

## ADRIJANA GVOZDENOVIC

In the project 'Archiving artistic anxieties,' there might be two archives. There is the 'archive of artistic anxieties,' as it was suggested by the title of my research project, which is an archive in a metaphorical sense. But this archive is based on the archive of exhibitions' take-away material or invitations, program brochures, leaflets, booklets, small objects, and some left-overs from exhibition openings which I have been collecting these objects for years, for no specific reason. I guess they were kind of proof that I had been in a particular place. I was also thinking of them as artistic references, like the footnotes you have in theoretical work. They are documents of my learning process. I was going to these different events, and each of them did something to me.

In the beginning, I was not sure how to deal with this collection. Especially with the issue of authorship, as it could be a kind of appropriation of others' ideas, artworks, and exhibitions. And that is not a strategy I was interested in, but I still wanted to keep these references present in my work. To expose how genuine artistic work is shaped by other works. I wanted to apply some sort of organization to my collection to put these references in relation. That is the 'archiving' I have been doing. I continued writing about 'artistic anxieties' and 'otherwise exhibiting' – the concepts I introduced in the proposal which helped me to develop works or working methods like it is, for example, a publication *7 anxieties and the world*, for one-on-one card readings. But there was another step, which came before these works, that functions like a research method and helps to create the space of conversation and exchange. In the beginning of the project, I would use these exhibition artifacts that I collected for lecture-performances, and I created a story about an artist who finds these traces in her room in an art residency, and she takes a role of a detective, to follow the threads wherever they lead.

Even though I would use traces as references and speak about works of others; it would still be only me speaking. I became more interested in developing methods for collaboration, works that happen through encounters. The artistic anxieties were often about being alone, working alone, and perpetuating this figure of the solitary artist.

### **How do you connect the exhibition artifacts to the artistic anxieties?**

There is this pressure for an artist to become successful. As if success is the proof of professional artistic activity. In this sense, I marked exhibitions as problematic. It is the only place where the artist can meet the audience, mediated through the artist's work. It is the place where the artist first enters the institutional structure. And yet, by the time that artists get involved in the making of an exhibition, most of the fundamental decisions have already been made by others. I got interested in the time of the exhibition and not the space of the exhibition, and I looked for solutions in the processes of exhibiting.

### **Eventually, the archive of exhibition artifacts led you to create a tarot-like set of cards, which you use for card-reading performances.**

Yes. I chose 22 pieces from my archive. Each card represents an item from the collection. I made the instructions for reading, which I read aloud during the card-reading sessions. There is also a brief text in the instructions that explains all the items represented on the cards (where I got it, on which public event, who is the artist, etc). Sometimes I use the artists' words, and sometimes I write my impressions. Each card-reading involves me and one other participant. Both of us can interpret the object.

**In what sense is the original exhibition object transformed through this process? If the original artist would witness one of your card-readings, maybe they wouldn't recognise the items anymore.**

Yes, one of the participating artists did not recognise the invitation coming from their own exhibition! This appropriation is minimal. It is just a reminder, like the way artwork or event stays in our memories. It is transformed by memory, for instance, by who we meet there. Card reading recalls artistic works or the events in its original meaning. But I also re-tell how I remember it and what it meant for me at that moment.

**Is the text about the card used during the performance?**

It is a very brief text, a short explanation that leaves a lot of space for speculation. But I often try to be very descriptive about the item on the card and the event it originates from if someone has difficulties finding associations with the card. I am wondering now if you could also consider the box with the cards as an 'archive'?

**But you also have a recording of the actual performances, the card-readings? So there is also an archive of the recordings?**

I am transcribing them right now, and it helps me think about how to continue the project. For this book, I invited my sister Kristina to listen to the recordings with me. I was interested in the words we chose to talk about anxieties. As she is a linguist, specifically working with conceptual metaphors, she could point to discursive forms in these conversations. We are both interested in how emotions, as embodied and experienced states, result from our socially determined world. The results is our contribution to this publication, our notes about anxiety

situated between mind and society, and its experiential imagery.

**What happened to your anxieties during the research? Did you 'archive' them, or did you manage to work through them, or are they still there, just like in the beginning?**

I understood that it is important that they are there. I wrote about this in the online publication *ArchivingArtisticAnxieties.me*. It includes my initial writings, so that the reader can follow the transformation of how I thought about 'artistic anxieties' during the project. It starts from the pressure of success, doubts, and insecurity, thinking about how to resist these anxious orders of art production, but also how not to overcome it by finding a stable solution. On the contrary, it is about understanding artistic activity as relational and this feeling of instability as constitutional.

Anxiety is related to concerns, worries, and fears and pressures about something that comes from the outside, although these are also, at the same time, very subjective. It is a warning for an individual for something that can be resolved only through the collective.

That's also when I started to think about working collectively and how to create situations or temporary spaces where we can share or learn together. Thinking with anxiety transformed my practice. It became about finding a way to stay unstable, experimental. How not to relate to the centre, to the figure of the 'successful' artist.