REMOVED FROM THE CROWD*:
Unexpected Encounters I

Edited by Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača in collaboration with Vesna Vuković

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Bringing together newly commissioned essays predominantly from an emerging generation of researchers and writers, this reader focuses on conceptual and experimental artistic, curatorial and institutional practices that have rarely or never been brought into relation with parallel developments outside their respective context, in this case Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Chile, Peru, Poland and Romania. It does not strive for the formulation of a structured narrative of theses and conclusions, nor is it imagined as a review of practices determined by their 'peripheral geographies'. Rather, while seeking to avoid already established analogies and references it becomes a call for a microanalysis. The result is an experiment in which comparative readings can be formed through potentially unexpected and revealing 'encounters'. The aim is not to merely 'fill in' the existing art historical narratives with what has been left out (i.e. illustrate the canonical production of the center by its corresponding 'echo' in the periphery), but to make an intervention into the very order of discourses that shape the dominant histories of contemporary art. What is discussed in *Removed*

from the Crowd: Unexpected Encounters I are practices that were themselves in search of new methodologies, exploring the interstices between the collective and individual, private and public, action and escapism, art and non-art, artist and curator, nature and the urban space, the visible and the invisible. Many of them were taking place in private spaces, in solitude, in nature, or camouflaging themselves as non-art, as part of everyday life, a protest, a crowded street, radically redefining or ignoring the idea of audience. They rather counted (consciously or not) on 'an audience to come' and so could be said to have been meant for the future. The art historians invited to contribute to this book are thus today their 'delayed public', approaching these phenomena from both historical and contemporaneous perspectives, shaped by their own preoccupations and urgencies.

Removed From the Crowd* is an ongoing research and publishing project developed by Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača at the Institute for Duration, Location and Variables (DeLVe) that had its previous iterations in the framework of *Political Practices of (Post)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01*, Belgrade 2009 [1], the exhibition and 'walking lecture' *Removed from the Crowd / The Fate of Outer Planets* at Škuc Gallery (2009), Ljubljana, and an 'open research' *Removed from the Crowd: Dionysian Socialism, (Non)Action, Delayed Audience* at tranzitdisplay, Prague (2011).

Based on the initial reading of selected phenomena and concepts that shaped the artistic, curatorial and intellectual practices in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and the 1970s, the project opens itself to an ongoing process of reshifting and reshaping its scope and methodology, introducing new elements and fragments with each new iteration. The concepts deduced through initial research – the key ones revolving around the idea of temporary communities, delayed audience, exodus, and Dionysian socialism – are now offered as entry points for new chapters, or encounters, within the project, that test their resonance in different geographies, and through new collaborations and research contributions.

This book is the first such opening up of the project, realized in collaboration with Vesna Vuković and [BLOK] [2]. It was preceded by the public seminar *Unexpected Encounters: Points Of Intersection (Methodologies Of Research And Interpretation Of The Practices Of "Historical Conceptualism")*, held in Zagreb in 2010, where drafts of several contributions in this volume were first presented and discussed.

* The title of the project is based on the title of the piece
Izvađeni iz gomile (*Removed from the Crowd*), 1976
by Mladen Stilinović

1
The exhibition, curated by Jelena Vesić and gathering independent contributions by a number of researchers and artists, was the first comprehensive presentation of the long-term research project *Political Practices of (Post-) Yugoslav Art*, initiated in 2006 by Prelom kolektiv (Belgrade), WHW kolektiv (Zagreb), kuda.org (Novi Sad) and SCCA/pro.ba (Sarajevo). See Jelena Vesić and Zorana Dojić (eds.), *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01*, Belgrade: Prelom Kolektiv, 2010

2
Realized in the framework of *The Art of Urban Intervention*, a project by: < rotor > association for contemporary art/ Graz, University of J. E. Purkyne/ Usti nad Labem, [BLOK] – Local Base for Culture Refreshment/ Zagreb, The Blue House Foundation/Amsterdam, Institute of Contemporary Art/ Sofia and NABA – New Academy of Fine Arts/ Milano.

LUCIAN GOMOLL
AND
LISSETTE OLIVARES

*Inversión de la
materia.*
Reframing 1980s
Chilean Conceptual-
ism as Performance and
Transnationalism

In our six years of working together, we have theorized issues related to contemporary art, museology and curatorial practice, initially concerned with establishing a political approach for our respective areas of investigation.[1] Our intensive intellectual exchanges have yielded several research projects that move beyond serving our individual interests, seriously considering a politics of collaborative scholarship as it relates to issues of performance and intervention, while enacting a feminist strategic alliance model. Our contribution to *Removed from the Crowd* reconsiders the vocabulary and stakes for how we understand conceptual and/or performance works in Chile that engage both local and transnational subjects. In particular, we are interested in the relationship and tensions between art historical and revisionist categories of conceptual art, conceptualism, performance art, and political performance, as they relate to Chilean art of the 1980s.

Following an extended theoretical discussion, we turn to two comparative case studies from Chile: the works of *Colectivo Acciones de Arte* or CADA (Collective of Art Actions) and *Las Yeguas del Apocalípsis* (The Mares of the Apocalypse). We pay close attention to techniques employed in the works we cite in order to mobilize our initial discussion about the political differences between framing artworks as conceptual or performance (or both). In this way, we hope to intervene in art historical discourses and ideologies that dominate discussions about contemporary art and culture.[2]

A RETURN TO FORM:
POLITICS OF CONCEPTUAL ART AND CONCEPTUALISM

Luis Camnitzer describes his widely cited *Conceptualism in Latin American Art* as "revisionism at its worst," or an attempt to rewrite the history of conceptual art practices from the Latin American context.[3] He claims that, until recently, Latin American conceptualism has been classified as the "belated offspring" of European Arte Povera and the North American conceptualist movement; however, the idiosyncratic character of the Latin American version, and its interrelation with ethical and political realities, makes this lineage "fragile, incidental and oppressive."[4] To contrast, Camnitzer describes conceptual art in the U.S. as tied to a hegemonic disciplinary framing that privileges the primacy of ideas and language within the lineage of art history. For him this makes it an art style, whereas he believes that in Latin America the role of art was less about style and more grounded in politics, emphasizing both formal and institutional ruptures with interdisciplinary inclinations, challenging "not only aesthetics but also the attitude toward the role of art – the ways of producing it and its intended impact."[5] Camnitzer draws his distinction between "conceptualism" and "conceptual art" from discussions that took place at the 1999-2000 exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*.[6] He reveals some of the politics of those discussions: "While the international critics accepted this

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[1] At the beginning of our collaborations, Lucian's focus was on political performance of the Americas, and histories of display, and Lissette's focus was on Chilean counter-cultural performances and literature of the last 40 years. Together, we have written papers and organized several events on the many areas of overlap between our commitments.

[2] It is important to emphasize that we identify as a "future audience" to these artworks' original time-space context (we were both too young to attend the events), and as a result, it is impossible for us to explore these works without considering the frames and institutions that have mediated our access to information.

[3] Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art. Didactics of Liberation*, University of Texas Press, 2007, p. 5

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 15

[6] See the exhibition catalogue, *Global Conceptualism*, Queens Museum of Art, 1999

decision, most of the reviewers in the United States were deeply offended by it and refused to accept a distinction between the terms."[7]

Camnitzer rejects the notion that Latin American conceptualism was a formalist movement and emphasizes instead a utopian imaginary removed from art's traditional institutions as fundamental to its development.[8] While important from a transnational perspective, he commits a very serious error that misunderstands the Eurocentric tradition, despite the latter's significant limitations. Rather than an intentional "style" or a formalist movement, conceptual artists in the (Western) European and Euro-American tradition saw themselves as abandoning the formalism that defined "progress" in predominant histories of the avant-garde. For example, in Clement Greenberg's notorious writings about modernism, avant-garde progression manifests in the reduction and refinement of an art genre to its "irreducible" qualities, such as purging illusionism from painting (which he saw as sculptural) to emphasizing instead two-dimensionality, the canvas, and the pigments. He thus postulated Modern Art as a Kantian process of constitutive self-critique.[9] While the Eurocentric and formalist histories of modern art glorified U.S. Abstract Expressionism, the

framework arguably reached its logistic ends with Minimalism, which focused only on the materials, saw art objects as autonomous with supposedly no meaning, and disavowed the "cult of the artist" of the previous generation.[10] When the Western narrative arrives at Conceptual Art, however, *form is significantly devalued*, and thus the grand ideas so knotted to Modern Art in the European tradition begin to disintegrate and disperse in that context.

U.S. conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, for example, dis-identified with Minimalism and believed that it was the idea or "score" that was most important to his art, and was what remained constant.[11] We might describe his work as a set of artistic blueprints that anyone can implement. Each manifestation will vary slightly when a work is realized; however, the specific physical iterations are greatly undervalued and only matter to the extent that they can relay an idea.[12] Therefore, conceptual artists like LeWitt saw themselves as engaging the mind of the audience rather than the eye or emotions – a significant break with the formalism of Western-

[7] Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 22

[8] Camnitzer argues that "hegemonic art history" has not been able to distinguish between formal and institutional differences, and he claims this is "particularly problematic when conceptual art is used as an example of mainstream rupture from modernism." Camnitzer builds on Nelly Richard's argument that "rupturist dynamics of the new" in both mainstream and Latin American modernism, "are based on a European present that defines past and future according to a dominant idea of "progress" that was validated as a canon without considering the periphery." (*Ibid.*, p. 15) Unfortunately both Camnitzer and Richard reproduce a binary form of thinking that reifies a dualism between center and periphery, gliding over important nuances. As will be discussed later, though the term "avant-garde" is rejected by Richard, she nonetheless classifies CADA's rupturistic works as part of an "avanzada" (advanced scene) which may reify the same notion of progress that she is trying to resist.

[9] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", *Art & Literature*, no. 4, Spring 1965, pp. 193-201

[10] Ad Reinhardt's notion of "art as art" rests upon his belief that art was completely and essentially separate from life, distinguishing himself from Abstract Expressionism that posited no separation at all from the artist and his work. See "Art as Art," in *Art International*, no. 10, December 1962. When minimalist artworks were first being produced, there was nothing to misunderstand about them because there was nothing *to* understand. Artists like Frank Stella emphasized the materials and units of their works, such as the duplication of a brick or an emphasis on the canvas being stretched. In other words, there was supposedly no form of representation in minimalist works, only immediate engagement between the person and the object. However, as Rosalind Krauss has argued, the refabrications of minimalist works during the 1980s undermine and contradict many of the statements of minimalist artists that weren't originally concerned with issues of authorship or originality. See Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum", *October*, vol. 54, Autumn, 1990, pp. 3-17

[11] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), cited in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art. A Sourcebook of Artists' Writing*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter H. Selz, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 822-823

[12] Attention to some of Sol Lewitt's definitions of conceptual art are relevant in this discussion: "In conceptual art the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made before-hand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art […] it is intuitive, independent on the skill of the artist as craftsman […] What the work of art looks like isn't too important […] art that is meant for sensation of the eye would be called perceptual rather than conceptual," *Ibid.*

ern Modern Art and Greenbergian art history. [13] The emphasis on idea was an explicit "self-critique," or rejection of a formalist preoccupation with the visible and the material of previous eras. [14] We do not see how Camnitzer's preference for the term *conceptualism* does the work he claims it does, because the very basic stakes of conceptual art in the Western tradition attempted many of the same general effects he says are unique of Latin American conceptualism. Conceptual art in the Euro-american tradition only saw itself as formalist to the extent that the work devalued such elements in the materials of art.

In its rejection of Greenbergian formalism, U.S. conceptualism is indebted to Duchamp who displaced the artist's studio with mass production, reminding us that the physical work of art was not always completed directly by the "old masters," and that it is only a recent and Modern bias to expect an artist to actually "do" the work himself. [15] In the case of *Fountain* (1917) for example, Duchamp emphasizes the role of the artist in choosing what materials get framed as art, emphasizing that this selection process "created a new *thought* for that object." [16] While conceptual artists in the Eurocentric tradition saw themselves as championing the idea to the extent that the form did not matter, the supposed differences between "conceptualism" and "conceptual art" as proposed

by *Global Conceptualisms* do reveal a productive irony. If the form was outwardly unimportant to artists like LeWitt it remains true that certain shapes and spatial relationships were given privilege in this movement that saw itself as not about form. Such forms tended to manifest in the geometric, linguistic, and pared-down elements that Camnitzer says define it as a style, claiming that based on "the stylistic shape that conceptualism took in north America (language, grid paper, a degree of ephemeral quality, documentation, etc.) it [conceptual art] should therefore designate a movement based on its formal attributes." [17] However the U.S. artists themselves did not see these forms or styles as valuable, as they were intended only to be a means that convey an idea.

Nonetheless, *Global Conceptualisms* accurately calls attention to the Euro-American artists' tendency towards privileging certain forms and visual relationships, suggesting an implicit value, even if it was not consciously recognized by the artists. Such an ironic stylistic dilemma that marks U.S. conceptual art explains why the U.S. reviewers may have been offended by the proposition of separate terms or did not understand the need for them. As artists and curators ourselves, we very much disagree with the devaluation of the material in contemporary art practices. However, these arguments will soon reveal internal incongruences within the Eurocentric understanding of conceptual art that allows other traditions to be labeled "derivative." What's more, while *Global Conceptualism* was informative, we must be careful to avoid reducing all conceptual art emerging from Western

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13
Lewitt's framing of conceptual art as engaging primarily the mind reveals his dependence on Western Continental philosophy and the Cartesian inheritance of dualistic thinking, which frames the mind as separate from the body (i.e. the visual experience as separate from the pure experience of the mind).

14
This is also what distinguishes conceptual art from performance art as they emerged contemporaneously in

this history.

15
This is one of the main defenses of Pop Art, which recycled popular images and denaturalized how we look at them, giving increasing importance to the idea over the form.

16
Marcel Duchamp, "The Richard Mutt Case", *Blind Man*, 1917, p. 5. Authors' emphasis.

17
Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 22

Europe and the U.S. to a monolithic "style." For example, Adrian Piper, a U.S. conceptual artist who is also considered to be a major protagonist of the movement, did not allow such purified disinterest to prevail without further internal critiques and re-emphasizing a politics of the body and inter-subjectivity.[18]

Camnitzer insists that the division between the artist's role as a citizen and as an art producer is accepted in the mainstream art world, however, that in Latin America, it makes no sense, since art is conceived as "a tool of combat".[19] By tracing the interrelationship of literature, pedagogy, and politics in Latin American art, Camnitzer further frames *conceptualism* as an interdisciplinary project that exceeds the confines of art historical disciplinary classification.[20] However, this approach is also problematic, and takes for granted the notion that, in the Eurocentric tradition, early twentieth-century divisions of labor predominated in later contexts – traditions that the majority of conceptual and performance artists all over the world starting in the 1960s saw themselves as rejecting and rearticulating. We have already explained how artists in the Eurocentric tradition were questioning the role of the artist in terms of who "actually" produces the work. Furthermore, artists like Claes Oldenberg and Allan Kaprow drew from a number of non-visual genres like John Cage's "silence" works, department store practices, and left their projects open to un-

expected audience participations – all in order to resist the formal reductionism of a Greenbergian art history, stating quite explicitly that they wanted to dissolve the elitism of art establishments and disperse art into the everyday.[21] Such aspects of *conceptualism* and performance art produced throughout Latin America, Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere function more as a transnational interface of co-evolution or common ground, and are not a basis for clear differentiation. At the same time, Camnitzer's alternative genealogy of conceptualism dating back to the eighteenth century shows us how insular and short-sighted the Eurocentric model of "self"-critique truly is.[22] But it is a major oversight to deny the critical processes that do connect Western modern art movements across a variety of genres and styles since the mid-1800s, which is not to say this tradition isn't also highly reductive.

The above discussion should not be understood as a defense of conceptual art in the Eurocentric tradition. Camnitzer's desire to resist the "derivative" status of Latin American art is admirable. While we agree with his general politics and his goals to take Latin American conceptualism seriously, we must resist doing so at the cost of misrepresenting the Eurocentric genealogy. Indeed, Camnitzer's rhetorical strategies allow him to reproduce many of the biases and mistakes we understand to be the core problematics of nor-

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See, for example, Red Piper's *Calling Cards*, that mobilized conceptual strategies to reveal her racial identity as black after a racial slur or joke was expressed in Piper's presence (due to that individual mistaking Piper to be a white woman). Piper's well-known conceptual installation *Cornered* also used logic sequences to trouble U.S.

racial divisions. Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight (Volume I)*, MIT Press, 1996, pp. 219-221, 304

19
Luis Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19

20
Ibid., pp. 14-15

21
See, for example, Claes Oldenburg, *Store Days: Documents from The Store*, Something Else Press, 1967. Similarly, European collectives like DADA, Fluxus, Surrealists, Viennese Actionists, Russian Constructivists, Situationists (amongst others) also questioned the limitations of the bourgeoisies' discursive constructions of "art," claiming to resist against the ideology of art for art's sake.

22
By imagining the progress of modern art to be "self" critical, artists and historians have greatly under-recognized and devalued the intercultural and transnational exchanges that also constitute art practices since colonization.

mative art historical models. Though Camnitzer claims that Latin American conceptualism is not about style or form like the conceptual art of the U.S. and Europe, we insist that the means by which Latin American artists become marked as derivative or "offspringish" actually have very much to do with style and form. If artists across Europe, North America and South America (as well as other regions) were emphasizing the concept over the visual or the material in their works, the question of how the works are differentiated and assigned a hierarchy will be more related to: 1) what ideas are considered more important, "pure," or interesting; and 2) what forms or materials are privileged in such a manner that they are believed to convey an idea without interrupting it politically, or through associations that may "distract" an audience from what is "actually important" in the work. Camnitzer and *Global Conceptualisms* seem receptive to the ways in which some works have been valued over others, but did not correctly articulate the stakes.

We believe that the differences do not lie in any essential or ontological qualities in Latin American art that can be distinct from Eurocentric conceptual or performance practices, where the latter supposedly emphasized a formalism that they actually disavowed; but rather, the core problem surrounds the conditions that made it possible for artists in the U.S. and Europe to be given a privileged subject-position that is able to convey apolitical, disinterested, or transcendental concepts, and the ability to associate certain forms with such impossibilities. These conditions include the regions' global economic dominance, but just as important, the onanistic fantasy of pure self-critique that elided its intercultural histories. [23] In other words, the critiques wagered

by conceptual and performance artists in the U.S. and Europe during the moment of the "dematerialization" of the art object did draw from the Greenbergian model in order to "self-critique" it, but did not adequately credit alternative influences and transnational exchanges. [24] In fact, it is important not only to understand this period as simply transnational, but in both the vertical and horizontal senses outlined by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih in *Minor Transnationalism*, where vertical transnationalism is a relationship of center-periphery, and horizontal or minor transnationalism is a relationship between marginal subjects and locations. The works we discuss in our case studies are examples of both major and minor transnationalism, including the latter which is sometimes overlooked due to the regional dominance of major cities. [25]

The styles and forms that Latin American conceptualists use to convey their ideas very often cause art historians to ignore or downplay the conceptualism of these works, focusing on their "lowbrow" or sometimes "baroque" forms. However, if we frame these as conceptual, such a preoccupation with form would not fully engage the works. [26] Seen in

23
Coco Fusco offers an early critique of this sort, stating that live and performative displays have been staged since the earliest moments of colonialism, and were usually related to cultural exoticism. Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas,* The New Press, 1995, pp. 37-63

24
For example, Lucy Lippard's well-known discussions of visiting Argentina may have caused her to belatedly realize that "all art is political," but not to the degree that any regionally-specific interventions transformed or destabilized her thinking beyond generalizations that were applied to the Western tradition. To be fair to Lippard, she has subsequently engaged non-Western traditions in more transformative and interesting ways.

25
Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 2-4

26
We must be careful, however, and avoid reproducing the stakes of conceptualism as Camnitzer does, which undertheorizes the material. We make this argument to reveal the internal incongruencies of conceptual art and conceptualism, which saw the form as unimportant but nonetheless privileged certain forms over others, and art historians favor those used by U.S. artists, extending the values to all other forms of conceptualism that use different materials and styles. For example, Camnitzer includes the aesthetic operations of activists like the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in his genealogy of Latin American conceptualism, which in a traditional U.S. or European art historical framework might be considered "mere" activism.

this light, it is the mistake of the critic or historian to assume that an idea is less valuable when it is materialized through forms that emerge from a visual language specific to Latin America, or styles that aren't considered to be "high art", as opposed to the more geometric and ostensibly pure forms that were predominant in the U.S. If the form and material of conceptualism are not meant to be valuable, then it shouldn't matter if the idea is expressed via a geometric shape, one of Joseph Kosuth's furniture pieces, a subversion of Nike shoes, the merging of Bart Simpson with older sculptural forms, or in the realm of social movements and cultural symbolism. If we are to accept the premise that the idea is supposed to be the most important part of the work, for both conceptual art and conceptualism (if they are to be differentiated), then assigning value to a conceptual piece should rely primarily on discursive and political engagements, rather than formal analyses or a hierarchy of style.

While Camnitzer's emphasis on *conceptualism* as a "didactics of liberation" is encouraging, his overemphasis on the idea is one he shares overwhelmingly with the Eurocentric tradition. [27] In the U.S. and Western Europe, this approach was successful at undermining a fetishizing formalism, but as a result, it enacts a repression of, and hostility towards, the body and the material. It also re-enacts Cartesian legacies of dualistic thinking that accept a separation between mind and body, and that resort to binary relations, which we find extremely limiting. In relation to

Greenberg, such hostility is understandable; but outside of Eurocentricism and masculinist art history, it is quite problematic. These tendencies are most apparent in the gaps of Camnitzer's text, when he reduces performance events to the idea with minor attention to specificities of a scenario or to the extended frame of the event, giving little or no attention to the role of audience. [28] Thus one of the problems with *conceptualism* is that by privileging the idea, we risk failing to consider its development beyond the author – as something that will be, by definition, interpreted and potentially transformed over time.

PERFORMANCE AND A REINVESTMENT IN THE MATERIAL

One of Camnitzer's most interesting interventions is to frame the Uruguayan Tupamaro revolutionary movement as a historical marker in the development of Latin American conceptualism, arguing that their political agenda "set in motion the breakdown of boundaries that kept isolating art from life." [29] He explains that "the Tupamaros had, 'with their operations, created the only work of art that managed to deeply change the political consciousness of the people and, probably the only political work that succeeded in establishing parameters for aesthetic perception in Latin America,' and laments that even though the history of art will likely never register these events, he hopes that in the future, "the instruction of art should not be possible with-

[27]
It is also unclear if the subtitle of his book is intended to suggest that "liberation" refers to one of transcending the body or the material, in a Kantian sense, in which case we hesitate to encourage such impossible thinking.

[28]
This is especially evident in Camnitzer's treatment of the work of C.A.D.A (Colectivo de Acciones de Arte) which we will discuss later. Camnitzer cites this collective as an example of Latin American Conceptualism, however, the material presented only considers the collective's stated objectives, without attention to the role of the audience, which the artists may not provide.

[29]
Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 12

out this information." [30] Despite his desire to incorporate the aesthetics of this revolutionary movement into art history, Camnitzer nonetheless reinforces a separation, framing the Tupamaros' interventions not as art, but, "as close as possible to the art side of the line." On the other side of this line, Camnitzer historicizes the Argentine *Tucumán Arde* (Tucumán is Burning) project in 1968, where artists "attempted to become publicists and activists in the social struggle in Tucumán," manifesting the desire for an "art that transforms, [and] that destroys the idealist separation between the artwork and reality; an art that is social, which is one that merges with the revolutionary fight against economic dependency and class oppression." [31] For Camnitzer these two cases are distinct because he claims that the Tupamaros aestheticized politics, whereas Tucumán Arde was an example of art's intervention in the political arena. [32] In Camnitzer's framework only the latter is an example of Latin American conceptualism, which he posits as unique and overlooked in the US and European trajectory because of its concern with reality over abstraction. [33]

Camnitzer's emphasis on Latin American conceptualist strategies to break down the boundaries that isolate art from life, and that activate creative processes in nonartistic arenas, are also fundamental to the European and US trajectories of both conceptual and performance art. For example, in Allan Kaprow's writings about Happenings, he recognized the label of "art" only insofar as it allowed him to formulate his ideas. Kaprow's intended goal was an expansion of his work to such a degree that he did not care if it was called "art," "sport," "game" or "life". [34] As with Conceptual Art, Camnitzer attempts to reduce Happenings to "formalist speculation", based on a playful quote by Kaprow about thinking of people as shapes. [35] However, his reading of Kaprow is seriously reductive and overly literal. [36] Kaprow may not have staged overly political works; however, the potential for Happenings to intervene in political subject matter is undeniable from a transnational perspective, as well as in the U.S. context, considering artists like Carolee Schneeman. [37] Again, we strongly disagree that any differences between Latin American art and those from the U.S. and Europe are formal or structural; they are primarily political, contextual, and content-related.

During the 1970s, U.S. critics such as Lucy Lippard believed the "dematerialization" that motivated U.S. conceptual artworks would greatly transform the art world, critiquing the market by producing something of value that had no object. However, she has since explained that their ideas were largely unfounded and overstated – that conceptualism was just as easily co-opted by art institutions. [38] Despite the consequences of co-optation, conceptual and performance art-

30
Ibid.

31
Ibid., p. 66

32
Ibid., p. 71

33
Ibid., p. 72

34
Allan Kaprow, *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*, H. N. Abrams, 1966

35
Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 60

36
Kaprow outlines the many aspects of Happenings throughout *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*.

37
In addition, we might ask: what are the stakes of claiming a politics only for Latin American conceptualism, and reducing works that emerged from the Eurocentric tradition to form? Even Camnitzer agrees that happenings were important in the context of Latin American conceptualism.

38
Lucy Lippard, postface, in: *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*. University of California Press, 1997

ists in various regions saw themselves as staging a critique of European traditions and enacting a quasi-Marxist politics. While performance art is often historicized as emerging during the same period as conceptual art in the Eurocentric context, there are also important differences usually invoked to mark their distinction. Returning again to LeWittian conceptualism, the work of art is reiterated and can be carried out by anyone; because the physical object and form were so undervalued, it did not matter to Lewitt who manifested the work. In this case, the conceptual artist maintains his status as creator and generator of the idea, and the relationship to the audience tended towards passive reception. To contrast, many works of performance art maintained open frames and considered audience participation to be key elements; Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* is an example where most of the artwork was based on audience responses leading to the actual risk of the artist passively performing her own death. Some of the major differences between conceptual and performance art in the European traditions relate to the status of the artist as creator or author, audience relationships, and where one demarcates the beginning and end of the work. For performance artists, the immateriality of transformation and interaction were important, but not at the expense of a decrease in value of the body. For conceptual artists, the author-function of the artist remained intact and essential.[39]

At this point in our essay, we rehearse such norma-

tive distinctions between conceptual art and performance art, not to argue that they are correct or more relevant than alternatives, but to reveal a bias in Camnitzer and other writings about Latin America that are still quite Eurocentric. Camnitzer's weak distinction between (an oxymoronic) formalist conceptualism in the U.S. and Europe, versus an idea-based political practice in Latin America, allows him to take for granted the author-function in conceptualism, and to devalue the material and the body in ways that are more in chorus with LeWitt (and not with alternatives such as Piper). To say that materiality is somehow less important in Latin America is politically questionable when considering the region's histories of bodily disappearance.[40] Indeed, proposing a framework that devalues the body and the material for analyzing Latin American art, and belittling U.S. works to style, simply inverts the power relationship without interrogating the structures, and what it really means to propose is that form or style is not important. What's more, if we also project the divisions between conceptual/performance art onto Latin America, we commit an epistemological violence towards projects that were not engaged with, or committed to, the Eurocentric model of "self-critique." CADA's work is an example of how the distinctions cannot work outside of the Eurocentric framework, and why it is a mistake to frame them as only conceptual as Camnitzer does.

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Author-function is a Foucauldian term, historicized as a recent and modern necessity to have the author's name or signature attached to a work of literature, once it became possible for the literary to be culturally transgressive (before the Enlightenment, many literary works were anonymous). Foucault's theories have been imported into art history for similar reasons. For example, it is not until the nineteenth century that artists are expected to directly produce their works (instead of a studio, for example), coinciding with the rise of realist artists such as Courbet and Manet who challenged and eventually usurped the neoclassicists.

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Although somewhat extreme, it is difficult not to make connections between any tendency towards the disappearance of the body and its devaluation with the violent disappearances of peoples by military coups, such as those in the Southern Cone.

CASE STUDY I: CADA

In 1979, *Colectivo Acciones de Arte* (Collective of Art Actions), or CADA, staged *Inversión de Escena* (Scene Inversion/Investment), which attempted to bring art out of high cultural institutions and into the realm of the everyday. For the event, CADA artists scheduled milk trucks to drive from a dairy and park in front of the Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, where the entrance was covered by bright white fabric. The emphasis on white was in part a reference to milk, particularly to a campaign by Salvador Allende[41] that guaranteed ½ liter of milk for the nutrition of every Chilean child.[42] The white fabric was also intended to critique the Pinochet regime's censorship of public space. Its placement blocking the entrance of the museum asserted that art produced under the dictatorship must not aspire to be stored safely in the museum, but to be integrated into everyday life. CADA's interventions have been described in terms of conceptualism by Camnitzer, and were lauded as pivotal and (neo)avant-garde by French-Chilean theorist Nelly Richard, who brought them international recognition via her widely circulated writings.[43] However, the ways in which the CADA's interventions have been remembered and categorized according to Eurocentric paradigms contradict many aspects of their politics. The collective's insertion into a discourse of the "avant-garde" suggests that their contributions were original or may have emerged from the Green-

bergian lineage of progress and Kantian self-critique.[44] This is highly problematic, as the expressed intentions of the artist collective were to break down such authoritative barriers. Remembering CADA according to traditional art historical paradigms eclipses the actions of their contemporaries, who also participated in the cultural critiques of their generation. For example, the cultural symbolism of milk was, and continues to be, used by other artists in Chile.[45] Furthermore, the extension of CADA's work to the streets ruptured conventional frames of artistic production and authorship, and opened up meaning-making to a variety of unexpected interpretations. Ironically, critics have argued that the action may have been interpreted as an advertisement for the Soprole milk company.[46] Yet the conversational nature of CADA's work made them vulnerable to such irony, and thus the public should be interpreted to some degree as co-au-

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In Nelly Richard's internationally circulated book *Margins & Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973*, the author's introduction immediately establishes a hierarchy of aesthetic value that privileges a discussion of works produced by the "Avanzada Scene" (advanced scene). She argues that this term is "simply operative" and that it "covers the work carried out by Chileans engaged in counter-institutional practices from 1979-present," and that it is used to "avoid confusion with the nostalgic connotations of the word 'avant-garde'", p. 21. Nonetheless, Richard's term establishes boundaries between the formal and stylistic approach used by those in the Avanzada, and those in other realms of counter-cultural production. Richard's framing asserts that the Avanzada scene is distinct from the realm of other popular cultural production of the period because it "dared to gamble on a form of creativity able to disrupt the order imposed on language by the figures of authority and their grammar of power," working to gain public visibility, rather than the "spontaneous expression of rebellion" and the "temptation of anti-institutional types of resistance", p. 24. For Richard parallel cultural and popular art movements such as the Young Artists Association, were mainly informed by an "aesthetics of commitment," which she describes as combative and illustrative of national crisis, p. 23. She argues that this art was out of touch with the Avanzada because "their strategies were radically different." Ironically, this marked separation between formal and stylistic strategies used in the Avanzada are used to expound the Avanzada's originality, and its refinement of aesthetic expression. For example, CADA member Lotty Rosenfeld self-reflexively refers to their work as avant-garde, saying, "[N]osotros pensamos que la vanguardia debe participar en Chile en todos los terrenos; si persiste en marginarse, *déjà de existir*." [We think that the avant-garde has to participate in all of Chile's terrains; if you choose to be marginal you choose not to exist], Lotty Rosenfeld, *Revista Hoy*, 1981.

45
Camnitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 87. Camnitzer states that Allende's slogan was referenced by other artists before CADA, and due to the impact of Allende's policy in political imaginaries beyond current and past iterations, we assume that milk's symbolism could be pertinent in future applications.

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Based on Olivares' conversations with members from Chile's countercultural movement. Ironically, the institutional status of CADA's work makes it a common topic for criticism, though none of those who issue these critiques wish to be quoted or have their comments placed on the record.

41
President of Chile, 1970-73

42
Camnitzer, *op.cit.* p. 87

43
See, for example, Nelly Richard: *The Insubordination of Signs*, Duke University Press, 2004; Nelly Richard, "Margins and Institutions: Performances of the Chilean *Avanzada*" in *Corpus Delecti Performance Art of the Americas*, edited by Coco Fusco, Routledge, 2000.

thors. This latter quality is not characteristic of LeWittian conceptual art nor Camnitzerian conceptualism.

The problematics discussed thus far have more to do with how CADA is remembered, rather than anything inherent in their work. [47] Camnitzer's discussion of CADA is important, but focuses only on the conceptual aspects of their interventions and discusses nothing of the interactivities that took place, or the ephemeral qualities. For these reasons, we believe it is necessary to critically examine these works using the rhetoric of "performance art" in addition to conceptualism with an acute awareness that it is also inherently problematic. Theorist Diana Taylor reminds us that *performance* is often used in Spanish to refer specifically to performance art, and instead, *lo performático* commonly refers to the variety of social actions and embodied modes that "performance" signifies in English. [48] Yet Taylor actually argues that the undefinability and complexity of the term "performance" should be reassuring: "the untranslatability […] is actually a positive one, a necessary stumbling block that reminds us that 'we' – whether in our various disciplines, or languages, or geographic locations throughout the Americas – do not simply or unproblematically understand each other." [49] It is in reference to the military regime's murderous biopolitics that we emphasize the importance of the human body (whether living or dead, direct or indirect) and the relevance of the material in this historical context. We

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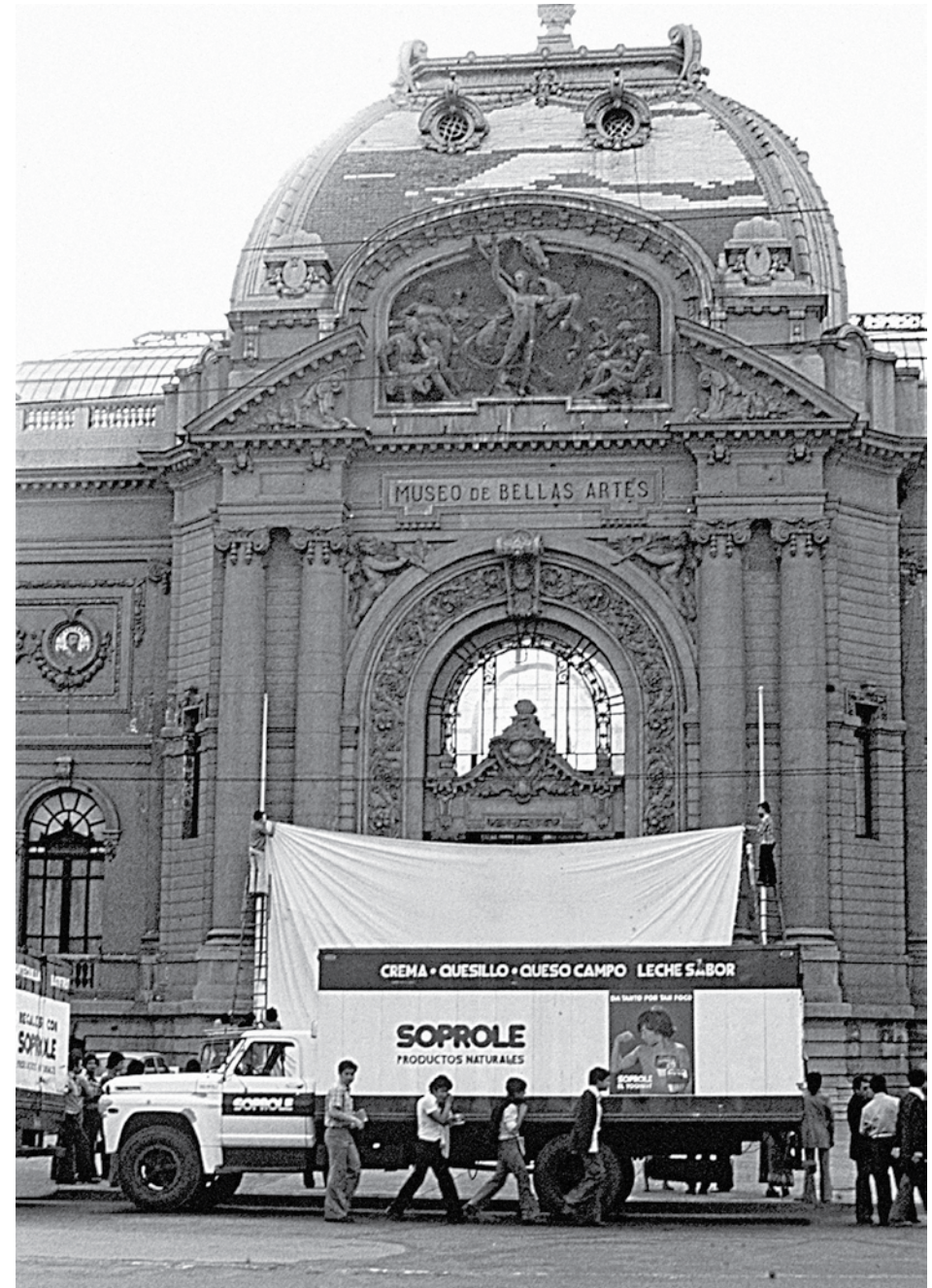Except, perhaps, for their work's conversationalist nature, which could have contributed to the ironic reinterpretations of their actions as "avant-garde."

48
Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 12. Performance art is often either translated as simply *performance* or *arte dramático*.

49
Ibid., p. 15

C.A.D.A, Inversión de Escena, 1979,
photo-documentation of the action

cite both conceptualism and performance art, as a means of engaging existing discourses, contributing to their problematization and working with what we see as their potentially productive frictions.

By framing *Inversión de Escena* as both a conceptual and performative practice, the event takes on a different valence: the gaze with which the action is analyzed must then consider an extended frame, one that pays attention to the role of the audience both in its immediate context and in the action's afterlife. *Inversión de Escena* attempted to engage the city of Santiago as a living entity, and was not a completed work for the consumption of an elite audience. Photographic and video registers do not highlight any of the specific members from the CADA collective. Instead, documentation emphasizes the movement of trucks from the milk factory, through the city, and to their arrival at the museum. The official video release of this action concludes with the declaration "Art is the city and citizens are malnourished bodies". Viewers may track the production of milk from a factory, but its usual course is perverted as the drink does not arrive at the commercial retail sector, but the museum. This act inverts the museum's role from one of repository to redistribution. We might think of the vehicles both as distribution trucks not only making a delivery, but ready to receive the contents of art from the museum to redistribute them to other locations as well. Indeed a work of conceptualism, *Inversión* thus remakes the way we think about the location and ownership of art. Instead of a container for cultural treasures, CADA recasts the museum as a site for future dispersal of the aesthetic and the political needs of society. The idea that the artists propose and work

with as a medium for their art is indeed key to understanding it. However, we must be careful to avoid only analyzing the concept that is central to the intervention. The arrival of trucks and statement that citizens are starved for art kept in cultural institutions emphasize an idea to the extent that it can be manipulated for social change. In other words, the concept is secondary to the intervention it proposes. Hence the preference of Fernando Balcells, a core member of the collective, to refer to their work as *social sculpture*, or "a proposal for the social construction of reality".[50]

Importantly, both the conceptual strategies and political discourses of *Inversión de Escena* traveled beyond the borders of Chile, exceeding regional interventionism to a transnational network of solidarity. For example, Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuna appropriated CADA's signification of milk as a demand for social justice in her own attempt to sculpt societal change in Colombia. Vicuna spilled a glass of milk in protest of the corrupt governmental oversights that made it possible for impoverished children to drink from contaminated milk supplies, ending in numerous infant deaths. In Toronto, Chilean-born artist Eugenio Téllez drank milk and read a text aloud in front of City Hall. The ideas that CADA artists worked with were frequently related to redistributing art to the citizens of Chile and beyond, and considering examples like those above, their conceptualism should be understood as the beginning of subsequent collaboration and transformation. Thus the idea-centered rhetoric of studying conceptualism, and the collaborative

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Fernando Balcells, "CADA: art and life", *Artlink* Magazine, Vol 27, No 2, 2007

open-endedness of performance art, both apply.

Indeed, CADA's strategies were adopted by many other artists throughout Chile and the rest of the world. Their well-known series *No+* began with a street intervention, for which four artists each carried a rolled poster and, during a designated time, unraveled all four at the top of a bridge. The posters combined the title of the piece with an image of a gun pointed at the viewer, demanding "No + Violence" (or "No More Violence"). In the context of Chile during the 1980s, the statement would have been clearly understood as protest against practices of the military coup. The four banners were removed by city officials very soon after they were unraveled. However, neither the concept nor the physical removal of the parts from the first intervention were the end of the work. Instead, "No+" functioned as a fill-in-the-blank mantra of resistance that could be manipulated by anyone. Art is redistributed from the elites to the everyday, and CADA members were catalysts for such a practice, not avant-garde creators of something "original" or conceptualists developing a stable idea. Other iterations of *No+* included banners declaring "No + Dictator" and picket signs stating "No + Torture." The slogan was also added to various surfaces throughout the Chilean landscape, including building exteriors and natural rock formations. To credit CADA as the sole author of the work would be seriously shortsighted. In fact, it is almost impossible to credit CADA as the "true" originator of this slogan due to how prolific it was. Instead the collective is better understood as a crucial conceptual-performative catalyst for a widespread cultural phenomenon that is owned by no one.

Ay Sudamerica, part of the series *Para No Morir de*

Hambre en el Arte (To Not Starve in the Arts) that also includes *Inversión de Escena*, is another paradigmatic example of how CADA sought to redistribute artistic authorship and reframe trans/national historical events using an alternate aesthetic lexicon. On July 12, 1981, using six fighter planes as mediators of their message, CADA dropped 400,000 pamphlets above Santiago's townships. The aerial scene constructed by CADA draws visual inspiration from the regime's bombing of La Moneda (Chile's presidential palace) on the eve of the coup, both citing the historic event and replicating its mechanism of aerial power with an inverted proposition. In addition, the action mimics the multi-national practice of dropping military and colonial propaganda during wartime – a strategy implemented by many nation states since the First World War, and especially the U.S during the Vietnam War, to engage in psychological warfare in addition to physical violence. For the military, such literature would include warnings to civilians with regards to an impending attack, as well as statements intended to turn the reader against the government in which he or she is associated. Thus *Ay Sudamerica* once again inverted the power relations, remobilizing an oppressive method to redistribute art and empower the reader, rather than incite fear or cause harm. The pamphlets, which doubled as manifestos, incited their audience to join a collective struggle for the reshaping of everyday life, claiming:

NOSOTROS SOMOS ARTISTAS, PERO CADA HOMBRE QUE TRABAJA POR LA AMPLIACIÓN, AUNQUE SEA MENTAL, DE SUS ESPACIOS DE VIDA ES UN ARTISTA. CUANDO USTED CAMINA ATRAVESANDO ESTOS LU-

GARES Y MIRA EL CIELO Y BAJO ÉL LAS CUMBRES NEVADAS ECONOCE EN ESTE SITIO EL ESPACIO DE NUESTRAS VIDAS: EL COLOR PIEL MORENA, ESTATURA Y LENGUA, PENSAMIENTO.

[WE ARE ARTISTS, BUT EACH MAN WHO WORKS FOR THE EXPANSION, EVEN IF MENTALLY, OF HIS LIVING SPACE IS AN ARTIST. WHEN YOU WALK ACROSS THESE PLACES AND LOOKUP AT THE SKY AND BENEATH ITS SNOWY SUMMITS RECOGNIZE IN THIS PLACE THE SPACE OF OUR LIVES: DARK SKIN, HEIGHT AND LANGUAGE, THOUGHT.]

As literary scholar Robert Neustadt points out, CADA's statement speaks directly and persuasively to its unknown audience, respectfully addressing its readers with the formal Spanish pronoun *Usted* (instead of the common and informal *tu*), while also choosing a poetic voice to transmit its message. [51] The use of poetry to translate CADA's political discourse is especially important considering the militarized imagery used to drop the pamphlets, perhaps to allow the audience to distinguish this message from that of the military (especially since the regime actively distanced itself from the literary cultural imaginary that was affiliated so strongly to the previous UP & Allende government).

Neustadt further explains that *Ay Sudamerica* must be interpreted on numerous levels: as a statement, for its

visual effect, and as a performative discourse, emphasizing the multi-layered interpretive mechanisms at work within the extended frame of the action. It is possible to explore the conceptual intentions of this work as we have done here, but it is more difficult to gauge the original audience's interpretation, as there are no records that emphasize the reactions of those who found the pamphlets, or who saw them being dropped from the planes. While specificities may elude us, it is still possible to understand the potentiality of this work in the realm of performative discourse. *Ay Sudamerica* stands out because of its continued exploration of the expanded field of art, invoking both a political and artistic subjectivity in reaching out to an unknown audience through an inversion of military operations. The dropping of pamphlets that describe the common person as an artist similarly invokes the rhetoric of a beginning and of redistribution, albeit the explicit consequences remain unclear and undocumented. The work is also an attempt at social sculpture, since the statement clearly seeks to change the way in which art is understood, not merely as an individual production, but as a social relationship. In *Ay Sudamerica*, as the title suggests, the society in question is not only that of Chile but a continental one. Just as the military violence directed at Chile's democratic system was intended to cause a political shift across all of Latin America, so too can *Ay Sudamerica* be understood as a transnational gesture for creative and collaborative consciousness.

CADA's actions culminated during the early 1980s and by 1983 their collective disbanded. Many of their countercultural peers have argued that despite CADA's attempts to speak to a broad audience, their works nonetheless tended to

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[51] Robert Neustadt, "El grupo Cada: Acciones de arte en el Chile dictatorial," *Revista Conjunto*, 127-131. Neustadt also argues that the poetic voice found in this message is actually reminiscent of concrete poetry from Latin America, which coincides with Luis Camnitzer's argument that concrete poetry should be included within the parameters of Latin American conceptualism. We might extend Camnitzer's framework to argue that poetry is a vital part of Latin America's performative and conceptual traditions.

circulate most amongst an elite intelligentsia granting them the possibility of traveling abroad and of working with institutional support and protection. For many of their critics, CADA's interventions were also seen as privileged spaces of resistance, since all of the members of the collective had obtained university degrees and were framed within academic discourses, and also because of their ability to garner official permission and documentation for their most spectacular interventions (i.e. the use of video documentation, the loan of Soprole's factory and milk trucks, the ability to intervene at a museum entrance, or the official permission to use six fighter planes). In other words, CADA's version of transnationalism is also a privilege when compared to many of their Chilean contemporaries: under the dictatorship, many people had to create alternatives to university education or other institutional experiences. The resources available to the artists we discuss in the following section were vastly different from CADA's, even though in Western terms, both may be seen as marginal/ized. Critiques of CADA's access to resources and transnational expressions, while important, may also be reactions against how academic writers like Richard and Camnitzer have historicized the works. We do not believe such features eliminate the critical value of the interventions made by CADA because the collective was self-effacing and interested in revealing to everyone how she or he can be an artist. However, such critiques do make evident the need to explore realms of artistic and cultural production that engage diverse constituencies and implement divergent symbolic lexicons with differing degrees of risk.

CASE STUDY II: LAS YEGUAS DEL APOCALIPSIS

Almost a decade after CADA began its social sculptures, a young collective known as *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (the Mares of the Apocalypse) irrupted into Santiago's urban underground scene, developing a radically different approach to the artistic transformation of society. *Las Yeguas* were a libertine and pagan imaginary that "transversed the barbed scenery of the 80s," describes Pedro Lemebel, a well-known writer from Chile's 1980s generation and one of the founding mares.[52] Consisting of Lemebel and Francisco Casas (also a writer), this queer collective performed several art actions between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, transforming their bodies into political and public ciphers that struggled to resist the legacies of class, race, sexuality, gender, and political discrimination. Brought together through their friendship and political activism, the collective's title emphasizes their dedication to a contentious and "battling visibility" in the midst of a repressive dictatorship and social order.

In contrast to CADA whose members were not interested in showcasing themselves as extraordinary, instead dressing and acting somewhat unremarkably so as to be part of "the everyday" they were championing, the queer men of Las Yeguas were arguably prevented from embodying "the everyday" and thus their physical presence is inflected with a different and more urgent visibility politics. The word "yegua," or mare, is often used as a pejorative term for homosexuals in Chile, its feminization invoking the rhetoric of failed masculinity, which both the military regime and

[52] Pedro Lemebel, "Lemebel: La Yegua Silenciada," Interview by Maureen Schaffer, *Revista Hoy*, No.1.072 del 9 al 15 de febrero de 1998

many so-called progressive political factions associate with a deviant and dangerous subjectivity.[53] We might consider its inaugural conceptual-performative action to be this re-appropriation of a popular grammar, and their attempt to re-signify its degraded connotation into a politicized branding. Francisco Casas potently and poetically describes their transformation:
"We reinvented ourselves as a body, different morbidly sexed, and lumpen.[54] We became a female animal, a mare, a warring machine from another time, beasts of burden; animals in disuse at the mercy of the spur…Two plus two, four legs to turn back the homosexed centaur that neighed at the troop and sniffed, the sadistic, syphilitic, and immune deficient wound on the cadaver of the nation."[55]

Casas' description of *Las Yeguas* moves beyond the traditional Western origin story, beyond the Garden of Eden, and into a realm of mythological re-articulation where their queer marginal bodies become fused into a "warring machine from another time." Whereas the artists from the CADA collective produced their interventions at the very beginning of the 1980s (during the regime's early period), the actions by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* became notorious during the final years of the dictatorship, and developed in relation to the country's so-called democratic transition. Both groups

developed critical and conceptual resistance aesthetics, yet their styles emphasized divergent methodologies.

Many of CADA's art actions, including *Inversión de Escena*, emphasized a type of disembodied collective statement, where focus on the individual artist was downplayed and the symbolic materials within the actions (i.e. milk, milk trucks, white sheet, poetry) were portrayed by themselves or in relation to each other as hermeneutic devices. While CADA members did not emphasize their own bodies, they consistently invoked a hungry body when imagining national and transnational collectivities, conceptually, but also quite literally when thinking of the city as a living entity. If the nation and the city figure as living bodies for CADA, particularly expressed by what the collective repeatedly calls a "hunger" within and for the arts that are sequestered by the state and cultural institutions, then Lemebel and Casas perform as "wounds" to both visions of collective corporeality (CADA's "everyday" collective body, and the state's body politic), as the conclusion of Casas' quotation above suggests. Theirs is not a Catholic embodiment of suffering, nor one of passive victimhood, but of a queer abscess that eats away at the conceptualization of a social body that often tries to eliminate them. *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* depend on their flesh for conceptual and performative transmission. Just as Foucault's analytic of power traces discursive practices to the materiality of the body, so do *Las Yeguas* depend on the social constitution of their corporeality to construct and manifest their political discourse.

Whereas CADA's actions were framed by the transnational mobilizations of the early 1980s, *Las Yeguas* come into being at the close of the decade, during a volatile threshold

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The 1980 Chilean constitution that was rewritten by the military regime frames heteronormativity as an issue of national defense, and its first clause expounds the importance of protecting the nuclear family. However, even underground and radical political associations, such as the Communist Party, were also invested in traditional gender hierarchies, and often replicated both sexist and homophobic ideologies. The trajectory of performances by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* draw attention to the exclusion of queer and other marginal voices in the construction of national political imaginaries by both the

left and right.

54
Lumpen can be translated as marginal dialect. Marx uses this term to refer to the class of people who cannot or will not participate as working proletariats, such as the homeless.

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Francisco Casas, "Equine Lips of Exile," in *Corpus Delecti: Performance from the Americas*, ed. Coco Fusco. Routledge, 2000, p. 221

period when Chile's transition from military rule to democracy was not yet secure. Despite the constitution's scheduled call for an electoral plebiscite to determine the future of Chile's governmental structure in 1989, many opponents to the Pinochet regime still believed that the military could rescind its agreement to honor the election, and that even if the elections were to occur as scheduled, there was no guarantee that the regime's opponents would prevail. Furthermore, many doubted that the election, even if it did secure a democratic candidate, would truly end the military's hegemony. This particular context of political uncertainty is fundamental to the conceptual-performative engagement proposed by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis*. Interpellated as queer and lumpen subjects by the prevailing social structure, Las Yeguas wield their bodies as public weapons of intervention, transforming deviant bodies into an active criminal queerness.[56]

The stakes outlined above are evident in the *Yeguas'* performance *La Conquista de América*, staged on October 12, 1989 – *el Día de la Hispanidad* (The Day of "Hispanicity"), a national holiday that usually celebrates Columbus' so-called discovery of the Americas. In the foyer of Chile's Human Rights commission, Las Yeguas sat together shirtless and barefoot. They wore matching black pants rolled up to their calves, and at their feet a large map of Latin America merged its borders with the floor of the commission. This map's outline was drawn on sheets of white paper, upon which scattered shards of broken Coca-Cola bottles raised topographic detail. Las Yeguas sat in the "northern lati-

tude" of the scene, and taking each other's arm they moved onto the territory. Their bodies faced each other, assuming a choreographed pose well-recognized by the audience as they moved in sync to the steps and quarter rhythm of Chile's national dance, *la cueca*. Dancing upon the sharp shards of glass they grimaced, containing their pain. The silence was so acute that several audience members claimed to hear the shards of glass enter their bare feet, especially during the climax of the dance, during an agitated series of steps known as *el zapateo*. After only one round of the dance, they left in silence, limping as they exited the commission entirely, their feet leaving slightly bloodied tracks on the map.

By reworking the codes of a rich symbolic history, *La Conquista de América* became a palimpsest of protest. The performance expressed solidarity with the history of injustice claimed also by the wives of men whom the government had disappeared, emphasizing their partner's absence symbolically by dancing a traditionally partnered dance alone in *la cueca sola*.[57] As homosexual men dancing the steps without the traditional partner but also in a pair (just of a different, queer kind), *La Conquista de América* memorialized an unrecognized and abject population of the disappeared. *Las Yeguas* performed the loss of their comrades, a transnational homosexual population that was targeted and disappeared by military apparati across Latin America. Due to their abjection, members of this group have experienced a *double-disappearance*: they were marginalized and erased even from the official registers of disappearance. *La Conquista de*

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[56]
"Criminal queer" is a phrase coined by Eric Stanley and Chris Vargas in their film *Criminal Queers* (2009).

[57]
See our co-authored essay "Intervention/Resurrection" for a further discussion of la cueca sola and the complex histories of this intervention. In *Curatorial Dreams: Critics Imagine Exhibitions*, ed. Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer (forthcoming).

América's affective strength is that it reveals the wounds of multiple silenced histories, calling into question the layers of fragmentation caused by multinational regimes of violence. As the title and images suggest, *La Conquista de América* goes beyond a critique of Chile's national history of political murders and its insular future of democracy. Instead, this performance asks its audience to extend their emotive understanding of a national history to a continental condition of oppression. The broken Coca-Cola bottles extended to the borders of the map allude to a new period of colonization and neoliberalism, which impedes liberation in a global context.

One of *Las Yeguas'* earliest performances is *La Refundación de la Universidad de Chile* (Re-founding the University of Chile), when the collective symbolically "re-founded" Chile's national university in 1987. At the time of their performance, the military government had appointed Jose Luís Federici as the rector of the University of Chile. Federici's appointment was seen as part of the regime's impending restructuring and privatization of the University of Chile, and at the same time annulled the democratic election of the position, provoking one of the biggest university strikes in Chile's history. [58] The few publicly available photographs of this performance show Casas and Lemebel nude atop a small mare whose reins are held and guided by Carmen Beren-

[58]
The appointment of Federici, Dean of Economic Sciences and ally of the regime and its neoliberal policies, was particularly inflammatory because he had a history of dismantling nationalized industries and transforming them into private entities (such as the National Railroad Company (EFE) and the National Carbon Company (Enacar)). Furthermore, his appointment was seen as part of the regime's impending restructuring and privatization of the University of Chile. The timing of

Pinochet's appointment of Federici in September of 1987 was especially volatile because a plebisicite to determine whether Pinochet would remain in power or if the country would transition to democratic elections was planned later that year in 1988. Students and faculty rejected the military's intervention on the basis of defending the university's autonomy and its democratic tradition, and the magnitude of their strike was reflective of the resistance much of the population had to the continued political domain of the military. For an extended history *www.lachilebajofederici.info*

Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis, *La Conquista de América*, 1989

guer and Nadia Prado (two well-known feminists from the 1980s generation). The performance consisted of circling the mares around the Faculty of Arts campus in a queer rendition of Lady Godiva's historical rebellion in the nude. In Lady Godiva's fable, she sought to protect the citizens of Coventry from oppressive taxes levied by her husband, who upon her request suggested that only if she rode through the town naked would he absolve the fees. Lady Godiva remains chaste in the fable, however, requesting all citizens to close their shutters so that they do not see her naked body. Like Lady Godiva, *Las Yeguas* rode through the university's public space in resistance to economic exploitation, in their case one that threatened to privatize the university system and restrict its access. In contrast to Lady Godiva the performance by Las Yeguas depended on an explicitly public nudity. The bareness of their bodies, their close contact and touching skin (i.e. in one photo Lemebel holds Casas' waist), their performance of nude proximity imbued the scene with both a vulnerable and dangerous queerness.

In the context of the dictatorship Casas and Lemebel's male bodies are antithetical to a mainstream construction of heteronormative masculinity, and are particularly deviant when considered in relation to the hypermasculine construction of a military officer or soldier, whose uniform transforms the vulnerable individual body into a closed and impenetrable unit of aggression. The battling aesthetic constructed by Las Yeguas in *La Refundación de La Universidad de Chile* unites a series of bodies: Lemebel and Casas are physically connected to the mare and the feminists who guide them. Thus their performance at the university constructs an antithetical collectivity to that of the military

apparatus, framing women, homosexual, queer, and animal bodies as a collective of marginal interests that work together in solidarity. Or as Casas theorizes, "Las Yeguas map a utopian construction of ethnicity, of our sexes, our social popular, our lets-do-it-all-over-again for the construction of more just societies…"[59] *La Refundación de la Universidad de Chile* is one of these "lets-do-it all-over-again" scenarios, creating an alternate universe where past and present histories of colonization are cited and inverted. With their bodies elevated by riding the mare, Las Yeguas became a dislocated allegory of the Americas' colonial past, when conquistadores used horses (not mares) to exert fear and dominance over the indigenous populations. In their restaging of the colonial encounter, however, Las Yeguas are devoid of armor and their use of a slow-walking mare disrupts the trope of aggression. *Las Yeguas* also draw attention to the neocolonial impact of neoliberalism, a repeated scene of devastation, where marginal constituencies are those that are most targeted by imperial and patriarchal dominance. Yet, the performance should not be interpreted as a simple inversion of power, with marginal sectors now in control of the university; instead, Casas insists, "we did not march there to enter and remain inside, but rather to let the academy know that we are outside, that they have reinstituted the margin as aesthetic".[60] This statement complements their apocalyptic discourse, which rather than seeking institutionalization is aimed at dislocating established hierarchies and structures of power.

[59] Casas, *op.cit.*, p. 221

[60] *Ibid.*

Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis invoke the queer body's historicity in both national and transnational contexts. Performances like *La Conquista de America* and *La Refundación de la Universidad de Chile* address the specificity of a national history of discrimination while also providing an extended critique of the oppressive interpellations that construct deviant bodies within and beyond national boundaries. In addition to their memorialization of persecuted homosexual bodies across Latin America, their expanded field of solidarity allied their struggle with other oppressed subjectivities: women, the proletariat, those without access to higher education, a racialized indigenous population, and even animals. *Las Yeguas* interrupt Chile's history of art as harbingers of apocalypse, their destruction aimed against colonized constructions of art and artists, while also waging a material-semiotic war against a political and economic status-quo (on the political left and right) that perpetuates social inequities. In the art actions developed by *Las Yeguas*, the bodies of both Lemebel and Casas were vital to each scenario construction. Unlike CADA's collective actions, their specific bodies were the most important symbolic markers for the development of conceptual statements. They privileged the immediacy of their bodies, creating blitzkrieg performances (or lighting attacks) that often fell outside the realm of official archival performance registers. As a result, information and reflection about their performances tended to remain within Chile, circulating by word of mouth, and through some published articles and photographic registers in underground and clandestine magazines. [61]

[61]
See: Maura Brecia, *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* en una accion de arte", *La Epoca*. 17 de octubre de 1989; Carla Moller, Photographic Registers. *La Conquista de América*. Published in *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* en una accion de arte", *La Epoca*. 17 de octubre de 1989, pp. 27; *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis*. "Que no muera el sexo bajo los puentes (Sex under bridges shouldn't die)" *El Trauco*. No. 46. Agosto 1989

Our approach to the case studies of CADA and *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* bridges what we consider to be important hermeneutic gaps prevalent within art historical approaches that narrativize artistic trajectories through rigid discursive models. Through a close reconsideration of Luis Camnitzer's *Latin American Conceptualism: Didactics of Liberation*, we have shown that the history of conceptual art in the Euro-American tradition, while problematic, is not reducible to a 'style' as Camnitzer argues. We take issue with Camnitzer's attempt to ontologically distinguish art practices tied to the conceptual tradition in Latin America from those in the U.S and Western Europe, arguing that while there are important differences, such differences cannot be essentialized or hierarchized. Our approach seriously considers the historical implications of the "dematerialization of the art object" and attempts to move away from formalist art histories, while also emphasizing the regional and transnational specificities of conceptual practices. We highlight the importance of dismantling an author-creator approach to conceptualism, and alternatively encourage a material-semiotic interpretation of art that considers artist contributions to an expanded field of engagement, in relation to diverse audiences, and across multiple locations and temporalities – without perpetuating a preoccupation with artistic originality, trying to identify what counts as art, or establishing a hierarchy of styles.

The political performances of CADA and *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* only partially reveal the depth of interpretation made possible through a performative-conceptual approach. While there are important stylistic and institutional differences amongst these art collectives from the 1980s, nei-

ther group can be said to employ "more" of a conceptualist strategy than the other. By interpreting these works through a performative lens we are able to reconsider the framing of their actions (such as how scholars integrate them into histories of art), and also reinvest in the material that includes audiences and other contextual elements of their interventions. Importantly, both groups engage transnational historical developments, albeit with distinct political purposes and available resources. Varying social positionalities distinguished each group's approach to conceptualism, though both collectives sought to take part in transnational struggles of resistance and consciousness-raising. It is our hope that this essay may itself perform as a catalyst for other scholars to reconsider the ways in which we historicize art projects as conceptual, performative, transnational – or all of the above.
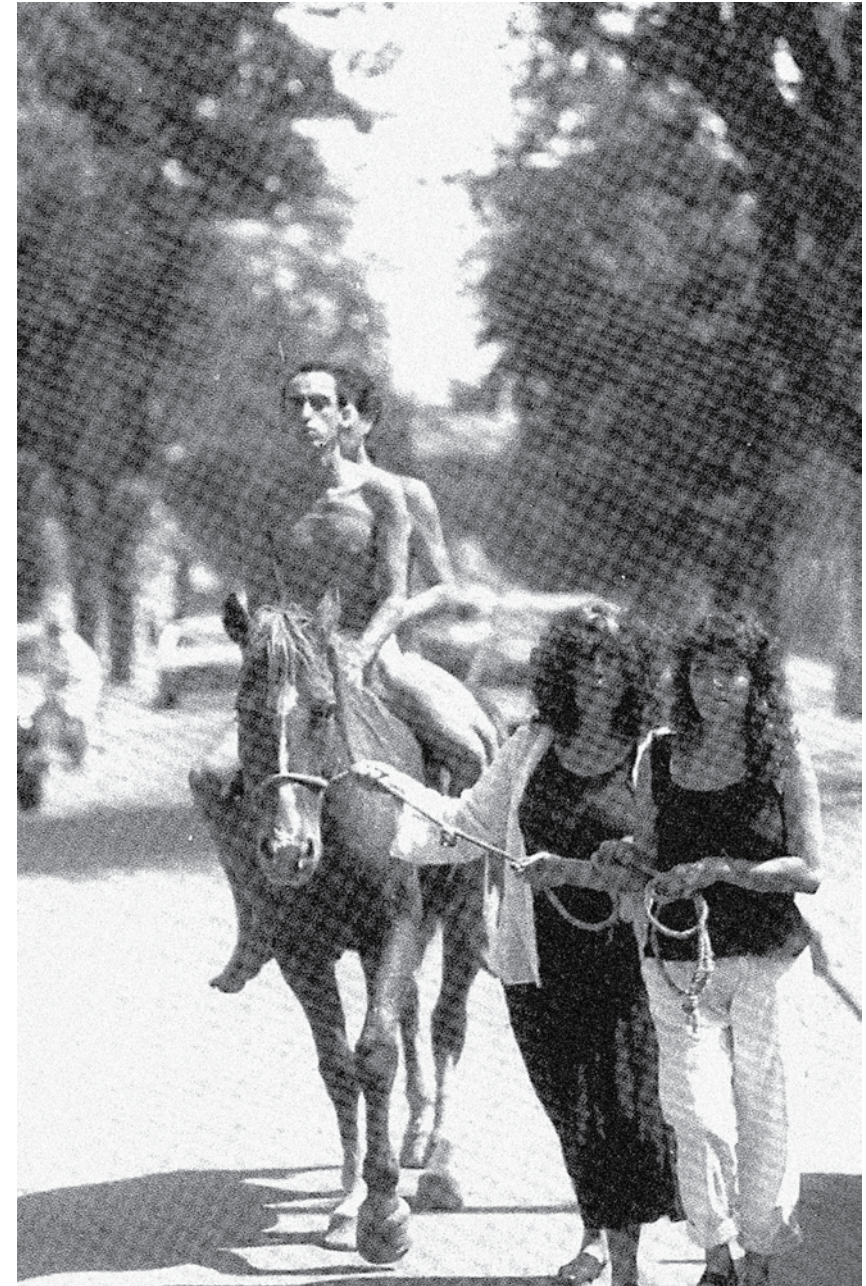
Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis,
La Refundación de la Universidad de Chile, 1987

NATAŠA PETREŠIN-
BACHELEZ

The Archival Tendency.
The Case of Irwin

The increasing interest in organising, structuring, document-ing and revealing the art history of former Eastern Europe is largely the domain of the artists that participate actively in changing orders and elements within the visible, sayable and thinkable, as Jacques Rancière defines political art. [1] Although heterogeneous in their formal proposals artistic projects that are run, assembled and proposed by artists like Lia Perjovschi, Ilya Kabakov, Tamás St. Auby, Walid Ra'ad, Vyacheslav Akhunov and Irwin have in common discursive aspects or visual presentations that give forms to what can be, somewhat tediously, called "innovative forms of archives". The notion of innovation as something scien-tifically or creatively progressive in the title of this essay is deliberately ironic, and it is followed by well-known sup-port structures of visual presentation and organisation (ex-hibitions, events, books). Within these regimes and formats a Rancièrian re-distribution of the sensible is taking place. However, these familiar regimes of presentations have had their status changed, since they are now conceived as por-table, easily accessible assemblies or archives. Furthermore, they do not only represent the strategy of self-historicisation, one of the correctives that is performed within the institu-tional critique of the former Eastern Europe, but also con-tribute to the methods of artistic research and to theoretical endeavours of imagining what, if at all, a history of common European contemporary art might be.

If an archive reminds us of bookshelves, unending rows of boxes, folders and various types of documents that await the regiment of historians to disclose and reactivate them, largely within the critical writings, it also denotes any series or group of documents. In order to use the term more precisely, Sue Breakell describes an archive as "a set of traces of actions, the records left by a life – drawing, writing, inter-acting with society on personal and formal levels. In an ar-chive, the sketchbook would ideally be part of a larger body of papers including correspondence, diaries, photographs – all of which can shed light on each other". [2] The specific artists' projects briefly mentioned above bear witness to the objectives and mechanisms of archiving not only in former Eastern Europe, but also in the Middle East and in South America [3], whereby they employ the notion of archive as form [4] and find in this undertaking an argument for declar-ing that museum and archive are synonyms. The profound relationship within knowledge production through employ-ing different models of subjectivities in the cases of a mu-seum and an archive have been consolidated in the engaging writings of Douglas Crimp who significantly contributed to the theorizing of institutional critique from the late 1970s onwards.

There are many reasons for the appearance of diverse forms of archives from the late 1980s onwards: of Lia Per-jovschi's Contemporary Art Archive/Center for Art Analy-sis, Irwin's *East Art Map*, Tamás St. Auby's *Portable Intelli-*

1
Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, London and New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 63

2
Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive", in *Tate Papers*, issue 9, Spring 2008, London, *www.tate.org. uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/08spring/breakell. shtm*

3
The many archival positions coming from South America have to be included in future researches, but will not be specifically mentioned here.

4
For more about the archive as form in contemporary art, see Okwui Enwezor, "Archive Fever. Photography Be-tween History and Monument", in: Okwui Enwezor (ed.), *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, New York: International Center of Photography, Göttingen: Steidl, 2008, pp. 14-18

gence Increase Museum, Vyacheslav Akhunov's minimized reproductions of all his works in his installation *1m2*, Walid Ra'ad's *A History of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art*, and authorless projects originating from the South-Eastern Europe [5], most specifically the project *Museum of American Art* in Berlin. [6] Their practices have not only to do with the material found while researching through various personal and official archives. They create a visual typology, offer material for the further research in art history and at the same time experiment with the registers of the presenting and questioning of documentation and archival material, whose values of truth are taken for granted by aggressive and continuous media pollution. They are taking part in the discourse on archeological procedures and the imaginary which is heightened in the contemporary art of today. [7] Their research takes the form of an artwork, in the form of an exhibition, or as a critically acclaimed and relevant art theoretical and art historical opus. In their presentations, they are becoming museum-like structures as well as self-institutionalised agencies, with all the accompanying knowledge produced, assembled and transmitted in order to be used as a tool. What these artists have in common is thus an adaptation of the profession of an archivist or art historian. Thus assembling them under the denominator of "archival artists" following Hal Foster's term by which he understands artists who make "historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present". [8] Focusing on the found images, objects, and texts, would be logical, but still inadequate to these artists' explicit art historiographic and political endeavours. However, Foster denotes the main issue that separates artists-as-archivists from artists-as-curators: "That the museum has been ruined as a coherent system in a public sphere is generally assumed, not triumphally proclaimed or melancholically pondered, and some of these artists suggest other kinds of ordering — within the museum and without. In this respect the orientation of archival art is often more 'institutive' than 'destructive', more 'legislative', than 'transgressive'". [9] In the following parts of this essay, I will focus on the idea of self-historicisation, performative documentation and the work of Irwin group.

SELF-HISTORICISATION AS AN ARTISTIC STRATEGY

The interest and tolerance of official art apparatchiks in socialist and communist regimes for the experimental art production varied from country to country, thus causing the respective scenes to develop in different directions. The information, documentation and other printed matter circulated among the groups of like-minded critics, writers and artists and rarely accessed official art institutions. Artists and directors of experimental art venues kept collecting and piling the documentation within their personal and spatial

5
The term "authorless projects" for this very specific assembly of projects and exhibitions is used by Inke Arns, who curated the exhibition *What is Modern Art? (A Group Show)* at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in 2006 and edited together with Walter Benjamin the catalogue *What is Modern Art? Introductory Series to Modern Art 2*, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2006

6
Another important example, which is however omitted in this essay, is the Polish conceptual artist Zofia Kulik, who, in her several research projects, has been arranging and exhibiting the archive of The Laboratory of Action, Documentation, and Promotion — PDDiU. This was an archive managed by the artistic tandem KwieKu-

lik (Zofia Kulik and her then partner in life and art, Przemysław Kwiek) and maintained in their houses. More on the archiving strategies in the body of work of Zofia Kulik, see Luiza Nader, "What Do Archives Forget? Memory and Histories, 'From the Archive of Kwiekulik'", in: *Opowiedziane inaczej. A story Differently Told: Tomasz Ciec/ersk / Jarosaw Kozłowski / Zofia Kulik / Zbigniew Libera i Darek Foks / Aleksandra Polisewicz, Gdańsk: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Łaźnia*, 2008, pp. 84-122. *www.kulikzofia.pl/english/ok2/ok2_nader_eng.html*

7
See: Dieter Roelstraete, "The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art", in *e-flux journal* #4, 03/2009, *www.e-flux.com/journal/view/51*

8
Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse", *October* 110 (Fall 2004), p. 4

9
Ibid., p. 5

capabilities. By the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the increasingly liberating atmosphere of what could be called "the attempts of the early civil society in a socialist state" emerged hand in hand with underground creativity. More insight into this documentation was enabled, and affective intra-generational links were formed as well. Boris Groys describes the mechanisms of collections of art, museums or archives in the former Eastern Europe in his numerous writings. Art in former Eastern Europe was created in an ideological context and outside of the logic of collection, as was and still is the case in the former West. [10] Instead of getting incorporated in Western collections, the artists of the former Eastern Europe, Groys concludes, have created imaginary or alternative "collections-installations", histories and narrations that fill the entirety of museum spaces. In 2006, Zdenka Badovinac curated an exhibition at Moderna galerija in Ljubljana that dealt with the artistic archiving strategies in the former Eastern Europe called *Interrupted Histories*. In the text of the catalogue she establishes an important definition of the artistic process of self-historicisation: "...because the local institutions that should have been systematizing neo-avant-garde art and its tradition either did not exist or were disdainful of such art, the artists themselves were forced to be their own art historians and archivists, a situation that still exists in some places today. Such self-historicisation includes the collecting and archiving of documents, whether of one's own art actions, or, in certain spaces, of broader movements, ones that were usually marginalized by local politics and in-

visible in the international art context". [11] In the case of the Slovenian group Irwin, this strategy was not explicitly critical, but existed in the form of a constructive approach or a corrective. As Miran Mohar of the Irwin group says when referring to the institutional critique in the West, "How can you criticize something which you actually don't have?" [12] The main motto of Irwin in the 1990s was "construction of one's own context", where the group functioned at the same time as both the observer and the object of observation. This is the base from which we can think about the strategy of self-historicisation; an artistic strategy which can furthermore be seen as one of the characteristics of an Eastern European institutional critique. [13]

Several years ago, Ilya Kabakov explained this artistic strategy of self-historicisation with the term "self-description": "…the author would imitate, re-create that very same 'outside' perspective of which he was deprived in actual reality. He became simultaneously an author and an observer. Deprived of a genuine viewer, critic, or historian, the author unwittingly became them himself, trying to guess what his works meant 'objectively'. He attempted to 'imagine' that very 'History' in which he was functioning and which was 'looking' at him. Obviously, this 'History' existed only in his imagination and had its own image for each artist…". [14]

10
See: Boris Groys, *Logik der Sammlung. Das Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, Munich: Carl Hanser, 1997

11
Zdenka Badovinac, "Interrupted Histories", in: Zdenka Badovinac and others (eds.), *Prekinjene zgodovine / Interrupted Histories*, Ljubljana: Museum of Modern Art, 2006, non paginated

12
Interview of the author with Miran Mohar, 2006, unpublished

13
See: Nataša Petrešin, "Self-historicisation and self-insti-

tutionalisation as strategies of the institutional critique in the Eastern Europe", in Marina Gržinić, Alenka Domjan (eds.), *Conceptual Artists and the Power of their Art Works for the Present*, Celje: Center for Contemporary Arts, 2007

14
Ilya Kabakov, "Foreword", in: Laura Hoptman and Tomáš Pospiszyl (eds.), *Primary Documents. A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002, p. 8

Similarly, Victor Tupitsyn in his most recent book *The Museological Unconscious. Communal (Post)Modernism in Russia* [15] asks himself "what is to be done with art that has not realized its 'museological function' in time, even if this is through no fault of its own". [16] Tupitsyn sees the increasing (Russian) artists' involvement in controlling both the selection of material as well as its interpretation in the cases of publications, as a principle of egocentricity: "...they are attempts to reproduce the museological function (and even to replicate its institutional format) at the artists' own expense and on their own terms". [17] Thus, in compensation for the lack of an institutional framework for unofficial artistic practices, the situation which we encounter all over former Eastern Europe, and also in the Middle East and South America, is that the egocentric strategy has been activated as an alternative to institutional mechanisms.

While Tupitsyn might be right about describing the aspirations of neo-avant-garde artists, not everything should be reduced to egocentricity and paranoid control over one's body of work, which has never been properly documented, interpreted and presented. The projects that will be presented here as case studies, share a similar partisan spirituality, which can be denoted conveniently with the notion from the online initiative of Open Access or Open Archives: self-archiving [18]. Self-archiving involves depositing a free

copy of a digital document on the web in order to provide open access to its usage and citation impact. The term usually refers to self-archiving of peer reviewed research journal and conference articles as well as theses, deposited in the author's own institutional repository or open archive. Self-archiving or innovative forms of archive are contributing to raising the question of inclusion and exclusion and access to participation in restricted knowledge communities. Closely linked to this, is the process of staging or fictionalising features and events. The ontological status of the source and the question of the authenticity of the document is brought forward into the discussion about its performativity, as is the case with the above mentioned projects of Walid Ra'ad and the "authorless projects", where fictional identities and invented documents playfully disturb the canons of knowledge and histories as solid unmovable rocks.

Irwin's *Retroavantgarde* and *East Art Map* both give ground to expanding archives and contest the objectification of the Grand (Art) Historical Narrative as imposed by "colonisers" from Western Europe and the US. The process and consequences of colonisation have been widely discussed within the former Eastern European theoretical discourse for a decade. The aim is to observe its forking historical currents, the official and unofficial documents, events and stories, all in the light of the encounter between Postcolonial and Postcommunist studies. In a recent text about the post-bipolar condition of the former Eastern block, Vit Havránek explains how in the Eastern European states outside of the Soviet Union there existed a double colonisation: "Soviet executive colonial power manifested itself across the Eastern Bloc unevenly, because it colonised countries not through

15
Victor Tupitsyn, *The Museological Unconscious. Communal (Post)Modernism in Russia*, Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 2009

16
Ibid., p. 230

17
Ibid.

18
In an email conversation, Sven Spieker, the author of one of the seminal books about artistic positions dealing with the archives (*The Big Archive*, Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 2008), suggested an umbrella-term, "self-archive", for the cases that are discussed in this article.

direct governance, but by establishing, controlling and overseeing national governments which were subordinated to the centre in differing degrees. The 'paternal nation', along with the state apparatuses of each country, administered and adapted the colonial ideology locally, according to its own needs and local conditions, translating its local languages into local laws and norms... In the satellite states, people were colonised twice – first, as historical victims of the post-war world which fell to their liberators, divested of their existing state administrations and forcibly oriented toward the historically higher-ranking ideology of communism (horizontally) and, second, by means of their own communist agitators and governments in whose hands they were subjected to a differentiated national self-colonisation (vertically)".[19] Opposing themselves to the most common symptom of the colonised; the belatedness in which one's own culture has been projected as an echo of the grand narratives, these particular artistic engagements furthermore witness the importance of their documenting and disseminating the neglected chapters of art history. It might seem that the role of the artist and that of the museum have changed places. The objective of this artistic strategy of (self)historicising is to record the parallel histories that are subjectively preserved and exist as the fragments of memories and semi-forgotten oral traditions. Zdenka Badovinac elaborates in her seminal essay on "interrupted histories" that the artists, thus, act as ethnologists or archivists of their own and other

artists' projects that were marginalized by local politics and remained invisible in the context of international art.[20] This informal historicisation is, in Badovinac's view, the point in which the Other resists its former status as object of observation, classification, and subordination to the modernizing process, and instead transforms into an "active Other."

RETROAVANTGARDE

Already in the late 1980s the newly established Irwin group defined its programme, whose governing principles were retroprinciple, emphatic eclecticism and the assertion of nationality and national culture. Retro-principle is defined not as a style or trend, but rather as a conceptual principle, that is, a particular way to behave and act. In a diagram, created in 2003, Irwin claimed that the retroprinciple is the ultimate method that works on the construction of its context. It consists of three fields of interest where Irwin performs its artistic activities: "geopolitics" (projects like *NSK Embassy Moscow*, *Transnacionala*, *East Art Map*), "politics of the artificial person" (transformation of the collective Neue Slowenische Kunst, which Irwin co-founded, to a *State-in-time*, *Retroavantgarde – Ready-made avant-garde* and some other projects) and "instrumental politics" (Irwin's advisory work on several international collections, *East Art Map*). The work *Retroavantgarde* (1997-2005) by Irwin which will be mentioned here, develops the group's ongoing strategy of self-historicisation and questions the status of an artwork in relation to its documentation.

When the transitional period began in the 1990s and

19
Havránek refers to Alexander Kiossev's term "self-colonisation", but uses it in a different sense: people do not self-colonise unconsciously; instead, they consciously adapt the coloniser's ideology to local circumstances. See

Vit Havránek, "The Post-Bipolar Order and the Status of Public and Private under Communism", in: Christine Macel, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez (eds.), *The Promises of the Past*, Paris: Centre Pompidou, Zürich: JRP – Ringier, 2010, p. 26

20
Badovinac, *op.cit.*

the doors to the Western art establishment (meaning internationally acclaimed status) were wide open and possible, Irwin, in opposition to most other artist groups, did not try to melt within the Western art system, but decided to keep on articulating their own cultural context. The basic premise was that the conditions under which the artists in the East worked were the only real capital available to them, after the change in the early 1990s. Therefore Irwin turned to the East in order to compare the experience with other artists. Irwin labelled the difference between the East and the West, inscribed in the artistic production since 1990s, 'Eastern Modernism'. The term was paradoxical in relation to the internationalising and globalising institution of (Western) Modernism and it represents Irwin's attempt to actively intervene in the grand narratives of a Western-dominated art history by means of constructing a fictive art movement for the geographic space of Yugoslavia, called "retroavantgarde" or "retrogarde". Vit Havránek writes about a certain "compensatory effect which manifested itself promptly after 1989 in the satellite countries [which] was an immediate rejection of a common ideological (non)time as a colonial instrument of governance along with the need for the 're-turn' of national temporalities to that of Western history. This process has run a very paradoxical course; the West demanded the integration of 'Eastern art' as a homogenous temporality into the universal time of the First World – and continues to do so to this day, one might say". [21] With the aim of unmasking the subjective construction of that very art history which was imposing its canons, and which colonised

[21]
Vit Havranek, *op.cit.*, p. 27

other parts of the (Second and Third) World, Irwin, together with their long-term collaborator and writer Eda Čufer wrote a manifesto *The Ear Behind the Painting* (1990), where we can read: "During the Cold War, numerous artists emigrated to the West, and the false conviction that modern art, no matter whether coming from the East or from the West,

IRWIN
Retroavantgarde
120 x 200 cm, mixed media, 1996
First exhibited in January 2007 in Kunsthalle Wien
Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar

is so universal as to be classified under a common name: the current –ism, appeared to be very common... The different contexts in which the Western and the Eastern experiments were carried out deprived modern art of its international character... With Eastern time preserved in the past and Western time stopped in the present, modern art lost its driving element – the future... The name of Eastern art is East-
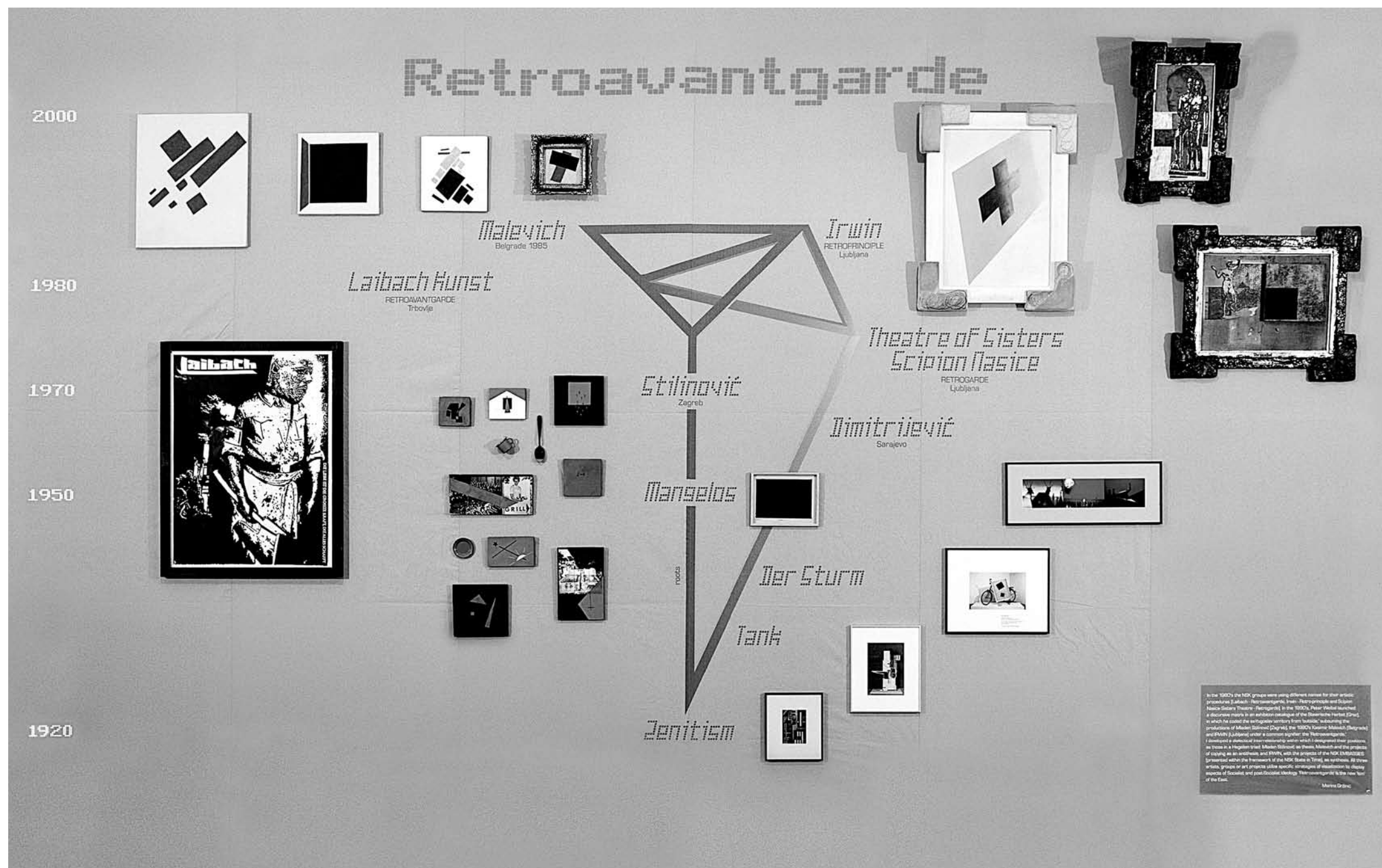
ern Modernism. The name of its method is retrogardism".[22] They thus referred to the master narrative of modernism, that of Alfred H. Barr's *Diagram of Stylistic Evolution from 1890 until 1935*, which Barr, founding director of New York's MOMA, developed in 1936 as a genealogic tree of the European avant-garde movements as precursors of the abstract art of modernism and in collaboration with the philosopher Marina Gržinić Irwin "with a similarly arrogant attitude... transfers this scheme onto Yugoslavia, here in the form of a reversed genealogy of the "retroavantgarde", which extends from the neo-avantgarde of the present back to the period of the historical avant-garde. The installation Retroavantgarde... is both an independent work of art and a pragmatic, cartographic instrument... By postulating the existence of a fictive Yugoslavian retro-avant-garde, Irwin (re)constructs and posits a modernism intrinsic to Eastern Europe. This "Eastern Modernism" however, turns out to be just as construed, fictive, and artificial as its Western counterpart".[23] In painting and later on in installations which included original works by, among others, Mangelos, Mladen Stilinović, Braco Dimitrijević, Kasimir Malevich [24] and Irwin, the artists incorporated their heroes and influences into an organised

system. Moreover, as mentioned above, Eastern Europe has usually been seen in the eyes of Western art historians as a region where belated influences from the West constructed its respective art history and where reproductions or copies of masterpieces were more often seen than originals.

22
Inke Arns (ed.), *Irwin: Retroprincip*, 1983-2003, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver. Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2003, p. 233

23
Inke Arns, "Irwin Navigator: Retroprincip 1983-2003", in: Inke Arns, *op.cit.*, p. 14

24
Kasimir Malevich belongs to a series of authorless projects originating from the South-Eastern Europe, active from the early 1980s until today. Among these projects are *Salon de Fleurus*, New York, a performance by Walter Benjamin in Ljubljana in 1986, *Museum of American Art* in Berlin, etc. As Marina Gržinić writes: "In the projects of copying from the 1980s in ex-Yugoslavia the real artist's signature is missing and even some of the 'historical' facts are distorted (dates, places). From my point of view, the production of copies and the reconstruction of projects from the avant-garde art period in post-Socialism had a direct effect on art perceived as 'Institution' and against 'History', which was (and is still?) completely totalised in post-Socialism." Marina Gržinić. "The Retro-Avant Garde Movement In The Ex-Yugoslav Territory Or *Mapping* Post-Socialism", in: Inke Arns, *op.cit.*, p. 220. More information about these projects is in the following part of this article.

EAST ART MAP

Continuing with their activity of creating context, the group Irwin found itself at the right place at the right time to provide a research tool in the form of the ongoing project *East Art Map* where a multiplicity of subjective views and voices from different generations and of opposite aesthetic choices could be expanded into an art historical alternative.

The *East Art Map*, an ongoing project that was started in 2002, gave form to a book published in 2006 by Afterall Press in London and to several exhibitions. In 2002 Irwin invited 23 curators, critics, and art historians (among them Iara Boubnova, Ekaterina Degot, Marina Gržinić, Elona Lubyte, Suzana Milevska, Viktor Misiano, Edi Muka, Ana Peraica, Piotr Piotrowski, Igor Zabel) from Central and Eastern Europe to select 10 artists from their respective local context that they considered the most crucial for the development of contemporary art in Eastern Europe. "The history of art is a history of friendship," claims Irwin in the first part of the East Art Map project, based on the axiom that "*history is not given*" and the belief that one has to actively intervene in the construction of history. The aim of this ongoing project is to show the art of geographical Eastern Europe as a unified whole, outside of any national frameworks. Irwin writes that "in Eastern Europe there exist as a rule no transparent structures in which those

events, artifacts, and artists that are significant to the history of art have been organized into a referential system accepted and respected outside the borders of a particular country. Instead, we encounter systems that are closed within national borders and a whole series of stories and legends about art and artists who were opposed to this
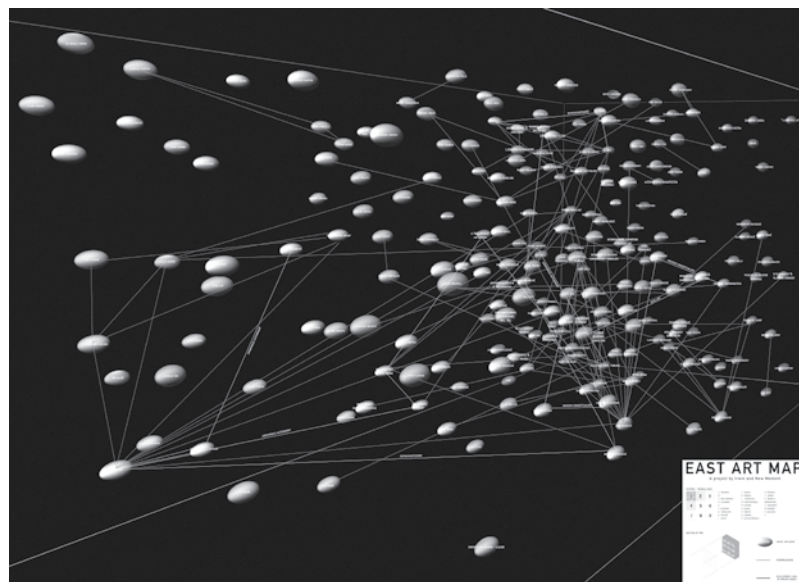
IRWIN
East Art Map, 2000/2005
Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar

official art world. However, written records about the latter are few and fragmented. Comparisons with contemporary Western art and artists are extremely rare. A system fragmented to such an extent…prevents any serious possibility of comprehending the art created during socialist times as a whole. Secondly, it represents a huge problem for artists who, apart from lacking any solid support…

are compelled for the same reason to steer between the local and international art systems. And thirdly, this blocks communication among artists, critics, and theoreticians from these countries."

Understanding history as the ultimate context, Irwin decides to "democratize" its construction. Thus following the official selection of the invited professionals, Irwin established an online portal (www.eastartmap.org), where anyone interested can add proposals or suggest substitutions within the established *East Art Map*. The invitation to do so may sound desperate: "History is not given, please help construct it!" however, sharing the responsibility by proposing a co-authorship in historiography is a democratic gesture in itself. This portal is now an archive-in-progress for the forthcoming proposals and discussions about the compiled documentation.

Another level of the project is the installations in gallery contexts that offer a possibility to browse through an archive of links, digitalised images and a transparent system of selections done by the invited professionals. These installations are Irwin's art works. So is, in its potential reading, the publication itself.

### *LIKE TO LIKE*: A TYPOLOGY OF DOCUMENTS

Another project by Irwin, *Like to Like* (2004), allows us to look more closely into the potential that a document carries, i.e. that of performing or activating the past. The established typology that follows here is linked to questions about the document and its performativity as proposed by Philip Auslander, the American performance theoretician.

In his seminal text, *On the Performativity of Perfor-*
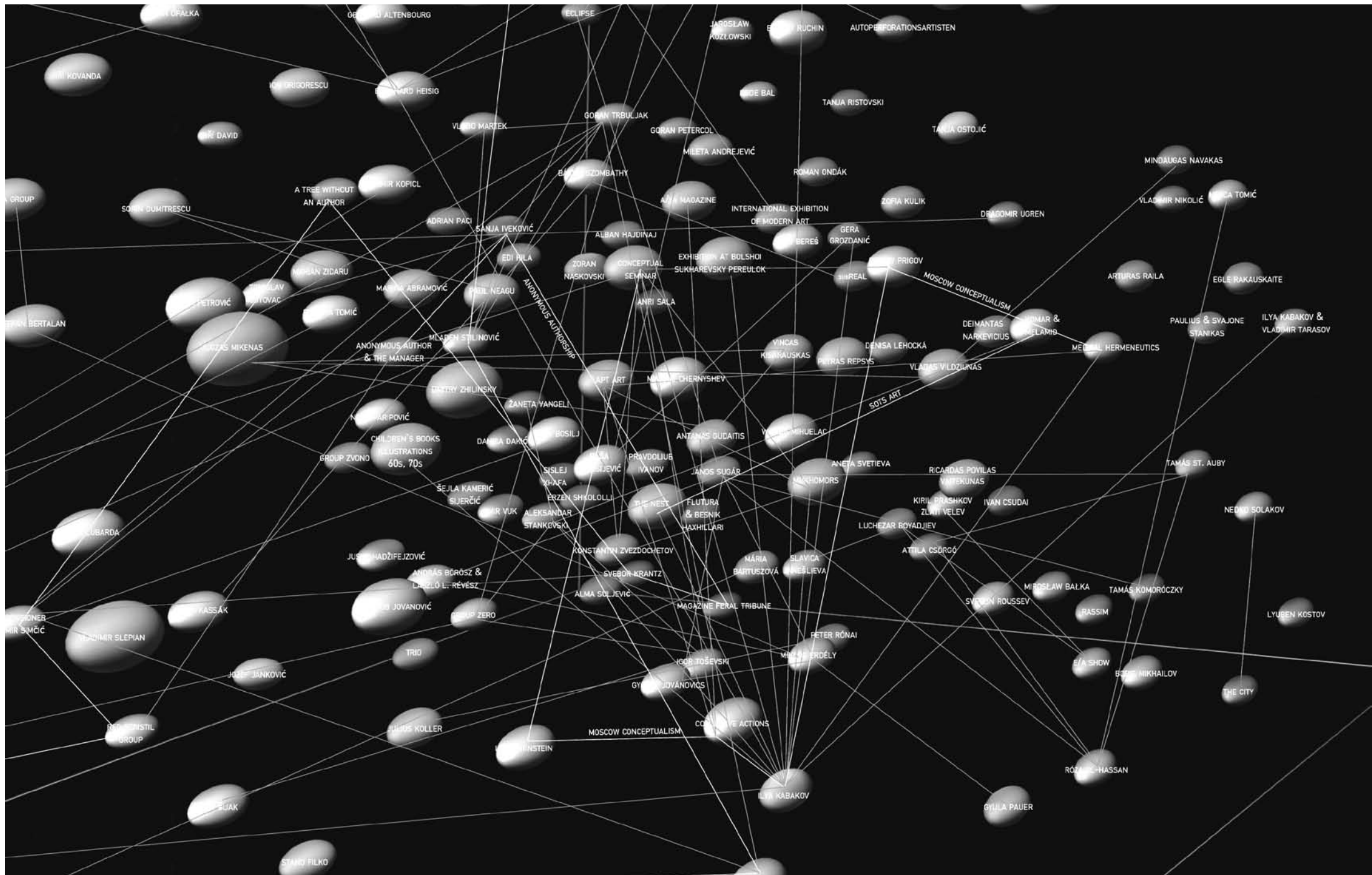
mance Documentation[25], Auslander references his colleague, American theoretician of performance and body art Amelia Jones, who in her essay *Presence in Absentia* explores the relationship between performance and document. Reinstating photography's position as an access point to the reality of performance, Jones declares how she is "… respectful of the specificity of knowledges gained from participating in a live performance situation [...] I will argue here that this specificity should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledges that develop in relation to the documentary traces of such an event. While the live situation may enable the phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement, the documentary exchange (viewer/reader < - > document) is equally intersubjective."[26] Following on from this argument, Auslander classifies any performance documentation into two categories: documentary and theatrical. Specifically, the latter is interesting for our discussion here, since it includes projects where the performance is totally staged with the sole purpose of being recorded, so that the original event bears no preceding meaningful existence whatsoever: "The space of a document, be it visual or audiovisual, becomes the only space in which the performance takes place".[27] Not only the captured reality or situation but also its production, features in the work itself. Facing theatricality the document's authenticity and its ability to reflect reality is discredited. The consequence is thus that

IRWIN
Svoji k svojim / *Pšenica in vrv* / Like to Like / *Wheat and Rope*, 2004
Remake on the basis of a photograph. The action of the group OHO (Milenko Matanović)
from 1970 *Wheat and Rope*
Photo: Tomaž Gregorič
Production: Cornerhouse
Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar

the spectator does not see the document as a communication of information but as a staging of information.

In his most recent research, Auslander further develops his theoretical approach to performance documentation, focusing on the phenomenological relation of the public to the performance document, and less on the ontological relation of the document to the original performance. In his approach, Auslander observes how a spectator's primary action regarding performance art is not the witnessing of live events but the imaginative reconstitution of performances from images, whether held in memory or available through documentation. He draws on the hermeneutics of the Ger-

25
Philip Auslander, "On the Performativity of Performance Documentation", in: Barbara Clausen (ed.), *After the Act: The (Re)Presentation of Performance Art*, Vienna: MUMOK, 2005, pp. 21-33

26
Amelia Jones: "Presence in Absentia", *Art Journal*, Winter, 1997, *www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0425/is_n4_v56/ai_20544717/pg_1?tag=content;col1* (accessed 18 February 2011).

27
See: note 25, p. 24

man philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer who argues that understanding something does not consist of revealing an objective truth inherent in it, waiting to be discovered. Rather, understanding proves to be something that emerges through dialogue, in our case the dialogue between the performance document and its public. Auslander claims that the public's imaginative reconstitution of a performance from its documentation is not a process in which they retrieve information about something that took place in the past, but is itself a performance in the present in which we take part. [28]

Furthermore, the notion of performativity can be attributed to the document itself. By assessing this concept through Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech: The Politics of the Performative* (1997), [29] where performativity is defined as a study of the discourse used in identity formation and law-making, or John Langshaw Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), [30] where stating objects is considered similar to constituting those objects in certain circumstances and linguistic expression does not simply take place but carries out an action at the same time, we can see that the concept of the performative document describes the ways in which words are used to describe and define reality, or perform events. In our discussion it is interesting to note that, if we consider the past through the aspect of the performativity of language, we can detect how our words and interpretations

28
Adapted from the abstract for a conference by Philip Auslander, available here: *www.mcgill.ca/ahcs/ahcsevents/speakerseries/* (accessed 18 February 2011). For more related topics see also his conference paper "Ontology vs. History: Making Distinctions Between the Live and the Mediatized" (2010) *www.webcast.gatech.edu/papers/arch/Auslander.html* (accessed 18 February 2011).

29
Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. The Politics of the Performative*, New York: Routledge Press, 1997

30
John Langshaw Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, (Second Edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975

assist in the understanding of the past, while observing it through images or textual or oral material.

Irwin's series of works *Like to Like: Irwin – OHO* (2004) consists of six large-scale color photographs presenting actions and projects in landscape which are re-articulations and re-enactments of some of the crucial works of the most important Slovene conceptual art group OHO, such as *Mount Triglav* (1968), *Wheat and Rope* (1969) and *Family of fire, air and water: water-air* (1969). Miško Šuvaković understands this series as the inverse of their retro-avant-garde principle, namely he describes the series as if coming from "the postmodern repudiation of avant-garde/neo-avant-garde [where] the Irwin group directed itself towards the establishment of its own 'modern or avant-garde traditions' in the frame of its national culture". [31]
This joins the thoughts of Igor Zabel, who wrote insightfully some months before his tragic death about how Irwin in this particular case appropriated OHO's projects, but not by using their original photographs, but by re-staging original actions: "This difference is strikingly accentuated by the use of the spectacular possibilities of contemporary photography. This means that we have to pose the question about the very object of their appropriation and depiction". [32] Irwin's re-enactments were performed in the actual or similar-looking locations where the happenings took place, and documented voluntarily by means of superior-quality photographs. The black and white, poor-quality and modest quantity documentation from the late 1960s and 1970s that marks the majority of per-

31
Miško Šuvaković, "3 x Triglav: Controversies and Problems regarding Mount Triglav", *www.mg-lj.si/node/89*

32
Igor Zabel, "Like to Like", 2004, unpublished

formance-related art in the former Eastern Europe accompanied as the only witness of the ephemeral actions of artists which were often carried out without audience, as is the case with the OHO. In Zabel's words, "what has happened, not only with OHO, but also with numerous other artists, is that documentation slowly took over the place of the works of art. The artists deliberately used photography in such a way that it became as impersonal and non-estheticized as possible...The grainy character of these black and white pictures has attained a particular esthetical and emotional value; the compositions of the images (originally unimportant and accidental) have been transformed into recognizable art icons". [33] In contrast to the photographs that recorded the iconic OHO actions, Irwin invited a professional photographer and enlarged his colour photographs and framed them, thus opening the reading that these are the actual works of art. They created yet another level of distance between the original action and its restaging by clearly repeating the projects, whereby the composition does not stay identical with the OHO's photographic documentation. Zabel thus concludes that this operation presents "not just OHO actions, but OHO as a phenomenon that already belongs to the history of art and culture. OHO became such a phenomenon also through the process that placed documentary images within the position of works of art. This operation can be understood as a symptom of a more fundamental operation, i.e. of the codification and categorization of OHO. Through this process, OHO has been constructed as an element of art historical, cultural and ideological structures". [34]

33
Ibid.

34
Ibid.

IRWIN
Svoji k svojim / *Triglav* | Like to Like / *Mount Triglav*, 2004
Color photo, 199,5 x 168 x 7 cm
Photographic reconstruction of the 1968 action *Mount Triglav* by OHO Group
Photo: Tomaž Gregorič
Production: Cornerhouse
Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar

To finish on a broader view towards the writing of art history and by quoting one last time the much missed Igor Zabel, the discipline of historiography never was and never is a neutral and objective activity: "It is always a construction of an image of an historical period or development… This construction plays a specific role in the symbolic and ideological systems, throughout which various systems of power manifest themselves on the level of public conscious-

ness. The fields of culture and art, thus art and cultural history, are those spheres where it becomes evident how the systems of power function symbolically. They namely construct stories and development systems and, simultaneously, present them as "objective" facts. Those viewpoints, that are incompatible with such constructions, are, on the other hand, marginalised, hidden or excluded".[35] Knowing about the conditions and manipulations of the emergence of documents or works of art, which are then officially presented as "objective facts", neutralizes the ideas and knowledge that we inherit through education and society at large.

IRWIN
Svoji k svojim / *Voda – zrak* | Like to Like / *Water – Air*, 2004
Remake on the basis of a photograph. The action of the group OHO (Marko Pogačnik)
from 1969 *Family of Fire, Air and Water: Water – Air*
Photo: Tomaž Gregorič
Production: Cornerhouse
Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar

35
Igor Zabel, "Strategija zgodovinopisja", in: Boris Groys,
Celostna umetnina Stalin, Ljubljana: Založba, 1999, p.
147

EDIT SASVÁRI

A Moment of Experimen-
tal Democracy in the
Kádár Era.
György Galántai's
Chapel Studio in
Balatonboglár and the
Social Milieu of Counter-
Culture in Hungary in
the 1960s and 1970s

Balatonboglár is a small village by Lake Balaton in Hungary. In the early seventies, its abandoned chapel became a place where groups representing different approaches of unofficial art could appear and act together. György Galántai, the young artist who rented the chapel, shared the space with others, giving them a chance to present their work. Hence artists coming from diverse positions, both geographical and intellectual, gathered in the underground milieu during summer vacations. In the course of its four years, this series of events grew into the most substantial privately initiated artistic endeavor of the seventies in the unofficial art scene.[1]

One may wonder how this was possible in a dictatorial period, when art had to operate within a tightly regulated framework and was subject to acute social distrust. What situation could give rise to such an event and how could it persist so long in an openly hostile environment? Answering these questions requires a clear understanding of some of the developments in society, politics, and art between the beginning of the Kádár era and the early seventies.

After the 1956 uprising, the relationship between art and the political establishment evolved in a series of intricate configurations. It was a chain of compromises between different echelons of power, within the power elite, and between artists and party officials. The questions at stake were invariably the following: what is praiseworthy, what is acceptable, and what must be rejected in contemporary art based on the ideology of the socialist system? The futility

of answering these questions became clear by the 80s, and the political establishment, recognizing this too, practically gave up its ambitions of steering art. The last time an exhibition was banned in Hungary was 1984[2], and interestingly enough, it happened to be organized by the very same György Galántai who had been involved in the greatest underground endeavor of the 70s, the organization of the chapel exhibitions in Balatonboglár, the subject of my study here.

The earliest years of the Kádár era (between 1958-60) were a turbulent affair in Hungarian political life. Reprisals after the crushed uprising were in full swing, and Imre Nagy, the prime minister of the revolutionary government, was executed. In art too, it was a time of cleanup and restoring order: the artists' association was dissolved, reorganized, and filled with artists who were members of the state party; various institutions of art were reshaped in the spirit of the new era. The next few years were devoted to consolidating political power and establishing a status quo. After 1963, however, it was within this status quo that the elite of the Kádár regime was looking for forms of cooperation with society.

The control of art was informed by the political principle of balancing: make allowances here, clamp down there. How the leash relaxed or tightened always depended on the political and social constellation of the moment. While the dismal atmosphere of the political clampdown loomed over

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[1]
For more detail on this topic, see: Edit Sasvári and Júlia Klaniczay: *Törvénytelen avantgárd. Galántai György kápolnaműterme 1970-73* [Illegal Avant-garde. The Chapel Studio of György Galántai in Balatonboglár, 1970-1973], Budapest: Artpool-Balassi, 2003, p. 460

[2]
Hungary Can Be Yours (Magyarország a tiéd lehet), an international exhibition with 110 participating artists, Fiatal Képzőművészek Klubja, Budapest, 1984. The exhibition was banned on the day of opening, January 24. For more detail on the exhibition, see *www.artpool.hu/ Commonpress51/default.html*

the society of the early Kádár era, the early sixties offered a richer and at times surprising array of cultural products, including the increasingly steady influx of western art. [3]

János Major: *Living Tomb*
1 July, 1973
Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár
Photos: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

Two distinct blocks existed side by side in the space of art in this period: the vast and, let's admit, rather diverse camp of official art and the tiny radical troop of unofficial art. Their relationships to power were based on the same dilemma that affected Hungarian society as a whole in the sixties: should they accept or reject the conciliatory consensus the Kádár

[3]
Műcsarnok (Art Hall), perhaps the most prestigious institution of Hungarian visual art, exhibited Henry Moore's sculptures in 1961 and 1967, contemporary British painting including works by Lucien Freud, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, and Graham Sutherland in 1963, contemporary French painting (works by Hans Hartung, Marechal Poliakoff, Manessier, Pierre Soulage and Victor Vasarely) in 1966, and graphic works by Picasso in 1967.

At the end of the decade several Hungarian artists who had become canonical in the West, such as Amerigo Tot or Victor Vasarely, were invited back with great media fanfare, and in 1970 this applied to the entirety of Hungarian emigré art except for those artists who left in 1956. However, a small exhibition by László Moholy Nagy in the King Stephen Museum (István Király Múzeum) of Székesfehérvár in 1969 had no coverage in the press.

Tamás St. Auby:
Exclusion Practice, Pre-Punishment Autotherapy (event)
"Direct Week", 06-09 July, 1972
Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár
Photo: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

EDIT SASVÁRI

A MOMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL DEMOCRACY IN THE KÁDÁR ERA.
GYÖRGY GALÁNTAI'S CHAPEL STUDIO IN BALATONBOGLÁR AND THE SOCIAL MILIEU OF COUNTER-CULTURE IN HUNGARY IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

regime offered after the post-1956 reprisals? Those who decided to accept it became part of the "official" block, while the rest automatically belonged to the other. In neither case can one speak of homogenous alliances: the two groups appeared before the public as homogenous based on the shared will of allegiance and rejection, respectively.

The art phenomena of the period cannot be interpreted without regard to these relations. I will offer two examples that shed light on how the critical attitude to democratic principles actually worked in sham democratic situations and how a peculiar anarchic democracy (not unlike the later period of regime change) took shape in the milieu of the underground, a space presumed to be free.

The Young Artists' Studio was the official institution that brought together young artists who chose the traditional career path.[4] The mid-60s saw the election of a new, liberal leadership open to reform in virtually every area of concern to young artists (commissions, self-improvement, art criticism, opportunities for exhibitions, and the abolition of censorship). One of their most spectacular achievements was an unjuried exhibition [5] in 1966, held in Ernst Museum, an exhibition space of Műcsarnok (Art Hall). After next year's group exhibition, however, this leadership with ambitions of reform was removed in an internal coup. [6] We do not know in full detail by what rationale the members of the leadership turned against each other and whose interest was served by changing the former innovative approach in the Studio into one "compatible" with the political establishment. [7] In any case, a brief period in the life of the organization, one that was quite promising for the representation of young artists' interests, was now over.

The Studio had never been a uniform organization, but rather a fusion of various interest groups from the start, and this left its mark on the leadership to some extent. It is a widespread assessment that besides intrigue and personal differences of interests, the 1967 takeover was a clash of two factions and two attitudes. The fault-line of their difference was one deeply ingrained in the period, namely the conflict between abstraction and figural thought. The split in leadership led to decisions of cultural policy that conclusively suppressed all struggles for the Studio's autonomy, and a noticeably stricter political control was imposed on the institution. The high point of all the achievements from the 1964-66 period, a definitive phase in the operation of the Studio, was the previously mentioned Studio exhibition of 1966, which gave artists the opportunity to present their works without being subject to jury selection, something unprecedented in the period. Indeed, this show admitted all visual art trends

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4
The Studio was founded in 1958; its predecessor, the Creative Community of Young Visual Artists, had been formed in 1954, during the Rákosi era. For a study on the history of the Studio, see Katalin Aknai and Orsolya Merhán, "Belső zsűri. A Fiatal Képzőművészek Stúdiójának története 1958-1978". *Második nyilvánosság* [The Second Public Sphere]. Compiled by Hans Knoll, ed. Jolsvai Júlia, Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2002, pp. 200-227

5
All exhibitions were subject toto jury selection, that is censorship, in the period.

6
Tűrés és Tiltás. A Fiatal Képzőművészek Stúdiójának 1966-os és 1967-es kiállítása. [Tolerating and Prohibiting. The 1966 and 1967 Exhibitions of the Young Artists' Studio.], exhibition catalogue, ed. Szilvia Csanádi-Bognár, Budapest: Ernst Múzeum, Budapest, 2006

7
Introducing a new framework for the Studio's operation was most likely related to the economic reform in progress at the time. The reform program known as New Economic Mechanism, launched on January 1 1968, had a substantial impact on the sphere of art and reshuffled preferred areas to benefit education, popular education, sports and science at the expense of elite culture. The new emerging concept of culture was conceived as relative to an economic context. The initial ideological uncertainty resulting from the economic transformations, which could be felt soon after the spring of 1966 when the reform initiative was proclaimed, gave many the false understanding that the intention to adopt elements of a market economy would be coupled with a more lenient control of culture.

and currents present in Hungary at the time, but its real significance resided not so much in the presentation of individual artists but in exhibiting "group opinions," the formation of groups based on distinct and conflicting views.

This case reveals the mindset of the artists in the Studio's leadership. Although the Young Artists' Studio belonged in the sphere of official art, the leadership elected in 1964 sincerely believed in the possibility of improving the system through change and increased openness. This leadership was removed in 1967.

The group of neo-avantgarde artists rejected any negotiation with the powers that be as hopeless. In other words, they rejected the consensus offered by Kádár and did so on the moral ground that one ought not to participate in a fundamentally false system. They found the internal debates of the system fake, the public political discourse manipulative and misleading, institutions and the unacceptable operation of the press a sham, and they thought human relationships were deformed as well. As artists, they spoke the language of contemporary progressive art instead of that preferred by the system. Since they did not believe the system could be changed, they opted for its complete rejection, thereby leaving society and settling into a subcultural milieu of groups. It was a short-lived "coalition" of these groups that came about in the Balatonboglár chapel, far from the capital.

In the sixties and seventies, the sphere of art was characterized by a highly diverse assortment of group views, although these views were almost entirely absent from a more general public discourse. While the internal debate within the Studio revolved around questions of figurative and abstract art (continuing an artificially fostered repetitious de-

bate since the fifties), independent groups of the period queried the new function and changed conditions of art. Their responses drew on contemporary Western art, while also finding inspiration in a first-hand experience of an East-Central European sense of life. Groups were formed to represent these attitudes in a programmatic way. A subcultural map of Hungary in the period reveals a broad spectrum of such groups, which, of course, extended beyond the world of visual art. People had started to gather at regular tables at Budapest cafés and espresso bars [8] as early as the 50s, forming autonomous intellectual circles, but these were tiny islands. Besides cafés, these forms of association based mostly on friendship also operated in people's homes [9], retaining and often carefully guarding their private and elite character. Starting with the sixties, interest-based youth groups and clubs gained more public visibility in a new framework of operations in cultural centers, university clubs, and other marginal institutions. These groups included Szürenon (1968), the Iparterv group (1968), the NO 1 group of filmmakers, writers, and visual artists in Budapest, and the Pécs Workshop (Pécsi Műhely) experimenting with geometric and conceptual art in the southern city of Pécs (1970) among others. These groups emerging in the late sixties initially held separate exhibitions, but later also exhibited together: for example, the Iparterv and Szürenon groups had a joint exhibition in Building R of the Technical University in December 1970.

This was also the year when the Chapel program was

[8] The most famous were Café Luxor, the Muskátli and Bajtárs espresso bars, and the Kárpátia restaurant.

[9] For example, Pál Petrigalla's apartment in Vécsey utca, where ad hoc exhibitions, readings and concerts were held for a selctive audience; Endre Bálint, József Jakovits, and Júlia Vajda's apartment in Rottenbiller utca, or Miklós Erdély and Zsuzsa Szenes's house in Virágárok utca.

launched under the name "chapel exhibitions". Galántai had a degree from the College of Visual Art and a traditional artist's career beckoning, when he legally rented the desacralized chapel as a studio with the intention of presenting Studio artists there. Additionally, it has a significant bearing on our story that
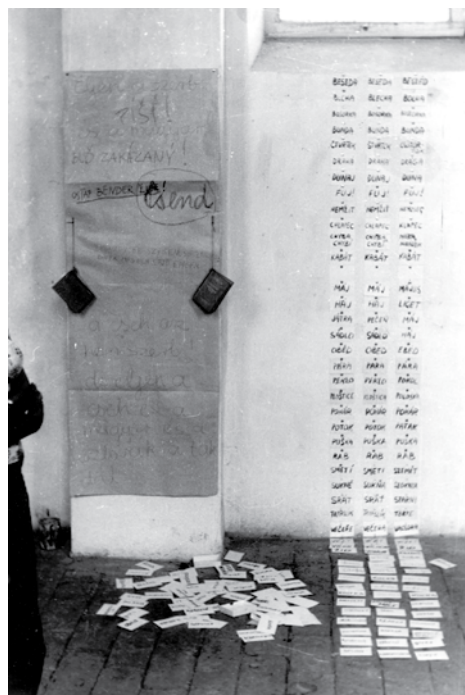
the region of Lake Balaton became an important scene of youth culture in the seventies: it was a symbolic site of confrontation between bourgeois mentality and young people's desire for freedom. So it was an important initiative by Galántai to invite his like-minded fellow artists to appear in the summer exhibitions rather than only using the chapel for his own purposes.[10]

10
In addition to Galántai, Attila Csáji was also instrumental in shaping the conception of the project in the first two years.
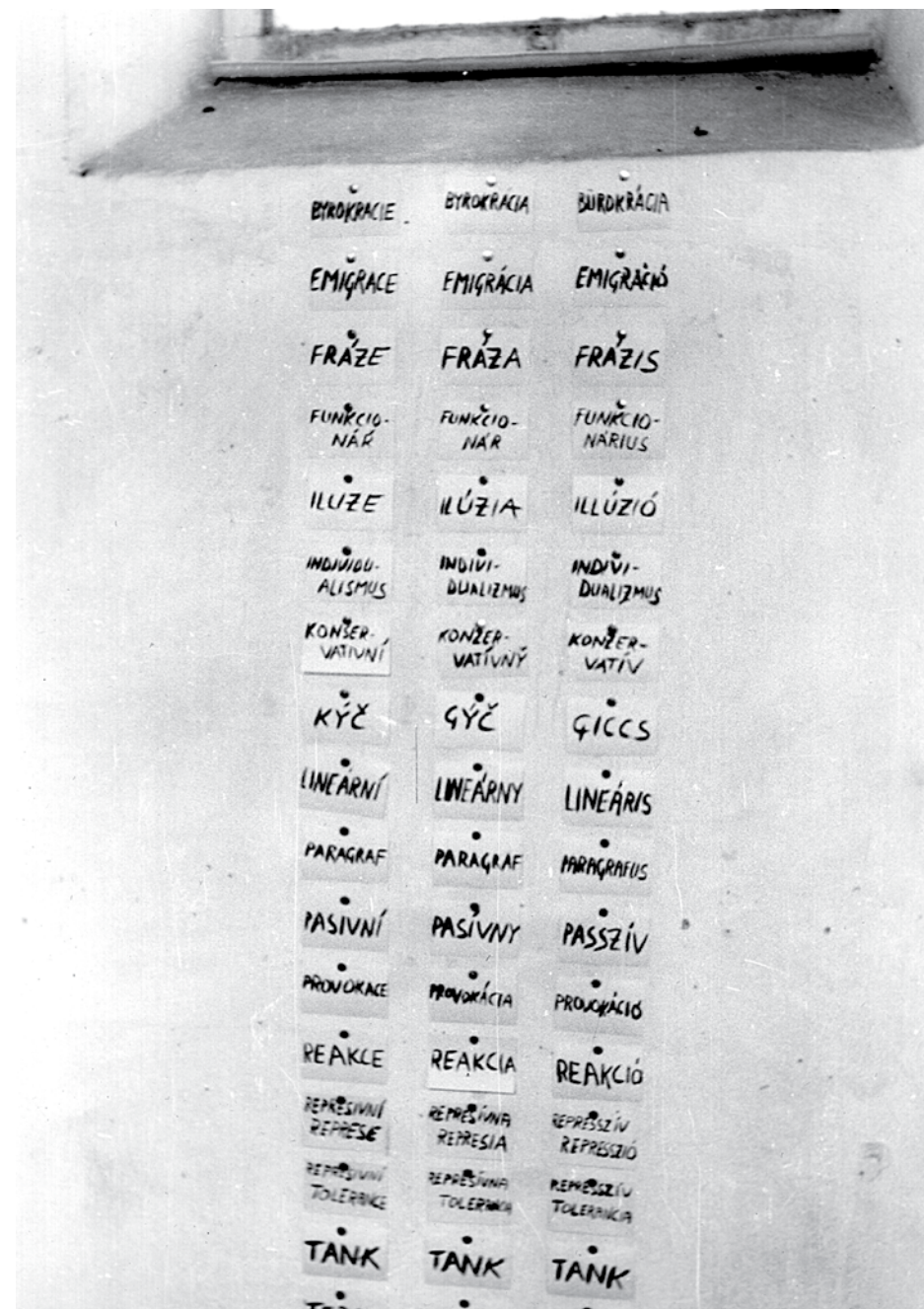
László Beke: *Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Words*
Photos: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

The first year was characterized by traditional exhibition-type presentations: painting, sculpture and graphic works and accompanying programs (such as readings, performances of vocal music, folksongs, and ballads). However, banned genres such
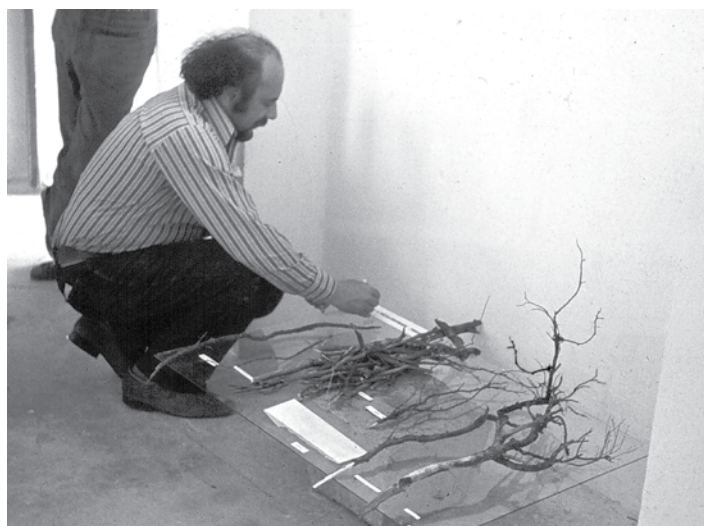
Miklós Erdély: *Brushwood is the Proletarian of Fuel* (installation)
The original labels of the pieces were:
Semi-Brushwood, Miscellaneous Brushwood, Bourgeois
Exasperating Brushwood, Birch, Stone Stricken Brushwood,
Brushwood Against Demagogy, Packed Brushwood
"Direct Week", 06-09 July, 1972
Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár
Photo: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

as actions and happenings appeared as early as 1971 (*Parallel Course/Training Track*, happening, initiation ritual, *A-B* by Tamás St. Auby and *Flysheet* action by Gyula Pauer). Over the next years the program series became increasingly radical and individual careers changed course towards new genres, which led to conflicts between radical artists and those preferring more traditional art forms. The most spectacular confrontations were those that society at large would only come to experience with

full force at the time of the regime change in 1989. This was the time when the tensions that had built up during the unavoidable coexistence of individuals and groups of different persuasions, unwilling bedfellows under political oppression, suddenly exploded. The peculiar circumstances of Balatonboglár allowed for the articulation and open confrontation of extremely different attitudes.

This offered an experience of freedom their generation had never known except for the few weeks of the 1956 uprising, and a model of democracy took shape in Balatonboglár, if only within the limited sphere of the participating artists and their audience. The chapel itself, as a special site, turned into an exceptional medium for the conflicts in question. The artists' repartees to each other took the form of site-specific (and situation-specific) works. If one group felt the other "de-secrated" the chapel with its work, they would "resanctify" it with another.[11] The milieu of the chapel proved to be highly inspiring; a good number of the emblematic works of the seventies were born there.[12]

The entire spectrum of artists' groups formed since the sixties appeared in Balatonboglár at one time or another between 1970-73. In addition to the groups established in the capital (Iparterv and Szürenon), and avant-gardist groups from the countryside (members of Pécsi Műhely), the range of exhibitors eventually included international artists (Czech,

11
Sándor Csutoros, László Haris and József V. Molnár: *"Confrontation" Arrangement of space by Sándor Csutoros, László Haris and József V. Molnár* (1973)

12
To name a few: *Exclusion Practice, Pre-Punishment Autotherapy* (1972) by Tamás Szentjóby; *Brushwood is the Proletarian of Fuel* (1972) by Miklós Erdély; *Body traces*

(1972) by Gyula Gulyás; *Conscience Examiner* (1972) by István Haraszty; *Handshake action* organized by László Beke with Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak participating artists, reflecting on the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia; the performance, exhibition and screening of György Szemadám's *A Tentative of Identification* (1973); *Be Prohibited!* (1973) by Tamás Szentjóby and *János Major's Coat* (1973) by Miklós Erdély, György Jovánovics and János Majos.
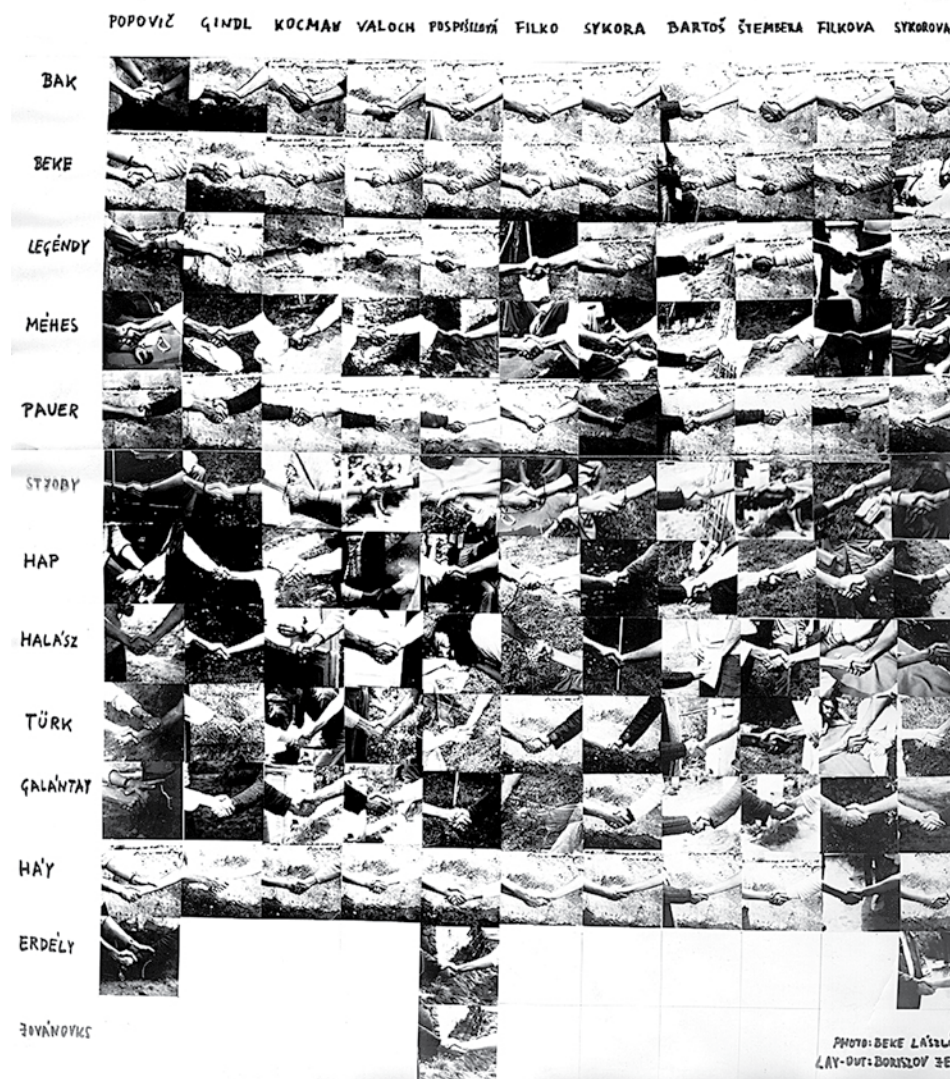
Tableau of László Beke's *Handshaking Action*
Photo: László Beke, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

Slovak, Yugoslav artists and ethnic Hungarian artists from the Vojvodina region).[13] Group exhibitions were dominant, in fact, there were hardly any solo shows in the chapel. Besides artists, György Galántai also invited other alternative groups of the period, including the theatre companies of Péter Halász, László Najmányi, and János Szikora. The summer of 1973 finds numerous figures of the intellectual and political opposition in Balatonboglár as well. Art forms still relatively unknown in Hungary and primarily inspired by international art developments formed the backbone of the program (especially in the works of Miklós Erdély, Tamás Szentjóby, Gyula Pauer, Tibor Hajas, and János Major).

At the same time, these events provoked mistrust and even hostility in both the locals and the authorities. Although the regulations in force stipulated that no exhibition could be held without an official permit, Galántai's rental contract stated that he could give space to atelier exhibitions in the chapel he otherwise used as a studio. So the avantgardist exhibitions were technically legal as atelier exhibitions. Still, there were attempts to undermine the chapel exhibitions through various unfounded accusations: the authorities started malevolent intrigues and hostile articles appeared in the national and county press, relying on the period's broad consensus of petty bourgeois aversion to modern art. In this hostile campaign against art, the political system documented its own limits and eventually closed down the chapel exhibitions through administrative measures. The closure of

13
Jiří Valoch, Rudolf Sikora, Vladimir Popović, Petr Štembera (Czechoslovakia); Bosch+Bosch group, Katalin Ladik, Eva Marta Ujhazy, Predrag Šidjanin, Bálint Szombathy (Yugoslavia)

the chapel by the police can be interpreted as part of a more general repression in 1973, one that stifled the efforts at liberalization initiated in the sixties. It is a testament to the vitality and intellectual power of the Hungarian avantgarde in the seventies that the artistic program of the chapel worked for as long as four years despite these circumstances. The free space of the chapel attracted the most promising independent young artists, including a good number of the most consequential figures of Hungarian art in the 60s and 70s.

-Translated into English by Katalin Orbán

A meeting of Czech, Slovak and Hungarian artists organized by László Beke
(a reflection on the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia)

László Beke: *Tug-of-war*
Participants: Imre Bak, Peter Bartos, László Beke, Miklós Erdély, Stano Filko,
György Galántai, Péter Halász, Béla Hap, Ágnes Háy, Tamás Hencze,
György Jovánovics, J. H. Kocman, Péter Legéndy, János Major, László Méhes,
Gyula Pauer, Vladimir Popović, Petr Štembera, Rudolf Sikora, Tamás Szentjóby,
Anna Szeredi, Endre Tót, Péter Türk, Jiří Valoch
26–27 August 1972
Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár
Photo: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center

MIGUEL A. LÓPEZ

Discarded Knowledge. Peripheral Bodies and Clandestine Signals in the 1980s War in Peru [1]

One of the most significant events in Peru's recent history was the image war that accompanied the most difficult years of the armed conflict between clandestine communist guerrillas and the Peruvian State (1980-2000). [2] Camouflaged within newspaper covers, public advertisements, street paintings and flickering on the media, this image war has been one of the most salient and tragic chapters of visual history in Peru. It represented an episode in which images intervened and played a prominent part not only in the more evident struggles for political power, but also in the intersubjective realm of social activity and in the shared production of meaning. In this theatre of operations that lasted for almost twenty years, thousands of images accompanied and counter parted the fierce armed struggle. Illegal repression was employed by both sides in a continuous exchange between 'action' and 'reaction', where subversive guerrilla actions and State terrorism shared strategies, leaving nearly 70,000 people killed. [3]

In those circumstances, the production and deployment of signs was one of the most dynamic spheres of war. Just as the 'revolutionary' representations of the subversive groups tried to produce an attractive political identity, many other cultural phenomena of the era managed to seep into the public realm questioning the pre-existing mystifying constructions and rhetorical sketches, aiming to intervene in those spaces where ideology attempts to control meaning and body. Due to the dominant military analysis of the war, but also because of its peripheral condition within traditional art history, the study of some of these critical aesthetic practices and phenomena remained largely relegated to a secondary role in the analyses of this conflict. [4]

It is revealing that the first public gesture of the Peruvian Communist Party *Shining Path* (PCP-SL), in the beginning of the armed conflict in May 1980, was the burning of eleven ballot boxes in the town of Chuschi in the province of Ayacucho. Soon after, on December 26th, 1980, PCP-SL returned to make its appearance through a stunning demonstration: hanging more than a dozen dead dogs from the light posts in the Center of Lima, with signs that read, "Teng Hsiao Ping, son of a bitch". [5] The heightened level of 'scenography' within the actions of PCP-SL, in addition to a dimension of reiterated ritual, entered into daily life as a new form of communication that attempted to both captivate and intimidate at the same time. The party engaged in a grammar of horror that some cultural critics denominated as "terrifying visual performances". [6]

[2]
The armed conflict in Peru started in 1980. It lasted until 2000, the year of the fall of the right-wing dictator Alberto Fujimori and his criminal and corrupt government. The principal actors in the war were the self-proclaimed: Peruvian Communist Party – Shining Path (Partido Comunista del Perú – Sendero Luminoso or PCP-SL), the 'Guevarist' guerrilla group: Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru or MRTA), and the government of Peru. All of the armed actors in the war committed systematic human rights atrocities and killed civilians, making the conflict bloodier than any other war in Peruvian history since the European colonization of the country.

[3]
The precise estimate of the Final Report of the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (Truth and Reconciliation Commission or CVR) is that 69,280 people were killed, with a margin of error of 5%. See: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final*, Annex 3 "¿Cuántos peruanos murieron? Estimación del número total de víctimas fatales del conflicto armado interno entre 1980 y 2000", Lima, CVR, 2003

[4]
It was the art historian Gustavo Buntinx who has dedicated the most pages to the images produced during the Peruvian armed conflict. See the bibliography cited in this text.

[5]
The dogs were a reference to Teng Hsiao Ping, initiator of the reforms in China shortly before the death of Mao (in 1976) and whom the members of PCP-SL branded as a 'revisionist.' For the Peruvian Maoist group - orthodox communists instructed in Stalinism - what was in play was the future of communism, viewed as betrayed by Nikita Khrushchev (in the Soviet Union) and by Teng Hsiao Ping (in China). With the war in Peru, PCP-SL hoped to mobilize a strategic counteroffensive and to lead a new global communist revolution. About Maoist group PCP-SL, see: Carlos Iván Degregori, "How Difficult it is to be God. Ideology and Political Violence in Sendero Luminoso", *Critique of Anthropology* 11, London, 1991, pp. 233-250

[6]
Juan Carlos Ubilluz and Víctor Vich, "Juicio Sumario de Ángel Valdez", in: Juan Carlos Ubilluz, Alexandra Hibbett y Víctor Vich, *Contra el sueño de los justos: la literatura peruana ante la violencia política*, Lima: IEP, 2009, p. 263

Whether or not we are referring to the images related to a subversive struggle, those connected with the official discourses, or to the multiple critical responses coming from civil society, the sphere of image production becomes the primary space for the circulation of all of the greatest promises (and disasters) of the era. The struggle for symbolic power evokes offenses and responses in which images and words assume the difficult role of *thinking* that, which until then lacked a name.

WAR AND REPRESENTATION

The 'people's war' declared by PCP-SL against the Peruvian State in 1980 coincided with the return of formal 'democracy' in the country, after more than ten years of a reformist military dictatorship (1968-1980). The announcement of elections for a Constituent Assembly in 1978, and shortly after for the democratic presidential elections in 1980, divided the Socialist field, altering the emotional and political geography of the old and new organizations of the Left, many of which had upheld the 'armed revolution' during the 1970s.[7] From the perspective of some orthodox sectors, this first 'formal' involvement of the Left in the participatory democracy was seen as a bourgeois resignation or as electoral

[7]
The 1978 election marks the electoral birth of a Left that until then had been operating on the margins of the system. The Left as a whole obtained 30% of all valid votes, even when divided into four lists: the Worker Peasant Student and Popular Front (Frente Obrero Campesino Estudiantil y Popular or FOCEP), the Popular Democratic Unity (Unidad Democrático Popular or UDP), the Peruvian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Peruano or PCP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Revolucionario or PSR). For the 1980 elections two electoral alliances were formed, although soon dissolved: a 'radical' sector represented by the Leftist Revolutionary Alliance (Alianza Revolucionaria de Izquierda or ARI), and a 'moderate' sector of Unity of the Left (Unidad de Izquierda or UI). In those years certain groups still defended their electoral participation under the "Leninist maxim of utilizing elections and parliaments as platforms for agitation and propaganda, only to end up trapped within the very system they had hoped to transform (or even to destroy)". See: Iván Hinojosa, "On Poor Relations and the Nouveau Riche: Shining Path and the Radical Peruvian Left", in: Steve Stern (ed.), *Shining and Other Paths. War and Society in Peru*, 1980-1995, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 71

opportunism; nonetheless, the unexpected winning of a significant percentage of votes obliged them to transform and moderate their political agendas. This transition intensified with subsequent, increasingly bloody, clandestine actions of PCP-SL, which instilled a general uncertainty and finally fatally wounded the symbolic legitimacy of the Socialist discourse. The consequences would include a growing distance between the elected Left and its bases, and a gradual disassociation and internal fragmentation that would lead to the political decline of Leftist thinking from the mid-1980s onward.
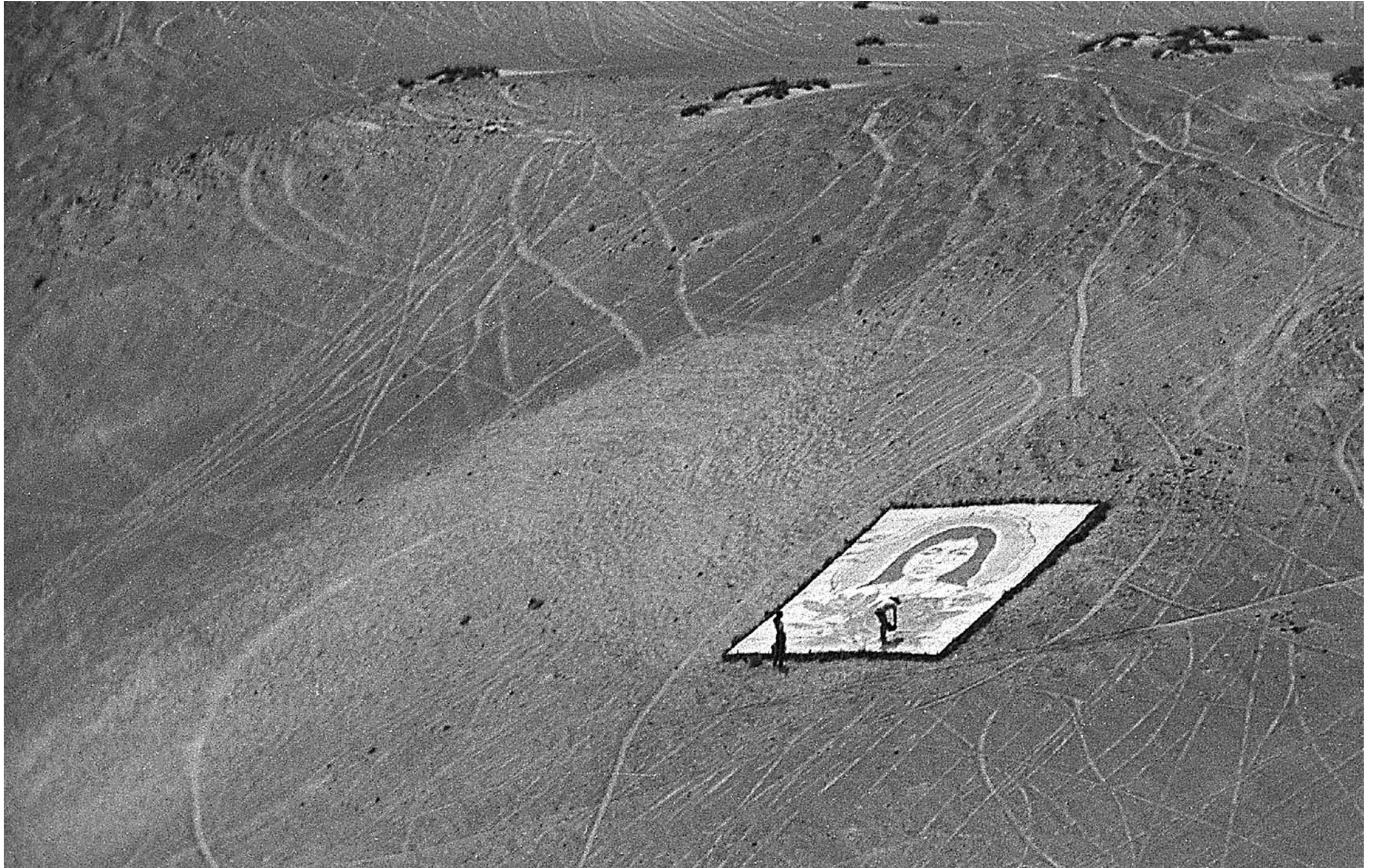

Sergio Zevallos, *A few attempts about the Immaculate Conception*, 1986
Courtesy: Sergio Zevallos Archive

Nonetheless, even at the end of the previous decade it seemed possible to speak with optimism of the socialist unity

surrounding, in different ways, cultural critics, artists and art collectives. This optimism is evident in the experience of the group E.P.S. Huayco (1980-1981), an artists' collective that joined the cosmopolitan New Peruvian Left to create new spaces for the integration of visual art and the popular aesthetics of peasants, migrants and mestizos [8] that had transformed the face of the city since 1960s. [9] But this quest for an *alternative modernity* performed by the group that arose from the encounter of Leftist radical thinking and militant aesthetics, was soon pulled down in the coming years of unleashed civil war, marking the symbolic end of that 'socialist utopia' born at the end of the 70s with the fall of the military regime. [10] Just one year after the dissolution of the group E.P.S. Huayco, the places and grammars of artistic radicalism will change irreversibly.

Among these drastic transformations in the beginning of the 1980s, one of the least understood (due mostly to its ambivalence and rage) is the one generated in Lima from at least 1982/1983 onwards, through the intersections of rock and punk music, experimental architecture, anarchist movements, visual arts, poetry, and independent theatre. These practices were taking the form of displaced collective experiences within semi-clandestine spaces in the city and 'official' spaces of the middle class. They formed an unprecedented cultural phenomenon and though they were not ideologically united, they were interrelated by the crudity and the poverty of their forms and by their total negation of official values.

Bestiarios, *Des-hechos en Arquitectura*, 1984
Ephemeral constructions in the Ricardo Palma University
Photo: Álex Ángeles
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

'Youth' and 'violence' started emerging as the keywords of a new cultural moment, experiences of which would become one of the most piercing testimonies of the indignation, anger, and the shared frustration in the face of the ethical and social breakdown of the entire country. A prominent characteristic of these new radical associations was the refusal to be silent in the face of torture and disappearances of people in the interior of the country that inaugurated the

8
Mestizo is a term traditionally used in Latin America and Spain for people of mixed European and Native American heritage or descent. The term originated as a racial category in the Casta system that was in use during the Spanish empire's control of their American colonies; it was used to describe those who had one European-born parent and one who was member of an indigenous American population.

9
One of the culminating experiences of *E.P.S.* Huayco is their intervention in a hill on the 54½ kilometer of the Panamericana highway, on the outskirts of Lima, where they installed a great carpet of empty cans over which they painted a portrait of the unofficial saint 'Sarita

Colonia'. The work reappropriates and subverts the codes of cosmopolitan 'pop art' to offer a space of social communication, but also a religious place of worship to Sarita Colonia, a venerated icon for the large Andean and migrant communities of the country. Sarita Colonia is also recognized as a patron of prostitutes, homosexual, transvestites and thieves. See: Gustavo Buntinx (ed.), E.P.S. *Huayco–Documentos*, Lima: CCE, MALI, IFEA, 2005

10
For more on the artistic breakdowns at the heart of what the art historian Gustavo Buntinx calls the "Socialist utopia," see: Gustavo Buntinx, "La utopía perdida: Imágenes de la revolución bajo el segundo belaundismo", *Márgenes* 1, Lima: Casa Sur, March 1987, pp. 52-98

Helmut Psotta, Sergio Zevallos, Raul Avellaneda, among others,
Untitled action [The procession], 1982
Action of carrying an ephemeral 'totem' made on garbage by Sergio Zevallos
Photo: César Guerra

'dirty war' and the politics of annihilation that the Peruvian State implemented against many sectors of the civil population. [11] In this context, much of the new independent scene opted to enter into a confrontation with authoritarianism, in some cases intervening in those proximate urban places where the governmental discourses and the symbolic proclamations of the communist groups took place (the universities, the media, the streets and the public walls). These actions and artistic practices that critically appropriated ideological signs, press announces and political declarations, embodied a *mise en scène* of power and its rhetoric in a context where *destruction* was not only a creative possibility but also an imminent social reality.

However, it is not the intention of this paper to propose a look at the entire period, but rather to address two specific cases. I refer to the experiences of the Grupo Chaclacayo (1983-1994) and to the N.N. group (1988-1991), which responded to and symbolized the most extreme violence of the conflict. There are in these two collectives, however, other (tragic) common features that are also symptomatic of this period. The first: the members of both collectives were, in different moments, irresponsibly linked with PCP-SL and Maoist guerrillas by critics and journalists, and as a result of this, persecuted or harassed, while one of the members was kidnapped by the State and incarcerated for a few years. [12] The second: a considerable num-

11
On the 30th of December 1982 the government of Peru delegated broad power for the counter-subversive fight to the Armed Forces in order to take control of the zones declared to be in a 'state of emergency' in the central Andes. The political authorities did not activate the protection mechanisms for human rights. The abuse was, in part, inherent in the strategy of the military government.

12
In Peru of those years, an accusation of this type signified immediate detention and in many other cases led to kidnapping and even death. The accusation of "apology" to PCP-SL in allusion to the work of Grupo Chaclacayo was spread in an art critique in a local magazine, after an exposition that the group presented in Germany in 1989. See: Luis E. Lama, "Perversión y complacencia", *Caretas* no.1084, Lima, 20 November 1989, pp. 74-76. This reckless accusation has been repeated more recently; see: Luis E. Lama, "Agtistucho 1", *Caretas* no.1739, Lima, 19 September 2002, p. 82

ber of their documentation and images (archives, works, and documents) would remain lost for a long time, whether this was because they were deliberately eliminated by third parties, moved out of the country or destroyed by the members themselves in moments in which the threats and persecution have put the lives of many people at risk. [13] Thirdly: they still exist as *rumors* or myths, resonating perhaps as symptoms of a non-articulated collective trauma.

Música Subterránea [Underground Music] (cover and back cover), 1985
Photocopy, 21.9 x 27 cm.
Fanzine distributed in rock and punk concerts in Lima
Courtesy: Herbert Rodriguez

ICONOGRAPHIES OF THE CRISIS

To understand the context in which Grupo Chaclacayo and the N.N. group began their activities requires digging into the field of the anxieties and schizophrenias of political identities in the first years of the 1980s. This was a time of incisive effervescence, initially defined by an amalgamation of rock and poetry. The most explosive cultural moments of this period coincided with the killings and assassinations in the central Andes by the army forces and the communist guerrilla groups that shook and paralyzed the entire country in 1983 an 1984. [14]

The names of the rock groups as suggestive as *Leuzemia* (a changed spelling of Leukemia), *Narcosis, Zcuela Cerrada* (a changed spelling of 'Closed School'), *Guerrilla Urbana* (Urban Guerilla) and *Autopsia* (Autopsy) testify the emotional transition towards a furious anarchist punk proclamation that reframes the concept of 'revolution': a sign of the visceral negotiation that this defiant sector of Limenian youth tried to establish between intimate rebellion and a wounded and fractured social structure. This breaking moment on the music scene is similar to that which, in poetry, has as its major proponent in the ephemeral 'commune' founded by Movimiento Kloaka (1982-1984), which assumes its violent literary production as a space of social struggle against what is seen as an out-

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13
In 1994 one of the members of Taller NN, Alfredo Márquez, is kidnapped, incarcerated and accused of having links with PCP-SL, and is finally liberated and absolved in 1997 thanks to the work of the *Comisión*

Ad-Hoc de Indultos for people unjustly accused of terrorism, directed by Father Hubert Lanssiers. A significant number of their graphic pieces were lost in that process. Some other members of the collective then opted to make their materials 'disappear' under persecution.

14
In 1983 a succession of deaths stirs a preoccupation and public discussion about the violence on a national scale; the 'slaughter of Uchuraccay' in which eight journalists are assassinated by forty members of a community with military training, who confuse the journalists with members of PCP-SL; the 'slaughter of Lucanamarca' where PCP-SL assassinates 69 peasants in the province of

Ayacucho; the 'killing of Socos' where 32 peasants were assassinated by members of the ex-Civil Guard and then secretly buried, among various others. The Final Report of the CVR indicates that 1983 and 1984 were the most ferocious years of the entire conflict (1980-2000), coming to a loss of life totaling a third of the victims of the entire period of violence. See: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final*, 2003, vol. 1, chapter 3, p.133

dated 'political system.' [15] Soon, independent album covers, song lyrics, and aggressive poetry mixed with liberating attitudes emerging from the margins of society, identifying themselves with the thousands of massacred bodies in the thousands of images of death that shaped the common sentiment of a country at war.

Herbert Rodríguez, *Untitled*,
from the series GENOCIDIO PERÚ [Peru Genocide], ca. 1984/1985
Collage and photocopy
Courtesy: Herbert Rodríguez

The rebellious attitudes of these groups (shocking sarcasm, sexual disobedience, belligerent statements and junk aesthetics) forced some friction with political factions and traditional Socialist parties, including the spokespeople and critics of a new cultural Left who saw in its erratic and scan-

dalous youth movements the signs of social disintegration against the yearned-for socialist union. [16] In this way, too, they generated some discomfort and clashes within the Maoist and orthodox Marxist discourses. These new subcultural groupings were demanding individual freedom, do-it-yourself ethics, direct action and anti-establishment views as necessary alternatives to the unsatisfactory governmental solutions for social crisis and they encouraged themselves to inhabit some peripheral zones with pleasure: the hyper-stimulation with drugs and alcohol, the sexual liberty and a new creative violence. More importantly, it enabled a distinct form of identification and collective communication through their degraded and socially marginalized bodies: the body being perceived as the *escoria* or scum, dirty and residual entity that has no place in the demands of the 'constructive' elements of the traditional Left.[17] In various ways, the radical experiences of the Grupo Chaclacayo and of the N.N. group reflected the hostility and the ideas of total subversion that wafted through a cracked country. Their radical experimentation stands as a testimony of the negated social antagonisms, repressions, and structural violence that induced armed war.

15
In February of 1983, the Kloaka movement takes a position of denouncing the rash strategy of the government after the slaughter of Uchuraccay. For more on the radical itineraries of poetry in the 1980s, see: José Antonio Mazzotti, *Poéticas del Flujo. Migración y violencia verbales en el Perú de los 80*, Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2002

16
See, for example, the irritated commentary of the art critic Gustavo Buntinx after a public poetry reading of the Kloaka group, in which they presented some self-destructive poetry 'performances' and an insolent concert as a direct provocation of the traditional literary rites. Buntinx reproaches them for, among other things, their inability to relate with other necessities that are not personal. See: [Gustavo Buntinx] Sebastián Gris, "Pelea de blancos", *La República*, Lima, 21 de mayo de 1983, p. 9

17
Chilean sociologist Fernanda Carvajal analyzes from the same perspective the shift between the Chilean artistic 'vanguard' of the 1970s and the disruption of the punk, *queer*, loud and skeptical, of the new collectives like the Pinochet Boys and the *Ángeles Negros* in the 1980s. See: Fernanda Carvajal, "Los Ángeles Negros. Farsa y subcultura en el arte chileno de los últimos años 80", in: Miguel López and Ana Longoni (eds.), *Tercer Texto 2*. "Irrupciones desde el Sur. Formas de antagonismo artístico/político en América Latina entre los 60 y los 80", 2011. Online version: *www.tercertexto.org*

Atrofia Cerebral [Cerebral Atrophy], *Matanza Extrema* [Extreme Killing] (demo back cover), Photocopy, 1989
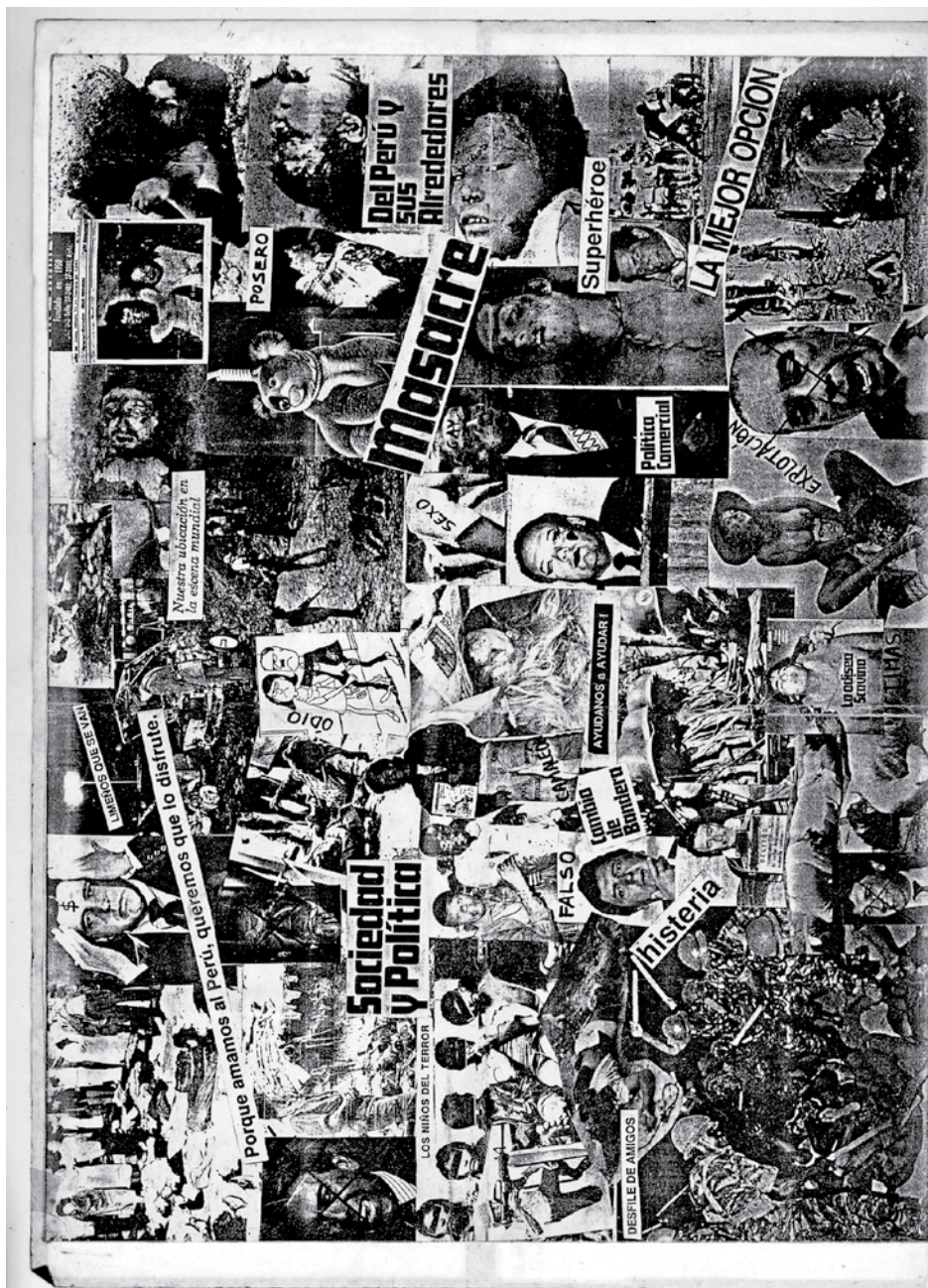
Courtesy: Miguel Tipacti

THE SURVIVING BODY

The work of Grupo Chaclacayo has been, from its beginnings, the overwhelming effect of anxiety: an accumulation of images and actions whose sinister background signals the impossibility of imagining the immediate future. Their distinct projects propose a re-elaboration of the surplus materials of urban modernity (the detritus of a city), combined with a fascination for representing the ways in which the colonial legacy and Christian religion, like the authoritarian ghosts of ideology, incarnate the crimes and torture perpetuated during the armed conflict of Peru in the 1980s. The creative stimuli of the group would come from the exploration into their personal memories marked by racism and discrimination, but also from the affirmation of a very insolent, profane and sexual iconography non-existing in that way within the local context.

The group was formed from the meeting of the German artist Helmut Psotta and the Peruvian students Sergio Zevallos and Raúl Avellaneda. Psotta, who had travelled to Lima as a visiting professor at the *Escuela de Artes de la Universidad Católica* (School of Arts at the Catholic University) in 1982, began to organize workshops that explicitly dealt with the first images of the tortures and the massacres of the armed conflict. Psotta would be fired from the University for these activities after one semester of teaching, after which Zevallos and Avellaneda would also opt to leave the University. [18] The three moved to a rented house at the

[18]
Psotta organizes workshops with students from different specialties and also generates a call to create a multimedia project about torture in Peru, using images and registers of the first killings in the provinces of Peru that the National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH) obtained. (Conversations with Raul Avellaneda and Helmut Psotta, Galhen / Berlín, 2009-2011)

margins of the city of Lima, in the district of Chaclacayo, where they began a long process of collective creative practice under the leadership of Psotta, generating work in which violence and pleasure exchange their roles and meanings. The self-exile of the group represented a withdrawal from the official art realm but also an escape from its social environment, an attempt to generate conditions to open states of extreme freedom in the face of normative structures.

In their radicalism, these experiments delineate sensitive maps of the restrictive society, those marked by the unexplored desires that are acts not only of purification and liberation, but also of healing. Here, the body is declared to have an unprecedented power for the interference and apprehension of the world. Their actions utilize a sarcastic theatricality that employs symbols associated with fanaticism, religion, and ideology, in which Christian crosses become Nazi swastikas and the Pope's mitres are replaced with the capes of the Ku Klux Klan, as lost relatives of the same totalitarian genealogy. It is in these precarious stagings that the body assumes its most ambivalent and perturbing dimension.

In *La agonía de un mito maligno* (*The agony of a malignant myth)*, 1984, directed by Psotta, some half-buried corpses surrounded with candles, a precarious tent and an escort of nude people with robes and *capirotes* (tall, pointed hoods worn in Holy Week processions) serves as the scenography for an obscure sacrifice ritual or a silent wake in front of the Pacific Ocean. The dead bodies remained still in the sand while the fake celebrants and priests walked around and worshiped them. The furtive and intimidating ceremony evokes the terrifying identities of some extreme reactionary religious currents, but also the latent signs of terrorist's organizations. In the ending act, in the

shore, covered with black flags and crosses, occurs the sudden appearance of the body (in drag) of Santa Rosa of Lima, who is in her death throes and falls, knocked down. The figure of Santa Rosa (1586-1617), the first Saint of America (fervently venerated, even during her lifetime, for her overwhelming spiritual devotion and her painful self-inflicted corporeal punishment), is revealed by Grupo Chaclacayo as an ambiguous symbol that catalyzes the sordidness of the governmental politics of extermination masked in religious devotion, which permits them to appear "clean-faced" after committing the most criminal atrocities.[19] In their performances, the 'malignant myth' appears as a metaphor for this repressive dimension linked with the legacy of 500 years of European colonialism and its rhetoric of development. The group creates an allegory of these through examining the extreme mysticism surrounding Santa Rosa, whose beatification in 1668 was also a strategic gesture by the Church to consolidate its hierarchy and to proclaim the success of the processes of evangelization in the Americas. "That which used to happen through the Church now happens through the banks and the politicians," signaled Psotta, alluding to the hidden alliances between Christianity and the politics of exploitation and violence that maintain a moral and economic order in which the sacred is always fetish or commodity.[20]

19

Sergio Zevallos referred to it in this way, see: Dorothee Hackenberg, "Dieser Brutälitat der Sanftheit. Interview mit Helmut J. Psotta, Raul Avellaneda, Sergio Zevallos von der Grupo Chaclacayo über 'Todesbilder'", *TAZ*, Berlin, 26 January 1990, p. 23. I want to thank Sharon Lerner for the translation of some of these German articles.

20

Dorothee Hackenberg, *Op*. cit., p. 22. In a 1921 text, Walter Benjamin observes capitalism as a 'religious phenomenon' whose development was decisively strengthened by Christianity: "Capitalism is purely cultic religion, without dogma. Capitalism itself developed parasitically on Christianity in the West – not in Calvinism alone, but also, as must be shown, in the remaining orthodox Christian movements – in such a way that, in the end, its history is essentially the history of its parasites, of capitalism. Walter Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion" (trans. Chad Kautzer), in: Eduardo Mendieta (ed.), The Frankfurt School on Religion: *Key Writings by the Major Thinkers*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 260

Historic and aesthetic transfigurations of the violence are also reflected in a series of kitsch photographs such as *Rosa Cordis* (1986) by Sergio Zevallos. Here, a character in drag with a black tunic and a crown of roses (an allusion to Santa Rosa) applies make-up, then masturbates at the side of a dead body in a cubicle dyed red and covered with advertisement clippings; an instant later, Santa Rosa changes into a tortuous hooded being that sexually penetrates the cadaver. [21] Seduction, alterity, and simulacra are the manifestations of the symbolic flip side of the most lascivious rites of power. Some of these performances were a symbolic response to governmental actions such as the decoration of the prestigious distinction of the 'Order of the Sun' to Santa Rosa for the 400th anniversary of her birth, just a few weeks before the vicious 'slaughter of the prisons'[22] and few months after the extrajudicial executions in the Lurigancho jail. This public ceremony, lead by governmental authorities, was a liturgy that the Grupo Chaclacayo interprets as a fetishistic pretext of the political and military caste that disguises their participation in the war at all costs. [23]

These vanities and arrogances of the authoritarian discourse are also dramatized through parodic, more 'documentary' works, such as *Retrato de un general peruano* (Portrait of a Peruvian General, 1987*)* of Raul Avellaneda,

composed of various drawings, documents, and photographs that establish a false admiration for a soldier who lived nearby (and who declares himself a follower of the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet). Or even through impulsive actions for the camera that continuously denounces the per-

Sergio Zevallos, from the series *Rosa Cordis* [Rose of My Heart], 1986
Fine art prints on Hahnemühle paper, 50 x 73 cm
Courtesy: Sergio Zevallos

verse complicity between the local conservative bishops and the military forces that committed tortures and clandestine murders against Andean communities. Grupo Chaclacayo staged some of these in the context of the celebrated first visit of Pope John Paul II to different cities and provinces in Peru in 1985 (such as Lima, Arequipa or even Ayacucho, a city terribly devastated by the war). The visit of the Pope was a very important media phenomenon staged by the group

21
For these images the poet Frido Martin (Marco Antonio Young) performed as *queer* Santa Rosa. Martin was one of the driving forces of the radical poetry experiences in early 80s, appearing with Durazno Sangrando band (Fernando Bryce and Rodrigo Quijano) and with Kloaka group in several public poetry readings.

22
The 'slaughter of the prisons' refers to the political repression and military event on the 18th and 19th of June,

1986, following a riot by prisoners accused of terrorism in various penitentiaries in Lima. The riot was created with the intent of capturing international media attention immediately before the XVII Congreso de la Internacional Socialista (18th Congress of the International Socialist) (Lima, June 20-23, 1986), which was organized for the first time in Latin America. This slaughter was the greatest mass murder of the decade.

23
Dorohee Hackenberg, "Heiliger Folter-Rosa!", *TAZ*, Berlin, January 26, 1990, p. 23

through some photographs – never exhibited – in which a fake Holy Father, half covered in white robes, lustfully ran his hands, dyed red, all over what looks like a dead male body. [24]

The Grupo Chaclacayo would have just one exposition in Lima titled *Perú, un sueño* (Peru, a dream), in the Lima Museum of Art in 1984, which precipitated a predictable polemic — the show would even be partially censured by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Peru on its opening, which covered some of the works with black fabric, later uncovered by the public. The later work of this exhibition reintroduced with greater intensity the destruction of the body, the exploration of social and sexual margins through role-playing: an androgynous body incarnates all of the antagonistic identities: *the soldier, the martyr, the colonizer, the peasant, the priest, the Saint in drag, and the tortured body.* [25] These were stagings inspired by the official discourse and its stable identities, but were also attempts to explore the multiple subjectivities in conflict, which crumbled and recomposed with each moment. With their actions and fictitious but strongly transgressive symbols, Grupo Chaclacayo gave

24
The discourse of John Paul II in Ayacucho in February in 1985 was delivered in the airport city, right next to Los Cabitos headquarters where a large number of peasants were brutalized and punished under the suspect of being 'terrorist'. The inhabitants denounced these criminalities since 1983, but they were ignored by the conservative archbishop Federico Richter Prada and by other local religious authorities that collaborated in the preparation of the papal discourse. The Final Report of Commission of Truth and Reconciliation confirmed in 2003 that at least one hundred people were killed and illegally buried in Los Cabitos in those years. John Paul's II speeches at that time also pointed against Latin American Liberation Theology movements, one of its founders was Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez. Liberation theology proposes a critique of society and the Catholic faith and hierarchy through the eyes of the oppressed people and

the poor. Detractors described it as Christianized Marxism. About Liberation Theology see: Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988

25
One of their last photographic series in Lima, never exhibited, *El Descubrimiento de América* (The Discovery of America, 1986/1987) was conceived by Psotta. In it, two people embody all these identities: the 'colonizer' represented by a lavish cross-dressed man who plays and seduces the 'oppressed', who appears covered with different layers of 'clothes' that the colonist removes slowly in a sort of a erotic rite. These layers allegorize the ideological and historical clashes at that time: a black plastic bag (used to transport corpses), an Andean poncho, a military costume, and red underwear. The action ended with a kiss between them and the subsequent domination and killing of the subordinate one.

evidence to the violent *excesses* unrecognized by the State, completely re-signifying the space of their agents: where the subaltern body is not only an object of violence and illegal torture, but also a subject that produces testimony: a surviving body.

Grupo Chaclacayo, *Todesbilder – Peru oder Das Ende des europäischen Traums,* 1990
Installation view with works by Sergio Zevallos and Helmut Psotta
Galerie am Weidendamm, Berlin
Photography: Grupo Chaclacayo (Raul Avellaneda)
Courtesy: Sergio Zevallos Archive

From this exhibition in 1984 until their departure from Peru in January of 1989, the group would have no more public shows in Lima. Their work was concentrated in the same marginal house that, on more than one occasion, was inspected by the police and military that confused the group's iconography with veiled allusions to PCP-SL or to a pagan cult. After arriving in Germany a few months before the fall of the

Berlin Wall, Grupo Chaclacayo organized an exhibition synthesizing their work in Peru, entitled *Todesbilder. Peru oder Das Ende des europäischen Traums* (Images of Death. Peru or the End of the European Dream). The show toured from 1989-1990 at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) in Stuttgart, the Museum Bochum, the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, and at the Küntlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, among others. In addition, the group presented a series of live performances in Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, connecting the crisis and the fall of communism in Europe, the Maoist guerrillas in Peru and the inverted inherences of colonialism, through a sadomasochistic and ritual lexicon that opened a new path for their work, which would deserve a separate analysis. [26] This last part of their project – still totally unknown in Peru – catalyzes one of the most extreme reflections about the movements of ideology and repercussions of violence on collective body. In this sense, their work knits a complex weave from the experiences framed by horrors and brutalities of diverse origin – superimposing political, economical and social consequences of the Second World War and Cold War on the conflicts that in recent decades resulted in repression, forced disappearances and death in different countries of Latin America. [27]

The group's departure from Lima in January of 1989 would also be, in their way, a funerary rite: all of the works produced in those six years of work were packed and shipped by plane to the Federal Republic of Germany — with the support of the German embassy — and, those materials that could not be transported were burned in a bonfire by their house. These ashes were also taken with them in a small container.
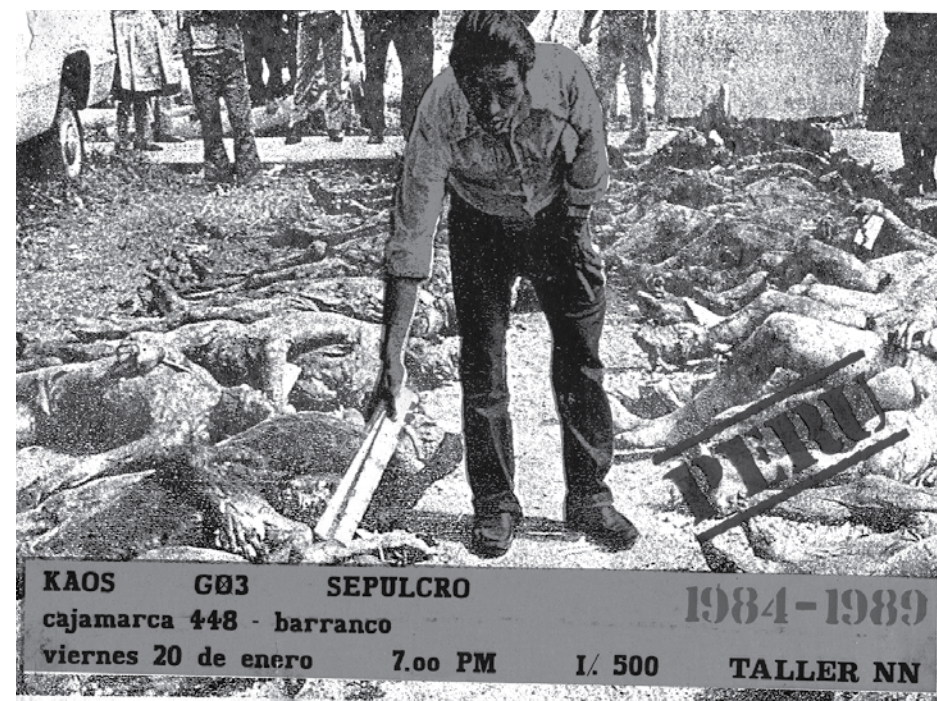
NN, Concert flyer *PERÚ 1984 - 1989*, 1989
Silkscreen on print, 29.7 x 21 cm
Concert organized by Kaos rock band and NN
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

26
See: Grupo Chaclacayo, *Todesbilder. Peru oder Das Ende des europäischen Traums*, West Berlin, Alexander Verlag, 1989. The Grupo Chaclacayo continued working as a collective until 1995 when they decided to separate, presenting in those years in theatre festivals and art spaces. Their last presentation as a group was at *Fest III* (September 29 — October 3, 1994) in Dresden, with participation of Yugoslav/Slovenian band Laibach, the dance-theater company Betontanc, the filmmaker Lutz Dammbeck, the artist and theoretician Peter Weibel, among others.

27
Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona, "Proyecto Grupo Chaclacayo entre Perú y Alemania (1983-1995)", Lima, August 2010, exhibition project, unpublished text

NN, *Mito Muerto José Carlos Mariátegui,*
from the project *NN-PERÚ (Carpeta Negra)* [Black File], 1988
Silkscreen on photocopy, 29 x 42 cm
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

IDENTITIES OF THE REVOLUTION

The work of the NN group (1988-1991) is one of the most intense experiences of the process of theoretical and aesthetic radicalization of the independent scene of the 80s. Their work is inseparable from an earlier group dynamic: that of the collective Bestiarios (1984-1987), a group of architecture students that renewed the modes of political participation through ephemeral constructions and encounters

of total art in public spaces. [28] NN grew from the rupture of the Bestiarios group at the end of 1987, which forced four of the former members to rent a small workshop that would become a space to think through the implications of creating architecture and cultural actions in a city dramatically altered by war.

The fundamental nucleus of NN is made up of Enrique Wong (NN detuchino), Alex Ángeles (NN acarajo), José Luis García (NN papalucho) and Alfredo Márquez (NN a-c-falo). The name of the group was an allegory for the thousands of unidentified, murdered bodies that were appearing daily in the shared ditches in the country's provinces. The group's anonymous and almost clandestine work raises the urgency of constructing images that not only document the conflict but also permit one to see differently that which was impeded by rhetoric and the sensationalism of press and media. Even when NN conceives their work as 'architecture,' in their praxis, their production is always an agit-prop texts and graphics that undermines the official discourse, granting critical visual language to recitals and concerts, but also to political events. [29] One of the most important pieces of the group was *NN-PERÚ* (1988): a file of sixteen photocopies altered by silk screening, also known as the *Carpeta Ne-*

28
One of the first experiences of the group *Bestiarios* was their participation in the *Carpa Teatro del Puente Santa Rosa* (Tent Theatre of Saint Rose Bridge), which they constructed with support of Izquierda Unida city government. This 'Tent Theatre' was a space created from waste materials that hosted art workshops, concerts of *música folklórica* and rock, theatre presentations, and cultural activism.

29
The links and help of Herbert Rodríguez (former

member of E.P.S. Huayco) are very important in this first stage. One of the group's first assignments is for the public presentation of the report to the Peruvian Congress of the investigation about the aforementioned 'slaughter of the prisons,' committed in 1986. Rodríguez and José Luis García (NN papalucho) produce a series of texts and stencils on paper (with words such as 'murderous,' 'injustice,' 'consumerism,' among others) that they title *Violencia estructural* or (Structural violence, 1988). For more information about the report see: Rolando Ames, et al., *Informe al Congreso sobre los sucesos de los penales*, Lima, 1988, p. 379

gra (Black File). [30] This graphic piece proposed a *mise en scène* of the ideological imaginary that fed the conflict: representations that freeze in an instant the fictional fabrication (the historical fabrication) of 'national identity,' making visible not only the Leftists dogmas and their symbols, but also the rhetoric of progress and order that appears coldly superimposed over the innumerable fallen bodies.

NN-PERÚ was made up of two visceral manifestos, five prints from the series *Mito-Muerto* or (Myth-Death), six prints from the series *Peru de Exporta-Ación* (Peru for Export), two collages, and a final print that described the origin of all of the images. One of the most stunning visual blocks was *Mito-Muerto*, a series of insolent portraits that illuminated the actions of the various leftist discourses in Peru. This first series included a portrait of Mao Tse Tung, who inspired the actions of PCP-SL; the portraits of José María Arguedas and of José Carlos Mariátegui (founder of the Socialist party in Peru in 1928), both brilliant intellectuals who merge socialism and indigenous concerns, whose thoughts are later used and distorted by subversive fanaticism. *Mito-Muerto* also included the recumbent face of Edith Lagos, the deceased militant and icon of religious veneration within PCP-SL; and the portrait of 'Che' Guevara, ideologue of the Cuban Revolution and leader of the guerrilla forces in the 1960s whose revolutionary strategy is taken up by another Peruvian insurgent movement that bursts into the scene in those years:

the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). [31] Each of these portraits were reproduced over the image of a commercial bar code with a telephone number announced by the local press and media encouraging the people to call and denounce who they believe are suspects of being part of clandestine and subversive actions: a telling metaphor of the proscribed and problematic place of leftist thinking within Peruvian social imaginary.
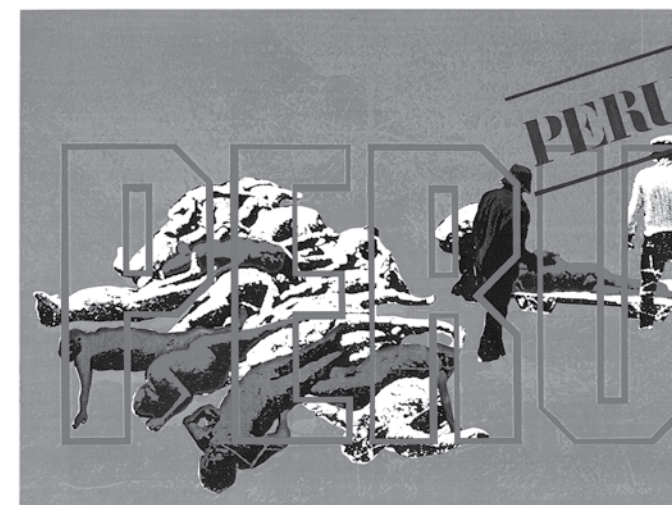
NN, *Pucayacu*, from the series *NN-PERÚ* (Carpeta Negra) [Black File], 1988
Silkscreen on photocopy, 29 x 42 cm
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

The second block, entitled *Peru de Exportación*, exhibited images of violated bodies that, like postcards of horror, interrupt and dis-complete the word Perú over them. The piece addresses the registers taken by the press of the most extreme killings and violence of these years: the evictions of

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30
The authors of this piece are: NN nenadu (Jennifer Gaube); NN papalucho (José Luis García); NN el-lío (Elio Martuccelli; NN depreche (Claudia Cancino); NN negrita (Michelle Beltrán); NN acarajo (Alex Ángeles); NN a-c-falo (Alfredo Márquez); NN detuchino (Enrique Wong); NN kafarlitos (Carlos Abanto); NN pervert (Herbert Rodríguez).

31
The MRTA is a Peruvian subversive organization founded in 1982 that picks up the Latin American guerrilla tradition and principally the experience of 'Che' Guevara. The most active period of their insurgent activity, through kidnappings, attacks, and car bombs, was between 1985 and 1997.

populations of human settlements in Garagay (8 deaths, 104 wounded); the rebellion and political repression in the prison El Sexto (22 deaths); the bodies of peasants, assassinated and clandestinely buried, then found in a mass grave in Pucayacu (50 bodies); among others. These images allegorize the denial of antagonisms in all its forms. But *Carpeta Negra* aimed to be more than a graphic reflection of ruins and promises: it was circulated to political figures, intellectuals, feminists, activists, and opinion makers in an attempt to demand a new critical language for their statements in a moment in which the conventional discourses had little or no effect.

The group also turns their view to the role that artists and intellectuals played in moments of war, rethinking the links between *thought* and *revolutionary action*. NN concentrates on the figure of the well-known Peruvian poet César Vallejo, but focuses specifically on his most politicized horizons, recuperating Vallejo's intention, after his trips to the Soviet Union (1932-1936), to give expression to an aesthetic theory that stresses the links between art and the proletarian revolution on a global level. In this way, as a consequence of an unexpected invitation to the 3rd Biennial of Havana (1989), the group responds with a project that deconstructed the public image of a poet admired for his literary dimensions but unknown for his political aspects. Their project for Cuba reutilizes a photograph in which Vallejo is portrayed with a raised fist in a Congress of Antifascist Writers (1937) in Spain, an image that was until then totally unknown. NN captures the image first in an aborted installation that reproduced the icon in a big placard, and then in an impressive silk screen titled *Vallejo (Destrucción/Construcción)* (Vallejo (Destruction/Construction), 1989), which juxtaposes the mel-

NN (Alfredo Márquez y Enrique Wong),
Vallejo (Construcción/Destrucción) [Vallejo (Construction/Destruction)], 1989
Silkscreen on paper, 76 x 56 cm
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

ancholic and idealized portrait of the poet with his militant and combative image that was emblazoned with the hammer and sickle symbol. The piece embodies a reflection over dialectical oppositions and the possibilities of representations to create new politically charged constellations within the present. New perceptions of history through montage which for the group was the basis to open up new utopian visions of the future.

NN (Alfredo Márquez y Enrique Wong), "Viva el maoísmo" (Long Live Maoism), 1989
Silkscreen on paper, 76 x 56 cm
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez

But the image that best condenses the messianic and mystic outbreak of political fervor at the end of the decade is probably the portrait of Mao Tse Tung with his lips suggestively painted vibrant red, which NN titled with a defiant cutting slogan: *Viva el maoísmo* (Long live Maoism), 1989. This piece, also created in Cuba, again recovers the figure of Mao, but this time reconstructed over the overwhelming repetition of the same photograph: a group of PCP-SL prisoners, who march and sing in front of murals that repeat phrases such

as "Long live Maoism" and "Communist Party of Peru", creating a mirror game that collapses the distance between the revolutionary image of the mystifying Chinese leader and his Peruvian, provincial echoes. The radical ambiguity of the piece is increased by the inclusion (again) of a bar code next to the signature, which repeats this time the numbers used by the Peruvian law to identify the people accused of the offense of 'apology of terrorism'. A bar code that indicates at the same time the introduction of technological processes of consumption in a marginal country such as Peru, but also that reminds us of the condemnation put forward in early 80s by president Fernando Belaunde Terry against Marxism as "imported ideology". [32]

In a very different way than Grupo Chaclacayo, NN group articulates a very sharp consideration about the extreme religious mysticism and political fetishism in Peru, personified in this case in the figure of Mao that was at that time the "most exalted and persecuted icon" as art historian Gustavo Buntinx recognized. The operation of NN was to dismantle and to alter the ideological (and even sexual) identity of the pamphlet emblem, asking for the place of radicality within an image already transformed in a sign of banality and spectacle. [33] However, this silk screen reaches

[32]
A third silk screen printed with gold ink on gold paper, also created by NN in Havana, remained totally lost after Alfredo Márquez's detention in 1994. A unique print, never exhibited, was found in Lima few months ago and it is printed here for the first time. *Untitled* (1989) shows two police officers trying to take down a Sendero Luminoso red flag with the sickle and hammer symbol, in a Peruvian Andean province. All these silk screens were made in the Taller de Serigrafía René Portocarrero.

[33]
"Against the totalitarian risk insinuated by every myth:

critical irony. Against the levity menacing all forms of irony lacking a utopian horizon: the reconstruction of myth. Against the identity principle: radical ambivalence. It is this alterity so naturally interiorized by NN that makes its work unbearable for fanatics of all opposing factions", signaled Gustavo Buntinx in a notable analysis about this piece. Gustavo Buntinx, "The Power and the Illusion: Aura, Lost and Restored in the 'Peruvian Weimar Republic' (1980-1992)", in: Gerardo Mosquera (ed.) *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, London, The Institute of International Visual Arts, 1995, p. 310

even more paradoxical dimensions in the convulsing stage of other revolutions that rapidly modify global geographies: just a few days after the inauguration of the 3rd Biennial of Havana on the 27th of October (the only one organized in a Socialist country), the Berlin Wall falls, and with it falls Cuba's principle ally in the communist internationalist project. Although the news is partially concealed by the press, the reverberations of the collapse are crystallized in the small riots by the discontented youth in Havana who assume this figure of Mao, stamped on papers and on clothing, as one of the signs of opposition in the face of a Pro-Soviet Cuban regimen. [34]

Involuntarily, even unwillingly, the images of NN operate as a radical rescue of the *politicization* of the sign, distancing themselves from spaces of a consensus and stability of meaning and making themselves appear as contradictory objects that break truths. It is an operation that converts received symbols into potential tools for subversion, thanks to their ability not to be identified by all, nor to be functional to power. Tellingly, their repercussions have continued until long after the dissolution of the group in 1991, proving influential even in more recent moments. A handful of the last silk screens manage to furtively re-enter Peru after the experience at the Havana Biennial (with all of the risks implied in traveling with a portrait of Mao in one's luggage), but they are later confiscated when the State kidnaps and incarcerates one of the group's members, Al-

[34] See: Miguel A. López, "Revolución Cultural y Orgía Creativa: el Taller NN (1988-1991). Entrevista con Alfredo Márquez", in: Miguel López and Ana Longoni (eds.), *Tercer Texto 2*. "Irrupciones desde el Sur. Formas de antagonismo artístico/político en América Latina entre los 60 y los 80", 2011. Online version: *www.tercer-texto.org*

fredo Márquez, in 1994, and the same image is later used in one of the trials against Márquez during the years of the Fujimori dictatorship. In this new appearance of the portrait, the official gaze interprets the piece as a clear sign of a terrorist apology, while the defense's allegations claim it as a 'pop art' piece. The movement of this silk screen is one of the various symptoms of the gravity of this continued image war, but it also signals how aesthetic dissent participates (always as a contradiction) in political processes: for NN did not try to make the two coincide, but rather attempted to put their contradictions into play.

WITHOUT PLACE

The experience of Grupo Chaclacayo and that of NN coincided in the necessity to represent the country as a disastrous colonial fantasy, as a project of modernity that was historically incapable of seeing beyond the interests of the established economic and social elite that dominated the Peruvian Republic right from the beginning. The actions and images of both collectives in the 1980s signaled the *remainder* that has been eliminated from social life so that it could maintain its established existence, its structural 'normality.'

The beginning of the 1990s was marked by a gradual decline in clandestine guerrilla action, but also by the rise of the civic-military dictatorship that installed savage neoliberalism, bought all of the press and media, and shattered the fragile national institutions during almost ten years of control. This same dictatorship simultaneously tried to track down any antagonistic and opponent opinions, all Marxist traces, suspecting that these dissident thinkings were complicit with subversive violence. Through a decade, the Fujimori authoritarian

regime organized paramilitary groups that kidnapped and assassinated with impunity, erasing opposition and installing a fear to disagree in corporal memory.

To rethink this history from the perspective of how certain marginal aesthetics tried, despite everything, to unveil the slaughter, represents today a possibility to confront the totalizing reason of the official discourse that attempts to wipe out critical and sensitive memory. The importance of both, Grupo Chaclacayo and NN, does not come solely from their decision to reject official spaces, to generate 'experimental' dynamics in the face of the established artistic realm, or to have been forced to face the repression. Their importance resides in their ability to interpose an irresolute *doubt*, even today, about the means of interpreting the origin and the development of the conflict. These actions and images emerge to disrupt the safety of a language still unable to explain the tragedy to us.

Their experiences are also a loaded gun of utopia: far from any descriptive purposes, they wanted to create situations, events, *to make the future occur*. To return today to these veiled experiences from the past should permit us to recuperate that denied visuality as a possibility for knowledge and vivid intervention. Not with history, but rather against history: to trace a story of the past that can write the future.

Lima, April 2011

-Translated from Spanish by Megan Hanley

NN (Alfredo Márquez y Enrique Wong), *Untitled,* 1989
Silkscreen on paper
Courtesy: Alfredo Márquez Archive

MARA TRAUMANE

Staging Hypothetical Encounters. Missing Links in Regional Art Histories of the Former Soviet Union

This essay is based on an on-going research engaging in the comparative analysis of two artistic collectives active from the mid-1970s until the end of 1980s in two cities of the Soviet Union: Moscow – the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Riga – the capital of Latvia, previously the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The first group, *Collective Actions* [1] (Kollektivnye Deystviya), is a renowned member of the Moscow Conceptualism circle. Their first action, *Appearance*, took place on March 1976 in the Ismailovo park in Moscow. Already in 1977, the actions of the group – still nameless at the time – were exposed to the Western art audience through a small photo in the clipboard-style cover of the *Flash Art* magazine [2] and a short survey of their work. The publishing of Boris Groys' influential article "Moscow Romantic Conceptualism" [3], in a magazine edited by Russian emigration in Paris in 1979, was crucial for the subsequent naming of the group, and its inscription into the canon of Moscow's unofficial art. By the mid-1980s *Collective Actions* received both local recognition and international attention from Slavist scholars, and subsequently from curators and art institutions. Materials on their actions: photo-documentations, descriptions, extensive hermeneutic self-staged

commentary sessions and discussions are collected in a multi-volume publication titled *Poezdki za gorod* (Trips Out of Town). This 'discursive' archive, an important collection of the text-based and text-inspired conceptual art practice, was first published in volumes of 4-5 copy *samizdat* editions, that were reprinted in two books in 1998 and 2009. [4]

The other group that I will discuss here started to gather in Riga at the end of the 1970s. After first experimenting with home music recordings and writing an absurd novel, poetry and song lyrics, they soon set out to perform their first outdoor actions. In 1982 three of the participants founded an experimental music band *Unfelt Feelings Restoration Workshop* (Nebijušu sajūtu restaurēšanas darbnīca abbreviated as NSRD). [5] This name has later been expanded and applied to all their collaborative activities – records, actions, exhibitions, stage- and video performances. Initially inspired by the ideas of post-modern architecture theory, the aesthetics of *new wave* and the evolution of the multimedia in the arts, in 1987 the group arrived to their own "Approximate Art" programme articulated in the Manifesto: "Boundaries between different genres of art are very diffuse, they can not be defined just alike boundaries between different cultures. Often a question comes up – is it art, or no longer art. This is pointing to the presence of approximation in the art processes". [6] The channels of international exposure for *NSRD* were very different from those of the Moscow group

1
The group was founded by Nikita Alekseyev (who left the group in 1982), Georgi Kizevalter, Andrei Monastyrsky and Nikolai Panitkov. Permanent members who joined the group at the end of the 1970s are Elena Elagina, Igor Makarevich and Sergei Romashko. Sabine Hänsgen joined the group in 1987. On the occasion of their first action in 1976, the group was joined by Lev Rubinstein who did not participate in the future performances.

2
Flash art. The International Arts Review, No. 76/77, July-August 1977

3
The name "Collective Actions" was first introduced in 1977 by Boris Groys in his text "Solution Nil" in the samizdat magazine *37* published in Leningrad, and later appeared in his article "Moscow Romantic Conceptualism" in 1979 in the Paris based exile arts magazine *A-Ya*. Sabine Hänsgen notes: "The group name 'Kollektivnye Deystviya' derives from the title of the section 'azioni collettive', in which performances were categorized in the catalogue of the Venice Biennale in 1977. This name was taken up by Boris Groys in his article "Moscow Romantic Conceptualism", *A-Ya* [Unofficial Russian Art Review] 1, 1979, pp. 3–11".

4
Kollektivnye Deystviya, *Poezdki za gorod*, vol. 1-5, Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1998 and Kollektivnye Deystviya, *Poezdki za gorod*, vol. 6-11, Vologda: German Titov, 2009

5
The group was founded by Juris Boiko and Hardijs Lediņš and joined by Imants Žodžiks, Mārtiņš Rutkis,

Inguna Černova, Leonards Laganovskis, Aigars Sparāns and some occasionally invited participants. The core participants of the music project NSRD were Juris Boiko, Hardijs Lediņš, Inguna Černova and Mārtiņš Rutkis.

6
Hardijs Lediņš. *Introduction to the Approximate Art Manifesto*, 1987, manuscript

– it evolved through the contacts with younger generation of the Second World War Latvian emigration. In 1988/89 the group participated in a major exhibition, *Riga-Lettische Avantgarde* that presented the neo-avant-garde developments of Latvian art in Berlin, Kiel and Bremen. These international events, however, were followed by the dissolution of the group: like many other East European artists groups, *NSRD* faced a moment of crisis after encountering the institutional framework of the world of "visual arts" in
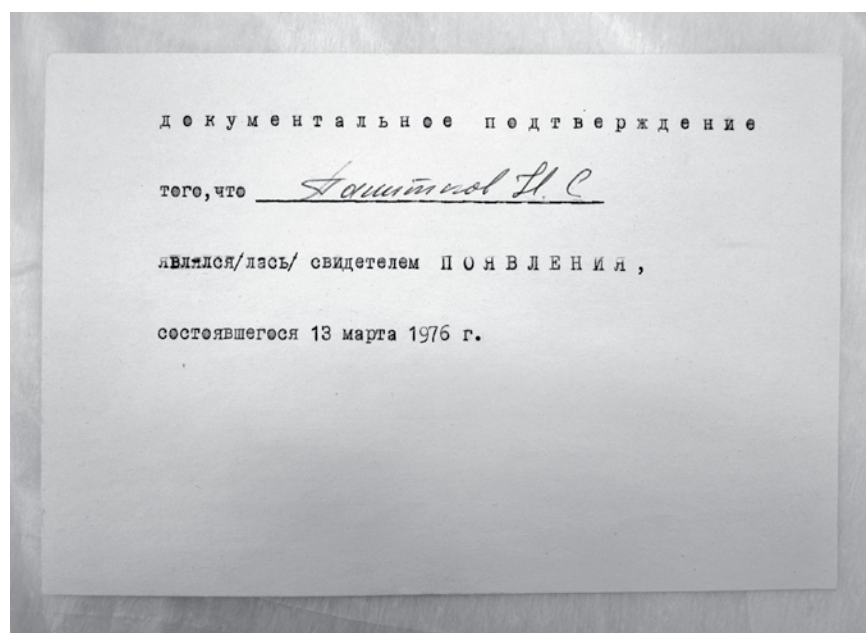
Collective Actions, "documentary confirmation" of participation of Nikolai Panitkov
in the first action of the group *Appearance*, that took place on March 13th, 1976

the West (elusive concepts as their time-based "approximation" would hardly be a welcome feature in mainstream exhibition venues). Political and economic changes in Latvia pushed towards a more pragmatic thinking and members of the group turned to individual creative work. Retaining

legendary fame as an avant-garde and underground music and art collective in Latvia, *NSRD* is seldom mentioned in comparably rare surveys of the new tendencies in the Baltic art of the Soviet period.

Leonards Laganovskis, Hardijs Lediņš, Imants Žodžiks.
A Line in Kurzeme, action, 1983
Photo: Imants Žodžiks

Although members of these two groups never met there are clear parallels among the influences and the overall context in which their respective practices developed. What I am particularly interested in is the transition from the avant-garde to post-modern language in the work of both groups. In the beginning, both *Collective Actions* and *NSRD* were influenced by modernist and avant-garde literature and music, as well as Eastern schools of philosophy. Transformative quests of these movements are also echoed in their later work. The interest in the new forms and structures of poetry, prose and music marked the interdisciplinary nature of their work from the very beginning, and was later explained by their independent aesthetic programmes and invented terminology that, in an eclectic way, adopted post-modern and post-structural theory.

It is well known that time-based art practices were excluded from the rigidly "professionalised", highly controlled and instrumentalised sphere of the Soviet art, and so both groups belonged to the unofficial art-scene. Their founders didn't have the conventional academic education in the arts; the members of the Moscow group came from the fields of poetry and visual art, while the Riga artists had their background in architecture, poetry and independent music. Reflecting these roots and interests, the archives of *Collective Actions* and *NSRD* do not comprise art objects, but instead various forms of documentation and sets of artefacts: texts, samizdats, sound and music recordings, photographs and video-footages.

Despite all these parallels, one of the issues that the comparative reading of the groups brings forward is their uneven exposure in art history. If the isolation of the unofficial art scenes has been explained from the historical perspective (despite the fact that such factually grounded explanations are overdue and still to be written), then the persisting absence of *NSRD* from contemporary art history volumes addressing art in the former Soviet Union or even in Eastern Europe raises further questions about the ideologies behind art-historical narratives, both in the past and today. It seems that the centre-periphery division that shaped the cultural processes in the Soviet Union as well as the legacy of the past cultural and national policies still influence ways how regional histories of the Soviet Union are approached by local scholars, and as a consequence, by international researchers.

This is why in my attempt to measure the "distance" between the Moscow and Riga artists I have decided to begin

my research by staging two hypothetical historic encounters: by looking into two episodes of the rapprochement of the Riga and Moscow creative scenes and a re-creation of two situations where at least some exchange of information (if not the actual encounter of the artists) could have taken
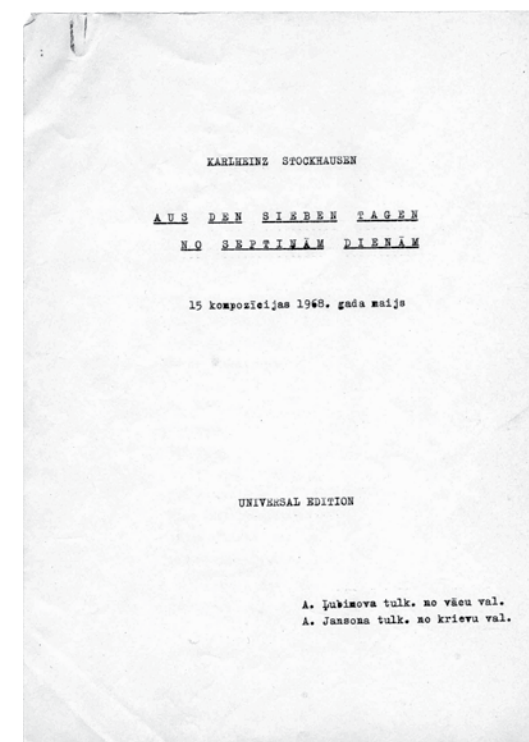
Samizdat translation of Karlheinz Stockhausen's text compositions
Aus den sieben Tagen, performed in 1976 contemporary music concert series.
Translated into Latvian by A. Jansons from Russian translation by A. Lyubimov.

place. The first episode happened in April 1976, just after the first *Collective Actions* project, and the second in 1989, the last year of the existence of *NSRD*, as well as the year when *Collective Actions* announced the end of their activities (although they were to resume them five years later).

Alexei Lyubimov before concert at the Latvian Art Academy,
contemporary music concert series 1976
Photo: Kirils Šmeļkovs

EPISODE I: MUSIC

In 1976 an unprecedented event took place in the conservative and highly state-controlled music life of Riga. It was the first contemporary music festival, semi-officially organised under the umbrella of the Riga Polytechnical Institute Students' Club. Before this event, the avant-garde classical music in Latvia was accessible only through a handful of foreign magazines available in the Republican State Library, some rare music scores and through occasional lectures by visiting musicologists and musicians. The earlier attempts to introduce new forms of music to a wider audience through touring concert programmes ended with public complaints and official cancellations of concerts. [7]

The programme of the 1976 semi-underground, informally organised festival [8] was put together by the outstanding Moscow pianist and enthusiastic proponent of the music avant-garde Alexei Lyubimov who, together with his ensemble Music – XX century, has been exploring and fostering new tendencies in music at concerts throughout the USSR since 1968/69. He was invited by the initiators and organisers of the festival in Riga – Hardijs Lediņš, a student of architecture and later a co-founder of *NSRD*, whose experiments in literature and music recordings in his home-

[7]
For example, the cycle of concerts *Music of the 20th century* that was organised by Alexei Lyubimov in Riga Philharmonics from 1974 to 1975 and that included examples of theatrical music by John Cage, Charles Ives and Valentin Silvestrov was closed after repeated written complaints of members of the audience to the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

[8]
The festival was a reaction to the closure of the concert series led by Alexei Lyubimov in 1974/1975. The organisers Hardijs Lediņš and Boriss Avramecs used contacts with Moscow musicians and facilities and resources of the Students' Club of Riga Polytechnic Institute, where Lediņš was active at the time. According to the interview with Boriss Avramecs it was "pure underground", the premises of the Students' Club (the Anglican Church) were officially approved, but the programme was not and "no printed materials were possible".

studio "Seque" started at about the same time, and Boriss Avramecs, a violinist. [9]

Juris Boiko, Hardijs Lediņš, *The Walk to Boderāja*, action, 16th January, 1982
Photo: Hardijs Lediņš, Juris Boiko

The concert series, which later gained the colloquial title *The Avant-garde Music Festival*, was the first opportunity for the wider Riga audience to get acquainted with the compositions of John Cage, the intuitive music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Terry Riley's programmatic *In C* composition, and experimental pieces of the Moscow composer Vladimir Martynov and his electronic music band Boomerang. The main concert of the festival concluded with John Cage's *Lecture on the Weather* and an improvised happening.

The festival was banned after its second edition in 1977, when it took place in a more official setting. This time entitled *Contemporary Music Decade* and dedicated to the "60th anniversary of the October Revolution", the festival included only the works of Soviet composers, however, the

9
Hereinafter the factual overview of the Avantgarde Music Festival events in Riga is based on an interview with the musicologist Boris Avramecs, Riga, 2008 (from the author's research archive).

programme again reflected the most progressive tendencies in the Soviet music – composers such as Alexander Knaifel, Vladimir Martynov, Arvo Pärt, Valentin Silvestrov and Viktor Suslin were present at the event.
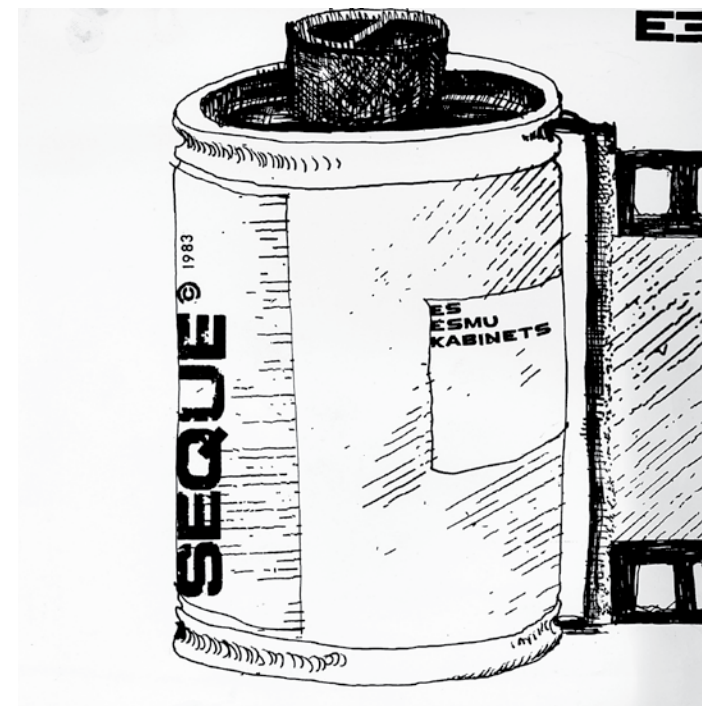
Samizdat cover of the single *Es esmu kabinets* [I am a cabinet] recorded by *NSRD* in studio *Seque*, limited edition on flexible membrane, cover - photoprint, 1983
Design: Imants Žodžiks

The festival ended with disciplinary prosecutions after the performance of *Easter Cantata* by Vladimir Martynov. Multiplied cantata texts "Der am Kreuz ist meine Leib!" were thrown into the audience, which the State Security Committee services interpreted as "religious propaganda" – this marked the end of the short life of the festival.

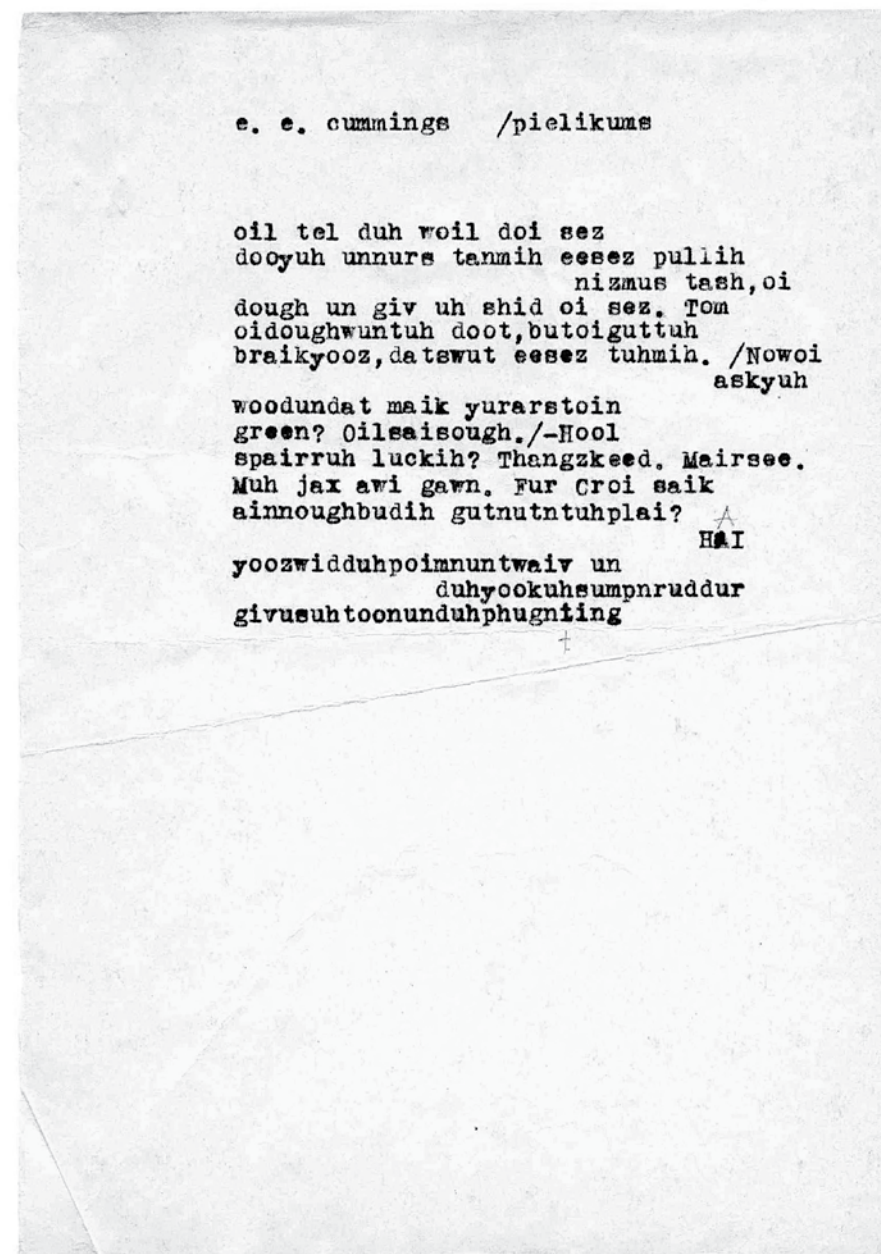These two editions of the contemporary music festival

are rare episodes of a self-initiated collaboration between the Riga and Moscow musicians and artists. Their programmes reveal a general interest in the avant-garde tradition, but also a deepening break from the avant-garde, while opening up paths to post-avant-garde and post-modern aesthetics.

These events echoed a broader paradigmatic shift that had stirred the field of progressive academic and electronic music in the Soviet Union in the early 1970s. It was the moment when several young composers and musicians, a minority that was previously passionately engaged with avant-garde music, became conscious of the limitations of avant-garde experiments. They developed an interest in "something like post-"[10] that was fuelled by affiliations with different spiritual traditions, an interest in a time-based collective experience and the possibilities of a "meta-" communication in art. As commented by Lyubimov: "You asked about collective actions and improvisations? In our case they were always oriented towards a spiritual togetherness. With our means of expression – music or dance, or both, we were trying to create an intense field of communication that would involve not only performers, but also listeners – the audience. I think those were somewhat childish and a bit unprofessional aspirations for what was later professionally done by Grotowsky in his theatre."[11]

The music and writings by John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen, as well as Artrock and New Jazz sound pieces had a major influence on the founders of *NSRD*, Hardijs

Juris Boiko, From samizdat edition of translated poems of Edward Estlin Cummings, translations dedicated to Hardijs Lediņš, 1976/1977

10
Alexei Lyubimov in an interview with the author, Moscow, November 2007 (from the author's research archive)

11
Ibid.

Lediņš and Juris Boiko and were shaping the group's musical development. Similarly, the first actions of *NSRD* were attempts to transpose "these [the new music] ideas in the surrounding reality".[12] These avant-garde and minimalist influences were later succeeded by an interest in the ideas of pluralistic creativity of the new-wave and multimedia music and stage innovations of Laurie Anderson and Brian Eno.

The role that the music played in the formation of the Moscow artist group was less direct. Alexei Lyubimov was part of the circle of young intellectuals, some of whom soon became associated with *Collective Actions* – Nikita Alekseev, Georgi Kisevalter, Andrey Monastirsky, Irina Nahova, Lev Rubinstein and others. The artists recall that their shared space of interests resided in Minimalism, Conceptualism and explorations of performativity.[13] As already mentioned, these common music and performative aesthetic affiliations are transgressive in several aspects: they provide more direct connections among the artists than do the references to international visual arts and, at the same time, they reflect the last wave of interest in the (neo)avant-garde aesthetics, that was soon questioned and challenged by both groups.

EPISODE II: PRINTED MEDIA

Another hypothetical encounter between *Collective Actions* and *NSRD* could have happened in 1989, this time through printed media. In 1987, in the wake of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*, the new magazine Avots (The Source), a "literary, ar-

tistic and socio-political youth magazine"[14] was founded in Riga by the Central Committee of the Latvian Comsomol (the Communist Youth Union). The magazine was printed in separate Latvian and Russian versions with mixed editorial boards. The content, however, overlapped only partly. In 1988-89 the Russian edition of *Avots - Родник* was one of the first official magazines within the USSR that published Russian underground writers and poets like Vladimir Sorokin and Lev Rubinstein. Before 1989, in the Soviet Union, works of these authors were printed only in underground *samizdat* editions.

Collective Actions, *The Slogan*, action, 26th January, 1977
Photo: Andrey Abramov

Covering a broad range of arts and culture, *Avots* was also enthusiastically introducing avant-garde and "underground" art phenomena. The November 1989 issue was one of the first Soviet publications to publish an article on *Collective Actions* entitled "'Eternal youth' or do 'Collective Actions' exist?" written by Georgi Kizevalter, one of

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12
Juris Boiko in an interview with the author, Riga, April 2001 (from the author's research archive)

13
Alexei Lyubimov: "Vremya radostnyh otkrytij" (The time of joyful discoveries) in: Georgi Kisevalter (ed.), *Eti strannye semedisyatye* (Those strange seventies), Moscow: NLO, 2010

14
As stated in the impressum of the *Avots* editions.

the group members. He opens the essay with an ironic note: "After all, it took less than eleven years since the first presentation of the Moscow group *Collective Actions* in *Flash Art* 1977 (No. 76/77) that we have been granted an opportunity to tell something about this group to the Soviet readers. Unfortunately, in the meantime *Collective Actions* have considerably aged, and are now shrunken and worn out, but ...the muses are alive!"[15]

Collective Actions, The Division, action, 29th May, 1983
Photo: Igor Makarevich

Juris Boiko, Hardijs Lediņš, Imants Žodžiks, *The Walk to Boderāja - House in Bolderāja*, action, April 1984
Photo: Imants Žodžiks

Interestingly, one year before, the Latvian version of the magazine already published an interview with Hardijs Lediņš about the actions and aesthetic programme of *NSRD*.[16] Despite the fact that Avots was very popular, well-distributed and programmatic intellectual magazine riding on the wave of the new liberties of the Glasnost era[17], Latvian artists

never discovered the article on *Collective Actions* for one reason – the article was printed in the Russian version of the magazine, which was far less popular among Latvian readers. And as the article on *NSRD* was missing from the Russian version of the magazine it is highly unlikely that Russian artists could have ever encountered it.

BETWEEN PARALLEL HISTORIES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The examples of *The Avant-garde music festivals* and *Avots* are not merely interesting historical facts, but rather, by revealing parallel developments in Moscow and Riga, these events might enable us to reconstruct some "missing links", both in past and contemporary approaches towards art history.

The *Avots* publications make evident how late the groups' activities reached mass media and the wider audience in the Soviet Union. Symptomatically, both the avantgarde music festival and a bigger survey on *Collective Actions* appeared in the "regional" space of Riga. This indicates different levels of availability of information and media in different regions within the Soviet Union. Despite of (or maybe due to) a stronger informational isolation and a restrictive conformist system governing the field of visual arts in Latvia, intellectuals were sometimes closer to official infrastructures, which allowed them to access media and venues to present their work and introduce their aesthetic platforms in "informative" and popular articles.

We encountered *NSRD* in 1976 through their affiliation with avant-garde music, while in 1989 *Collective Actions* were introduced to the editors of *Avots* via their contacts in the field of literature. Once more, this opens up the question of interdisciplinary affiliations and interests of both groups and their weak links to official visual art structures, which is even more

15
Georgi Kisevalter, "'Vechnaya molodost'' ili sushestvuyut li 'Kollektivnye deistviya'?", *Rodnik (Avots)*, No.11 1989, pp. 36-39

16
Lācis, Normunds. "Bolderājas blūzs. HL: NL", *Avots*, No.4, 1988, pp. 50.–55

17
In 1989 it was published in the edition of 140,000.

important to note and research since the existing art historical readings of the two collectives usually ignore this conflation of disciplines, interpreting them exclusively as visual arts phenomena.

Finally, these two examples display "vectors" of the exchange between Riga and Moscow: Moscow appears to be the "sender" of the up-to-date information and interesting trends, while the developments in Riga leave no traces and are not "translated" for the Moscow audience. This calls for a discussion on the centre-periphery relations and the regional (and frequently language-based) divides within the USSR, but it is also a consequence of the pattern of institutionalisation of the experimental art in Moscow – although representing an alternative, it nonetheless involved a much more consolidated and established network of people.

It is of no less importance that a parallel reading, such as the above, reveals issues topical for contemporary art history. Firstly, it points to a necessity of a broader contextual and "transitory" reading of art phenomena, a necessity to avoid fixing them in static canonical understandings of the groups, trends, artworks and places within the national tradition, but rather linking them to the duration and changes in their practice, interrupted developments and the shifting spheres of influences. Moreover, it once again proves that we need to look beyond the visual arts references and take into account a spectrum of different disciplines, such as film, literature, architecture, music and popular media, as these (in Riga, for example) sometimes had a much stronger impact on groundbreaking art than the knowledge of contemporary art tendencies.

The comparative approach also evokes strategic questions about the place and role of regional art histories. Writing

about the isolation of neo-avantgarde artists in the neighbouring countries of Central-Eastern Europe, Piotr Piotrowski states: "In general, there was little interest in the Central European art as such, and that which could be seen was limited to a very small elite group. Each country in the region saw the West, not its neighbours, as the most desirable partner".[18] In his recent

Collective Actions, Balloon, action, 15th June, 1977
Photo: Andrey Abramov

research Piotrowski acknowledges that the neo-avantgarde phenomena have gained a "national meaning" and a "nationalised" character in the countries of the Eastern Bloc.[19] The legacy of such isolation, enforced by contemporary regional and national divides, continues to affect the current research of the art of the socialist period. My research into the publications on art history in the Soviet Union reveals that most of the existing studies have viewed the developments in the different regions of the dissolved state not as interrelated or even parallel, but rather as separate and belonging to different "national"

18
Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe*, 1945–1989. London: Reaktion Books, 2009, p. 245

19
Piotr Piotrowski's lecture at the conference "Kunst und das kommunistische Europa 1945–1989" (Art and the Communist Europe 1945-1989), conference proceedings, 19-21 November, 2009, Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin

or "local" histories. The majority of contemporary studies oscillate between two tendencies: a homogenising, generalising approach to the cultural space of the Eastern Bloc reflected in publications on the "post-communist condition", and on the other hand – attempts that aim to distinguish local art phenomena by enclosing them in their local cultural "specificity".[20] It is curious that sometimes these seemingly contradictory trends may overlap when, for example, the entire post-communist geographic space is regarded as "exceptional" or when articles focus on the "exemplary" cultural tradition. The following quote by Boris Groys is as an example of such a perspective: "If Soviet history had been merely a national and regional history, it could easily be reintegrated into unified universal history with a few small changes. Soviet history, however, was a different narration of universal history, which, because of its claims to universality, could not be subsumed under neutral and scientifically conceived Western historiography".[21]

The necessity of comparative studies of the developments within the Soviet Union has so far mostly been addressed by scholars of political and social sciences. As noted by Donald L. Horowitz, these fields have been affected by the "...longstanding isolation of Soviet studies from the mainstream of comparative studies in the various social science disciplines.. [...] Setting the Soviet Union off as the separate arena was a necessary course, given the unproductive history of attempts to understand the Soviet Union without adequate specialist knowledge, but it meant the absence of any sustained comparative approach to understanding, save for the few studies of comparative communist systems that emerged."[22]

Claims on methodologies of narration, generalisations and positions of "exceptionality" are inescapably linked to the statements of power that fuel oppositions between the Western "comparative" to the Post-communist "different", or "regional" versus "universal". My reading reveals that there is a tradition of "representation" and "under-representation" of the regional histories of the former Soviet Union. This intrinsic pattern was formed through the national policies and restricted information circulation within the socialist state to be later affirmed by separation and national self-assertion of its former regions. The staging of hypothetical encounters and the discovery of the missing links between art practices allows us to unload the burden of this accustomed tradition and intervene into the power-driven generalisations. As noted by Piotr Piotrowski "We describe the history of local art differently in the 'peripheries' from

20
As far as scholarly research of the regions of the Soviet Union is concerned, the first approach is exemplified by the conference and publications of the project *The Post-Communist Condition* (www.postcommunist.de) devoted, as the project website announces, to the theoretisation of the "Communism Soviet Style" phenomena. Even in the internationally focused publication of the project – the book *Zurück aus der Zukunft: Osteuropäische Kulturen im Zeitalter des Postkommunismus* (Back from the future: Eastern European cultures in the age of postcommunism), ed. Boris Groys, Anne von der Heiden and Peter Weibel, Suhrkamp, 2005, the articles devoted to the Soviet and post-Soviet phenomena predominantly, with only a few exceptions, interpreted the situation in Russia, ignoring the complexities of the Soviet Union as a multinational state with numerous regional scenes. The second approach is exemplified by a variety of publications stressing the "untranslatability" and cultural specificity of the local art scene, or the "exclusionary hermeneutics", as it was called by Susan Buck-Morss in her book *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, The MIT Press, 2002.

Among other examples of this line of argumentation I could mention: Mikhail N. Epstein "The Origins and Meaning of Russian Postmodernism", in: *After the Future. The Paradoxes of Postmodernism & Contemporary Russian Culture*, Amherst, USA 1995; and Viktor Tupytsin *Kommunal'ny (post) modernism*, Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1998.

21
Boris Groys, "The Other Gaze. Russian Unofficial Art's view of the Soviet World" in: Aleš Erjavec (ed.): *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 2003, p. 80. It can also be compared with a statement by Moscow philosopher Valery Podoroga: "However as soon as we become attentive to the place of Russian culture in contemporary art history, we immediately notice the uniqueness of our national trajectory." Valery Podoroga "Politics of Philosophy: New Challenges", in: Joseph Bakstein, Daniel Birnbaum, Sven-Olaov Wallenstein (eds.) *Thinking Worlds. The Moscow conference on Philosophy, Politics and Art*, Berlin and New York: Lukas & Sternberg 2007, p. 47

22
Donald L. Horowitz, "How To Begin Thinking Comparatively About Soviet Ethnic Problems", in: Alexander J.Motyl (ed.) *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 10-11

how it is described in the 'centre'. From the perspective of the 'peripheries', we see the 'centre' in the different light. Above all, we see different centres or, more precisely, we are aware of tensions among those centres, something that is not apparent from the perspective of the centre and its singular point of view". [23]

Collective Actions, Comedy, action, 2nd October, 1977
Photo: Nikita Alekseyev

NSRD, Binocular dances, performance at the *Approximate Art Exhibition*, Riga, 1987
Photo: Imants Žodžiks

[23]
Piotr Piotrowski, In the *Shadow of Yalta*, op.cit., p. 14

VESNA VUKOVIĆ

Spaces of Accummulated Time. Parallel Readings - Sanja Iveković and Tomislav Gotovac

"Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin opposes a petrified image of the past as established and maintained by historicism, to a materialistic recording of history which recognises the fact that there is no such a thing as "the way it really was", that any state of things is fabricated and the subject of a posthumous construction, sometimes resulting from events that happened centuries afterwards. "To articulate the past historically," says Benjamin, "means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger".[1] The present, and each subsequent moment, which the traditional historian is asked to forget when "entering the spirit" of a historic moment, is always involved in the past in this materialistic process. "He takes cognizance of it [the past, the historical subject as a monad, V.V.], in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history — blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework."[2]

The authors and works addressed in this article belong to the historical period of the 1960s through to the 1980s, the period which is referred to as the "new art practices" by subsequent historicisation within the Yugoslav context. These practices are largely interpreted as characterised by "a high political consciousness of the artist"[3] and conceptual aspira-

tions, as well as a certain isolation and a marginal position in the Yugoslav art system, which is certainly a consequence of the fact that they problematise the very notion of art and its institutional tendencies.[4] Art historian and critic Ješa Denegri brings into the foreground the non-institutional character of these practices: the fact that most of the protagonists[5] did not come from the circles of artistic offspring (i.e., academies), as well as the strong internationalisation that was not implemented by art institutions but was rather a result of direct affiliation. It is important to mention the contribution of student centres, as a kind of a "temporary autonomous zone", whose history and role were of interest to the Prelom collective.[6] Some perceive this proliferation of non-institutional exhibition areas as a space of self-organisation, a sort of autonomous zone, with a practice of criticising the system while others are adamant that those zones were strictly controlled, and that the resistance was ghettoised and utilised for the purposes of the Yugoslav international propaganda as a free and democratic country. Both of these approaches, however, regardless of their view of the artistic practices as a conscious apostasy or an unaware utilisation, approach this time as homogeneous.

This article is an attempt to speak of the period as a heterogeneous time saturated with the present, an attempt to find and interpret the moments of its breakthrough in the selected

1
Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte", in: Walter Benjamin: *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften 1*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974. Translation: Dennis Redmond, retrieved 15th March 2011 from: *www.filepedia.org/on-the-concept-of-history*

2
Ibid.

3
Marijan Susovski (ed.), *Inovacije u hrvatskoj umjetnosti sedamdesetih godina* (Innovations in the Croatian Art of the Seventies), exhibition catalogue, Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb / Muzej savremene umetnosti Beograd, 1982

4
The very term of "art practices" was preferred to "art" by the critical perception of the times and should be understood the same way.

5
"non-profesionally formed artists", per Ješa Denegri, according to *Razlozi za drugu liniju: Za novu umetnost sedamdesetih* (Reasons for the second line: For the new art of the 70s), Novi Sad, Zagreb: Kolekcija Marinko Sudac & MSUV, 2007

6
Prelom collective: "Dva vremena jednog zida: Slučaj studentskog kulturnog centra sedamdesetih godina" (Two Periods of a Wall: The Case of the Student Culture Center of the Seventies), in: Zorana Dojić, Jelena Vesić (eds.), *Političke prakse postjugoslavenske umjetnosti: Retrospektiva 01* (Political Practices of the Post-Yugoslav Art: A Retrospection 01, exhibition catalogue), Beograd: Prelom kolektiv, 2010

works, akin to the "image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again".[7] With the analysis of a few selected works, I will attempt to revive some particular moments that work against their narrow interpretation as the subversion of totalitarianism, whether as a gesture of direct confrontation or displacement and conscious apostasy. These moments are flashes of a utopian consciousness that is successfully dimmed by the master narratives, be it those that were involved in the making of the independent state of Croatia, that spin the tale of the age-old struggle for liberation, or the liberal ones, that assume a tardiness in constantly catching up with the West.

Looking for the clues of a present that has already occurred in the selected works, I will approach with particular attention, on the one hand, the question of public space, its status in the socialist vs. democratic/capitalist regime and artistic tactics that intervene in it (direct confrontation and/or tactics of displacement), and on the other hand, the question of their audience, whose status is at least twofold (immediate and subsequent audience). This article-draft finds an incentive in Buden's interpretation of Yugoslav films of the so-called black wave, which he sees as films about post-socialism, or as films for the post-Yugoslav audience.[8] Contrasting the formal interpretations of the black wave films, and in an attempt to challenge their hegemonic translations, Buden reads Dušan Makavejev's *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* as a subversion of the subsequent post-communist stereotypes, which

flow into the phrase "Comrades! Even now I am not ashamed of my communist past!", uttered by one of the characters.
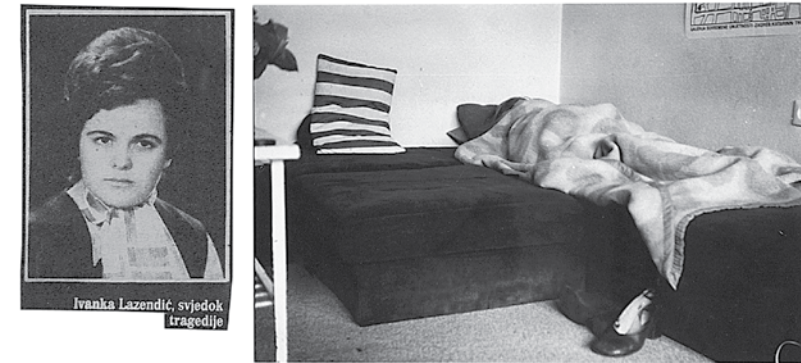
The artists that will be discussed here, Sanja Iveković and Tom Gotovac, are prominent representatives of the so-called new artistic practice, with respectable careers, and my choice to write about their work is not arbitrary. I have chosen to examine these artists firstly, because the questions that I will be addressing, the question of public space and the question of the status of the audience, are at the core of their artistic work, and secondly, because I do not wish to add more facts to the past, to repeat and reinstate how these artists were silenced, forgotten, repressed. Instead, I would like to, in a way, elicit a new life out of these well-known and over-analysed works. This operation, again bringing to mind Walter Benjamin, could be referred to as a translation, and the aesthetic in these works is formulated precisely through their ability to survive or "bloom anew".[9]

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[7]
Walter Benjamin, *op.cit.*

[8]
Boris Buden, "Behind the Velvet Curtain – Remembering Dušan Makavejev's W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism", *in: Afterall 18*, 2008, retrieved 25th March 2011 from: *www.afterall.org/journal/issue.18/behind.velvet. curtain.remembering.dusan.makavejevs*

[9]
Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers", in: Walter Benjamin: *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften 1*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974

Lastly, because the task of cross-reading these two authors[10] seems quite inspiring to me.

Sanja Iveković, starting with her earliest works from the early 1970s, questions and provokes the dichotomy between the public and the private (concepts that, from ancient Greece, have linked the private to necessity and – it is quite unnecessary to stress this – to the area associated primarily
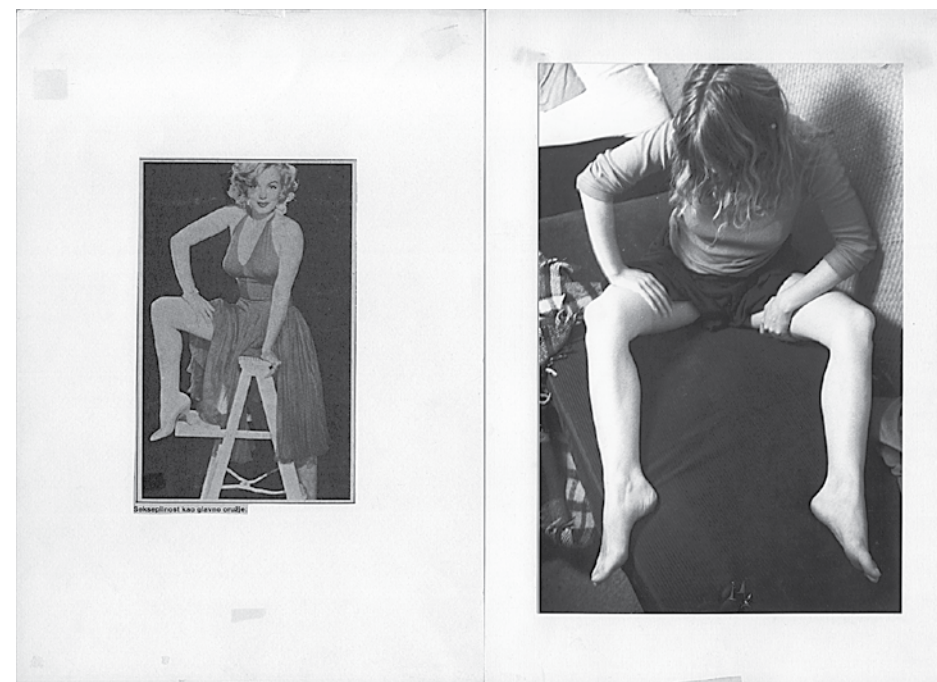
Sanja Iveković, *Double Life*, 1975
Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb
Photo: Egbert Trogemann

with women, children and slaves; where the public is understood as a sphere that begins precisely where every necessity ends, and where citizens discuss matters outside and beyond mere life, matters devoid of personal or private interests), and constructs all of her work upon the ruins of this myth. Whether we are discussing her videos, collages, media inter-

10
This task is, quite naturally, caused by the existing limits to research which is not yet exhausted. Indeed, I find overlapping of these two artistic positions and their specific techniques rather inspiring for a future work.

ventions or the so-called public works, all of them are marked by inter-positioning and equating of the so-called personal, meaning private, and the so-called public, meaning political. Iveković engages with these issues, as was so brilliantly analysed by Bojana Pejić [11], through the strategy of "personal cuts" (a procedure based on the techniques of collage and montage).

Her work from 1975, *Double Life*, is a series of collages, each made of two photographs: one of them is always a picture of a woman from one of the popular magazines and the other, a photograph from her private album. The two are inter-positioned based on the similarities in composition, appearance and props. *Tragedy of a Venus* from 1976 is yet another series of photograph pairings: on the one side there are photographs of Marilyn Monroe from tabloids and photographs of Sanja Iveković from her private album, on the other. *Bitter Life* from 1975 confronts photographs and articles from the crime column with the artist's personal photographs. Let us stop here, although we could follow the sequence into our present times, and not only chronologically, but also spatially – within the array of media used by the artist.

What is so intriguing in this clear and explicit gesture of equating a woman's public representation with the private photographs of the artist? Let us first unveil what can be read from the technique – scissoring and collage: each of these poles is a construct and can be pulled apart and reassembled again as such. Let us then closely observe the dis-

[11]
Referring to the study by Bojana Pejić, "Public Cuts", in: Urška Jurman (ed.), *Sanja Iveković: Public Cuts*, Ljubljana: Zavod P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E., 2006
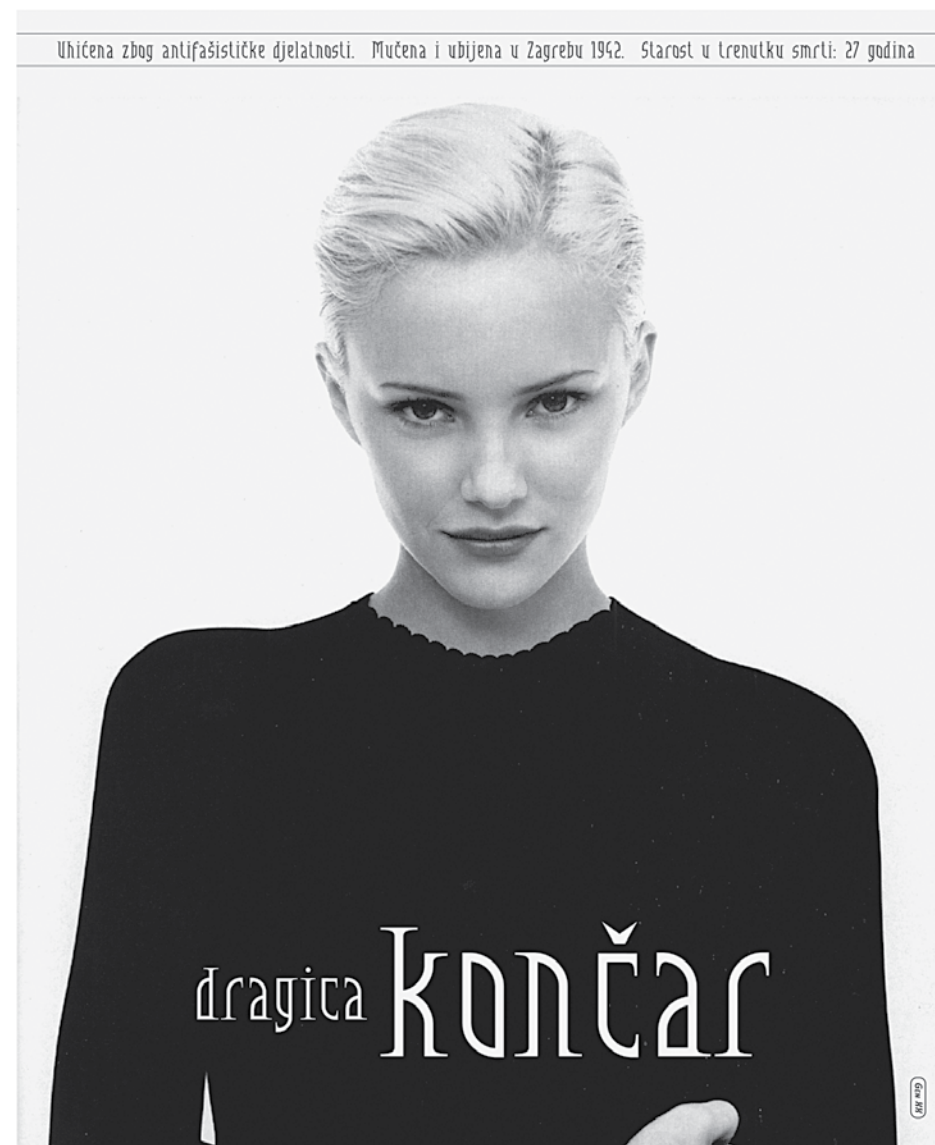
Sanja Iveković, *Gen XX*, 1997-2001

assembled material: photographs from female fashion journals and those from a private collection. I believe that the political tendency of this work becomes even more interesting when placed within its socialist context: these works do not confront the central power directly, it is through them that the artist recognises and discloses the power in its capillary distribution. It is precisely at this point that I read

Sanja Iveković, *Gen XX*, 1997-2001
Photo: Piotr Tomczyk

the proclaimed "breakthrough of the present", since beyond the dichotomy there is a 'direct confrontation: outsourcing' concerning the dominant line, and not only because of this: I find the mere presentation of the popular Western magazine quite symptomatic. What if we turned the matter on its head and established that this work, today, does not only speak to us about the personal as the political, but rather uses the sole personal to obfuscate the open criticism of official politics:

that which follows the Yugoslav economic reform of 1965 and the liberalisation of market relations, especially since it shows incredible similarities with the neoliberal administrative logic of today?

It appears to me that this interpretation gets reinforced through Iveković's media project *Gen XX* (1997 – 2001), a work from the time after the defeat of state socialism, where she once again uses the technique of collage – this time it is photography, fashion photography that is more specifically fashion photography (these are photographs of models and are hence effectively advertisements) and text (a short biography of one of the national heroines of the antifascistic struggle, executed during the Second World War) – which intervenes in the media space. During 1997 and 1998, the photographs, in the format of advertisements, from which they differed only in the additional text, were published in *Arkzin*, *Zaposlena*, *Frakcija*, *Kruh i ruže* and *Kontura*. [12] This reversal in formatting of Iveković's work, evident after mid-nineties, a time when she starts appearing more and more in the public space (as it is conventionally understood, i.e., as a democratic public space meaning a resistant sphere in which, according to Habermas' model, citizens participate equally in rational discussion, a general sphere of inclusiveness and accessibility) seems to me crucial for the course of interpretation set forth in the above lines. What is interesting is not so much that her work is then "transposed" into the public sphere, but the fact that her work since then deals with Yugoslavia's antifascist history, which is suppressed

[12]
By all means, those were not *mainstream* magazines, rather, they were alternative, minority, or specialised art magazines

like a trauma in the construction of a new national identity, banished from public discourse, public space, schoolbooks... and all of that resulting from the national euphoria in which history began anew.[13] It is precisely this banished past, the repressed political struggles, that Sanja Iveković persistently exposes. This transgression of the past into the present, the process of making incisions into the tissue of the present with the scalpel of the past, makes it all the more readable on the grid of non-homogeneous time. In order to keep this process of reading consistent, we must pause for a bit and ask ourselves where *the personal* went, that which was obvious in the works I previously analysed. The answer is: it is not gone. It is – just like the banishment of the past from the public discourse – repressed, unvoiced, not because it is a personal trauma[14], but because the artist uses this gesture to cunningly[15] dodge being fenced in the domain of the private, whilst dismantling the present as a construct.

Women's magazines are often used by Sanja Iveković as sources, but also as a battle area where gender and national identity are dismantled. A women's magazine found its way into the hands and work of Tomislav Gotovac as early as 1962, in *Showing the Elle*. A later work, *Foxy Mister* from 2002 (a remake of a porno-erotic series of photographs of a female model published in the *Inside Foxy Lady* porno magazine in 1984) might impose as the more logical object of

Tom Gotovac, *Showing the Elle*
Sljeme, Medvednica Mountain, performance and series of 6 photographs, Zagreb, 1962
Photo: Ivica Hripko

13
Rastko Močnik speaks of this new kind of orientalism: "the notion of the 'East' performs a historical amnesia. It erases the political dimension from the eastern past, and achieves likewise effects in the present.", per: Boris Buden, *The post-Yugoslavian Condition of Institutional Critique: An Introduction*, transversal web magazine: www.eipcp.net/transversal/0208/buden/en

14
It was precisely because of her antifascist activity that Sanja Iveković's mother spent two years in Auschwitz.

15
As observed by Tihomir Milovac, "it is exactly the cunning and mutability that form her artistic strategy", Tihomir Milovac, in: Sanja *Iveković – Is This My True Face*, Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998, op.cit., p. 2

comparison or to make this article into a more logical whole, but I've chosen to focus on *Showing the Elle* instead. It is a performance art piece and a series of six photographs (Ivica Hripko took the photographs, as directed [16] by Gotovac) which came to be during an amiable outing to Sljeme where, the cold notwithstanding (it was a snowy winter), Gotovac decided to disrobe – however, he got but (!) half-naked due to the embarrasment [17] stemming from the presence of a woman – and sat leafing through an issue of *Elle* women's magazine. This work, the first manifestation of the nude body of Gotovac, can – albeit from the future – be read as a proto-performance, as an announcement [18] of his later artistic process. However following the line of the aforementioned argumentation – still from the future and still as a symptom read from the mere presence of a Western fashion magazine in the artistic act – the work may be read as an announcement of what was to follow: the Yugoslav economic reform of 1965 and the liberalisation of market relations. If only for a moment it is interesting to focus on the environment in which the artistic action takes place, the aformentioned being nature, an excursion site, an environment lagely understood as neutral, unsaturated with ideologies and unblemished by its mechanisms. Taking into account the fact that Gotovac performs his subsequent acts within the urban environment, often literally kissing the pavement, we will not read this ac-

tion as fleeing to the haven of the neutral nature, but as an insistence on the unchastity of nature itself: a simple gesture of displaying a women's fashion magazine alongside revealing a nude male body – truth to be told, only half-nude – is quite a clear signal. Although marked by a certain spontaneity (the transgression of the artistic gesture into everyday life, a decision to disrobe and yet not reveal completely, the fact the performance took place in front of friends, without a formal audience), the fact the performance was meticulously documented and directed grants us the right to think of it as what will later be called a performance art piece, or as Ješa Denegri suggests, his first performance art piece and one of the first art pieces in the Yugoslav context documented and realised through technical and linguistic aspects of photography as a medium. Furthermore, it grants us the right to establish the piece as something thought out (and directed) for a later audience that is yet to come. This is, of course, true for every photograph, but the status of this piece and even the status of its observers is shaken by the assertion of a performance piece, even if translated into the language of photography. It is precisely this sort of translation between media – translating a performance piece into the language of photography or film and vice versa – that is a key artistic strategy for Tomislav Gotovac, so *Showing the Elle* does indeed figure as the artist's manifesto.

Showing the Elle could be considered an artistic offset into open space, outside the 'protected' walls of the art institution, the atmosphere of a certain shyness or lacking exposure notwithstanding, and not in the fact that the artist was embarrassed due to female presence, but because the piece was performed amongst friends and without passers-

16
Everything is a film and all is film directing for Gotovac. His remark: "It is all a movie", is well-known and widely quoted.

17
Per Ješa Denegri: "Pojedinačna mitologija Tomislava Gotovca" (The Individual Mythology of Tomislav Gotovac), in: *Tomislav Gotovac*, Zagreb: HFS & MSU, 2003

18
"Showing the Elle is a manifesto of sorts", from an interview by Goran Trbuljak and Hrvoje Turković with Tomislav Gotovac, magazine *Film*, issue 10-11, pp. 39-66, Zagreb, 1977, op.cit.: *Tomislav Gotovac*, Zagreb: HFS & MSU, 2003, p. 25

by. As well as here, I have found this aspect of lacking expo-sure or 'vulnerability', which will be discussed later, in the work of Sanja Iveković. It was hardly a moment ago that I claimed that the nineties were the point of Sanja Iveković's offset into the public space. First of all, it is necessary to correct this assertion. In fact, Sanja Iveković had her first experience with the public space (the way it is understood conventionally – as an open city space) as early as 1971 as a part of a series of interventions in the urban space, by the "new generation of Zagreb plastics" entitled *Possiblities for '71*. This project of interventions, alongside the similar ones that followed [19], was initiated and realised by the then Gal-lery of Contemporary Art (today's Museum of Contemporary Art) in accordance with the concept by Davor Matičević, on the wave of institutional tendencies towards a democratisa-tion of art, an attempt at making it more accessible to a wid-er audience and of its permeation with the city and socialist society. [20] Alongside these two early *site-specific* pieces, Sanja Iveković performed in an open space to be precise - a partially open space, with *Triangle*, 1979.

Triangle is a solo performance staged on the artist's balcony during one of Tito's visits to Zagreb. The work was comprised of four black-and-white photographs and pre-sented as a set of photographs in the artist's solo exhibition catalogue at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, 1980 [21], although it was not exhibited there. It is accompa-nied by the artist's description of the work, where she puts an accent on its duration – a mere 18 minutes – and offers precise 'reading instructions' which put the performative aspect of her work in the foreground, despite its documen-taristic, photographic materiality:

"The action takes place on the day that the president visits the city, and develops as an intercommunication between three persons:

1. a person on the roof of the tall building across the street from my apartment
2. myself, on the balcony
3. a policeman on the street in front of my house.

Because of the cement construction of the balcony, only the person on the roof can actually see me and follow the action. My assumption is that this person has binoculars and walk-ie-talkie apparatus. I notice that the policeman on the street also has a walkie-talkie. The action begins when I walk out onto the balcony and sit on a chair. I sip whiskey, read a book, lift up my skirt and make gestures simulating mas-turbation. After some time, a policeman rings my doorbell and orders that the person and objects be removed from the balcony." [22]

The fact that the instructions describe the course of action meticulously, as well as the fact that the piece was published in a catalogue, rather than being part of an exhi-

19
6th Zagreb Salon, "Gulliver in Wonderland" exhibition at the Korana sculpture park in Karlovac

20
Bojana Pejić offers an analysis of this kind of institu-tional politics thus: "...belonged to a trend in former Yugoslavia termed 'democratization' or 'socialization of art'; terms that explicitly indicated two things: that modernist experience (abstract art in particular), which in the Yugoslav Socialist state enjoyed a status of of-ficial (art) ideology, was not enough 'socialized' since

our Socialist Modernism (akin to all other modernisms) privileged 'rhetoric of purity' and disinterested artwork *above* the so-called. First-hand reality; the other impor-tant aspect of these city projects was that young artists who then opted for a conceptual approach introduced a new social role of the (Socialist) artist since their interventions in the urban environment did not end up in political monuments (at that time resorting exclusively to abstract shapes) or in 'non-political' female nudes, which populated our modern, Socialist cities.", in: Urška Jur-man (ed.), *Sanja Iveković: Public Cuts*, Ljubljana: Zavod P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E., 2006, p. 17

21
Sanja Iveković, *Performance/Installation*, Galerija suvremene umjetnosti (Gallery of Contemporary Art), Zagreb, 1980

22
Ibid.

Sanja Iveković
TROKUT (TRIANGLE)
1979

Performance / photographs
Time: 18 min

The action takes place on the day of the President Tito's visit to the city, and it
develops as intercommunication between three persons:
    1. a person on the roof of a tall building across the street of my apartment;
    2. myself, on the balcony;
    3. a policeman in the street in front of the house.
Due to the cement construction of the balcony, only the person on the roof can
actually see me and follow the action. My assumption is that this person has
binoculars and a walkie - talkie apparatus. I notice that the policeman in the
street also has a walkie - talkie.
The action begins when I walk out onto the balcony and sit on a chair. I sip
whiskey, read a book, and make gestures as if I perform masturbation. After a
period of time the policeman rings my doorbell and orders that «the persons
and objects are to be removed from the balcony»

Savska 1
Zagreb, 10 May 1979
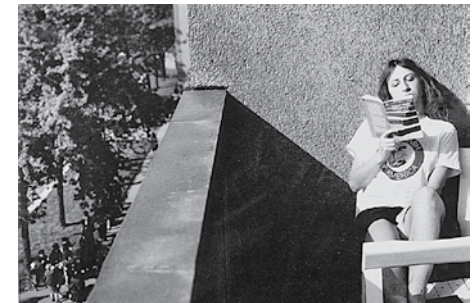
bition, points us again in the direction of its being intended for a postponed, subsequent audience. Regarding its immediate context, the context at the time it came into being, I would like to reference the brilliant study of Bojana Pejić, *Metonymical Moves* in which the author analyses the site-specific aspect of this piece, firstly from the point of the balcony as an iconographic motive in the history of Western painting and secondly, within the context of enhanced security where the relation of gaze and power lies bare.[23] However, I will attempt to speak of this piece as a public space art piece, or to be more precise, as if it were public space art, examining the base-text by Bojana Pejić ever so closely and going against the grain.

"In the *Triangle* performance, Iveković introduces all that is necessary in public-and-political art: she tests and shifts the borders between the personal and public, between the erotic and ideological, and with her feminist (as well as anarchical) mind, places the personal within the political. Notwithstanding, it is hard to qualify *Triangle* as public art. Why? Because what Iveković's performative act on her balcony lacks is the chief condition for public art and this is *public space*, which is a 'corollary' of democracy. Apart from *Triangle*, which is in my view *the* public performance that announces an emergence of the democratic public space, all Iveković's other public works realized either in Zagreb or abroad belong to the late 1990s."[24]

However, is an artist's appearance in the public space only possible after the introduction of liberal democracy,

where the democratic public space is considered a stable sphere, where all citizens equally participate in rational discussion, a sphere of general inclusiveness and accessibility? If following in Lefort's footsteps we define democracy as a disappearance of any security and a disappearance of any certainty about the foundations of social life and public space as open, as a contingent space that appears precisely with the disappearance of any thoughts about the existence of absolute foundation that unifies the society, this idealistic public sphere is revealed as an illusion, and the public space can be seen as a space of elimination, a mere possession of certain privileged social groups. A step further allows us the concept of the so-called phantom public sphere, coined by Walter Lippman in 1925, according to which the public is a phantom since the democratic ideal is unattainable, and since there is no such thing as a united public. The term "phantom" is of analytic importance to us here, although not as a lost apparition that rises again with the advent of the democratic regime[25], but "phantom" as an illusion, that which it always was. Thus, I am adamant that this article only features the public as a phantom, as a quality that constitutes inhabits, but also penetrates the interior of the social subject, as a state exposure of the subject to the outside. Within this game of the inseparability and interconnectedness of the public and the private, external and internal, neither one of these pairs in the opposition is stable. In the same way, the exterior or the public can be read back as unstable, as a state Thomas Keenan claims to be one "of

23
Bojana Pejić: "Metonymical Moves", in: cat. *Sanja Iveković: Is This My True Face*, Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998

24
Bojana Pejić, "Public Cuts", in: Urška Jurman (ed.), *Sanja Iveković: Public Cuts,* Ljubljana: Zavod P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E., 2006, p. 18

25
Let us try to envision this same performance after 1990, possibly during a visit from the Pope or the President of the United States.

vulnerability". It is my opinion that this brief appearance of the public makes the work of Sanja Iveković public, in the sense that such public art questions or criticises the mere conditions of the emergence of the public. This perturbance of the interior [26] is a perturbance of the exterior all the same, having exposed its fragility, vulnerability and lack of firm foundations. This moment of the reactivation of its contingent nature is a moment of the political.

There is yet another aspect that I find pliable to the interpretation of this piece as a public space work, which is the question of exposure, and not the kind emerging from the relation of the observer and the observed as a power struggle [27], but the state of being exposed to others as a public field. Hannah Arendt defines the public sphere as the "space of appearance" [28], and it is precisely by accentuating the appearance that she links the public sphere with the field of the visual, which – as noted by Rosalyn Deutsche – unintentionally opens the possibility for visual art to play a role in widening the public space. Thus, exposure to others lies at the heart of democratic public life, and the main concern does not lie with the way we present ourselves to others, but the way we respond to the emergence of othersand within this framework art can open space for the viewer's ability to have a public life. In *Triangle*, there is a communi-

cation between three persons: Sanja Iveković as a performer, the observer from the roof of the building across the street and the policeman on the road below, where the communication situation is suggested by the mere title of the piece. However, the fact that the work consists of four photographs introduces a sort of discomfort in this stable communication scheme, as if opening up a space for an encounter with someone outside of the triad, it necessarily draws in the bystander, not as a direct witness, but as a subsequent observer, and then invokes another type of view: one in which there is no longer talk of our (or the artist's) exposure to the outside, but of our (or anyone else's) treatment of this exposure.

Speaking of the democratic public space as an illusion, Rosalyn Deutsche detects a certain agoraphobia – meaning a fear of the public space whose beginnings are in emptiness and loss. [29] Agoraphobia is usually a female fate; it is not necessary to point out how the streets and squares are spaces where males have more rights [30], so Iveković's staying on the balcony can be read as a certain agoraphobia, especially if we cross-view it with a piece by Tomislav Gotovac *Zagreb, I Love You* [31] in which the artist – having left the serene environment of nature and replaced it with a concrete jungle, no longer naked to the waist but completely nude – walks along the street and kisses it: "Tom Gotovac, nude, on the streets

26
"The more light, the less sight, and the less there is in the interior that allows 'man' to find comfort and protection, to find a ground from which to look", Thomas Keenan, "Windows: Of Vulnerability", in: Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Sphere*, p. 27

27
On the relation of gaze and power, find more in the aforementioned study by Bojana Pejić, "Metonymical Moves", in: cat. *Sanja Iveković: Is This My True Face*, Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998

28
"The *polis*... is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be... It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men... make their appearance explicitly." (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1958, pp. 198-199)

29
Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions – Art and Spatial Politics*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998, p. 325

30
Sanja Iveković approached this subject on the level of naming the streets and squares in Zagreb, all of which bear male names. The only crack in this naming hegemony is The Street of an Unknown Heroine, whom the artist found, contrary to her expectations, to have left for

battle against the Turks looking for her beloved husband, donning male garb!

31
Tomislav Gotovac, *Lying Naked on the Pavement, Kissing the Pavement (Zagreb, I Love You...). An Homage to Howard Hawks and His Film Hatari!*, performance with the symbolic birthdate of 13th November 1981 (a Friday), beginning at noon marked by the Grič cannon, as the 10th action-object.

Tom Gotovac, *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I Love You!)*, An Homage to Howard Hawks and His Film *Hatari!* (1961), Zagreb, Friday, 13. 11. 1981
Photo: Ivan Posavec

of Zagreb, whilst kissing the pavement of his main street as if making love to his homeland, as if copulating with the surroundings that lie in a loving stretch beneath his feet".[32]

His performance *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I Love You...). A Hommage to Howard Hawks and His Film Hatari!* lasted a mere seven minutes and ended with the artist's arrest, which the artist had been counting on beforehand and which he 'directed' in advance (as many as three photographers took the directed photographs: Ivan Posavec, Mio Vesović and Boris Turković), as implied by the title. Hawks' film from the title speaks of hunters in Africa who hunt for wild animals on behalf of zoos, and its opening sequence is a scene of an unsuccessful hunt for a rhinoceros. Apart from this explicit film reference, which leads us to read the performance as an artistic revolt against the police state, at this point we must remember that this is a performance the artist first staged in 1971, whilst running through Belgrade in the nude[33], and even point out that this is the first act where Gotovac displays his complete nudity

to the public (as opposed to the 'shy' half-nakedness of the proto-performance *Showing the Elle*). The performance was documented as a scene in the controversial film by Lazar Stojanović *Plastic Jesus*.[34] As observed by Ješa Denegri, this is the right moment to ask about the status of the performance: was it a conscious performance by Gotovac, albeit in a different medium, the medium of film, albeit by a different author, or is Gotovac merely an 'actor' in this film? The answer to this question is visible again from the future, from Gotovac's later artistic strategy: he brings into his numerous performances in the urban landscape his often naked body as an operational principle, which Ješa Denegri finds a kind of a *ready-made* act, in which Gotovac takes himself for an object and treats his own body as an object and subject of the artistic act. Furthermore, it was just moments ago that we established translation – translating the performance into the language of photography or film or vice versa – as his key artistic strategy. Seeing as this later performance allows us to read *Streaking* as a performance and not a script, so does *Streaking* – precisely in its documentary aspect, in the fact that it was retained and screened as a film (again, subsequently!) – opens up a space for a different reading of *Zagreb, I Love You...* as a re-enactment and subtle dedication to *Plastic Jesus*, as the only way to promote it, seeing as it was banned for the following ten years and thus unavailable to an audience.

32
Bora Ćosić, *Mixed Media*, Beograd: VBZ; Novi Sad: Zavod za kulturu Vojvodine, Centar za nove medije_kuda.org, 2010, p. 353

33
Trčanje gol u centru grada (Streaking), Beograd, Sremska ulica, 1971

34
Plastic Jesus is the final exam of Lazar Stojanović at the Belgrade Academy, one of the most controversial Yugoslavian films which was not seen – paradoxically – by many. In fact, the film was made in 1971, and the author was tried the next year, and was not convicted until 1973, with the film only being retrieved from the bunker in 1990. It was tried as a pornographic and anti-socialist work and the recording of Tito right before his well-known speech in 1968 allegedly caused the most trouble, as he seemingly took the side of the insurgent students, thus calming their rebellion. Tito looks a nervous man, confused and insecure, followed by a close-up of a hearty guffaw from Gotovac.

I have attempted to read these selected works in search of those moments that challenge the dominant interpretations. Within those moments I was looking for flashes of the utopian consciousness which could rip them from the clutches of the master narratives that obfuscate them. I was also searching for those works successfully dimmed by the master narratives, be it those that were involved in the making of the independent state of Croatia, that spin the tale of the age-old struggle for liberation, or the liberal ones, that assume a tardiness in constantly catching up with the West. In saving their utopian substratum, let us sign off with the following lines: "Eisenstein once got a letter from one of the insurgent seamen, who thanked him for his film, identifying with 'one of those people under the canvas'. The director had no heart to tell him that the canvas was a pure dramatic fabrication, but was interested in the fact that the observer, a witness to an action, after having been exposed to the workings of empathy, can change his memory of a given fact."[35]

-Translated from Croatian by Ivana Pripuzović

35
Jay Leyda, *Eisenstein at Work*, Pantheon, Unknown
Printing Edition, 1982, per: Bora Ćosić, *Mixed Media*,
p. 283
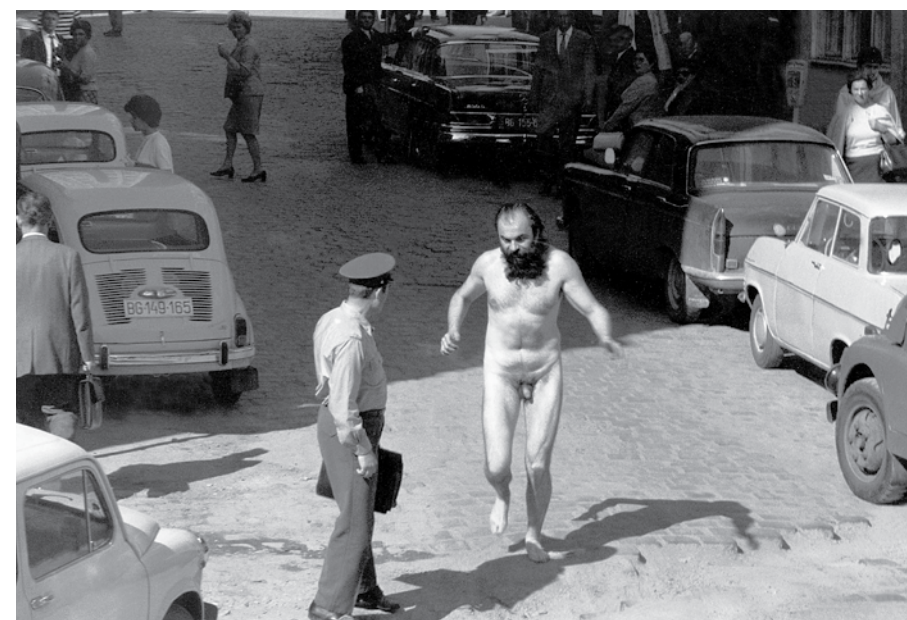
Tom Gotovac, *Streaking*
Running naked in the center of the city, action, Beograd, 1971
Photo: Branko Perak

ALINA ŞERBAN

**Rethinking Privacy.
On Theatricality and
Self-Representation
in the Work of Geta
Brătescu**

In various discussions accompanying a painful, yet euphoric process of dissociation of the East from the socialist political imaginarium, the notion of *privacy* has been extensively put forward when speaking about the material and mental restraints in the world in which an artist had to exist and construct his or her discourse. Looking back at the historical course of intellectual production in Romania during the times of communist welfare policies, it seems inevitable to reconsider the social (and cultural) significance of *privacy*.

This strategic turn towards *privacy* as a productive perspective for looking at the contradictory status of an art/ist within the framework of the actually existing socialism arose from the fact that private experience makes visible revelatory directions in the interpretation of allegorical and aesthetic strategies inhabited by artists under communism. Therefore, it is crucial to understand, in the light of the abrupt introduction of socialism in Romania, to what extent the traditional home and studio became an area of territorial sovereignty disclosing a dialectical exchange between the political order and aesthetic discourse, radically affecting the understanding of the very practice of art. Considering the forward-backward relation of private/public, inside/outside, I propose a reflection on the social and ideological character of privacy and its recognition as a determining factor of re-invention and/or re-definition of (artistic and individual) subjectivity, instead of reading *privacy* in terms of total seclusion and disconnection from the collective realities. Thefore, it is important to point that the structural transformations of Romanian post-war society affected the modernist pursuit of art autonomy, the artist being forced to apply specific ways to break with the inflections of politics

into culture, such as allegorical procedures, theatrical operations, re-contextualization of symbols.

In this text, I attempt to problematize the private/public dichotomy, by looking at a selected number of the self-referential and self-reflexive works of Geta Brătescu, providing a critical examination of the studio's function and its significance for artistic practice.

The theatrical character of her conceptual art, in particular those works where the artist herself becomes the subject of investigation, reformulates the understanding of the authorial Self and expands conventional understanding of the work's relationship with the place of its creation. As a line of contact between public and private spheres, the studio becomes a territory of both ethical and aesthetic choice. Contrary to Daniel Buren, for example, Brătescu argues for the 'materialization' of the studio, reconsidering the place of production not in terms of art economy and the institutionalization of the artwork (as Buren did), but through the politics of space and processes of subjectivation. The studio is here more than a physical location from where the work originates and more than a refuge from the control of official (cultural) dogmas. Brătescu's conceptualization of the studio is constructed through an ontological commitment.

A reflection on the topic of privacy and visual arts has to take place against the background of the oppressive climate of the Romanian post-war culture. In this respect, we must depart from the very problems that generated the need for *privacy* in a socialist state. In an environment where the feeling of being under constant surveillance characterized daily life, safeguarding *privacy* became a symbol of resistance against the enforcement of ideology upon the

private sphere. The erosion of the private sphere due to state-regulating policies led to the passivisation of the individual in public sphere, with just formal participation in the processes of decision-making. This eventually created the premises for the appearance of a "secondary public space" [1], the private apartment and the studio, less controlled by the authorities. The new social space that emerged at the confluence of the official and the purely private, granted voice to alternative artistic activities, some of which were devoted to the denunciation of punitive mechanisms that sustained the nationalistic ideology. There were serious attempts of the ideological apparatus to violate the "private-public space" [2] through the implementation of strict domestic policies [3]. The role played by the private environment during the communist regime in Romania was primarily that of enabling a certain autonomy against the nationalist pressures of Ceaușescu's era.

In light of the wider geopolitical shifts and dramatic oscillations of local cultural policies between the denunciation of Socialist Realism during the National Congress of Union of Artists (UAP) in 1965 [4] and the cultural repression that began with the speech delivered by

Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1971 [5], the private and semi-private locations such as flats, studios and off-side spaces constituted the fruitful terrain for artists to break with the formalist language of official art and to re-address issues of identity, power relations, gender, etc. The gesture of self-isolation must be neither fetishized nor marginalized – there is no intrinsic quality of the private space that makes it a suitable territory for artistic resistance, political subversion and emergence of progressive and critical art, nor can it be considered as inherently separated from the world, or secondary in considering the emergence of new artistic practices.

The ambiguous position of the artist/intellectual within in the socialist bloc, where all spheres of life were regulated by yearly plans and Party congresses, has led number of members of civil society and representatives of the cultural domain to celebrate *the private space* as a cornerstone of freedom and individual creative expression in opposition to state-censored *public space*. In this dichotomy, *the private* is characterized by intimacy, self-referentiality and authenticity, while *the public* is described as a depersonalized and formalized territory, where individuals, deprived of their subjectivity, mimic participation and dialogue.

In line with this oversimplified equation, one can ask in which way the Eastern European perspective differs from the Western as far as the concept of privacy and private

1
A term introduced by Viktor Voronkov, Jan Wielgohs, "Soviet Russia" in: Detlef Pollack, Jan Wielgohs (eds.), *Dissident and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe,* Hants: Ashgate 2004, p. 113

2
Ibid.

3
Probably the most frightening interference of politics into the domestic cocoon during Ceaușescu's time was

the elaboration of nationalist agendas, which through the 1966 'Decree 770' banned abortion in Romania.

4
One should note that the reformist policy initiated by the Romanian political leader Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej just before his death in 1965, which consisted of an official reconsideration of the relationships with the Soviet Union in favor of the West, was continued by Ceaușescu, affecting also the cultural domain. In the light of the new political directions, the highly ideological art of Socialist Realism is publicly repudiated in the plenary session of the Union of Artists in 1965.

5
During June 1971, Ceaușescu travels to China and North Korea. At his return to the country, the internal policies in Romania experience a dramatic change from a more liberalized life that has defined the first years of Ceaușescu's rule to a life marked by material deprivation, cultural isolation, prohibitions and rules of behaviors. These visits stirred the mind of Ceaușescu who became

fascinated with the spectacle dedicated to the cult of personality. During his speech from July 1971, he announces the change in the directions of governance. The *Thesis from July* (Tezele din Iulie), as they are known, mobilize a desire to assure the legitimacy of Romanian national-communism by purifying all sectors of life from any cosmopolitan influences; the newly elaborated cultural doctrine being called *protochronism*.

space is concerned? One can argue that in both geographies privacy refers to the concealment of information and the existential right to separate "I" from the rest. However, the distinction lies in the way the notion is represented and experienced. In the East privacy is a normative category that mirrors an objective reality and is regarded as instrumental, securing the artist's environment from the effective strategies of power's ideological inoculation. In the West, privacy is recognized as a value, an individual's born-right that permits him or her to control the flow of information regarding the private aspects of his life.

It appears that the need for isolation (privacy) became a sort of precondition for artistic production and experiment during the socialist times. Today it seems crucial to ask: what were the actual possibilities for artists to clearly formulate a space of resistance outside of the public sphere? What were the necessary resources to maintain the independence of the private realm and its logic of self-seclusion? How private was the private space where artists worked and lived? In the post-communist era, the notion of *privacy* has gained tremendous importance and become subject of numerous pub-
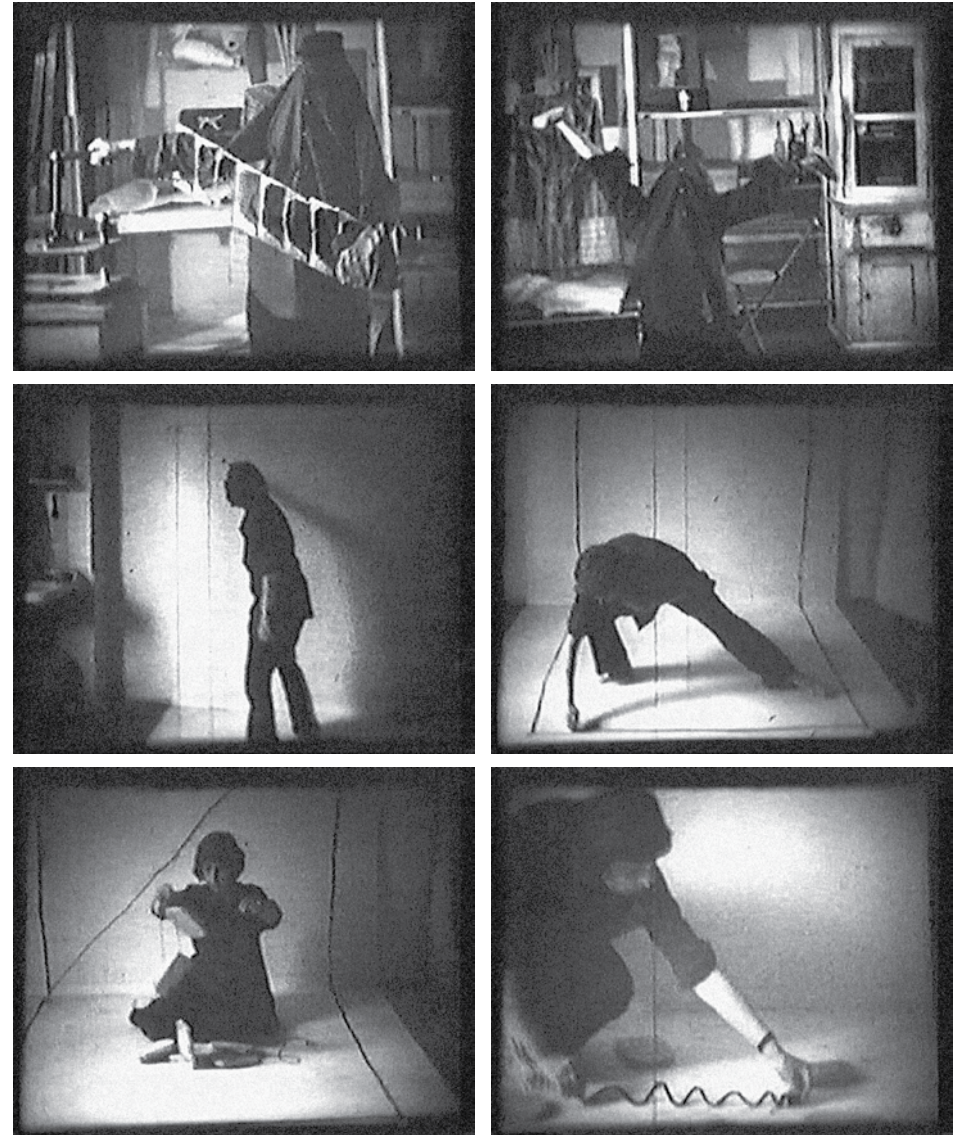
The Studio, 1978, film 8mm, camera: Ion Grigorescu, film stills
Courtesy: the artist & MNAC

lic debates, theoretical proposals and sociological investigations. A studio, a flat, and a writer's drawer occupy a special position in the process of the negotiation of personal space. It is essential, however, to overcome the traditional perspective on the studio, seen as a retreat from the compromises of the public life, and to think through its ambivalent position: a social habitat that reacts and permanently adapts to the procedures carried out by the "outside" world and simultaneously – a personal frame of action which brings the "inside" within the political realm.

I therefore propose to reflect upon the discursive and non-discursive practices of Geta Brătescu that stem from the particular way of the conceptualization of personal space (the studio) as a "vehicle," "exhibition room", "mythical location", "surface" or "context" of the work. Brătescu's artistic practice has revealed a new kind of inner tension which expands the meanings of visual representation beyond formal aestheticism and material conventions and leads further to a specific engagement of the spectator with the intimate, physical and mental space of the artist. Should the private space here be thought of as a space of experimentation or/and a social space that enables the resistance and critical gestures? It must be said in relation to this that Brătescu's particular grammar and artistic strategy depart from questions of self-reflection, space/body relationship, personal narration and autobiography. Paradoxically, within a cultural tradition that sustained the political ritual, Brătescu assumes the stance of neutrality, much in the syntax of modernism.

Not surprisingly, Brătescu introduces theatrical procedures in order to bridge the two realities (the public and private), and to make explicit the active interchange between them. Located between the spaces of art and life, the works of Brătescu are the result of a long process of conceptualization and elaboration, which starts from a self-questioning and from an interrogation into how art must be communicated and displayed. She writes in a text published in her 1985 book *Atelier Continuu* (The Ongoing Studio): "I can compare art to life, it is just as absurd as life which melts away so as to cease to be, consuming itself in order to reach its opposite; art can transcend matter only in matter. Incandescence attached to the core of the coal, the work of art is, because of its own nature, awkward. The artist carries within herself a histrionic person, a being descending into an act, expressing herself. Subject and object at once, the artist is, in her Chaplin-like destiny, tragic and comical at once; sublime, in her lucid assertion." [6]

The directions and strategies of her artistic practice highlight the fact that the gesture of the art/ist must be experienced by the spectator and made immediately available to him/her through a *mise-en-scène*. Geta Brătescu explores the status of artist, re-situated outside of the collective, and reconsiders the matter of artifice in art, the status of the artifact and the aspect of "deceit", inherent to art. She understands art as *a locus of utopia*, and artist as a generator of an artifice. "The artifice is a deceit and adaptation. […] The artifice is the product of an inquisitive combinatorial mind… what it is, but also what might be… When the thing does not bear this mark, it is not acknowledged as sign of

[6]
Geta Brătescu, *Atelier Continuu* (The Ongoing Studio),
București: Cartea Românească, 1985, p. 67

individuality and/or of a social community. Culture is an artifice, it is not artificial in relation to human nature; it is part of human nature. Nature has created man as its artifice; humans are naturally artificial by their own nature. The most artificial of them all is the artist (the poet). The artist lives between two mirrors. Understanding art also means grasping the meaning of the artifices that built it up".[7]

The work of Brătescu must be viewed in the framework of a particular relationship between the narratives of politics and narratives of the "private" which dominate the public sphere in Romania. The studio is appropriated as a screen, mirror, as a self-centered environment where the artist freely confesses her playfulness, where the performed gestures disclose alternative scripts to daily precariousness. As Brătescu argues, *the studio* is not a fixed location; *the studio* becomes the other Self of *the artist*, continuously accompanying her everywhere.

Brătescu's preoccupation with the studio can be traced back to the beginning of 1969 and a series of drawings and tapestries which incorporate the tools she used in her daily artistic practice or the objects from her studio: a loom, a chair, a working desk. These elements were later physically displayed during her first exhibition entitled *Studio I* and held in 1971 at Orizont Gallery in Bucharest. This exhibition constitutes, according to the artist, the beginning of a re-tracing and remapping of the various perspectives and iterations of the studio. In 1972 she conceived the exhibition *Studio II* and as a continuation, the exhibition *Studio III*

in 1976. The remarkable quality of the series of exhibitions lies in a profound conceptualization of the studio as a self-referential reality and an iconic/symbolic spatial structure. The three exhibitions explored this topic by using different mediums through which specific mechanisms of representation were addressed, from pictorial to cinematographic procedures, from literal references towards a dematerialization of physical reality.

In the group show *Artists photographing* (1979) at the gallery Căminul Artei (The House of Art) in Bucharest, Brătescu presented the photo-montage *The Studio. The Invocation of Drawing*. The work is composed of fragmented perspectives of the artist's studio and its surroundings in Bucharest. In the middle of the composition is the artist with her back turned to the spectator, holding in her hands two pieces of wood covered with black textile. It seems that the position of the artist implies the freezing of one of the sequences of a ritual that she is performing. The subtitle of the work, *The Invocation of Drawing*, offers a clue to the problem addressed by the artist: "Movement in time, in space, movement of body, movement of mind, physical movement, everything is drawing. Drawing connects the actual space with the abstract one… Everything we do we decrypt and encrypt through drawing".[8] Brătescu thus identifies the reconstitution of the studio and its spatial surroundings through a collage of photographic images with the gesture of drawing which reconstructs the studio piece by piece, perceptually and cognitively, in order to construct relations towards everyday life. If in the series of three exhibitions she

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[7] Geta Brătescu, "Despre artificial" (On Artificial), in:
Geta *Brătescu. Catalogue*, Bucharest: Muzeul Naţional
de Artă al României, 1999, p. 71

[8] Geta Brătescu, 2004, unpublished writings

The Studio. Invocation, 1979 photocollage
Courtesy: the artist & MNAC collection

pays attention to the very process of reconstructing and deconstructing the narrative of a studio into visual sequences of ludic and abstract quality, the 1979 photo-montage appropriates the language of document.

In 1978 Brătescu made the film using once again the title *The Studio*. Based on a written scenario, the film explores the mental and physical environment of the artist, *the studio*. The film is structured into three distinct sequences: The Sleep, The Awakening and The Game (seen as key moments of a lifetime). The camera, in the written scenario denominated as the Eye, infiltrates in the artist's universe (the studio) surveying the environment as a voyeur. In the first two parts the camera passively captures the space and the artist's performance. The artist is seen lying asleep in her studio, abandoning her conscious presence among the objects. After she awakes, the camera follows her at work. The artist draws a vertical and a horizontal line on white panels, taking as coordinates her own body. In the delineated square where she places herself, she tries unsuccessfully to draw a diagonal using her own stature. Suggesting that one cannot live but according to one's own "measures", the process of sizing oneself engages questions of self-knowledge and introspection. The impossibility to overcome one's own condition becomes apparent in the last sequence, The Game, culminating with the transformation of the artist into a puppet. In the first two sequences the camera appears as an outer presence, which documents the space, the artist's studio and the artist's action. In the third part, the Eye becomes a pronounced presence, which the artist is aware of and for which she therefore starts to perform.

Towards White (an action represented through nine

photographic sequences, 1975), *Self-Portrait, Towards White* (an action represented through seven photographic sequences, 1975) and *From Black to White* (object, fabric, wood, tempera, 1976) were presented for the first time as a single installation during the artist solo show *Studio III – Towards White* in Galateea Gallery, in Bucharest in 1976. The installation was developed as a space-specific, performative work in which the artist investigated the relation between physiognomy, body and the surrounding space. We encounter the artist's obsession with self(portrait), relieved of those elements that are considered supplemental, and displayed in a filmic manner which brings the work of Brătescu towards a visual essentialism and towards an intensification of a certain pictorial quality. Within the context of Romanian and Eastern European art histories, her practice shows how an apparent formal problem becomes a matter of the investigation of the very nature of her condition, illuminating the problems such as the autonomy of the art object, the dematerialization of body in space and the spatial and temporal dislocations between the stage and the spectator, between nature and artifice, between sensory perception and conceptual semantics. This is how the artist comments on the exhibition: "Towards white. White is also said to be a sign of self-amputation. The transition from black to white truly operates in the direction of the transition from accumulation, implosion, to release, explosion, atomization. On the other hand, in physics, black is the lack of colour, white is the totality of colours. Darkness is black, light is white. Darkness oppresses, it is heavy; light renders things dainty, washes them; in the dark, my contour is sometimes unbearable; in the light, I dissolve. Exhibitions started to turn into

social acts. In some aspects, it is a good thing; in others, it isn't. The words written by a young man – probably still at school – on the cover of a catalogue contain a wonderfully juvenile gusto: 'White prevails. Thank you'. But these words cannot be extracted from the continuous texture of the sentences enveloping and concealing, undeservedly, our ingenuity. I fear the words uttered under the shade of a flag." [9]

Towards White, 1975, photomontage
Photos: Mihai Brătescu
Courtesy: the artist

[9]
Geta Brătescu, *Atelier Continuu* (The Ongoing Studio),
București: Cartea Românească, 1985, p. 76

The modularity of Brătescu's world is the result of a carefully projected *mise-en-scène*, of an orchestrated choreography of the artist's body/mind. The scenic sight/look implied by her art objectifies the body and the face of the artist
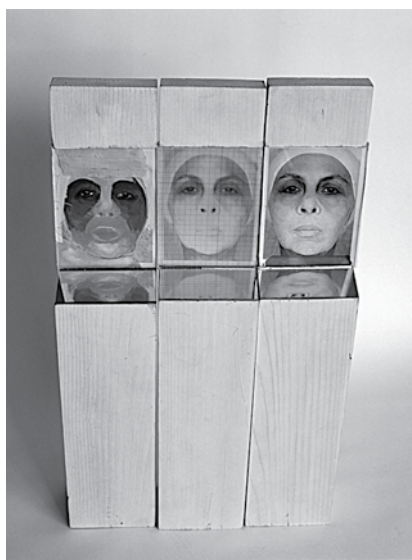
Pillars, 1985, three pieces, mixed media
Courtesy: the artist & MNAC collection

creating a space of experimentation and sensibility from a combination of different materials and means of expression, placing uncanny objects, actions, events, and her body side by side in a dialogue, or in opposition to each other. Theatricality argues for a subjective view that regulates the position of the spectator, his or her engagement with the work, the Gaze and, further on, the Space. Her reliance on a theatrical mode of expression can be linked to the biographical aspect of her work, which the artist herself has often referred to. [10]

10
I am refferring here to several discussions with the artist
as part of my research.

In relation to the process of artistic production, she refers to a certain feeling of uneasiness with the world which would suggest a conscious exile in her studio, in family circle and in her writings. [11] Brătescu never performed in front of an audience, although her passion for theater and dance is at the heart of her work and she has never been photographed or filmed during her happenings or actions, except by family and friends.

The three-part work of the *Studio III* exhibition can be perceived as three sequences or acts of a theatrical play, where the acting role, assumed by the artist, brings into discussion questions of self-identity and its annulment. This is invoked through a successive overlapping of plastic bags on the artist's face in *Self-Portrait, Towards White*. The issues related to the dematerialization of object and the body in space are prominent in *Towards White* while a general concern with ethical codes can be traced in *Self-Portrait, Towards White*, generating a reconsideration of the social and political context in which the artist lives, shifting the discussion towards a critical gaze on the everyday reality.

Brătescu's self-portraits are grounded in seriality and an understanding of the face as a surface where the artist is balancing on the line between the fictional and the real, the theatrical and the poetical. The strategy of masking the actual features of her physiognomy through make-up disguise the actual pleasure the artist takes in posing, an elusive narcissism, pointing to an introspective manner of reading the relationship between art and life, and advocating the personal history as a subtle oppositional position towards the social reality.

11
Ibid.
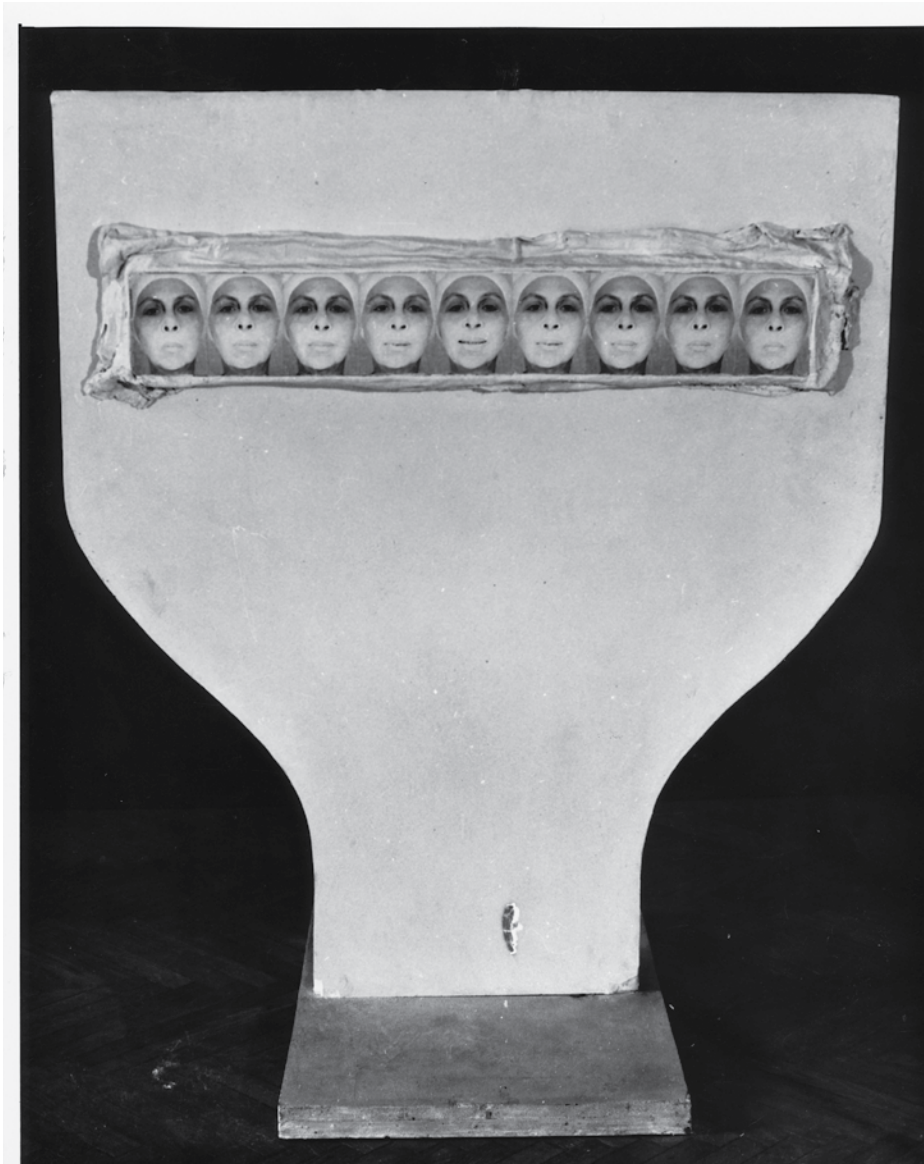
The Smile, 1978, object, photography, tempera gause, plaster 100x80x50cm
Courtesy: the artist

In the film *Hands* (1977, camera by Ion Grigorescu) subtitled *For the eye, the hand of my body reconstitutes my portrait* the hands of the artist are the protagonist. Through a cinematic succession of suggestive gestural movements, the hands are seeing, selecting, playing with small objects and then drawing their linear profile on the table, providing an alternative mode of reconstructing the artist's portrait as well as the surroundings of the studio. The provocative and repetitive choreography of the hands' movement, and the expressiveness of their form connote a process of identification. The dialogue between the hands delivers a constant dynamic between what is shown (the objects, the studio, and the artist's environment) and what is not shown or seen by the viewer – the artist's face.

The work of Geta Brătescu derives from the way in which she *inhabits* the context, and it is exactly the notion of the context that is brought forward as what determines the meaning-making in the process of artistic production. Norman Bryson argues that "the work of art is recognized not only as reflecting its context, but mediating it, reflecting *upon* it and the work is understood as not simply passive with regard to the cultural forces that have shaped it, but active – it produces its own range of social effects, it acts upon its surrounding world". [12] The growing theatricalization of Brătescu's art express a subliminal attempt at a different conceptualization of the status of the author. Her work further suggests that the constant interiorization and aestheticization of the personal space (the studio) leads to

[12]
Norman Bryson, "Introduction: Art and Subjectivity" in:
Mieke Bal, *Looking in: The Art of Viewing*, Amsterdam:
Overseas Publishing Association, 2001, p. 2

the rewriting of subjectivity, thereby generating a different way of experiencing the outer world. A complicated interplay between two different authorial positions determines the inner dynamics of Brătescu's work – the artist-creator (more anchored in the modernist conventions) and the playful artist (deconstructing those conventions). The theatrical gesture marks the gap between reality and its representation, between nature and artifice and underlines the sculptural aspect of the studio, its potential to aquire form together with the works produced inside it. The studio appears as the stage on which the spectator is guided towards an aesthetic and psychological experience of a private, autonomous universe, a voyeuristic act through which the artist's fictional self-representations are revealed.

In a recent publication[13] Brătescu writes "...I have moved to my studio where the daylight can be adjusted. When I need it, I turn on three lights which are hanging above the drawing board. This independence makes me feel good. It gives the quality of the stage to the studio, where the works can be perceived as decorum and I can look at myself as if I were an actor. I believe you have to live *the sense of artifice* in order to feel the need to express yourself. In the sphere of art, the word 'natural' is perceived as anachronistic. In still life – an apple, in the landscape – a tree, are objects clarifying the vision of space. In theater this is the stage; the stage is either set up 'properly', or it is delineated with a rope (as Tadeus Kantor did it),[14] or it is constructed by grouping the

13
Geta Brătescu, *Copacul din Curtea Vecină* (The Tree from the Neighbor's Yard), București: Fundația Culturala Secolul 21, 2009, pp. 190-91

14
In 1975 Brătescu travelled to Cracow, Poland where she met Tadeus Kantor and assisted on one of the theater performances of Cricot 2. The note from Brătescu's text refers to the manner in which the stage was separated from the audience.

Hands
For the eye, the hand of my body reconstitutes my portrait,
1977, film 8mm, camera: Ion Grigorescu, film stills
Courtesy: the artist & MNAC

people around a free place. Everything should be done in order to allow the feeling of convention to emerge. The actors might move among the audience, but then the acting artifice devours the public and the visual expression; everything depends on the way in which the space is staged. […] The spatial quality of all arts determines our senses to communicate. We say: how harmonious is the color of this painting or how strident it is, but we can also say: how round is this musical piece or how sharp are these sounds. Art, whatever its field might be, provokes sensory reactions first, and intellectual reactions later. Dance gestures either comment on a musical piece, or refuse to interact with it; the gestures are created and are creating, more than in other arts, spatial trajectories belong to the domain of the sensible. The rhythm is an organic result: it is one of the qualities which define the artist; […] the rhythm is dependent on the inner structure of man, on life and is obviously historically determined. One is the rhythm of renaissance Art, and other is the rhythm of Expressionist art; contemporary art – seen as a limit – consumes the experience of every possible rhythm; as its disquieting beauty".

Making visible the fragile delineation between private and public, inside and outside, artificial and natural, Brătescu's work mobilizes our gaze towards an authorial space that questions both the reality of art and the social and cultural habits that circumscribe it. It appears that Brătescu's intention is to free the work from the conditions of the material world, re-locating it in a self-regulated context that succeeds to decentralize the official narrative in a personal way by reinforcing a stagey attitude. The artist plays with visual deception, the concealment or masking of

identity enclosing the beholder into a space where the limits of fictitious and real are exercised. The fact that Brătescu resorts in her discourse to the studio as a cardinal point of mirroring herself highlights its complex conceptualization as a space where concrete and/or illusionary transactions between the outer world and the intimate world of the artist take place. Subjecting studio to analytic and poetic reformulations, Brătescu calls our attention to a strategy of self-distancing from the external world, which should not be perceived as a withdrawal. It rather suggests a symptomatic shift of the classical relationship between the audience and the stage and a re-definition of the function of the artistic site.

ALEKSANDRA JACH

The Only Way Out.
Transgression in Pitch-
In Culture

The notion of "transgression" will accompany us in a search for a re-reading of the activities practised within the Pitch-In Culture, a name applied to independent activities of a group of artists active in Łódź during the 1980s. [1] This specific community, or "way-of-being-with", resides in the "pitch-in" gesture, meaning a monetary contribution to a common goal. On a very basic level – i.e. in the name of this phenomenon – we must confront the complex structure of a collective. It is a notion related to the sphere of economy, that of production, exchange and consumption. Those who "pitch in" simultaneously participate in material and symbolic costs. "Pitching-in" has nothing to do with a gift – it is never a "pure gift" – but describes the acceptance and recognition of a donor, while at the same time assuming a cooperative structure. The "pitch-in culture" is based on relations between its participants, relations that can be understood in terms of mutual gratification. The contribution is clearly indicated; it implies "participation" at different levels of involvement.

The suggestions made in this text are a contribution to a rethinking of the selected "independent activities" and an attempt to apply new rhetorical figures and new theoretical notions in their interpretation. The text is based on an analysis of several selected activities and works that represent not the Pitch-In Culture itself, but its philosophical

and theoretical implications or potentials, contemporary to the movement, among which are: anarchism, nihilism, the notions of the destructive and the "embarrassing". Such tendencies and links resulted in the difficulty of the movement's institutionalisation. [2]

I would like to discuss the features of this phenomenon that provoke us to identify its crucial facets in its 21st century reception. What can we find "for ourselves" in the particular activities of the Pitch-In Culture and in the decade sealed by a symbolic date: the year 1989, when Solidarity, having won the semi-free parliamentary elections, designated the first non-communist Prime Minister? Why are counterculture, underground or anti-institutional practices more and more important, not only in Polish art history? Perhaps it is because we are just looking for phenomena which could not easily "take place" in the canon of the global artworld. In my research, however, I would like to refrain from dialectic thinking, believing that it is precisely non-reducible notions that allow for constant movement, for "transgressing" corporeal, cultural, geographical and other limitations, which is a necessary move in the "search for alternatives" to the oppressing rules of the global capitalist system. The attempts at describing constant movement and progress are conceived in a non-linear way: as the shifting of borders, as the necessity of confrontation and conflict, as fluidity.

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[1] The notion of transgression appears in relevant critical literature discussing the Pitch-In Culture, among others, in the text by Jolanta Ciesielska, "Transgresje w sztuce polskiej lat 80-tych" (Transgressions in Polish art of the 1980s.), in *Republika bananowa. Ekspresja lat 80*. (Banana Republic. Expression in the 1980s), exhibition catalogue, Wrocław: OKiS, 2008, pp. 3-16. A similar perspective can also be found in the text by Dorota Monkiewicz,

"Zbigniew Libera. Some Biographical Observations on Polish Video in the 1980s", in Piotr Krajewski, Violetta Kutlubasis-Krajewska (eds.): *The Hidden Decade. Polish Video Art 1985-1995*, Wrocław: WRO, 2010, pp. 295-305. In the same book, Piotr Krajewski discusses transgression in the context of the works of Zbigniew Libera and Jerzy Truszkowski, see Piotr Krajewski, "The Hidden Decade. An Outline of the History of Polish Video Art 1985-1995", op.cit., pp. 174-215

[2] This is partly due to the fact that the above notions are usually perceived negatively not only in capitalism but also in socialism. The author herself is aware of the fact

that the will to reinvoke them results in the will to give them value, which is revealed in the notion of "potential" used here, which denotes not only a scale of possibilities but also the competence and efficiency connected with it.

Pitch-In Culture, as a creation with anarchist roots, based in the affirmation of the "being with", is, from this perspective, an attractive research topic. [3] It is a gesture of transgression torn out from dialectics – communist regime versus society. Research into the Pitch-In Culture will then be, in the words of Miško Šuvaković, a questioning of "the canons and normality in art and its canonical theory and respective contexts of culture and society – submitting them, namely, to fundamental redefinitions. Transgression is violation of law or order: in geological terms, it is penetration and spreading of the sea into the land". [4]

<div align="center">WAR STATE</div>

The identification of a "topical" character in the works and documentation of the Pitch-In Culture must result from an awareness of historical conditions that led to the formation of such modes of action. In his book on transformations in Polish art after 1945, Piotr Piotrowski writes that "the turn of the 1980s is a clear historic turning point visible both on a political level and on a psychological and cultural level". [5] The proclamation of Martial Law on December 13, 1981 which led to a severe infringement of civil rights, is a moment when the majority had to modify their way of life. The prohibition of group gatherings, of photographing, filming, travelling from one city to another without an official pass

are just some examples of the many resolutions introduced in the times of Martial Law. [6]

About two months earlier (on 26 October 1981), the international exhibition *Construction in Process* initiated by Ryszard Wasko and the artists and students associated with the Łódź Film School, opened in Łódź. [7] This grass-roots initiative established cooperation between local institutions in order to present to the local mainstream audiences the 'Western' world of art. With the help of the local board of Solidarity, the board of Budrem factory and state officials, they managed to invite 54 artists representing the post-constructivist and minimalist movements. Some of the artists came to Łódź and realised their works on site using materials that were available at hand. The avant-garde's attempts to create an international community of artists were written in the ideology surrounding *Construction in Process*. It was not by accident that the collection of works by the 'revolutionary artist' (a.r. collection) was the first gesture related to the foundation of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. In the following years, when Ryszard Stanisławski was its director, the museum's cultural politics was anchored precisely in the idea of internationalism – he presented Western artists who had developed or experimented with an avant-garde language. The main goal for the organisers of *Construction in Process* was also to educate Łódź audience by the presenta-

[3]
"Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works, just as communication is not a work or even an operation of singular beings, for community is simply their beings – their being suspended upon its limit", Jean Luc Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 31

[4]
Miško Šuvaković, *Epistemology of Art. Critical Design for Procedures and Platforms of Contemporary Art Education*, Belgrade, 2008, p. 65

[5]
Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty* (In the Shadow of Jalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe), Poznań: Rebis,2005, p. 429

[6]
www.pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Obwieszczenie_Rady_Pa%C5%84stwa_o_stanie_wojennym, last accessed March 10, 2011

[7]
The Board of Organisers consisted of Lechosław

Czołnowski, Jacek Jóźwiak, Andrzej Kamrowski, Mariella Nitosławska, Krzysztof Osada, Józef Robakowski, Tomasz Snopkiewicz, Maria Waśko and Piotr Zarębski. Ryszard Waśko and Józef Robakowski were working as lecturers at Łódź Film School and between 1971-1979, they were members of the Workshop of Film Form – the most radical group in the history of Polish film after 1945.
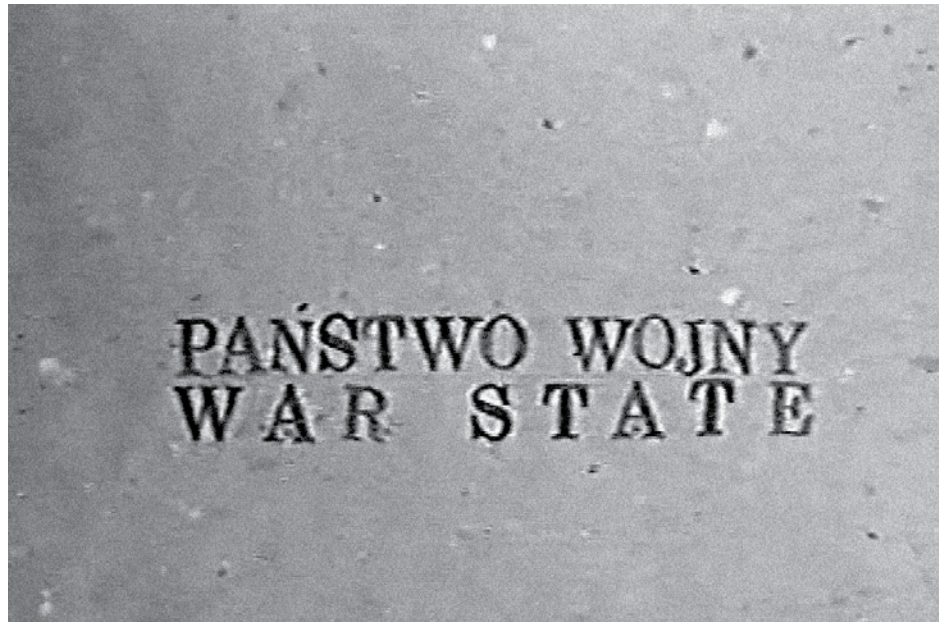
War State, film by Józef Robakowski, 1982, Osieki nad Wisła

Courtesy: Józef Robakowski (this image and all other images in the text)

tion of selected international artists.

Marked by the specific historical moment, *Construction in Process* evolved from an international exhibition into a social experiment. At the same time, the exhibition at the Budrem factory site became a manifestation of support for the Polish society and for the Solidarity movement. Artists were determined to come despite the lack of funding for fees or travel. Organisers covered only the costs of accommodation, production and food. Workers of the Budrem factory and of a few other places helped with the realisation of the works but during this collaborative process, the organisers often contacted the boards of the factories rather than individuals. Certain board members participated in this "informal exchange" for they were fascinated by the idea of supporting not only the artists but also the Solidarity. They maintained convinced that regardless of the content or quality of the art presented, the very presence of the Western mainstream could carry political potential. Their actions were an attempt to create a social space defined as a place where power is "torn away" from the dominant discourses. It is this formula that will be used in the analysis of the Pitch-In Culture.

THE COMING COMMUNITY [8]

The group that created the Pitch-In Culture (c. 1982) had previously been involved in organising *Construction in Process* or they were participants of the exhibition of Polish artists that accompanied it [9]. The common space for all activities was the Attic, at 149 Piotrkowska Street – a privately-owned studio of

[8] The section's title is inspired by Giorgio Agamben's book *The Coming Community*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993

[9] *Falochron* (Pier), curated by Antoni Mikołajczyk, 1981

Władysław Adamiak – a Łódź architect and a lecturer at the technical University of Łódź. In the following years, this place became the site of exhibitions, festivals, lectures, concerts, performances and the publishing of artistic magazines (*Tango*, *Bez tytułu*, *Halo Halo*). [10] The intensity of events increased during the period of Martial Law, when many artists decided to boycott official institutions of culture and present their art in galleries that were privately-owned apartments. There were many people who decided on the "programme" of events in the Attic. In this sense it was a public space, functioning as a "workshop, gallery, meeting place, night shelter, club, canteen" until 1986. [11] During the Martial Law, this was the meeting place of Łódź's intellectual milieu, but events were organised in other cities as well, using an informal network to stage meetings, *plein-airs*, etc. [12] For example, the *Silent Cinema Festival* was initiated and took place from 1983 till 1985. A film festival in those days was a rather challenging undertaking; it was difficult to acquire a camera or tape, and only a few films show evidence of an occasion for professional editing. Numerous films produced at the time were silent, or artists worked without a tape; Tomasz Snopkiewicz prepared "animation" on tram tickets entitled "reduction cinema"; Jacek Kryszkowski and Ewa Zarzycka gave lectures based on "screenplays".

The Pitch-In Culture consisted of artists, filmmakers, students and amateurs whose attitude was defined as that of an alternative to the system of government and state institutions on the one hand, and to Church and the affiliated opposition on the other. [13] The prevailing attitude was that of "anti-politics" since politics was understood by those who practised it as a system of activities within specific government institutions influencing reality. [14] The Pitch-In Culture was a proposition of the so-called "third way", i.e., outside official, regime art and the environment affiliated with the Church. [15] The 1980s were a decade marked by historic points – on one side there was the Martial Law in 1981, on the other the 1989; yet these years were important in a rather general sense. In the 1970s, artists could travel and participate in exhibitions around the world, thus participating in the art market. In the 1980s, the same was possible with the exception of the period of the Martial Law when such activities were severely impeded. The following years brought the domination of new expressionism – "Neue Wilde" – on the Polish art scene, with exhibitions taking place in official institutions. Among these were *Gruppa*, *Neue Bieremiennost*, *Koło Klipsa* and *Luxus* which functioned within a multidisciplinary framework, involving painting, sculpture and concerts. It is difficult to summarize this new trend in a few words, but what distinguished this neo-expressionist groups from the participants of the "Pitch-In Culture" was a fluent and also chaotic character and strategies of the latter.

10
Detailed descriptions of events related to Pitch-In Culture can be found in the following books: Marek Janiak (ed.), *Kultura Zrzuty* (Pitch-In Culture), Akademia Ruchu, Warszawa 1989 and Józef Robakowski (ed.), *PST! czyli Sygnia nowej sztuki* (PST! Signs of New Art), Warszawa: Akademia Ruchu, 1989

11
Jolanta Ciesielska, "Kultura Zrzuty", in: *Kultura Zrzuty*, op.cit, p. 8

12
In Gorzów Wielkopolski, Koszalin, Warszawa and Zielona Góra, among others. The actions under the Pitch-In Culture "slogan" also took place in official institutions, mainly in student galleries.

13
The Pitch-In Culture involved also one artist group – Łódź Kaliska (Marek Janiak, Andrzej Kwietniewski, Adam Rzepecki, Andrzej Świetlik and Andrzej Wielogórski). Among the other most active artists and organisers within the circle were: Włodzimierz Adamiak, Zbigniew Bińczyk, Jacek Jóźwiak, Jacek Kryszkowski, Zbigniew Libera, Józef Robakowski, Zygmunt Rytka, Tomasz Snopkiewicz, Zbyszko Trzeciakowski and Jerzy Truszkowski.

14
In the conversations with the participants the sense of a lack of influence on socio-political reality repeatedly appears, providing the artists at the same time with a sense of security.

15
Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Meanings of Modernism. Towards a History of Polish Art after 1945), Poznań: Rebis, 1999, pp. 220-235

The artists from the Attic claimed to be "outside ideology" because they were creating their own space of activities and managed the life of their micro-community that had to continually confront state bodies. For example, if they wanted to make an Artzine, they had to find all the necessary materials – paints, paper and a duplicator. Money was not a problem but availability was. The same issues applied to films. They were using the infrastructure of official institutions and drawing on personal contacts. "Independence" and a declaration of "anti-politics" were consistently reiterated in relation to the "Pitch-In Culture". The utopian character of thinking about the autonomy of one's own space was combined with constant experiments connected with creating that space. Politics was understood as a system of power strongly connected with the State, and the activity of the "Pitch-In Culture" was understood as an alternative network of creation, production and exchange. These transgressive practices were aiming for a continuous re-definition of the relationship between an individual and a community and were thus growing closer to Agamben's "community without presuppositions"[16], which is not based on identity and, simultaneously, not subject to universalisation.

What was characteristic of the Pitch-In Culture was the communal character of that which was individual: nearly every artist presented an individual attitude. Every artist was responsible for creative experiments and had to account for the chance of rejection. Cooperation during specific events was partly due to practical conditions. The artists

had to "face mundane, basic situations, information barriers, lack of resources".[17] The simultaneous organisation of the space of activities and working *de facto* outside of institutions resulted in the fact that "in notions, such as participation, the legitimacy usually granted by official circulation here gained a different, personal character".[18] Most importantly, they were based on "resistance towards the existing cultural forms" and on negating authorities.[19]

This theme is tackled by *War State*, a film recorded in the middle of the Martial Law by the participants of the *plein-air* in the town of Osiek on the Vistula river (1982). Józef Robakowski gave it its final shape, but it can also be treated as a metaphor for a "community without presuppositions", where groups of people that knew each other from school, street, bar, etc. were trying to "be together". They were artists and amateurs, filmmakers and architects who would find their own space, for creation too. The film has no plot. We can see a naked woman running through a forest, a man slapping the woman, people lying in the dark lit only by the camera light. An atmosphere of claustrophobia, fear, introversion and desperation is present in the film. For the participants themselves the ultimate meaning of making this work resided mainly in the value of common activities.[20]

16
Giorgio Agamben, *op.cit.*

17
Tomasz Snopkiewicz, "Kultura ula", *Tango*, no 8, 1985, no pagination.

18
Ibid.

19
Ibid.

20
"Its sense or lack of sense is justified by the fact that the

phenomenon appeared in a WAR STATE". "We were lucky enough that, despite many posts controlling cars and private luggage, we managed to carry a camera and film tapes. We had no script, not even a conscious idea of the film. We were all certain, however, that it will be created in spite of our will, because that was the need of the moment. The only one, general assumption was that anyone can grab a camera or be filmed. It was only the initiation of the common activity that started to explain the motivations and the meaning of our meaning", Józef Robakowski, *PST! Czyli Sygnia Nowej Sztuki*, op.cit., p. 139

Józef Robakowski wrote elsewhere that, "PITCH-IN ART is realised, among other places, in slogans and statements. That is why it can be anywhere: in our houses, on the streets, in summer, the bar, park, tram, at the queue at the butcher's and even on a train from Łódź to Koszalin and back..." [21] What is most important is the "presence" itself; an activity that does not need to be socially received; but it is vital that the participants derive satisfaction from the common activity itself. Robakowski thus uses the term coined by Andrzej Partum: "positive nihilism" which implies an adaptation to any condition. What does this actually mean and is it at all possible to realise such a contradiction? This is what it meant to tie an "injury of sense" – searching for tensions, borders, cracks. Partum wrote that "mistake is good for thought" which guides us on the notion of "transgression". [22]

Many performative activities that were a part of the Pitch-In Culture, including the more radical ones, could have ended in physical harm or even death. These activities were connected with affirming the notion of authenticity which simultaneously refers to individualism, autonomy and is a category of expression. [23] "Individuality cannot be expressed by multiplying, repeating or reproducing anything. Individuality is not revealed but created; it is called into existence in small acts, in details whose specific character is destroyed by language". [24] The proper functioning in society usually implies the limiting of spontaneous actions

21
Ibid., p. 140

22
Ibid., p. 118

23
Magdalena Środa, *Indywidualizm i jego krytycy* (Individualism and Its Critics), Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 2003, p. 71

24
Ibid.

and of experiments that can lead to "transgressions". Non-authenticity is associated with the elimination of one's own personality, with the feeling of "being controlled by institutions", whereby a subject is mostly defined by his or her social function as a citizen, artist, worker, doctor, etc. The affirmation of this-what-is-individual could be related to the compulsory collectivisation in real socialism where civic society is impossible: "the formula of collective ownership, leads to (…) the destruction of the foundations of social diversity". [25] In mid-1980s, Polish sociologists were analysing society by describing relations between the individual and the common as a state of constant conflict of subject for his or her own identity, based in economy. "In socialism, where there are no dialectics between that which is particular and that which is general, the State is seen as a particular moment of social life, representing the matter of its own reproduction, and other citizens as competitors to administratively distributed supplies". [26] In this system, society tries to fight its own atomisation and describes its identity towards the State. From this perspective, the "acts of expression" are attempts to constitute the subject, not the expression of the already existing subject". [27]

It is not clear why practitioners of the Pitch-In Culture were so concentrated on modernist notions such as the "true" and the "authentic". Perhaps it was due to a connection to the informal status of their activities and a feeling of "imprisonment in privacy". They didn't share a pragmatic

aim which could have helped them to formalise the "Pitch-In Culture" structure, which is why they emphasised the differences between them. Jacek Kryszkowski analysed what was for him a perceptible dissolution of the group (ca. 1985) which, in his view, was related to the fact that spontaneous action had been replaced with a reflection on what the purpose of the functioning of a community was and if it was possible to create a definable strategy under these conditions. After a period of mutual fascination, different attitudes evoke "mutual distrust and disgust". Jacek Kryszkowski sees the problem in the mechanisms of culture pressuring towards the need of "containing the impetuous process". [28] That which had been based on a faith in the strength of the community operating according to its own rules, at the same time a "virus" infecting the environment, started to collapse. Each activity "regardless of its character, in the eyes of the remaining group members, is – if not a usurping symptom – something unappealing or irrelevant to the cause". Kryszkowski, however, still sees the potential in the will for togetherness in an "indefinable herd" and not in the "coordination of group activities".

What is most interesting in the Pitch-In Culture is visible in small gestures of a performative character, which were rarely documented and, when they were, then only in a loose manner. Frequently, the works were intentionally destroyed. Zbigniew Libera destroyed his video tapes and Zbyszek Trzeciakowski, who practised self-destructive activities, suddenly decided they were too radical and destroyed his tapes as well. [29] Most actions under taken by Jacek Kryszkowski were not recorded at all.

25
Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Ontologia socjalizmu* (The Ontology of Socialism), Kraków-Nowy Sącz: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej. Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu, National-Louis University w Nowym Sączu, 2006, p. 219

26
Ibid., p. 220

27
Ibid.

28
Jacek Kryszkowski, *Hola Hoop*, no 3 or 4, no pagination

29
Piotr Krajewski, op.cit., p. 45

In the magazine he founded, *Hali Gali* [30] (the last issue is from 1985), the author published his last will stating that he forbids the "gathering, storing and publishing of any kind of materials related to or suggesting a relationship" with him and orders that they "destroy gifts, share the common experience but only orally", "destroy each object that was attributed to [him] remaining outside [his] reach at the disposal of any institution or of any kinds of sons-of-bitches. In order to avoid abuse and machinations". [31] At the same time, Kryszkowski creates objects and runs his magazine and attaches to one of the issues the milled bones of Witkacy[32] that he supposedly brought from Ukraine. This inconsistency is a result of seeing culture as something artificially separated and seeing his own actions as pointless in a social, political and symbolic context; this is why Kryszkowski affirms that which he can control: the value of "independent thinking". [33]

The Pitch-In Culture is then an ephemeral proposal, undermining itself, based on emotional relations and referring to action. It is "being together" without repeating the patterns known from the State, religious or oppositional structures, outside the set hierarchies and logical, and thus predictable, courses of action.

ART AS A PRIVATE GESTURE [34]

In artworks, texts, discussions and memoirs of the 1980s, the adjective "independent" very frequently appears directly followed by "private". [35] "Private" meant working outside of institutions, creating your own places, cooperating with friends and acquaintances in their flats and houses thanks to the help of their families, which was not only the result of the control and limited interest of official institutions but was also related to a sense of isolation and the lack of a place for a certain kind of art and, subsequently, to the feeling of influence on social reality by means of artistic practices. Several manifestos, created within the Pitch-In Culture, refer to the obligation of an artist towards society. [36] They contain an irony that opposes the involvement and requirements of art's social function. They stipulate that "in order to practice NECESSARY ART you have to sit comfortably or even lie down, preferably after dinner – in fact, it has to be stated that such art is conservative". [37] The authors of the text ironically comment on the instrumentalisation of artistic creation in a communist system, and ponder on the status of their work. [38]

30
The title of the magazine was variable

31
Jacek Kryszkowski, *op.cit.*

32
Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) (1885-1939) was an avant-garde Polish artist, writer and philosopher, who committed suicide when he found out that the Russian army had crossed the Polish border.

33
"The state of the society that produces alcohol illegally, chases pussy of both sexes, aired by waves of the new-wave PUNK, falsified by new painting, soaked in bigotries and the ineffective resistance provides a fertile ground for an aristocrat's vegetation. An aristocrat, contrary to "an intellectual of civilization" has a privilege of independent thinking and not an impression of independent doing which is just creating shit in an interesting packaging", Jacek Kryszkowski, "Nieme Kino 9-10.03.1984, frame 4: Odciecie", in: *Nieme Kino* (Silent Cinema]), catalogue, no pagination

34
The Meeting of Artists and Art Critics with the slogan *Sztuka jako gest prywatny* (Art as a Private Gesture) initiated by Elżbieta Kalinowska-Motkowicz took place at BWA Gallery in Koszalin in 1989.

35
See: Jolanta Ciesielska, *Republika bananowa*, op.cit.; Maryla Sitkowska and Andrzej Bonarski (eds.), *Co słychać* (What's up), Warszawa 1989; Józef Robakowski, *Sztuka Osobna* (Separate Art), 1991; Józef Robakowski, *Kino własne* (Own Cinema) (1981), among others.

36
The Łódź Kaliska group was the only one that defined itself as a group within the Pitch-In Culture, in the framework of which it conducted its activities; it was also a field for the confrontation of its members who performed/exhibited individually. Members of the group were Marek Janiak, Adam Rzepecki, Andrzej Swietlik, Andrzej Wielogórski.

37
Marek Janiak, Andrzej Kwietniewski, "O sztukę potrzebną" (Of Necessary Art), 1983, in: *Kultura Zrzuty* (Pitch-In Culture), *op.cit.*, p. 95

38
"Let us first ask where the bodies are. First and foremost they are busy working. They carry the burden of work. They are sentenced to it, return to it, expect to rest from it, rest and quickly go back to their posts – and work again, embody goods, they are goods, they are the force of work, a capital that cannot be accumulated, they are sold, exhausted on a market of accumulated capital, they are the capital, its self-accumulation… they are a factory, workshop, office…", after: Jean Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2002, p. 97

This topic is developed by Marek Janiak in a manifesto entitled, *Praca bez skupienia* (Work Without Focus) where we read that work is "an activity evoked by the necessity of an individual's productivity/its social usefulness", through which it becomes "socially impossible, just like its cultural elevation".[39] This is important when we take into consideration that the dominant slogan of the art of the 1980s, also in Poland, was "expression" or "new expression", reflecting the postulate of "opening towards reality" and realising a new social role of art.[40] Art was supposed to talk about "everydayness", ordinary things and also about politics. The assumed "blurring of differences", expressed additionally in traditional painting and sculpture, wasn't accepted with the participants of the Pitch-In Culture.

They were constantly looking for places where they could create "outside ideology", from which the popularity of the slogan of "privacy" emerged.[41] Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition* that the meaning of public life is "being seen and being heard by others".[42] She connects the situation of the limited privacy with the feeling of "the mass phenomenon of loneliness".[43] She wrote: "[I]n the private sphere a man is a unit not an individual, an ele-

39
Marek Janiak, "Praca bez skupienia" (Work Without Focus), 1983, in: *Kultura Zrzuty* (Pitch-In Culture), *op.cit.*, p. 67

40
"Polish art discovered reality and it was its great achievement. It had political support, emotions and social revolt. It was a great political and intellectual awakening resulting in art superseding reality. Art started to commercialise", cited in R. Ziarkiewicz, *Ekspresja? Jaka ekspresja... Suplementy do sztuki polskiej lat 80.*, p. 11

41
It is worth quoting the concept of "ideoses" by Andrzej Turowski. He said "I once defined ideoses as a space,

where the dominating political options control individual choices. It does not matter if the domination is legitimised by 'historical necessity', 'raison d'état', 'common agreement' or 'a right objective'. What is important is that the justifications are formulated from the position of political power whose aim is to appropriate, incorporate decisions of individuals", Andrzej Turowski, "Krzysztof Wodiczko and Polish Art of the 1970s", in: *Primary Documents. A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*, p. 154

42
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 50

43
Ibid., p. 59

ment of nature, necessity, a dark world of emotions; in the public sphere a man gains identity, is Someone: not a thing, an animal, barbarian, slave or a woman. A man is a citizen".[44] Retreat into the world of "privacy" was the result of bringing an individual down to an element realising a social plan, system plan, imposed on the man or woman.

The activities of the Pitch-In Culture, even those happening in the company of friends, or in front of a small number of people, created an opposition to the public, i.e. to the that-which-is-state and at the same time where it parts and crosses the boundaries of Law, e.g. by placing intimate matters within the public sphere/discussion. The regime attempted to lock into the ghetto of "the private" issues such as sexuality, nudity, disability and anything not adhering to the normative, whereas the artists made these matters gain political character because "that which is political refers to ... the activity of speaking, persuading and that, which is private, refers to silence, rape, suffering and love".[45]

At the beginning of the 1980s, Marek Janiak wrote a manifesto of the "embarrassing art" (1983) which was supposed to rely on the gesture "against the rules of social organisation", to show "the magnitude of enslavement of an individual and be an apology for the impossible 'life without society'".[46] The author also enumerates other features connected with practising this kind of art such as machination, fraud, laziness and every other feature which, by undermining the existing order, bring a sense of freedom.

44
Magdalena Środa, *op.cit.*, p. 33

45
Ibid. p. 33

46
Kultura Zrzuty, op.cit., p. 85

Zbigniew Libera, who arrived at the Attic having just graduated from high school, took the photos of various activities which were not present in the social sphere involving the nudity of men, children or the elderly. [47] Photos of the naked artist masturbating in his apartment entitled *Libera-mebel* (Libera-Furniture), or the performances by Jerzy Truszkowski also masturbating in front of the audience in the Attic can be understood as dramatic and desperate acts. What was the intended 'action' by the authors in these cases? Can we treat these as attempts at addressing universal intersubjective relationships by means of eroticism and metaphors of copulation, dialectics of rape and creation, creation and destruction? [48]

Thanks to these works, the canon of presenting the male body, which "appeared in Central-Eastern Europe in the context of visual culture as a "rarely naked" [49] body of a hero, was undermined. A man who poses in front of the lens is active, but his activity has an introverted character, which is a threat to the social order. [50]

The fight for the right to one's own body was a kind of transgression, because transgression happens through the body and within the body, as it is the "initiation into the human condition and human morality, in its darkest corners". [51] Experiencing borderline states connected with causing pain, death, betrayal and filth causes the "crossing to the other side" in order to "return to this side". [52]

Zbyszko Trzeciakowski decided to stand motionless with a candle until it burnt out. The process lasted for over five hours, and this is how the artist remembered the process: "[F]irst I felt an increasing pain in my whole body and, having gone beyond the critical point, it was as if I had gone beyond my own body. I had the impression that I stood opposite myself. When the extinguishing candle started to burn my hands, I came back to my body and finished the performance". [53] Here we have the motif of physical suffering that allows for the transgression of corporeal limitations and, simultaneously, once exposed to a public, becomes a victim, a sacrifice. Trzeciakowski conducted several other performances of a similarly radical character, among others, throwing himself naked onto vertically placed bamboo rods which resulted in a chest injury and a broken jaw. Communicating pain is not suitable in public space; public space only tolerates that which is considered important, and at the same time that which is not important is pushed into the private sphere.

What is then the proper place for destructive actions, related to violence and aggression within culture? They are frequently traded as non-productive, i.e. frequently referring to biological conditions, physiology or instinct. Treated

47
Zbigniew Libera discussed these themes, among others, in: *Intimate Rites* (1984), *Libera-mebel* (ca. 1985), *Ktoś inny* (ca. 1986), *Hermafrodyta* (1986). See: Dorota Monkiewicz (ed.), *Zbigniew Libera. Prace z lat 1982-2008* (Zbigniew Libera. Works from 1982-2008), exhibition catalogue, Zacheta – Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, BWA Wrocław – Galerie Sztuki Współczesnej, Warszawa 2009

48
Zbigniew Majchrowski, "'Białe małżeństwo' i Eros tragiczny" ('White Marriage' and the Tragic Eros), in: *Odmieńcy* (Queers), selected and edited by Maria Janion and Zbigniew Majchrowski, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdańsk 1982, p. 432

49
Piotr Piotrowski, *op.cit.*, p. 401

50
Ibid., pp. 408-409

51
Maria Janion in a discussion: "Przekroczenie stało się faktem. Dyskusja nad przekładem 'Uroczystosci żałobnych' w dniu 28 czerwca 1979 roku" (Excess has become reality. Discussion on the translation of 'Funeral Ceremonies', on 28 June 1979), in: *Odmieńcy* (0Queers), *op.cit.*, p. 327

52
Ibid.

53
Jerzy Truszkowski, "Sztuka przekraczania granic" (Art Across Borders), *www.dsw.muzeum.koszalin.pl/magazyn-sztuki/archiwum/teksty_internet_arch_all/archiwum_teksty_online_13.htm*, last accessed on March 10, 2011

as irrational, uncontrollable, wild and dangerous but also conservative, as they refer to the enigmatic pre-culture or the state beyond culture.

Jerzy Truszkowski's film showing the author in a uniform, using a scalpel to engrave various signs to his body: Latin cross, five-arm star, six-arm star and swastika simultaneously affirms a figure of a leader with totalitarian symbols and of someone who suffers because he will be conscripted the following day.[54] His expression and individuality are doomed for abandonment: authenticity does not bring any gratification to the social space. The artist is playing with rituals of socialisation, questioning them by way of utter radicalisation – the ideological symbols are literally inscribed onto his body.

It is madness, nonsense, a traumatizing act. The case with *Obrzędy intymne* (Intimate Rites) by Zbigniew Libera is similar. It is a film of a young man – the author, who takes care of his elderly, senile grandmother: he bathes her, feeds her, changes her diaper. Simple shots present a body of an elderly person, a body that loses its subjectivity because it is passive and motionless; at the same time, here, the act of empathy towards another person is moving. It is difficult to unambiguously define the meaning of this work.

Similarly to the above-described actions, the Pitch-In Culture is situated on the border: it symbolises a break, crack, separation, distance. "It reveals, exposes the power of prohibition and engages it at the same time", thanks to which it becomes a moment of individual self-destruction.[55]

The elements of re-defining and transgressing as part of the Pitch-In Culture related also to matters connected with the creation of a community that was intended to be based on "being together", rather than on the development according to the logic of an artistic movement. Combining biographical aspects with creativity, a work of art was not an anonymous creation but an attempt to explain the experience in the context of resistance towards authority. Let us treat the concept of "transgression" as an instrument of change, an incentive to look for "temporary autonomous spaces"[56], for moments of possible freedom accompanied by an awareness of all the tensions, contradictions, cracks, holes, inconsistencies, and mistakes.

The Pitch-In Culture was formed at the same time when Maria Janion was finishing a series of seminars held at Gdańsk University, entitled *Transgressions*. These seminars dealt with "various symptoms – literary, philosophical, biographical, and existential – of transgressing borders. Transgressing yourself, transgressing norms, role conventions, assumed images... Experiences of the 'misfits', or 'gallery slaves of sensitivity' in fact, were proof of a 'fierce defence of individuality' and opposed 'the rule of mediocrity, dullness and alienation of people and communities'".[57] Pitch-In Culture could have been an attempt at defending the rights of an individual, albeit desperate, sometimes naive and bungling, but also uncompromising in undermining conventional ways of thinking. The relations between the

54
Jerzy Truszkowski, *Pożegnanie z Europą* (Farewell to Europe), 1987 – a film recorded at Zbigniew Libera's flat, a day before conscription.

55
Miško Šuvaković, op.cit., p. 67

56
Hakim Bey's conception, based on the idea of space as a non-place, utopia, celebration, ephemeral creation allowing to create a sphere of activities devoid of hierarchy. See Hakim Bey, *Tymczasowa Strefa Autonomiczna* (Temporary Autonomous Zone), Kraków: Ha!art, 2010

57
A text from the cover of the series "Transgresje" (Transgressions), *Odmieńcy* (Queers), op.cit.

individual and community are complex issues, but in the context of the "Pitch-In Culture" these issues emerged with a voice. Why are we so enchanted by the notion of art's effectiveness? Perhaps it is a result of our desire to exert influence and effect change? The Pitch-In Culture was certainly recognising the borders.

-Translated from Polish by Albert Godycki

IVANA BAGO &
ANTONIA MAJAČA

Dissociative Association, Dionysian Socialism, Non-Action and Delayed Audience. Between Action and Exodus in the Art of the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia

When I was a student, I had loads of fun
I was reading Praxis and debating with everyone
Anarchism was in my blood – to the barricades!
I dreamed I was a leader of young proletarians.
And now, doctor, please help me!
I'm having a hard time, believe me.
What am I supposed to do all day, without any
action...

Azra, (*'68*, 1982)

All things considered, the anonymous hero of the famous
Look for narrative of any kind. Anti-narrative, non-narrative, para-narrative, semi-narrative, quasi-narrative, post-narrative, bad narrative.
-Allen Ruppersberg, "What One Loves About Life Are the Things That Fade", in *Allen Ruppersberg: Books, Inc.*, Fond Regional D'Art Contemporain de Limousin, 2001
rock-ballad of the legendary ex-Yugoslav band Azra, suffers from an advanced phase of a condition that Walter Benjamin, writing about the German poet Erich Kästner (1899-1974), defined as "left melancholy". In her text *Resisting Left Melancholy* (whose very title suggests that resisting this 'disease' should almost become the primary goal of contemporary leftist thought and action), Wendy Brown defines Benjamin's diagnosis as an "unambivalent epithet for the revolutionary hack who is, finally, more attached to a particular political analysis or ideal – even to the failure of that ideal – than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present."[1] It is not only, Brown continues, a question of unwillingness or even a lack of any need to come to terms with the present, but also of "a certain narcissism with regard to one's past political attachments and identity," which makes the attachment to the object of one's loss stronger
/CHORUS: The opening refrain/
Ring them bells
Ring them sorrowful bells
Now freedom has come and gone
Ring Them Bells (Freedom Has Come and Gone), Thee Silver Mt Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band, 2005

1
Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy", *Boundary 2*, 26.3 (1999), p. 19

than the willingness to recover from it. But wherein lies this loss? Brown identifies it primarily in the failed promise of the Left to be able to offer a clear and certain path towards emancipation; the loss, we might say, of a belief that the programme has been discovered and that the only questionable aspect is its realisation.

For the melancholic hero of our song, the loss, as it seems, rests merely in the absence, or the disappearance of "action". It is thus possible to interpret the song as a settling of accounts between two different historical periods, between the "new" era, in which the author, Johnny Branimir Štulić, who belonged to the thriving New Wave generation of the early 1980s in ex-Yugoslavia[2], mocks the now middle-aged and sexually frustrated 'sixty-eighter', who is not capable of recognizing the new wave of action, much less of riding it.
/CHORUS: Rising action/

New Times [1]

Comrades!

Our mission
in the transitional future
is to guard the borders of possibilities

Comrades and comradesses!
Our common wish
is to make a step ahead
in a new light
In the second half
Strong young men
are beating the world record
high
higer! even higher!
much higher than before the war

2
For a reference on Yugoslav New Wave, see *www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslav_New_Wave* (last accessed September 20, 2011) The "new era" was also marked by Tito's death in 1980, followed by the period of the so-called "decadent socialism".

New times. Old state.
New times. Same crap!
New, new, new times!

Comrades! (and housewives)
In a gradual increase (a true pleasure)
In critical years (can bring about changes)

(...)

The weather today:
A deep area of low air pressure
moving from the West towards the Ural mountains
will reach tonight our region!

New, new, new times!
"New times, comrades, seek also commitment to new tasks!"
(He pointed out, concluding his speech)

[1] Buldožer, *Novo vrijeme* (New Times), 1980 (own translation)

Instead of effective therapy, he is left with a placebo, a deceptive lullaby in the form of a refrain that evokes and, through repetition, deepens the false hope that "sixty + eight will come back again".

Dissecting time into numbers and measuring the distance between the present and certain moments of the past, we observed, among other things, that in 2008 we were

What will 2008 be remembered by? In Zagreb, as a year of "confronting and dealing with" organized crime? In the region as a year when Kosovo won independence and when Radovan Karadžić, i.e. Dr Dabić, was arrested? Internationally, as a year when Fidel Castro left his throne in Cuba and George W. Bush his in America? Will 2008 be remembered by the Olympic Games in China, which will maybe overshadow the war in South Ossetia? It seems that the one thing we will remember 2008 by had already started in January of the same year, with breaking the so-called psychological barrier of $100 per oil barrel. Historians predict an end to the era marked by the global erruption of free market which, as even Wall Street brokers know very well, was predicted by Karl Marx himself. It seems that the situation in 2008 once more confirmed his thesis that global capitalism can function only as a series of crises. What distinguishes the period before World War II from today, however, is the fact that at that time the Left existed but now exists only on the political margins. The radical right, however, functions as an instrument for negative legitimisation, making all liberal options seemingly better, the so-called "lesser evil".

forty years away from the global student protests of 1968. What positions have we adopted in joining or ignoring this "anniversary"? Are we closer to the powerless, melancholic

hero of the song (infatuated with his own loss), or the sarcastic, superior position of its author? And, after all, who are the professed "we", posing the question and presupposing a unified and homogeneous subject? Is that heedless assumption simply another symptom of the melancholic condition – dreaming about some lost solidarity?

"P.S. IS INTOXICATED BY THE SECRET OF THE EARLY YEARS; THE MEMORIES OF SOMETHING THAT USED TO BE OR PERHAPS NOT EVEN THAT." [3]

In the preface to the collection of essays published under the title *Between Past and Future*, Hannah Arendt also writes about loss, but in a significantly different manner. Starting from the writing of the French poet René Char from the period of his engagement in the French resistance movement, she (likewise) poeticises the notion of loss by speaking of the "lost treasure of the revolutions". [4] However, unlike Brown, who focuses on a specific political orientation and the loss of its "promise", Arendt finds the treasure of the revolutions precisely in that elusive, nameless entity that belongs to the sphere of concentrated experience, which can only be lived, but cannot be defined or passed on to future generations, not even as a name, much less as a structured programme of action. Paradoxically, it is exactly those who have lived it that

[3] Note by Josip Vaništa on *Post Scriptum*, a series of six publications launched in 1989, partly dedicated to the members of the Gorgona group. Cited in: Branka Stipančić, "Josip Vaništa – Vrijeme Gorgone i Postgorgone" [J. V. – The times of Gorgona and Postgorgona], *Novine Galerije Nova* 2007

[4] "The history of revolutions – from the summer of 1776 in Philadelphia and the summer of 1789 in Paris to the autumn of 1956 in Budapest – which politically spells out the innermost story of the modern age, could be told in parable form as the tale of an age-old treasure which, under the most varied circumstances, appears abruptly, unexpectedly, and disappears again, under different mysterious conditions, as though it were a fata morgana." Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 4

IVANA BAGO & ANTONIA MAJAČA

DISSOCIATIVE ASSOCIATION, DIONYSIAN SOCIALISM, NON-ACTION AND DELAYED AUDIENCE.
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now find it to be the most "nameless" and elusive. [5]

In the writings to which Arendt refers, Char predicted the coming loss of his "treasure" – an intense, sensual, experiential, in a way fundamental state in which he found himself as a member of the resistance movement: "If I survive, I know that I shall have to break with the aroma of these essential years, silently reject, (not repress), my treasure." [6] Revolutionary struggle, or perhaps the revolutionary state of the subject, is put forward, both in Char's writing and in Arendt's interpretation, not as the promise of a new beginning, but as a sense of loss in the midst of a sudden, flashing moment of experi-

> **Sumić**
> Ovo je onaj objekt u Kino klubu što je Pave radio od nekih plastičnih komada. Ili je snimljeno nešto slično tome. Možda je neka refleksija. Ili je to nešto drugo, nije mi baš jasno.
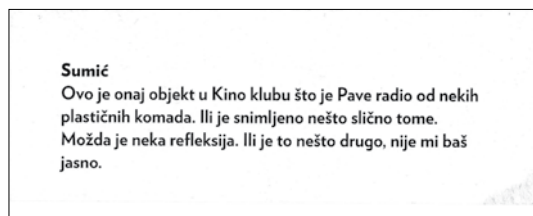
Sumić

This is the object in the Cinema Club that Pave made out of some plastic pieces. Or maybe something similar to that. Maybe it's a reflection of some sort? Or is it something completely different? It's not quite clear to me.

See note 5.

enced truth, even if that flash were only an apparition. Char described it as a state of extreme nakedness, as being stripped of all that was superfluous, of all masks or insincerities. Here, one finally encounters himself/herself, at the same time surpassing his/her individuality; he/she thus ceases to be "in quest of [himself] without mastery, in naked unsatisfaction." [7]

Even in such moment of discovery, of coincidence with oneself, one does not achieve freedom; it is perhaps as near as possible, but even so remains an apparition: "At every meal that we eat together freedom is invited to sit down. The chair remains vacant but the place is set." [8] For Arendt, a precondition for the proposition of freedom does not entail liberation from hostile tyranny, but the beginning of the creation of a common, "public" space amongst the members of the movement.

COLLECTIVE WORK

CRITICAL-RATIONAL APPROACH
Collective Work is the complete opposite of the efforts we are constantly making as individuals: to affirm the person, who is confirmed and realized in their individual work. The individual testifies to his/her destiny. Because he/she can not testify to someone else's without being untruthful and artificial.
Do I still desire a Collective Work?
I do.
Is Collective Work possible?
I suppose that it would require a common goal and an equality of thought and will. Kindred feelings. And some, at least minimal, common enthusiasm. A 'constructive' Collective work certainly also demands a certain common programme of action.

The short text above lists some of the crucial concepts that open up niches of associative reading of an entire era, its

[5]
The reproduction of the wall caption found among the program leaflets of Nova Gallery, after the closure of the exhibition ...*What Preceded the Red Peristyle* (curators: Boris Cvjetanović and Petar Grimani, March 2008). The captions presented comments that two former members of the so-called *Red Peristyle* group made while looking at the photographs of their early activities. The caption with comment of Slaven Sumić, who cannot recall what was shown on one of the photographs, was probably overprinted and was not used for the exhibition. And so it remained among the program leaflets as a phantom of the exhibition that attempted to trace the common history of the members of the group before their famous *Red Peristyle* action in Split in 1968.

[6]
René Char, cited in: Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 4

[7]
Ibid.

[8]
Ibid.

atmosphere and its (utopian) transformative potential: collectivity, individual, truth, fallacy, quest, thought, work, presence or absence of a programme. It is an excerpt from one of the "homeworks" that members of the Zagreb art group Gorgona [9] used to exchange. In this case, the task given to all group members was to answer the question: Is it possible to make a collective work? In his answer, Đuro Seder first considered the "critical-rational approach" to the idea of collective work, only to oppose it in the following part of the text to the "Gorgonic approach" – which mocked the commonsensical and constructive premises of the first, yet longing for them at the same time. The "Gorgonic approach" is amused by the almost childish naïveté of the belief that, if all conditions are met and all preparations made, it is possible to realize the intended goal. Despite that, it plunges into the adventure of trial and error, of seeking entry points, circling around the possibility of realizing the "impossible project", and looking at it from various sides. In all four suggested drafts of collective work, each time, and in different ways, something goes wrong: first it is invisible, then it hasn't been achieved collectively, in the third case its form does not correspond to the space in which it is presented, and in the fourth the very work becomes redundant and useless...

What all these Gorgonic endeavours point to is the incompatibility of the utopian idea with any kind of institutional framework (represented here by Šira, the owner of the exhibition space). The Collective Work thus seems to exist only

9
A group of artists (its members were visual artists, art critics, and architects Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos, Miljenko Horvat, Marijan Jevšovar, Ivan Kožarić, Julije Knifer, Radoslav Putar, Đuro Seder and Josip Vaništa), active in Zagreb from 1959-1966. Their activity may be interpreted today as "proto-conceptual".

until it begins to materialise in specific spatial and temporal circumstances.

How to Disappear Completely? [2]
In 1969 the artist Robert Barry faxed a simple instruction for making a collaborative work, as an assignment for the students of David Askevold's class at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax, Canada. According to the instructions, the students were supposed to come up with a shared idea that would be kept secret from anyone outside the group. The work would exist as long as the idea remained secret, hidden inside the group. If someone would give away the secret, the work would cease to exist.

[2] Song title from the album *Kid A* by Radiohead (2000)

MORE ACTION! LESS TEARS! [10]

In this text, we wish to embrace the peculiar Gorgonic approach and use it as a tool for our own "Gorgonising" around other possible narratives of deviation in the art of the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia. Even though Mangelos, writing his *Moscow Manifesto* in 1977 on the occasion of Gorgona's "posthumous" exhibition, used the term "Gorgonising" with a touch of irony, proclaiming both Gorgona's death and the death of art[11], it may still help us to, at least here, resist the helplessness of naming and honour Gorgo-

I struggle with the text! Hours have passed and I'm still tangled up in bits, clues.[3] Going over them everything seems possible. I make jottings in the margins. I insert exclamation marks victoriously! It seems that the problem is exactly the fact that I can't give in to the experiment, that I keep thinking there needs to be a plan, a programme of action, a programme of writing, which is exactly what we are 'rising' against in this text; against a programme of writing and a programme in general, against its incapacity to reach the truth. It might be because the decision to experiment is in itself still a decision? Because it also implies a programme? I'm afraid, for I know that once I start I must continue; each word leads to another, each letter to a comma, each full stop to a space. And a space to a space between, in which there is nothing left to say. Or nothing that wants to be said.

[3] You have to shoot eventually, you can't just pass the ball around", Slaven Bilić, the coach of Croatian football team

"A coquettish, even cheerful nihilism. One recognizes the imperative of silence, but goes on

10
Title from *The Pretty Little Lightning Paw* album by Thee Silver Mountain Reveries (2004).

11
Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos, "Moscow manifesto", reproduced in: Tihomir Milovac (ed.), *The Misfits. Conceptualist Strategies in Croatian Contemporary Art*, Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002

Kolektivno djelo

KRITIČKO-RACIONALNI PRISTUP

Kolektivno djelo je ~~napraxi~~ sušta suprotnost onom nastojanju, kojim smo neprestano obuzeti kao pojedinci: afirmacija ličnosti, koja se potvrdjuje i ostvaruje u svom individualnom djelu. Svjedoči ~~samxax~~ o svojoj sudbini, jer i ne može o tudjoj, ako ne želi rizik neistine i iskonstruiranosti.

Da li ipak želim Kolektivno djelo ?

Želim.

Da li je Kolektivno djelo moguće?

Pretpostavljam da je potreban zajednički cilj, zatim podudarnost misli i volje. Srodnost osjećanja. I neko, barem minimalno, zajedničko oduševljenje. Za "konstruktivno" Kolektivno djelo potreban je svakako još i odredjen zajednički program rada.

GORGONSKI PRISTUP

Prvi projekt

– Kolektivno djelo šulja se potajno izmedju naših ruku i ulazi kriomice kroz vrata Širinog salona. U velikoj tajnosti pribire svoje dijelove, skuplja svoje komade u nerazgovjetnu cjelinu punu odredjenog smisla. Noću se nehotice rasipa i ponovo traži, jer još ne poznaje svoju kolektivnu suštinu. Nekoliko dana spava vrlo nemirno, sanja nesuvisle slike, i preobražava se postepeno u završeno djelo. (Šira još o svemu nezna ništa.) Pred samo otvorenje pokušava da pobjegne, ali Šira, koji je u medjuvremenu nešto saznao, zaključava salon. Na dan otvorenja Kolektivno djelo je vrlo smuždeno i blijedo, gotovo nevidljivo, vrlo nehomogeno, jedva postojeće. Od posjetilaca nitko na njega ne obraća pažnju, iako su svi vrlo dobro raspoloženi. – Slijedećih dana Kolektivno djelo izjeda tajna bolest, potpuno gubi pamćenje, i kopni kao komad snijega na ulici. Prilikom zatvaranja izložbe konstatira se da više i ne postoji. Ostaje samo mala mlaka neodredjene tekućine u jednom uglu salona. Slave se karmine.

Drugi projekt

Kolektivno djelo ostvaruje se na ovaj način:

Prvoga dana ulazi u salon prvi Gorgonaš (redoslijed je po abecednom redu

---

ili se baca kocka) i započinje Kolektivno djelo.

Drugog dana ulazi drugi Gorgonaš i nastavlja kolektivno djelo.

Trećeg dana ulazi treći Gorgonaš po istom poslu.

Četvrtog dana četvrti Gorgonaš kreira Kolektivno djelo.

Petoga dana peti, a šestoga šesti Gorgonaš.

Sedmoga dana sedmi Gorgonaš.

Slijedeća tri dana rezervirana su za eventualne nepoznate Gorgonaše, koji bi možda željeli sudjelovati.

Nakon toga je Kolektivno djelo gotovo.

Bitna je u ovom projektu zajamčena tajnost. Naime, da ni jedan od Gorgonaša koji slijedi, nema pojma o onome što je prethodnik napravio. Dozvoljena je apsolutna sloboda kreiranja.

Na dan otvorenja Kolektivno djelo zapanjuje svoje stvaraoce i publiku. Šira je očajan.

Treći projekt

Kolektivno djelo je naručeno u nepoznatoj radionici i gospodična tajnica izvještava da je gotovo. Na dan otvorenja svi Gorgonaši uz pomoć Nikole unose Kolektivno djelo oprezno u salon. Pozivnice su razaslane i Mikac je već podijelio plakate. U zadnji čas konstatira se s užasom, da je kolektivno djelo preveliko i ne može se unijeti kroz vrata. U općoj konsternaciji prisutnih autora i uzvanika, u gužvi zastoja saobraćaja izazvanog Kolektivnim djelom, pada odluka da se izložba Kolektivnog djela odgadja.

Četvrti projekt

Kolektivno djelo je završeno. Izložba je već davno održana i prelazi se na razmatranje mogućnosti drugih važnih pothvata.

VIZIJE

Kolektivno djelo nema lica.

Kolektivno djelo nezna govoriti.

Kolektivno djelo ne poznaje svoj početak, ima samo kraj.

Kolektivno djelo se ne može predvidjeti kao forma, samo kao nastojanje.

Konačni izgled Kolektivnog djela nije uopće važan.

D. SEDER

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The Collective Work [3]

CRITICAL-RATIONAL APPROACH

Collective Work is the complete opposite of the efforts we are constantly making as individuals: to affirm the person, who is confirmed and realised in the individual work. The individual only testifies to his/her own destiny, because he/she can not testify to someone else's without being untruthful and artificial.
Do I still desire a Collective Work?
I do.
Is Collective Work possible?
I suppose that it would require a common goal and an equality of thought and will. Kindred feelings. And some, at least minimal, common enthusiasm. A 'constructive' Collective Work certainly also demands a certain common program of action.

GORGONIC APPROACH

First project

Collective Work is secretly creeping between our hands and furtively entering through the door of Šira's Salon. It is assembling its parts in great secrecy, gathering the pieces into an indistinct whole, full of a certain meaning.
At night it inadvertently falls apart and looks for itself again, because it does not yet know its collective essence. For several days it sleeps restlessly, dreams unconnected pictures and gradually transforms itself into a finished work (Šira still knows nothing about it). Just before the opening it tries to run away, but Šira, who has in the meantime found out, locks the salon. On the opening day the Collective Work is very downcast and pale, almost invisible, heterogeneous, it hardly exists. None of the visitors pay any attention to it, although they are all in very good spirits. During the following days the Collective Work is devoured by a secret

illness, it suffers complete memory loss and melts away like a piece of snow in the street. When the exhibition closes it no longer exists. All that remains is a small pool of liquid in one corner of the salon. Its wake is celebrated.

Second project

The Collective work is produced as follows. On the first day the first Gorgonian enters the salon (they come in alphabetical order or else lots are cast) and starts the Collective Work.
On the second day the second Gorgonian enters and continues the Collective Work.
On the third day the third Gorgonian enters and does the same.
On the fourth day the fourth Gorgonian creates the Collective Work.
On the fifth day the fifth, and on the sixth day the sixth Gorgonian.
On the seventh day the seventh Gorgonian.
The next three days are reserved for Gorgonians who may as yet be unknown and who may want to participate.
After this the Collective Work is finished. A guarantee of secrecy is essential to this project. None of the Gorgonians have any idea of what their predecessors did. Absolute freedom of movement is allowed.
On the opening day the the Collective Work amazes its creators and the public.
Šira is desperate.

Third project

The Collective Work is commissioned in an unknown workshop and the young secretary there sends word that it is finished. On the opening day all the Gorgonians, with the help of Nikola, carefully bring the Collective work into the salon. The invitations have been sent and Mikac has already distributed the posters. At the last moment they discover, to their horror, that the Collective Work is too big to be brought in through the door. During the general consternation

amongst the authors and the guests, in the traffic jam caused by the Collective Work, it is decided to postpone the exhibition.

Fourth project

The Collective Work is finished. The exhibition was held long ago and we move on to discuss the possibilities of other important undertakings.

VISIONS

Collective Work has no face.
Collective Work can not speak.
Collective Work does not know its beginning, it only has an end.
Collective work cannot be seen as a form, only as an effort.
The final appearance of Collective Work is of no consequence at all.

Đ. Seder

[3]
Reproduced in Marija Gattin (ed.), *Gorgona* (Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002)

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speaking anyway. Discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say that."
-Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence", *Aspen* 5+6 (1967)

na by distancing ourselves from the blasphemous effect of calling Gorgona's "Gorgonising" an activity.

By stating something, one inevitably opens up the space for negation, for a stance of opposition that imposes itself upon us, used to thinking in dichotomies. Is "thinking" a relevant counterpart to acting, necessary for completing the binary pair?

Just as she illustrates the history of revolutions through the story of a long-lost treasure that reappears from time to time only to disappear again, Arendt interprets the intellectual history of the 20th century as a repeated alternation of the phases of "thought" and "action". Due to the crisis of metaphysics, which was no longer capable even of formulating the right questions, much less of offering answers, the generation of early 20th-century existentialists found their refuge in "action".

"Literature, Sartre concluded, functioned as a bourgeois substitute for real commitment in the world." (*www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre*)

On the other hand, the generation of René Char, after World War II – in which it was forced to act – returned to the realm of thought, compelled to rethink its recent past.

Arendt published her book in 1961, before she could witness the world events of 1968 as another passage from "thought" to "action". Neither did Gorgona, which ended its activities as a group in 1966, witness this turn.

"Before I write a poem, I must clear away the rubbish in my street." (Vlado Martek)

Variations on Martek:
Before I write a poem, I must clear away the rubbish in my street.
Before I write a poem, I must clear away the rubbish in my art.
Before I write a poem, I must clear away the art in my rubbish.
Before I write a poem, I must postpone postponing without delay.

It is however precisely the resonances and trajectories of

Gorgonising and deviating from the "constructive approach" that we wish to trace in the social, intellectual and artistic events of the late 1960s and 1970s.
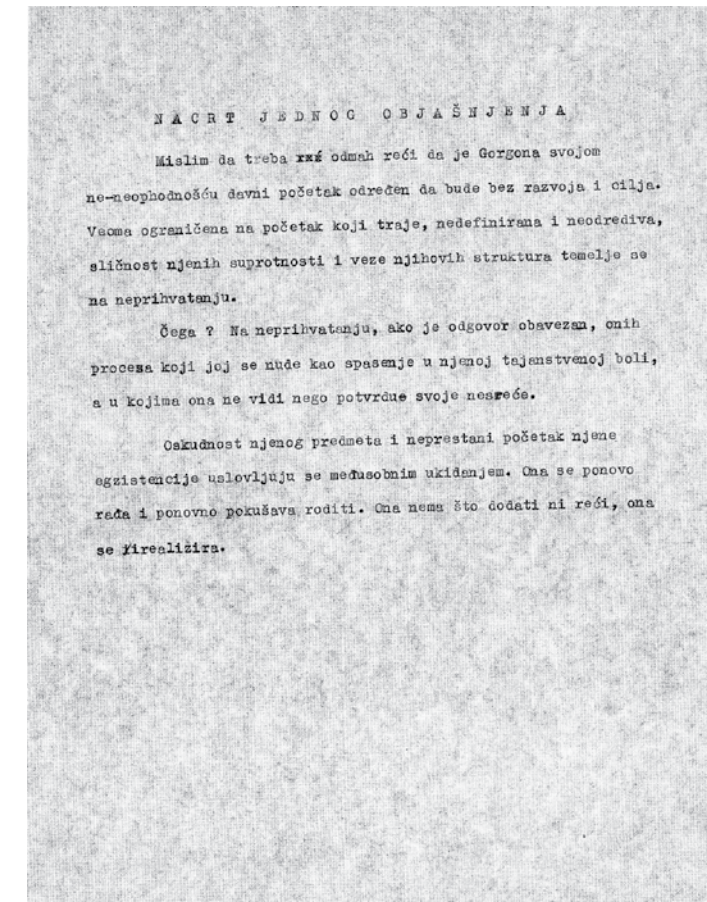
"SOMETIMES GORGONA DID NOTHING, IT JUST LIVED." [12]

Gorgona lived in the early 1960s, at the time when the project of building up the Yugoslav socialist self-management and Tito's programme of the "third path" was still at its pinnacle. The contemporary art of those times went side by side with the new society. It found its social role not through following the paradigm of socialist realism (which it rejected) but through two high modernist projects of the 1950s and 1960s. Both of these – Exat 51 and the New Tendencies – were based on the principles of geometric abstraction, constructivism, intermediality, cybernetics, redefining the notion of applied arts and integrating art into society. It was an art that, just like the new Yugoslav society, had a clearly defined programme: in 1951, more than a year before their first exhibition, the members of the Exat 51 group publicly presented their manifesto. The very act of declaring a programme (a performative utterance) is thus the initial point of its realisation, and perfectly in tune with the society that nurtured the "constructive" approach to the idea of the collective (work) – entailing a homogeneous, undifferentiated subject, a common goal, proclaiming the correspondence between thought and action, and a joint working programme.

12
Josip Vaništa, cited in: Marija Gattin (ed.), *Gorgona*,
Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002

Even though Seder's reflection on constructive and Gorgonic approaches to Collective Work, along with Vaništa's "Draft of an Explanation", could be understood as its possible manifestos, unlike Exat 51, Gorgona could hardly be said to have had one – it "sometimes did nothing, it just lived". Perhaps this is where we should look for the meaning of Josip Vaništa's comment, stating that "Marijan Jevšovar might have been nearest to the truth when he said that the Gorgonians behaved as if they were not living in Communism". They were "escaping" into the irrational, the "feeling of unusualness", introducing "dark ingredients" into their existence.[13] From the society of imposed collective optimism, Gorgona slipped into friendship and spiritual kinship. Even if it would have had a manifesto and a programme, it would have not felt the need to read it out loud. There was no clear message and thus no addressee. Equally uncertain was the group membership itself: "We are not Gorgona, we are just searching for Gorgona in the world around us."[14]

Josip Vaništa, "A Draft of an Explanation", 1961

A Draft of an Explanation

I think it must immediately be said that Gorgona, being so unnecessary, is that ancient beginning that is predestined not to have any development or goal. It is strictly limited to a permanent beginning, undefined and indefinable, the similarity of its opposites and the links between their structures based on non-acceptance.
Of what? Of non-acceptance, if we must give an answer, of processes that Gorgona is offered as salvation from its mysterious pain, and in which it cannot but see confirmation of its unhappiness.
The sparsity of what it deals with and the unending beginning of its existence are mutually conditioned because they annul one another. Gorgona is always being reborn and always trying to regive birth. It has nothing to add or say – it irrealises itself.

13
Ibid.

14
Radoslav Putar, cited in Marija Gattin, *op.cit.*

"NOTHING IS HERE YET BUT SOME FORM MAY ALREADY FIT IT" [15]

Gorgona's principle of "non-action", "outcomelessness" and de-materialization has often been characterized as nihilism or as mocking of social and artistic forms. [16] However, by embracing the irrational, the silent and the paradoxical, Gorgona was much closer to the classical existentialist understanding of the subject. It was not about abandoning art but a quest for it, it's *becoming*. Whereas nihilism abolishes the very sense of the quest, for Gorgona it was the only thing that made sense at all. When the group sent invitations to fifty private addresses, containing nothing but the words "You are invited to attend", with no further explanation, it was not a mere play with the conventions of the art world. Instead, it was an invitation to "unusualness", to an estrangement of the everyday, to stepping into the void in order to start the quest for something one *could* attend.

On 29 May 1975 the Group of Six Artists organized an exhibition-action, at the Sopot housing estate in Novi Zagreb, with Boris Demur, Željko Jerman, Mladen Stilinović, Sven Stilinović and Fedor Vučemilović participating. Demur's participation didn't involve his presence. Instead, he wrote a text/work:

- How is it not possible to change the world? By changing ourselves we change the world.
- I ask that the emptiness resulting from my absence be labelled (understood) as an act/work.
- All has been declared, all has been done, all written down – and I'm not there.
- I create the situation of a negative of the action, as a genuine work process – the possibility of a negative of an action.
- This is in fact the sublimation (concretisation) of a state (of mine).
- The sublimation of a state as an un-anonymous signal or signals in opposition to the systemic structure of the abundance of anonymous signals and messages.

Photo-session at Julije Knifer's solo exhibition at
Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, 1966
Photo: Branko Balić

- Messages are systematised signals.
- Message is the organism and the signal a cell.
- I'm not there.
- The negative of action – inaction as action
- Title: rendering of the motif "There is – there isn't" or "There is – there not is"
- For me, these are experiences (in order not to bump my head against the same wall)
- Boris Demur, cited in *Group of Six Authors,* edited by Janka Vukmir, Zagreb: SCCA, 1998

"Nothing is represented on it not because nothing happened at that given moment, but because the thing that happened is essentially unrepresentable." Andrei Monastyrski
In explaining the notion of "empty action" in the activities of the Collective Actions group, its leader Andrei Monastyrski defines it as a "a non-demonstrational element that is introduced into the action's structure". As an example of this he describes an action entitled *Comedy* (taking place on an empty field near Moscow in 1977), in which a draped performer approaches the audience with his arms raised under the robe giving the impression that there is another person underneath it, when there is actually nothing there except, as Monastyrski phrases it – a hidden emptiness. Upon the lifting of the drape, this emptiness – the lack of sign – becomes apparent. The empty field on which the action takes place assumes a different kind of

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15
Nothing Is Here Yet But Some Form May Already Fit It is the title of a work by Vladimir Kopicl from 1973, in which the sentence in the title is followed by another one: "that is why i am not going to record / to exhibit / the work of my art so that it would be able to become (it) I am going to recode THIS out of art, yet I did not realise what it is". See, Dubravka Đurić and Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991,* The MIT Press, 2003, p. 232

16
See, for example, Nena Dimitrijević, "Art as a form of existence", in: Marija Gattin, *op.cit.* It should be noted, however, that it is Dimitrijević who first recognized and framed certain aspects of Gorgona's activities within the context of art production, thus at the same time stressing and erasing the distinction between "work" and "existence".

Photo-session with Gorgona's members and friends, 1961
Photo: Branko Balić

emptiness than before. It is no longer empty in the same way it was before the action took place. It is filled with the recognition of the empty field that had concealed the second performer. As Monastyrski puts it: "Before the draped participant lifted the drapery and uncovered the 'hidden emptiness', everything that had been taking place on the field was merely preparation, and the audience remained in an ordinary state of anticipation. But after the emptiness was liberated and 'filled' the demonstrational field, anticipation was transformed into an event, that is, what we call in the commentaries *the completed anticipation*". (See: Andrei Monastyrski: "Seven Photographs", *http://conceptualism.letov.ru/MONASTYRSKI-7-PHOTOGRAPHS.htm*)

Perhaps precisely such an approach, one that gives priority to the quest for possibilities, facilitates the necessary escape

"Beckett has announced the wish that art would renounce all further projects for disturbing matters on 'the plane of the feasible,' that art would retire, 'weary of puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going further along a dreary road.' The alternative is an art consisting of 'the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express'. From where does this obligation derive? The very aesthetics of death wish seems to make of that wish something incorrigibly lively."

"The Aesthetics of Silence", *Aspen* 5+6 (1967)

from the traps of dichotomy, between thought and action, between participating and dropping out, between resistance and its neutralisation, between the artist and the institution. Gorgona operated in the space between these opposites. Its members were far from being social outcasts; they were all actively participating in the "constructive" approaches to art and the socialist society – as successful artists, art critics, and architects. In a way, Gorgona was the site of their parallel, Gorgonic lives that too assumed a certain "constructive" framework: through exhibitions at Šira's frame-salon, the *Gorgona* anti-magazine, and ongoing contacts with the protagonists of the international scene.

And yet, it is the immaterial and elusive aspect of their work that is the most appealing for us today. This is, in our view, precisely what René Char called "treasure" and Vaništa "the secret of the early years". A spatio-temporal event in which the place for freedom can be set only under the condition that there exists a common, "public" space

among those who are attending. [17]

We wish to understand this elusive and constantly recreated "public space" not through the notion of unique collectivism or the plurality of interested groups with defined programmes, but through ways of understanding togetherness itself. Following Jean Luc-Nancy, this togetherness, or "being with" is understood through the concept of "singular plural" – a mode of being in which "I" does not precede "we" and where "we" is not a closed entity. [18] It is through such conception of community that the "public space" is created, regardless of its immediate impact or outreach. The truths it speaks are not necessarily loud or directed at a specific addressee, as in the hegemonic neoliberal understanding of "public relations" and the "audience".

"The abstraction of non-imperial art is not concerned with any particular public or audience. Non-imperial art is related to a kind of aristocratic-proletarian ethic: Alone, it does what it says, without distinguishing between kinds of people."
Alain Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art", www.16beavergroup.org/jpurnalism/archives/000633.php

Its resonances and new temporal and spatial configurations emerge unexpectedly, with an echo or a "delay" whose sources and recipients are not always clearly identifiable.

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

The artistic practices discussed here have all sought to subvert the conventional understanding of the public space and community, opening up different possibilities for their re-imagination. For Gorgona, as well as the Russian group Collective Actions and the Slovenian OHO, dislocation from a homogenised urban environment was one of the precondi-

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17
Hannah Arendt, *op.cit*.

18
Jean Luc-Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford University Press, 2000

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tions for this re-invention. Taking the (small and familiar) audience to a snow-covered forest in order to observe "empty actions" or the somewhat more esoteric OHO's gesture of leaving traces in the landscape assume the same procedures as Gorgona's dislocations. For Gorgona, nature seems to represent the neutral, ideologically unsaturated environment, which could be reinvented by joint walks (or *footing,* as they called them), the "committee inspections" of the seasons, exchanging postcards with maritime or mountain imagery, the "impossible suggestions" such as cutting off a slice of Mount Medvednica, etc.).

"Allan Kaprow organised a Happening on Segal's farm, near the sea, on a beach, at the end of the day. Men and women that no one pays any attention to are looking at the wind playing in the plants, on the surface of the sea: there is no better performance than the moment one is living in, nor a more beautiful dialogue than a conversation with friends. Is this not, in fact, abandoning artificial or theatrical speech to realise what is real and what belongs to everyday life. Art becomes secondary. Finally." (Allain Jouffroy, J.J. Leveque: "The Crisis Of Art Today", *Aujourd'hui*, April 1964.)
- cited in Josip Vaništa, *Thoughts for Months: Thoughts for June*, 1964

The dislocation can also take place in time: by using archaic forms and archaic language, by ante-dating documents or session minutes. Indeed, the "Gorgonians" barely lived in communism; instead, they probably lived exactly in what Henri Lefebvre, inspired by clear Mediterranean skies and perhaps a glass or two of wine during the Korčula Summer School [19], charmingly dubbed "Dionysian Socialism".

"However, besides the official activities of the School, what was very precious were the so-called informal conversations between the participants, which took place all across the Korčula island, during walks and especially in the evenings in a restaurant under the clear sky. It is exactly these moments that remained for everyone among their most pleasant memories. This was especially so for participants from abroad who saw these meetings – informal conversations lasting late into the night, under the clear Mediterranean sky and a peculiar atmosphere – as something unforgettable. The atmosphere of these meetings can hardly be described

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19
Korčula Summer School (1964-1974) was a series of seminars in philosophy and sociology, launched by members of the Yugoslav philosophical group *Praxis* on the island of Korčula. During the ten years of its existence, Korčula Summer School became a meeting point for the most prominent European and world philosophers, sociologists, theoreticians, and artists.

in brief: those were beautiful evenings, filled with spirit and good moods, which, after the official discussions at the assemblies that took place during the day, enabled us to talk in a most relaxed and direct way, without official regulations and duties. So, according to all the participants, especially those from abroad, it was these meetings that were the most beautiful and the most fruitful, generally speaking, in Korčula. Due to this peculiar Mediterranean atmosphere, the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre hatched a name for these discussions under clear skies: "Dionysian Socialism". For him, this implied an atmosphere where a man, in a naturally beautiful environment, seeks harmony and beauty in human relations. It invokes humorous dialogue, a positive mood, searching for the meaning of life in intimate personal contact with a spiritual peer; the sense of play and pure human immediacy regarding the deepest problems, in which the spirit becomes playful, open to any situation it relates to, in the freedom of its full expression. This is what the foreign participants liked about Korčula, this is what they also, among other things, wrote about once they returned to their homes in their letters addressing us and expressing support for the continuation of the School."

Milan Kangrga, *Izvan povijesnog događanja: dokumenti jednog vremena* [Beyond the historical event: documents of a time], Split: Feral Tribune, 1997

Even in the late 1960s, when the homogeneity of the representative public space was already being challenged and undermined, artists tended to employ strategies of dislocation more than they engaged in direct confrontation with the public "proper". The Group of Six Artists[20] performed their exhibition-actions in the street, but also at the River Sava bathing resort, at the seaside, at universities; the "group" Senior Citizen Tihomir Simčić[21] tested the notion of incidentality as the key moment of creating a work of art in hallways and back alleys; Sanja Iveković played with the borderlines of the intimate (female) and the authoritarian (patriarchal) by disturbing – from her balcony, as yet an-

20
The Group of Six Artists (Boris Demur, Željko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Mladen Stilinović, Sven Stilinović, and Fedor Vučemilović) realized twenty one "exhibition-actions" in the period from 1975-1979. The very choice for naming their activities "exhibition-actions" indicates a certain detachment from conventional exhibition forms. . Similarly to Gorgona, they always laid stress on the informal character of their association and actually never used the term Group of Six Authors. They were rather named by art historians: the name was first used by Radoslav Putar in the journal *Spot 7* (1975) and it entered "official historicisation" in the catalogue of the project *New Art Practice*, 19789, when the editor, Marijan Susovski, used it as the title of the text of Nena Baljković Dimitrijević. Later the Group of Three was also to be mentioned, as a kind of fraction of the Group of Six, consisting of Demur, Martek and Jerman.

21
Senior Citizen Tihomir Simičić was a fictitious group/art project initiated by Braco Dimitrijević and Goran Trbuljak in 1969/1970. Co-authorship over the project is cited in literature already since the 1970s, however, in the samizdat *The Post Historic Times*, Anno Post Historicum XXXVI, Croatian Edition, No.2, Dimitrijević denies it, claiming that it is his individual project, with the participation of G. Trbuljak. Whatever the case may be, in its brief activity, the "group" initiated the questions of the relations between the artist and institution, the concept of "anonymous artist," "incidental participant," and "incidentally created work of art." Both artists continued investigating the relationship between the artist and the institution, the art system, and the mechanisms of writing art history in their individual subsequent work.

other "in-between space" – the official visit of Marshall Tito to Zagreb. Through this quest for the space of dis/trans/delocation, they created a "public space" in the sense in which it had been alluded to by Arendt: regardless of the number of observers or witnesses to any of these events, they opened up the possibility of singular plurality, a kind of radicalised mutuality.

Radna zajednica umjetnika Podroom (Working

RZU Podroom (Working Community of Artists "The Basement") was active in Zagreb in the period from 1978 to 1980, in the studio of Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis, which had been turned into an exhibition space, but also a space where the gathered artists intensively spent time, worked, associated, discussed and which they at the same time felt as both public and "their own". The RZU did not have a fixed membership or a defined programme of action, and the name of the initiative itself can on the one hand be read as ironising of the socialist bureaucracy, but on the other, as a tactical gesture of speaking in a language of the apparatus, and with the goal of securing the impression of institutional relevancy. Transcript of the conversation from one of the working meetings of the group, published in the *First Issue* ("magazine-catalogue" from 1980, which at the same time represents a resume of earlier activities, but also an attempt of mapping the road for further actions), clearly points out to different views of the ways of functioning and the role of such an artist-run space. Besides being an endeavour to surpass the framework of the Podroom itself by active and concretised advocacy of artist rights and the autonomy of artistic work (e.g. through making a "Contract" that regulates the relationship between artists and galleries), the *First Issue* is also an attempt to define the specificities that differentiate Podroom from local institutions. The published conversation, however, reveals exactly the insecurity of articulating such a position of radical deviation from institutional cultural practices. At the same time, within the group itself, there arise different ideas concerning the conception of the programme and the role of the space on the local scene. On the one hand it is seen as a space for open dialogue and critical questioning of the local context through relatively free, informal and anarchic actions, and on the other, of a space that would at the same time act both as a bond with the international art scene and clearly position itself locally, as a place for forming a certain front for advancement of the social and economic status of the artist. The entire existence of the Podroom can in this way be perceived as yet another quest for the "inbetween spaces" and the programme, where the fact that there exists a certain physical location of association – as Sanja Iveković points out in the above mentioned conversation – not in the least helps in concentrating on the "the concept of action – on the programme". The differentiation of Podroom from other art venues is being traced in numerous ways, by recognizing its dissimilarity with conventional gallery spaces, by the fact that artists actively discuss and spend time there, by its informal orientation to be a "form of action", and finally, at the very end of the conversation, by recognizing it as living space on the basis of existence and active usage of a "sink", the "photo-portrait" of which concludes the *First Issue*. The short life of the RZU Podroom continued, however, not only through a few joint exhibitions and performances outside of it during 1981, but also through subsequent establishing of the PM Gallery (Expanded Media Gallery) in 1981, an autonomous space managed by a number of the artists that were active earlier and in the Podroom as well (later the space was led by Mladen Stilinović). In a way, the subsequent institutionalisation of the PM Gallery likewise closes the history of a "generation" of self-organising artistic initiatives in Croatia – which in no way are synchronous, separate accounts, but ones

Goran: Dozvolu za izlaganje rada od galeriste mož... dobiti ako on posjeduje svijest o tome što je taj rad, a, mislim, svijest naših galerista nije baš na nekom nivou. Tako da dolazi u opasnost da on sudi o tvom radu...

Goran:... pa čak i obrazloženje umjetnika često puta ne može galerista shvatiti.

Marta: Da, pazi, onda ima još jedna vrlo važna stvar: i kad tebi neko dozvoli izložbu, on od tebe traži određene radove. To se još više vidi kod otkupa. Zato bi bilo vrlo važno ne prodavati u vlastitom interesu, jer se tebi otkupljuju samo određene vrste radova, koje u većini slučajeva ti ne smatraš reprezentativnim za svoj rad. Tvoja aktivnost može biti devedeset i devet posto usmjerena u jednom smjeru, ali oni kupuju onaj jedan posto tvoje aktivnosti jer to odgovara njima. Praktički tako se stvara totalno kriva slika o tome što ti radiš.

Trba: Ja se sjećam onog prvog razgovora koji je bio u Podrumu, šta ja znam, prije dvije godine na kojem su manje više svi koji su ovdje bili prisutni. Ono kaj se meni svida je to da se stvar malo više, neću reć politizirala, nego je postala svjesnija. Prije dvije godine, čini mi se, da je ono kaj je bilo važno, je bilo to da se samo izlaže, mislim, pod svaku cijenu, a sistem i ono kaj je djelovala na taj rad nije bilo uopće važno. To, mislim, da je jako važno i da je to jako dobro i da je, mislim, da je svaki od autora koji su ovdje u tom smjeru nekaj napravio. Ono čega je mene zapravo strah, te samo za Podrum, nego za sve naše aktivnosti je kak daleko to ide, kome se mi obraćamo? Ali, o tome ste vi već vjerojatno raspravljali.

To kaj je zapravo čudno, je da je samo mali broj ljudi za koje mislimo da razumiju to šta radimo, a zapravo je vrlo brzo svaki od nas vidio da od ostalih, nitko živ to ne razumije i da to zapravo nikog ne zanima. Mislim, sretna je okolnost to da barem onaj mali broj ljudi, da barem oni (ja imam takav dojam) razumiju jedni druge. E, sad je samo pitanje da li je to dovoljno, odnosno, kaj se tu može još napraviti da to ide malo šire, da postane, nekako, publika. Ja znam da se zapitati ne može izmisliti...

Sanja: Ali se može animirati.

Trba: Točno. To recimo šta radi Studentski list zadnjih deset, ili ne znam točno koliko brojeva, to je recimo, jedan od načina. Samo kod toga je blesavo kao kod svih novina, da se ne vidi odjek toga.

Marta: Odjek toga...

Trba: Ono kaj se meni čini, je da je u tom Podrumu slična publika. N u Galeriji suvremene umjetnosti na druge publike. Možda bi se nekom trebalo... najpoštenije je da se ljude zainteresira za tu neku drugu aktivnost, pa će oni onda doći i primat u drugu...

Sanja: Čuj, ja ću ti nešto reć, moglo se vidjeti na konkretnim primjerima dvije, tri manifestacije u Podrumu da publika postoji i da se može dosta lako animirati za određenu izložbu ili manifestaciju. Imali smo iskustvo da kad smo ulagali više vremena, a bogme i novaca u tiskanje i distribuciju pozivnica, plakata i slično, odaziv je bio iznad očekivanja. Treba imati u umu, da nismo jednostavno imali para za te neke stvari koje svaka druga institucija normalno ima.

Sanja: Dakle, mislim, za mene nije uopće pitanje kako zainteresirati ljude da ovamo dolaze, postoje za to prokušane metode i sredstva, nego je pitanje koje mi se čini važnije tko su ti ljudi i koji je pravi interes njihov...

Trba: Znaš šta, ono što je sad svima jasno, i mislim, što je jako dobro je to što je svaki od nas, možda ne svi, ali veliki dio ljudi koji su ovdje prisutni je prošao kroz iskustvo potrebe da afimira svoj rad: odnosno, barem mu se čini da je nekom odraslom, kušiš, koji više razumije, koji više zna nego on sam, da je pokazao svoj rad i da je dobio neki odgovor na to – ili je sad to bilo tako da je taj rad bio prihvaćen ili je doživio neko razočaranje jer je vidio da to zapravo nitko nije shvatio. A mislim, da je to jedno dragocjeno iskustvo; zapravo šta se ustanovilo: da se ne treba obraćat NJIMA, mislim tim institucijama i svim tim ljudima koji prave kulturu... da se treba obraćat nekom drugom, odnosno, onima koji su... dakle, ne onim »starima« od kojih se ranije očekivalo da oni tebe shvate, nego drugima...

Stile: To pitanje je užasno, za mene škakljivo, jer ti kada to pogledaš, mi u stvari postajemo (ono što je na zapadu na neki način već prevaziđeno) društvo užasno ovisno o reklami. To je užasavajuće. Ti kad pogledaš recimo, Bulajića: koliko je reklamu napravio, onda odeš u kino (ja sam bio), gledao sam film – ljudi se smiju, zvižde, zajebavaju se, plješću, ali dolaze! Razumeš, to mene užasava, to da stvarno ljudi podležu toj reklami. I na koncu Podrum je imao to iskustvo sa Jermanom, je ja recimo, Jerman najavio »Punk-Art« i došlo je masa ljudi ovdje na tu izložbu, na taj naziv, na tu reklamu.

Marta: Pazi, ja mislim da se mi ne moramo držati tih konvencija reklame, pa reć, znaš ono: Galerija suvremene troši ne znam koliko, milion i pol na godinu, pa ak' mi potrošimo milion i pol dobit ćemo isto, ne? Ali postoji drugi način, pogotovo za drugu publiku, mislim celi taj sistem neće dovuć ne znam: mlade, studente, srednjoškolce i tak, na to trza rulja koja je već nekak izdvojena iz prosjeka, koja naime, ne ide ionako prima pozive.

Trba: To je jedna razlika od onog razgovora koji smo imali prije dvije godine, jer onda smo bili u takvoj poziciji da su neki već izlagali u Galeriji suvremene umjetnosti, neki su još aspirirali i tak dalje. Sad mi...

slim, po tom pitanju, kaj ja znam, čini mi se da smo sad svi slični, da smo tu fazu prošli. Sada nema više, ono, borbe...

Marta: Frustracije.

Trba:... frustracije, nesigurnosti i tak dalje... Sad svaki zna šta predstavlja i misem, nema potrebe da ga sad neko tješi i govori mu – je, ti si sad dobar umjetnik i da na tome sve ostane, ne? I prema tome, mislim, da je sad to ipak jedno veliko iskustvo i da sad samo treba vidjet, mislim, kam dalje (to je jako pametno šta sam reko, hm...) (Smijeh)

Boro: Pitanje je kako će sada netko reagirati na eventualne suradnje sa drugim institucijama, recimo, kako će ljudi ovdje reagirati na recimo, pozive Galerije suvremene umjetnosti konkretno.

Sanja: Da, ali shvaćaš, radi se o jednoj izmjeni u ponašanju, o jednom, ja bi rekla, sazrijevanju, kužiš? Na primjer, ovaj ugovor su svi prihvatili, mislim, dakle, to znači da postoji već jedan zajednički stav -ako se odnositi prema institucijama, sistemu.

Trba: I sad je tu ono što je dosta bitno (mislim, šta se može isto promijeniti). Koji je naš stav prema slikarima? Jer, u ovom trenutku kad ideš s tim ugovorom, ti ćeš morati, morat ćeš pozivat ljude koji ne rade kao ti, slikare i tak dalje. A taj ugovor će funkcionirat jedino onda kad... ne samo... mi, kužiš? (žamor)

Marta: On odgovara svima... (žamor)

Sanja: Taj ugovor je upravo s tom namjerom i napravljen, da ne bude valjan za jednu malu grupu, mislim da on odgovara svim ljudima koji se smatraju samo-stalnim umjetnicima.

Marta: To je ono kaj smo rekli, mi inzistiramo na jednom društveno-ekonomskom fer odnosu, a ne na nekakvom odnosu prema određenom estetskom shvrti, ne kao – mi moramo imati ovaj specijalni tretman za razliku od nekog slikara koji, što se nas tiče, može ostati vrtiti – neeeee...

(žamor)

Goran: Da, kad se napravi taj prijedlog, onda treba vidjeti na koji način ga raširiti, jer postoji...

Marta: Pa, sigurno, treba ga nastojati širiti, ali ga mi moramo početi sprovoditi radikalno da bi...

(žamor)

Stile: Da, nikada.

Marta: Jer, činjenica je da većina umjetnika nije spremna zauzeti nekakav stav, kužiš, koji će biti radikalan, nego, ne, znaš, reć: – je, fino deaki, ja se s svama slažem – a sutra kad ga pozove Zdenko Rus bude si mislil – jebemti, pa nisam lud da se sad s tim zajebavam u Modernoj galeriji...

(žamor, smijeh...)
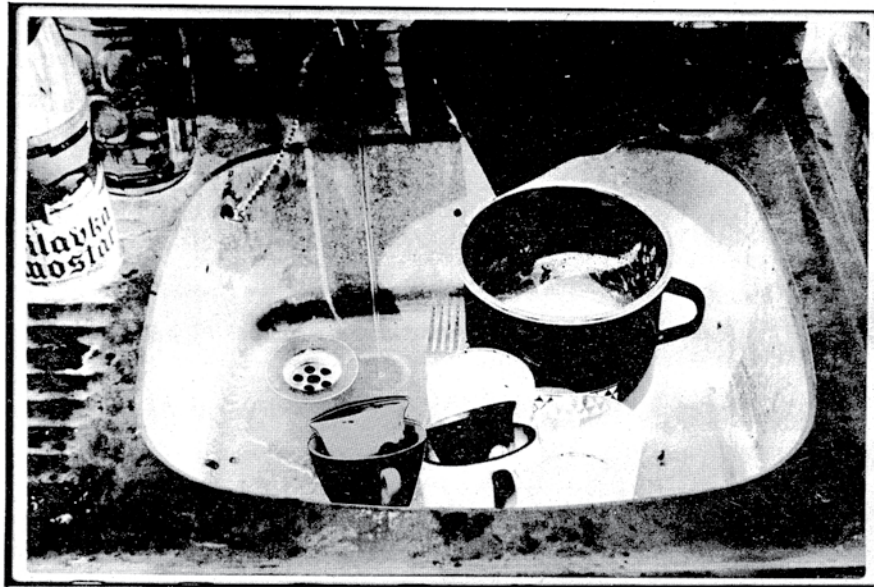
Podroom [The Basement]
the journal-catalogue Prvi broj [First Issue], Zagreb, 1980

Martinis: Just because this space doesn't now look like a typical gallery and doesn't have an usher who tears your entrance tickets does not mean that in two years, as we know can happen, it won't be injected complete into the system and get nicely established within it.

Dorogi: It is obvious that the space is not and cannot be that which joins things, the basement would have to be a form of action... I have to admit that people from outside nevertheless got the idea that the name Podroom/Basemet refers only and entirely to the space, as if we who were here were basement-artists, get it, as if this were a mirror of our activities. Then, clearly we have to bring out a form of action, whether we call it basement or cucumber, or something else.

Sanja: I often thought that this space, I mean, has in a sense been the weak point of the whole thing...

Rog: Weak point, yeah, in essence, when one thinks about it.

Sanja: I mean, the fact that the space exists, perhaps made it impossible for people to concentrate more on the creation of a concept of action, a programme. Perhaps we should get rid of the space, perhaps we should forget that it exists, and maybe then... In the very beginning, it didn't seem to us that it was enough to have a space in which to show one's work, make catalogues and so on. And that this space was in itself different from galleries. And after all, because the character of our work has changed and the awareness about the role of the artist today has changed, we have in some sense stopped being just artists and started to be something more than that...

Stile: Less...

Sanja: More or less, in my opinion, more, when I say more I mean it is not important to us just how you are going to do your piece, but you have an awareness that you are working in a context and that artists are some cultural factors and that accordingly you have the right to have a critical attitude towards that and then to create this, some kind of cultural policy, I dunno... And when we mentioned in the first plans for the Podroom things such as panel discussions, thematic exhibitions, lectures, bulletins-cum-magazines, we had in mind this activity that does not have the traditional exhibition character. And so Marta and I insisted more on these kind of events. Such was the talk with the CEAC group from Toronto, the lecture of Liza Bear about the alternative use of communications, our conversation in Podroom about alternative art centres in Canada and America, the library. So, let's say, this decision to launch this journal seemed to me important, it was a good sign.

Excerpt from the transcripts of a discussion between the members of the Podroom initiative, published in: *Podroom* [The Basement]: *Prvi broj* [First Issue], journal-catalogue, samizdat, Zagreb, 1980

that organically and chronologically follow upon one another not only through mutual affinity and recognition, but also by means of a direct connection through the individuals that make up the cores of many different groups: from Gorgona (1959–1966), to one-day exhibition activities in the doorway of 2A Frankopanska Street in Zagreb, led by Braco and Nena Dimitrijević (1970–1972), then the Group of Six Artists (1975–1979) and their magazine *May 75* (1978–1984), to the RZU Podroom (1978–1980) and the PM Gallery (1981–). Definitely aided by the generational shift and the precipitous social-political changes at the beginning of the 90s, PM Gallery marks the exhaustion of the potential for self-organised actions and the beginning of their institutionalization.*

* On the continuation of self-organised actions from the second half of the 1990s until today, in terms of development of the so-called non-institutional scene in Croatia, which is no longer connected strictly to artistic actions, and on the relationship between these "two waves of collectivity", see: Ana Dević, "To criticize, charge for services rendered, and be thanked", *Transversal online journal, Issue: The Post-Yugoslavian condition of Institutional Critique,* 2007, *www.eipcp.net/transversal/0208/devic/en*

Community of Artists Podroom/"The Basement") prioritised the idea of "community", regardless of the divergent individual artistic strategies of its members and often even entirely conflicting ideas about the role of art and the artist in society. Guided by this fluid understanding of joint activities, the "Basement" artists never clearly articulated a common manifesto or programme. It was a group of artists in search of a model of self-organisation, trying to position themselves critically towards the institutions, although, as they suggest in the published minutes of a working meeting, their activities remained isolated within the semi-visibility of the "basement".

These often invisible and "removed-from-the-crowd" spaces, events, gestures and ideas, eventually lead to the instigation of new ones; those of temporary freedom and emancipation from social norms and boundaries.[22] Even when it is impossible to precisely delineate their form or measure their immediate impact, they should by no means be considered harmless; instead, as Mladen Stilinović has
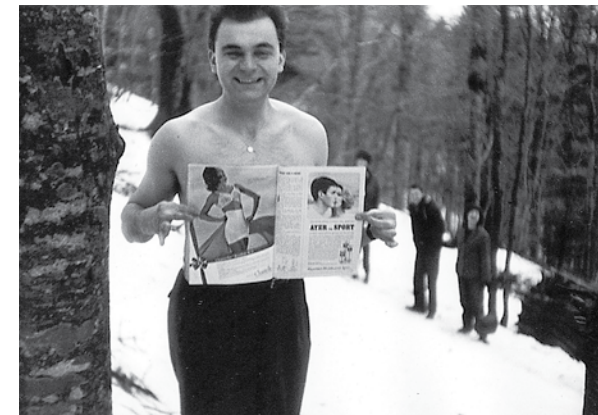
pointed out, they necessarily produce consequences.
"The question is how to manipulate that what manipulates you, so blatantly, so shamelessly, but I am not innocent – there is no such thing as art without consequences.
-Mladen Stilinović, *Tekst nogom* [Written by Foot], 1984

"What art historians are bound to examine, whether they like it or not, is the work as effect and affect, not only as a neatly remote product of an age long gone."
Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History", *The Art Bulletin* 73.2 (1991)

The self-organized artistic initiative Podroom could thus be interpreted as a direct consequence of the Group of Six Artists taking a swim at the River Sava bathing resort and Tomislav Gotovac's controversial action *Zagreb, I love you!* (1981)[23] as a sequel to his performance *Showing the Elle Magazine*, which took place nineteen years earlier in the much "safer" area of Mount Medvednica – shyly in terms of both location and "action". However, his half-naked posing in nature, together with half-naked models from the women's magazine, assumed the function of initiation into his later blatant

Tomislav Gotovac, *Showing the Elle Magazine*, 1962
Photo by: Ivica Hripko

22
Perhaps in a similar way to Hakim Bey's idea of "temporary autonomous zones", Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zones, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, New York: Autonomedia Anti-copyright, 1985, 1991

23
The complete title of the performance was: *Ležanje gol na asfaltu, ljubljenje asfalta (Zagreb, volim te!). Homage to Howard Hawks' Hatari!* [Lying naked on the pavement, kissing the pavement (Zagreb, I love you!) Homage to Howard Hawk's Hatari!]

confrontations with the living urban space and the socialist/petit-bourgeois morals.

**"IT'S RAINING AND OPINION ON WHETHER TO TAKE
TO THE STREETS OR NOT IS DIVIDED."** [24]

This is where we once again return to the idea of the "delayed audience", not only as a perspective through which we can read the phenomena of the past, but also as a concept of thought and action essential for our own practice today. We embrace it as a subversion of the contemporary cultural institutions' anxiety and obsession with attendance and as a mode of escaping the pressures of the result- and visibility-oriented neoliberalism. Could one emancipate herself precisely by being unacceptable, uninteresting and irrelevant to the hegemonic circulation of cultural commodities and "delay" the audience?

The first encounter of the professional as well as of the general public with the work of the Gorgona group (1959-1966) was the exhibition that was devised and organised by Nena Baljković Dimitrijević in 1977 in the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. Vlado Martek, a member of the Group of Six Authors, poetically describes the non-linear labyrinths of the birth of history, talking about how the appearance of conceptual art practice in the work of Braco Dimitrijević and Goran Trbuljak, and later in the actions of the Group of Six Artists in fact set off the discovery and enabled the contextualisation of the work of Gorgona. "We actually provoked them to come out into the public and to do this exhibition. In fact, we who are in a sense their children were their parents from this point of view... With this exhibition, Gorgona became officially present in our culture, and this was a kind of birth – they were in fact born after their own children."
-Vlado Martek, discussion in the framework of the alternative education project *Curatorial Platform*, Zagreb, Miroslav Kraljević Gallery, May, 2009

"The question is how today we can look at *Plastic Jesus*. The first thing that has to be clarified in connection with Yugoslav cinematography, apart from it always have been an inflated bal-

loon of some kind of Hollywood spectacle, is that its alternative segment, which is characterised as black wave, almost never had any cultural and aesthetic effect, not even at the time of its production... Paradoxically, it can be said that *Plastic Jesus* is a film of the post-Yugoslav generation; just as Boris Buden says that *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is a film about post-socialism, so we can say that many of the films of the black wave (particularly *Plastic Jesus*) are addressed to (us) post-Yugoslavs, for one very practical reason – in socialist Yugoslavia, no one in fact watched those films."
-Sezgin Boynik, "Some contributions to a better understanding and enjoyment of the film *Plastic Jesus* of Lazar Stojanović", *Život umjetnosti* 83 (2008)

Tomislav Gotovac, *Lying Naked on the Pavement, Kissing the Pavement (Zagreb, I Love You!). Homage to Howard Hawks' Hatari!*, documentation of the action, 1981
Photo by: Ivan Posavec

24
This sentence appeared in an Internet encyclopedia, which offered the chronology of the events that took place in Zagreb in June 1968 (*www.bos.anarchopedia.org/1968._u_Jugoslaviji*). Even though the text that immediately preceded it mentioned the existence of opposed factions among Zagreb students, who disagreed about whether they should express their support to Belgrade students by taking to the streets, the quoted sentence seems to have arbitrarily entered the narrative the cold process of selecting the historical facts. Mentioning the fact that it was raining (while at the same time ignoring, for example, that the Student Centre was already by then surrounded by police) relativises the opposition of beliefs and the dramatic character of the situation, turning its protagonists into an indifferent and melancholic crew which was ready for action, but only if it meant keeping their feet dry.

P: Come in, come in.
M. Enter!
S: Yes, what do you want?
X: Ah... no, no, not likely.
Do: Who was that?
-Excerpt from the transcripts of a discussion between the members of the Podroom initiative, published in: *Podroom* [The Basement], journal-catalogue *Prvi broj* [First Issue], Zagreb, 1980

As it has already been pointed out, the fact that the audience is delayed or non-existent does not at the same time mean the absense of the creation of the public, or of the public space. The secluded space of the *Podroom* studio, into which an occasional passer-by wanders only as if by accident, is still a public space, created by the singular-plural community of those who constitute it. It is by disturbing the linear perspective that we today also enter this space, which simultaneosly becomes our own, just as we become part of its public. This is how phenomena such as the *Podroom* in Zagreb, *Collective Actions* in Moscow, the basement of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague (where Petr Štembera, Jan Mlčoch, Karel Miler and Jirí Kovanda performed their actions after the museum would officially close down for the day), become not mere escapist gestures, avoiding confrontation with the broader socio-political reality – as they tend to be interpreted in the problematically pervasive and simplistic dialectics of the oppression (of the system) and freedom (sought by artists) – but paths for tracing completely

"Nothing is less passive than flight. The 'exit' modifies the conditions within which the conflict takes place, rather than presupposes it as an irremovable horizon; it changes the context within which a problem arises, rather than deals with the problem by choosing one or another of the alternative solutions already on offer." -Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution", in *Radical Thought in Italy. A potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt, The University of Minnesota Press, 1996

new models of work and alternative notions of the public space and community.

This search implies refusing the simple game of "for" and "against", slipping off the check-board that offers strat-

egies depending on the presupposition that there exist merely two opposing colours, and looking for new rules and playgrounds, even when they seem to be utopian or simply vague notions of *elsewhere*. As the Russian poet and artist Dmitry Aleksandrovich Prigov wrote in his playful aphorism on the (im)possibility of opposition (but at the same time simply on longing for something that is elsewhere, whatever that might be): *In Japan, I would be Catullus / In Rome I would be Hokusai / And in Russia I am the same guy / Who would have been / Catullus in Japan / And in Rome, Hokusai.* [25]

In a society based on the idea of a unique, homogeneous public body, with a clearly outlined programme of action, there is no possibility for other programmes and confrontations between various interest groups. Western liberalism, with its emphasis on the individual rather than the collective, results in grouping individual "programmes" into what has been termed "identity politics" – by establishing and constantly reshaping a variety of interest groups with clearly articulated goals, primarily realised through the development of the civil society sector and the institution of civic action. Following this logic, art can also be voluntarily (or through its appropriation into the field of social action) placed at the disposal of a specific interest group, which results in overturning or even abolishing the activism-art dichotomy.

Besides numerous artistic phenomena similar to what was in the Yugoslav context called New artistic practice,

25
Dmitry Alexandrovich Prigov, transl. by Philip Metres, http://behindthelinespoetry.blogspot.com/2007/07/dmitry-alexandrovich-prigov-soviet-era.html, last accessed: September 12 2011

various art groups and trends emerging in the West in the 1960s and 1970s endorsed specific projects for transformation of the social reality: feminism, anti-racist struggle, ecological movements, workers' movements, movements for sexual liberation, etc. In the Yugoslav context, where the society was based on an ideologically constituted equality, all possibilities of such endorsement were abolished in advance: e.g., it was impossible to demand the equality of women when they were already equal "comradesses".[26] The relevance of any attempt to introduce such particular discourses was often undermined by accusations of being a contaminating – and in a socialist society completely redundant – "import from the West".

The conference "Drugarica žena. Žensko pitanje: novi pristup?" gathered Yugoslav and West-European feminists on a seminal event in the history of feminism in Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe, organised in the Belgrade Students' Cultural Centre in October 1978 was. As it can be inferred from one of the reports from the conference, the Western feminists were suspicious of the their Eastern comradesses who continuously used the pronoun 'we', interpretating that as a way of alignment themselves with the official politics, with the communist party and the imposed collectivity. The Westerners were simply disappointed in their Eastern peers, not finding them radical enough. They kept asking 'where do you stand, how do you fight the system?' Most of the feminist from the West saw the position of their Yugoslav colleagues as dictated by the political regime. Eventually, after the initial enthusiasm about meeting each other, there seemed to be a complete lack of dialogue. One of the participants finally concluded 'We, the Westerners, we are in the dark. We don't know what the Yugoslavs think and what they expect from us. When the Western comrade women pushed the Yugoslavs to position themselves autonomously and politically, the Yugoslavs replied 'We have no lessons to receive.' The Western feminists were ignoring the fact that, in many ways, the position of women in Yugoslavia, was more advanced than in many of the European democratic countries of the time.

-cited from Chiara Bonfiglioli, *Belgrade 1978. Rembering the Conference "Drug-ca žena. Žensko Pitanje – Novi Pristup?"/Comrade Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?" Thirty Years After*, unpublished MA thesis, Utrecht University, 2008

[26]
For an excellent analysis of the history and construction of femininity and the "women's issue" in Yugoslavia, see: Bojana Pejić, "The Morning After: Plavi Radion, Abstract Art and Bananas", n.paradoxa, Vol. 10, 2002

WITH (OLD) TITO INTO NEW VICTORIES!

In the meantime, many things were being imported from the West through official channels, above all, the economic system that, from the times of the Yugoslav economic reform in 1965, was flirting with liberalism and capitalism. The unsuccessful development of the reform caused a huge economic crisis in the late 1960s, when Yugoslavia had to face the fact that its classless utopian society was gradually developing social and class differences. Instead of building socialism at home, its members were often forced to seek much better compensation for their work by building up foreign capitalism. Many Yugoslav films of the so-called Black Wave were censored and "bunkered" in the late 1960s and the early 1970s precisely because they pointed out, among other things, to this particular phenomenon: the thriving of capitalism, and the growth of social differences, under the guise of socialist revolution.

Even though the Belgrade student protests of 1968 were spontaneous and started as a rebellion against the police violence during the "New Belgrade 68" concert, they were by all means linked to the general dissatisfaction with the socio-economic situation and the lack of prospects for young people, who now protested holding banners and exclaiming: "Down with the Red Bourgeoisie!". The Belgrade protests, and later those in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo, were not directed against the existing system, but demanded a more consistent implementation of Marxism. The students' programme was thus the "programme of SFRJ",[27] and their loyalty to the

[27]
The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia

IVANA BAGO & ANTONIA MAJAČA

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leader of that programme, Josip Broz Tito, was more or less genuine, rather than just a necessary tool of legitimisation.[28] Even though the insistence on implementing the socialist programme more consistently was certainly an intelligent method of pointing out to the hypocrisies of the ruling "princes of Communism", that was precisely what deprived the movement of its power. It was apparently the lack of a clearly articulated "alternative" vision of the future that opened up the way for the eventual suppression of the protest by the authorities: "The student proclamations were largely theoretical in nature and limited to demands for 'democratising our social and political system.' In their generalisation, they were hardly any different from the official proclamations of the Party."[29] If we accept the hypothesis that "new times seek commitment to new tasks", this call for returning to the tasks that had been set out more than twenty years before was in itself a melancholic gesture. This made it possible for Tito (the initiator of that original path and now the chief "prince of communism") to adopt a paternal and patronising stance towards the events. In his speech broadcast live on national TV, Tito supported the students' demands in principle, promising that all their concerns would be answered. He ended his speech with the following words: *And finally, I wish to say to the students once again, It is time for you to return to your books, since you are now in the middle of the exams, and I wish you great luck with that. It would really be a pity for you to waste any more time.* Funnily enough, after hearing this, the students jubilantly joined in a "Kozara" wheel dance.[30]

In *Early Works* (1969) by Želimir Žilnik the director follows a group of young rebels who, in the endless plains of the Panonian countryside, proclaim the self-realisation of each individual. After the effort to teach and emancipate the peasants results in a fiasco, one of the group members is worried that they might run into trouble precisely because they are a group, but didn't register as one. A group always represents a common programme and so is always a potential threat to the system.

"Žilnik examines the life of the young rebels in the modern corporate state and he describes their inevitable passage into nihilism. For that is what romanticism, refused an unambiguous ideology and political discipline, refused power, becomes. "Death to the romantics!" they cry, condemning themselves. The four young people are out to create a socialist revolution in a communist country. On the way they discover that they are, like the rest of us, impotent before the state, isolated and incapable of affecting a sufficient response from the regime. (Unless one considers a police-administered haircut a sufficient response. It is certainly a totalitarian one.) The state disregards them. Their difficulty is simply that they are half-way revolutionaries because their enemy (the state) has co-opted their ideology."
-Cited in: "Early Works: Half-way Revolutions", *Dotson Rader, Grove Press International Film Festival Book*, available at: *www.zelimirzilnik.com/content/view/26/27/*

July 1968 student movemement, Yugoslavia

28
Tihomir Ponoš, *Na rubu revolucije – studenti '71* (On the verge of revolution – the students of '71), Zagreb: Profil, 2007

29
Katarina Spehnjak and Tihomir Cipek, "Disidenti, opozicija i otpor - Hrvatska i Jugoslavija 1945-1990" [Dissidents, opposition, and resistance – Croatia and Yugoslavia, 1945-1990], *Institute for Croatian History* 2 (2007)

30
Tihomir Ponoš, *op. cit*.

KARL MARX AS A LONESOME ANTI-MARXIST [31]

Although the Yugoslav 1968 student uprising may seem rather benign in comparison with the events taking place in Czechoslovakia or Argentina at the time, it was the first massive act of protest and expression of dissatisfaction in the country. It demonstrated a potential of public association, which would culminate in the Zagreb student protests of 1971 – this time, however, with a clearly articulated political programme, and not a leftist, but a nationalist agenda. Similar to the programme of the official Croatian Party leadership at the time, it placed in the foreground the issue of Croatian national identity and the position of the Socialist Republic within the Yugoslav federative community. The protests ended by the deposing of the Croatian Party leaders and detaining or even imprisoning the student protesters. They also had serious social and political consequences, ultimately leading to the new 1974 constitution that would enable the legal framework for the break-up of Yugoslavia two decades later.

Even though the so-called "Spring activists" [32] were also addressing Tito for support, in their case, it was no longer that simple for the president to use the same method in neutralising dissatisfaction. They too were referring to the basic values of socialism and self-management, and actively engaging in debates with their "leftist" colleagues (the '68 activists) about the proper understanding of Marxism. Ob-

viously, it was possible to reinterpret endlessly the premises on which the society was based, as long as one nominally remained within the existing boundaries of discourse. The legacy of Marxism became a field of struggle for all the interest groups: the socialist state, the philosophers around the *Praxis* journal and the Korčula Summer School, the leftist '68 activists and the rightist Spring activists, all of which sought to legitimise their own agendas by proposing a "proper" understanding of Marxism.

"Work is a disease. Karl Marx." - Mladen Stilinović, 1981

One of the local press articles on the famous 1972 lecture of Joseph Beuys at the Belgrade Students' Cultural Center condemned Beuys' twisted, "Western" understanding of Marxism.

It seems that advocating an alternative was possible only by simulating or mimicking the existing, i.e. ideologically and socially accepted frameworks of thought and action. How far one could go in that mimicry of the society and the phraseology that sustained it becomes evident in the slogan by Mladen Stilinović: "An attack on my art is an attack on socialism and progress", finally leading into a logical paradox.

31
"Marx once said about himself that he was no Marxist, having in mind his son-in-law Paul Lafargue and many others who vulgarized and twisted his philosophy and his doctrine. In that sense, I am no Marxist either, since even Stalin and Stalinists of all shapes and colours have been declaring themselves as Marxist to the present day."

Milan Kangrga, *Izvan povijesnog događanja: dokumenti jednog vremena*, [Beyond historical events: documents of a time] (Split: Feral Tribune Biblioteka, 1997).

32
The Zagreb student movements of 1971 are known as the "Croatian Spring."

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YOU WILL FIND ME, MOTHER, IN NIRVANA

In 1971, there were those who were neither "maspok" [33] *activists -"Budiša's men", nor on the side of, let's say, Žarko Puhovski either; they represented a current that was actually anarchoid, perhaps even anarchistic (…) There was a situationist action performed by Lino Veljak: he threw a stone and broke one of the windows of the University building as a sign of protest against the rector's policy. The event has become an urban legend, although its veracity needn't be doubted. This is the question to be asked now: are individual protests possible?* [34]

Who will be the first to throw the stone, and at whom? What is the role of those who went astray and fell out of the wheel dance?

Question Mark Variables:

Gene Swenson: "The art world is sitting on a time bomb of social revolution", April 1968. Gene Swenson, carrying a blue question mark perched on a pole, is picketing in front of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The guards have been warned not to let him inside. Swenson used to be one of the most influential New York based critics and became a bitter and paranoid outcast. His gesture was a quixotic one. To what extent does, in fact, the artist have power in the face of the ivory towers of institutions and the state, if he acts from the outside, as a lonely coyote with underdeveloped fangs?

The Slovak artist Julius Koller has used the question mark as his logo since the 1960s. In 1978 he performed the *Universal Futurological Question Mark*, by sitting down in a field with thirty children arranged in the form of a question mark. He called this action a "cultural situation". The photograph of the action shows the question mark pointing to the sky – there is no institution addressed. It addresses the one who doesn't see it or that which it itself cannot see. The question mark protrudes towards emptiness. The children are, for the time being, just a form, possible bearers of a question which it will be possible to raise in the future.

Those who have questioned the limits of thoughts and actions without manifestos or programs? The *Red Peristyle* action, in which eight young men painted Peristyle, the central square of Split (and a representative monument of ancient Roman culture) in January 1968, has become an urban legend, not only of that city, but of Croatian art history as well. The action has been the focus of many debates, which

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33
Maspok (mass movement) is another name for Croatian Spring.

34
Hrvoje Jurić in: "Protesti i protestiranje"[Protests and protesting], transcript from a debate part of the project Bilježenje grada – bilježenje vremena [Documenting the city – documenting the time], 2nd Open Office, klub za net.kulturu mama, Zagreb, 24 May 2006, *Zarez*, nr.184-185, 2006

Mladen Stilinović, *Artist at Work* (detail), 1978

sought to explain its motivation: did it signify the deconstruction of red, since that was the colour that symbolised the communist regimes, or was it actually referring to historical Russian avant-gardes or the Red Square in Moscow, since it used red colour together with the rectangular form? Some were saying that the group had also considered painting the square orange, which could have associated the action, equally randomly, with Buddhism, or simply with bringing back some colour to the faded ancient monuments. All those arbitrary debates indicated the uncertainty of the artists' intention as a gesture of protest against the society in which they lived, or rather the uncertainty of using the red colour as its symbol, thereby relativising the possible "political" character of the action.

Perhaps here we should invoke "the death of the author" and conclude that what matters are not the intentions but the consequences of this gesture, which was the first case

If we wished to play with cronology, we might adopt a ludic presumption that the *Red Peristyle* action, which took place at the very beginning of 1968 in a peripheral Yugoslav city, was

Red Peristyle, 1968
documentation of the action

perhaps a sort of initiation, heralding – or by some sort of "butterfly effect" perhaps even causing the later first occupation of public spaces by a multitute of rebellious bodies – the student protests of Belgrade, in June that very year? Perhaps even those in Paris?

of blatant seizure, appropriation and estrangement of a representative public space in Yugoslavia. Regardless of its "original" aims, or perhaps exactly because of its "impossible history" [35], *Red Peristyle* becomes an indication of an exploding anarchoid incidentality without a programme, inarticulate rage against an unnamable enemy. And then again – who are the unnamed we?

In a far more subtle example of artistic tactic as interventions in the environment defined by strategies[36], Mladen Stilinović inserts banners with childishly intoned messages "Ađo loves Stipa" and "Stipa loves Ađo" among the official banners that celebrate the 1st of May, in 1975. By mimicking and paraphrasing the pathetic slogans of socialist folklore, Stilinović introduces a personal message, which in the prevailing ideological iconography alludes to the absurdity of the proclaimed collective programme.

"This is not my opinion about art and society, this is what I shall say about it. WE, in Yugoslavia, often hide behind the pronoun WE. This time I too have hidden. WE in Yugoslavia in politics and art and in writing, often hide behind the pronoun WE. I have hidden because it is easier to speak while assuming a vast agglomeration of people behind one, and think that one is supported in what one is saying. But, I believe that often, when it comes both to artistic and political circles no-one stands behind the one who speaks. Still, this is accepted as a practice because it is safer. It is a lot safer to speak, think and write behind that pronoun and assume that the responsibility is always shifted to someone else, never to the one who is speaking. WE is big: it's painted and red. WE reoccurs in my work and in my views; WE and MINE/YOURS.
-Mladen Stilinović, cited in the film *Untitled* by Zoran Popović, 1976

35
The term with which Miško Šuvaković frames any act of historicisation of the avant-garde, neo- and post-avant-garde artistic practices in ex-Yugoslavia. See: Dubravka Đurić i Miško Šuvaković (eds.), *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, The MIT Press, 2003

36
According to Michel de Certeau, *tactics* are used by individuals in order to create a place for themselves in an environment defined by institutions and power structures who create *strategies*. According to this premise, the city is a concept generated from rules and the strategic manouevring of the authorities and the institutions. On the other hand, an average passer-by (a figure frequently appropriated by artists in the late 1960s and 1970s) could act upon these structures by tactics that evade the strategies of power. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, London: University of California Press, 1988

"We could certainly talk of subversive actions in the work of artists of our generation. But there was also self-censorship – it didn't make sense to end up in court because of a single art piece. We were being careful, but our actions were at the same time a way of expressing criticism, freedom and revolt. The work *Ađo Loves Stipa* didn't go through any censorship, not even the art critics of the time recognized the political connotations of the work. In the frame of the action *The 1st of May 1975* we put that banner in the street, where it remained for quite some time. It is true, though, that the infantile note of the message was enabling this work to remain free. It's simply a love message inserted into the context of a collective ritual of celebrating Labour Day. I renounce that whole parade and say: I don't care, I just love Stipa."
-Mladen Stilinović in: Antonia Majača, *A Sunday Conversation With Mladen Stilinović*, published in: Ellen Blumenstein (ed.), *Männerfantasien*, Berlin: Coma, 2008

Searching for tactics instead of programs is what disrupts the dialectics of opposition: perhaps we can claim that the most transgressive tactic here is precisely non-action, or rather – acting incidentally, in absurdity, with the awareness that there is no goal. The system must be able to recognise the subversive element in order to confront it.

When Željko Jerman placed the street banners in Zagreb and Belgrade, with the statement *This is not my world*,[37] it cannot be interpreted as merely an opposition to the existing world around him. The transgressiveness of that statement resided above all in the vagueness of the world that was/would/may/should have been his. The transgression was in the audacity to raise the very question of the possibility of other, undiscovered worlds, and perhaps most of all in the possibility that this "other" world did not really exist in the first place. As in Julius Koller's question mark, the statement was addressing the void. Just like Gorgona's slogan: "We are not Gorgona, we are just looking for Gorgona in the world around us."

The possibility of aimless wandering implies a potential threat of what might be found. In that sense we may also understand the censorship of the second album by the Yu-

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[37]
Ovo nije moj svijet [This Is Not My World], an intervention in the form of a street intervention, performed in Zagreb and Belgrade in 1976

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goslav band Buldožer, when the word "nirvana" was turned into "kafana" (pub), since a lost son can easily be found in the nearest pub, but the enterprise becomes impossible if he gets lost in something as elusive as nirvana.

Pljuni istini u oči (Spit in the Eye of Truth) is the indicative title of Buldožer's album released in 1975 and sold out within a month. Its re-release was banned since the censorship bodies found it controversial. It emanated cynicism and nihilism, which were at odds with the socialist society of progress. Shortly afterwards, in a typical manner of amortisation and neutralisation of those considered "unsuitable", the Buldožer member Marko Brecelj received the prestigious Seven Secretaries of SKOJ Award (SKOJ is short for Young Communist League of Yugoslavia). For the reissue of their second album the production company made them change the word "nirvana" into "kafana" (pub): "You'll find me, mother, in kafana".
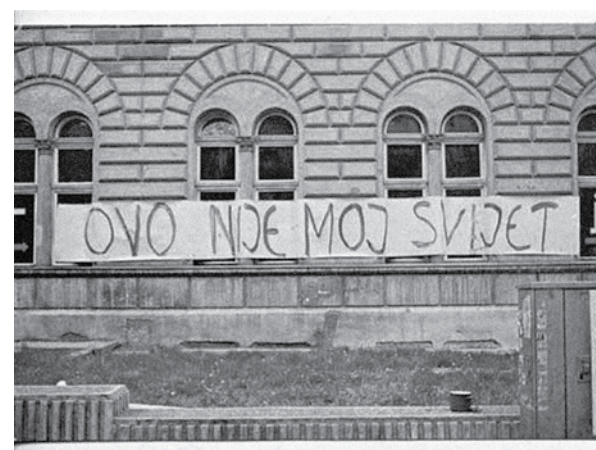
Željko Jerman, *This is Not My World*, SKC, Belgrade, 1976

Left to Themselves, the title of a TV drama produced in 1971[38], but banned and broadcast for the first time on Croatian TV in the 1990s, may be considered the paradigm of an entire generation of small-step seekers, wanderers, and "urban sleepers"[39] with no programme. While wander-

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[38]
It was realized by a team of young people, some of which were still students at the Academy of Drama Arts (directed by Želimir Mesarić, actors: Zdenko Jelčić, Darko Ćurdo, Branko Supek, Mladen Budišćak, Angel Palačev, Zvonko Lepetić, Đuro Utješanović)

[39]
Referring the title of a literary journal from Mostar called "Kolaps - vodič za urbane spavače" [Collapse: Guide for urban sleepers].

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ing through the streets of Zagreb, a group of young men find a corpse by the road and, after discussing what they should do, head straight to the closest pub, despite the efforts of one of them, going by the symbolic name of Che, to convince the others that they cannot simply ignore what they have seen. In the pub, they encounter a group of "toilers", whom they (as sworn idlers and "good-for-nothings"), confront, whereby Poet uses the situation to recite a poem that explicitly problematises the economic situation and the fact that the working class is leaving the country in order to work as *Gastarbeiters* in Germany (the former enemy) for "black, filthy, blood money." After this brief moment of facing the social reality, they move to Poet's flat, where they drink until the morning and have intellectual debates dominated by a nihilist tone. The characters in the film are representatives of the new, futureless Yugoslav generation – the so-called "pessimistic youth." The impossibility of finding

/CHORUS: Climax/

1, 2, 3, 4
The Lost ones!
There are more of us!

For years they've been saying there are not many of us
But the numbers keep growing
numbers keep growing
For years they've been saying
there are only few of us
But the numbers keep growing

1, 2, 3, 4
The Lost ones!

- lyrics from *Izgubljeni* [The Lost Ones], a song by Let 3, 1989

a way out and into action – or even a reason for action – remains the focus of the plot: Che is embittered because of his colleagues' indifference, Alarm Clock dreams about girls and sex (even though this "action" also remains at the level

of imagination), and Poet is infatuated with philosophy and poetry. Such expressions of pessimism and resignation that we generally encounter in the Yugoslav Black Wave cinematography – and coming precisely from the generation that was to be the bearer of the future – shake the very foundations of the system built on the optimistic idea of progress.

The band Buldožer

CONTEMPORARY ART AS THE (DETAINED) DARLING OF THE STATE

Many interpretations of the critical position of contemporary art in Yugoslavia in the 1960 and 1970s have noted its outspokenly marginal position, not only with respect to the society as a whole, but also with respect to other cultural practices, such as film or literature. That marginal position resulted, paradoxically or not, in a relative autonomy of art. The "new" art was nurtured on the institutional margins, embodied in the activities of the student cultural centres. They were in charge of the "alternative" youth culture and created an arena for critical thinking, but also its ghetto. Some of these institutions adopted the strategies of emulating and reappropriating socially prescribed models.

The SKC – Student Cultural Centre in Belgrade found the basis of its programme policies precisely in reinterpreting and implementing the model of self-management.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was the state institutions – rather than the individual practitioners or self-organised artistic initiatives – that were initiating major changes in the fields of culture and art. From 1969 onwards, the Zagreb Student Centre Gallery started experimenting with new exhibition models, and working with artists who would soon become the protagonists of the New Artistic Practice. Zagreb's Gallery of Contemporary Art organised the first exhibitions/interventions in public space and the Belgrade SKC Gallery launched the yearly international festival *April Encounters*. The only thing that spoiled the fun, as it is often the case with contemporary art, was the question of its "real impact" (whatever that means) and its "actual" potentials of reaching beyond its limited, intellectual and elitist fields. [40]

"*New artistic practice*, as critics called the art that was made in the 1970s in Yugoslavia, was mostly presented in galleries that were part of student cultural centres, but occasionally also in certain state galleries which presented the local and international avant-garde scene (the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb). So although this practice was marginalised on one hand ("student cultural centres" had the role of places where "alternative activity" was practiced), it cannot be defined as dissident, because it was supported (and financed) by art institutions and a certain number of "progressive" critics and intellectuals, some of whom were still influential members of the Communist Party and had strong political positions in art institutions and government bodies. Nor did the artists position themselves as dissidents. Their critique wasn't a "struggle against dark communist totalitarianism"; they were more inclined to see their practices as the critique of a bureaucratic government which wanted to

[40]
In the local contex, the fun was spoilt as early as 1924 by August Cesarec, who wrote an essay for *Književna republika* during his stay in the USSR, entitled: "Contemporary Russian Painters: Art in Revolution and Abstraction in Art. Kandinsky, Malevich, Tatlin", in which he, according to Miško Šuvaković, "offered a radical leftist criticism of modern and avant-garde art, pointing to the problems of reception of avant-garde artworks in popular socialist culture, i.e. among the working classes."

M. Šuvaković, "Zašto nemoguće istorije" [Why impossible histories], Novine Galerije Nova, nr.13/14, 2007. Many years later, at one of the *April Encounters*, the fun was spoilt, as Šuvaković again reports, by a guest, Achile Bonito Oliva, who called SKC and its activity a "reservation", isolated from the culture in which it was active and used by the authorities as evidence of freedom. See the exhibition catalogue: *SKC in ŠKUC. The Case of Students' Cultural Centre in the 1970's*, edited by Prelom Kolektiv; Prelom Kolektiv and Škuc Gallery, 2008

maintain the status quo at all costs. One can rightfully say that those who were active on the counter-cultural scene at the time took the socialist project far more seriously than the cynical governing political elite. Young cultural workers who wrote for the socialist youth press demanded "permanent revolution" and conceptual artists asked, in some of their manifestos, for an adequate "revolutionary art for a revolutionary society". "New artistic practice" (which I also participated in) was really "new", in that it posed for the first time radical questions about the nature and function of art itself, about the "autonomy" of the gallery-museum relationship, about the influence of market logic on the production of the art work, etc. It's true that all of this was on western artists' agendas, but it seemed to us that the idea of the dematerialisation of the art work and an art which leaves the institutions and communicates with "the people" was much closer to a socialist idea of society. The paradox is that we as artists had serious intentions of "democratising art", but the artistic language that we were using was so radically new that our audience was really limited. Film was, of course, always more dangerous for the regime, because it had a mass audience. The fierce critique of society that the Yugoslavian "black wave" directors articulated as early as the 60s, certainly left a deep mark on our generation, but at the time when we started working, many of them (Pavlović, Makavejev) had already been "removed" from the scene. What was characteristic of conceptual art in the 70s in socialist Yugoslavia was that its critique referred exclusively to the "art system". This "institutional critique" played an extremely important role in destroying the modernist paradigm which was strongly characteristic of official state art, but the question is whether we can equate it with the activist art practice which appeared in the west as part of the civil rights movement of the 60s. Here, the roots of the civil rights movement are visible in the 80s, in the "decadent" phase of socialism, but in the visual art, issues such as women's rights, sexism, homophobia, poverty, chauvinism, nationalism, privatisation, etc. appeared only later, in the 90s, during democracy, when new channels for the production and distribution of critical practice opened up and when the postmodernist paradigm became acceptable to the cultural elite as well. What I want to emphasize here is that we have to differentiate between activist and political art. The difference isn't in the content, in the subjects that the works deal with, but in the methodology, the formal strategy, and the activist goal."

-Sanja Iveković in conversation with Antonia Majača, published in: *The Collection Book*, Vienna: Thyssen-Bornemsiza Art Contemporary, 2008

The question of art's "efficiency" is still hitting the core of the matter today. Does contemporary art really produce structures that are closer to "reservations of resistance" than to "temporary autonomous zones"?

ART IS DEAD, LONG LIVE ART!

Despite the critical investigation of actual socio-political phenomena and the social "atmosphere", present in the work of some rare artists such as Sanja Iveković (whose feminist articulation of the female subject in socialism was unique in the Yugoslav, and even Eastern-European context), in the playfully/poetically anarchoid work of the

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Group of Six Artists [41], as well as in the work of Tomislav Gotovac, Marina Abramović, etc. – most of the New Artistic Practice in Yugoslavia, the same as in the West, was engaged primarily with itself, with the quest for its own identity and for some "autonomous", uncontaminated space. Its greatest enemy was neither the state nor injustice, neither capitalism nor communism, but – another type of art. Sometimes these were the petrified modernist

We find a symptomatic example of the tension between the "old" and the "new" in the case of the group KÔD. KÔD were among the few visual artists indicted for their activities. At the same time, the case proves that the police intervention is often too eagerly interpreted as evidence of provocativeness or repression of the state apparatus. According to one its members, KÔD did not end up in court by the direct intervention of the authorities, but by the intervention of their senior colleagues – artists who felt that the new generations were threatening to take over their territory: "In fact, we were not interested in politics, we had no illusions of doing anything relevant in that sense; we only wanted to live our art. The politicians didn't care so much about it, they had better things to do, but the class of reactionary artists hated our guts and slandered us. The police and the politicians eventually did the joy, since they loved to demonstrate power, in the sense of: 'just point your finger and consider it done'. That's how the traditionalists managed to eliminate us as dangerous competitions, at least only temporarily."
-Jadran Boban, *Kralj šume u transu rock'n'rolla - razgovor sa Slobodanom Tišmom* [King of the Forest in a Rock'n'Roll Trance – Interview with Slobodan Tišma, note: the member of the KÔD Group], *Zarez* 146 (2005)

forms and conventions, or even Art itself, when New Artistic Practice sought to abandon and break the framework of art and "become" something else.

What does art "know" and what can it do, how effective is its language today and how has it transformed since forty years ago? Can we remain silent for a moment and reflect upon the present without cynicism or concern, or contemplate the past without nostalgia or mystification? How can we, artists and cultural workers, ever halt the hyper-production of images, projects, representations, brochures

41
For example, in the work of Mladen Stilinović, striking at the very foundations of social and ideological order – the language it used and the iconography which served to illustrate it; in those of Vlado Martek, which were a case of verbal agitation and anarchoid behaviour towards the "state": *Lie to the State, I Am in Love with the State, Long Live Adultery*, etc.; or in those of Sven Stilinović, who was deconstructing symbols such as the Yugoslav flag.

and catalogues, recreational theory, and curatorial rhetoric in this vast forest of information and incessant noise, how can we not be bringing any new images or objects into the world and still dare to speak? Where to take refuge in the era of marketing slogans? Sampling of information, of scattered memories, sentences torn out in passing, uttered by someone who no longer remembers them... Can we remain silent and reflect upon the past and present at a time when everyone is talking? Can withdrawal, dislocation, and invisibility be subversive in these times of hyper-production?

Possible Variables of Withdrawal
You then withdrew from the scene, you didn't publish anything until 1995. What was the reason for such an escape from public life?
The reason consisted in a great disenchantment with regards to what happened in the early seventies. The great illusions were crushed. The idea that life equals art was definitely dead. I didn't want to deal in any way with strategies, i.e. politics. I started to doubt everything we did and then I simply quit.
-Jadran Boban, *Kralj šume u transu rock'n'rolla - razgovor sa Slobodanom Tišmom* [King of the Forest in a Rock'n'Roll Trance – Interview with Slobodan Tišma, note: the member of the KÔD Group], *Zarez* 146 (2005)

In 1969 the US artist Douglas Huebler wrote a statement that has since been quoted many times: "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more." This artist, who a year before fully rejected painting and sculpture, decided to organize his work around three axes: Time (Duration Pieces), Place (Location Pieces) and the overlapping of those two elements (Variable Pieces). In the aforementioned renowned statement Huebler condensed the peak moment of crisis of authority and crisis of institutions. In the West, the world of art at the time was a reflection of capitalist commodification, the explosion of mass media, the ideology of state bureaucracy – a society in which, as Guy Debord concluded, all that had once been lived was now mere representation. Art should have receded, in favour of life, it should have become life itself. Life of art. Art of life. "Art does not exist, you are art", says a Situationist slogan.

"I want to rest myself from work, myself from myself, society from myself, society from art, I want art to take a rest from art."
-Igor Grubić

"Capitalism is based on the exploitation of physical energy, and semiocapitalism has subjugated the nervous energy of society to the point of collapse. The notion of exhaustion has always been anathema to the discourse of modernity, of romantic Sturm und Drang, of the Faustian drive to immortality, the endless thirst for economic growth and profit, the denial of organic limits. [...] The coming European insurrection will not be driven by energy, but by slowness, withdrawal, and exhaustion. It will be the autonomization of the collective body and soul from exploitation by means of speed and competition."
-Franco Berardi Bifo, "Exhaustion and Senile Utopia of the Coming European Insurrection", *e-flux journal* 21.12 (2010)

How can we be present in absence and speak without voice, remain in passivity without resignation?

Perhaps, however, the way out of these questions that keep returning us to the starting points of this essay, might be in abandoning the questions as such, or rather, raising different ones. In an era pervaded by cynicism, it may be liberating to turn to the "truth", that outdated notion which, since the era of postmodernism, all seem to be suspicious of. In his "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art" [42] Badiou defined art as the "production" and "process" of truth: *Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity (be it ethnic or personal). Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed at everyone (...) Art is the process of a truth, and this truth is always the truth of the sensible or sensual, the sensible as sensible. This means: the transformation of the sensible into a happening of the Idea.* The only rule that governs that "process of a truth" is the premise of non-imperial art; the forms through which it can be realised are limitless, yet: *Non-imperial art must be as rigorous as a mathematical demonstration, as surprising as an ambush in the night, and as elevated as a star.* Besides, it makes sense only if it makes visible what the Empire does not see or refuses to see: *It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognises as existent.* This postulate, so radically in opposition to the prevailing pragmatics' maxim "better anything than nothing," may be the hardest one to accept. However, *since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing commercial*

42
Alain Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art",
cited from *www.lacan.com/frameXXIII7.htm*, last accessed August 21, 2011

circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer censures anything. All art, and all thought, is ruined when we accept this permission to consume, to communicate and to enjoy. We should become the pitiless censors of ourselves.

Marginalized in contemporary theoretical discourse, truth is at the same time one of the most used and exploited concepts in the public sphere of ex-Yugoslav countries. Different political factions and various protagonists of public life are constantly calling for or threatening the moment when truth will see the light of day: the truth about World War II, the truth about the Homeland War, the truth about the victims that we owe the truth to.

All these truths collide in the space which enables
"Because every generation, if it be truly revolutionary, carries within it the truth about the historical moment in which it finds itself, as well as the possibility of giving rise to a new social relation. Each such generation however, due to a certain ill fate of history, is informed by an infatuation with their own truth and a fully non-dialectical consciousness, unable to problematize the newly aquired social relation by defining its meaning and the outreach of its humanity."
-Dražen Budiša, *Studentski list*, 28 September, 1971, cited in: Tihomir Ponoš, *Na rubu revolucije. Studenti '71.* [On the Verge of Revolution. Students in 1971], Zagreb: Profil, 2007

"Putar knew how to describe the feeling of absent life, a feeling that is not easy to define. When I listened to him, I seemed to be knowing the truth. It was different from the truths we reach by observing nature or the objects that surround us. Putar did not flaunt his words. He spoke with utter restraint."
(Josip Vaništa on Radoslav Putar, quoted in: Marija Gattin (ed.), *Gorgona*, MSU, 2008)

them a potential entry into historical narratives, into the history schoolbooks which keep changing on a yearly basis, revealing that not only the history of contemporary art of the ex-Yugoslavia, but also its political and social history, can still be written only as the "impossible history". And also read as such.
"But the reader preferred to read. As he himself claimed, he read to transform his life and used his life as a reading matter. He who reads, he thought, is between himself and that which is read. There is not only air there but an expanse of land where not the invisible, but the visible, is the mystery. He collected fragments of what he read and invented conjuring-tricks with them, so that he seemed to be seeing things which weren't intended. New things he had conjured up by reading eyes..."
-Dirk Van Weelderna: "A Different Kind of Never-Never-Land", *F. R. David*, Autumn 2008

If we, however, return to the imagined sphere of art

and suppose that the truth it produces, and to which Badiou is referring to, is a quest for knowledge beyond the rational acquisition and manipulation of facts, the truth becomes a territory inhabited by or indicated by all other concepts, such as "treasure", "secret", "promise", or "freedom", all woven through this text in order to mark primarily a process of searching for that which constantly evades. But the preciousness of the prospect of finding it is unquestionable and makes the quest itself meaningful. How should one, therefore, persist in art, the very "process of truth", and at the same time perform pitiless self-censorship?

This certainly remains a question. However, one need not despair. Just like Gorgona's Collective Work, which attempts, but never really succeeds, to flash in its full glory in Šira's small frame shop, or like Sisyphus rolling his stone, perhaps we should imagine Art happy.

"The philosophy of the state, its ethics, not mentioning its aesthetics, is always yesterday's language. Art is always today, and often, especially in the case of the orthodoxy of this or that political system, even tomorrow. One of the merits of art consists of it helping man to determine the time of his existence, to differentiate himself in the crowd of predecessors and of people like himself. Art then is not an aesthetic messing-about, and so on. And the state is no passive animal."

-Vlado Martek, cite from *Akcije pisanja* [Actions of Writing], Zagreb: Naklada MD/SCCA, 1997

/CHORUS: Epilogue without resolution/

Dear brothers and sisters
dear enemies and friends

Why are we all so alone here
All we need is a little more hope, a little more joy
All we need is a little more light, a little less weight, a little more freedom.
If we were an army and if we believed that we were an army
And we believed that everyone was scared like little lost children in their grown up clothes and poses
So we ended up alone here floating through long wasted days, or great tribulations.
While everything felt wrong
Good words, strong words, words that could've moved mountains
Words that no one ever said
We were all waiting to hear those words and no one ever said them
And the tactics never hatched
And the plans were never mapped
And we all learned not to believe
And strange lonesome monsters loafed through the hills wondering why
And it is best to never ever ever ever ever ever ever ever ever ever wonder why
So tangle - oh tangle us up in bright red ribbons!
Let's have a parade
It's been so long since we had a parade, so let's have a parade!
Let's invite all our friends
And all our friends' friends!
Let's promenade down the boulevards with terrific pride and light in our eyes
Twelve feet tall and staggering
Sick with joy with the angels there and light in our eyes
Brothers and sisters, hope still waits in the wings like a bitter spinster
Impatient, lonely and shivering, waiting to build her glorious fires
It's because of our plans man; our beautiful ridiculous plans
Let's launch them like careening jetplanes
Let's crash all our planes in the river
Let's build strange and radiant machines at this jericho waiting to fall.

Built Then Burnt (Hurrah! Hurrah!), The Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band, 2003

This text is an experiment in "performative writing" that in the end became the starting point of the *Removed from the Crowd* project. It is conceptualised as an open form that is rebuilt and transformed through its each iteration. Initiated and first published (under a different title) in *Život umjetnosti / Life of Art Magazine*, 83, Zagreb, 2008, special issue *Issue-ing the Revolution*, of which we were guest-editors, it represents a collage of fragments of our ongoing comparative research and reading of the phenomena of the artistic, curatorial and intellectual practices of the 1960s and 1970s. The basic narrative of the text is opened up with a number of secondary associations, textual fragments, images, and a soundtrack score, that sometimes figure as found footage, as evidence, and sometimes only as interim but potentially revealing bypaths through which the chance, unpredictability and the idea of a non-programmatic action itself is emancipated. Its second iteration was published in *Political Practice of (Post-)Yugoslav Art,* edited by Zorana Dojić and Jelena Vesić, Belgrade: Prelom collective, 2010 and now here with several alterations and additions.

-Translated from Croatian by Marina Miladinov

Josip Vaništa, *A Walk*, 1989

IZVAĐENI IZ GOMILE

M. Stilinović 1976