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The Tourists and the Locals. Participatory Practices of Art Institutions in View of Dean MacCannell's Concept of Tourism

Between the stage and the backstage

Three decades ago, Jean Baudrillard argued that America did not exist, that there had not been the Gulf War, and that Disneyland was the symbol of reality. Radicalism of these thesis made the French sociologist the most recognized character among the authors who were writing about domination of “representation” over reality. Baudrillard’s analysis, today considered classical, fit into a range of previously put up proposals. They corresponded to the texts of Erving Goffman, Guy Debord, Villém Flusser or Dean MacCannell. Although these thinkers differed in worldview provenience and terminology used, in each case the point was to deem – to put it as broadly as possible – the excess of *signifiant* over *signifié* as a constitutive problem for the Western culture in the 20th century. For Guy Debord, this phenomenon was thematized as “the society of the spectacle”¹, for Villém Flusser, its figure was “the apparatus”², and for Erving Goffman and Dean MacCannell – division into “the front stage” and “the back stage” of the social life.

When it comes to the analysis of contemporary artistic practice, it seems that special hopes can be cherished for the perspective outlined in 1976 by Dean MacCannell in the book *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*³. Inspired by the flagship work of Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*⁴, MacCannell created a concept of tourism, which was meant to depict *grosso modo* interpersonal relations shaped by modernity. This vision was based on a quite common observation that along with the development of modernity, traditional communities undergo disintegration and the society experiences fragmentation at

¹ G. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. F. Perelman, ed. Black & Red, 1970.

² V. Flusser, *Towards A Philosophy of Photography*, trans. A. Mathews, Reaktion Books, London 2000.

³ D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Schocken Books, New York 1976.

⁴ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Anchor Books, 1959.

different levels. Direct interpersonal relations, which were the basis of pre-modern⁵ societies, are being replaced by relations mediated by merchandise, services, and primarily by media. In the opinion of MacCannell, this process, apart from having many other results, above all influences the social view on categories of truth and false. As the author puts it:

In pre-modern types of society, truth and nontruth are socially encoded distinctions protected by norms. The maintenance of this distinction is essential to the functioning of a society that is based on interpersonal relationships. The stability of interpersonal relations requires a separation of truth from lies, and the stability of social structure requires stable interpersonal relations. [...] In modern settings, society is established through cultural representations of reality at a level above that of interpersonal relations⁶.

The category of truth and false in pre-modern societies is verified and legitimized within direct interpersonal relations. With disintegration of these, truth and false lose their utility and conclusiveness, at least in the subject of direct interpersonal relations. In this sense, MacCannell brings up the well-known thought of Goffman, who stated that contemporary it is not enough to simply be a human to be perceived as one; today "it is often necessary to *act out* reality and truth"⁷.

In the creation of this opposition: pre-modern societies based on the category of truth vs. modern and post-modern societies susceptible to hoaxes, MacCannell refers to the terms of *front stage region* and *back stage region*, which were used before by Erving Goffman to analyze the structure of social institutions. By "the front stage region", the Canadian-American sociologist meant, for example, a place of meeting of a host with guests, or customers with staff, and by "the back stage region", for example a place, to which team members go in times between performances or services to rest and prepare themselves. Hosts have access to both the front stage and the back stage. Guests most often see only the front stage, only in exceptional cases they are admitted to the back stage. In MacCannell's opinion, the division into two regions in social life is connected with the tendency to mystification – the back stage, veiled from the audience, "allows concealment of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front"⁸. This tendency, according to MacCannell, has a considerable cultural meaning. While in pre-modern societies every member of society and all aspects of his life were exposed to a constant overview of others, in modern societies, which divide life into the front stage and the back stage, a belief appears that in every institution (in the broadest understanding of this word) there is something more than meets the eye. The feeling of reality

⁵ Author is erratic here, once he writes about the premodern societies, another time about primal societies, somehow *in extenso* identifying the former with the latter.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 91.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 92.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 92.

is weakened and a need determined by it emerges, to look for experience what is hidden from sight, that is somehow more authentic.

In MacCannell's terms, modern societies live in conviction that authenticity had been hidden and it is necessary to find it by entering "the back stage". Goffman in his analysis remains "the essentialist", assuming that the division into the back stage and the front stage is complete – a performance is played on the front stage, but behind the scenes of social institutions, there lies a certain truth. To meet it, it is enough to enter there. MacCannell goes a step further, claiming that the front stage and the back stage relation based on a mystification led to the permeation of elements from the back stage to the front stage, and *vice versa*: to arranging the back stage as the front stage. This conclusion made in analysis of tourism is based on the premises, according to which "the authenticity" and "the truth" in post-modern societies are the domain of "the imaginary". The truth is a *cliché* generated by the presentation, a *cliché* according to which the audience wants to act, as well as the actors of everyday life, the tourists and the locals. Despite a tourist dreams to fully understand the visited locals and somehow become "one of them", he will never accomplish this goal. The modernity made authenticity a phantasm, causing the social life to be a constant "montage of attractions" which aims to "authenticate" what is presented, for the viewers and the viewed.

The theatre of participation

The anti-essentialist thesis of MacCannell is a starting point for my few comments on the activity of contemporary existing art institutions. Let us remind once again that the authenticity and the truth in MacCannell's view are unattainable because of the structure of modern societies. The identity of the latter is based on the realm of the representation, realm of the imaginary – and this one is unreal by definition, having the nature of a projection. This way of perceiving the truth and the authenticity seems interesting in the context of activity of contemporary museums and galleries, for which "opening up to the viewer" and familiarizing him with "the back stage" of institutions' activity became a priority. Museums and galleries organize events aiming to introduce the audience to the functioning of an institution by educational programs, participatory actions carried out by artists within the functioning of an institution, and a range of other practices.

It is difficult to point the exact causes of this tendency. When it comes to Poland, an important aspect is low attendance of the audience in art institutions in comparison with the theaters, cinemas, music festivals etc.⁹ Probably it is also determined by the fact, that visual arts in Poland have relatively low prestige as compared with the literature, cinema, theater or music, as had been pointed out

⁹ According to the data of the Central Statistical Office for 2008, http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/kts_instytucje_kultury_w_2008.pdf (access: 31.12.2014).

multiple times¹⁰. Hence maybe appears an intensified activity of art institutions to “open up to the viewer”, to attract and shape him, indicating the interpretation tools. These tendencies are associated with the phenomenon of separating individual cultural areas in industrial and post-industrial societies, diagnosed and described repeatedly. Hans Georg Gadamer¹¹ and Jürgen Habermas¹² – but also many other authors – analyzed the phenomenon of autonomization of the area of art, becoming independent from legislation, science and everyday life, breaking the unity of pre-modern culture (or, at least, the unity attributed to it). These analysis had something of the myths about Eden – the distant and lost land, where once all cultural, political and economical events determined the rhythm of life of the whole society. Therefore, fragmented (post)modern culture would demand reunion, for example filling the gap between visual arts and unspecialized viewers. While for the intellectuals such issue has only a theoretical nature, for the gallery and museum workers it transforms into a number of real problems, which need to be solved step by step. The final solution of this issue would be practically educating the whole society so that everyone could participate in culture competently. With the character of some regulative idea, this goal is obviously unattainable. What remains, is applying the actions which would attract the greatest number of viewers, which in vulgarized version comes down to the museum tourism and the phenomenon of “McDonaldization” of museums¹³.

Revolving around the practices related to the tourism, art institutions apply structurally the same strategies, which are used by travel agencies, cruise companies, guides, or ethnic groups living by presenting their own folklore. And like a tourist led by the will to know the “truth” about a given place meets a whole infrastructure aiming to make it possible for him, the audience of museums and galleries enters the area of exploring “the authenticity”. Galleries and museums apply practices which on one hand aim to reveal the art in its truth and authenticity, and on the other hand aim to reveal “the truth” about the institution itself and allow for meeting its “authentic” identity. Obviously, the stake here is not learning about foreign culture and getting close to it, but getting familiar with a strange – which is for i.e. a junior high school student often more alien, incomprehensible and more distant than exotic tribes in perspective of symbolic capital, knowledge and refinement – and hermetic contemporary art. In MacCannell’s nomenclature, direct and authentic

¹⁰ See: J. Dąbrowski, *Cenzura w sztuce polskiej po 1989 roku*, Fundacja Kultura Miejsca, Warszawa 2014, vol. II, p. 130–131.

¹¹ See: H.-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful. Art as Play, Symbol, and Festival*, trans. N. Walker, [in:] idem, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. N. Walker, ed. R. Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, p. 3–53.

¹² See: J. Habermas, *Modernity: an Unfinished Project*, trans. N. Walker, [in:] Habermas *And the Unfinished Project of Modernity. Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. M. Passerin D’Entreves, S. Benhabib, MIT Press, 1997, p. 38–55.

¹³ Cf. G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of society: an investigation into the changing character of contemporary social life*, Pine Forge Press, 1996; J. Clair, *Malaise dans les musées*, Flammarion, Paris 2007.

learning about the institution and becoming familiar with it, making a more friendly image of it, and getting closer with the viewer would mean introducing him to its “back stage”, so to the area usually unavailable. This task is being done by using two interchangeable strategies completing each other: drawing the elements of back stage onto the front stage, and arranging the back stage so that it proves its “authenticity”.

If, like Goffman states, contemporary it is not enough to be a human to be perceived as one, but it is necessary to play this role, then in case of an institution, it is similarly. Following some practices of galleries and museums, one could say that it is no more enough to be an institution, but this role has to be played, above all. Establishing and opening an institution is today not sufficient to make it available (as may be probably evidenced by the emptiness in many Polish museums). Paradoxically, the fact of opening has to be acted, to authenticate it. That is why it seems that the basic task of contemporary galleries and museums is exhibiting themselves. Not without purpose Jean Baudrillard dedicated one of his essays to the Centre Pompidou of Paris¹⁴. The idea of this building was to exhibit those elements of the infrastructure, which usually remain hidden in architectural designs. The back stage became somehow part of the front stage, and vice versa. In Polish realizations of gallery buildings such spectacular (aptly named) proposals have not appeared yet. However with help of slightly more modest strategies, the back stage is also being pulled to light and inclined in the front stage as a decoration.

It is reminded, for example, by the series of openings of institutions, during which the viewers could watch the buildings. Among these cases, there was the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków, which had, in fact, two openings. Firstly, the building was made available to the public November 16, 2010. The visitors could watch empty exhibition halls, photos presenting subsequent stages of constructing the museum and a documentary movie dedicated to the history of Zabłocie district, where the institution had been located. The similar thing happened at BWA SOKÓŁ Gallery in Nowy Sącz. Its new building – also in November 2010 – was made available to the viewers so that they could see the building itself. To tell the truth, at SOKÓŁ, a small exhibition had been held, however that was not the point of the inauguration. Its aim was to present the building. Independently of the fact, that both these openings were dictated by political issues (November 28, 2010, local elections had been held, and local governments founded both new buildings), they had the same function. They had to introduce the audience to the “back stage”, show institution *in statu nascendi*, in raw form, just at the stage of preparation of exhibitions. Obviously, the areas which the viewers could watch, had been selected with a purpose. There was no possibility to enter the real backstage, the rooms where workers performed their everyday duties. Directors’ offices, workers’ rooms, social rooms etc. were

¹⁴ J. Baudrillard, *The Beaubourg Effect: Implosion and Deterrance*, trans. R. Krauss, A. Michelson, “October”, vol. 20, Spring 1982.

inaccessible for the visitors. The exhibition halls of MOCAK and BWA SOKÓŁ became the stage, which had to present itself, act its role.

Contrary to that, in CCA Kronika in Bytom, walls between exhibition halls and offices were demolished. The Centre famous for actions exploring the local identity, sensitive to social issues, looking for contact with the local community and trying to introduce it to the events organized in the Kronika, somehow according to plan had removed the walls to demonstrate its will to open to the outside. In the Kronika, a visitor can see the exhibition and watch the workers doing their duties. A curious thing is the huge counter, on which the institution's publications had been placed. It is big enough to clearly divide the office area from the exhibition area. Although one can bypass it, it leaves an ambiguous impression, that the visitor takes part in a perverse game. The viewer is convinced, that despite being allowed to enter the backstage, he or she still deals only with a front stage decoration. Maybe this feeling of discomfort does not result from lack of possibility to cross the border between the front stage and the back stage, but it comes from unwillingness to see the latter. MacCannell observes that a guest visiting the backstage often does not want to see it. Too "literal" backstage, not sufficiently decorated, could embarrass both the viewer and the viewed "actors"-workers – the mundanity of activities performed by the latter would undermine the image of the institution¹⁵. If in MacCannell's optics the imaginary is a determiner of truth, it would mean that too realistic backstage would undermine the authenticity of an institution itself.

That is why it is safest to watch the backstage, which had been properly arranged before. A kind of decoration of the stage by the parts of a backstage are also the events called "Museums at Night". There, the public has a possibility to watch exhibitions late at night. By opening in unusual hours (though the exhibitions are presented and lit exactly the same as always), an institution indicates that the public has an opportunity to experience this area in the time when usually no one sees it. Watching the museum in the time when it usually "sleeps", and when a mysterious night life takes place inside of it, is considered to be the way to get close to it and to really recognize it. Otherwise, creating places and special conditions in which the guests can see "the back stage", is, according to MacCannell, an explicit cultural tendency.¹⁶ It can be found in factories, private companies and many public institutions – in most of parliaments there are specially prepared rooms, from which the citizens can watch MPs debates. As MacCannell observes, during such trips guests may often enter the backstage more deeply than many workers. They get to know the visited places better than the employees, but it is inevitably superficial experience.

It can also happen in case of art institutions which decide to show collections kept in the magazines or the technical background. Similar practices are performed in the "hard" and the "soft" version. In case of the first one, the visitors have an opportunity to literally enter the backstage, the offices and magazines, take a close

¹⁵ D. MacCannell, *The Tourist...*, p. 94.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 98–99.

look to the actions not visible in exhibition halls, activities which are base for archiving, securing and conservation of the exhibits. On this principle, in 2009, Joanna Warsza and Michał Gorczyca, during the action *Bżuh mózeum*¹⁷ [*Museum' belly*] (also during the Museums at Night) allowed the public to enter the backstage of National Museum in Kraków, revealing places usually inaccessible, i.e. the social room, the machinery, or the office of museum director, Zofia Gołubiew¹⁸. We stop seeing this "hard" version as a radical opening gesture of the institution if we remember that the trips of visitors were cautiously planned, and places which could be seen, where also carefully prepared.

We deal with the "soft" version when institutions decide to present in exhibition halls the works, which previously filled the magazines because of their faint artistic value, the state of conservation, or just the lack of space in the exhibition area. One of the most recognizable exhibitions of this kind was, prepared by Karol Radziszewski at Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw, *Siusiu w torcik* [*Pee in a cake*] (5 IX–2 XI 2009)¹⁹. It was the fifth exhibition in Zachęta which was based on its not exhibited previously, or rarely exhibited collections. The curator chose the works and intervened in arrangement of the exposure, playing with the gallery space and works, and posing a question about the status and character of the collection. The context of introducing the audience to the "authentic" life of these works, taking place out of public, is underlined by the meaningful title of a short educational movie created on the occasion of the exhibition: *Siusiu w torcik, czyli co się dzieje z kolekcją Zachęty, kiedy nikt nie patrzy?* [*Pee in a cake, or what happens with collection of Zachęta when nobody's looking*] (directed by Monika Weychert-Waluszko, 2010). During the other exhibition made by Zachęta in the same series, a flagship work of Katarzyna Kozyra, *Piramida zwierząt* [*Pyramid of Animals*], was presented as unfinished. This arrangement served to present to the public, what happens to objects, while they are kept in magazines and are, for example, subjects to restoration works. To highlight the gesture of inviting the public "behind the scenes", a part of elements of installation were in boxes, part of them were taken out, but they remained foiled, a part of unpacked ones was like waiting to be exposed and join to the rest. The backstage was again used to decorate the stage.

However, a jewel in the crown of the practices which open up an institution to the viewers are the participatory activities. As part of institutions' programs, there are artists who carry out projects, which aim to engage the audience and precipitate it from the attitude of passive spectator. The artistic actions aiming at social effectiveness seem to be a grateful object of observation in the context of – inspired

¹⁷ Written with intentional misspellings, referring to a reform of Polish orthography postulated by Polish futurists.

¹⁸ Cf. *Muzeum jedzie na Woodstock*, rozmowa W. Szymańskiego z J. Gomulą, „Obieg”, <http://www.obieg.pl/rozmowy/16042> (access: 31.12.2014).

¹⁹ Cf. E. Opałka, *Wyśmienite trupy wychodzą z szafy*, „Obieg”, <http://www.obieg.pl/wydarzenie/14752> (access: 31.12.2014).

by symbolic interactionism – comments by MacCannell. If we consider the existence of lasting interpersonal relationships a basic condition of appearing of socially authorized “truth” and “non-truth”, we can interpret the participatory activities as an attempt to reconstitute the true and authentic experience in the area of art. It would happen by giving a direct, interpersonal character to the social relations existing in institutions. The participatory activities try to include the recipient into the circuit of institution’s functioning, so that it ceases to be a place of representation, and becomes a place – using the favorite expression of Nicolas Bourriaud – of meeting. Artists who carry out such activities often want to transform the formal relations of the audience and the institution’s workers into informal and symmetric ones.

The flagship example of such activities is the project *Przewodnik* [*The Guide*] (curators: Dominik Kuryłek, Ewa Tatar), carried out in 2005–2007 by the National Museum in Kraków. During this project, events and interventions took place, realized by Joanna Rajkowska, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Hubert Czerepok and Roman Dziadkiewicz. In the discussed context, especially interesting is the action of Joanna Rajkowska, *Wyjście. Czekając na 624 pracowników Muzeum* [*Exit. Waiting for 624 Museum Employees*]. Despite it was not aimed at viewers, but at the workers of the institution, it perfectly captures the structure of similar events and their indispositions. Invited to participate in the project, Joanna Rajkowska visited the museum few times, looking at its internal structure. It seemed problematic to the artist, that most of people employed there treats their duties simply as “a work”, where they stay between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., not identifying themselves neither with the museum, nor with art. Also the relations between them were mostly of a formal, professional character. The workers, in Rajkowska’s opinion, were not a self-aware social group, they were a team only in administrative understanding, not in the social one.²⁰ Therefore, Rajkowska decided to invite all employees to go out together from the building for a walk on Błonie, which are nearby. There, a tread had been prepared for them. Writing about the *Wyjście*, Rajkowska described her intentions:

I am guided by a need to see all the people, who work for the Museum. I would like them to leave their workplaces, go out of the basements, rooms and cubbies, leave the offices and small booths, exhibition halls and workshops. I would like to see the doors of Museum open and a great number of people slowly walking down the stairs. [...] It will, for a moment, disturb the hierarchy of the Building, to which they belong every day. It will not be important who works on which floor and what position he or she holds²¹.

Rajkowska’s project can be called theatrical at least for two reasons. Firstly, by encouraging employees to “leave their workplaces, go out of the basements, rooms and cubbies”, she proposed nothing less than leaving the backstage and entering the

²⁰ D. Kuryłek, E. M. Tatar, *Przewodnik*, www.muzeum.krakow.pl/Przewodnik.299.0.html (access: 31.12.2014).

²¹ Ibidem.

front stage. The curators became the objects to looks and exhibits. Secondly, there was the method of carrying out the action and the role which Rajkowska played – a quite patronizing viewer coming from the outside, who dreams to see “a great number of people slowly walking down the stairs” – both the method and the role determined the participants of this action as actors in the spectacle directed by the artist. Rajkowska tried to arrange the situation in which relations between the employees would free themselves from an institutional rigor and professional relations. Still, a concept of the complete transformation of formalized and set relations was indifferent to the participants. This attitude of the employees was observed by the curator, Ewa Tatar, who claimed that the project “did not meet their trust, they were scared, afraid of the manipulation. They treated Rajkowska like someone who destroys their developed structure”²².

Rajkowska wanted to transform the formalized relations between the museum employees into spontaneous relations, assuming that she can reshape a leveled structure of professional relations into a horizontal network, where all subjects are equal. It is of no significance, whether it was about employees or about the institution’s audience – the purpose of participatory practices is always similar. They tend to create a kind of – to refer to Nicolas Bourriaud again – an interstice in the functioning of an institution, where the exceptions, divisions, social or business hierarchies, would be suspended – they strive for at least momentary connection of the divided society and fragmented culture.

To lose the distinction

The perspective of symbolic interactionism in MacCannell’s interpretation would suggest that, as gestures of theatrical nature, the participatory activities – but also the rest of listed methods of “opening up” institutions to the viewer – are a pretended movement. Not necessarily intentional, because behind the events which aim to open institution to the viewer or allow him to participate in it, there are usually honest intentions of the organizers, artists and curators. The problem is that the desire to introduce a wide variety of social groups to the high culture – invalidate the social antagonisms, distinctions and exclusions, transform formal relations into informal ones, mediated into direct ones and, finally, suspend the tastes – is based on a vision impossible to fulfill because of the nature of an institution. Being the elements of a field of art – and this is not a hint from MacCannell, but a suggestion from Pierre Bourdieu – galleries and museums participate in a game of symbolic capital and of the reign in this area. And this is connected with distinctions, hierarchies, and exclusions.

In this approach, activities of institutions to open up to the viewer are more the acts of faith and wishful thinking. Practices described previously acquire a nature of a hoax, a patronizing creation of a playground for the public. If one would draw

²² Ibidem.

final consequences from the postulate of audience participation, one should ask, in what range the border dividing a viewer from an institution can be eliminated. In other words, galleries and museums should indicate, what would be the range of opening, to what extent its borders could be negotiated, and where appetites of negotiators would have to end. Because, on what level the influence of an audience would have to stay not to become pretended (and therefore comical)? On education programs? Program of exhibitions? Personnel policy? If institutions would want to really open themselves to the viewers – thus, build symmetrical relations with them – they would have to take a risk of giving up the power, so they would let the viewers influence the condition of institution on different levels. Understanding participation as a serious social and political project, we would have to require institutions to rethink the conditions under which they want to share the power with an audience. Only such project could ensure not only superficial participation of the public under conditions provided by institutions – in prepared decorations – but also a possibility of a real influence on the shape of art institution as a public area. The institutions would have to leave empty gestures of letting the viewers go into directors' offices and admit, that not all viewers have the competence to participate on an equal basis. Those who can become potential partners in discussion about the shape of a museum or a gallery are very few, and in each such serious discussion, the institution selects the partners and sets the conditions of a dialogue.

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Turyści i tubylcy. Praktyki partycypacyjne instytucji wystawienniczych w perspektywie koncepcji turystyki Deana MacCannella

Streszczenie

Sięgając po aparaturę pojęciową wykorzystywaną przez Deana MacCannella do refleksji nad turystem, artykuł poddaje analizie wybrane praktyki stosowane przez polskie instytucje wystawiennicze w relacjach z publicznością. Celem tych praktyk jest z jednej strony zwiększenie frekwencji w muzeach i galeriach, z drugiej strony aktywizacja widzów. Aktywizację tę rozumie się jako proces przechodzenia od modelu, który sprowadzał odbiorcę do roli biernego widza, do modelu, w którym publiczność ma stać się potencjalnym „partnerem” instytucji. Analizując owe tendencje poprzez pojęcia „kulis”, „sceny” i „dekoracji sceny”, artykuł wskazuje powody, by aktywizujące publiczność działania instytucji uznawać za ruch często powierzchowny lub mający wręcz mistyfikacyjny charakter.

Słowa kluczowe: interakcjonizm symboliczny, partycypacja, przedstawienie, teatralizacja, autentyczność

The Tourists and the Locals. Participatory Practices of Art Institutions in View of Dean MacCannell's Concept of Tourism

Abstract

Reaching for the conceptual apparatus used by Dean MacCannell to reflect on tourism, the article analyzes the selected practices used by the Polish exhibition institutions in relation to the audience. The aim of these practices is, on the one hand, increasing the attendance of museums and galleries, and on the other the activation of spectators. This activation is

understood as a process of coming from a model that diminished the receptor to the role of a passive spectator, to the model in which the audience is to become a potential “partner” of the institution. Analyzing these tendencies through the concepts of “backstage”, “scene” and “scene decorations”, the article points the reasons to perceive the audience activation actions as often superficial or even mystifying in nature.

Key words: symbolic interactionism, participation, representation, theatricalization, authenticity

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