

MASS ORNAMENTS – EDITORIAL

Marta Popivoda, Siniša Ilić

"The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgments about itself." (Kracauer)

"Mass ornaments", No. 22 of the *TKH, journal for performing arts theory*, was conceived as an art book, which is a new practice for the *TKH* journal. The editorial concept of the issue focuses away from *hardcore* theoretical discourse, to artworks, thoughts, analytical and performative texts that in various ways address and question the notions of "the mass" and "mass ornament".

Our starting point is the notion of "mass ornament" conceived by German thinker Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), who in much of his work critically discussed marginal areas of high culture and, even more, manifestations of popular culture in modern Western society, such as film, circus, dance, advertising, tourism, and the organization of urban spaces and cities. Some of his phenomenological interpretations of the everyday world of modernity, as Gertrude Koch would put it, were published in his 1927 book *The Mass Ornament* (Ornament der Masse). In his work, Kracauer was a fierce critic of the middle and higher classes' lifestyle, as well as of capitalism and other totalitarian societies (e.g. Nazism, then rising in Germany).

Kracauer uses the notion of "mass ornament" to designate and analyze different forms of mass events that feature a strong visual element, for example, geometrically precise group body figures as a reflection of Taylorist workflow in the age of Fordist-capitalist production. Kracauer cites various types of public manifestations as examples of mass ornaments, such as parades, mass performances, early 20th-century musicals, and, especially, the Tiller Girls, a rather popular dance company at the time. Today, we may view the mass ornament both as a phenomenon of global culture and an analytical tool to reflect on society, which is a "surface level expression", a conceptual image enabling us to address the issue of the masses. For Kracauer, the mass ornament is an aesthetic reflex of the prevailing political and economic (capitalist) order and a concept he produced in order to pursue his interest in reading the world of objects contemplated as a picture, in terms of ideology critique. (G. Koch)

However, although we still find Kracauer's concept of mass ornament quite relevant today, we would like to develop it further so as to make it into an operative analytical tool for our own context. Namely, coming from a background in self-organized cultural artistic scenes in former Yugoslavia, and operating in a wider European context, we, the editors of this volume, wanted to move away from the mass ornament as a strictly negative notion and thus invited other artists to consider it in wider terms. Our epistemological line of thinking the "mass" departs from celebrating its spontaneity – for instance, in the work of Edith Turner and her reading of the notion of "communitas", as developed by Victor Turner, rethinks Kracauer's critical approach where the unconscious mass and mass ornament are always produced by "a creator", and delves more deeply into Gertrude Koch's critique of Kracauer's critique, which she accuses of ignoring the participatory self-organized political masses and their symbolical ornaments.

Therefore, for this issue of the *TKH* journal, we invited several authors to try to break the mass ornament from below and return the gaze to "the creator", as well as move beyond Kracauer's notion of the mass ornament and reflect and imagine today's political masses.

"The surface level is the dream society dreams of itself and enables an interpretation of society. The dream thus illuminates the dreamer. The mass dreams in the form of its ornaments. The substantive contents of the dream constitute the social basis of the mass." (Koch)

MASOVNI ORNAMEN TI – UVODNIK

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„Analiza jednostavnih površinskih manifestacija neke epohe može doprineti određivanju njenog mesta u istorijskom procesu više nego vlastiti sudovi te epohe o sebi.“ (Kracauer)

„Masovni ornament i“, 22. broj časopisa *TKH*, osmišljen je kao umetnička knjiga, što je za *TKH* nova praksa. Urednička koncepcija ovog izdanja se stoga okreće od tvrdo teorijskog diskursa ka umetničkim radovima, analitičkim i izvedbenim tekstovima koji na razne načine istražuju i promišljaju pojmove mase i masovnog ornamenta.

Polazište naše uredničke koncepcije je pojam masovnog ornamenta nemačkog mislioca Siegfrieda Kracauera (1889–1966), koji se kritički bavio marginalnim područjima visoke kulture i, još više, manifestacijama popularne kulture u modernom zapadnjačkom društvu, poput filma, cirkusa, plesa, reklama, turizma i uređivanja gradova i gradskog prostora. Neka od njegovih tumačenja svakodnevnog sveta moderne, kako bi to formulisala Gertrude Koch, objavljena su 1927. u knjizi *Masovni ornament* (Ornament der Masse). U svom radu, Kracauer je bio oštar kritičar načina života srednje i više klase, kao i kapitalizma i drugih totalitarnih društava (npr. nacizma, koji je u tadašnjoj Nemačkoj bio u usponu).

Kracauer koristi pojam „masovni ornament“ da bi označio i analizirao razne oblike masovnih priredbi koje karakterišu jaki vizuelni elementi, na primer, geometrijski precizne grupne figure tela kao odraz tejlorističkog radnog procesa, u eri fordističko-kapitalističke proizvodnje. Kracauer navodi razne vrste javnih priredbi kao primere masovnog ornamenta, poput parada, masovnih izvedbi, mjuzikla s početka 20. veka, a naročito Tiller Girls, tada veoma popularnu plesnu grupu. Danas se masovni ornament može sagledati i kao fenomen globalne kulture i kao analitičko sredstvo za promišljanje slike koja neka vrsta „površinskog izraza“ ili konceptualne slike koja nam omogućava da se bavimo pitanjem masa. Za Kracauera, masovni ornament je estetski odraz vladajućeg političkog i ekonomskog (kapitalističkog) poretka, ali i pojam koji je osmislio da bi analizirao svet objekata kao sliku u kategorijama kritike ideologije (G. Koch).

Međutim, iako smatramo da je Kracauerov pojam masovnog ornamenta i dalje značajan i relevantan, naša namjera je da ga razvijemo dalje, kako bi postao operativno analitičko oruđe i za naš današnji kontekst. Recimo, s obzirom da dolazimo sa pozicija samoorganizovanog kulturnog aktivizma i umetničkog rada na nezavisnim scenama u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, ali i u širem evropskom kontekstu, prepoznavamo da one nisu uračunate u Kracauerova razmatranja. To nas je navelo da se u ovom broju pomaknemo od masovnog ornamenta kao striktno negativnog pojma i otvorimo ga za nove interpretacije i glasove. Naš epistemološki pravac razmatranja „mase“ kreće od slavljenja njene spontanosti – na primer, u radu Edith Turner i njenom čitanju pojma *communitas*, koji je razvio Victor Turner – zatim iznova promišlja Kracauerov kritički pristup po kojem nesvesnu masu i masovni ornament stvara uvek nekakav „tvorac“, kako bismo na kraju došli do kritike Gertrude Koch na račun Kracauerove kritike, koja, prema njoj, prenegava participativne samoorganizovane političke mase i njihove simboličke ornamente.

Iz navedenih razloga, za ovo izdanje časopisa *TKH* pozvali smo nekolicinu autora da pokušaju da razlože masovni ornament odozdo i uzvrate pogled „tvorcu“, kao i da odu preko Kracauerovog pojma, radi promišljanja i zamišljanja političkih masa današnjice.

„Površinski nivo je san koji društvo sneva o sebi i omogućava tumačenje društva. San stoga osvetljava snevača. Masa sanja u vidu svojih ornamenta. Suštinska sadržina sna čini društvenu osnovu mase.“ (Koch)

GROUND ZERO

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NULTA TAČKA

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SIEGFRIED KRACAUER

