Editorial. After Crises: Art, Museums, and New Socialities

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> I am much too alone in this world, yet not alone enough
> to truly consecrate the hour.
> I am much too small in this world, yet not small enough
> to be to you just object and thing,
> dark and smart. [...]
> [I] want to describe myself like a picture I observed
> for a long time, one close up
>
> —Rainer Maria Rilke

In this poem, Rilke captures an emerging crisis—a crisis as ethical dilemma, emotional emergency, unbearable pressure, and threatening change. The poet brings together crises of consciousness, of intentionality, and of the self's relationship to the world. The crisis has its own spatial and temporal dimensions, and it is both discursive and pictorial, revealing its *figura* through references to images and through the organization of the text. The poem speaks of different degrees of crisis—'I am much too small in this world, yet not small enough'—as those of instability and movement. At first, we see contradictions—the desire for solitude and the fear of loneliness—but later, we comprehend the trajectory of crisis: towards imprecision, ambivalence, and a lack of purpose. In the process, the poet discusses the relationship between the subject and a social group, conceiving of this relationship as a new sociality. In the end, we come to understand that the subject *is* the crisis. This understanding reveals the modern subject and modernity itself. In other words, ideologies of crisis underpin modernity and its variations (post-modernity, meta-modernity, and so on), and, as the world is going through another major crisis, it is imperative that we explore those ideologies critically.

Nietzsche employed the language of tragedy and fate to uncover the meaning of a new modernity. Virginia Woolf revealed modernity as an epistemological crisis, employing catoptrics to launch an attack on text (i.e., a *figura* emploding). Freud's emphasis on the neurotic symptoms of modernity separated the rational, 'scientific' methods of knowing from those of sensibility and dissociation. But it was Husserl who conceived of modernity through the language of crisis. He worked on his *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, also known simply as *The Crisis*, in the aftermath of World War I. Though originally published in 1936, the book became widely known only after World War II, thus becoming both an investigation

and an ideology of twentieth-century crises. In this book, Husserl (1970) speaks of modernity as a departure—through a crisis—from pre-given, intentional backgrounds to the 'painful, existential contradictions' of modernity (p. 17). His idea of 'modernity as crisis' has been appropriated—often incorrectly—into academic discourse in the form of catch phrases such as 'modernity in crisis' or 'the crises of modernity.'

In this issue of *The Garage Journal*, we — the editors and contributors — critically leverage Husserl's notion of modernity as crisis to think about arts, culture, and art institutions and their responses to crises of different kinds, including political, financial, social, aesthetic, epistemological, and so on. Indeed, numerous crises—global and local, current and historical, natural and human-made, and technological and creative—have impacted the ways in which social identities, interactions, and associations occur and continue to be maintained and articulated. Of course, in Marxist theory, these identities and exchanges are accounted for through the evolution of capital, whereby every new fall in the rate of profit causes a reconfiguration of the economy and society. And in post-Marxist theory, especially in the works of Alain Badiou (2007) and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2005), crisis gives birth to the revolutionary subjectivity that emerges in voids and gaps and advances radical politics of equality. While we are interested in the radical politics of equality and remain cognizant of the class struggle, dominance, and economics, we focus on the idea of crisis as a crisis of knowledge, expression and participation.

So, what exactly did Husserl mean by his 'crisis of European sciences'? As George Heffernan (2017) explains, 'the traditional interpretation suggests that the [crisis] lies not in the inadequacy of the 'scientificity' of sciences, but in the loss of their meaningfulness for life.' Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic global crisis has brought about a deluge of (populist) comments on the crisis of sciences and their inapplicability to the demands of life. More recent interpretations of Husserl's work such as Heffernan's suggest that 'the crisis is *both* a crisis of scientificity and a crisis of the sciences' meaningfulness for life.' We wish to suggest that this understanding of Husserl's crisis has both a structural and an aesthetic dimension. Where we diverge is our interest in the crisis of imagination, or the capacity to imagine communities and express solidarities, shifting our attention to a new politics of care. This politics 'centers on people's basic needs and connections to fellow citizens, the global community, and the natural world' (Boston Review 2020: 1). This issue of *The Garage Journal* insists that to imagine is a basic need, securing the place of arts in the new post-COVID politics of so-called (non)essential services.

For example, some countries have provided direct financial support to those working in the culture sector, whilst others have delegated responsibility to the private sector, grassroots communities, and professional associations. In some ways, the effects of the crisis caused by COVID-19 are unprecedented by modern standards (e.g., social distancing, the sector-wide practice of working from home, and travel bans). But in other ways, they are similar to those of other crises caused by terrorism, wars, natural disasters, and market crashes (e.g., economic difficulties, disruptions to communication, and

the impossibility of making long-term plans). Like every crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the ways in which people work, communicate, and socialize, with many individuals and institutions mourning lost opportunities and making use of new ones to build support groups, networks, and associations. Hence, we inquire about these new socialities that encompass values, or understandings of the meaning and purpose of a society/community, on one level, and the tendency and desire to associate in or form social groups and the means to carry out work and other duties, organize one's professional and personal life, manage projects and institutions, and relate to other social constructs such as the nation, on the other.

In political discourse, the idea of crisis is invoked to imply that we need a new way of thinking about our lives, especially the economy. As a matter of fact, crises are frequently used as a pretext to introduce unpopular economic and social reforms, such as the privatization of the healthcare system or the introduction of a new retirement age. These measures are framed as the only alternatives to an ongoing crisis. We are still in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis and only beginning to comprehend the magnitude of its economic consequences, with many thinkers suggesting that we should seek for new ways of thinking about our lives. There are also those who inquire whether, in fact, we need those 'new ways' of thinking, or whether we should maintain the status quo, resisting the regimes of crisis and enjoying available values and practices. In terms of theory, what if we are to expect not the emergence of a new theory but rather a return to and a critical examination of existing frameworks? How do we make our choices and what meanings do we want to re-consider? And finally, how can all of us benefit from the self-reflexive processes imposed on us as a result of the global pandemic?

That same political notion of crisis contains an implicit imperative that the crisis be managed. In neoliberal regimes, the 'crisis management' of art, museums, and culture is part of the dominant discourse. It aims to achieve greater efficiency, but it does so at the expense of the well-being and development of individuals. Hence, the focus of this issue of *The Garage Journal* is not on identities and cultural politics, but on the relations between individuals and institutions, individuals and communities, and individuals and the art sector. For example, we reflect on how the recent crises have revealed the weaknesses in the structures of the art market and its ideologemes, and, by extension, the weaknesses in economic and political relations, trade, technical infrastructure, finance, and information flows. Moreover, we are interested in 'unmanaged,' unruly ways of dealing with crises, including networks of resistance, memory, and solidarity. So, instead of considering how crises can be managed, we look at how crises can be endured and, in some cases, enjoyed. We celebrate stoicism, ingenuity, and longevity at the expense of effectiveness. We celebrate intersubjectivity at the expense of individualism.

Indeed, in his critique of transcendental phenomenology, Husserl arrives at the idea of intersubjectivity. According to him, intersubjectivity plays a fundamental role in constituting both us and the spatio-temporal organization of the world. He shows how intersubjectivity arises from empathy, which

means that the intersubjective experience is always an empathic experience. The belief and/or expectation that we as subjects, through empathy, share familiar traits enables a single community of subjects, or, in Husserl's terms, a lifeworld. From approximation to commonality, subjects find their own ways to enter the lifeworld, generating a socially established sense of meaning. Whether these are prior structures or outcomes of future interactions, these lifeworlds—or socialities, in our terms—provide 'grounding soil' (Husserl 1970: 134) that naturalizes knowledge and creates acceptances and solidarities. To reiterate, this grounding soil also gives birth to imagination and expression. Thus, we see socialities not as a 'product' of an intersubjective exchange, but as an environment in which lifeworlds become apparent.

This issue of *The Garage Journal* considers the notions of crisis and sociality from a range of perspectives. The first part of the issue looks at the ways in which artists, curators, publics, and art institutions have attempted to overcome limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part examines the effects of different kinds of crises on the meanings of art practices and exhibition practices in current and historical contexts. The third part continues the analysis of crises and socialities in historical and contemporary settings, but from the point of view of motion and mobility.

Curators and directors of Russian art institutions set the tone for this issue of *The Garage Journal.* In the transcript of a round-table discussion which took place during the Cosmoscow Art Fair (Gostiny Dvor, Moscow, September 2020), representatives of six institutions—state-, privately-, and publicly funded—engage in a critical overview of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Russian art scene. While acknowledging a crisis of museum identity, they also celebrate the dedication of their staff in creating new pathways for publics to engage with art and institutions during full and partial lockdowns. They point out how institutions mobilized internally and also developed externally by collaborating with other institutions and staging activities outside the walls of the museum, outside the regime of mandatory productivity. Subsequent contributions supply analyses of specific cases of artists, curators, and institutions adapting to the new conditions. Marina Romanova discusses the ways in which digital tools, including online video services, have been utilized to deliver 'art mediation,' a particular form of public engagement which is burgeoning on the Russian art scene. Linda Kvitkina reflects on her own experience as a dancer and researcher and her work with the dance community during the pandemic. She shows how 'thinking through the body' has allowed new forms of sociality sustained by digital tools to emerge, too. Angelos Theocharis continues the discussion by analyzing how new global socialities were formed as a result of the lockdown and the migration of participants of a London-based cultural activity online.

If contributions in the first part celebrate the achievements of different communities, contributions in the two subsequent parts consider more challenging cases that did not always result in the successful implementation of planned programs. Valerii Ledenev uncovers documents about 'unrealized' exhibitions in the Garage Archive Collection, though, of course, they

were realized in the imagination of their original organizers and have been brought to fruition in Ledenev's conceptualization. Isabel Bredenbröker, Angela Stiegler, and Lennart Boyd Schürmann analyze interventions staged by their art collective, K, in Munich, Germany, which led to functional socialities. In this practice-based, autoethnographic essay, the three organizers discuss the dynamics of social, nonrepresentational formats in art institutions. Jeffrey Taylor and Kelsey Sloane propose 'a free ownership consumption' model to evaluate non-objects in the context of experiential consumption and the value of space, prioritizing the non-ownership of non-canonical non-objects. These three contributions deal with issues of the (in)visibility of the ideas, expressions, values, and socialities that are built around these (non)existing phenomena, thus expanding the conceptual framework of the issue.

The ideas of (in)visibility, (dis)continuation, and (non)representation are realized in this issue's specially commissioned research-based artwork. Wing Po So, a Hong Kong-based artist, has created *The Making of Voids*, an artwork that exists as a portal between different worlds. It helps break with the past and imagine the world anew. Pickling is used as a process and metaphor for creating new meaning and new connections, evoking Jacques Derrida's notion of hauntology: the work shows the myrobalan fruit going through an uncontrollable cell discharge process, which affects all organic material as cells are expelled from the fruit. As time goes by, the fruit turns into a scaffolding for the tissue that resembles like a ghost due to its paleness and translucency.

The past—thought of as a scaffolding, context, memory, and trauma—is a common theme in the next two contributions. Boris Chukhovich reinterprets works produced by artists in the circle of Daniil Stepanov in Samarkand in the 1920s. He notes how these artists moved from an interest in the aesthetics of androgyny, associated in that context with male teenagers performing in drag, to developing a more focused representation of a homosexual relationship, or what he calls a 'homoerotic narrative,' which reveals anxiety about sexuality and imperial domination at the same time. Chukhovich shows how art allowed for new socialities to emerge in the challenging context of Uzbekistan occupied by the Soviets. Michelle Lim continues the discussion by examining another context in which the issues of dominance, art, and sociality converge. Her visual essay looks at the conditions of art-making and exhibition on Oshima, one of the Setouchi Triennale's anchor islands. Up until 1996, when Japan's Leprosy Prevention Law that required the lifetime segregation of Hansen's disease patients from society was finally repealed, Oshima had been a leprosarium. Isolation, extinction, slow violence, disease, and community are principal notions that Lim considers in her work. The two contributions look at revolutionary subjectivities and advance a radical politics of equality as a form of sociality.

The issue considers a variety of contexts, including Germany, Hong Kong, Japan and the US. The first part is based on the Russian case, that is, Russian as pertaining both to the Russian Federation and to the global Russian community, thus problematizing the categories of nationhood, belonging, and identity in times of crisis. 'Russianhood' as a form of sociality is brought

into question in this part as well as in other contributions of the issue. For instance, Valerii Ledenev reconsiders the materials of the Garage Archive Collection to elucidate issues of identity and artistic processes in the late USSR and post-Soviet Russia. Boris Chukhovich analyses the activities of 'Russian' artists in 1920s Samarkand in the newly formed Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. These and other contributions in the issue extend the notion of Russian culture to include late Tsarist— and early Soviet Russian communities in Central Asia and contemporary Russophone communities in London.

These contributions reveal how Russianness has emerged in response to and as part of different crises, including the crisis of selfhood and Russians' own search for emancipation, including sexual freedom. The discussion places the arts and the art collective, not national borders, the economy, or state institutions, at the core of Russianness as a sociality. Valerii Ledenev reminds us of the political pressures on artists during the Soviet period when discussing unrealized—banned or failed—exhibitions of contemporary art, and Michelle Lim uses the genre of the visual essay to explore the conditions of art-making and exhibition on Oshima. These contributions speak of the ways in which art allows us to overcome segregation—between the 'ill' and the rest of the island's inhabitants, between official and unofficial arts, and so on.

The second issue of *The Garage Journal* concludes with two book reviews. Marina Israilova has reviewed *Open Systems: Self-Organized Art Initiatives in Russia, 2000–2020*, published by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, and Aleksei Ulko has reviewed T. J. Demos's *Beyond the World's End: Arts of Living at the Crossing*, published by Duke University Press (both in 2020). Featuring 101 self-organized art initiatives based in Russia, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, the former book explores self-organizations— associations of artists and curators who work independently to implement their artistic ideas—in the context of the Russian transition to neoliberal capitalism. The materials in the volume—authored by many researchers and edited by Antonina Trubitsyna—are both a catalog of organizations and a critical reflection on their emergence, as well as on available research methodologies. The latter book examines art practices that offer propositions for living in a world engulfed by environmental and political crises. Analyzing a wide range of art practices, the author of the monograph puts forward a conceptual framework for a socially just world of the future. Together, these two books supply a reflection—theoretical and practice-based—on artistic practices responding to global challenges such as economic and political crises and climate change.

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