

NSK

FROM KAPITAL TO CAPITAL
NEUE SLOWENISCHE KUNST
AN EVENT OF THE FINAL DECADE OF YUGOSLAVIA



MG+

International conference

19–21 June 2015, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, auditorium

Concept: **Zdenka Badovinac** and **Eda Čufer**

Friday, 19 June, 6 p.m.: **Boris Groys**, key lecture

Conference participants: **Zdenka Badovinac**, **Izidor Barši** (Neteorit), **Barbara Borčič**, **Eda Čufer**, **Mladen Dolar**, **Charles Esche**, Former artist known as **Adrian Kovacs**, **Anthony Gardner**, **Marina Gržinić** & **Jasmina Založnik**, **Lev Kreft**, **Tomaž Mastnak**, **Rastko Močnik**, **Alexei Monroe**, **Katja Praznik**, **Daniel Ricardo Quiles**, **Igor Vidmar**, **Alexei Yurchak**

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FRIDAY, 19 June 2015

Keynote Lecture:

18:00 - 19:00 **Boris Groys**
19:00 - 19:45 Discussion

SATURDAY, 20 June 2015

10:30 - 11:00 Registration

11:00 - 11:15 Coffee

Welcoming addresses

11:15 - 11:30 **Zdenka Badovinac**
11:30 - 11:45 **Eda Čufer**

From Kapital to Capital

11:45 - 12:15 **Tomaž Mastnak**
12:15 - 12:45 **Rastko Močnik**

12:45 - 13:00 Coffee

13:00 - 13:10 Commentary: **Izidor Barši** (Neteorit)
13:10 - 14:00 Discussion, moderator **Izidor Barši** (Neteorit)

14:00 - 15:00 Lunch break

What Was the Alternative – the relationship between NSK and the alternative culture of the 1980s

15:00 - 15:30 **Igor Vidmar**
15:30 - 16:00 **Barbara Borčič**
16:00 - 16:10 Commentary: **Katja Praznik**
16:10 - 17:00 Discussion, moderator **Katja Praznik**

22:00

Musical Nocturne - a sound performance by LAIBACH
Outside of the Moderna galerija
(part of the Summer Museum Night's programme)

SUNDAY, 21 June 2015

9:30 - 10:00 Registration

Art history and institutional critique in the light of geopolitical relations

10:00 - 10:30 **Anthony Gardner**
10:30 - 11:00 **Marina Gržinić & Jasmina Založnik**
11:00 - 11:30 **Daniel Ricardo Quiles**

11:30 - 11:45 Coffee

11:45 - 11:55 Commentary: **Charles Esche**
11:55 - 12:45 Discussion, moderator **Charles Esche**

12:45 - 13:45 Lunch break

NSK Subjects

13:45 - 14:15 **Mladen Dolar**
14:15 - 14:45 **Alexei Yurchak**
14:45 - 15:15 **Alexei Monroe**
15:15 - 15:45 **Lev Kreft**

15:45 - 16:00 Coffee

16:00 - 16:30 **Former artist known as Adrian Kovacs**
16:30 - 16:40 Commentary: **Anthony Gardner**
16:40 - 17:30 Discussion, moderator **Anthony Gardner**

Wrap-up

Zdenka Badovinac

Zdenka Badovinac is a curator and writer, who has served since 1993 as Director of the Moderna galerija and the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana. She has curated numerous exhibitions, presenting both Slovenian and international artists, and started the first collection of Eastern European art, Moderna galerija's 2000+ Arteast Collection. She has been systematically dealing with the processes of redefining history and issues related to different avant-garde traditions of contemporary art, starting with the exhibition *Body and the East – From the 1960s to the Present*, staged at the Moderna galerija in 1998. Badovinac was the Slovenian Commissioner at the Venice Biennale (1993–1997, 2005) and Austrian Commissioner at the São Paulo Biennial (2002). From 2011–2013 she was president of CIMAM.

Izidor Barši

Izidor Barši is currently completing his studies in Philosophy and Sociology of Culture at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. He has published several articles and longer texts about philosophy, art and architecture in various newspapers and magazines. He was an editor at the newspaper Tribuna and is a member of the editorial team at the journal Šum. Since 2010 he has also worked as an editor for cultural and humanities programming at Radio Student. He has organized several reading seminars focused on philosophy and theory, held at the Moderna galerija and elsewhere (Neteorit). He is active within the collective Živko Skvotec at Factory Rog.

Barbara Borčič

Alternative Culture, ŠKUC Gallery and Neue Slowenische Kunst in the 1980s

This talk will tackle the complex subject of the alternative scene in the 1980s in Slovenia, and the NSK groups that came to prominence within it. The first part will be devoted to the context of the alternative scene – the largest cultural and social movement in Slovenia to date, developing a wide range of far-reaching cultural and social practices –, with an emphasis on the two main generators and venues for alternative art and subculture, the ŠKUC Gallery and Disco FV. This network of protagonists, relationships, and exchanges enabled specific shifts and breakthroughs in the field of culture. The formative period of the Laibach and IRWIN groups will be presented in this context, focusing on their early actions and exhibitions. The individual groups that made up NSK entered the Slovenian cultural arena on the basis of the specific language of their projects and the programme texts they used for planning their events and providing their contexts, as well as the terms of reception from their audience, thus changing the prevailing relations in art. These groups all

shared a deliberate strategy of representation and a method of appropriation, but named their practices differently, i.e., retroavantgarde, retroprinciple and retrogarde. Barbara Borčič is an art historian and media theorist, as well as director of SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts. She is active as a curator and publicist, with a focus on performance and video art, along with the artistic practices of the Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s. She is the author of documentation, research, curatorial and archival projects on video art in Slovenia within the framework of SCCA-Ljubljana (Videodokument, Videospotting, DIVA Station and Video Turn). She has regularly lectured and published texts in catalogues, magazines and books, such as “Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism”, in *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003). She is the author of the book *Celostna umetnina Laibach. Fragmentarni pogled [Gesamtkunst Laibach. Fragmentary View]* (Ljubljana: Založba/*cf, Žepna Series no. 11, 2013).

Eda Čufer

Eda Čufer is a dramaturge, curator and writer. Her texts on theatre, dance, visual arts, culture and politics have been published in numerous publications at home and abroad. In the 1980s, she collaborated as a dramaturge with the director Dragan Živadinov. In 1983 she was co-founder of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre. Between 1991 and 1999 she collaborated as dramaturge with the group IRWIN, on projects that dealt with a new perception and understanding of the relations between the East and West in the period of post-socialism. She is the editor of many books and catalogues, and has co-curated numerous exhibitions.

Mladen Dolar

State and Art from Plato to NSK

Famously, Plato wanted to ban art from his Republic. The reason for this was not simply his disregard for art as a suspect and inferior form in comparison to philosophy, but rather that he saw artists as competitors in his own field, and particularly with regard to the ideal state that he wanted to propose. The state for him was the supreme sort of art that made all other art redundant, and hence dangerous. The state was for Plato the ultimate Gesamtkunstwerk.

Paradoxically, NSK intervened in this very Platonic conjuncture. Their gesture was not the affirmation of art as the domain of individual expression and creativity opposed to the state, but rather to present their art as pertaining to a statehood, to point out the ‘state-of-the-art’, to use this pun, to point to the neuralgic juncture

where state and art intersect and cannot be relegated to a peaceful division of labor. The dangerous point in their art was that it competed with the state. Hence the subsequent founding of the NSK state was a logical consequence of this stance.

Mladen Dolar is Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana. His principal areas of research are psychoanalysis, modern French philosophy, German idealism and art theory. He has lectured extensively at universities in the USA and across Europe, and is the author of more than a hundred papers that have been published in scholarly journals and anthologies. In addition to ten books in Slovenian his most notable publications include *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT 2006, translated into six languages) and *Opera's Second Death* (with Slavoj Žižek, Routledge 2001, also translated into several languages), with the former now the standard reference work in the expanding area of voice studies. His new book, *The Riskiest Moment*, will be published by Duke University Press. He is one of the founders of the Ljubljana Lacanian School.

Charles Esche

Charles Esche is a curator, director, and writer, and the co-founder and co-editor of Afterall Journal and Afterall Books, the contemporary art publisher. In April 2014 he was awarded Bard College's Audrey Irmas Award for Curatorial Excellence. The prize honoured multiple achievements, including Esche's endless commitment to rethinking what art can do and redefining what it can be. He currently directs the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, and over the past two decades has been involved in exhibitions such as: *Strange and Close* at CAPC, Bordeaux, France (2011); *An Idea for Living* at the U3 Slovene Triennial (2011); the Second and Third RIWAQ Biennials in Ramallah, Palestine (2007/2009); the Ninth International Istanbul Biennial (2005); and the Fourth Gwangju Biennale, Republic of Korea (2002). He also curated the 31st Sao Paulo Biennale, which opened in the fall of 2014.

Anthony Gardner

Critiquing Institutions, Pursuing Independence

Can NSK's work be understood as a form of institutional critique? The growing consensus suggests that it certainly can be, part of the rapid international expansion of institutional critique from the North Atlantic centres of Western Europe and North America into the quite different contexts of Eastern and Central Europe. Nonetheless, the slick alignment of NSK and institutional critique needs to be treated very carefully, and not least because this growing consensus cements once "marginalized" practices in an extended canon of "critical art", while shoring up

institutional critique's remit at a time when its position is increasingly precarious. In this paper, I want to re-evaluate the view that NSK's work exemplified readymade forms of institutional critique, for that view may not only shut out the more messy realities of this history, but also exclude other connections between NSK's work and those of their international contemporaries.

Anthony Gardner is Associate Professor in Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Oxford, where he is also the Director of Graduate Studies at the Ruskin School of Art. He writes extensively on postcolonialism, postsocialism and curatorial histories, and is one of the editors of the MIT Press journal ARTMargins. Among his books are the anthology *Mapping South: Journeys in South-South Cultural Relations* (Melbourne, 2013), *Politically Unbecoming: Postsocialist Art against Democracy* (MIT Press, 2015), and (with Charles Green) *Mega-Exhibitions: Biennials, Triennials, Documentas* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

Boris Groys

The remobilisation of the signs of early avant-garde as well as totalitarian art was used by IRWIN to give more energy to their project of re-constructing the Slovenian national and cultural identity. In this context, the term retroavantgarde means not only the re-enactment of certain avant-garde attitudes and gestures, but also – and perhaps foremost – the influx of avant-garde energies into IRWIN's artistic practices. The general mood of post-modernity was a certain melancholy after the end of the love affair with Utopia. However, the project to re-construct the Slovenian national identity required some Utopian energy – energy that IRWIN obtained from the sources of radical modernity.

Boris Groys is an art critic, media theorist, curator and philosopher. He is currently a Global Distinguished Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University and Senior Research Fellow at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design in Karlsruhe, Germany. Since 2013 he has also been a Professor at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. Groys' work first focused on the Russian avant-garde, as well as the various artistic movements that came after it in the twentieth century. Groys eventually broadened his reflections to encompass contemporary art, analysing the legitimacy of works in public spaces and examining new media. His recent curatorial projects include the Russian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2011), and his work as co-curator of the Shanghai Biennale (2012). His recent books include: *History Becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism* (2010), *An Introduction to Antiphilosophy* (2012), *Under Suspicion: A Phenomenology of Media* (2012), and *On the New* (2014).

Marina Gržinić & Jasmina Založnik

From Capital to Nation-State and Back

The following presentation will focus on the NSK State in Time. However, we will not describe the NSK State, but focus instead on a set of changes regarding the State and its ideology within global neoliberal capitalism, in order to conceptualise and contextualise these changes and their effects on the NSK project. The centres of power (wherever money circulates: private, semi-public and semi-private) that control the spaces of art, theory and criticism within the Western institution of contemporary art, and as well the organisation of major contemporary art events (where power and capital coincide), are today made visibly hegemonic. There is thus a high degree of servitude to these centres, as money matters, power matters, and circulation matters. These are the key elements for understanding the changes in contemporary art, not least the contemporary art institution, and also to rethink, both historically and currently, the NSK State in Time. The question we will pose is this: is global capitalism – prone as it is to the circulation of texts and information – capable of dealing with (and does it even want to deal with) the interpretations that were elaborated in the spaces where the focal art productions first took place?

Dr. Marina Gržinić is a researcher at the FI SRC SASA (Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts), Ljubljana, and Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She has published ten books (monographs and translations), both at home and abroad. In 2014, in collaboration with Šefik Tatlić, she co-authored the book *Necropolitics, Racialization and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life* (Lexington Books, USA, 2014.)

MA Jasmina Založnik is a PhD candidate in Art History and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen (UK), with her research focusing on Slovenian and Serbian alternative culture in the 1970s and 1980s. She also works as dramaturge, curator and writer in the field of performing arts. Založnik completed her MA in Philosophy at SRC SASA (Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts), under the University of Nova Gorica, and BA in Sociology of Culture and Pedagogy (Faculty of Arts) at the University of Ljubljana.

Former artist known as Adrian Kovacs

Moscow Portraits 1989-1991

In 1991, when Yugoslavia was already in the process of breaking-up, the group IRWIN had one of the earliest presentations of their work *Kapital* in the New Langton Arts gallery, half a world away in San Francisco. Today, both Yugoslavia and New

Langton Arts no longer exist, but San Francisco and IRWIN still remain. In reading an article about the exhibition published in the San Francisco Chronicle we will learn about another participant in the exhibition, a little known artist called Adrian Kovacs, who presented his installation *Narcissus*.

However, this was not the first joint appearance of IRWIN and Adrian Kovacs. In the same year they had already collaborated in the exhibition *Moscow Portraits*, which also included other artists from Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade.

This collaborative exhibition was based on six portraits of Adrian Kovacs made by street artists working on the Arbat street, in Moscow, in February 1989, during the first exhibition of Malevich's work in the Soviet Union since the artist's death. While posing for the portraits Kovacs held in his hands the catalogue for the Malevich exhibition, with the iconic suprematist painting *Eight Red Rectangles* on its cover.

After returning to Belgrade, where Kovacs was a member of the Amateur Art Society "Unity", he asked six of his fellow members to paint versions of *Eight Red Rectangles*, and then he made black and white copies of these six paintings. He also made black and white copies of the portraits made by the Arbat artists. These twelve pictures then led to the collaborative show that included Mladen Stilinović and an anonymous artist from Zagreb, as well as Marina Gržinić, Aina Šmid, IRWIN and VSSD from Ljubljana, who all produced works related to the portraits from Arbat or the painting *Eight Red Rectangles*. Those were then presented at the exhibition *Moscow Portraits*, which was first organized by Branka Stipančić at the Galerija grada Zagreba in 1990. After its appearance in Zagreb, and thanks to Marina Gržinić, the exhibition was then brought to the Mestna galerija in Ljubljana in January 1991.

This exhibition is especially notable, not only because it brought together amateurs and artists who were already internationally known, but because it was the last collaborative exhibition of artists from Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade before the final dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Adrian Kovacs was a member of the amateur art society AKUD Jedinstvo (Unity) in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, between 1988-1991, during which time he participated in several group exhibitions organized for national holidays, like the New Year, March 8th, May 1st and November 29th, which were usually held in lobbies and foyers. In 1989 his career took a new direction when he was invited to join the exhibition *Jugoslovenska dokumenta* in Sarajevo, where he had a chance meet some well-known artists, including Mladen Stilinovic and members of IRWIN, with whom he then collaborated in the exhibition *Moscow Portraits*. The exhibition first took place in the Galerija grada Zagreba in 1990, and then at the Mestna galerija in Ljubljana, 1991. His last appearance was with the work *Narcissus* 1991 at New Langton Arts in San Francisco, when he had an opportunity to exhibit again with IRWIN.

Lev Kreft

Avantgarde and Neue Slowenische Kunst

The idea of the avant-garde (both artistic and historical) arose at the same time as Modernism, “not militant but ready-made for discipline” (Baudelaire), although it had first been introduced by Saint-Simon. The concepts of both the avant-garde and retrogarde belong to the art of war, but not on the battlefield itself, and instead in the formations marching towards it. While there are some similarities between the historical avant-garde and totalitarianism, there is an important difference in relation to history’s horizon. Totalitarianism presents utopias on the horizon to prevent watching its messy ground, while the avant-garde builds on optimal projections (Aleksandar Flaker) which have their own horizons, but what they really watch is the ground on which they are marching. The historical avant-garde is a notion that is difficult to accept, because it was introduced by Peter Bürger to indicate that the avant-garde belongs to the past, and that neo-avant-gardes are in fact not avant-gardes at all. Still, if we are to name just a few of the ideas and movements appropriated by NSK, then Dada Berlin and détournement, as practiced by Cobra, Lettrism and Situationism, have to be mentioned. Taken together, the links between NSK and the historical avant-garde represent an appropriative priem (Shklovsky). But there is also another example from Marx’s critique of the German situation in the 1840s, where we find a metaphor referring to the cold waves of the river Saale.

Finally, to explain why NSK priem does not have the same hold today as it used to, two features of contemporaneity and the contemporary art world have to be mentioned. For contemporaneity, it is its depoliticisation, and for the contemporary art world, it is its squaring the circle in the relations among sociability, participation, activism and moralization.

Lev Kreft (1951) graduated from and defended his PhD at the Faculty of Arts, the University of Ljubljana. In ancient times he worked at the Cultural Association of Ljubljana, at the Union of Socialist Youth in Belgrade, and at the Marxist Center of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia. In the new age he was a Member and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia, and Professor at Ljubljana University. He teaches aesthetics, philosophy of art, cultural history and philosophy of sport. He has also been Director of the Peace Institute in Ljubljana. A married man, he is the father of two grown-up daughters and has five grandchildren – four grandsons and one granddaughter, all still minors.

Tomaž Mastnak

An Event of the Final Decade of the Cold War

NSK was an event of the final decade of the Cold War, one of those times “that try men’s souls.” NSK neither succumbed to the liberal critique of communism nor participated in the nascent destruction of reason. Precisely because they were neither liberals nor “democraticals,” their critical position remains productive and relevant, as totalitarianism lies in the future, not the past.

Tomaž Mastnak is a Director of Research in the Institute of Philosophy at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana, and a Visiting Researcher at the University of California at Irvine. He works in the field of political theory and history of political thought. He has written or edited a number of books and published widely in scholarly publications in various countries, and writes a regular column on current political developments. His books include *Hobbes’s Behemoth: Politics and Religion*, Exeter, 2009 (editor); *Evropa: istorija političkog pojma* [Europe: *A History of a Political Concept*], Belgrade, 2007; *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim world, and Western Political Order*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002 (Arabic and Croatian translations). Among his recent publications are “Hobbes in Kiel, 1938: From Ferdinand Tönnies to Carl Schmitt,” *History of European Ideas*, 2014; “Botanical decolonization: Rethinking native plants,” *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space*, 2014, issue 2 (with co-authors Julia Elyachar and Tom Boellstorff); and “Nazism and Climate Change,” *Belgrade Journal of Media and Communications*, 2014, no. 6

Rastko Močnik

I will examine the confluence of processes that has occasioned the current commemorative event. What is the present status of aesthetic practices? What is their ideology? What is the structure of the material existence of this ideology, i.e., of artistic institutions? Supposing these questions delineate the horizon of the event, another question arises: Is this an attempt to transform history into art history? This would certainly be a possible alternative to the replacement of historiography by memory, now under way in many post-socialist countries (Buden), or even a good riposte to the Slovenian historiography of socialism, presently engaged in variants of Roman and Biblical (Foucault) historiography, when not candidly mythical. However, this *Kunstgeschichte* is a curious historiography: it quotes Agamben, not reports from a statistical office. Traditionally, philosophers mined historiography for material whose sense they were keen to reveal. Now discourses on the arts search for explanatory schemata in what currently passes for philosophy, itself a parasitic discourse. What may be the effects of these operations? Are certain aesthetic practices, like those of NSK, particularly open to them? If so, why?

Rastko Močnik taught at the University of Ljubljana, and is now teaching at the Faculty of Media and Communication, at Singidunum University, Belgrade. He is co-chair of the International Board of Directors of the Institute for Critical Social Studies, Sofia and Plovdiv. He is also a member of the international advisory boards of the journals *Eszmélet*, in Budapest, and *Sociologicheski problemi*, in Sofia; as well as a member of the editorial boards of *Založba* /*cf., in Ljubljana, the on-line journal *Transeuropéennes*, based in Paris. Močnik is Doctor Honoris Causa at the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. His works focus on the theory of ideological practices and the field of historical materialism.

Alexei Monroe

This paper analyses Laibach’s foundational concept in the light of Yugoslavian cultural and architectural history. Yugoslavia was itself a futuristic, hyper-modernist structure built on a Promethean scale, trying and ultimately failing to overcome its unstable foundations. If many Yugoslavians experienced a sense of “future shock” caused by alienating architectural, artistic and ideological novelties, this did not mean they were ready for or receptive to Laibach’s “past shock” tactics - its equally spectacular resurrection of styles and symbols that officially belonged to the past, but which it suggested also belonged to the near future. Just as Yugoslavian architecture (ultra)-identified with the utopian core of self-management, Laibach’s over-identified with the dystopian core that the system itself was both in flight from and falling back towards. Working with its allies in Neue Slowenische Kunst, Laibach (re)-constructed its own retro-futuristic conceptual structure. This virtual architectural monumentalism found ultimate expression in the work of The Builders (Graditeljji), which played an important symbolic role in the construction of the NSK *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Dr. Alexei Monroe is a non-aligned cultural theorist and writer from London. His book on Laibach and NSK has been published in Slovenia, America, France and Germany. In September 2010 he co-organised and moderated an international three-day symposium on the works of Laibach and NSK as part of the former’s 30th anniversary event, Red Districts, Black Cross. He was programme director of the First NSK Citizens’ Congress held in Berlin in 2010, and edited the book *State of Emergence: The First NSK Citizens’ Congress in Berlin* (Plöttner Verlag 2011). He was also co-editor of a major publication on Test Dept., *Total State Machine* (PC Press 2015). He writes on and reviews a wide range of electronic music, and in January 2015 he participated in the first international conference on Kraftwerk. His current research includes projects on the history of German techno, the connections between industrial music and British science fiction, and the history of the stag as a symbol. He runs the electronic music label VEB89, and is also active as a DJ.

Katja Praznik

Katja Praznik is an Assistant Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she teaches in the Arts Management Program. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on the politics of unpaid artistic labour, and political economy in the arts during the end of the welfare state. As a dramaturge she has worked with several dance artists, such as Maja Delak and Matija Ferlin. She was the editor-in-chief of the performing arts journal *Maska* (2007–2009) and co-authored the book *Chronotopographies of Dance: Two Inquiries* (Emanat, 2010). From 2009 to 2011 she was engaged in improving the working conditions of independent cultural producers at Asociacija, the Association of Cultural NGOs and Freelancers in Ljubljana. She is currently working on a book project, *Remuneration of artistic labor: a transcontinental comparative analysis*, a study of cultural policy regulation and grassroots artists’ initiatives concerning unpaid artistic labor in three different environments affected by the process of neoliberalization: post-socialist Slovenia, post-unification Germany and post-financial crisis US.

Daniel R. Quiles

Overidentification: The Latin American Case(s)

My presentation will explore parallels of Neue Slowenische Kunst’s strategy of “overidentification” in postwar and contemporary Latin American art. Given the vastness of the region, any such investigation can only point to discrete examples, but it does afford an opportunity to compare overidentification in relation to right-wing versus left-wing regimes during the “years of lead.” I begin with mid- 1960s Buenos Aires, where artists associated with the theorist Oscar Masotta produced a structural analogue for the Onganía dictatorship’s manipulation of the mass media: an affirmative yet fake happening featuring enthusiastic young artists. I then consider the emphasis on the body by Southern Cone artists during the most violent years of the 1970s, arguing that echoes of North Atlantic “body art” in this context took up the possibility of identifying with victim, victimizer, or both. I will round out my discussion with a look at the New Cuban Art of the 1980s, which unfolded in a situation much closer to that of NSK. Key to my argument here will be the notion of the *choteo*, or irreverent joke, which is distinct from the NSK’s relentlessly deadpan register. I will conclude by considering recent developments in light of the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba—can we perhaps read generative perversity into Tania Bruguera’s recent transformation into *cause célèbre*?

Daniel Ricardo Quiles is an Assistant Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he teaches courses on the theory and history of post-war art of the Americas. His research has appeared in academic journals such as *Art Journal*

and ARTMargins, and he is currently completing a book titled *Ghost Messages: Oscar Masotta and Argentine Conceptualism*. He is also an art critic who has written for Artforum, Art in America, and DIS Magazine, among other publications. He was a 2003-2004 Critical Studies Fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program, received a 2013 Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, and was the 2013-2014 Artlas Post-Doctoral Fellow at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris.

Igor Vidmar

What is the Alternative? - Alternative Culture of the 1980s and NSK

This will be an attempt at a “naïve” ideological reflection on our theme, and one that will also resurrect a retro-leftist supposition that all artistic endeavours, including those engaged in popular art and culture, have political significance, and are positioned in some relation to the hegemonic ideological discourse/context. We will propose that alternative culture in 1980s Slovenia was the product of a conjuncture of outside influences, from both East and West, and specific, local socio-political circumstances. The latter include the alternative scene’s own dialectic/contradiction between its punk origins (from 1977 on) that were more of a parallel/counter-culture, as well as a distant echo of the SLO student movement of 1968 (as seen in the relevance of Radio Študent and ŠKUC (Students Cultural Center), and its Laibach/NSK phase, that started out as an explicit alternative to the prevailing Slovenian culture of the 1980s. We will revisit differences in attitude towards the dominant culture/politics of the day, and the impact of the key Event – the so-called Nazi-punk poster scandal that was constructed by the media and police, and which mobilised the forces of alternative theory for the first time. This was thus perhaps a decisive factor in the development of Laibach/NSK, both as an artistic and political phenomenon, but also, due to the mass-cultural nature/appeal of the related art works and actions, a key Event in mobilising the mass consciousness of a wider civic society, and one that may still be relevant today.

Igor Vidmar studied economics and political science from 1970 to 1974, while also a journalist and editor at the independent Radio Študent (RŠ). After having been expelled from RŠ as part of the League of Communists’ anti-liberal crackdown, he turned to writing about comics and prog-rock, publishing the first regional underground comic book (with ŠKUC, the student cultural centre). After the emergence of punk in 1977, Vidmar returned to RŠ as a DJ, working as both a promoter of the movement and its ideologue. He was also the producer of a number of albums, co-producing the first Yugoslavian punk album, then proposing and organizing the seminal Ljubljana Novi rock punk/avant-garde rock festival, and hosting the first punk/new wave weekly radio show on national radio. Vidmar co-produced Laibach’s first recordings, and after establishing the ROPOT concert promotor and label within ŠKUC, released the group’s first “no name” album in 1985. He then organized the first NSK international performance at Wiener

Festwoche in 1986, and was Laibach’s tour collaborator from 1983 to 1988. In 1989 he became a weekly political columnist for the national television and monthly commentator at RŠ, as well as working for other media outlets. He has been the independent promoter of more than 500 concerts, including performances by the Sex Pistols, Nirvana, Rage Against the Machine, Pearl Jam, Lou Reed, Bob Dylan, David Bowie, Public Enemy, Philip Glass, Nick Cave, Patti Smith, Kraftwerk, Einstürzende Neubauten, among many others.

Alexei Yurchak

Monstration: the absurd as political critique

In the past few years a new social phenomenon has emerged in many Russian cities – marches of thousands of young people walking through the city center each year on May 1. Such marches are called “monstrations” (in Russian - monstratsiya) – a term that combines “demonstration” and “monsters”. Participants in monstrations carry slogans that appear to be absurd, meaningless and disconnected from each other. Typical examples include: “Let us turn English into Japanese”, “We support same-sex fights”, “No one has arrived” and “I demand meaningful slogans.” At first glance this event is utterly apolitical and nothing more than a meaningless carnival. However, closer scrutiny shows that monstrations work as a powerful form of political critique in the context of late-Putin rule. This approach is genealogically linked to the strategy of over-identification, as it was developed and perfected by NSK and their Soviet counterparts in the 1980s. The paper will analyze this phenomenon and will illustrate it with many visual examples.

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