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EXAMPLES OF EXPERIMENTAL ART PRACTICE AND INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS DURING THE 1960s AND 1970s IN THE TERRITORY OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND SOCIALIST COUNTRIES BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Abstract

This research is divided into two case studies. The first includes examples of radical neo-avant-garde artistic practice in Poland and former Czechoslovakia, which were banned for ideological reasons during the 1960s and 1970s. Its basis is the Marinko Sudac Collection. The aim is to contextualise the reality of experimental artists in these two countries, where governing structures controlled the domestic art scene and projects abroad. The second study looks at the Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Students' Centre Gallery in Zagreb as places to meet and exchange ideas between artists in the specific political context of the former Yugoslavia. The study examines examples of international projects organised in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasising the participation of neo-avant-garde artists from former Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary who managed to circumvent regime politics.

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INTRODUCTION

The increased interest in post-war Eastern and Central European art that appeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall resulted in many relevant but selective studies, exhibitions and publications. However, experts often used the Western canon as an interpretative model for evaluating the art of the countries “behind the Iron Curtain.” With such an approach, the dominant relationship between the West and the East, shown as the relationship between the artistic centre and the periphery, always came to the fore in comparative analyses. Therefore, curatorial concepts were persistent in finding similarities between Eastern European art and Western art, that is, to what extent Eastern European art gravitated towards the West. However, such a point of view cannot be applied to the artistic production of Eastern and Central Europe due to the different cultural and historical contexts of its creation, and processes of reception, assimilation, import or export of

artistic ideas should be observed depending on local political and economic conditions.¹

In this essay we focus on the relationship between the countries of the Eastern Bloc and the former Yugoslavia, which during the Cold War period, and especially after the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, served as a particular point of artistic and intellectual exchange between East and West. The creative work of experimental artists during the 1960s and 1970s behind the Iron Curtain showed great innovation, both in concept and execution. However, it was created within a highly constricted area of functioning, often marginalised, censored, and prohibited. This is juxtaposed with the various exhibiting opportunities that those artists had in the Non-aligned Yugoslavia, whose curators and artists hosted several events featuring their colleagues from the Eastern Bloc.

Thus, some of the questions this chapter aims to answer are related to the Marinko Sudac Collection's strategy of collecting, which serves as a starting point for the research of experimental practices.² The Zagreb-based collection focuses primarily on avant-garde art and its legacy in Central and Eastern Europe from 1909 to 1989, encompassing diverse global practices and emphasising both artworks and archival materials. Then, it examines how international exhibitions held in the 1960s and 1970s at the City Gallery of Contemporary Art and the SC Gallery in Zagreb played an essential role in connecting the countries of the Eastern Bloc and the West, and how experimental artists in Eastern and Central Europe managed to bypass totalitarian apparatuses and the imposed dictates of the environment in which they were created and, despite censorship, created and exhibited domestically and abroad. Within this overall context, significant individuals and projects stand out.

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The first part of this essay considers examples of radical experimental practice in the 1960s and 1970s in Eastern and Central Europe from the Marinko Sudac Collection with a particular focus on artists of the unofficial scene, that is, those whose works were subjected to the censorship of totalitarian regimes and the dictates of certain cultural policies. The selected examples show a cross-section of the different types of censorship and marginalisation of artists in Poland and former Czechoslovakia. The second part of the study focuses on the events and international participants from the Eastern Bloc in exhibitions organised during the 1960s and 1970s on the territory of Yugoslavia.

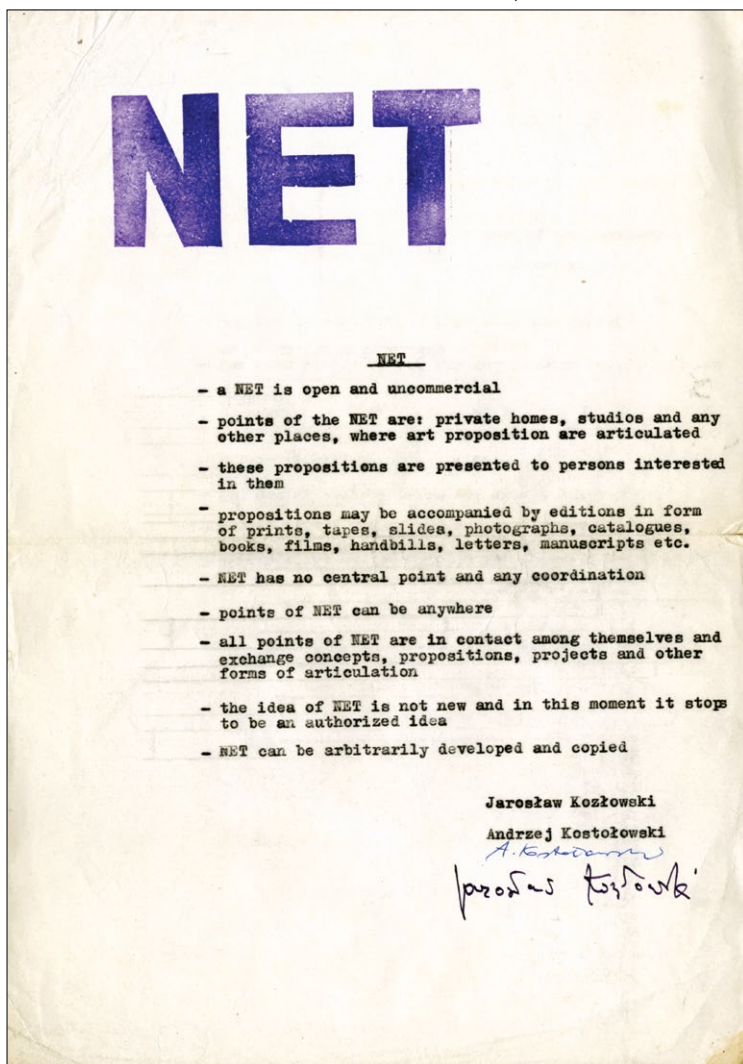
1 Matthias Flügge, Jiří Švestka, *Der Rissim Raum: Positionen der Kunst seit 1945 in Deutschland, Polen, der Slowakei und Tschechien* [Rift in Space: Positions of Art since 1945 in Germany, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic] (Dresden/Berlin: Verl der Kunst, 1994); Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011); Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art: Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013); Klara Kemp-Welch, *Networking the Bloc: Experimental Art in Eastern Europe 1965–1981* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2018).

2 The Marinko Sudac Collection (Zagreb) focuses on Central and Eastern Europe's radical art and includes all related practices that can be found in the world, from Latin and North America to the Far East. It aims to preserve the cultural heritage of Central and Eastern Europe in its contextual unity and to interweave it into global art history.

“THE VELVET PRISON”

During the Cold War, art was partly appropriated as a kind of tool of the totalitarian regimes in the countries behind the Iron Curtain, serving as the promoter of their ideological programmes. Cultural issues were under the control of state cultural councils who dictated the artistic paradigm, approved the printing of publications and artistic and other cultural projects at home and abroad. In this sense, any activity that strayed from the mainstream could be interpreted as political activism. Although a regime often perceived it as such, this “art in deviation” was not a way of direct political engagement but a temporary escape for the artists from the then situation.

According to Miklós Haraszti, the artists and intellectuals of 1970s Poland worked in a “velvet prison”³ as long as they created in the field of pure and politically non-engaged art. Polish conceptual artist Jarosław Kozłowski’s⁴ (b. 1945, Śrem) first encounter with censorship took place during his studies.



However, the focus here is on a later instance, the case of *NET*. In 1971, Kozłowski and Andrzej Kostolowski (b. 1940, Buchach) created *NET – An International Network of Artists* and mailed the *NET Manifesto* to artists around the world (fig. 1). Their idea was to encourage the exchange of materials and ideas between artists without any political or geographical boundaries. Kozłowski received many responses and invited ten close friends to his apartment to share these materials with them. After forty minutes, the police arrived and stopped the event. Officially, this closure was due to the fact that the gathering was not registered. As Kozłowski states, the cunningness of Polish law at the time meant that all non-family gatherings had to have official approval. The more likely reason for the arrival of the police is that one of his friends cooperated with the police, and the meeting was considered politically coloured. The works exhibited by Kozłowski were confiscated and only partially returned a year later.

The leader of Polish feminist art, Natalia LL (Lach-Lachowicz; Żywiec, 1937 – Wrocław, 2022), established the PERMAFO gallery in

Fig. 1. Jarosław Kozłowski, Andrzej Kostolowski, *NET Manifesto*, 1971, typewriter text, stamp, paper, Marinko Sudac Collection, Zagreb.

3 Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988).

4 See also: Marinko Sudac, ed., *Standstill – Activist Art from the Marinko Sudac Collection* (Zagreb: Institute for the Research of the Avant-Garde, 2011), 264–270.

Wrocław with her then-partner, artist Andrzej Lachowicz, and friends. There she set up her exhibition *Intimate Photography* (1971). The installation consisted of large panels set in the shape of a closed-off screen with doors slightly ajar. The outside panels were lined with Natalia's self-portraits, and the inside ones were explicit photos of lovemaking. The exhibition was closed by a communist censor after being open for just one day, and the installation was removed.⁵

Jerzy Beres (Nowy Sacz, 1930 – Krakow, 2012) was a leader in performance and body art in Poland. His *manifestations* (performances) involved the use of wooden structures and his naked body. Although the mere fact that Beres was naked was enough for communist Poland to condemn his performances, his artwork *Altar of Changes* (1978) was partially censored. It is composed of a windmill-like object equipped with four brooms and a controversial red and white cloth – like the Polish flag. According to Beres: “A censor allowed displaying it only if the white-red textile will disappear. I replaced it with raw linen canvas, and I even thought that I was wrong and there will be no changes in Poland. However, soon it turned out that I was right. And the white-red fabric returned into the *Altar of Changes*.”⁶

NORMALISATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

²⁴⁶ In Czechoslovakia, censorship intensified after the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968 and the establishment of a period of normalisation throughout the Czechoslovak territory. “In the resolution of the 2nd of November of 1972, the committee of the Union of Slovak Visual Artists elaborated a list that denounced a series of subversive artistic activities that took place during the sixties. As a result, their authors were expelled from the Union, their work was excluded from acquisitions in public collections and the artists were banned from participating in exhibitions in Czechoslovakia or abroad.”⁷

The artist Jiří Kolář (Protivín, 1914 – Prague, 2002) was imprisoned for the manuscript of his radical collection of poems *Prometheus' Liver* written in 1950. The collection was discovered in 1953 in the home of the literary historian Václav Černý during a secret police search. Kolář was arrested and spent nine months in prison because of the manuscript, his membership in the group Skupina 42⁸ and his friendship with representatives of the Czech Avant-garde who had emigrated. He married Běla Helclová, who took the surname Kolářová

⁵ The censorship of Natalia LL's works also took place in 2014 at the Zlín Regional Gallery, and in 2019, a work from the *Consumer Art* series was removed from the National Museum in Warsaw.

⁶ Beres Foundation, *Altar of Changes Spinning Over and Over*, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/231685296>.

⁷ Paula Gortázar, *Transitional Frames: From Normalisation to Democracy Czech and Slovak Art Photography (1968-1998)* (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2018), 280.

⁸ Skupina 42 was a group of artists, theorists and poets founded in Czechoslovakia and active between 1942 and 1948. Its theoretical basis was an article by Jindřich Chalupecký. Titled “The World We Live In,” published in the *Život roku* journal in 1946. See more in Jindřich Chalupecký, “Svět, v němž žijeme”, in: Jindřich Chalupecký, *Obhajoba umění* [Defense of the Arts] (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1991, 68–75.



Fig. 2. Milan Knížák, *Demonstration for One*, 1964, b/w photographs, Marinko Sudac Collection, Zagreb.

in 1949. In 1979, the Kolářs went on a one-year study visit to West Berlin. Kolář was sentenced to one year in prison and lost his property for illegally leaving Czechoslovakia. For this reason, they decided to stay in Paris. Kolářová returned to Prague in 1981, but they did not return together until 1999.

One of the most prominent individuals on the Czechoslovak art scene was the artist, art theorist, professor and curator Jiří Valoch (b. 1946, Brno). Due to his numerous contacts, the relatively peripheral city of Brno hosted exhibitions of some of the most cutting edge types of contemporary art during the 1960s and 1970s. Because of his ties with the West and neighbouring countries, Valoch could not avoid the StB (Státní bezpečnost), i.e. the secret police. As Helena Musilová writes, Valoch was forced to cooperate with the secret police after 1975 under the codename Vaclav.⁹ The secret police criticised Valoch for his minimal activity on their behalf. Data shows that he tried to restrict or keep some contacts secret.¹⁰ After the exhibition *Současná česká kresba*¹¹ (Contemporary Czech Drawing) organised by Valoch in 1980, he was banned from publishing and other public activities.

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Milan Knížák (b. 1940, Plzeň) was one of the first artists to create happenings in the Eastern Bloc, and was also a leading representative of Eastern European Fluxus. He was the head of the Fluxus East division and the founder of the Aktual group. In 1964, in the *Demonstration for One* happening (fig. 2), Knížák lay on the pavement and read a book, eventually scrunching up and burning several pages of it – a clear allusion to strict Czechoslovak censorship laws.¹² During the 1970s, he was followed by the secret police and was imprisoned numerous times.

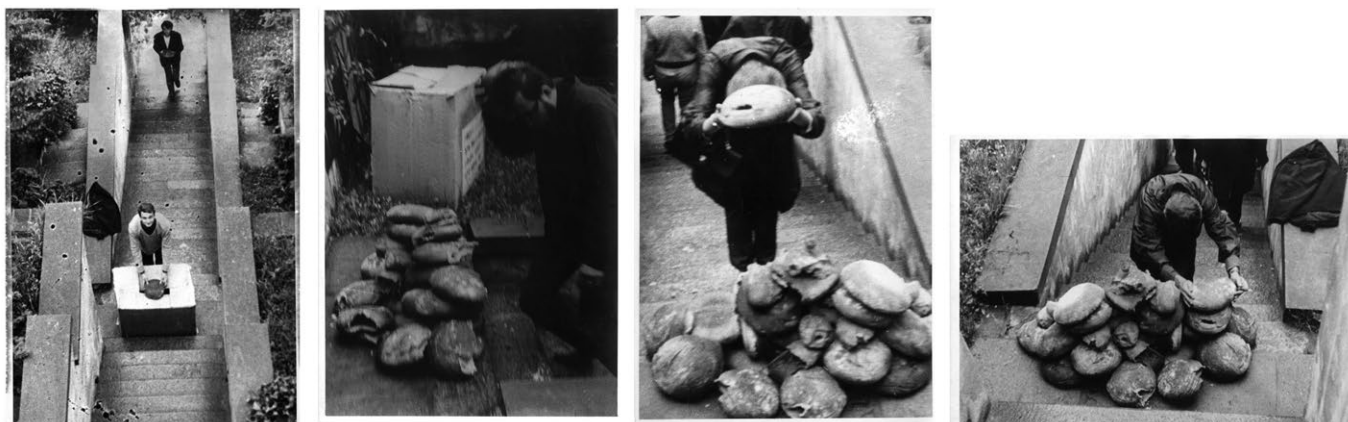
In the mid-1960s, Eugen Brikcius (b. 1942, Prague) began to organise happenings, leading to a conflict with the totalitarian regime. One of them was

9 Helena Musilová, *Jiří Valoch. Curator, Theoretician, Collector. Years 1965–1980* (Prague: Národní galerie Praha, 2018.), 178.

10 Musilová, *Jiří Valoch*, 178–183.

11 See more in: Helena Musilová, “Současná česká kresba, 1980, Dům umění města Brna – Dům pánů z Kunštátu: Jiří Valoch a možnost realizace kolektivní výstavy v období tzv. normalizace” [Contemporary Czech Drawing, 1980, Brno House of Art – House of Lords of Kubštát: Jiří Valoch and the Possibility of Organizing a Collective Exhibition During the So-Called Normalization Period], *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny. Vědecko-výzkumné pracoviště Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze*, no. 26 (2019), 64–85.

12 Monica Bauer, “Milan Knížák is Fluxus East’: Aktual and the Found Velvet Dwarf” (Master’s thesis, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1996), 4–5.



the *Thanksgiving or the Mystery of Bread* happening (fig. 3). On Thanksgiving 1970, Brikcius wanted to reconstruct a ritual offering to a goddess. The “goddess” sat by a baroque arch at the end of a staircase in a public park. Brikcius and his friends climbed the stairs and laid a pyramid of bread at her feet. The happening was forcibly interrupted by the police, who arrested the participants and confiscated the bread.¹³ Brikcius was accused of vandalism and disparaging the symbols of working people. He declared the subsequent court proceedings to be part of the happening itself.¹⁴ He was arrested again in 1973 with three friends for rioting and slandering the nation. One night in a pub, they had a fight with a high-ranking member of the StB and sang a song including the exhortation to “drive the Russians out of Prague.” The StB official called the police, and they ended up in court. Brikcius was sentenced to 14 months in prison. However, an appeal reduced the sentence to eight.¹⁵ He emigrated to Vienna in 1980.

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The *First Open Studio* event marked the emergence of unofficial art, bringing together 19 artists from three different generations, and showcasing a number of neo-avant-garde practices – including conceptual art, body art and actions, land art, installations, Fluxus and kinetic art.¹⁶ The one-day event was organised in the private house of Rudolf Sikora (b. 1946, Žilina), at 32 Tehelna Street in Bratislava, on November 19, 1970. The *First Open Studio* took place in a period of repressive normalisation and ended with a lengthy interrogation of all of the participants by the secret police. As a precaution, the date of the exhibition’s opening was announced as the day after it actually took place. For Sikora, the event was “a reaction to the closure of galleries, an opportunity for political

Fig. 3. Eugen Brikcius, *Thanksgiving or the Mystery of Bread*, 1970, b/w photographs, Marinko Sudac Collection, Zagreb.

13 Eugen Brikcius, “The Bread Mysterium Happening,” *Memory of Nations*, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en/brikcius-eugen-1942>.

14 Andrea Bátorová, *The Art of Contestation. Performative Practices in the 1960s and 1970s in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Comenius University in Bratislava, 2019), 45–46.

15 Eugen Brikcius, “Arrested in a Pub,” *Memory of Nations*, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en/brikcius-eugen-1942>.

16 See more: Eugénia Sikorová, *1. Otvorený ateliér* [1st Open Studio] (Bratislava: Sorosovo centrum súčasného umeni), 2000; Ivana Jankovič, *Slovakian Neo-Avant-Garde. Rudolf Sikora, Július Koller and the First Open Studio* (Zagreb: Institute for the Research of the Avant-Garde), manuscript submitted for publication.

17 Rudolf Sikora, *First Open Studio* [video], 2016, 4’04”, production: Marinko Sudac Collection.

directive after the occupation of the Soviet Army.¹⁷ However, he added that it was not just about fighting the regime, but also stemmed from a desire to exhibit in a non-traditional environment.¹⁸

Such examples of censorship indicate control over public and private life, which was not always of equal intensity. The presence and activity of artists on the art scene in the Eastern Bloc depended on the degree of the cultural control policies of different countries. The most pronounced control was in Czechoslovakia during normalisation, when experimental artists could not exhibit in public institutions, and the state apparatus often prevented their travels and projects abroad. During this period, artists could exhibit abroad in Poland or non-aligned Yugoslavia, given that trips to the West were infrequent.¹⁹ This led to artists' various initiatives and conceptual projects, but did not stop communications (correspondence and mail art).

EASTERN BLOC ARTISTS IN YUGOSLAVIAN ART EXHIBITIONS

The political position of the former state of Yugoslavia during the Cold War was different from the socialist countries behind the Iron Curtain. The departure from the Soviet Bloc began in 1948, after which Yugoslav policy focused on the so-called third path of Socialist self-government, balancing between the East and West. In the new circumstances, numerous festivals and events were held in Zagreb²⁰ during the 1960s and 1970s, presenting contemporary phenomena of experimental music (Music Biennale Zagreb, from 1961), film (Genre Film Festival, 1963–1969) and art that presented artists equally from the East and the West. At the same time, the progressive Zagreb institutions, the City Gallery of Contemporary Art (Gradska galerija suvremene umjetnosti; hereafter cited as GGSU) and Students' Centre Gallery (Galerija Studentskog centra; hereafter cited as SC Gallery) organised important international projects, actions and exhibitions that hosted numerous artists from Central and Eastern Europe over the years. Moreover, during the 1970s, individual examples of projects on both

18 Ibid.

19 Akumulatory 2 in Poznan or PERMAFO in Wrocław are examples of galleries in which artists from Czechoslovakia, as well as from Hungary and East Germany (and in some events even artists from Western Europe) exhibited. Along with them, it is necessary to mention the following galleries: odNowa, Poznan; Krzywe Koło, Warsaw; Foksal, Warsaw; Mona Lisa, Wrocław; Krzysztofory, Krakow; Pi Gallery, Krakow; Biuro Poezji, Łódź.

20 While the New Tendencies were the most prominent and internationally-driven event of the 1960s, there were other cultural hubs, such as the Students' Centre in Zagreb, which are also discussed in this paper. For visual arts, this includes the independent galleries established by students' centres – in Zagreb (1962) and Belgrade (1968) and the ŠKUC Gallery in Ljubljana (1978). The Podroom gallery, which started its activity with the *Umjetnost u umu* [Art in the Mind] exhibition, should also be mentioned. One of the first examples of an exhibition organised in an alternative gallery space in Zagreb was the international exhibition of conceptual art *At the Moment*, put on by Braco and Nena Dimitrijević in 1971 in the entryway to a residential building 2a Frankopanska Street in Zagreb (1970–1979). April Meetings (starting in 1972) were events that gathered artists and theorists from the East and West in the Belgrade Students' Cultural Centre, hosting some of the greatest names in contemporary art (such as Joseph Beuys, Allan Kaprow, Vito Acconci, Daniel Buren, Jannis Kounellis, John Baldessari, Bill Viola, and others). In Novi Sad, the couple Bogdanka and Dejan Poznanović played a crucial role in connecting the unofficial art scene by creating a network of international artists (especially through Bogdanka's *Feedback Letter-box* project, 1973–1974) contacts as part of Tribina mladih (Youth Tribune) activities.

sides of the Bloc showed a tendency to network, and the dominant Western European discourse in the interpretation of the scene and the construction of the entire history of art was overpowered or neutralised.²¹ In this sense, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, individual efforts were replaced by extensive international exhibitions, and conferences and publications began to reevaluate such issues, a process that continues with recent research.²²

This case study focuses on the participation of neo-avant-garde artists and experts from former Czechoslovakia and Poland in projects in Zagreb, a focus that has been extended to Hungary with further research. Most of the considered representatives of Neo-Avant-Garde art from behind the Iron Curtain were banned or marginalised on the public stage. They were also not allowed to participate in exhibitions outside their countries. This is why their works were often delivered by mail and sometimes at the initiative of specific individuals – art historians, critics, and by private transport. This study intends to contextualise the GGSU and the SC Gallery as meeting places for experts, artists and the exchange of artistic ideas between the East and Yugoslavia. The sources for the research were the holdings and documentation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Marinko Sudac Collection and the Art Archive of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

CITY GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART, ZAGREB

From 1961 to 1973, the City Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (now the Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzej suvremene umjetnosti; hereafter cited as MSU), in cooperation with several other institutions, organised a series of five international exhibitions of New Tendencies at the initiative of artists, curators, theorists and critics (Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar, Dimitrije Bašičević, Boris Kelemen, Božo Bek, Almir Mavignier, Vjenceslav Richter, Ivan Picelj).²³ The New Tendencies Movement was a pioneering artistic and theoretical initiative focusing on the intersection of art and technology while promoting concrete, constructive, kinetic and programmed art principles. The intention was to show a variety of different contemporary artistic practices: Neoconstructivism, kinetic art, programmed art, computer

21 See: Klaus Groh, ed., *Die Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa: CSSR, Jugoslawien, Polen, Rumänien, UDSSR, Ungar* [Contemporary Art in East Europe: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Hungary] (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1972).

22 See footnote 1.

23 See: *Nove tendencije* [New Tendencies] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1961); *Nove tendencije 2* [New Tendencies 2] (Zagreb: Galleries of the City of Zagreb, 1963); *Nova tendencija 3* [New Tendency 3] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1965); Radoslav Putar, Boris Kelemen, eds. *Tendencije 4: Kompjuteri i vizualna istraživanja* [Tendencies 4: Computers and Visual Research] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1968); Božo Bek, Boris Kelemen and Marijan Susovski, eds., *Tendencije 5: konstruktivna vizuelna istraživanja / kompjuterska vizuelna istraživanja / konceptualna umjetnost* [Tendencies 5: Constructive Visual Research / Computer Visual Research / Conceptual Art] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1973). Margit Rosen with Peter Weibel, Darko Fritz, and Marija Gattin, eds., *A Little-Known Story about a Movement, a Magazine, and the Computer's Arrival in Art: New Tendencies and Bit International, 1961–1973* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Armin Medosch, *New Tendencies: Art at the Threshold of the Information Revolution (1961–1978)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

art, and conceptual art. An extensive programme, which included colloquia, symposia, exhibitions, round tables and other similar events, was held at several different locations in Zagreb (GGSU, Museum of Arts and Crafts, SC Gallery, and more). At the invitation of one of the most influential theorists, Radoslav Putar, artist, curator and theorist Jiří Valoch from Brno participated in the international colloquium *Computers and Visual Research* held in 1968 at the Cultural Information Centre. In the same year, Valoch organised the *Computer Graphic* exhibition (March 10 – April 5, 1968) at the Dům umění in Brno, which preceded the Zagreb exhibition *Computers and Visual Research* (August 3 – 4, 1968) and the London *Cybernetic Serendipity* exhibition (August 2 – October 20, 1968). As a member of the organising committee of the *Tendencies 4* exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, Valoch suggested that several artists from Czechoslovakia participate in it a year later (May 5 – June 30, 1969): Milan Dobeš, Miloš Urbásek, Jiří Bielecki, Jiří Hilmar, Štefan Belohradský, Jarmila Čihánková, Tamara Klímová, and Radoslav Kratina. The MSU's holdings include works by Czechoslovak Neoconstructivist artists Dobeš and Urbásek. A year later, they took part in the aforementioned one-day event of the *First Open Studio* in Rudolf Sikora's house in Bratislava.

Some of these artworks are only documented in photographs. These photographs, along with the application forms with additional photographs and titles of the works sent to the curators, are preserved in the MSU documentation. One example shows the work of the Czechoslovak artist Jarmila Čihánková (b. 1925, Roštín) *Object, Environment* (1969) in the right corner of the photograph of the installation view (**fig. 4**). Documentation of the *Tendencies 5* exhibition held in 1973 in the Zagreb Technical Museum testifies that Dobeš exhibited three luminokinetic *Optical reliefs* (1972) and three *Light objects* (1972) in the *Constructive and Computer Visual Research* section. In the *Conceptual Art* section, the Hungarian art historian and artist László Beke presented Xerox copies of A4-size works of the most radical artists of the Hungarian conceptual scene in the form of a book that he named *Anonymous Collective Book*, which speaks volumes about the marginalised position of artists at the time. The book of the anonymous collective was exhibited together with a number of



Fig. 4. Installation views of the *Tendencies 4* exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, 1969, b/w photographs, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb. Photographs by Marija Braut.

the most important conceptual artists from the West – John Baldessari, John Latham and others. However, it is not reproduced in the exhibition catalogue, but is only included in the list of works by the participants of the anonymous collective: Gyula Pauer, Endre Tót, János Major, István Harasztý, Miklós Erdély, Tamás Szentjóby, Imre Bak, László Lakner, Péter Türk, Péter Legény, András Baranyay, Gábor Attalai, György Jovánovics, Ilona Keserü, Tibor Csiky, Gyula Gyulás, Tamás Hencze, Tibor Gáyor, and Dóra Maurer. One of the pages shows the works of János Major, who in 1969 protested at a large exhibition of renowned op-art artist Victor Vasarely carrying a small sign in his pocket that read “Vasarely Go Home”, which he showed to friends. This is interesting because Vasarely presented several works in a separate section at the *Tendencies 5* exhibition, which are today part of the MSU Collection.

The *Polish Contemporary Photography* exhibition held in 1977 at the GGSU in Zagreb, organised by the Centre for Photography, Film and Television (CEFFT) and in cooperation with the Association of Polish Photographers, showed a wide range of approaches to photography, from photojournalism to experimental photography, such as those by Andrzej Lachowicz (Vilnius, 1939 – Wrocław, 2015) and Zdzislaw Sosnowski (b. 1947, Ignacew). Lachowicz presented a conceptual series of photographs *I Am* based on his project *Permanent Photography*, which registers everything the human eye sees in a deliberately indiscriminate way through multiplied images. Sosnowski presented a series of photographs titled *Goalkeeper* (fig. 5). The author examined the presentation and influence of mass media and television on social idols such as football players.

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Fig. 5. Zdzislaw Sosnowski, *Goalkeeper*, 1975, b/w photograph, Marinko Sudac Collection, Zagreb.

THE CASE OF THE STUDENT CENTRE GALLERY AS A SPACE OF FREEDOM

One of the most agile curators of the Zagreb SC Gallery during the 1960s and 1970s was Želimir Košćević (b. 1939, Zagreb). He ran the Gallery from 1966 to 1979. Although the state funded the SC Gallery's programme, the staff perceived the Gallery as a space of freedom. Košćević's idea of gallery activity aspired to democracy. From such a starting point, creative projects emerged that required entering the urban environment and interacting with the audience. The Gallery published *Newspapers of the Students' Centre Gallery*, which served as a catalogue and gallery newsletter. It offered information about the current events on the art scene, taking into account the local and international context. The SC Gallery subscribed early on to important art magazines such as *Flash Art* (ed. Giancarlo Politi), which had had an *Eastern European Artist* section since 1976. The Museum of Contemporary Art's holdings include works by artists who participated in the long-running *La Galerie des Locataires* (Tenants' Gallery) project by art historian and critic Ida Biard (b. 1945?, Beočin), who was active between Zagreb and Paris. The project's conceptual basis was the organisation of actions, interventions in urban spaces, mail art projects, and similar non-institutional forms of presentation based on the principle of "ethics and not aesthetics" as a critique of the legality of the art system and market on the activities and position of artists. It included projects such as the *French Window* (exhibitions in the window of a rented apartment in Paris) and projections of artists' slides as part of the propaganda programme of the former Cinema Balkan (today Cinema Europe) in Zagreb, and more.²⁴ The acquisitions lists include the names of artists who exhibited at two important exhibitions at the SC Gallery. Želimir Košćević, Ida Biard, conceptual artist Goran Trbuljak (b. 1948, Varaždin) and several other relevant foreign curators and artists (László Beke, Klaus Groh, Friederike Pezold), organised the *XEROX* exhibition (June 14 – 30, 1973). It was based on materials collected via an advertisement published in no. 36 of the *L'Art Vivant* magazine from February 1973 and presented 64 artists from all over the world, from Germany to Japan. The exhibition presented various approaches to the Xerox technique, from those for education (Virginia University), and visual research (Bruno Munari, Marina Appolonio) to numerous examples of experimental and conceptual practices (Goran Trbuljak, Marina Abramović, David Mayor, André Cadere, Joan Marin and others). The artists' works were reproduced in issue no. 44 of the *Newspaper of the Students' Centre Gallery*,²⁵ and then a year

24 See: Ida Biard, *Galerija stanara* [Tenants' Gallery], in *Nova umjetnička praksa* [New Art Practice], ed. Marijan Susovski (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1978). See also: *French Window* exhibition, Galerija SC, Zagreb, 1973; Massimo Riposati, ed., *Simplon-Express*, (Rome: Edizioni Carte Segrete / Data Arte s.r.l., 1989).

25 Ida Biard and Želimir Košćević, eds., *Novine Galerije Studentskog centra*, no. 44 (1973), inv. no. 1515, the Museum of Contemporary Art Library, Zagreb (hereafter cited as MCA Library).

later in issue no. 5 of *Spot* magazine (1975),²⁶ specialising in photography. They were accompanied by Koščević's text *Xerox – Possibility or Delusion*, in which he points out that he was not interested in distributing or updating the discussion of the relationship between art and technology, as it was the case of computers. He considers the whole exhibition to be the opening of "one more opportunity for the artist in his work," and that it is possible to interpret Xerox as simply a technique that "allows ideas to be distributed beyond galleries and luxurious art magazines," and in some countries as part of the "fight against the system."²⁷ The last two statements can be directly related to a larger group of artists from socialist countries (Czechoslovakia: Jiří Valoch, Jetleb Zbyněk; Hungary: János Urbán, Gábor Tóth, Pécsi Műhely group – Sándor Pinczehelyi, Károly Halász, Károly Kismányoky, Ferenc Ficzek, Szijártó Kálmán). One example is a work by Pinczehelyi (b. 1946, Szigetvár), who imprinted his hand and foot on the Xerox copy and "struck in" a five-pointed star (fig. 6).

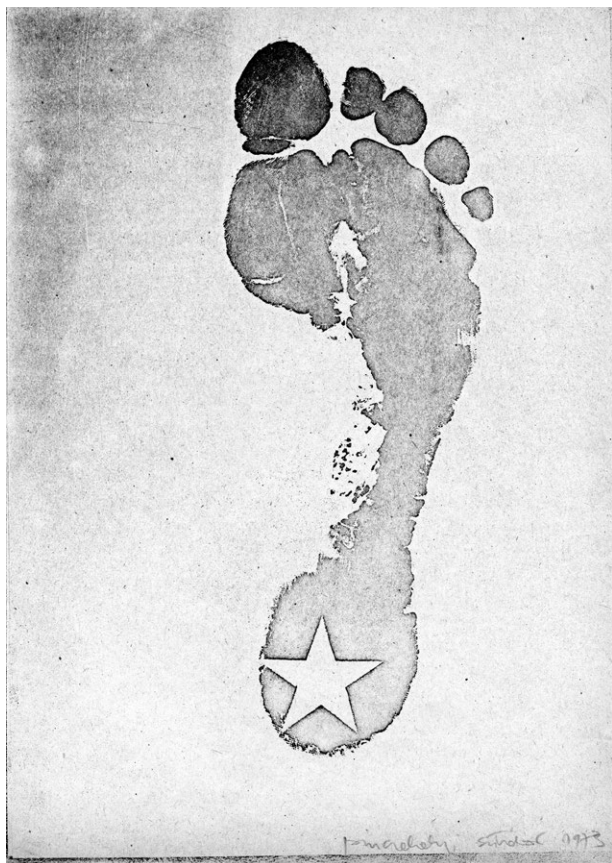


Fig. 6. Sándor Pinczehelyi, *Untitled*, 1973, xerox, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

26 Radoslav Putar, ed., *Spot – časopis za fotografiju* [Spot – Magazine for Photography], no. 5 (1974), inv. no. 17747, MCA Library, Zagreb.

27 Biard and Koščević, eds., *Novine Galerije Studentskog centra*, no. 44.



Fig. 7. Petr Štembera, *Endurance Test*, 1972–1973, b/w photographs, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

Ida Biard was the author of the concept for the exhibition titled *Another Opportunity to Be an Artist*, organised in Zagreb's SC Gallery (December 7– 12, 1973). Of the 68 invited artists, 48 exhibited. It included artists from the West (Christian Boltanski, Annete Messager, Klaus Groh, André Cadere), from Czechoslovakia (Jiří Valoch, Dalibor Chatrný, Jiří Hynek Kocman, Miloslav Moucha, Miloš Laky), from Poland (Tomek Kawiak, Petr Štembera) and from Hungary (Gabor Tóth, János Urbán). In this case, too, the artists sent artworks by mail. It is worth mentioning Petr Štembera's (b. 1945, Plzeň) work *Endurance Test* (1972–1973). Together with Karel Miller and Jan Mlčoch, Štembera was the most prominent protagonist of the performance scene in Prague (**fig. 7**). In Czechoslovakia, he created numerous radical performances, works of body art in which he examined the limits of endurance, which can be interpreted through the position of an artist who was forbidden to perform in public at that time.

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CONCLUSION

The examples of radical experimental practice from Czechoslovakia and Poland presented in the first half of this study show the myriad of ways in which the governing structures controlled the art scene in socialist countries and projects abroad. The rich archival material from the Marinko Sudac Collection served as a source for research into various artistic activities and international projects, both realised and prohibited, during the tectonic changes of the socio-political context behind the Iron Curtain. Artists bypassed the restrictive policies of the state apparatus in various ways, often as part of private initiatives that enabled the communication and networking of art projects and artists between East and West.

The second half of the study shows examples of international projects in Zagreb in the 1960s and 1970s that were platforms for exchanging artistic ideas between the East and West. From this point of view, for Czechoslovak experimental artists during normalisation and for Hungarian artists during the 1970s, these types of international projects and actions represented a gap in the Iron Curtain and, thus, offered the possibility for so-called dissident artists to

exhibit outside the Eastern Bloc. However, most were unable to participate in person, given the regime at the time. Both the first and second parts of the study present examples of the restriction of artistic freedom and the activities of socially marginalised artists in the Eastern Bloc countries, who resorted to various subversive strategies as a form of resistance to the dominant structure.