

EAST EUROPEAN ART SEEN FROM GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: PAST AND PRESENT

24 - 27.10.2014

Galeria Labirynt, Lublin

ABSTRACTS

Key-note speaker:

Thomas DaCosta KAUFMANN

The Netherlandish Model. The Low Countries and Central Europe

Speakers:

Anu ALLAS

Our Imaginings Unite with Reality. Ideological Encounters in the East European Neo-Avant-Garde

My paper will focus on the modifications to the avant-garde idea of transferring art to the praxis of life in the manifestations of East European artists during the nineteen sixties. Against the background of the development of the post-war avant-garde in different regions of the world, in Europe, the US, Latin America and Japan, I will address the conceptual specificity and heterogeneity of this phenomenon in East Europe, looking at it in relation to the cultural dynamics in the era of the Cold War and Late Socialism, among other aspects.

The neo-avant-garde can be described from a global perspective both in terms of its ideological sources and with regard to the emergence of comparable artistic movements in different geographical and historical contexts. Discursive shifts in the art of the nineteen sixties were characterised by an interweaving of various conceptual leitmotifs, including the re-actualisation of the ideas of the historical avant-garde, in other words, art's direct engagement with political and social processes, an affinity with Eastern philosophy and Zen Buddhism, interaction with different counter-culture movements, an aspiration to return to the initial, pre-modern, impulses and functions of artistic activity and so forth. Of particular interest to me are the re-formulations of the notion of socially engaged art created by the East European neo-avant-garde artists in relation to the imagined trans-cultural community and/or to the universal context in which their art might function. These re-formulations were influenced both by the 'Cage discourse', based on the concepts of Eastern philosophy, and the late adaptation of existentialist philosophy in East Europe. However, the engagement with universal context should not only be viewed as a way of establishing a distance from the actual social environment, but rather as a complex strategy of communicating with it.

Aktual Univerzity: Ten Lessons (1967–68), a text by the Czech artist Milan Knížák, will serve as my initial example and I will be comparing it with writings by other neo-avant-garde artists from different cultural backgrounds.

László BEKE

Post-Contemporary Art in East and Central Europe. A New Art Tendency and a New Methodology for Art History

In the final decade of the twentieth century, several new tendencies in art and art history emerged, several of them proposed by Piotr Piotrowski. First, there was the idea of the acceptance of globalisation and the supremacy of the English language, together with the survival of post-communist conditions, where I only insist on maintaining the varieties of local traditions. The second was introduced by Piotrowski with the rallying cry “Peripheries of the World unite!” last year in Kosice at the AICA Congress, *White Places and Black Holes*. Demanding new, parallel art history studies, his paper took art tendencies in East Europe and Latin America, with a particular focus on Argentina and Buenos Aires, as its example.

In this sense, I am proposing a step forward, a step which also includes the results of my recent research into the questions of migration, cultural heritage and failures, errors and misunderstandings in art. Last year, I ‘officially’ introduced the notion of Post-Contemporary Art. This is neither a style nor a group, but a condition, just as the Post-Modern became a condition following Jean-François Lyotard’s articulation of his thesis. *Post-contemporary art* does not annihilate; on the contrary, it retains, develops and combines the Post-Modern, Post-Social and Post-Communist tendencies. At both the universal and the East European level, there are already some artists who could be considered as being Post-Contemporary.

As a methodology for art history, Post-Contemporary Art could open up possibilities for the development of new points of view for application in research into older periods of art and the process of art history.

Amy BRYZGEL

Performance Art on the Border between East and West

In 2004, Vladimir Nikolic brought a Montenegrin dirge singer to the grave of Marcel Duchamp to honor him on the anniversary of his death, as part of an artistic performance. As a Serbian artist, Nikolic describes himself as bearing a “geopolitical burden,” and is conscious of the fact that he cannot present his work in an international context as a “free man,” unencumbered by his ethnicity. In his experience, curators only expect art about war from a Serbian artist. This is precisely the opposite of what Duchamp had aimed to do with the readymade – to take an object out of its context and provide it with a new meaning, divorced of its source. In the performance, the dirge singer is positioned between Nikolic and Duchamp, preventing the former from gaining access to the legacy of the latter, and entering the international art context freely.

This is a situation that many artists from the “former East” find themselves in nowadays. The question of where to place of art from Eastern Europe on the global map continues to plague art historians, but what about the artists and where they see themselves? This paper will examine four distinct performance art pieces by artists working in different and distinct areas of the former “East,” whose work addresses this question directly: Vladimir Nikolic (Serbia), Sislej Xhafa (Kosovo/New York), Mladen Miljanovic (Bosnia), and Flo Kasearu (Estonia). In particular, attention will be paid to the manner in which each of these artists has used the fleeting and transitory art form of performance in attempt to find a fixed and stable position for themselves on the global map of contemporary art.

As the artists attempt to situate themselves amid the crossroads of East and West, this paper will challenge assumptions with regard to the meaning and significance of the genre of performance art, which currently relies on texts constructed in and about the West. By examining the work of these five performance artists in a local, global and regional context, I will attempt to position their work in terms of its range of significance, from the framework of the post-communist to the postmodern.

Katarzyna CYTLAK

Beyond the Fantasies of the Red Star. Eastern European Art Seen from the Argentinean Perspective

The tendency toward juxtaposing artistic practices in Eastern Europe and Latin America over the past decades is becoming increasingly visible at conferences and exhibitions, as well as in recent publications. The notion of bringing together communist Eastern Europe and Latin America, with its various military dictatorships, is inextricably linked to the discourses which challenge the Western view of the development of art history. However, the question of the possible reception of Eastern European art in Latin America is one which has yet to be expanded upon and thus begs further consideration.

The aim of this paper is twofold. The first objective is to attempt to demonstrate the role of the Argentinean artistic milieu in establishing artistic contacts between Eastern Europe and Latin America during the late nineteen sixties and the subsequent decades. The second is to question the possible/impossible reception of Eastern European art in Argentina during the same period. The paper thus also sets out to answer the question as to whether artistic contacts between the two regions developed via mail art, experimental poetry exhibitions and the Net initiative and, if so, to what degree. In addition, it addresses the extent to which the direct contacts established by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación group and the presentation of Hungarian and Polish art at the centre could have inspired, influenced or even engendered not only Argentinean, but also Uruguayan and Chilean artistic work at the time.

The paper will focus in particular on several instances of Argentinean and Chilean artists for whom a confrontation with Eastern European art, be it direct or indirect, could have played a significant role in their artistic practices, in the construction of their artistic discourse, or even in the establishment of contacts between their local artistic milieus. The Argentinean vision of Eastern European art is also inseparable from the interest in communist ideology on the part of numerous artists leaning toward the left and opposing the local dictatorships. Another focal point is provided by several cases of the 'misinterpretation' of Eastern European art, which, in a fresh socio-political context, obtained a new role, serving as a model for the expression of a strong engagement in the cause of liberation, not only social and political, but also sexual, as exemplified, for instance, by Horacio Zabala's or Pedro Lemebel's use of communist symbols and the reception of Marina Abramović's performances by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis and of Tadeusz Kantor by the engaged, post-dictatorship Argentinean theatre.

Marina DMITRIEVA

Between Russia and Europe. Ukrainian Modernism on the Global Map of the International Avant-Garde

The Ukrainian *Pan-Futurists* saw themselves as direct heirs of the Italian Futurists. In so doing, the artists and writers belonging to that group occupied an imaginary space between the Russian East and the European West. This paper will analyse the place of Ukrainian modernism on the global map of the international avant-garde movement by comparing its self-perception and position in contemporary academic curricula with that of its Russian counterpart. The focus will be on the controversial connections between centre and periphery and the colonial discourse in the art history of post-imperial Russia.

Aleš ERJAVEC

Art and the Politics of Representation in Eastern Europe from a Global Perspective

The paper will focus on some of the ways in which subjectivisation, representation, and self-representation have been applied in Eastern Europe and on the role that art plays in these processes. It points to two related features of the region, namely, the absence of a common point of identification and the split between the view from outside the region and that from within it. Rancière's notions of "voice" and "speech" are introduced, with "speech" being proposed as a precondition for subjectivisation and political representation. The import of Eastern European art in recent subjectivisation, identification, and representation processes in respect of the region's constitutive parts is then broached. These processes began in the nineteen eighties and reached their apogee in the decade following 1989, when art acquired an unprecedented role in Eastern European societies, for it not only expressed and reflected upon ongoing political and social events, but also provided persuasive artistic achievements which facilitated the progressive proximity of Eastern Europe to Western. The special position held by art in the region diminished with the subsequent political developments; the extraordinary place occupied by art in the former East Europe was no longer either required or supported. The closing section of the paper explores the contemporary 'global' view of Eastern Europe as the 'second-hand Europe'.

Eva FORGÁCS

Between Local and Global: Double Bind and Double Challenge

Global presence, I would like to argue, depends on the strength and solidity of the local (national) narrative to a very great extent. In post-communist Eastern Europe the local narrative needs to be constructed, based local consensus,

and, at the same time, the art and historiography have to keep up with the international art world and art history writing. Now that both the curatorial space and the marketplace are global, and one of the reasons that East Europeans are not in a good position in either of these (although there is hardly any such statement one can make today with a claim to absolute validity) is that the respective East European countries rarely support their artists. Partly because the local narratives are still works-in-progress and who among the contemporary artists fits into it is often not a consensual view. Opening a publication on contemporary art in Eastern Europe, or contemporary art in general, one encounters different representatives of the respective East European cultures, because on the global scene, consistently with the polyvalent views and moderate information of these cultures, one or another artist fits into one or another curatorial or editorial concept. I would like to talk about the challenges that East European art faces in the present due to deep-rooted historical issues as well as the particularities of the present conditions.

Maja & Reuben FOWKES

Towards a Planetary History of East European Art

The distinction that Gayatri Spivak makes between the global and the planetary is based on the insight that while ‘the globe is on our computers’, but no one lives there, which allows us ‘to think that we can aim to control it’, the planet belongs ‘to another system’ which we inhabit ‘on loan’, and therefore we need to imagine ourselves as ‘planetary subjects rather than global agents.’ This paper sets out to investigate ways in which the art history of the socialist era in Eastern Europe can be reassessed in the light of the environmental perspective offered by planetary thinking, from the uncovering of Stalinist attitudes to nature in official Socialist Realist painting and sculpture, to highlighting the striking engagements of East European neo-avant-garde artists with ecology, that superseded closed state socialist borders. A number of complex questions with implications for global art history to be addressed include consideration of the relationship between the treatment of nature in Socialist Realism, which oscillated between instrumentalization and subjugation, and the deep rooted problem of alienation from nature in modernist culture that reflected the distorted values of the industrial civilization of the twentieth century. This paper also considers the moment when both Socialist Realism and high modernism collapsed under the weight of new political and social movements that culminated in the global unrest of 1968, which was also the time that ecological crisis was first understood as a global phenomenon.

Tomasz GRUSIECKI

Globalising Provenance: After-Lives of a Polish-Lithuanian Squirrel

Michał Boym’s *Flora Sinensis* (Vienna, 1656) was the first Western treatise on Chinese flora and fauna to contain images. One illustration to Boym’s *Flora Sinensis* is of particular interest to me, namely his engraving of the animal *sum xu*, depicted largely in line with the visual convention of Chinese painting. This image is crucial for cross-cultural critical enquiry, for it represents a specimen from maritime south-east Asia copied from a Ming encyclopaedia by either a Chinese convert to Christianity or a Polish-Lithuanian Jesuit. Engraved by a central European printmaker from a drawing by Boym (or his assistant); published in Vienna in 1656; the volume was subsequently disseminated throughout Europe among interested publics. As such, the image of the *sum xu* contradicts the proclivity to speak of single geographical origin for this representation. The cross-cultural nature of Boym’s work is precisely why it is so illuminating: Indeed, the *Flora Sinensis* resists incorporation into any given national historiography of art, and lends itself only to supranational and trans-territorial approaches. By tracing the subsequent mutations and circulations of the *sum xu* in western Europe, I will argue that the peripheral Polish-Lithuanian visual culture did resonate in early modern Europe by enabling and mediating the flow of non-Western visual forms. The historiography of Western art – my argument goes – relies heavily on the notion of exclusive geographic origins of a given visual idiom or artistic style. Once we unveil the mechanisms of essentialising the mono-spatial origin of artefacts into a fixed *doxa*, we can then challenge the very historical narrative that has been written for the Polish-Lithuanian visual culture from such a distorted perspective.

Beata HOCK

Managing Trans/Nationality. Cultural Actors within Imperial Structures

This talk considers the general topic of the conference from a methodological point of view, suggesting that a global perspective is not only beneficial to bringing out East-Central Europe's transnational embeddedness—this alone is no novelty since the exploration of cross-cultural connections has long belonged to the conventional tasks of the discipline of art and cultural history. However, the global and transnational approaches and their 'allies', *histoire croisée/entangled histories* and *world art studies*, do not so much conceive of the 'world' as a quantitative sum of distinct national units defined by national borders, but perceive cross-border flows, connections and biographies to be elements equally as relevant to a country's or locality's history as the events unfolding within state boundaries. Unlike the nationally compartmentalised disciplinary tradition, these narratives invest less in reconstructing a unidirectional developmental line and are ready to explore encounters, interconnections and mutual influences in an ever more intensively integrating world. Furthermore, transnational history owes a great deal to the insights of post-colonial theory and is therefore particularly useful in capturing the power dynamics between geographical or geopolitical sites. For these reasons, the use of the analytical tools of transnational history in the study of the cultural history of the East-Central European region promises to facilitate the accomplishment of two methodological tasks. What is at stake in both cases is retrieving a kind of 'synchronous agency' and achieving a 'narrative' or 'diachronic' agency. Both operations aim at introducing the cultural history of East-Central Europe as a viable and productive subject field for the production of knowledge in the global studies paradigm; in other words, they aim at making this region visible in, and for, that scholarly discourse. And that is the easier task. More challenging is narrating this history in a way which removes it from the disadvantageous status it has acquired within the Western-focused cultural canon, a status often marked by the labels 'backward'/'delayed' or 'imitative'/'derivative'. Ideally, this removal should not be attained simply by flaunting achievements, by parading, for instance, artists, artworks and/or scientific innovations which 'stand comparison', or with a value that lies in the faithful imitation or brave appropriation of great models. The eventual ambition is the drawing of an analytical framework in which dominant Western narratives do not form the sole reference point. The talk will propose ways of inscribing nineteenth-century East European art into a globalised history and will also present a variety of short case studies in order to highlight some 'always-already' transnational features of the region's art life.

Marta KEIL

Producers of Culture in Post-1989 'Eastern Europe'

Since 1989, we have witnessed not only the political, economical and social transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, but also a much wider-scale reconfiguration process of the system and situation of 'centre' and 'periphery' in the global context. In my opinion, the economic changes and the resulting social ones have had a critical impact on art production. I am interested in researching the changes in the system of art production and presentation in post-1990, post-communist Europe in the context of the global change in the economical, political and social map of 'centre' and 'periphery', or, following Immanuel Wallerstein's proposal, in the reshaping of the system of 'core', 'periphery' and 'semi-periphery'. As performing arts is my main field of research, I would like to examine the phenomenon of festivalisation, including the development of the festival industry, the biennale format, art fairs and showcases, the role of the 'independent curator', the changes, or lack of change, in art institutions, in other words, museums, performing arts centres and so forth, which have influenced the 'global' map of arts core and peripheries in the past few decades. In this context I would like to take a particular look at the system of art production and distribution in post-communist Europe and try to place it in the contemporary landscape. I also aim to ask what the terms 'centre', 'semi-periphery' or 'periphery' mean nowadays in the context of 'global' art circulation. Is it really global? Where are the contemporary cores? Where are the semi-peripheries and peripheries and why are they where they are? Why do so many of the most influential biennales usually take place beyond the metropolis of the former hegemonic core and what does it mean? What is the situation of the Central and East European system of art production and distribution? Why are the concepts of centre and peripheries actually travelling and what is the role of the producers of culture in reshaping the notion underlying them?

Klara KEMP-WELCH

Personalities and Possibilities: Global Pioneers of Eastern European Experimental Art

This paper surveys the role played by a handful of influential members of the globalised art world of the 1970s in creating the conditions for East European art's dissemination internationally. That information about East European art occasionally found its way into important international magazines and journals such as *Flash Art* in the 1970s, and that works by East European artists cropped up in exhibitions and collections around the world, overcoming a range of political and cultural impediments, was not only as a result of the efforts of the artists themselves, but also thanks to the commitment of international critics and gallerists, whose engagement in Eastern European art was, in turn, fuelled by circuitous encounters with artists from the region. In an effort to 'reassemble the social' (Bruno Latour), this paper traces a selection of material and immaterial networks, shedding light on the ways in which a series of key personalities played a part in 'networking the bloc', from a global perspective.

Krista KODRES

Rules of the Game. Constructing the Baroque and its History in Soviet Estonia

The paper aims to address the problems of constructing art history narratives. It takes as its starting point the conviction that art historians work in, and with, a certain disciplinary discourse that quietly sets the 'rules of the game' by 'stating' which objects can, in fact, be considered as art objects, how they should be organised into a coherent order and how they should be valued. As disciplinary discourse is also "a text in context" (Teun A. van Dijk), a complex relationship exists between the narrative produced and its social and cultural environment. Moreover, discourse ought not to be viewed as something conclusive, but as a practice, as something in constant process. As such, its static aspects and dynamics should be sought. Inspired by these theoretical ideas, I intend to explore the question of how Estonian, and Latvian, art historians constructed their versions of Baroque art and architecture during the Soviet period. First, I am particularly interested in constructive tools, namely, the vocabulary, arguments and other building bricks of the art history narratives used internationally and locally to construct the characteristics of style. Did the Soviet art history discourse differ from the 'global' mainstream, in other words, from Western discourse? Second, I consider that the relation between the texts and the objects which constitute the focus of their reflections is a topic requiring scrutiny. Third, I view the context as being conditioned first and foremost by history, both international and local; in the case I will address in the paper, this is manifest in the form of harsh political and ideological intervention. What kind of mutations did this context elicit in 'normal' discourse? Finally, I am interested in the socially active subject, which is to say, the art historian, who becomes the link between discourse and socio-cultural reality (Ruth Wodak, Michael Meyer). Viewed thus, it appears that the art history narrative unveils as much, if not more, about the time and place of its writing as it does of the actual topic it undertakes.

Viktor Olivier LŐRINCZ

Places of Expansion. Hard Core and the Protective Belt in the Architecture of the Eighteenth-Century World System

After one and a half centuries under the Ottoman rule and the violent Thököly and Rákóczy uprisings against the Hapsburgs, the eighteenth century became the century of reconstruction in Hungary. However, like the Greek Dark Ages, the preceding eras had left almost no trace of the flourishing centres of the Middle Ages in the occupied territories. The task of reorganising the country's economy, industry, administration, religion and infrastructure was more or less comparable to the *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula or the colonisation of a country. It is not surprising that we can even find hidden connections between Latin America and East Europe in the architectural field during the eighteenth century.

In our paper, we intend not only to apply colonial and postcolonial theory based on the world beyond Europe and the East European situation, but also to point to direct relations between distant peripheries. Beyond classical theories such as Wallerstein's World System Theory, for instance, we aim to transplant an idea developed in a debate between Thomas Kuhn and Imre Lakatos on paradigms and research programmes. We also plan to take advantage of the concept of the protective belt, a system which is intended to defend the core from external impact. Rather than the notion of the clash of cultures, we will set out to emphasise the interaction in peripheral buffer zones. We begin with a brief presentation of the Hapsburg states and colonies of the eighteenth century from the viewpoint of their economical background, in other words, both the agricultural and industrial 'foundation' and the 'superstructures'.

These were foundations and superstructures in both a figurative and a literal sense; until the nineteenth century, the undeveloped money economy of the periphery meant that not only residences, but even cathedrals were sometimes built on the caves where the crops from the latifundia were stored. It is in this context that we set out to apply the new theories, both economic and psychological, to the influences on architects' careers and the decision to migrate, as well as endeavouring to analyse the flow of architects not only between core and periphery, but also between distant peripheries, even in a case of balanced supply and demand. Having established this framework, we first put it to use in a presentation of the career of the French-born architect Isidore Marcellus Amandus Canevale (Ganneval), architect of the first psychiatry building in Vienna and the pre-modern cathedral in Vác in Hungary and creator of numerous interior designs such as the Parade Room of the Paar Palace, now held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the remodelling of the Vieux Laque Room in Schönbrunn Palace, a fine example of Chinoiserie. We discuss his confrontation with the local architects and his collaboration with other artists, mostly from other peripheral regions, although Franz Anton Maulbertsch also numbered amongst them. We analyse his attitude toward the local culture, setting out the reinvention and reuse of mediaeval ruins as an early example of historicism and the notion of *renovatio imperii*. We then go on to examine the global career of architects from Central- and East Europe, looking not only to Portugal and Carlos Mardel, a leading figure in the reconstruction of Lisbon after the great earthquake of 1755, but also to Lima and instances such as Juan Rehr, a Hungarian-born architect and Jesuit priest who reconstructed the ceiling of the cathedral in Lima after an earthquake, during which undertaking, according to the sources, he applied his local, Central-European knowledge. He also built other churches, as well as blazing the trail for Peruvian meteorology. In this context, we analyse how the models for the colonisation of Latin America proved to be useful in the Hapsburg Monarchy's re-colonisation of Hungary and vice versa. We then discuss the interesting phenomenon of the manifold national identities which appear in dissenting sources, where Canevale, for instance, is recorded as being French, Italian or Austrian, while Mardel features as French, Irish or Hungarian and Rehr, as Bohemian, Austrian or Hungarian, and so forth. Finally, we explore the problem of the architectural copy in the peripheries, such as the 'miniature Rome' concept in Vác, for example, or the propagation of the Jesuit model of church buildings in Central Europe and Latin America.

Katarzyna MURAWSKA-MUTHESIUS

Ego Ideals of East-Central Europe

When composed of the endless stream of ideas, rival ideologies and of the endless variety of artefacts, rooted in Slavic, Latin, Orthodox, Jewish and Islamic cultures, while looking up to Parisian, Viennese, Moscow and New York-derived canons, the 'region' of East-Central Europe seems to collapse in the process of its construction, revealing instead its essential hybridity, as well as competing models of modernity, freedom and democracy. Much research has been focused on the variety of ways of problematizing its perception as the Other, as the periphery of West. But, could we identify the positively valued image of the East-Central European Self? If we step up into the domain of high art produced in this region, past and present, are there any works which have been analyzed as projections of an image of the desirable East-Central European trans-national collective identity, its Ego Ideal (in metaphorical rather than strictly psychosocial meaning of the term)? Are there any paintings, sculptures, prints, buildings, or memorable film frames which could function as positively valued emblems of East-Central Europe – in a way similar to that in which the Sergei Eisenstein's shots, frescoes by Diego Rivera, or drip paintings by Jackson Pollock have been constructed and widely promoted as signifiers of Soviet Russia, engaged art of the Latin America, or the freedom of the West? The paper will look at the choices that have already been made by curators of exhibitions of art in East Central Europe, as well as by the authors and publishers of the books on the topic, comparing the 'master images' on the covers. Clearly, the act of selecting an artwork for the cover frames it as the key image, not only capable of visualizing some aspects of the argument inside, but also strong enough to attract attention of a potential reader, of dragging him or her into the field. By contributing to the iconosphere as the visual signifiers of East Central European art, the book covers, inadvertently enter the battle for signification, and can be subjected, in the same way as maps, to visual discourse analysis.

Krisztóf NAGY

The Emergence of the Soros Foundation in Hungary. Decolonisation or Neocolonisation?

The Soros Foundation launched its activities in Hungary in 1984, commencing operations in the field of the arts in cooperation with Kunsthalle (Múcsarnok), Budapest, in 1985. The main venue for their initiative was the Fine Arts Documentation Center, where the works of contemporary Hungarian artists were documented following the standards of the National Gallery in Washington. In addition, the Foundation supported the participation of artists in exhibitions in the West and the publication of catalogues of their works.

My hypothesis is that, while the work of the Soros Foundation served to loosen the ties which bound the Hungarian cultural field tightly to the classic, Soviet-type colonisation, it led to the development of a new, less visible, neocolonial dependency in Hungarian cultural life. The project aided the integration of Hungarian art into the global art world, but only in a subordinated, peripheral position. In consequence, we can map a postcolonial-cum-post-socialist condition based on the subordinated relationship to the core areas.

Applying the term *hegemony* could prove useful in describing the political context. The Soros Foundation's counter-hegemonic project quickly attained success and the participants became the dominant figures of the new liberal hegemony. We can examine the international transfer of knowledge between the leading Western art historians and their local counterparts, as well as the formation of the new ruling elite. This was one of the first stages in the evolution of the 'Soros Network', which held an important position in the Eastern European art of the nineteen nineties.

Bojana PEJIĆ

Belgrade 1961. Non-Alignment, Modernism, and 'Yugo-Centrism'

My paper will put forward some aspects of the interfacing of the Yugoslavian international politics of nonalignment and modernist doctrine in art and architecture, which had already been accepted locally as "official art ideology" by the early nineteen sixties. What I call 'Yugo-centrism' was primarily conditioned by two 'events'. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia, a country practicing state socialism, was able to insert itself between the Western and the Eastern blocs after breaking with Stalin's 'road' in 1948, something that indeed contributed to our self-image of being the 'bridge' between East and West. The expression 'non-alignment' was coined by an Indian diplomat, V.K. Krishna Menon, at the United Nations in 1953. After the African-Asian Bandung Conference, held in 1955, the first Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries was held in Belgrade from 1st to 6th September 1961, gathering together twenty-five countries and three observers. The exhibition by famous modernist Yugoslav painter Petar Lubarda (1907-1974) opened in Belgrade's Press Hall on 29th August 1961. The exhibition of thirty-six paintings, with his work *Africa is Awakening* amongst them, was envisaged as being a "representative cultural event" accompanying the Nonalignment Conference. At the time, Lubarda himself stated, "It is a special honour for me that my exhibition will be held at the time of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries. We, the artists, also perceive this conference as something of great importance, as we are convinced that art can only flourish in time of peace". His huge *The Prometheus of the New Century* (650 x 285) was moved from the exhibition and installed to grace the Hall of the National Assembly, where the Conference took place!

Magdalena RADOMSKA

A Visual Critique of Global Capitalism in Central-Eastern Europe

The paper will focus on the topic of global capitalism and critical perspectives on the issue in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly after the financial crisis of 2008. It will explore such interventions and art works as those created by Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi, the Czech group, Ztohoven, Estonian artists Johnson & Johnson, Slovenian artists Marina Gržinić, Tobias Putrih and Miha Artnak, Hungarian artist Tamás Kaszás, the Russian group, Factory of Found Clothes and many others. Works written after the financial crisis by post-Marxist philosophers, such as *Declaration* by Hardt and Negri, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* by Žižek and *Communist Hypothesis* by Badiou, will serve as the main analytical tool. The theoretical framework in respect of the possibility of the existence of global capitalism within the Central-Eastern Europe context is constructed using texts by David Lane, Lenka Klimplova and Dorothee Bohle.

Jörg SCHELLER

More Than Mirrors

The role of large-scale, contemporary art exhibitions in the globalisation of Central and Eastern European art, as exemplified by the Polish exhibitions at the Venice Art Biennale.

Ever since the nineteenth century, large-scale, public exhibitions have served as salient catalysts for the globalisation and, ultimately, the global harmonisation of contemporary art on the one hand and, on the other, for the staging of differences and identities, such as national, regional, local, cultural, ideological, religious and so forth. Moreover, as windows to the global public, they provided, and continue to provide, opportunities for countries, institutions and individuals to politicise through art, be it overtly or covertly, as in the case of Hungary, for instance, which, in 1909, built a 'national' pavilion at the Venice Art Biennale *before* becoming a sovereign state, or in the case of Zimbabwe, which only opened its national pavilion in 2011 in order to criticise the former pan-African pavilion.

In order to discuss the ambivalent role of art biennials in the context of the topics addressed by the conference, my talk takes as its case studies a selection of exhibitions organised for the Venice Art Biennale by Polish artistic societies and successive Polish governments from the late nineteenth century onward. The history of the Venice Art Biennale encompasses four major periods in the history of Poland, namely, the final stage of the Partitions, the interwar years and the Second Republic, the era under Soviet rule and the Third Republic, established after the fall of communism. Since the sovereign state of Poland was wiped off the map by the partitioning powers in the late eighteenth century and would not be reborn until the end of World War I, art and culture played a major role in the persistence of the "imagined community" (Benedict Anderson), not least via large-scale exhibitions such as the Venice Art Biennale.

I will argue that the Venice exhibitions are of paramount importance to the global integration of art from Central and Eastern Europe into Western mainstream art, the respective politics always included. In the nineteen thirties, it was already possible in Venice, for instance, to place the then 'peripheral' Polish state at the 'centre' of power, albeit symbolically, among the Giardini pavilions. Having said this, rather than considering large-scale exhibitions solely as mirrors of political conditions, they should be regarded as veritable political agents. Here, "art power" (Boris Groys) becomes tangible, not only explicitly, but even more so implicitly, from the seemingly harmless, but actually latently political, landscape paintings of the Podhale region which were shown in the Polish pavilion in the 1920s to the 'biennialised' or 'globalised' art of today, with its blurry *e pluribus unum*-agenda, whereby:

[biennials] try time and again to both create and demonstrate a balance of power between contradictory art trends, aesthetic attitudes, and strategies of representation - to give an idealised, curated image of this balance (Groys 2008). It is this idealised image and its historic formation which we must study carefully when we discuss the place of Central and East European art on the global map.

Joanna SOKOŁOWSKA

Undoing the East. Towards the Global Semi-Periphery

I would like to undertake a critical examination of recent curatorial and artistic case studies which endeavour to frame contemporary East European art within the multiple perspectives of gender, historical narratives, urban and economic transformation, arts institutions and geopolitics, namely, *Gender Check*, MUMOK, 2009, / Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, 2008, *Interrupted Histories*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, 2006, *Another City, Another Life*, Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, 2010, *Over the Counter. The Phenomena of Post-Socialist Economy in Contemporary Art*, Múcsarnok, Budapest, 2010, *The Journey to the East*, Arsenał Gallery, Białystok, 2011. Drawing upon these examples, I will point to the contradictions arising from such framing and raise a question as to whether it reproduces essentialising positioning, rhetoric and the politics of representation. Finally, I would like to propose an alternative to the East European contextualisation of artistic production and discuss the emergence of diverse, transnational, semi-peripheric discourses, including case studies which traverse and go beyond the outmoded divisions between the East and the West such as *Life in the Forrest*, Arsenał Gallery, Białystok, 2011, *Workers Leaving the Workplace*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2010, *Untimely Stories*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2012, *Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin. Facts, Incidents, Accidents, Circumstances, Situations*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2013, *Shockworkers of the Mobile Image*, the 1st Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg, 2010. On the one hand, they revise hegemonic, universal art historical and cultural narratives while, on the other, they undo the orientalisng constructions of the East. While recognising specific geopolitical and local differences, these projects negotiate possibilities of new, transnational alliances and solidarity, calling for the linking of semi-peripheric. geopolitical mapping with research into the global division of production.

Eszter SZAKÁCS

Curatorial Discourse and Practice. Globalism and the Eastern European Region

The paper endeavours to analyse the gap between curatorial discourse and curatorial practice from a geopolitical point of view. A characteristic of curatorial discourse is that it is always extrapolated from practice. It aims to describe and legitimise certain types of curatorial practices and what it thus ensues is that there are many more practices than those from which the global discourse is formulated. The latter are predominantly, if not solely, practices employed in the centres of the art world and those most visibly utilised by curators, artists, writers and theorists in those very places. I will examine selected case studies of curatorial projects carried out in Eastern Europe against the backdrop of certain concepts of global curatorial and contemporary art discourse, such as socially-engaged art, public art or the curatorial. By underlining how these 'global' concepts often fail to describe the level of practice in the Eastern European region, I also argue for a more differentiated, as well as a de- and re-contextualised understanding of both curatorial practice and discourse. The projects discussed in the paper include *Polyphony—Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art*, Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA), Budapest, 1993, *Moszkva tér [Moscow Square]– Gravitation*, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, 2003, *Spațiul Public Bukurești | Public Art Bucharest 2007*, Bucharest, 2007 and *Political Practices of (post-) Yugoslav Art (2006-2009)*.

Andrzej SZCZERSKI

Interpretations of the 'Thaw'. Ryszard Stanisławski Exhibitions in Latin America

Between 1961 and 1969, Ryszard Stanisławski curated several Polish contemporary art shows in Latin America, the most important being the Polish sections at the São Paulo Biennale. These exhibitions were part of the official cultural policy of the People's Republic of Poland; censored and strictly controlled, they aimed at creating a propaganda image of post-war Poland as a modern socialist country at the centre of Europe. They thus included various artistic phenomena accepted by the state in the mid nineteen-fifties during the period of the 'Thaw', namely, abstraction, figurative expressionism, metaphorical painting and the new realism, close to the Marxist humanism of the 1960s. Poland's art enjoyed considerable success in São Paulo and her artists won the Grand Prix on two occasions; Tadeusz Kulisiewicz in 1961 and Magdalena Abakanowicz in 1965. Following the Biennale, the artworks which had travelled to Brazil were then used to mount exhibitions of Polish contemporary art in the region, for example, in Argentina and Uruguay. The content of all the Latin American shows was similar, as Ryszard Stanisławski showed politically neutral art which was accepted at home and could be exported abroad. This neutrality strengthened the image of Poland as an enclave of relatively liberal modern art, immune to the influence of communist ideology. For Stanisławski, what was also essential was his conviction that this politically neutral modernism had a universal, world-wide appeal and, as such, the artists who created it had the ability to attract attention in an environment culturally different from that of Poland, such as Brazil. This was possible thanks to the promotion of the same principles of 'universal' modernism practiced in Poland and Brazil alike, both of them countries which questioned their 'peripheral' position in the history of modern art. Stanisławski did not aim at rewriting the canon of art history, but hoped, rather, to introduce Polish art into the mainstream history of modernism. The exhibitions in Latin America were intended to gain international recognition and secure the presence of Poland in major art history narratives.