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Gazing at Fiction in Brussels: Europe as Forgery in David Černý's *Entropa*

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This article explores issues of visual representations and the interaction between fiction and reality in the making of the 'idea of Europe'. It specifically focuses on David Černý's installation Entropa, exhibited at the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in 2009. The article argues that, despite the use of national stereotypes as the most characteristic representational element of the installation, Entropa does not limit itself to a sardonic critique of a political institution and a ridicule of national identities. Rather, it unveils the uneasiness of facing European identity as fiction. Entropa challenges the boundary between theatricality and reality, because it is exhibited in a political institution. The installation is addressed as a narrative of confusion, where fiction and fact interact in the construction of ideas on Europe, its history, politics, and culture. Therefore, the article concludes, such interaction potentially accommodates a critical standpoint towards the idea of Europe itself.

Introduction: Representing mission Europe

Attempts to freeze the narrative of Europe into a single image emerged with the myth of princess Europa, kidnapped and raped by the disguised Zeus. The motif is common in various artistic representations, which range from antiquity to the twentieth century.[1] As images of Europe multiply, they expose that attempts to represent Europe negotiate the ongoing dialogue between imagination and its history. For instance, with the discovery of other continents and their conquest, Europe was anthropomorphised in images as well as sculpture and began to acquire the shape of a crowned woman,[2] which not only personified Europe's authority over the rest of the world, but also established a gendered gaze on Europe. These representations appeared in light of the Ottoman Empire's expansion, growing religious unrest within the Holy Roman Empire, social turmoil common throughout the continent, and increasing circulation of the word 'Europe' in the vocabulary of the time.[3] Both visual and verbal circulation of the idea of Europe proliferated as an objective to defend the Christian world against the threats that surrounded it. Given this background, it comes as no surprise that one of the first to use the word 'Europe' synonymously with the Christian world and describe an inhabitant of Europe as 'europeus' was the fifteenth-century

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pope Pius II.[4] In other words, the first representations illustrate that Europe first of all emerges not as an object to be discovered, but as Zygmunt Bauman claims, a mission.[5]

Improving cartographic skills and geographical triumphs buttressed this position even more, since they set the scene for the appearance of maps where the continent of Europe was shown as the body of a queen. Interestingly, some of them were quite masculinised images, herein illustrating the subordination of a feminised Europe to the male authority and reliance on it. For example, in the sixteenth century map *Regina Europa* by Johannes Bucius, which can be found in Sebastien Münster's celebrated *Cosmographia*, Europe appears as an imposing woman with broad shoulders, muscular hands and a sturdy neck, equally making room to interpret the figure as a man. The Iberian peninsula is the queen's crown, while Bohemia is the heart, thus embodying the descent of Charles V, whose power was epitomised in Regina Europa.[6] As Europe's cultural and geographical topography was changing during Napoleon's rule, these profound shifts once again were allegorically personified in another eccentric body. Hendrik Kloekhoff's 1790 map *Europa. Volgens de nieuwste verdeeling* (Europe. The Newest Classification) transforms queen Europe into an aging, hunched and somewhat mysterious woman rather a celebratory figure. Her body and dress are imposed on the continent, with the Middle East and the Russian Empire forming dark shadows on the layers of the dress as the woman mixes what looks like medicine in a cup she holds in her arms. This satirical map illustrated the first of the seven volumes of the Dutch writer Arend Fokke's *Boertige reis door Europa* (The Burlesque Travels Through Europe).[7]

Recent endeavours to convey the changing political, economic and sociocultural climate of Europe, along with its new symbolic order, suggest a similar amount of confusion. Take, for example, the common currency of the European Union. The euro fuses the EU's financial flows into a circulation of simulated European bridges that are supposed to represent ongoing cross-cultural communication. The requirements of the design competition for the euro banknotes stated that the notes should leave no room for national bias. Therefore, the images used were supposed to be recognisable as European styles without evoking specific places.[8] Before the launch of the currency in 2002, Robert Kalina, the winner of the competition, expressed hope that 'no one will recognise the old places',[9] thus exposing the frustration of representing Europe in the making. Kalina used computer graphics in order to render the appearance of bridges dispersed throughout the EU countries in order to frame Europe's new allegory, where no single EU member overshadows the others in Europe's new symbolic order. The notes that circulate throughout Europe abound with windows, gateways and bridges, yet display no people, this way unfolding a transitional universe that renders its spatiality anonymous, similar to Marc Augé's 'non-places'.[10] Here, identity, history and the relations between them are erased in order to construct the constant state of passage that is supposed to epitomise one's condition in contemporary Europe. Along with the Eurovison Song Contest, European Champions League, European Parliament, European Capital of Culture and the EU flag, the euro is one of the novel and tangible cultural markers that articulate Europe's wholeness and create a sense of belonging to it.

All of these markers were launched after last century's devastating wars and many of them followed Europe's demarcation with the Iron Curtain in order to fill in the apparent

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cultural and political void framed by such geopolitical circumstances.[11] These contemporary symbols expose Europe not as an object to be reflected upon and represented, but an object that has to be constructed in the face of Europe's post-colonial legacy, increasing migration and the EU's ongoing enlargement. After circulating as a myth for more than two millennia, Europe remains intangible and somewhat obscure, like the myth from which the name originates. In fact, this brings back the way the Greeks, and later on the Romans, thought of Europe, primarily associating it with myth rather than political entity or history.[12] Similarly, today's Europe is neither a continent nor a political body framed by the EU borders. Rather, it has become an incessant flow of simulated images that project its past and attempt to focus on the future. The essence of Europe can no longer be articulated as a set of particular values or political agendas. Its current climate and tensions are most vividly articulated in an annual live broadcast of songs that, instead of celebrating European commonness, challenges the periphery to outperform Europe rather than connect with it.[13]

Given these emerging patterns, my principal argument in this article is that instead of repetitively asking what Europe is, it is crucial to look for ways to relate to Europe as a construct, a site where imagination coats fact and fiction overlaps with reality. As practices of displaying Europe become engaging performances, the language of theatre rather than politics opens up critical insights on the idea of Europe and European identity. In this article I suggest reading representations of Europe through the perspective of theatricality, which I consider a way to relate to staged reality and a mode of engagement rather than the quality of the object or event. By doing so it is possible to interrogate how ways of looking at Europe as the subject of representation challenge the object that Europe is. I attempt to show how the installation *Entropa*, created by a group of Czech artists and erected in the headquarters of the European Union Council in January 2009, serves as an illuminating case where the ambiguities of Europe's representation and engagement with it unfold. I will start my argument by providing an account of *Entropa's* exhibition in Brussels, paying attention not only to the content of the installation itself, but also to the context within which it was staged – both political and mediatised. I will then introduce the concept of theatricality as a way to relate to staged reality. I will discuss *Entropa* against this background and examine the extent to which it illustrates how reality and fiction overlap in the construction of the discourse on Europe.

Visuality and the black cloth

The installation *Entropa* was commissioned by the Czech government and erected in the headquarters of the EU Council in January 2009 to mark the start of the Czech presidency in the Council (Figure 1). Semi-annually the space occupied by *Entropa* is given to the government of the country heading the six-month-long presidency, where artists of those countries exhibit commissioned work. Given the context of the institution, it comes as no surprise that displayed artworks tend to be celebratory and rarely address the idea of Europe or the EU critically. A few years ago, marking Germany's presidency, an installation in the shape of two identical bridges was created. While one of them was placed in the headquarters of the EU Council, the other was erected in the central hall of

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Figure 1. *Entropa* erected in the headquarters of the EU Council.

the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. When France held the presidency in 2008, a large balloon in the French national colours was suspended from the ceiling.

Contrary to expectations, *Entropa* neglected to reflect upon the euphoric celebration of Europe's unification epitomised by the enlargement of the EU, the sense of belonging to it, or the particular qualities of the Czech Republic. Instead, it exposed a number of European countries belonging to the EU in a clichéd way – by recycling some of the existing national stereotypes. The installation presented 27 EU countries scattered on a large scale modelling kit – about 16 metres high and 16 metres wide. Belgium became a box of chocolates, Sweden turned into a package from Ikea, France was wrapped up with a banner saying 'On Strike!', count Dracula's castle stood for Romania, drowning minarets indicated the Netherlands, a desert with a bomb in the Northern region symbolised Spain, the United Kingdom was simply absent, while five *Manneken Pis* sculptures, dressed in the Soviet

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Figure 2. The installation resembled a large-scale modelling kit, which consisted of 27 fragments.

army uniforms were relieving themselves eastwards (Figure 2). The latter fragment was symbolising Lithuania. Before the official launch, Slovakia's Minister for Foreign Affairs got in touch with the Czech Deputy Prime Minister expressing an official complaint regarding the way Slovakia was represented in the installation, as a sausage wrapped with a red-white-and-green string – the national colours of Hungary, thus suggesting an interpretation of tense relationships between the neighbouring countries. Representation of Bulgaria became the most widely discussed fragment of the artwork, since it was made present in *Entropa* as a series of squat toilets. After Bulgarian officials summoned the Czech ambassador demanding to remove Bulgaria from *Entropa*, it was covered up with a black cloth (Figure 3), thus remaining absent next to the United Kingdom, even though the mode of absence of these two countries is significantly different. This incident explicitly showcases the perpetual interaction between representation and politics, whereby both contest each other, while the installation's title tellingly recaps its cacophonic aesthetics.

The artwork was commissioned to the Czech artist David Černý, renowned for politically provocative projects, of which the most famous is a Soviet tank, which the artist painted in pink in 1991. According to the official booklet,[14] Černý was expected to gather artworks of 27 European artists, each representing individual EU member states. Before the launch it turned out that the artist, along with the acclaimed Czech art critic Tomás Pospiszyl and another artist Kristof Kintera, were completely in charge of *Entropa* and the embodiment of each of the 27 EU fragments. As journalists were franticly seeking to get in touch with the authors of the most scandalous representations, names and biographies of the 27 artists who were announced as the co-authors appeared to be fictitious. Later, Černý confessed that he indeed was planning to invite a number of European artists with their contributions, yet due to time constraints this could not be achieved.

The space occupied by *Entropa* is the first thing one sees upon entering the building of the EU Council. As the sculpture looms above the strict business suits and the press-conference room, its status becomes chimeral. Artistic farce finds itself next to political performances, incessant European news flows, and tourists paying homage to Brussels as

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Figure 3. The representation of Bulgaria was covered up with a black cloth.

Europe's new symbolic order. Extensive media coverage, the political setting within which Černý's artwork was commissioned and displayed along with the fact that it reflected upon contemporary Europe constitute the context within which *Entropa* is made legible. While it touches upon categories of politics, theatre, performance art, and media event, Černý's installation strictly falls into none of these. On the one hand, it is a monument to Europe's current condition and exposes how politics, art, personal, and public interact in the dramaturgy of everyday life. On the other, *Entropa* is a theoretical object which poses questions about the anatomy of representation and political implications of visuality as a way of dissecting how the displayed becomes seen.

To be more precise, instead of representing, *Entropa* poses questions on representation and asks how and why certain ideas of Europe take shape. Does a black cloth concealing squat toilets speak less or more than their display and what different meanings do these modes of exposition construct? Why are representations of 27 European countries by local artists disregarded as reflections on diverse European identities as well as Europe's congruous identity, and instead considered as a mere hoax once it becomes evident that the authorship belongs to the Czech artists headed by Černý? By exposing the ambiguity of representation with regards to the state of Europe nowadays *Entropa* illustrates how visibility and showing are charged with political implications, since later on representation

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defines the way history is being written.[15] In the same way, the installation illustrates how actual and imaginary negotiate each other in the construction of collective identity.[16–18] In fact, *Entropa* serves as an extension of previous and emerging attempts to frame the image of Europe, which by embracing fiction illustrate Bauman's remark that 'the essence of 'being a European' [is] to have an essence that always stays ahead of reality, and it is the essence of European realities to always lag behind the essence of Europe'.[19] In other words, existing attempts to show Europe expose his argument that 'European identity' was a utopia at all moments in its history.[20]

Since *Entropa* serves as a visual interpretation of the image of the EU, the tension between fiction and reality is particularly uneasy, because nowadays the EU epitomises Europe as a continent, a culture, a civilisation, a narrative, and a way of life. While the EU is an elaborate political construct, it is also Europe's most scripted incarnation, an exhaustive political apparatus, emerging in the constellation of meticulously staged props: the Constitution, common currency, anthem, flag, the Eurovision Song Contest, and the annual programme The European Capital of Culture. Once these lose the battle for the imagination of the European people, which recently happened with the difficulties of implementing the European Constitution as the EU's key document, this discourse tends to be taken over by counter-narratives, commonly articulated by nationalist political leaders.

Despite Europe's proliferating symbols, they are still rarely understood as imaginary bridges reconciling Europe's mythological past with uncertain future. This inability to embrace the element of fiction in the idea of Europe was illustrated by the Czech Deputy Prime Minister for the European Affairs Alexandr Vondra during the official launch of the installation when he famously announced: '*Entropa* is just art. Nothing more. Nothing less'. Afterwards the minister rushed to add that this was not how the Czech government was viewing the EU or any member state, thus negating his 'just art' point of view and demonstrating how easily fiction can be regarded as flesh in contemporary Europe. The fact that *Entropa* can be approached as forgery with the twofold relationship that this concept establishes, underscores the uneasy relationship between fiction and reality as well as practices of staging in the cultural ecology of contemporary Europe.

On his website, Černý describes *Entropa* first of all as mystification, consequently showing how *Entropa* functions outside of the undemanding and rigid binary of fakeness/authenticity by drawing attention to the peculiar tension between creation and falsification evident in the way the installation was staged. I believe it is useful to examine the underlying logic of forgery in *Entropa*, because the concept first of all spurs an ambiguous interaction – fascination with fakeness on the one hand (because it was considered to be authentic) and outrage with it on the other hand. It should be noted that the sixteenth century artist and historiographer of Renaissance Florence Giorgio Vasari considered Michelangelo's forgeries of antique sculptures as the highest artistic achievements.[21] Since forgery takes place in juxtaposition with the authentic which it threatens, because of its inferiority to authenticity, forgery manages to absorb and compel. By complicating the process of identification, forgery challenges the aura surrounding the artwork in a similar way that mechanical reproduction contests the notion of the work of art, since both open up questions regarding the original.[22]

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In this respect, it is useful to trace how *Entropa* functions as forgery, because it exemplifies that, as a concept and a practice, forgery is increasingly migrating from the context of art history, where it traces its origin. Once forgery leaves institutions of art (museums, galleries, auctions) and enters the quotidian realm, it serves as a trope unveiling the twofold origin of our cultural ecology as a 'forgery culture',[23] whereby forgery is both an object of fascination and mystique. By considering forgery outside of the art world it is possible to trace how 'fabricating practices'[24] permeate everyday life and how they give shape to reality. As a theoretical concept it enables us to understand the ambiguous relationship between fact and fiction in the construction of discourses that are yearned for.

Thus, forgery functions as a criss-crossing of attribution, whereby strange comes to represent own, false is disguised as true, and where false is nonetheless meticulously crafted. Ultimately, forging and forgery engage in an intricate interaction, which problematises the concept of representation. In *Entropa*, forgery underlies not only the fact that at first the creation of 27 European fragments was attributed to 27 European countries, but also the attribution of the installation to the current state of the EU. By erecting the artwork in Brussels, which has become synonymous with political performances that give shape to Europe nowadays, *Entropa* asks who is in charge of the way discourses on Europe and its fragments are constructed and who authorises them as accurate. Therefore, even if more suitable fragments were assembled together, they would still illustrate that history is always written[25] by feeding on quotations and fragments. While the Czech officials found it necessary to apologise for the artwork after Bulgaria and Slovakia expressed official complaints, it should be noted that both of these countries were only recently embraced by the EU and their reaction reveals that, for the identities that are only beginning to leave their mark on the emerging map of Europe, each representation equals presentation, and thus an identity struggle. *Entropa's* quasi-real character does not ask to search for a more politically correct narrative. Instead, it gives shape to Černý's argument that we in fact know nothing of Europe[26] and perhaps the only way to address this illiteracy is by exaggerating this nothingness and exhibiting it within the space and context that epitomise Europe. Once the uncanny image of Europe is projected on Brussels' political and politicised screen, the uneasiness of encountering one's own image as fiction is revealed and this fiction is even more striking, because it is staged in the space that gives most tangible shape to the idea of Europe nowadays.

Disassembling 'Kit *Entropa*'

Because of this juxtaposition in the logic of *Entropa*'s display Černý's installation necessitates the mode of looking, whereby the presence of both fiction and reality matter and where a critical reflection on the interaction of both rather than a clear-cut distinction can take place. Here, I consider the concept of theatricality as a useful theoretical tool to relate to the meaning-making of *Entropa*. According to performance theorist Tracy C. Davis, the term theatricality stems from the eighteenth and the nineteenth century debates on the public sphere and democratic theory. She argues that instead of being equated with the idea of theatrical as a particular quality of display, theatricality is a 'process of spectatorship'[27] which establishes one's relation with the stage. Commonly

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this stage is not contained within theatre, but rather relates to the public sphere, whereby everyday reality is surpassed by its representation.[28] By acknowledging the stage and the presence of actors, roles, and fakery in the everyday life as well as by deciding to embrace this staged character of quotidian actuality, while at the same time remaining alienated from this understanding by letting these staged practices continue, the spectators become 'aware of their own dédoublement – their own acting'.[29] For Davis this awareness establishes a certain estranged relationship with staged instances – a conscious look from the outside, which hinges on the borderline between the stage and the space that surrounds it. The presence of both of these realms catalyses critical thinking – by embracing staged instances instead of lamenting, or becoming deceived by their fakery. Theatricality as distanced reflection becomes a response to the theatre of everyday life.

Following this argument, performance scholar Maaike Bleeker suggests that the problem in such reasoning lies in the fact that nowadays 'the question is not (or not only) how to actively dissociate oneself but how to relate to this spectacle that is our reality'.[30] Bleeker expands the notion of theatricality by emphasising that its implications within theatre and outside of theatre are different. The moment of identifying the emergence of theatricality within theatre takes place in a spectator's seat as an act of establishing a distance between oneself and the actor or the role, or the situation. According to Bleeker, outside of theatre, theatricality evokes investigation of 'one's own assumption, interests, desires and presuppositions'.[30] Thus, theatricality outside of theatre becomes a litmus test of one's private ideology, as one engages with the fakeness of the moment in real time. Such argumentation interrogates theatricality both as engagement and estrangement or, to put it differently, a decision to tightrope-walk between believing and denying what is being encountered without neglecting either. This problematises theatricality as the predicament of modern subjectivity, since the tension between staged (hence, not quite real) and authentic (therefore real) realms is constantly apparent in the proliferation of mediascapes[31] and the encounters they generate. By tracing how theatricality manifests outside of theatre, the ontology of reality is dissected and contested. When, as a mode of looking, theatricality unfolds on the borderline between staged and what is presumed as real and authentic (hence, institutionalised as non-staged), this theoretical concept allows one to respond to the fakeness of the moment 'in real time' by neither neglecting, nor opposing fabrication, but rather remaining in an in-between state. Here, the assumptions about reality matter as much as the understanding of fiction. In their encounter both are being challenged and their interaction speaks about the tensions that make us either engage or safeguard the distance with what is being exposed. Understood this way rather than equated with theatrical qualities and articulated as an opposition to reality, theatricality maintains an ongoing dialogue between fiction and reality in the everyday life where both of these realms mingle together.

In light of this argument, perhaps unwillingly, the most engaged spectators of Černý's artwork become the EU officials incessantly sharing their workspace with the chaos of *Entropa* and participating in the incessant flows of political performances taking place in Brussels. To be more precise, by appearing in the shape of a modelling kit, *Entropa* foregrounds the idea of Europe as performance, since the act of disassembling and assembling the fragments provided in 'kit *Entropa*' gives shape to them. Hence, the idea

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of Europe appears first of all as an engaging open-ended meaning-making process, which first of all commences on the personal level – as one's national identity is exposed to international ridicule, as one's overarching transnational identity is articulated as mere entropy, as politicians tightrope-walk counteracting these claims, as these negotiations are broadcast in news flows and as one engages with the many layers triggered by Černý's installation live. Therefore, *Entropa* serves as an interesting and provocative object not primarily because of the content, but because of the context that it produces for the reading of it.

In fact, the format of a kit has been used by Černý previously. A few years ago the artist displayed various iconic figures, such as Jesus Christ, The Rock Star, and The Artist packaged as modelling kits. Instead of presenting completeness, this framing showcases that images emerge from particular fragments, which are constructed even before they are made present. It comes as no surprise that *Entropa* brings into focus Europe as another iconic figure, which by circulating in various discourses and contexts (media, geography, political discourse) seems to have already taken shape. Once it is encountered in a rigid frame, which presupposes that all the necessary parts are visible and assemblage gets underway, it is possible to ask why certain fragments in fact do not correspond to the preconceived image of Europe.

That said, in *Entropa* the logic of a kit extends beyond the thick blue frame within which Europe's fragments were suspended in the atrium of the EU Council, this way explicitly contesting the official slogan of the Czech government for the presidency – 'Europe without borders'. As Czech art historian Milena Bartlova astutely notes, the fictional catalogue with 27 fictional artists, some of whom were noted for exhibitions in fictional galleries as well as existing ones is just as important as the absence of *Entropa's* institutional framing within a museum space.[32] The latter element leaves *Entropa* without Benjaminian aura, construction of which through ongoing reproduction, representation and remediation is entwined not only with the proliferation of various media, but also with the practices of art institutions that assign value to objects on display. In addition, this leaves *Entropa* without the meaning-assigning script, thus complicating its spectatorship. The way *Entropa* suspends the role of the EU newcomer heading the presidency of the EU Council becomes another fragment of 'kit *Entropa*' and frames Europe not only as a chaotic mixture of arguable identities, but 'a challenge to perform',[33] which nowadays concerns Europe's former peripheries in particular, given the EU's enlargement. These are additional touches that frame *Entropa* as an inquiry into Europe's stagecraft and dramaturgy. To quote Bartlova, 'many residents of Old Europe see themselves as graciously total',[32] and consider areas, which remain either faraway or on its fringes, to be entropic, with the Balkans being an immediate example. By mocking, parodying and insulting particular countries, *Entropa* shows that stagecraft is of the utmost importance in the construction of Europe's supposed wholeness.

Similarly, Bulgaria's incident and *Entropa's* role as a battlefield of cross-cultural implications, accusations, and mitigations clearly illustrates that in Europe the boundary between fiction and reality is indistinct. On the one hand, Bulgaria's representation is humiliating and outrageous, yet on the other hand, the reaction of their politicians and later on the decision to conceal this fragment suggest that in the political centre of Europe

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the borderline between the fiction of 'art' and the reality of 'non-art' is a blurry one, thus making Europeanisation[11] a particular kind of artwork. It should be noted that the decision to cover up the fragment of *Entropa* was petitioned against by almost 300 activists, artists, and scholars from 19 European countries; however, this protest against censorship addressed to the Bulgarian government was met with silence, even though almost one third of the signatures were from Bulgaria. Yet as one gazes at the black cloth in the atrium of the EU Council, theatricality manifests – when it is no longer clear where the fiction of artwork ends and the reality of politics begins, yet the juxtaposition of the two poses fundamental questions on both. In that respect, the decision to cover up Bulgaria rather than remove it is an extension of the perpetual role play between fiction and fact in the dramaturgy of Europe's political, economic, and cultural agenda.

Once we become conscious of this ongoing exchange, the main concern should be how to overstep cynicism, which is suggested by 'the world's a stage' perspective.[30] It is not enough to acknowledge the presence of various social and cultural roles we conduct as participants of this show that is Europe. In an arduous critique of increasing attempts to hijack theatrical metaphors in order to examine ways societies are constructed and identities are shaped, Bruce Wilshire shows that once the way we get by offstage is equated with what is happening onstage, it should not be forgotten that the actor's role disappears along with the curtain call, whereas this is not the case with the everyday life.[34] As we perform various roles, they do not disappear. Rather, we constantly have to live with the understanding that they remain within us and produce the dynamics and the tensions that finally construct our identity. Thus, the challenge is to find ways to examine the polarities that emerge in the process of locating theatrical patterns offstage.

In this respect, theatricality as I propose to see it engages with what is understood as staged instead of maintaining a distance. By embracing theatricality and acknowledging how *Entropa* manages not only to juxtapose Europe's pertinent issues and fiction, but also to make them interact, a critical reflection on the idea of Europe gets underway. As the gaze moves from the fragments of the kit to the bureaucrats walking underneath them to the black cloth and to the representation of the country the spectator might be from, the appearance of this trajectory of looking exposes that seeing is always a result of stagecraft rather than simply one's decision to see. More importantly, what is seen in the process of engaging with an artwork becomes as significant as the elements that are being excluded from the view. They push or pull to engage with what is being exposed, while before deciding whether to choose either of the two standpoints beliefs, desires, hopes, and expectations are being triggered.

Here the use of stereotypes is also important. As Michael Herzfeld exposes, stereotypes are not simply trivial projections of generalised narratives that immediately trigger reaction.[35] By making certain (individual, national, etc) features and cultural values speak loudly as stereotypes, they hide power relations that remain unspeakable. In that respect, *Entropa* could be understood as a critical reaction to ways European countries use stereotypes in order to shorthand their identities in the cross-cultural encounters (holiday commercials could be one of the many examples). Yet as stereotypes speak (and most commonly) very loudly, they keep other issues that define national identities and worry them unheard.

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To sum up, I want to suggest that the way *Entropa* constructed and dealt with its context stipulates the idea of Europe as, by and large, a latent image that happened to be projected on this continent, which itself does not even observe such geographical definition.[36] As Bauman notes, after claiming to discover the larger part of the world, Europe remains undiscovered.[37] While the element of forgery in *Entropa* showcases how the construction of Europe entails both creation and falsification, theatricality as a mode of engagement with both of these domains focuses a critical look towards Europe, whereby first of all it is addressed as a contested rather than complete idea. Consequently, the response to this installation as 'just art' and the estranged perspective established with it might be symptomatic of other logics, such as 'just politics' or 'just business', which aim to obscure that in fact all of these terrains engage in a complex construction of subjects, which expose some and render others invisible.

Writing after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advent of Europe's unification, which particularly in the post-Soviet countries was followed with great expectations of inclusion, philosopher Agnes Heller observed that Europe was always a 'phantasy' rather than history, and was based on imagination rather than the past. According to Heller, Europe was conceived in the eighteenth century as the offspring of modernity and its 'new world'.[38] Her point of critique with regards to current trajectories that project the idea of Europe derives from the argument that nowadays 'creative phantasy'[39] is driving a number of cultures globally, while European culture tends to be projected towards the 'meaningful past'.[39] Therefore Heller's argument is that project 'Europe' calls for 'a new cultural mythology'[40] rather than hindsight. To paraphrase, from its conception Europe was a projection of the world that was not present yet. Perhaps that explains the awkward nature of the anthropomorphised maps I mention in the beginning of this article and the necessity to turn Europe's common currency into a circulation of structures that had to be rendered familiar.

I want to suggest that this new cultural mythology must first of all be preceded with ways to engage in the deconstruction of Europe's current mythology and the images that speak of Europe nowadays. They must first of all enable us to acknowledge the yet fictitious character of Europe, which is illuminatingly exposed in the entropy of framed European fragments that were housed in the EU Council for half a year. That said, the logic of forgery underlying *Entropa* and theatricality as a mode of engaging with it unveil the uneasiness of facing Europe's fabricated image. Instead of equating Europe's new mythology with the messianic enlargement of the EU, *Entropa* makes the spectators aware of the fact that they are gazing at forgery, which inevitably poses questions on possible ways that could convey the wholeness of Europe.

Only by looking for ways to produce representations that dissect the anatomy of looking, that question how points of view are forged, subjects appear and why we look at them, can ways of showing and seeing be challenged. In that respect, *Entropa* works as an intriguing study of representation, because it does not claim to display the real image of Europe, yet once it appears in the context where ways of dealing with Europe leave no marginal spaces for fiction to reside, its phantasmagoric entropy exposes the ambiguity of dealing with one's own subjectivity as fiction. *Entropa* achieves that by revealing how the imaginary interacts with reality in the construction of European symbols, its history, politics, and culture.

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