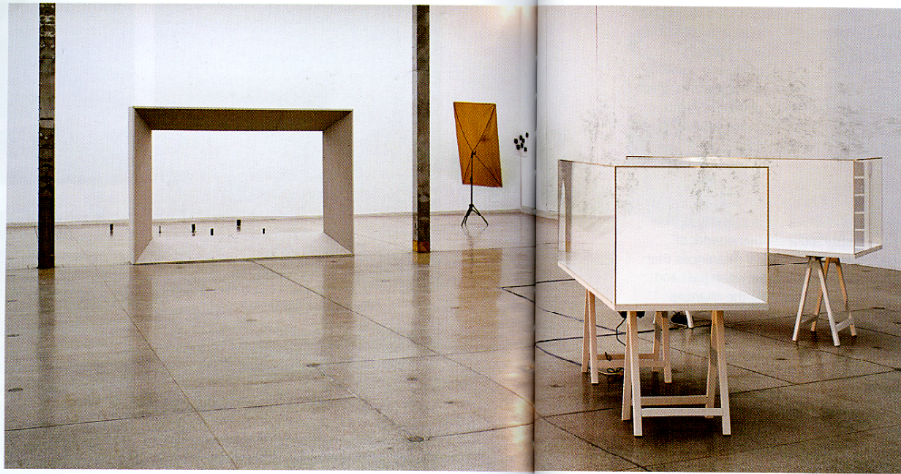


# METRO PICTURES

Brunner, Bettina. "David Maljkovic: Secession Vienna," *Frieze* (March 2012): 146-147

AUSTRIA



David Maljković  
'Exhibitions  
for Secession'  
2011  
Installation view

## David Maljković Secession Vienna

A light illuminates two white display walls erected in the Secession's vast exhibition hall. Their shapes are reminiscent of gigantic, old-fashioned television screens: rectangular surfaces with frames slightly rounded at the corners. On one wall the light is continuously flickering within the cavity between the flat surface and its hollowed-out frame. This formal reference may promise the unfolding of a world of visual diversity for its viewers; their expectations, however, remain entirely unfulfilled. The wall is nothing but that, a white surface illuminated by a flickering light.

Entitled *Display for After Giuseppe Sambito at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, 2010* (all works 2011), the installation was one of 11 works presented as part of David Maljković's 'Exhibitions for Secession', which the artist describes as a project 'taking the shape of a retrospective' yet without intending 'to look back at works'. The installations were in fact exact reconstructions of display situations Maljković created for previous exhibitions of his work, dating back to 2000. The aforementioned piece, for example, was originally constructed as a display structure for digital prints and built anew for this project. In 'Exhibitions for Secession' small interventions by the artist served to recall the presence of the missing works.

Most striking were the centrally placed *Display for Images With Their Own Shadows at Metro Pictures Gallery, New York, 2009* and *Display for Images With Their Own Shadows at Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, 2010*, which formed two large, overlapping structures resembling the closing shutters of a camera. Originally constructed to house a film, at the Secession a bright floodlight shone straight at visitors entering the gallery. This heightened sense of theatricality was also present in other gestures by the artist, such as a live-feed of sounds recorded within the space, or the fog that continuously filled two aquarium-like glass cubes in *Display for Sources in the Air at MUSAC, León, 2011*.

'Secret Societies'  
2011  
Installation view

In the exhibition's catalogue, Maljković describes his interventions as aiming to create 'another level – the level of feeling, or perhaps even irritation'. Rather than the experience of irritation, however, it is the precisely choreographed arrangement of the reconstructed exhibition settings within the space – through visual axes and choreographed viewpoints – which emerged as the show's central aspect. Though Maljković writes about 'the act of annulling content' by removing his works from their display structures, this project clearly related to the subjects of his artistic practice, which often isolated sculptural objects and architectural structures from their original contexts and place them within new narratives. His well-known works *Scenes for a New Heritage* (2002–6) and *These Days* (2005), for example, examined the 1970s designs for the Petrova Gora Memorial Park and the Zagreb International Fair in the 1960s.

At the Secession, the objects on display themselves seemed to exist in limbo, with the artist at pains to avoid using the term 'art work', preferring words such as 'set-up', 'installation' or 'structure'. 'Exhibitions for Secession' appeared to be a response to Brian O'Doherty's famous essays from 1976 on the subject, in which he wrote about the Modernist gallery as a space in which 'the object introduced into the gallery "frames" the gallery and its laws' rather than the reverse. Maljković seemed to be asking whether this is also the case with the specific architecture he has constructed for particular works, by removing them from their display settings to reflect on his own methods of contextualization. With its self-critical reflection on exhibition methodologies, 'Exhibitions for Secession' most clearly hinted at one question without, however, answering it – where to go from here? Turning the uncertainty of one's own position towards the past into a viable option for the future is very much in line with Maljković's previous works, which frequently made use of cultural objects of historical interest as agents for future projections. 'Exhibitions for Secession' took this position to a meta-level.

Bettina Brunner

