

## BARRICADE MANIFEST / E

concerning the exhibition *Barrikadenwetter – Image Acts of Insurrection*  
at the **MACRO** — Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma  
20 September 2023 – 18 February 2024

The term «*Barrikadenwetter*» (barricade weather), coined by the anarchist revolutionary and theorist MIKHAIL BAKUNIN (1814 – 1876), denotes the historical moment of a turning point: when a revolutionary subject emerges in the common action, reifying its resistance in the improvisation of an obstruction constructed from found objects. This entanglement abruptly stands in the way of the state forces of the established order. As a former artillery officer, he knew in the revolutionary year of 1839, when he helped tactically preparing the defence against the onslaught of the Prussian army in Dresden alongside his bourgeois comrades-in-arms, the composer RICHARD WAGNER (1813 – 1883) and the architect GOTTFRIED SEMPER (1803 – 1879), that the heroic phase of barricade-building, which Semper still sought to perfect with the craftsman's ethos of the master builder, was long over. Artillery that had become mobile had put an end to its former efficiency.

Conversely, however, Bakunin saw the metaphorical power that still resided in the erection of barricades, because it remained the dramatic sign of mass uprising and collective unity that instilled respect in the ruling class. In a tone of irony, he therefore suggested to his comrades that the famous painting of the *Sistine Madonna* by Raphael in Dresden's *Old Masters Gallery* – later called *Semper Gallery* – be placed on the walls of the fortifications, since the classically educated Prussians were hardly likely to vandalise the most sublime art treasures of Western culture. Following the suppression of the revolution, Semper – who had overseen the construction of some elaborate barricades committed to the art of architecture – sought refuge in England as a persecuted revolutionary, never in his life to return to Dresden, where some of his most iconic buildings stand.

In its display cases this project lays out a rich iconography of the barricade in documents of its entire history. The framework is provided by a comparison of three different image acts of looking at the revolt in Paris in May 1968 on three walls. While the perspective of the rioters themselves can be seen on the left wall – especially by sympathizers of the Situationists –, the deictic act of the media unfolds on the back wall and the supervision of state power on the right. Although in the imagery of this triptych all three types of pictures have the same situations as their subject matter, the observation pursues different purposes in each characteristic way.

In the pictures of the insurgents, the actors are apparent as the general revolutionary collective, whose members faces have been wisely made unrecognisable. In the spectacle of mediatization through photojournalism, employing the format of human-interest they are recorded narratively and moralised as individuals exposed to violence or perpetrating violence. In the view of the authorities, they are legal persons who are monitored under the aspect of securing evidence and identification, so that delinquency and property offense become visually verifiable in order to enforce the law.

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The pictorial order of a regime of surveillance applied during the last wide-ranging insurrection in Europe's history in May 1968 designates a critical moment in the development of governmental visualization strategies towards a totalitarian *god's perspective* on the urban fabric. In the earlier *Watts riots* of 1965 in Los Angeles, aerial surveillance by aircraft was initially used only by the media. Among other characteristic typologies of authoritative monitoring aspects, the *Archives de la Préfecture de police de Paris* marked the historic beginning of the deployment of helicopter-based aerial photography as a means of governmental crowd control in a situation of escalating insurrection. The political will to gain an unobstructed view on any individual motion pattern represented in these images leads to epistemically new technologies that combine observation with political governance and the use of force as recently manifested in the agency of drones and face recognition.

In the course of this project, an art historical conception became evident, based on the notion of a historical connection between the emergence of the fundamental methods in all art genres of the early avant-garde of 20th century and the nature of the barricade. Beginning with the invention of collage by HANNAH HÖCH (1889 – 1978), who was involved in the DADA-movement and its proximity to the construction of barricades during the *Spartacist* uprising in Berlin in 1919, the composition of random and heterogeneous fragments from the inventory of social rule have been alienated and misused in order to be employed against the same society with the aim of overcoming its *Ancien Régime*.

In visual arts this very practice referring to the logical structure of the barricade consists in the collage which took on its political role with Hannah Höch. In literature it is the *dé-tournement* as propagated by PAUL NOUGÉ (1895 – 1967) and the Situationists, the *Cut-up* of the Beat Generation or the *Verfremdungseffekt* of BERTOLT BRECHT (1898 – 1956). In film it is the *montage* as described by SERGEI EISENSTEIN (1898 – 1948) using drawings of barricades. In music it is the use of the *pastiche* or the *sample*. In sculpture it's the *assemblage*. And in architecture both *constructivism* – as with VLADIMIR TATLIN (1885 – 1953) – and *deconstructivism*.

A single collage by Hannah Höch exemplifies this revolution in art, which was derived from the archetype of the barricade and its haunting figurative expressiveness.