesn't that also mean the end of *das Neue*, also in *Logik der Sammlung*, the artistic and political avant-gardes. It is not from the idea of a better world, what is it?

BG: First of all, I consider my own work as the new. The decision to take something out of the archive and to put it into the archive is an *actual* political decision. It's not like Christ: believing he was not just a man but God. To ascribe value to something, to put it into a valuable context, is the *Urform* of politics. It is the same pattern according to the same pattern.

the workers had no value in the system of representation. It takes a political decision to change this value, after which they are represented.

In the *Second Surrealist Manifesto*, Breton asks: What is an authentic surrealist artwork? And he answers: to go into the crowd with a revolver and randomly shooting into it. So, you take this action, a terrorist deed, and put it into another context, the context of art. In the same way, Marinetti speaks of the metallization of the human body, the wonderful effect of exploding African villages, and so on. If you look at those examples, you see immediately that what I describe is eminently political. Utopias are not by nature political, they are literary fictions. Whether they have any political value has to be decided politically. In other words: utopias are not a source of politics, but an object of politics. I have to make the decision, and this decision cannot be delegated to any theory or any utopian vision. That means that the value of my political decision cannot be deduced from utopia itself.

TL: The politics of the new, then, is that in the same way as people that were not politically represented get a vote and get representation, something that was outside of the cultural realm gets inserted.

BG: Yes. And with regard to politics, not only people, but maybe even lions or plants. There has emerged a new ecological consciousness that believes that also certain animals or plants should be represented in our culture, which means they should be protected. The question what should be represented is the crucial question of our society, because our society knows only two modes of relating to things and people: to let them perish, or to protect them. That is the basic political decision. If you decide to include something into the system of representation, this means that you are interested in how this thing – object, human being, animal or whatever – will be translated into the future. The museum, the archive in general, is a futurist institution, because it keeps things for the future. Futurism was never about the future, innovation is not about the future, but it relates to the future in so far as it gives us a promise of protection and preservation.

TL: So what is new now will be in the future.

BG: Yes, precisely. Being included, on which our culture is based. This is neglected. For example, Nietzsche said three hundred years. It meant that he was not fully understanding his writings, working in libraries, distributing them, for three hundred years. Utopia, this is a true utopia. There is no utopia on the institutions of protection in art works, have an instinctive trust in the future, precisely what gives the basic energy of the future. It would be safeguarded, protected, and I was and still am interested in it.

II. The new, then and now

TL: What, in your view, is the world 25 years ago and now?

BG: The main differences have to do with the electronic archive. These differences are in the ways. First, if you think of the traditional archive, it was precisely to mediate between the past and the artistic (or theoretical) expression of the present. The internet gives to everybody the immediate access to the past – everybody makes selfies, video, and a mass culture of consumers – the situation of mass cultural production is different. We no longer have writers, philosophers, or artists.

The second difference, however, is that the Internet still does not produce the stability, security and protection that the traditional archives had. We often think this is an institutional question, or a technological one, but in fact it is an economic one. Internet platforms are privately driven, so they have to make profit. And that means that on the Internet there is no place for the museum, or an archive in any form. I'm quite sceptical about whether this will change. Basically, today, if you want to have an archive on the Internet, it should be based on already existing archives. Only institutions like the MoMA and Tate can establish something like an Internet archive, partially also because they are able to pay for this. In the EU, if you want to establish an Internet archive, you get a guarantee of protection of maximum 30 years. So it will cost a lot of money, and there is still a lot of insecurity.

What does it mean if you take these two points together? It means that in the contemporary global framework, you have total representation, but from a future perspective, it is all garbage. What is interesting is that the Silicon Valley people know this very well; they all create secret museums, libraries, documentation centres, etc. but these are not traditional archives in the sense I describe in my book, since they are not publicly supported and accessible for the public. There have been many attempts to create electronic archives, but *de facto* none of these attempts were really successful, precisely because of the general structure of the Internet and its relations of property.

It is the classical Marxist situation of collective use and private property. That analysis, if there is any place to use it, very much applies here. Everybody uses these Internet platforms, but they belong to only a few companies. There is a tension between the interests of the users and the interests of the companies, but this tension is hidden and not thematized, because people believe that the Internet is a means of communication. If we would start to think the Internet as a means of archiving, then this tension would be obvious. It is possible, however, that people would give up the archive in general, that people will be only interested in communication and no longer in archiving. That would mean indeed that they would not be interested in the future, and then the role of the archives would be

decreasing. Partially we already are cannot compete with private collectors the current situation in the art world on the collector's taste, which cannot of course constitute the framework the same can be said about libraries and too expensive, taking up too much

It seems to me that today we are in structures I described in my book – are still existing and function in the virtual reality, viral videos, and so on. I want to say that there is a factor of relationship, and I think that is already written.

TL: You say that people are no longer the same time there is a lot of anxiety in the shape of 'cultural heritage' and so forth ceases to represent a danger and because of tradition has been preserved" (2010) anxiety emerges from a lack of history cannot make sense of the present, or do not know what is historically meant mean for the category of the new?

BG: Indeed, we can no longer rely related to digital media: we are concerned everyone globalized him or herself. archive still means under this new makes no difference for the category if the archives would dissolve completely the new, but then we also no longer

we'll still have politics, but I'm not sure about it. All these phenomena relate to the archives, so if the archives dissolve, then all the other things dissolve as well.

TL: Is that a real threat?

BG: Maybe it is a threat, maybe a relief. I think a lot of people would see it as liberation. It is difficult to say. I think it is a mixture between threat and liberation, in the same way that every utopia is also a dystopia. But I think the fact is that many people welcome this development; that the feeling of liberation prevails, the feeling of being liberated from the archive, but also from literature, art and philosophy.

In a sense it would be another step in the history of secularization. European culture has a complex relation to its religious heritage. You still have the names of the saints, ideals of sovereignty and creativity, and an institutional long-term memory, which all together show that it is really a secularized version of a feudal or religious order. In one of my early texts, written at the same time as *Über das Neue*, I wrote that I would not be surprised if after a new revolution curators would be hanged on lampposts in the same way the French aristocracy was, because they incorporate the same feudal order. It is possible that we go through a new wave of liberation, which started in the 1960s, found its medium in the Internet, and now rids itself of the final traces of the feudal order.

TL: And would this also mean the end of the new?

BG: Yes. The problem is that the new itself, in European culture, has of course its origin in the New Testament. So what is the new? The New Testament is new in relation to the Old Testament. If you don't have the Old Testament, you can't have a New Testament. That's only logic. Now, if we have an anti-testamentarian movement, as we have now, almost already full-fledged, then it is all over. There is no old, no new, there's no culture. And I tell you: people experience that as liberation. I see that a young generation is very happy about it. And I'm not against it.

TL: In your book, you discuss the inclusion of minorities or socially oppressed groups in a museum or archive. This seems to be a high goal, but for instance also with a museum that is considered to be too masculine, too traditional, of the way this debate is usually framed. How do you utilize things and signs of the social and cultural already detached herself from this? How do you come from without." (2014, 169). But isn't the goal of innovation is supposed to come? In the context of the collection that something appears from the outside in that case, you might say that claims to cultural recognition, are in fact highly

BG: They are relevant. But first of all, it's a struggle to enter the collection, that's the problem. That? It is always successful because of the kind of inner logic of the collection. When you are confronted with something they

However, as I tried to discuss in *Über das Neue*, representation involves two problems. In my experience in America, the first problem is that for me that I had to fill in 'race' in my application form, because I am a white male. In New York City, many don't speak English, so the majority culture of the US. So first of all, what is the majority? These categories

The second problem is that the individual represents his or her culture of origin. Is it French, that Huysmans is, or who

artists represent only themselves. The idea that they represent a bigger group is, I would say, a very American idea.

TL: But even if you say that the individual artist doesn't represent a group, you still might say that the museum represents a certain western white male culture, rather than other cultures, which are present geographically speaking but aren't represented in the museum's collection.

BG: I agree with that. We have a complicated structure of protest and domestication. To become a famous French poet you first have to hate everything French, to break with the tradition. Like Rimbaud who said: I want to become black, I hate France; or Breton who said: when I see a French flag I vomit, and so on. If you are really and typical French, you will never get into a French museum, and you will never be a French poet of genius, because you will be average French. You will have to break all the rules, hate France, committing some crimes is always helpful – think of Genet – and only then you get the status of being a great French artist.

The problem with the contemporary struggles is that people want to get access to the collection, but without putting into question yourself and your own tradition. You are not obliged or expected to make this detour, not obliged to become other to yourself, which is, actually, the meaning of the word 'other'. As French philosophy crossed the Atlantic it changed in many ways, but the crucial change was in the word 'other'. In the French tradition, the 'other' is either God, or the subconscious, but in any case, it is something living in you that is not you, that can possess you, destroy you, take over. You are struggling against it, put it under control or otherwise it controls you. It is an old story, and eventually leads to Bataille, Foucault and Derrida, for whom the other is writing: it is not you who write, but something in you and through you. But then, after this French philosophy crossed the Atlantic Ocean, the 'other' become simply: the other guy. People think they are already the other, because they are the other guy. This secularization or banalization of otherness is actually what constitutes the major part of contemporary discourse.

I don't say it's a wrong development of modern consciousness. I just wanted of the new, something changed. Me trying to destroy my identity, becoming to the cultural tradition (as was always) and raise a claim to be accepted to suffering or inner struggle.

TL: Today, even more than when applauded throughout society, especially. Think of Richard Florida's praise of has to be creative, think outside the box. How do you regard this imperative of innovation?

BG: I think creativity is nonsense, a Christian notion *per se*, it is a residue of Catholic, and all these people probably of that kind cannot be creative. It's the work of human productivity is combining, propelled after an elementary Turing machine of what a human mind can do. After anything ontologically new; that is not divine privilege.

TL: You argue in your book that inauthentic newness. But don't you think different, or is used in a different way like iPhone that one needs to have every day as an innovation in the art world?

BG: A new iPhone is not an innovation of innovation is the archive. We

supermarket, and the museum. What is the difference? One model, the museum, allows for innovation, because it keeps all the old productions, and so you can compare the old with the new. If I introduce a new product in the supermarket, it is simply part of the offer. You don't see what is not offered. Assyrian Gods, for instance, are not offered in the supermarket. What is not produced here and now is removed from the supermarket, and so we can't see it. And because you can't see it, you can't compare it, and because you can't compare it, you are in the same situation as you were before. Maybe you can remember what was in the supermarket two months ago, if you have a good memory, but not for very much longer. So if you are not in the archive but in the real world, there is no real change, because every moment is like the other moment. As long as you don't think teleologically – so if you don't think there is an origin, and don't believe there is an end – you cannot differentiate between one moment and another, since you cannot determine their distance from the beginning or the end. If you believe in the second coming of Christ, you can calculate the distance of a particular moment from the first and the second coming, but if there is no such promise, whatever it is, then it is like if you're running on a treadmill: you are running, but you remain in the same place.

When I came to America, there was the Obama campaign, with the posters “Change”, and “Yes we can”. I always told my students: changing is the only thing we can. There is change today, and change tomorrow. The only real change would be a change from change to no change – that is utopia.

TL: But social institutions can change. Replacing the feudal order with a democratic system is an actual change, isn't it?

BG: Yes, that was a historical change. But after that, and if there is no longer a hierarchy, then you don't have any change. The problem of our social institutions today is rather that they change all the time. You can never find the same person in the same place. I don't think democracy has anything to do with it. What happened is that ever since the industrial revolution, there is constant technological development, and we as humans tried to accommodate to changing situations. Every day, all our effort is concentrated on how to survive this day under different

conditions. I cannot send e-mails, I cannot install a new program, because my computer cannot accommodate to these changes. Total division of labour: you have to do everything on your own: your own doctor, taxi driver, and so on. It's the sheer material survival of mankind.

The protection of human beings is what works. Actually, the museum was invented by those who thought of human rights. Human rights are not there is this body that has to be protected, not mistreat it, etc. All you can do is look at what is established in the museum and you cannot use it. Human rights are based on what is established in the museum.

Now it seems to me that human beings are beginning to feel like Mowgli, or Tarzan, so that we are not sure how we can improve our chances, and we have a very cautious and frightened attitude. We are absolutely not frightened, but today we are absolutely not have the feeling that if they lose, they will be destroyed. They no longer believe in the social contract, a period in human history. But there is still a struggle for survival.

III. Innovation and acceleration

TL: A more recent plea for societal change is data activism, as explained in Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' *Manifesto* from 2013. They argue that it's not about innovation. Rather than

capitalism – as in the different slow-movements, or romanticizing localism and authenticity – we should speed up even further, so as to let capitalism crash against its own limits and go beyond it. How do you consider this proposal, or how in general would you describe the relationship between acceleration and innovation?

BG: There is no acceleration, there is just more pressure. Moreover, you are not the subject of this movement. The problem of accelerationism is the belief that you can appropriate this movement and steer it. That is impossible. Even our friend Deleuze didn't believe that. He believed we can enjoy acceleration, but he didn't believe that we could control it, or appropriate it.

TL: In their recent book *Inventing the Future. Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (2015), Srnicek and Williams further argue that left politics has abandoned the idea of progress and modernization, leaving them in the hands of neoliberalism, while retreating to a localized and romanticized 'folk politics', as they call it. In their view, the left should reclaim the future, and the category of the new is the instrument to do so. They write: 'If the supplanting of capitalism is impossible from the standpoint of one or even many defensive stances, it is because any form of prospective politics must set out to construct the new.' (75) How would you respond to this?

BG: I think that the moment we are experiencing now creates illusions of this type in the minds of young people. They believe that they are something like living start-ups. It's a new neoliberal illusion. Our whole development will lead to stagnation. First of all, the globe itself is a symbol of stagnation: it circulates, while progress is linear. Today we speak not about universalism, but about globalization. But globalization is circulation and that means that we already reached the point of stagnation. The stagnation is not obvious for most people, because there is still a middle class, with its traditional institutions: the universities, the museums, etc. But as soon as these collapse, the middle class will also collapse. I sometimes tell my students that every day they spent at the university makes them poorer, because the people who have money, from Madonna to Bill Gates, never went to school. So, we will come to a very traditional situation of poor and rich, and this will

produce the return of left ideas. Eventually cross the bridge between postmodernism and modernism. If you cross, you will always be neoliberal. But if the gap is too wide, like in *Metropolis*, then the only answer will be to do so. But if the gap is too wide, like in *Metropolis*, then the only answer will be to do so.

TL: What will these left ideas produce?

BG: We will see, we don't know what the revolution will produce. He was always saying that the Soviet Union was basically a temporary competitive world, it was becoming stagnating, then the question of international socialism and world state can come again. Right now, it is a feeling of that may be exciting, but it will last very long.

TL: So, if I understand you correctly, because these ideas are already there?

BG: Yes. In many ways we are back to the rhythm of the European culture: the eighteenth century was progressive, the nineteenth century progressive, etc. If you look at the French Revolution, first of all, everybody believed the revolutionaries were young women on the guillotine. But the capacity of survival were general through everybody was democratic. Now you

now the Soviet Union is totalitarian, terrible repression, women and children killed, and it was impossible, it could not survive. But in 70 or 80 years it will be completely reversed. So, we should simply relax and wait, for in time we will be disappointed by neoliberal illusions and utopias, look at the reality of life, which is miserable, and then look at the models, not of the better life, but how to organize miserable life.

TL: Like in the saying of Brecht, that communism isn't the equal distribution of wealth, but of poverty.

BG: Of course. And it is as bad as any other social system, but it has at least one advantage, that I understood when I went to the West. You really didn't have *Angst*, this prominent insecurity, and this sheer fear of not surviving the next day. On this very basic level people felt themselves totally secure and protected. And I believe this desire for stability, protection, and security will emerge again.

Today you see it on the right. Why is that? The West believes it has won the Cold War against socialism and communism. But who exactly are the winners? It is neoliberalism and religiously coloured nationalism. Now they are fighting each other. But they will try to find a compromise, because they have a common feature, and that is competition. Neoliberalism believes in the competition of everybody against everybody, and the other in the competition of one ethnic group against the other. Both hate universalism, and both hate the ideas of solidarity and cooperation. They honestly believe that what is best should be defined by competition, and if you don't arrange a harsh competition you won't know what is the best, or who is capable of winning. The problem is that, as I believe, man isn't capable of anything at all. The problem of nationalism and neoliberalism, then, is still the illusion of humanism, that humans can be creative, competitive, determine their own lives, can be responsible for themselves, and so on. They believe there is this kind of potential in human beings to deal with and manage any burden, going through any difficulty and making it: the American Dream. But it's all a huge lie, and the challenge is to see it as a huge lie that was only invented to terrorize people. To say to them: why are you poor, you have to make an effort, you have to struggle,

you have to constantly improve and point in time, we have to be relieved

When I was a child and responsive to Russian posters, saying: let us reach that we are somehow always behind more honest than everybody else, so Leninism, we should accept that our to reflect on it. So, our thinking is what connects capitalism and socialism than we can think.

IV. The future of the new

TL: Let's return once more to the concept 'entropy' you use in *Logik de* constantly extends and absorbs that economic jargon – be replaced by Inflation would then mean that the culturalization of profane domains) these innovations. (Bastelaere et al.

BG: If we follow our earlier line of thought and representation collapses, then in sense if you have the archives and is part of it. Without the institutions, sense. Art that leaves the museum [*nity art, TL*] always has to return to So, whatever you do outside of the value only if it is afterwards representation.

TL: In an interview I did with Luc Boltanski (Celikates and Lijster 2015) he argued, following Isabelle Graw, that the economic valuation of art works can never persist without the aesthetic valuation by critics, curators, artists, etc. If the two merge this is also destructive for the economic valuation. Do you agree with this analysis, and should this reassure us that market forces could never take over the art world completely?

BG: I think that art becomes more and more like a luxury product, like china or perfume. Everyone can make art, but not everybody makes a living from art. But if you don't make a living from art, it doesn't mean that you're not an artist. If you speak about professional art, you speak about making a living from art. Then it becomes simply a segment of the general market, and it's the same as Armani design and so on. If you look at creative districts in China, you see design, cutlery stores, fashion, art galleries, all together. But then it has nothing to do with general society.

TL: Is that so different from seventeenth century Holland, when art was also a luxury product?

BG: The institution of the museum, as you know, was created after the French Revolution. The revolutionaries took the objects of use from the aristocracy and instead of destroying them, they disenfranchised them and exhibited them, but forbid their use. It was a decision in between iconoclasm and iconophilia. What Duchamp later did was a repetition of this gesture – it is the same gesture. This museum is a public space. Privatization recreates the situation as it was before the French Revolution, but then we can no longer speak of public institutions and we lose historical consciousness. So the problem is not if Isabelle Graw or someone else finds some painting beautiful, according to a certain aesthetic theory. The question is: Is a certain artwork historically representative, so that it can be put in the museum? For a private collector, this question has no relevance, because it is his taste that matters, and not the archival importance. After writing *Über das Neue*, I was invited to Switzerland, where they organize schools for leading European collectors. I told them I considered these collections as installations and not

as museums, because the installation has a certain taste. At the moment you produce relationships that have nothing to do with

I tend to think that the model I produced in the 1990s, the model of culture that started with the French Revolution and communism. Now this system of culture and this process of collapsing takes very long time. The first libraries were private pyramids, and they survived. So many things survive as they survive the current model.

Notes

1] Boris Groys (1992) *Über das Neue. Versuche in der Kunstpolitik*. Translations in this text are to the English translation by Thijis Lijster and Robin Celikates, London and New York: Verso.

2] This brings Groys' theory of artistic innovation and politics are both characterized by *la partage* etc. See Rancière (2010).

References

- Bastelaere et al. 2013. *Boris Groys in context*.
Celikates, Robin and Thijs Lijster. 2015. "Conversation with Robin Celikates and Thijs Lijster." In: Gielen and Ruth Sonderegger (eds.) *Spaces of the Future*. Amsterdam: Valiz.
Groys, Boris. 1988. *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*.
Groys, Boris. 1992. *Über das Neue. Versuche in der Kunstpolitik*.

Groys, Boris. 1997. *Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*. München: Carl Hanser.

Groys, Boris. 2003. *Topologie der Kunst*. München: Carl Hanser.

Groys, Boris. 2006. *Das kommunistische Postskriptum*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Groys, Boris. 2008. *Art Power*. Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press.

Groys, Boris. 2009. "Comrades of Time." *e-flux* 11. Retrieved on 4 Dec 2017: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/11/61345/comrades-of-time/>

Groys, Boris. 2014. *On the New*, transl. G.M. Goshgarian. London and New York: Verso

Jameson, Fredric. 1998. *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*. London and New York: Verso.

Liotard, Jean-Francois. 1991. *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time*, transl. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Rancière, Jacques. 2010. *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics*, transl. Steven Corcoran. London and New York: Continuum.

Srnicek, Nick and Alex Williams. 2015. *Inventing the Future. Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London and New York: Verso.

Biographies

Boris Groys

Boris Groys (1947) is a philosopher, art critic and curator. He studied in Leningrad and Moscow, and did his PhD in Münster. He lectured in Vienna and Karlsruhe, and since 2005 is Global Distinguished Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Science, New York University. He published numerous books, including *The Total Art of Stalinism* (1992), *Art Power* (2008), *Introduction to Antiphilosophy* (2012), and *In the Flow* (2016).

Thijs Lijster

Thijs Lijster (1981) studied philosophy at the University of Groningen and the New School for Social Research in New York. Currently, he is assistant professor in the philosophy of art and culture at the University of Groningen, and postdoctoral researcher at the Culture Commons Quest Office of the University of Antwerp. He published *De grote vlucht inwaarts* (Bezige Bij, 2016) and *Benjamin and Adorno on Art and Art Criticism. Critique of Art* (Amsterdam University Press 2017), and coedited

De kunst van kritiek. Adorno in context (October 2017) and *Art Discourses* (Valiz 2015). This interview is published in *Artistic Innovation in Times of Social Acceleration* (Springer 2017).

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>