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*As a manuscript*

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DOCUMENTARY OPTICS IN CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS: PRACTICES OF  
WORKING WITH HISTORY AND MEMORY IN CONTEMPORARY ART (1989-2020S)

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## I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK

### The relevance of the study

In contemporary art since the late 1980s, themes of history and memory have increasingly come to the fore. Prominent artists such as Christian Boltanski, Gerhard Richter and Miroslav Balka are among those who address themes of memory, personal experiences of history and the transmission of memories in their works. This process extends beyond individual works. Researchers, curators and artists are now paying particular attention to projects involving representations of the past. Exhibitions focusing on individual memories, closely interwoven with the histories of countries and eras are being held in renowned museums and art centers, as well as in independent spaces. These include the exhibition *L'espace d'un instant*<sup>1</sup> by the French Algerian artist Zeineb Sedira at the Galerie Nationale Jeu de Paume in Paris, *Not a Time for Love*<sup>2</sup> at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre in Moscow and *Between Laughter and Forgetting* at Prague's Meet Factory. At the same time, young artists today often turn to family memories and childhood memories in their work. Examples include exhibitions by Russian artists in recent years, including *Promzona*<sup>3</sup> by Pavel Otdelnov at the MMSI in Moscow, *In Search of the Elephant*<sup>4</sup> by Dima Filippov at the MMSI in Moscow, and the exhibition *Life Line*<sup>5</sup> by Maria Poluektova at the Gulag Museum.

Exploring the past, artists address situations of conflict, war and the collapse of states. In other words, they choose those moments that best reflect the impact of history on people's fates. For example, the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar in his works

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<sup>1</sup> L'espace d'un instant. // Jeu de Paume. URL: <https://jeudepaume.org/evenement/zineb-sedira/> (accessed 15.08.2022)

<sup>2</sup> (Not) time for love. // Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre. URL: <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/exhibitions/ne-vremya-dlya-lyubvi/> (accessed 11.08.2022)

<sup>3</sup> Promzona. URL: <https://www.promzona.site/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>4</sup> In Search of the Elephant. URL: [https://mmoma.ru/exhibitions/ermolaevsky17/polihroniya\\_praktiki\\_issledovaniya\\_temporalnyh\\_rezhimov\\_sovremennostibr/](https://mmoma.ru/exhibitions/ermolaevsky17/polihroniya_praktiki_issledovaniya_temporalnyh_rezhimov_sovremennostibr/). (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>5</sup> Lifeline. Exhibition by Maria Poluektova. <https://istpamyat.ru/2014/08/13/664/> (Date of access: 20.08.2022)

*Rwanda Rwanda*<sup>6</sup> and *The Silence of Nduwayezu*<sup>7</sup> explores the history of the Rwandan genocide through photographs and documentary footage. Israeli-French artist Esther Shalev-Gertz records the stories of Holocaust survivors and those who were forced into exile. The treatment of such situations allows the artists to talk about how memory as personal experience and history intersect. History in this case is perceived more broadly than memory, because it extends beyond the life of a single person.

The intensification of interest in the past in culture increasingly focuses attention on personal stories. The importance of each person's experience as a bearer of certain memories is particularly realised by artists. In other words, the interest that arises in art does not exist in isolation, but is part of a more general process in culture that has affected literature, film and theatre.

The theme of memory and history is inextricably linked to the events of the 20th century, since it was the Second World War, and in particular the Holocaust, that influenced the way we are aware of ourselves now and how we shape our perceptions of the past. The second half of the last century in culture is almost entirely devoted to finding ways of talking about things which is almost unrepresentable. This has an impact on artists too, since after the Holocaust and World War II it is almost impossible to work without referring to the traumatic experience of the past. Art therefore begins to actively seek ways of showing what was very difficult to conceive of, much less portray. However, the understanding of the history of the Holocaust in art and culture takes place years after the end of the war. This is due to the need for temporal distance to form the optics of looking at the past. For example, many books dealing with the experience begin to be published immediately after the end of the war. However, a significant number of works analysing traumatic experiences already make sense of the events, as if at a distance from them. Many works are not published until later, such as Primo Levi's book "If

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<sup>6</sup> Rwanda Project. URL: [do-jaar-the-rwanda-project/](https://do-jaar-the-rwanda-project/) (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>7</sup> Rwanda Project. URL: [do-jaar-the-rwanda-project/](https://do-jaar-the-rwanda-project/) (Date of access: 10.08.2022)

this is this a man?"<sup>8</sup>, published in 1958. It represents a new lens of looking at history, which is linked to the transmission of first-person personal experiences.

Gradually, by the 1960s, the traumatic experience became an integral part of culture and required a revision of old and a search for new forms of expression. This manifests itself fully in all areas of culture, in literature, in theatre and in the arts. Artists begin to work with images of the Holocaust in order to capture the state of the world after the Second World War as accurately as possible. Anselm Kiefer, for example, creates a series of photographs *Occupation*<sup>9</sup> where he poses in a Nazi salute against the backdrop of landscapes from various European countries, and Christian Boltanski works *Purim, Les enfants de Dijon*, referring to photographs of children who were victims of the Holocaust.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new phase of attitudes to 20th-century history has begun. This study focuses on reflecting on this particular period. Events such as the collapse of the socialist bloc and the fall of the Berlin Wall draw attention not only to questions of World War II and the Holocaust, but also to the history and memory of the Gulag. New museums and memorial complexes are being opened, such as the Yad Vashem Museum<sup>10</sup> in Jerusalem and the Holocaust Hall at the Jewish Museum in Berlin<sup>11</sup>, as well as museums devoted to the history of repression. In other words, the problem of preserving the memory of traumatic events of the past becomes more acute. It is these pages of history that serve to develop a museum pedagogy of remembrance aimed at preventing a repetition of what happened.

Around the same time, the field of memory studies, which is devoted to the study of memory as a cultural, social and political phenomenon, became widespread. The researchers of this field study various forms of memory and ways of representation of the past. Many researchers claim that the works of Maurice

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<sup>8</sup> Levy P. Is this a person? M. 2011. 288 c.

<sup>9</sup> Kiefer A. Occupations. URL: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/in-focus/heroic-symbols-anselmkiefer/difficult-reception-occupations> (Date of access: 12.08.2022).

<sup>10</sup> Yad Vashem. URL: <https://www.yadvashem.org/ru.html> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>11</sup> Jewish Museum. Berlin. <https://www.jmberlin.de/> (Date of access: 10.08.2022)

Halbwachs laid the foundation for memory studies as a field of knowledge. In the 1980s, however, the field began a new stage of development.

In other words, the activation of work with history at the new stage led to the creation of a system for preserving the memory of the 20th century. The change in the geopolitical map and the collapse of the socialist bloc thus contributed to a revision of established ideas about memory and history.

Another important reason was the awareness of the need to preserve the voices of a generation that had witnessed history. In 1986, Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* was released, in which the director reconstructs the memory of the Holocaust through the voices of those who were victims and those who were involved in the violence. Jan Assmann, a key researcher in the field of memory studies, links the "existential essence" of<sup>12</sup> interest in the topic of history and memory to the fact that, "as society passes the natural frontier where living witness memories are threatened with extinction, it faces the need to develop 'cultural forms of memory of the past'"<sup>13</sup>. In other words, the awareness of the elusive and distant memory of witnesses contributes to an increased interest in the ways in which personal memories are preserved and transmitted.

Artists and writers' experience of the post-traumatic state of European culture has been expressed in doubts and reflections on how we can pass on the lived experiences of witnesses. After all, the stories of those who survived imprisonment in the Gulag or survived the concentration camps include situations that are almost impossible to talk about. At the same time, it is difficult to be a listener to these stories. Artists and museum curators are therefore faced with a range of questions about the difficulties of presenting personal histories in a public space.

Personal memories can take the form of an oral story or a diary, they can be recorded at the moment an event occurs, or they can describe situations from long ago. In other words, memory is always conditioned by the form it takes. The conversation about memory and history since the late 1980s has therefore been

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<sup>12</sup> Assmann J. Cultural Memory. Writing, Memory of the Past and Political Identity in the High Cultures of Antiquity. M., 2004. C. 21

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

defined by the types of material that memory holds, that is, by the appeal to documents. Attention to concrete, tangible experiences entails the choice of documentary sources as the main tool for the work. Therefore, artists are actively beginning to use materials such as letters, diaries, photographs from family albums and historical archives in their work.

The appeal to the document in culture goes back to before the 1980s. Various developments in political and artistic life in the 1960s influence attitudes to documentality. This is largely due to trends in film, photography and art. The genre of reportage and avant-garde cinema is being discovered in literature and cinematography. At the same time, discussions about the possibilities of reality reflection in documentary films are actively pursued. Documentary footage is used in various practices of political cinema. And the leaflet as a mode of artistic expression, which gains importance in the 1960s, is also a documentary form. Speaking of contemporary art, it is worth mentioning Christian Boltanski, who worked with photography back in the 1970s, showing its possibilities as a documentary material. However, the late 1980s and early 1990s offer new contexts for rethinking the notion of the document.

The role of the museum in the public space is being redefined. The "museum boom", as it is defined by researchers, is characterised by the opening of new museums, not only art museums, but also anthropological, ethnographic and especially historical ones. Museums are responding to the political and social dimension of culture and to the emergence of new disciplines and fields of study. At the same time, new museums emerge whose exhibitions address the themes of mass violence, wars, deportations and repressions. Among such museums are the Yad Vashem Museum<sup>14</sup> in Jerusalem and the Holocaust History Museum in Washington, D.C.<sup>15</sup> . These museums are becoming spaces for discussion about working with memory and history. Exhibitions at these museums are accompanied by educational and outreach programmes.

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<sup>14</sup> Yad Vashem. URL: <https://www.yadvashem.org/ru.html> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>15</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. URL: <https://www.ushmm.org/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

In the 2010s, the network of these types of museums expanded. Among the institutions opening during this period we can mention the *Red Line Museum*<sup>16</sup> (Antwerp, 2013), dedicated to the emigration of people from Europe to America, including in the period before World War II, the World War II Museum in Poland<sup>17</sup> (Gdańsk, 2017), and the new building and new exhibition of the Gulag History Museum<sup>18</sup> (Moscow, 2015). We cannot say that the mentioned museums stand on the same political and social positions: each of them has its own history and reasons for origin in different contexts. However, we bring them together to show that the search for ways to work with personal histories through documents covers not only at the level of individual exhibitions and performances, but also different areas of culture and cultural policy.

Thus the emergence of new museums both opens up access to documentary material and creates space for discussions about how to work with it.

In addition, another factor influencing the rethinking of the role of the document was a change in the way history was viewed as a science. A new field of knowledge - public history, which aims to bridge the gap between historical knowledge and the public - has spread. Public history took shape in the 1970s in the United States, where the journal *The Public Historian* was founded, the first professional society, the National Council for Public History, and the first master's programmes in universities were opened. However, in the 1990s public history entered a new stage of development, which is manifested in the creation of museum and exhibition projects, the development of documentary theatre and the active involvement of contemporary artists in interaction with historical museums. In Russia, interest in public history emerged much later, only in the 2010s, when projects such as Public History Laboratory and Public History Portal appeared, and educational programmes were opened at universities (MVSSSEN, Perm University, European University).

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<sup>16</sup> Red Star Line. URL: <https://redstarline.be/en> (Date of access: 19.08.2022)

<sup>17</sup> Museum of the Second World War. URL: <https://muzeum1939.pl/ru> (Date of access: 09.08.2022)

<sup>18</sup> Gulag History Museum. URL: <https://gmig.ru/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

Interpretations of public history as a field of knowledge are quite varied, but the main focus for all researchers is the transmission of scientific knowledge in comprehensible language and the search for new forms of conversation about the past. This leads historians to engage with museums, theatres and exhibition spaces. Artists and curators work together to discuss how documents can be interpreted and how history and personal memories can be shown.

In addition, one phenomenon that has influenced the surge of interest in history and memory in contemporary art is the spread of sustainable art practices as part of a more global turn towards sustainable development. The issue of sustainability, in addition to a focus on environmental issues, includes changing all aspects of life in general, as well as a shift in focus towards maintaining sustainable connections between people, sustainable economic growth, attention to heritage and reflection on historical experience. Sustainable art is therefore often seen as art that raises environmental and acutely social issues, as positioned by curators Maya and Reuben Fawkes<sup>19</sup> who were among the first to address the term sustainability in an art context. However, the Polish art historian Anna Markowska's definition seems broader and at the same time more accurate<sup>20</sup>, who writes that sustainable art practices consist in exploring existing contexts and situations through archives and artefacts of history. In general, the interest in the document in contemporary art, which became widespread in the 1990s, is connected, among other things, to the current process of development of sustainable art, which has only recently emerged in Russia.

Talk of a new phase of work with history and memory in the 1990s is therefore related to several reasons, which not only cover the field of art, but also affect processes in culture. Thanks to the opening of new museums and the increased

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<sup>19</sup> Fowkes M., Fowkes R. The Principles of Sustainability in Contemporary Art. URL: [https://web.archive.org/web/20161128083258/http://greenmuseum.org/generic\\_content.php?ct\\_id=265](https://web.archive.org/web/20161128083258/http://greenmuseum.org/generic_content.php?ct_id=265) (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>20</sup> Markowska A. Can a definition of art limit itself to the wish to reconstruct the world based on better principles // Sustainable art facing the need for regeneration, responsibility and relationships. Poland, 2015. P. 10

interest in personal memories and the ways of communicating them, the document is becoming a major tool for dealing with history and memory.

Characteristically, many recent exhibitions include work with documentary sources. Such exhibitions include *Fields of our loneliness*<sup>21</sup> (Mittelbau-Dora, 2013), *Kronstadt Stories-2. Archive*<sup>22</sup> (Gosudarev bastion, St. Petersburg, 2017), *Dried to believe*<sup>23</sup> (International Memorial Museum, Moscow). However, it is not only museum archives and exhibitions that interest artists — they also work with their own family sources, which may include letters, photo albums and memorabilia. In addition, artists also work with found objects, discarded or accidentally seen, for example, at a flea market — i.e. the range of materials that artists consider to be documentary is quite wide. Thus, almost any type of material that holds information about the past in text, voice, smell and image can act as a document.

Artists' engagement with documentary material raises the question of the definition of the document. In other words, we need to identify what we mean when we talk about working with documents as an important part of the process of making sense of memory and history in the space of art.

Given the broad understanding of the document in contemporary art, it becomes clear that it is not an established given, but is constructed under certain conditions and changes depending on the context. In this study, we attempt to analyse the conditions that allow the work with material as a document to be constructed, and to highlight those properties of this material that are necessary to give it a documentary status.

### *The optics of documentation*

The question of looking at material as a document is linked to the problem of the optics of documentation. It implies a set of relations within an exhibition or a work that defines the framework of our view of history and memory. The

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<sup>21</sup> Fields of our loneliness. Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Memorial. 2013. URL: <https://www.buchenwald.de/en/1101/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>22</sup> Kronshtadt Stories 2. Archive. Poterna and casemate of Gosudarev bastion, St. Petersburg, 2017. URL: [https://www.spbmuseum.ru/exhibits\\_and\\_exhibitions/temporary\\_exhibitions/](https://www.spbmuseum.ru/exhibits_and_exhibitions/temporary_exhibitions/) (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>23</sup> Dried is to be believed. Project website. URL: <https://zasushennye.ru/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

relationship is formed around the documentary material, which is structured in a certain way within the exhibition space.

The scope of our view of history and memory is not limited to the artistic sphere, because documents are also included in museum exhibitions and historical exhibitions, which also raise questions about the ways of showing, the organisation of materials in space and the interpretation of personal histories. By introducing the notion of the optics of documentation, we therefore propose to take the question of working with documents beyond the boundaries of events and projects which exist only in the field of art, and to overcome the boundary between artistic and historical ways of display. This makes it possible to consider how artistic and historical work with memory converge when both use the same materials. In these cases it is possible to see how historical material functions as artistic material and, at the same time, how an exhibition built entirely on documentary material can be viewed from an artistic perspective.

This study focuses not only on exhibitions in spaces designed to show art, but also where historical exhibitions are primarily held. Artists and curators address material evidence of memory and history in exhibitions including *From Generation to Generation: Inherited Memory and Contemporary Art*<sup>24</sup> (San Francisco Jewish Museum), devoted to artists' representations of history, *Between Laughter and Forgetting*<sup>25</sup> (Meet Factory, Prague), based on an exploration of oblivion as the reverse side of memory in contemporary art, and projects *The Haunted House*<sup>26</sup> (Ekaterina Cultural Foundation, Moscow), dedicated to forms of work with history and personal memory, and *Places One by One*<sup>27</sup> (Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre, Moscow) as part of Viktor Misiano's project *The Fate of Man*, a series of exhibitions entitled *Processes* (Gulag Museum, Moscow).

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<sup>24</sup> From Generation to Generation: Inherited Memory and Contemporary Art. 2017. URL: <https://www.thecjm.org/exhibitions/2> (Date of access: 11.08.2022).

<sup>25</sup> Between Laughter and Forgetting.// Meet Factory. 2016. URL: <http://www.meetfactory.cz/en/program/detail/smich-a-zapomneni> (Date of access: 13.08.2022)

<sup>26</sup> A haunted house.// Catherine's Cultural Foundation. 2018. URL: <http://thehumancondition.ru/session3> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>27</sup> In search of a place.// Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre. 2018. URL: <http://thehumancondition.ru/session4> (Date of access: 19.08.2022)

In addition, projects that can be described as existing at the interface between contemporary art and historical knowledge have been created recently. These include exhibitions in historical museums devoted to wars and repressions, created by contemporary artists (exhibitions at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, VAC Foundation projects at the Gulag History Museum in Moscow, exhibitions at the International Memorial Museum). Such projects demonstrate the process of rapprochement between memorial and historical museums and contemporary art. On the one hand, museums are interested in finding new ways of working with their own exhibitions, archives, and collections, so they attract contemporary artists. On the other hand, artists' interest in historical material is growing, because art goes beyond its own sphere and begins to work with different themes, including historical and anthropological ones, focusing on the individual and his fate.

Viewing projects and exhibitions in the context of the optics of documentation allows us to overcome the boundaries of fields and disciplines and to consider the process of reflecting on history and memory as a whole, as a phenomenon with a common problem of looking at the document.

Despite the interest in this topic on the part of curators, researchers, and artists, at the moment there are almost no full-scale studies in Russian and foreign literature aimed at analysing strategies for working with historical documents in contemporary art and in history museums. Most critical commentary on the subject is confined to articles in periodicals or exhibition catalogues. Therefore, in order to identify the specificity of contemporary foreign practices, as well as to analyse the sphere of Russian contemporary art, it becomes important to carry out a study of exhibition strategies of comprehension of history and memory in contemporary art and museums, a key element of which is the work with documents.

### **Elaboration of a scientific problem**

Our research is based on the complex problem of working with documents in contemporary exhibitions and art projects devoted to reflections on history and memory. We therefore focus on research that is more concerned with artistic

representations of the past than with the whole layer of representations of memory in culture, as this is a much broader problem that goes beyond the scope of this paper. In the context of the problem proposed in this study, several main vectors can be distinguished, among them the study of representations of memory and history in contemporary art, work with the document in art, as well as exhibition practices of comprehension of history and memory.

In the practice of researchers of cultural representations of the past it is customary to talk about the question of addressing memory and history in contemporary art as part of a more general process involving literature, film and theatre. It is impossible not to mention the works devoted to the field of memory studies. At the moment, there are many foreign studies devoted to various aspects of memory studies (works by P. Hutton, P. Nore, D. Lowenthal, G. Lubbe, J. Rüsen, P. Ricoeur, P. Berger, J. Assmann, A. Assmann, B. Genhe). Among the domestic researchers dealing with the problems of historical memory, it is worth noting L. P. Repina, O. B. Leontieva, I. M. Savelieva, A. V. Poletaev and many others. However, of all the variety of issues raised by memory researchers, we want to focus on the issue of artistic representations of the past.

This problem is of interest to one of the leading representatives of the direction of memory studies, the German historian and cultural scientist Aleida Assmann, who proposes the concept of memorial culture ("The long shadow of the past", "New discontent with memorial culture")<sup>28</sup>, by which she means, as historian and researcher of cultural memory Olga Leontieva writes, "the new culture of relating to the past ("mastering the past") that emerged at the turn of the 20th and 21st century and that is associated with a profound shift in the values of the modern world"<sup>29</sup>. The new culture is characterized by its interdisciplinarity, as it encompasses different spheres of political, social and cultural life. By singling out the creation of exhibitions and museum displays along with literary works and films into a separate

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<sup>28</sup> Assmann A. A new discontent with memorial culture. M., 2016. 232 c.

<sup>29</sup> Leontieva O.B. Memory, time, and memorial culture in the works of Aleida Assman // Historical Expertise. - 2017. - № 4. - C. 31.

category of "memory events"<sup>30</sup>, Assmann opens up space for a discussion of strategies of representation of memory and history in contemporary art and culture as a key, rather than peripheral, part of processes of making sense of the past.

Among the most important studies of artistic practices as part of the process of history transcending its own boundaries is also the text by Marianne Hirsch "Generation of Postmemory"<sup>31</sup>. Hirsch analyses the practices of artists who have not witnessed the events they are making sense of. She therefore speaks of a particular "aesthetics of memory"<sup>32</sup>, characterized by an interest in the memories of previous generations and a search for ways to appropriate, through art, the history that artists cannot remember.

In the Russian context of memory studies, the question of working with history and memory in contemporary art has not yet received a comprehensive analysis. However, works devoted to visual representations of memory are beginning to appear. Among Russian studies, it is important to note the collection "Trauma: points"<sup>33</sup>, compiled by Elena Trubina and Sergey Ushakin, which actualizes the theme of artistic and museum ways of representation of a special type of memory - memory of trauma, as well as the collection "Politics of affect. Museum as a Space for Public History", which addresses the question of exhibition work with memory, which the Public History Lab released in 2019.

The question of artistic understanding of memory and history in theatre, museums, and visual projects is also addressed by contemporary researchers, including E. Rozhdestvenskaya, V. Sklez, and O. Moroz. Often researchers focus on cultural representations of the past, especially the traumatic past, with an emphasis not on art, but on various forms of cultural production, including literature, museums and documentary theatre.

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<sup>30</sup> Assmann A. A new discontent with memorial culture. M., 2016. C. 147

<sup>31</sup> Hirsch M. What is post-memory. URL: <https://urokiistorii.ru/articles/chto-takoe-postpamjat> (Date of access: 04.07.2022)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Trauma: points / edited by Ushakin S. A., Trubina E. G. Moscow: New Literary Review, 2009. 936c.

The work of contemporary art with memory and history is also analysed within the framework of a special pedagogy — "pedagogy of memory"<sup>34</sup>. It is based on working with the history of wars, repressions and other instances of mass violence in history. The aim of pedagogy of remembrance is to prevent the past from being repeated. The author of the term, Thomas Krantz, sees artistic practices of memory work as an educational tool with great potential for dealing with traumatic and difficult historical events<sup>35</sup>.

When we talk about history and memory, we often think of places where memory is preserved, stored and studied. These spaces are historical and memorial museums that actively cooperate with contemporary art. Therefore much of the research on art strategies has focused around the problem of interaction between artists and historical museums, showing evidence (A. Kuhn<sup>36</sup>, E. Linenthal<sup>37</sup>, J. Young<sup>38</sup>, S. De Jong<sup>39</sup>).

While on the part of memory researchers contemporary art is seen as one way of talking about the past in culture, those who study contemporary art look at it from a completely different perspective. Researchers analyse the issue from several perspectives, but the main one is dealing with history as part of the individual artists' own strategy. Art historian Joan Gibbons has described artistic practices of working with memory in her book *"Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance"*<sup>40</sup>. Specific to Gibbons' approach, she focuses on artistic ways of recording personal history as part of the creative method of artists based on the creation of their own mythology. This problematic is actively explored in the works of art historians on the example of the work of individual artists (K. Nuril on

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<sup>34</sup> Krantz, T. The Pedagogy of Remembrance as a Form of Museum Education// The Person and the Challenges. - 2014. - № 2. - Pp. 257-269

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kuhn, A. Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media// .Memory Studies. 2010. №1(10)

<sup>37</sup> Linenthal, E. The Boundaries of Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum// American Quarterly. 1994. № 46. Pp. 406-433

<sup>38</sup> Young, J. The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning. Yale University Press, 1994. 415 p.

<sup>39</sup> De Jong, Sh. The Witness as Object: Video Testimony in Memorial Museums. N.Y. :Berghahn Books, 2019. 267 p.

<sup>40</sup> Gibbons J. Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance. L., 2007. 240 p.

Narkiavicius<sup>41</sup> , Balona di Olivera on Hirschhorn<sup>42</sup> , R. Perry on Mikal Rovner<sup>43</sup> ). The disadvantage of this approach is the isolation of art from a more general cultural process which is based on rethinking notions of history and memory.

The second aspect of the research is related to artists' work with documents. Mention should be made of the text by the curator and art critic Okui Enwezor, who puts the question of working with history into a wider general cultural context in his article "Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art"<sup>44</sup> . Enwezor is one of the first to conceptualise the process of reference to archives and documents as a particular trend in contemporary art dating back to the 1960s and describes different ways of working with the document as a way of recording personal and shared history. Hal Foster, in his text 'Archival Impulse'<sup>45</sup> , also deals with this problem by talking about the archival turn in art, as does Ruth Rosengarten in "Between memory and archive"<sup>46</sup> .

Despite the large number of studies, works devoted to understanding history and memory through reference to documentary and artistic materials are virtually non-existent, and studies on memory and history in contemporary art in general are fragmentary.

Firstly, the studies described involve considering the issue within the creative method of individual artists, excluding the influence of the general cultural context of the development of public history. Secondly, they assume an analysis of individual artistic works as isolated examples of making sense of history and memory. Thirdly, these texts treat art as part of the general cultural practices of

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<sup>41</sup> Nouril, K. Making Memories, Mediating Histories in the Work of Deimantas Narkevičius. Mardilovich, M. Taroutina, *New Narratives of Russian and East European Art: Between Traditions and Revolutions*. - Routledge, 2019. - Pp. 193-204

<sup>42</sup> Balona de Olivera, A. The Paradox of an Archive: The Anarchival-Archival Art of Thomas Hirschhorn. // *Slashseconds*. [electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.slashseconds.org/issues/002/004/articles/aoliveira/> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>43</sup> Perry R. Holocaust hospitality: Michal Rovner`s living landscape // *History and Memory*. 2016.№ 28(2). Pp. 89-122

<sup>44</sup> Enwezor O. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. N.Y., 2007. 285 p.

<sup>45</sup> Foster H. Archival Impulse // *Art Journal*. URL:<http://moscowartmagazine.com/issue/10/article/133> (Date of access: 12.08.2022)

<sup>46</sup> Between memory and archive. Berardo Museum. 2013-2014. URL: <https://www.ruthrosengarten.com/projects/between-memory-and-archive-201314> (Date of access: 12.08.2022).

working with memory and history in theatre, cinema, and museums, without taking into account the specificity of artistic representation of the past.

Thus, research into history and memory in contemporary art is fragmentary and does not treat document work as a specific type of artistic practice.

In this study, we would therefore like to focus on the problem of contemporary artists addressing history and memory through documentary material.

**The object of** this study is the practices of working with history and memory in contemporary art and exhibition projects.

**The subject** of the study is the set of relations shaping the view of history and memory in art and exhibition projects, designated in this study as the optics of documentality.

**The chronological scope** of the study is limited to the period from the 1990s to the present, as it is during this period that a new surge of interest in working with memory and history is taking place. At the same time, the new period is characterised by an appeal to personal documents as the main types of material that record memory and history. More and more artists begin to explore their own family history, become interested in personal memory, and communicate with witnesses to important historical events. It is realising that those who remember are passing very quickly and that it is important to have time to talk to them, to preserve the fragments of history that are already eluding us. Claude Lanzmann released the film *Shoah* in 1985, which redefined the figure of the Holocaust witness. The same period saw the opening of major museums of conscience, i.e. museums devoted to events such as genocide, repression and the Holocaust, based on telling the story through real objects, documents and stories (Holocaust Museum in Washington, Yad Vashem, Holocaust Hall in the Jewish Museum in Berlin). In addition, new forms of memory representation based on documents are emerging, among which the most famous example is Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus*, in which the author tells the story of his father, an Auschwitz survivor. On all levels, including political, social and

artistic, there is a redefinition of the relation to the document as the most important source of our knowledge of history and memory. These factors suggest a new period of working with the past within the framework of art and make it most important for analysis in the focus of this dissertation study.

### **The typological scope of the study**

The choice of projects and artists for analysis within the thesis is based on several factors.

Firstly, the text examines the projects of the most important contemporary artists, whose artistic strategy is linked to the exploration of memory and history and has largely determined the vector for the further development of many younger artists. In addition, the artists' works reveal the relationship between memory as a concrete experience of real people and reflection on history as a more general process that captures the course of time. These artists include the French artist Christian Boltanski (1944-2021), who is one of the first to talk about the individual in history and the role of private memory, Esther Shalev-Gertz (1948), an Israeli-French artist of a later period, working with questions about how personal histories can be represented, how to show them, and how the artist can speak through others' memories, and the Lithuanian artist Deimantas Narkevičius (1964), who explores the possibilities of representing post-Soviet history.

Secondly, the study examines the work of contemporary artists engaged in the search for new forms and ways of addressing memory and history through the forms of archives, monuments and personal documents. These include French artist Eric Baudelaire (1973), who explores issues of shaping the viewer's perspective on history and memory in his films, Israeli artists Mikal Rovner (1957), who consistently works with issues of representation of the Holocaust in art, and Orly Mayberg (1958), who works with found archives and documents.

Third, in this study we turn to the work of younger artists, including Russian artists Natalia Zintsova (1971), Dima Filippov (1989), Pavel Otdelnov (1979), and Anastasia Kuzmina (1989). This selection does not offer an exhaustive picture of the

comprehension of memory in contemporary Russian art, but it does show how artists work with the problem of distance in relation to history. For them, the question of showing the document is largely a question of finding a mediator who allows distance to be created between the past and the present moment. Thus, through the example of these works, it is important for us to show how artists perceive the distance between themselves and the time they cannot remember, but feel the need to talk about it. In addition, an analysis of projects like these provides an opportunity to look at how document work in contemporary Russian art develops in the current context, what strategies artists use, and how they fit into the more general context of working with memory. It is worth noting that the artists described are not always addressing moments of complex, traumatic history. Often they explore past experiences in their diversity, addressing family history or exploring everyday aspects of the past.

Fourthly, the text analyses exhibitions that represent a combination of historical and artistic materials in the spaces of historical and memorial museums, including exhibitions at the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, projects at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and exhibitions at the International Memorial Museum (*Dried to Believe, Material. The Female Memory of the Gulag*). The examples of these exhibitions reveal how museums integrate the ways of showing the document, which are present in contemporary art, into their own exhibitions and expositions. Such projects are often made by researchers rather than artists, but they borrow artistic means to present historical sources in exhibitions.

Thus, it becomes clear that the question of working with documents goes beyond just the artistic sphere, it is a wider process that captures not only the spaces of contemporary art, but also the spaces for showing history. There is a convergence of the two modes of display: the historical and the museum and the artistic, which requires increased analytical attention.

In order to consider ways of working with memory and history in art and exhibition projects, the following aims and objectives need to be set.

**The aim of the study** is to identify the specifics of working with history and memory in contemporary exhibition projects in the context of the notion of documentary optics

**Objectives:**

- Consider the particularities of working with history and memory through documents in contemporary art
- Identify a typology of ways of working with the document in contemporary art
- Analyse exhibition projects that explore history and memory through documentary material
- Identify strategies for dealing with exhibition projects based on memory and history through the concept of documentary optics
- Articulate the specificity of documentary optics in contemporary art and exhibition projects

**The hypothesis of the research is** that turning to the document to investigate the mechanisms of history and memory work within the framework of exhibition activities and art projects is a situation of shaping the optics of documentality. The notion of the optics of documentary includes a complex relationship between the document, the artist and the exhibition space, which forms the viewer's view of memory and history.

**Research methods**

The optics of documentality in exhibition projects is a complex phenomenon, requiring the connection of different concepts and methodologies from different fields of humanities knowledge.

It is important to note that the study of the optics of documentary is an analysis of the ways of looking at memory and history and the relationships between the elements of the exhibition that shape this view. The choice of mediums for display can be any and all, and depends on the strategies of the artistic work. In other words,

the focus of this study is not on the problem of the interaction between mediums for telling history and the representation of memory.

The object of our research is practices of working with history and memory in artworks, but the focus is on exhibition projects. The exhibition is understood in this study not as a set of works, but as a certain kind of organised physical and conceptual space. When analysing the projects we are interested in the message in public space that the exhibition broadcasts, rather than the consideration of individual artworks. As a research tool we therefore introduce Michel Foucault's notion of *dispositif*, later incorporated into the field of exhibition analysis by contemporary art researchers, including Jean Davallon, Jerome Glisenstein and Jean-Marc Poinot.

Foucault speaks of the *dispositif* as a 'heterogeneous system'<sup>47</sup>, in which all elements are linked together. In Foucault's own interpretation, the *dispositif* is 'the connection between all the elements'<sup>48</sup> of the system, i.e. the various institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and structures of knowledge organisation, since Foucault primarily uses the *dispositif* when speaking specifically about forms and systems of knowledge. With the *dispositif* it is possible to analyse different manifestations of disciplinary power, for example at the level of the state or within different institutions and established practices. However, if we see the exhibition as a certain structure, permeated by relations between its different elements and external contexts, we cannot avoid talking about power relations within the exhibition. Curators and artists exercise their power when they select the materials to be shown, organise them and arrange them in such a way as to present their vision of the problems of history and memory to the audience. In this case, the focus of the research is on the complex of relationships which are created by the author (curator, artist) and through which the viewer's view is shaped, and thus the author of the exhibition is placed in a position of power. Thus, referring to the *dispositif* will allow us to manifest the whole complex of relations that permeate and shape the exhibition space, and to determine which relations are power relations.

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<sup>47</sup> Foucault M. *Words and things*. Spb. : A-cad, 1994. C.127

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

This view on the analysis of exhibition projects is shared by French researchers and art historians, among them Jerome Glisenstein<sup>49</sup> and Jean-Marc Poinso<sup>50</sup>. However, Jean Davallon was one of the first to address such a method<sup>51</sup>, who proposed analysing exhibition space through the notion of the dispositif. He shifted the focus of attention to communicative space, that is, to the relationship that the author builds between the viewer and the exhibition.

In this way, the dispositif is used instrumentally to reveal the mechanisms of shaping the optics of documentation.

In addition, in the study we talk about artistic understandings of memory and history. In order to identify the problems that artists and curators work with, it is necessary to define the boundaries of the understanding of memory and history. Although some researchers do not draw a clear boundary between memory and history, this text considers examples of the separation of the different forms of knowledge organisation. This is due to the fact that many artists in their work problematise the separation between memory as a subjective, personal experience and history as a more general category that aspires to universality.

We draw on Maurice Halbwachs' concept of social memory<sup>52</sup>, to show how artists perceive the idea of constructed and socially conditioned memory. We also turn to Pierre Nora's notion of memory sites<sup>53</sup>, to examine the gap between the present and the past in contemporary artistic practices. The concept of "just memory"<sup>54</sup> by Paul Ricoeur makes the ethical issues of dealing with the past visible.

This study will describe exhibitions and projects that are based on the artistic and exhibition representation of documentary material. Michel Foucault's concept of the document as a monument<sup>55</sup> and the concept of the document as a construct,

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<sup>49</sup> Glisenstein J. Aesthetic experience and its dispositifs// Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music. Mainz, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Poinso, J-M. Les artistes contemporains et l'archive. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004. 282 p.

<sup>51</sup> Davallon J. The semiotic power of exhibition spaces. Towards a new conception of museum displays? 2011.№1. Pp. 42

<sup>52</sup> Halbwachs M. The Social Frame of Memory. M., 2007. 348 c.

<sup>53</sup> Nora P. France-memory. SPb., 1999, 396 pp.

<sup>54</sup> Ricoeur P. Memory, History, Oblivion. M., 2004. 728 c.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, M. The archaeology of knowledge. M., 2001

which the curator and art critic Okui Enwezor reveals in his exhibition and text<sup>56</sup> will be used to analyse strategies for working with the document. The concept of the document as a monument implies that we view documentary materials as a means to glimpse into another era, another time, different from the one in which the author is situated. By placing the document in the context of the exhibition, that is, by performing a procedure of interpretation, the artist makes a transition into the realm of another cultural experience.

The optics of documentality as a problem arise at the intersection of a changing attitude towards the exhibition and a changing attitude towards the document in contemporary art. The moment the document ceases to exist hermetically within the realm of art as part of conceptual practices, practices of self-inquiry and documentation, its significance as a historical document, material from another humanitarian realm, is revealed. Artists begin to pay attention to how the mechanisms of personal memory are arranged, how history works, and what the political, social factors of its functioning are. In other words, the artist begins to ask questions close to the work of a historian.

These questions will form the basis for an analysis of the exhibition projects, showing how the optics of documentality in contemporary art are being shaped.

The methodological foundations of the work thus involve the intersection of several fields: notions of history and memory, the concept of the document, and the analysis of the exhibition by means of the dispositif as a tool. The intersection of the three aspects is where the optics of documentality come into play, which involves the spatial representation of documents and the shaping of a way of looking at memory and history.

**The scientific novelty of the study is:**

1) A new way of looking at exhibitions that explore history and memory through documentary material is proposed, based on the concept of documentary optics

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<sup>56</sup> Enwezor O. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Documents in Contemporary Art*. ICP. New York, 2008.

- 2) The notion of the optics of documentability is described using the instrumental notion of dispositif
- 3) Russian exhibition practices of working with history and memory are considered alongside Western projects, so that the work reflects a unified process of artistic work with the past
- 4) Contemporary art exhibitions and exhibitions in historical centers and museums of conscience are considered together as part of an overall process of shaping the optics of documentary
- 5) A new typology of ways of working with the document in contemporary art is offered, based on a functional understanding of the document and the concept of the document as a monument (M. Foucault)
- 6) Types of dispositifs in dealing with history and memory in exhibition projects are identified
- 7) The concept of dispositif reveals the complex power relationship between the artist and the document in the exhibition
- 8) The notion of documentary optics in contemporary exhibition strategies is formulated

### **Statements to be defended**

- 1) Artistic and exhibition practices of working with history and memory on the basis of documentary material are presented as a process of shaping the optics of documentary
- 2) The notion of the optics of documentation is considered in connection with the artist's view of the material as a document, which determines the way the exhibition space is organised, the strategies for displaying documents and the ways in which materials are compared with one another
- 3) The optics of documentality in exhibition projects are examined through the notion of exhibition dispositif, based on research by Michel Foucault, Jean Davallon, Jean-Marc Poinot, Jérôme Glisenstein

4) A typology of documents in contemporary art is developed, based on the functions of the document and artistic strategies of displaying them: found documents, family archives, documents as a way of exploring the present, undocumentary materials

5) Artistic projects are considered according to how different types of exhibition dispositions work, based on a combination of artistic and historical materials

6) Five types of exhibition dispositions of work with memory and history are identified, based on the relationship between the historical and the artistic, the documentary and the artistic, the personal and the public, the documentary and the fictional.

7) It is suggested that the appeal to the optics of documentality should be seen as a single process, characteristic not only of contemporary art exhibitions but also of projects in historical and memorial museums that borrow artistic modes of display.

### **Theoretical and practical significance of the study**

A study of the optics of documentality in contemporary exhibition work could be an important step in art history in the general situation of a lack of theoretical understanding of the practices of working with history and memory through the document in contemporary art.

This study can be used for courses in art history, curatorial and artist training programmes, as it responds to current trends of interest in non-art museums, among them historical and memorial museums.

In addition, the method of looking at exhibition projects from the perspective of shaping the optics of documentality proposed in the study can serve as a guide for the work of contemporary institutions and curators working with the themes of history, personal memory, historical documents and archives.

The proposed optics of examining artistic projects that address memory and history can form the basis for future theoretical and practical research, because it

offers a shift of focus from thematic analysis of works to consideration of the artistic and exhibition process as a whole. When examining the optics of documentality, it becomes important for the researcher to focus not on the topic of artistic research (representation of the Holocaust, war, post-Soviet history), which limits possibilities for analysis and critique, but to focus on the chosen modes of display and the system of relations constructed by the exhibition. This will make visible the mechanisms for shaping the viewer's view of memory and history and develop an optic that incorporates different methodologies for analysing exhibition projects.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and a list of illustrations. The total volume of the thesis is 243 pages. The structure of the thesis reflects the aims and objectives of the research.

## **II. THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH**

In the **first chapter** we outlined the methodological foundations of this study, including the boundaries of understanding memory and history, the definition of the document in contemporary art, and the way in which the paper proposes to analyse exhibitions through the instrumental notion of the *dispositif*.

The concepts of philosophers and historians (P. Nora, P. Ricoeur, M. Halbwachs) were considered to address the question of the boundaries between memory and history. The analysis made it possible to talk about history and memory as constructed concepts, constantly changing in the process of artistic work, as well as to put artistic practices into a more general context of searching for a language of representations of the past.

A reference to the researchers' concepts has highlighted the main problematic knots of artists' work with history and memory. Maurice Halbwachs' concept of social memory shows how contemporary art problematises the separation of memory and history as two forms of relating to the past. It also emphasises the fact

that the past is defined from the present moment, which conditions the choice of themes and events for the work.

The study of Pierre Nora's memory sites provides an opportunity to reveal contemporary art's interest in concrete, tangible experiences. This leads to artists' work with objects, photographs, paper letters and diaries — real things that keep people's memories alive. The concept of separation of memory and history in Nora's work also reveals the attention in contemporary art to monuments, memorial spaces, and memorial complexes. Such spaces suggest a special type of memory organisation based on the display of historical material. Artists borrow these ways and actively interact with such spaces.

Paul Ricoeur's work "Memory. History. Oblivion" shifted the focus to the ethical problems of analysing art and exhibition projects. Through the concept of "fair memory", questions about the limits of artistic intervention in the history of others (montage, mode of display) and the distance when dealing with one's own memories became visible.

The definition of the document in contemporary art is examined through Michel Foucault's concept of the document as a 'monument'. In this concept, the document is understood as a 'conduit' into the cultural and everyday experience of others, rather than as a carrier of information and facts. Artists and curators turn to documentary material not to attribute an image or decipher a text, but to get in touch with history and show living, concrete experiences.

The first chapter also presented a way of analysing an exhibition through the concept of *dispositif*, described by Michel Foucault and then used to analyse exhibitions by many researchers, among them Jean Davallon, Jerome Glisenstein and Jean-Marc Poinot. The exhibition is considered as a system of relations between the elements of the exhibition, the external contexts and the material configuration of the space. This study uses *dispositif* as an instrumental concept, allowing us to identify different types of relations and to see how the optics of documentality are shaped in contemporary exhibitions.

In the **second chapter**, a typology of document work in contemporary art was proposed and existing ways of classifying documents were analysed in order to reveal the optics of documentality.

Hal Foster's conception of the document is presented as an element of the archive. His typology is based on the idea that the document does not exist autonomously, but is part of the structure of knowledge organisation. The archive is presented as a spatially organised structure. Okui Enwezor suggests that the document should be understood functionally, on the basis that the artist himself confers documentary status on materials. The functional relation implies that almost any material can play the role of a document. In other words, it has no intrinsic qualities and is therefore understood as a construct.

The functional approach to understanding the document and its relationship to the archive formed the basis of the typology proposed in this study.

The first type of working with a document represents interaction with found materials, discussed in the examples of the book *A distant sounding of the evening waltz* by Maxim Scher and the video *Footprints* by Orly Mayberg. The work with found materials has to do with the fact that the documents are anonymous. The artists attempt to appropriate the documents by giving them a story that they themselves invented.

The second type of work with family documents is analysed using the examples of Christian Boltanski's *Album La Famille D.*, the film *Disappearance of a tribe* by Deimantas Narkevičius and the installation *Look, Comrade, There's a Red Star* by Natalija Zintsova. Addressing family history documents is the opposite of working with found materials. It involves finding a way to distance oneself from one's own memories.

The third type involves working with conditionally "non-documentary" materials (the video by Deimantas Narkevičius *The role of a lifetime*). Making this a separate category shows how materials that do not have the status of a document for historians can be given this status in the process of artistic work.

The fourth type has to do with addressing the present moment rather than the past. The example of Eric Baudelaire's *Letters to Max* shows how an artist's correspondence and chronicle of his journey can act as documents. They capture the contemporary state of society, record the artist's reflections and intertwine history and the present moment.

The **third chapter** analyses exhibition projects in historical museums and contemporary art centres using the concept of *dispositif*. The typology is based on the spatial representation of the documents.

**The first** type of exhibition *dispositif* was a reference to witnessing in the exhibitions *Between Telling and Listening* and *Does your image reflect me?* The personal memories of Holocaust survivors are shown by the artist in a public space, highlighting the vulnerability of the witness figure. The artist arranges her video-recorded stories in such a way that the viewer gets a sense of himself as a witness. The viewer is included in the relationship between the narrator and his interlocutor, assuming the role of a listener.

**The second** way of constructing the *dispositif* is to work with local history, using Pavel Otdelnov's exhibition *Promzona* as an example. The artist in the exhibition creates a context for the interaction between the history of a place and his family memory. To do this, he exhibits his father's memories together with his own works on the history of the Dzerzhinsky factory. The reference to the history of the place unites "small" and "big" memories in the exhibition space.

**A third** type of exhibition *dispositif* relates to the imitation of documentary. It is examined through the exhibitions *Remember the Children: Daniel's Story* at the Washington Holocaust Museum, Anastasia Kuzmina's *Double Clamp*, and the flat exhibition *Exhibition of things #2*. This way of framing the exhibition reveals the problem of engaging viewers in experiencing and interacting with the past through documentary materials. This is revealed through several strategies: displaying documents united by a fictional story, "acting out" memories, and creating a space of memory as an occasion to play with the past.

The fourth type of exhibition dispositif involves combining documentary and artistic material in a single exhibition space. The exhibitions *Dried to Believe* and *Anne Frank. Holocaust Diaries* shows that the relationship between personal documents and the works of contemporary artists is built up hierarchically. Some materials become more visible, subordinating others.

The fifth way in which the exhibition dispositif works involves interaction between museums of conscience and contemporary art. This is explored through the works of Michal Rovner at Yad Vashem *Living Landscape and Traces of Life at the Auschwitz Memorial*, as well as works in the collection of the Washington Holocaust Museum, Richard Serra's *Gravity*, Sol LeWitt's *Consequences*, and Joel Shapiro's *Loss and Regeneration*. The artists' work with the permanent exhibition of Museums of Conscience involves combining historical and artistic material in the same space. Traditional exhibitions of museums of conscience are built according to a certain museum logic, either thematically or chronologically. Often they are emotionally coloured and force the viewer to be emotionally involved in the experience of what they see. The examples we have examined allow us to see that the key strategy for building the optics of documentality is to distance oneself from the exposition, from its ways of showing documents and to create a space for the viewer's critical perception.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The study has shown that the work of contemporary artists and curators with memory and history represents a special type of practice that exists at the intersection of historical and artistic approaches, which can be designated as the optics of documentality. It is shaped by the system of relationships that emerge between the artist, the document and personal memories. The way in which this relationship is constructed in the exhibition space influences the viewer's view of history and memory.

The optics of documentality are revealed through the development of a typology of ways of working with the document and the analysis of exhibitions.

Exhibitions are described using the notion of dispositif as a tool to identify different conditions and ways of constructing an exhibition space.

The study looks at how material is given the status of a document in contemporary art. Depending on what works for the artist as a document, the artist chooses one or another way of showing the material. The typology presented in the study shows what ways of working with a document exist based on its functional understanding.

The study has shown that the optics of documentation are a problem in shaping the view of memory and history within exhibition projects. The types of dispositifs highlighted in the paper made it possible to see how different ways of showing documents affect the understanding of memory and history and their relation to each other in exhibitions.

Almost all of the works examined are based on personal documents and testimonies that preserve the memory of people's lives and traumatic experiences of wars, repressions and the collapse of countries. Artists and curators work with these materials, make sense of them and show them in exhibitions. The documents shown in the exhibitions combine the personal and the general, when diaries or oral histories enter the public space. The documentary and the artistic intersect when everyday objects of memory acquire the status of art in an exhibition and, conversely, ordinary things are given the status of a document. The study thus reveals that the optics of documentation exist at the intersection of memory as a subjective experience and history as a more general narrative that extends beyond one person's life.

A look at Russian and foreign art exhibitions made it possible to consider the work with memory and history in contemporary art and exhibition practice as a unified process, which began in the period from the 1990s and spread in the 2000s, and which is also of interest to the younger artists of the present. An analysis of the various exhibition projects has shown that the formation of the optics of documentation is complex and goes beyond the field of contemporary art.

This study has touched upon a number of phenomena that require further scientific development as well as reflection in the framework of curatorial and art

projects. In the future, the approach proposed in this dissertation study may serve as a basis for further theoretical developments in the field, a methodology for the work of contemporary institutions and curators, as well as a basis for the development of training courses in the training programmes for art historians, curators and artists.

#### **IV. VALIDATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

##### **Publications**

**Works published by the author in journals indexed in international indexing and citation databases and those included in the list of high-level journals of the Higher School of Economics:**

1. Defining the Status of the Document in the Work of Deimantas Narkevičius "The Role of a Lifetime" // Communications. Media. Design. №2. 2022. URL: <https://cmd-journal.hse.ru/article/view/14629>. The White List of the National Research University Higher School of Economics
2. Review of: Synthesis of Modernity: The Ruins of GAKhN and Postdisciplinarity. Ed. by N.Sazonov, A. Hennig. Moscow: Gaidar Institute Press, 2021// Studies in East European Thought. 2022. URL: <https://rdcu.be/cMbnn>. Scopus, Q3.
3. Defining the Documentary in Contemporary Artistic Practices (On the Example of the film Eric Baudelaire's "Letters to Max") // Bulletin of the Russian State University of Humanities. Series "Literary Theory. Linguistics. Cultural studies". №9 (2), 2021. Pp.240-251. The White List of the National Research University Higher School of Economics
4. Representation of History: Contemporary Art in Museums of Conscience // Bulletin of the Russian State University of Humanities. Series

"Literary Theory. Linguistics. Cultural studies". №8, 2020. C.116-133. The White List of the National Research University Higher School of Economics

**Other publications:**

5. Apartment exhibitions. In search for the places of authenticity // Quart. The Quarterly of the Institute of Art History at the University of Wrocław. № 1(59). 2021. URL: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/quart/article/view/81516/75538>.

6. Memory as an attitude. Artistic practices of territory research// The Place of Art, №2, 2021. URL: <https://placeofart.ru/statja-24>

7. Appeal to memory in contemporary exhibition. Ways of representing the document// New Past. №1, 2020. URL: <https://newpast.sfedu.ru/archive/boi-za-istoriyu-1-2020/obrashchenie-k-pamyati-v-sovremennoy-vystavke-sposoby-reprezentatsii-dokumenta/>

8. Does the past equal a museum? Centre and Periphery. №1, 2019. URL: <https://placeofart.ru/article-10/post-preview/4498478>