

# REALLY?

## Art as the 5th Estate

The Fourth Estate is (as good as) dead.  
Long live the Fifth Estate!

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### THE AGONY OF AGON?

**The Fourth Estate is on its deathbed.** In the modern age, the press was regarded as the central instrument of a functioning public sphere, fostering political discourse and debate. Journalism's mission was not to chase sensationalism or sales but to dig deep, expose truth, hold power to account, and empower citizens. The ideal of reason and modern citizenship was upheld by the conclusive compulsion of the best argument. However, as early as 1962, Jürgen Habermas warned of a "feudalisation" of the press and media world. In 2022, the Frankfurt philosopher upped the ante, describing a "new structural transformation of the public sphere" in the digital age, posing a threat to democracy. This may sound alarmist, but he is not alone in his concerns.

### FOLLOW ME!

At a time when professional journalists are increasingly constrained by limited resources and time, and press freedom is eroded by media concentration and political and economic lobbying, real-time narratives are flourishing. Instead of thoroughly researched reports, images are spreading as memes—seemingly authentic stories "made by me". The paradox: The more immediate and unpolished the information, the more credible, impactful, and sensational it appears. An elaborately edited cover story is no longer necessary if the Instastory or shaky video tutorial is perceived as first-hand. Surely, it must be true, right? This development leads to disorientation: (Dis)information and pseudo-knowledge become the flipside of a deeply felt lack of meaning. The pitfall: Many people no longer know whom to trust and what to believe. The public sphere is fragmenting into small, isolated echo chambers, irrelevant and inaccessible to the wider public. Formerly unchallenged authorities such as science and traditional media now find it difficult to be heard.

### MILO RAU – International Institute of Political Murder

Drama unfolds: Following the rules of the "Unst" (without K), Milo Rau's International Institute of Political Murder staged and filmed a trial as impartial and polyphonic as possible under the title "The Congo Tribunal."

Scene from the documentary film "The Congo Tribunal" by Milo Rau © Fruitmarket Kultur und Medien GmbH.



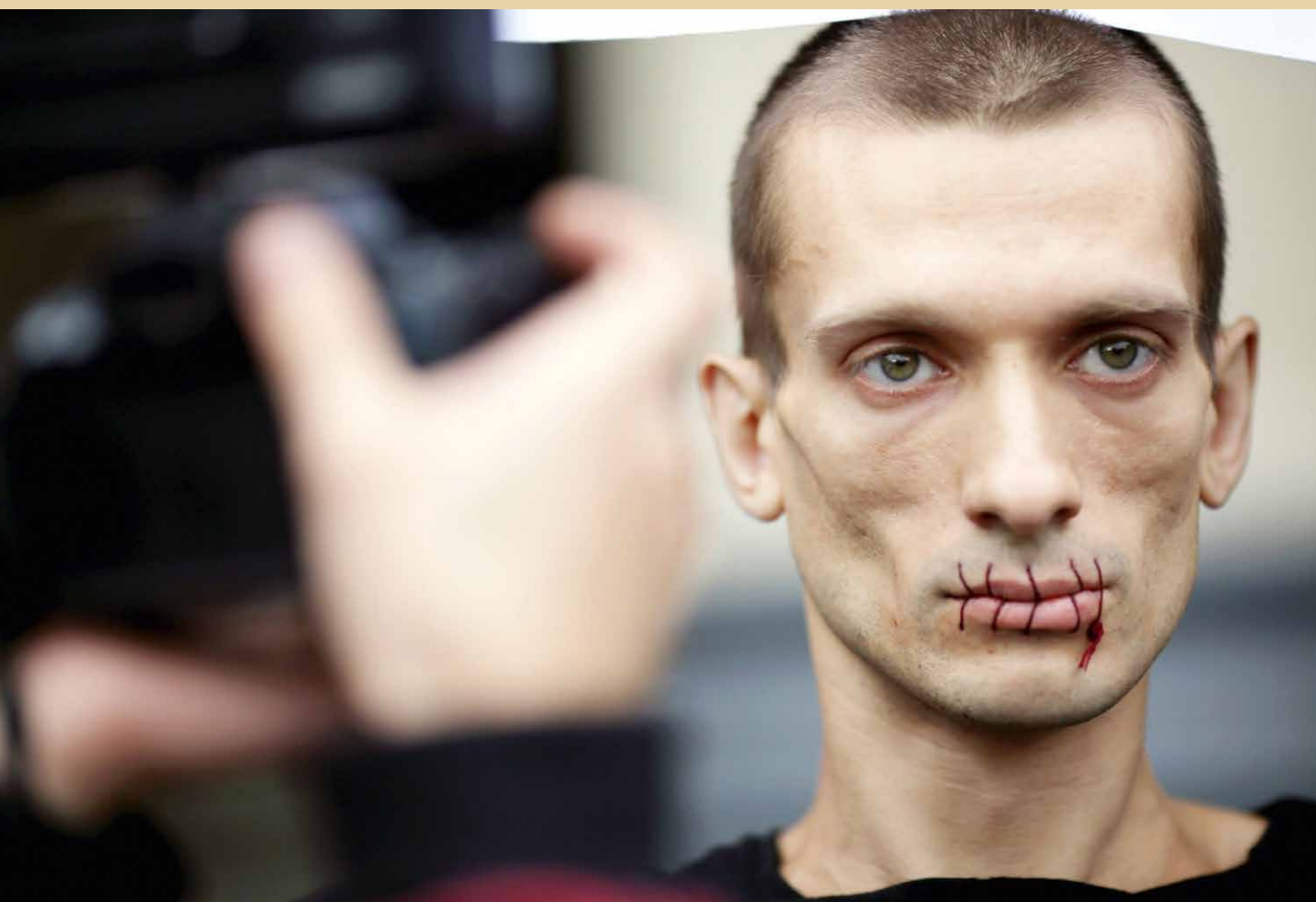
### THE THING ABOUT ART. AMBIGUITY TOLERANCE AS AN OPPORTUNITY?

Art often thrives on a balance of proximity and distance, drawing attention while remaining enigmatic and unsettling. When it comes to verification, art should not be taken too literally: it is not about right or wrong. Nor is it about fake or real.

**CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF**

Agent provocateur: A quarter-century ago, Christoph Schlingensiefel toyed with elements of reality TV, as popular then as it is today. For the 2000 Vienna Festival Weeks, he invited Austrian citizens and theatre-goers to gradually "vote out" asylum seekers in a staged show, with the winner being granted asylum in Austria. This provocative action took place in front of the Vienna Opera House, shortly after the right-wing populist FPÖ came to power—a Europe-wide horror scenario at the time.

© Christoph Schlingensiefel, "Please Love Austria". Wiener Festwochen 2000, Foto: David Baltzer

**Pyotr Pavlensky**

With heart and soul: Artist-activist and avowed Putin opponent Pyotr Pavlensky became infamous for his radical actions, such as nailing his testicles to the Red Square in front of the Kremlin, embarrassing the security forces, who had to quickly remove him from public view. In exile in France, he once again caused a stir when he managed to persuade the Macron supporter and frontrunner for the latest mayoral election in Paris to resign. The carefully cultivated image of the respectable family man clashed too strongly with compromising video footage leaked to the press in collaboration with Pavlensky's partner. Although punished for this, Pavlensky considers the court case itself a part of his art.

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**"POST-FICTION" VS. "POST-TRUTH"**

Christoph Schlingensiefel, Forensic Architecture, FRAUD, Pyotr Pavlensky, the Centre for Political Beauty, the Radical Daughters, and Milo Rau's International Institute of Political Murder are just a few examples of artists intervening in today's media and political landscape. These artists often act as a corrective: recovering forgotten or distorted narratives, conducting investigative research, using collective data to reconstruct cases, disrupting political campaigns, or prompting us to rethink our relationship with new media, digital data, archives, and institutions through playful, exaggerated scenarios.

Art claims innovative, transdisciplinary research and knowledge-production methods. Art theorist Claire Bishop (Artforum, April 2023) highlights how artists navigate the "information overload" and become researchers in the process. Similarly, literary scholar Ester Houser notes that artist collectives carve out new narrative paths amidst "infowhelm" (2020)—a state of overload and uncertainty.

Art experiments with anarchic, decentralised, and unconventional forms of knowledge production, challenging the "methodological constraints" (Paul Feyerabend) of conventional science. The boundaries between fiction and fact are reimagined: Distorted facts are restored, skewed narratives exposed, and incomplete legal investigations supplemented, confronting us with our often contradictory, irrational, or emotional responses to media, crises, and our shared existence.

Art does not claim to present the truth; perhaps it is enough if it sharpens our senses, creates new meanings, and blends facts, data, and diverse narratives into a form of "augmented fiction."

**This movement has only just begun.  
Long live the Fifth Estate!**

**FULLDEMO.cracry**

Democracy is no game: In the realistic live-theatre game FULLDEMO.cracry, theatre-goers become active participants. Against the backdrop of an extraordinary climate-crisis summit, the achievements and challenges of democratic processes are put to the test. "The countdown starts now!"

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**PUBLIC MOVEMENT: "Performing Politics for Germany"**

Aesthetics of Politics: The performance collective Public Movement deconstructs traditional ideas and choreographs contrasting positions. In the eye of the beholder, new codings and unfamiliar associations emerge.

© Public Movement, "Performing Politics for Germany". Berlin, 2009. Foto: David Schmidt.

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