# **EPHEMERAL FIXED**

EPHEMERAL ART IN THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES — PRACTICE AND THEORETICAL REFLECTION





## • Visegrad Fund

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# PART 1 EPHEMERAL FIXED. EPHEMERAL ART – HISTORY DOCUMENTED Foreword

"Ephemeral fixed. Ephemeral art - history documented" was a project that took place in Łódź between March 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 as a pre-event to the 4<sup>th</sup> Art and Documentation Festival. The project was based on two basic assumptions: the cooperation of artist run initiatives from Visegrad countries and the presentation of artworks and knowledge of ephemeral art forms in those countries. The host was the Wschodnia Gallery. Partners: Kassák Center for Intermedia Creativity, Nové Zámky; Magyar Műhely, Budapest; Jáma Michal, Ostrava.

## The Project consisted of three parts:

"It happens" - two evenings of performance art events by artists from Visegrad countries, chosen by each of the Partners.

"It happened" - the presentation of the documentation of the activity of selected artist run initiatives (ARI) that participated in the Project and documentation of the artists that are associated with them.

"It happened and it still happens. Ephemeral art in Visegrad Countries - practice and theoretical reflection." - a symposium on the history of the ARI movement in Visegrad countries, that was also an attempt to define the nature of ephemeral art and the role that documentation plays in it.

The papers read during the symposium were composed by researchers that represent various methodologies and attitudes; art historians, a critic and an aesthetician. This explains why the essays focus on various aspects and show the issue from various points of view.

The publication *Ephemeral art in Visegrad Countries - practice and theoretical reflection* attempts to put in order a collection of basic facts and at the same time suggests ways to understand and interpret them. The examples of works and organisational activities discussed in the texts, that form case studies are situated on the broader background of ephemeral art and cultural discourse, taking into account the specifics of each Visegrad country. We hope that these texts become aw starting point for broader comparative research on art in the region.

The collected materials allow for an understanding of the basic dialectics connecting the emergence and functioning of ARI in parallel with the development of ephemeral art forms from the sixties till now. The term 'ephemeral art' is used here to combine and name the contemporary form of artistic practice that used to belong to such art genres as action art, happenings, performance, events as well as those connected with film, video and digital media. It also embraces conceptual art forms and various types of installation and contextual (pro-social) forms.

As the essays were written with regard to a foreign reader in mind, sometimes they required clarifications or the highlighting of facts that in a given country are universally known. However, because available literature dealing with the subject in English is limited, the editors considered this aspect equally important.

The project details are on the web site: www.ephemeralfixed.eu in English, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian.



### **ŁUKASZ GUZEK**

# THE ART GALLERY MOVEMENT IN POLAND. A HISTORICAL OUTLINE. FROM THE SIXTIES, THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL GALLERIES OF THE SEVENTIES, UNTIL THEIR CONSEQUENCES IN THE EIGHTIES AND THE NINETIES

Opening an art gallery as a way to function in the art world was a characteristic feature of Polish art of the second half of the twentieth century. The number of such initiatives was substantial, they dealt with the most progressive art ideas of that time and they influenced the trends in the development of Polish art. That meant that art was in the hands of the artists themselves, not the local or central administration, galleries, museums, critics, curators, or art historians etc. It was also a social phenomenon being one of the factors that shaped the culture, often in extremely unfavourable conditions. Therefore we can talk about an 'art gallery movement' that became an art institution in Poland and it is unprecedented in the world of art.

As a description and interpretation of the gallery movement, both as an entire trend and as individual initiatives, I use the model of the modernist avant-garde described by Mieczysław Porębski. Porębski pointed out ten features of avant-garde formation: warlike spirit, uncompromising character, elitism, distance (towards the contemporary times), re-evaluating tradition, polycentrism, interdisciplinary practice, having a programme, revolutionary spirit, utopianism.¹ These features exactly explain the tendency by art milieus to create closed groups whose institutional expression was a gallery and the meaning in their artistic programmes was directly attached to the form of live art.

The artistic programme of the galleries emerging in the sixties came directly from the trends in modern avant-garde art, therefore they can be named 'modernist galleries'. Paradigmatic space for modernist art is a white wall or a white cube.<sup>2</sup> A gallery is treated here as an art container - the space for presentation, that is supposed to contain artworks - aesthetic objects. Galleries emerging in the seventies are associated with conceptual art, so they can be called 'conceptual galleries'. They are treated by their creators in fact *as* artworks or spaces for art activity. They not only become an art container, but by themselves become art forms and the expansion of existing artistic limits. In this sense, a conceptual gallery is an expression of a fundamental ontological shift in conceptual art which was about replacing visual aesthetics (objecthood) with idealism.

In reference to the issue discussed here, shifting the attention from an artwork (an object) to a gallery (space) allows us to interpret the space for art (artwork) as a space for presentness. Hence the meaning of all kinds of ephemeral art forms, live art and others that include the presentness factor, because they are an active agent responsible for extending the limits of art and the radicalism of artistic programmes. That is why the forms of presentness that appeared in modernist galleries announced the emergence of conceptual galleries and the change from an objective and neutral space of the modernist type (white cube) into a specific (contextual) space. This way art inevitably gained a social and political (critical) context, which referred to both the artworks and also art activity (within a milieu) in general. Contextualism is a form of late (mature) conceptualism (post-conceptualism) leading to a modernist / postmodernist breakthrough. The process

of gradual contextualisation and post-modernisation of artistic programmes of galleries we could observe since the end of the seventies, and especially in the eighties and nineties.

The dialectics of art and presentness, the internal and external, individual and social was recognised by Jan Świdziński who gave it the formula of 'art as contextual art' (Object "O" assumes the meaning "m" in time "t", place "p", situation "s", in relation to person/persons "x" then and only then).<sup>3</sup> Świdziński verbalised it in the mid-seventies and developed it until the end of the decade. Świdziński, even though he has lived in Warsaw, was as an artist associated with various milieus (in Warsaw he co-operated with the Repassage and mainly Remont Galleries, as well as the Address Gallery in Łódź, the BWA Gallery in Lublin and with the Newest Art Gallery in Wrocław with which he realised contextual art projects during its mature stage in the second half of the seventies). But the contextual concept itself was worked out while he co-operated with the Film Form Workshop in the mid seventies, in the area of photo-film avant-garde. This is important for our deliberations, because one of the methods used to describe the history of conceptual art is the presentation of its development divided into milieu (cities) that compete with one another. Świdziński has worked in each of them (with the exception of Krakow, where he appeared at a time towards the end of conceptual art domination, a fact that only confirms Kraków's less important role in the conceptual art of the seventies). Świdziński was an artist-theoretician and a model example of a conceptual artist, the most radical in Poland, close to Kosuth, whom he knew and with whom he conversed and was in a way more radical than Kosuth, because apart from treating the work of a theoretician as artistic work and using photography, Świdziński did performance that at a certain point became his main medium. Świdziński, different to other artists who wrote at that time in Poland (and similarly to Kosuth) has not treated writing about art only as a comment upon his own art, but referred to art in general. That is why it is he who as an artist managed to seize the change in Polish art that was caused by the emergence of conceptual art as an ontological change and a shift that took place within conceptual art from art as a linguistic entity to art as a social (critical) entity or pro-social conceptualism, or - to describe it in Kosuth's categories - between "Art after Philosophy" and "Artist as Anthropologist". This is why Świdziński is a key figure for Polish art - it is he who connected both Polish and world art on the other side of the iron curtain in this crucial moment, which was at first the impact of conceptual art and then the modernist / postmodernist breakthrough.

#### Social (critical) dimension

In Poland during the second half of the twentieth century, in post-war reality, the natural tendency of the avant-garde to close ranks within one's own circle was strengthened by the oppressive character of communist totalitarianism. One must add here that independently of the social and political situation of that time, a gallery - either modernist or conceptual has always been a par excellence political project (often independent of the intentions of the artists themselves). This causes an apparent paradox - the gallery creators at the same time, often expressis verbis, and cut themselves off from politics. However, the political engagement sine qua non made such forms of activity as a gallery attractive both for the artists themselves and the beholders. Especially as the gallery movement in the seventies was part of a counterculture stream (the pro-social dimension of conceptualism

Świdziński described in his book: *Art, Society and Self-consciousness*, published in 1979 in Canada.<sup>4</sup> Even though he had Western society in mind, the process was inevitable even on our side of the iron curtain. What was specific for it was an exclusion from the official sphere of expressed or declared views. There remained however a 'subsoil' impact (meaning everything which was discussed privately) and because of that it was not fully understood, as it would have to be then connected with practice in the social sphere. So a gallery was a *quasi* or *extra* institution - an alternative to existing institutions (also a social, community and counterculture alternative), parallel to the official life of art. The independence of galleries should be understood this way despite the fact that there is another paradox - various forms of organizational, administrative and financial dependence.

The problem was to find *modus vivendi* with the social and political system in Poland. A few models were worked out. For example the galleries were located in larger institutions such as 'culture houses' that were not under the strict vigilance of the authorities, as they were considered non-professional and did not represent the authorities such as official galleries and museums. They were also located in students' culture institutions, clubs and dormitories, because universities were quite autonomous, artists' organisations such as the Artists or Photographers Association, as they were limited to artistic circles and they were also in private homes and studios.

The galleries were founded and managed by artists and non-artists, so called 'conducive persons' (a term accepted in the gallery movement in the nineties). The category of a 'conducive person' could refer to someone who ran a gallery or played an active role in the life of artistic communities, but also those who worked in official institutions, who by themselves were neither conducive nor participated in the gallery movement. So it was a broad and numerous movement, which gave it a social strength which, after all, the authorities had to take into consideration. Not only the art exhibited indicated as to whether it belongs to the 'conceptual gallery' category. Moreover, it is the fact that the gallery created treats his/her project in fact as a work of art. And this was possible based on the assumptions of conceptual art. So the artistic programme of the gallery was derived from a decision containing a par excellence artistic character. The second feature of conceptual galleries is their belonging to a network of local or international scale. Their raison d'être is not about absorption and centralisation, but a centrifugal activity and the proliferation of art (and information). For a gallery movement there is no centre there are local centres which form points of a network.

In the seventies, the idealistic premises of conceptual art blurred the difference between an artist and non-artist (also artist / theoretician). If a gallery is an artistic project, treated in fact as a work of art then the making of a gallery = the making of art. Independent of the motive of the gallery movement participants, it was a time of the greatest openness (expansion) within art. So it should not be a surprise, that it was also a period in which the gallery movement was the strongest. This is also partially an answer to the question as to why today such a movement is not possible anymore. This also resulted in a certain paradox within the social functioning of such galleries, because on one hand the galleries declared their openness (through social interaction and when it came to their programme), and on the other hand, they had the character of an individual, personal project (such as an artwork), in which apart from its creator, only the people who were connected by a similar way of thinking could participate. This in fact refers, however, to both modernist and conceptual galleries. The main features of the galleries that

participated in the gallery movement were: non-commercialism, slightly enforced by the lack of an art market in Poland in that time; the emergence of an artistic community, its self-organisation and self-education as a result of grass-roots initiative; keeping direct contacts with the cultural community and artists abroad, based on personal relations. Plus a specialised programme, especially in conceptual galleries, designed to expand the definition of art, based mainly on ephemeral, live and new media art activities.<sup>5</sup>

In this text I focus however on the description of a certain factual state. The history of the gallery movement allows us to describe and analyse the process of reception and development of contemporary art issues in Poland, especially with regard to the specifics of broadly understood conceptual art and the modernist/postmodernist breakthrough in art. In this text, even though it refers to galleries, one should remember that the gallery movement is connected also with a system of open-air workshops, symposia and other regular or occasional meetings that influenced the construction of a network of relationships and the shaping of the programmes of individual venues. The survey of gallery initiatives presented below includes only the galleries that contribute to a greater understanding of the essence of this trend and its dynamics.

#### Chronology

In Poland one may divide the history of gallery initiatives into four periods. First - after 1956, from the post-Stalinist thaw until the end of the sixties, when the artistic programmes of the galleries were based on late modernism. Second period: from 1970, strikes and the massacre of workers, the change of authorities until December 13th, 1981. This period forms a 'prolonged' seventies decade, in which conceptual art dominated and conceptual galleries emerged, forming a network or gallery movement. Within this period one may also distinguish a late phase from August 1980 which included the emergence of a wide movement of social pressure that was organised around (and independent from) the authorities. This period also includes the emergence of the Solidarity trade union that came into existence as a result of strikes in Gdańsk shipyard and continued until the imposition of martial law on December 13th, 1981. During that period, the weakness of the totalitarian authorities on the one side and strong social pressure from the other, allowed for creation of a certain space for freedom, which released the creative energy of many milieus. It was expressed by many gallery and exhibition initiatives and intensified many international contacts. It was also a period of summarising the development of conceptual art and the process of postmodernisation of art (in the first phase associated with conceptualism). However, martial law halted the development of art practice in this direction.

The next period is between 1982-1989 and represents a somewhat 'shortened' decade of the eighties. It is the time of martial law, that was formally cancelled in 1984, but its consequences continued until the so called 'round table' agreement in 1989. This was the agreement between the authorities and the opposition and focused on reforms, political democratisation and economical liberalisation, and which was in practice the beginning of the dismantling the totalitarian system imposed in Poland after the second world war in 1945. During that period the art produced was influenced by the experiences of conceptualism, but the isolation of the artistic communities caused Polish art to be detached from international art trends. At the same time there emerged a need to search for a means of expression

and various ways of acting that would be adequate to the new situation. What happened during this third period was a break in the development of Polish art, which was to have its consequences in the following period.

In the nineties the art scene started to rebuild itself from the very beginning. Just like the whole country, it went through the process of adjustment to the new political and economical conditions (commercialisation). Also international contacts were established from the very beginning. Meantime a new generation of artists and organisers grew up, who have no direct experience of the conceptual decade other than through art history and about which little is known, because the break in the continuity of art practice also meant the break in discourse. Polish art in the nineties was created from scratch and connected with the trends of late (delayed) postmodernism somehow missing the eighties. We can see that the events of Polish internal politics were weaved into the changes within the art produced.

I end the survey at the end of the nineties. After the year 2000, although the galleries listed continue to work, in contact now with the wider art world, the influence of the change of system in Poland is very visible. The old gallery models ceased to function under the new conditions. At the same time other models associated with new ways of financing culture and the rules of the market economy came into being. Also art institutions started to change, quite willingly absorbing new trends. This all made for necessary change in the art discourse on art practice; a need for new questions, methods and terms. The fact that such galleries still exist and emerge proves the durability of the trend. Although the changes in art practice and influence of the external environment through decades caused changes in how they functioned in practice, the core concept remains constant.

#### The gallery movement

In Poland the practice and the myth of the avant-garde (and the avant-garde artist) had the deepest roots in Krakow, where there was a continuity of the avant-garde tradition reaching back to the nineteenth century, fin de siècle and the artistic decadence of Polish Jugendstil. In the period between 1918 - the end of World War I and continuing to the outbreak of World War II, strong centres of modernist avant-garde emerged such as in Łódź (especially thanks to Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński), in Wilno, Lwów and Warsaw. After World War II a leading role was played by those who maintained direct artistic continuity with the avant-garde tradition. This happened in Łódź and Kraków, but influenced by two different traditions; in Łódź it was connected with constructivism which after the World War II ceased to be influential, and in Kraków it was more eclectic, coming out of a longer and more rooted tradition. That is why in Kraków, during the totally changed political situation it was possible to build an artistic bridge over the iron curtain that divided the West from the East of Europe.

In Kraków, on the wave of the post-Stalinist thaw, there appeared the Krzysztofory Gallery founded in 1957 (from the name of the palace in whose basement it was located). The Gallery was established by the artists assembled in the Grupa Krakowska (Krakow Group) association. It was a so called 'second group', to distinguish it from the first one active from before the World War II, the group formed a continuation of which.<sup>6</sup> It was the first and only initiative of that kind in Poland at that time. The current authorities agreed to the emergence of an independent artists' association and allowed them to run a gallery simply because many of its members were active in the pre-war communist party. Communism

before the war was avant-garde, but following its 'victory' after the war it quickly became conservative and it was the conservative ideology of the authorities that blocked new initiatives in art. In the field of philosophy, communism replaced existentialism. However from the West of the iron curtain it expressed the decay within capitalism, in the East it expressed the decay of communism. In both cases it was a foundation for criticism of the system. During the period just after the war, the artistic life of Kraków (which was then equal with Poland) started to be organised and featured the prominent figure of Tadeusz Kantor. Kantor was not engaged in communist activity before the war. However, under the Nazi occupation in Kraków he ran in a private apartment an avant-garde theatre (based on e.g. Jean Cocteau's Orpheus). In 1957 Kantor was already an unquestionable leader of the Kraków milieu and an important figure within Polish art. In 1955 he had established Cricot 2 (Cricot was a name of a pre-war puppet theatre associated with the 'first' Krakow Group), that he next moved to Krzysztofory. The Krzysztofory Gallery was a space in which one could observe the process of the withdrawal from modernist avant-garde rooted in the art of the thirties before the post-war art trends: informel, structuralism, new realism and existentialism mixed with the Polish tradition of romanticism and the Young Poland (Młoda Polska) movement. As a result, the Krakow Group was a mixture of abstractionism and surrealism. However, what gave exceptional meaning to the Krakow Group in Poland was its direct roots in the tradition of a pre-war avant-garde. In contemporary times, its myth was based on happenings and shows by Kantor, Manifestations by Jerzy Bereś or performances by Zbigniew Warpechowski, all live art forms. The features of the avant-garde and modernist gallery that were described earlier, actually resulted in a longer perspective to act against the Kraków Group - causing it to close in on itself and the circle of its own artistic programme. While art around was changing and the world was changing, the Group was unable to develop together further than from a certain point. The activity of the Krzysztofory Gallery gradually declined, especially after the death of Kantor in 1990. Also, more and more members of the Kraków Group were taken over and represented by commercial galleries.

In Poznań, in December 1964, the odNowa Gallery was established. Its manager was Andrzej Matuszewski, who was an artist himself and the Gallery functioned until 1969. It was founded at a students' club of the same name. The artistic programme of the Gallery was quite eclectic. Various kinds of abstract art dominated here, which allows us to refer to it as a modernist gallery. However a few points in the gallery programme make it exceptional. The Gallery devoted a great deal of space to theoretical reflection by organising meetings, discussions, lectures and even conferences. Also, some exhibitions were associated with a rearrangement of the space, that is installation forms with the use of readymades. It was something new, an art that was ahead of its time. Such was the exhibition by Jarosław Kozłowski (who co-managed the Gallery from 1967) - Aranżacja (1967), or 21 Items by Andrzej Matuszewski (1968). The most interesting however were the happenings: the VIII Syncretic Show by Włodzimierz Borowski (1968), an action connected with an installation and Postepowanie / (Procedure) by Andrzej Matuszewski (1969), which was the last event to take place in the Gallery. The happening had an exceptionally well thought of and developed spatial structure for a happening. The work had a typical compartmented structure. An element of the arrangement was nine rooms. One could look into them through a hole and watch scenes being repetitively played. It was a reference not only to the compartmented structure of a happening but also to a film avant-garde classic - scenes from the movie The Blood of a Poet by Jean Cocteau (1930). Connecting forms drawn from media art, action and installation art was unusual in Poland at that time and could have opened the way to innovative intermedia works. However, it was neither recognised by art critics of that time, nor did Matuszewski himself continue working in the same direction. The above mentioned projects went beyond the dominating image of Polish art of the sixties. They are also the first evidence of searches into the post-avant-garde in Poland. But the Gallery was active for too short to make them the characteristics of its programme. In the odNowa Gallery there was also one event, which is important for our deliberations: a symposium entitled "The Spectrum of Galleries and Debut Salons" (1967), which was an attempt to describe the specifics of the gallery movement and building up of a network. The Galleries that participated in it were: the EL Gallery, Elblag, (Gerard Kwiatkowski), the Eksperymentalna Gallery - the Eksperymentalne Studio (Włodzimierz Borowski), the Lubelska Gallery, Lublin (Adam Styka), the odNOWA Gallery, Poznań (Andrzej Matuszewski), Pod Moną Lisą Gallery, Wrocław (Jerzy Ludwiński), the Gallery of Kultura i Życie magazine, Warszawa (Andrzej Ekwiński, Galeria Współczesna, Warszawa (Maria and Janusz Bogucki), the ZSP Gallery, Toruń (Elżbieta Wiśniewska), the Debut Salon, Warszawa (J. Bryl), Salon Debiutów Klubu "Od Nowa", Poznań (Jarosław Kozłowski), the Debut Salon at "Pałacyk", Wrocław (A. Szulc), the Debut Salon at "Żak" Student's Culture House, Gdańsk, the Debut Salon at the Journalists Club, Wrocław (Jan Chwałczyk). Altogether it comprised of eight galleries and five debut salons.8 Neither the Krzysztofory Gallery nor the Foksal Gallery participated in the meeting. The particapting galleries behaved according to the model features of the avant-garde as previously defined by Porebski. They kept their position until it ceased to have any meaning for anybody, however we can still see how many of these places remained in the gallery network. A few features of the odNowa Gallery signal the emergence of the conceptual gallery model. It was run by an artist, and even at a certain moment by two (Jarosław Kozłowski, Matuszewski's collaborator, who soon started to run his own conceptual Gallery Akumulatory 2). They did not think of giving the gallery the status of an art project, similar to the status an artist gives to his/her artworks, and this way they did not move the gallery to the position of a conceptual gallery and did not treat it as an artwork. Despite this fact they completed some innovative works in it, that because of their formal character caused the gallery space to become the space of an artwork. The act of going beyond the current model of art is associated with an increased interest in theoretical reflection, which was reflected by the programme of the gallery. I mentioned that above, but also Matuszewski himself wrote a great amount and sometimes he abandoned creating artefacts in order to create essays. Last but not least, organising the first gallery meeting announced a different way of thinking, not with regard to the avant-garde categories (as in Porebski's model) but with regard to the categories of creating a network that is open in its nature, based on exchange, co-operation and building a contextually (or relationally) understood space. Locally, the example of the odNowa Gallery influenced the emergence of other galleries of this type, generating the participants of the gallery network.

In Warsaw, in 1966 the Foksal Gallery was established (named after the street in which it was located). Different to the Krzysztofory Gallery, the Foksal Gallery was under the agenda of a state institution that dealt with professional contracts for artists. The Gallery was founded by art critics: Hanna Ptaszkowska, Wiesław Borowski and Mariusz Tchorek. The importance of the connection with the pre-war avant-garde proves the position of Henryk Stażewski who had been

a member of the Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création. Although in the sixties his works of an Hans Arp style did not have any artistic importance, he was still an important persona. However, it was Tadeusz Kantor who had the greatest impact on its artistic programme. Kantor supported the Gallery and its group with his authority, and the Gallery promoted Kantor. 9 It was a modernist gallery that represented the next stage in the development of post-avant-garde art of the sixties. The starting point of the artistic programme of the Gallery became not the avant-garde trends of the thirties like in the case of the Kraków Group and the Krzysztofory Gallery, but the tendencies of Nouveau Réalisme, which perfectly fit Kantor's art. Again, the most progressive events helping the gallery reach mythic status were the happenings by Kantor and other artists which were also performed outside of the Gallery with the co-operation of the gallery group that created it. Its history also started with a happening. The Gallery had its quite limited circle of international contacts, mainly in France, which was an asset that gave importance to the space. Conceptual art was never in the mainstream of the Gallery programme, mainly because of the artistic view of those who ran it. For example although in projects such as: Documentation or Living archive by Andrzej Turowski (1971), Polish and foreign conceptual artists were exhibited, they were rooted in the structural and process based thinking categories, so they were closer to the works of new realism and did not reach the conceptual ontological change. The Foksal Gallery functions even now, although it does not play an important role. In 2001 a group of young curators detached from the Foksal Gallery and created a separate institution called the Foksal Gallery Foundation (Warsaw), that took the greatest symbolic centre of the 'old' Gallery and its well known name.

In Wrocław, another modernist gallery was the Pod Moną Lizą (At Mona Lisa) Gallery. It was established by an art critic Jerzy Ludwiński at a local cultural institution, where it occupied a small hall. The Gallery was active for a short time - from December 1967 till December 1970. It emerged almost parallel to the Foksal Gallery, however the horizon of its artistic programme was different. Before setting up the Gallery, Ludwiński wrote mainly about painting and when he dealt with photography, he used the same categories (for example when writing about Piasecki's photographs<sup>10</sup>). The exhibitions referred to 'expanded painting', then geometric abstractionism (concrete, rational) or science art. Then they were referred to together as visualism, visualist art (the term was introduced by Piotr Krakowski<sup>11</sup>). This is how Ludwiński was writing about this art at the time. So it was also a modernist gallery. However, these were the tendencies that lead to early conceptualism. That is why Bożena Kowalska called this art a protoconceptualism. 12 But such statements may show up ex post. Ludwiński, at the time when he was establishing and then ran the Gallery, did not engage in conceptualism. The awareness of conceptual art showed up in his texts not earlier than around 1970, that is when the Gallery was ending its activity. In Polish art criticism at that time there were attempts to find terms for new trends that today are called conceptual art. Ludwiński especially devoted a great deal of time trying to find new words, as he felt that he was dealing with something new which required a different language: notional, absent, unidentified or impossible, which was also a key term for Kantor (the Impossible Theatre 1969), although e.g. Luiza Nader in her book noticed that the term was taken from a certain essay from Art in America. 13 It is possible, that Ludwiński knew the text, because it was one of a few magazines that penetrated the iron curtain (via the libraries of consulates), but of course he also knew the activities of Kantor very well. Ludwiński in his career as an art critic dealt with conceptual art. That is why there is a prevailing opinionthat the programme of his gallery had a conceptual character<sup>14</sup> (which would be pioneering in Poland). This is however, seeing his earlier activity projected through the perspective of his later work. Also in the case of the Krzysztofory and Foksal Galleries mentioned above, conceptual art emerged there in the seventies, but it did not define their character (even though Kantor himself did conceptual works, he soon abandoned this kind of art, most probably because he did not understand it).

In the Pod Mona Liza Gallery there appeared two artworks that were very radical for the time, that can be seen to be an announcement of forthcoming conceptual art, although then they were called happenings. I am thinking about Jarosław Kozłowski's work COLLAGES (1968)15, which was a collage of quotations and the so called anti-happening by Włodzimierz Borowski Fubki Tarb<sup>16</sup> (1969). What is interesting is that both artists were the authors of probably the most progressive works that represented the art of the sixties and seventies in the Foksal Gallery. Borowski showed an installation with an action Syncretic Show II (1966, that was in the very beginning of the Gallery's activities). The authors of the publication Taduesz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal (....) write, that "most exhibitions that took place then in the Foksal Gallery were of an environmental type", <sup>17</sup> but because of the association with factors within the space and presence, Borowski's work has an especially innovative character. Kozłowski in turn showed a conceptual triptych Metaphysics, Physics, Ysics (1972, 1973, 1974). It was one of the most important artworks of that time, because it questioned the status of an object, and therefore the "Duchampian" question of the readymade, that is one of the origins of conceptual art. The Polish reply turns to metaphysics, which is not Duchamplike, but shows how Polish conceptual art spanned across metaphysics (of a religious origin) and the rationalism of logic and language.

The Pod Mona Lisa Gallery, like the odNowa Gallery, contained features that indicated a conceptual model, but in both cases it was too early for conceptualism yet. In the programmes of both galleries works showed up, that can be recognised as announcing the forthcoming of conceptual art. But it was not the conceptual art of that time that decided about the character of those galleries, in which a different kind of art was prevailing. They reflect the state of Polish art of that time, but they do not go beyond that (which would mean recognising them as conceptual galleries). In 1970, when the Gallery was closed, Jerzy Ludwiński in his role as an art critic had just started to fight a battle with words to find a name for conceptual art works, which proves that he was aware of their novelty, but he still tried to understand conceptualism. He also co-created the Symposium "Wrocław'70" which was considered by many Polish researches to be the beginning of the reception of conceptual art in Poland.<sup>18</sup> However, it was a continuation of the artistic aims of an another symposium "Puławy'66", which included, finally, discussing artworks, not the idea of art. 19 That connects his way of thinking with modernism, although it was sometimes evident during the above mentioned symposia in extremely radical visual forms, which expressed the late consequences of structural thinking in / about art. Also while planning the programme of the Museum of Actual Art (1966) or the Centre for Artistic Research (1971) he presented a decidedly modernist way, that is proper to the avant-garde (according to Mieczysław Porebski's criteria), a centripetal way of thinking, not thinking in the category of a network (of ties and the lack of a centre). That is why the starting point for the movement of conceptual art galleries and by this, also for the history of conceptual art in Poland (one of them, about which I will write later) one can find in the odNowa Gallery.

#### Conceptual galleries

Conceptual galleries started to emerge not sooner than after 1970. Let us also remember about the social and political context - December 1970 was a time of a change in authorities in Poland after a wave of strikes, demonstrations and bloody massacres of workers in the towns on the shore of the Baltic sea - the worst in Gdańsk, also in Gdynia and Szczecin. The new authorities turned out to be more open to the external world, although of course Poland was still a totalitarian country, and the iron curtain did not disappear. This relative internal freedom and openness within Poland translated into a greater dynamics within the development of artistic milieus - the number of artists who were able to participate in the discourse on international art increased since the sixties, although it still required determination to break the limits imposed by the authorities. In December 1970 together with a new decade, a new era in Poland started with fresh artistic activities. This time it was to be a decade of conceptualism. Summarising the seventies in Polish art were two international exhibitions in 1981 - Construction in Process in Łódź<sup>20</sup> and IX Kraków Meetings<sup>21</sup>. They were at the same time a summary of the development of a conceptual tendency into the diverse trend that dominated the art scene. It also showed the channels of the exchange of information between Polish and international artists and art centres and the paths of influences that were worked out during that period.

I mentioned above two milieus rooted in a pre-war avant-garde: Krakow and Łódź (Warsaw, even though the war totally disintegrated the existing community, functioned as a capital in which the authorities and also the ones that ruled the culture concentrated. However it also attracted creative people and already by the mid-sixties a community emerged able to create the Foksal Gallery, even if it was supported by an import from Kraków). In Kraków, in the seventies, the activity of the milieu was still connected with the influence of the Kraków Group and the Krzysztofory Gallery. This would last longer still, practically until the nineties. In Łódź however, in the seventies the post-constructivist tradition stemming from the influence of Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro, on one hand became more and more academic and with time was only visible in design. On the other hand, a new force showed up, which referred to their ideas but expressed them through the practice of media art. This stemmed from the Film School, which from the fifties was a space for artistic experiment, originating also from Polish avantgarde projects in the field of photography and film. E.g. the famous Roman Polanski étude Two men and a wardrobe (1958) was created based on The Adventures of a Good Citizen by Stefan Themerson (1938). When the avant-garde tradition of constructivist photo-film traditions were added and connected with the tendencies of structuralism and the expanded cinema, in the beginning of the seventies, the milieu was able to create the Film Form Workshop (FFW). The spiritus movens of this initiative was Józef Robakowski, who was the most senior of the Group. Here we find a second starting point for the movement of conceptual galleries and at the same time for the history of conceptual art in Poland.<sup>22</sup>

#### Year 1970

In 1970 one may point to two events that initiated conceptual art in Poland. Firstly, the Symposium "Wrocław '70" (listed together with the open air workshop in Osieki that happened the same year, during which the ones who worked out the

concept of the symposium met, with Jerzy Ludwiński as the leader). Secondly, the emergence of the FFW. For our deliberations one should underline, that for Ludwiński this marked the end of activity, while for the FFW it was just the start. The symposium reflected that the main area for conceptual art in Poland was mainly in the field of theory, not art projects. At the same time, we have the works of the FFW: photographs, films, installations, actions and their hybrid junctures, such art forms as the structural or expanded movie, also documentalism strongly associated with criticism brought to Poland a conceptual art that had a different background than the avant-garde visual art and which originated from media art. The artists of the FFW, especially Józef Robakowski, underline creating art with a historical awareness of the connection of photo-film media art with the art of the avant-garde trends, especially with the local tradition (within Łódź and throughout Poland) such as Karol Holler, photomontage and especially the work of the Themersons. At the same time that "mediatisation" that is dominating art with examples coming from media art, plays a key role in the development of conceptual art. The FFW did not create a space that would be a regular gallery. FFW acted as a group until 1977 and this group had all the avant-garde features listed by Mieczysław Porebski. The fact that they were a group, increased their artistic power elevating the value of media art in the Polish art scene. The group incorporated other artists into their actions (into the so called the FFW circles described by Ryszard W. Kluszczyński<sup>23</sup>). The impact of the FFW goes far beyond the period during which the group existed and in the milieu of Łódź it is even visible now. The activity of the FFW also had a critical (social) and political dimension. The group stemmed from the critical element of the Film School programme and the film establishment. Film was in one of the main tools used to distribute the ideology of the authorities in Poland of that time. So similar to the case of the above mentioned galleries, the activity of the FFW was politically engaged volens nolens. It was contextual (pro-social) somehow by nature (so it is not surprising that at a certain stage they accepted Świdziński as "their" theoretician). The FFW did not become fully aware of the power of their political engagement until 1980-81.

#### The first half of the seventies

In Bydgoszcz two galleries emerged in 1970: the Non-existing "NO" Gallery (Leon Romanow, Ryszard Wietecki and Anastazy Wiśniewski) and the Non-existing Nodding "YES" Gallery (Leonard Przyjemski and Anastazy Wiśniewski - which from 1974 to 1975 continued as a project by Przyjemski called the *Museum of Hysterics*). As the names point out, these were *par excellance* artistic projects, in which the name of the gallery serves as a signature to the artworks. Przyjemski used for his works another name adopted from official nomenclature the *Museum of Hysterics*. Names such as 'gallery' or 'museum' that had a 'custodian' were a method to appropriate words and treat notions *as* a 'readymade', which allowed for the embracing of one's own artistic practice in one entity, and at the same time mrked its innovative and alternative character by showing, that in existing art discourse there are no words to describe its form and attitudes (Ludwiński struggled with this problem in the field of art theory).<sup>24</sup>

Conceptual galleries in Poland began with the 80x140 Gallery, established by Jerzy Treliński in May 1971 in the Artists' Club in Łódź (86 Piotrkowska St.). <sup>25</sup> The Gallery was actually a display of the dimensions listed in its name. Its activity was associated with a club space, even onto the whole street and also activities

during open-air workshops. The documentation of these actions or their elements was presented on the board, as well as independent artworks. For Treliński it was not only the kind of works that indicated the fact that the gallery was an artistic project, but also the way he celebrated the "bureaucratic" side of this activity. The Gallery existed in the club until 1977. Its activity was also connected with Treliński's Project entitled *Autotautologies* that consisted the placing of his last name - the word TRELIŃSKI on various objects, places and in various situations. The project was developed in parallel with the Gallery and continues even now. From May 1972 the 80x140 Gallery co-existed with the A4 Gallery of Andrzej Pierzgalski, which featured a sheet of paper of A4 format placed in the 80x140 Gallery. The works shown there were also documentation, but at the same time they had the status of independent works. So they were the first galleries treated *as* conceptual artworks.

In the same Artists' Club in Łódź, Ewa Partum ran the Address Gallery (spring 1972 - March 1973) in a 4m<sup>2</sup> space under the stairs. As the very name points out it was the first gallery situated in an apartment (its address was the address of her flat, where the Gallery operated until 1977). The Gallery was based on a mail-art model, one of the more important formulas used in the making of conceptual art. Although it was situated in a private space, it functioned in a public arena that was an art space at the same time. Ewa Partum is an artist who treated the gallery project as an artistic project. The mail art gallery of Ewa Partum emerged inspired by Andrzej Kostołowski and Jarosław Kozłowski, who started a project called NET in May 1972. This project was about sending a letter to people and institutions, picked according to social and artistic kinship, a letter with a request to send mail art artefacts. This way a network was supposed to show up - an alternative structure in which to distribute art ideas. The authors of the letter lived in Poznań. The most important element however was the network - NET created a metastructure, because each address was a potential place in which to exchange the correspondence, so it functioned as a gallery, and together they were supposed to create a meta gallery-network. Kostołowski and Kozłowski stated in their letter that they did not aspire to the authorship of the network, as it was supposed to be owned by anyone who would like to participate in it and for similar motives the figure of Monty Cantsin emerged which was an initiative supposed to oppose the art industry system, that created hierarchies and "stars" according to the needs of the market. Similarly to Monty Cantsin, which was associated with Istvan Kantor, NET became a conceptual artwork of Kozłowski and Kostołowski, and this is how it was recorded by art historians. When it came to a public show of artworks sent, NET had only two exhibitions: in Kozłowski's apartment and in the Artists' Union Club in Poznań, both in 1972. The mailing list of NET was also the first attempt to research the power and scope of the movement and create an ARI on an international scale. The authorities spotted the threat in building an independent grass-roots structure and the authors and more and more addressees of the letter were infiltrated because of that by the police.

In Poznań in 1972, Jarosław Kozłowski founded the Akumulatory 2 Gallery (at the students' club), which operated until 1990. In 1977 there was a Fluxus festival there. It is an important event, because Fluxus artists were the ones who were breaking through the Polish artists' isolation aided by the characteristics of Fluxus such as: openness towards counterculture and art operating outside of the mainstream, global thinking and functioning, the intermedia character of the artworks, including the prominent role of mail art and live art. That is why each contact with Fluxus provided the model for a radical artistic attitude.

In Warsaw, parallel to the Address Gallery, there emerged the Poetry Bureau of Andrzej Partum (Ewa Partum's husband) in his private apartment (between 1971-85, on 38 Poznańska St., the attic of the Polonia Hotel). This was also based on the mail-art model. The Address Gallery exhibited correspondence, functioning as a gallery, however the Poetry Bureau acted simply as an "open house" for those who were interested, so it was more of a network point in a social space which was treated as an art space, as a (quasi) institution it only had the name and address to indicate its gallery attributes. In Warsaw in 1971, at the students' club within Warsaw University at Krakowskie Przedmieście St. several galleries acted in turn: Sigma (1971-73) organised by Paweł Freisler and next in the same space Repassage (1973 - 77) organised by Elżbieta and Emil Cieslar until they emigrated (1978), after which it was taken over by Krzysztof Jung (1978-79) who named it Repassage 2. In the years 1980-81 (the time of the impact of the Solidarity movement) it acted under the name of Re-repassage and was run by Roman Woźniak.<sup>26</sup> In the last period, that is at the time of the greatest social and political tensions preceding the imposition of martial law (between October and December of 1981) the Gallery was run by Jerzy Słoma Słomiński. The Gallery was finally closed on December 13th, 1981. One of the important projects of the Gallery was the Art cleaning [Czyszczenie Sztuki] of Włodzimierz Borowski, Paweł Freisler and Jan Świdziński (May 1972). It had the character of a festival. It integrated the artistic milieus of the country, having the same function as the NET project (and partly was its after-effect). A specific integrating project that proved the existence of the network of connections between communities, although here shown à rebours, was the project by Andrzej Partum The list of those ignorant of art and culture / [Lista ignorantów kultury i sztuki] (1973). The reply to that project was The carousel of attitudes / [Karuzela postaw] by Elżbieta and Emil Cieślar (the series of works from 1975 to 1976) that dealt with pointing out the relationships and ties, so a kind of NET. The projects that included art in the public space (of the city) were evidence that conceptualism had entered a social (critical) phase that Świdziński would later call 'contextual' (e.g. City Repassage / [Repassage miejski], 1974; The collection of used shoes / [Zbiór butów używanych], 1975, The party with a table on the street / [Przyjęcie ze stołem wychodzącym na ulice], 1980; The French-fries action / [Akcja frytki], 1981, and more artworks that used the Gallery windows that faced a busy spot in the city centre). These kind of projects were featured in "The survey of documentation of independent galleries" 29.10.1973 - 04.1974, that included 19 galleries (also Repassage). The idea came from the "artistic adviser" of the Repassage Gallery, Włodzimierz Borowski. It was the first attempt to summarise the art activity of the network that had created the conceptual gallery movement.<sup>27</sup>

The Remont Gallery (Warsaw) was open between April 1972 and November 1979 and it functioned according to the model of the galleries functioning at the students' club, in this case it was the club of Warsaw Technical University. It was run by Henryk Gajewski (at times he co-operated with Andrzej Jórczak and Krzysztof Wojciechowski). Gajewski himself was a photographer and the programme of the Gallery was also dominated by photography, including the co-operation with FFW. In its programme meetings, lectures and publications played also a prominent role (*Art Texts* - by Kosuth, Higgins, Dłubak, Świdziński, Stażewski, J.St. Wojciechowski), so it was also engaged in art theory and not only in exhibiting art. In July 1977 Świdziński organised an international conference there "Art as Activity in the Context of Reality". An important moment was the arrival of sociological art (Collectif L'Art Sociologique) onto the Polish art scene – it was

a trend in late conceptualism, that Świdziński developed in the form of art as contextual art (presented in Świdziński's book Art, Society and Self-consciousness, published in 1979 in Canada). However, probably the most important event in the Gallery was a festival entitled I am - that was an International Artists' Meeting in April 1978, as it initiated broader contact of Polish artists devising performance art with international artists. It not only established the notion 'performance' but also the awareness of this art, which expanded the repertoire of the ways conceptual art could be practiced (26 Polish artists and 48 foreign artists participated in the festival). 28 This all points to the Remont Gallery run by Gajewski as the space in which two main trends of conceptual art met - media and actionism, also connected with theoretical reflection making conceptualism more actual in its social reflection (sociological or contextual). So it was the Remont Gallery that had the greatest merit in establishing a broad conceptual trend as the one that dominated in the seventies. Thus it was to become the most important conceptual art venue for the Polish art scene, because of the scale of its activity and the fact that it was situated in Warsaw proliferated conceptualism in Poland. This also happened because of Gajewski's character and his openness towards many different milieus, while other Galleries embraced significantly narrower circles of artists. The other feature of the Remont Gallery, that indicated its special relevance was the fact of it being international. In the sense of its scope and its number of contacts, the Remont Gallery was the most international among the conceptual galleries of that time (which also finally attracted the attention of the authorities who closed it down). The Gallery's importance was never recognised by art historians (although it was discussed and appreciated when it was still active). This was caused by the fact, that initiatives connected with the organisations that represented the authorities were neglected, even by the researchers of the youngest generation that started to work in the nineties (which is one of the results of the break in the continuity within the discourse of Polish art, about which I mentioned above). So the new political ideology won over historical research. Also Gajewski's emigration caused his activity to disappear from art historical discourse (despite the abundance of quite accessible sources).

In Kraków, in 1972, Maria Anna Potocka started an initiative and together with Józef Chrobak they ran the Pi  $(\pi)$  Gallery in their private apartament. Between 1974-79 she ran the Pawilon Gallery in a culture house in Nowa Huta (an industrial and working class neighbourhood in Krakow). Since 1980, on her own M. A. Potocka ran the Foto-Video Gallery (1980-81) at the Photographers' Union's space. In 1986 she resumed her activities and started the Potocka Gallery (till 2010), when she became a director of MOCAK in Kraków (under construction). At first the artistic programme of those galleries was mainly under the influence of the Krakow Group that was then strong in Kraków (Chrobak for many years was a director of the Krzysztofory Gallery). In her programme a meaningful role was played by the actions of important artists from Kraków such as Jerzy Bereś and Zbigniew Warpechowski. However only the later activity of M. A. Potocka in the Foto-Video Gallery had an original character thanks to her focus on media art and the connections with Fluxus artists. The impact of the Gallery also comes from the fact that it acted for a long time and became a model for such activities in subsequent decades.

In Wrocław in the very beginning of the conceptual decade there emerged the Permafo Gallery at an artists' club, 1972-81 (organised by Natalia LL and Andrzej Lachowicz), which was the first gallery specialised in photographic based art, which is important because this was a leading direction within conceptual art development

(next to actionism), which I indicated while writing about the activity of FFW. One should also remember, that the Permafo Gallery emerged as part of the wave favourable to conceptualism that was released after the Symposium "Wrocław 70". Also in Wrocław, in the period of 1973-78 there emerged the Newest Art Gallery [Galeria Sztuki Najnowszej] at the culture house "Pałacyk" (organised Anna and Roman Kutera, Lech Mrożek). In the beginning the Gallery co-operated with Jan Świdziński. The peak moment of their co-operation was the project *Local activities* (1977) in the countryside in Kurpie (a region of Poland), which was an attempt to expand the scope of art beyond the so called art world. At the same time it was an attempt to create contextual art and an example of the post-modernisation of art that resulted from conceptual art.

#### From the second half of the seventies until December 13th, 1981

In Warsaw, the model of a gallery in one's private apartment was used by Przemysław and Zofia Kulik (KwieKulik) and featured just four shows of artworks by the gallery creators (December 1975, 1976 and 1977). But the gallery was an interesting idea – incorporating installation and a permanent exhibition of their own works, partly overlapping each other using the method of collage. The development of the Gallery illustrates the artistic method of photographing ones' own (mainly) artistic deeds and archiving them as a quasi institution (called PDDiU project).

Also in Warsaw, at a students' dorm, the Dziekanka Gallery / Dean's Gallery (or the Dziekanka Studio / Dean's Studio) was founded (1976-87).<sup>29</sup> First the spaces were run by Wojciech Krukowski (Akademia Ruchu Theatre), then Janusz Bałdyga, Jerzy Onuch and Łukasz Szajna, and next Tomasz Sikorski who devoted the greatest attention to it. Their artistic interests caused them to devote a great deal of space in their programme to live art forms and also (post)conceptual forms and to new media and installations of various kinds. However the gallery presented a whole variety of attitudes within the Warsaw milieu and kept numerous contacts in Poland and abroad (also with the Fluxus artists). In 1984 there was a mail art exhibition from the collection created by Piotr Rypson, which shows that the trend ceased to be exclusively artistic and shifted to a meta zone. At that time there also appeared exhibitions of so called neo-expressionism in painting (in Polish art discourse the notion of post-modernism is usually associated with it, which is not quite exact). In the eighties Dziekanka was an important spot for artistic meetings. In its programme one could grasp the tendency to hybridise forms originating from the art of the seventies, that is a post-avant-agarde tendency, which allows us to identify Dziekanka as a post-modern gallery.

In Łódź in 1978 Józef Robakowski (together with Małgorzata Potocka) established the Exchange Gallery (that is active even now, still in a private apartment), also based on a mail art model. In the activity of this Gallery one may point at other threads important for the development of art practice during that time – that was the situating of contemporary art in the context of art history and the continuity of the development of a Polish avant-garde whose manifestation was the creation of his own collection (Robakowski also studied museum studies in Toruń), similar to provincial collections (according to Isabelle Schwarz³0). The Gallery was especially interested in the artistic book, but also in leaflets, art-zins (samizdats), that were an important forms of practising conceptual art and last but not least new media art: photography and, which was the most original – film. Collecting catalogues, books and documentation caused the Exchange Gallery to

fulfil an educational role for artists that could not familiarise themselves with that kind of art in the Art Academies. This self-educational aspect was an important aspect of a gallery movement. Also in Łódź in 1979 the Ślad Gallery appeared (first and second), run by Janusz Zagrodzki (at an official cultural institution called STK). It was active during a time of intense influence by the events of Solidarity (first) and also the effect of martial law (second) until 1987 when Zagrodzki became a manager of the Contemporary Art Department in the National Museum in Warsaw.

In Poznań, at the Academy of Fine Arts, the ON Gallery came into being, operating between 1977 and 2012. First it was run by Izabela Gustowska and Krystyna Piotrowska, then from 1992 by Sławomir Sobczak and it the nineties it was an important participant of the gallery movement being re-created. The second Poznan Academy of Fine Arts' gallery was the AT Gallery (1982 - until today), which is still run by the artist Tomasz Wilmański.

In Lublin, at the Marie Curie-Skłodkowska University in 1978 the Kont Gallery emerged and operated until 2010. Between 1988-92 it was run by performance artists Dariusz Fodczuk and Waldemar Tatarczuk (currently the director of the BWA Gallery in Lublin). The Gallery played an important role in the nineties (under the management of an artist Zbigniew Sobczuk) in the development of action art (the Kontrperformance Festival), video art (the Videokont Festival) and installation art. In Lublin in 1974 Andrzej Mroczek became the director of the municipal Labirynt Gallery (which was one of the galleries belonging to the BWA Gallery), promoting conceptual art (from 1981 he has been director of the whole BWA Gallery). What is important is that the Gallery was also active during martial law, becoming one of the few galleries, in which contemporary art could still develop in Poland. The Gallery was a space for many projects by Jan Świdziński. An important event of 1978 was an international festival *Performance and Body* that was the first festival illustrating a full awareness of this kind of art in Poland.

In the second half of the seventies, there were more galleries orientated towards art based on photography. Foto-Medium-Art founded in 1977 by Jerzy Olek in Wrocław – active still (currently as a commercial gallery); the gn Gallery (1978-81) organised by Leszek Brogowski, Gdańsk; the Jaszczurowa Photography Gallery (1978-81) organised by Adam Rzepecki, Kraków (in the students' club Pod Jaszczurami); we can also add here the Permafo Gallery that was founded in the first half of the seventies and the above-mentioned Foto-Video Gallery. However, the list above points out the fact that most of the new media galleries appeared in the second half of the seventies. One should notice, that categorisation according to medium has a limited function here, allowing one to grasp the specifics of the artistic programme of those galleries but it can also be misleading for the image of the gallery movement as a whole, because as I underlined, art based on photo-film media played a key role in conceptual art, and that is why new media art was more or less present in the programme of all conceptual art galleries.

An attempt to summarise the gallery movement in Poland was reflected in the project by Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski "CDN – Youth Art Presentations" under the Poniatowski Bridge in Warsaw in 1977, that was intended to be a "forum for discussing art". The plan was to publish "Four theoretical publications, a monograph of the event and a book. The future publications will aim to embrace the problems of the newest art history, including film, photography and also theoretical issues and the sociology of culture". Twenty-two galleries and six art groups were invited. In the accompanying publication, there was a text by Bożena Stokłosa, which was the very first analysis of the gallery movement of the seventies. However, she has not continued her research.<sup>31</sup>

In 1978 in Poznań, the Maximal Art Gallery (initiated by Grzegorz Dziamski, Bogdan Kuncewicz, 1977-80) organised *Profile sztuki [The art profiles]*, a show of the work of three galleries displayed on boards with the documentation of their activity (Uni Art, Repassage, Akumulatory 2). Dziamski is a sociologist and a cultural expert and has consequently researched the gallery movement at university level, and he has published many publications on that subject. <sup>32</sup> The activity of his gallery was a part of the initiative that was undertaken in the second half of the seventies to historicise and categorise the gallery movement (Bożena Stokłosa, Grzegorz Dziamski), which proves that the artistic experiment became a discourse, and shifted to the meta level.

A summary of the whole broad conceptual tendency, including the activity of the conceptual gallery movement, was prepared by artists – Jan Świdziński, Józef Robakowski and Witosław Czerwonka. It was an exhibition titled 70-80. New phenomena in Polish art of the seventies in the BWA Gallery in Sopot in the summer of 1981. The exhibition was accompanied by a book with texts by artists who practiced conceptual art in the seventies and art critics who were associated with them. In addition thirty-five galleries were invited to participate in the 70-80 exhibition.<sup>33</sup>

In Warsaw, in 1980-93, Emilia and Andrzej Dłużniewski run the Piwna 20/26 Gallery in their own apartment. It was an address-gallery, but it also organised exhibitions and co-operated with the Fluxus artists. This model of a gallery – studio – apartment became a key solution for the gallery movement in the following period.

#### 1982-89 period

This period can be divided into two sub-periods. The years until the mideighties was not just the time of the separation of Poland by even more of an iron curtain effect plus the escalation of police repression, but also the increase of an individual escapist stance, so called 'internal emigration'. There was a boycott of official institutions and at the same time most conceptual galleries ceased to function. Their activity was not possible nor did it make any sense within a situation in which the public space ceased to exist and the social sphere became paralysed, so the reference point for which they were an alternative disappeared. There remained however a second aspect that characterised their activity - the one in which they were themselves artistic projects. Since running a gallery was treated as an artistic work then it is quite understandable that one may do it in a studio or an apartment. So the engine for this activity remained the fundamental belief in the connection between art and presence, understood as a literal presence, here and now, in a given context (situation). Artistic life of that time moved to the private sphere. This way the experience of conceptual galleries was fully used. Without this, it would have been impossible to create in such extremely unfavourable conditions an independent artistic circuit, that is something that was ex post called 'The Pitch-In Culture'.

New galleries started to show up in the second half of the eighties. One may call them conceptual type galleries, or in conceptual style, because they were also treated *as* conceptual galleries, even if their artistic programmes do not stem directly from conceptual art anymore, which is a result of both generational changes in the art scene, as well as a general (historical) change in art. If the imposition of martial law on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1981 was a way for the authorities

to save themselves from collapse under the weight of social pressure, then in the second half of the eighties it turned out that the internal isolation and repressions only made the situation of the authorities worse. As the economical and social crisis deepened, the political opposition not only did not cease, but in contrary – its new generations that came indirectly from the Solidarity movement also started to make their voice heard. The only solution for the authorities was to try to find an agreement, mediating with the representatives of the opposition, which resulted in the talks of the so called 'Round Table' in 1989.

In Łódź there emerged the Pitch-In Culture. The term 'pitch-in' comes from the jargon of drinking culture (collecting money for alcohol drinks). In 1984 Jacek Jóźwiak came up with the idea of using it for art activity. First the term also functioned as 'pitch-in art'. The emergence of the name proves that the practice associated with it became elevated to the meta-discourse level. The term was easily accepted, as it reflected the situation of intermingling art and social life in a private sphere in the first years after the imposition of martial law. So it allowed for the connection of artworks that did not have a common formal-artistic denominator, only a social one. However the term also reflected back, pointing to the source of this practice in the activities of the milieu, such as the organisation of Construction in Process in 1981 and engaging in the reforms of the Film School, plus the earlier activities of the FFW and numerous conceptual galleries of the seventies. So the Pitch-In Culture also means a collective work, either local or in the Poland-wide scale, sometimes even international, which merged artistic and social activity. This double meaning of the Pitch-In Culture causes differences in its evaluation, even among its participants (mainly about the proportion between the first and the latter meaning). In the second half of the eighties the art scene started to change. On the one hand, the artistic formula of acting in the private sphere exhausted its possibilities. The veterans of conceptual art in the seventies started to be replaced by others, which was partly due to the emergence of a new generation and on the other hand, there was also a gradual freeing of the public space. The Pitch-In Culture also slowly lost its universal and Poland-wide dimension. Around 1988 the first attempt to historicise the phenomenon of the Pitch-In Culture showed up.<sup>34</sup> The summary of the development of art created within the frame of the Pitch-In Culture and also the whole period of the eighties in Polish art was featured in an exhibition entitled Lochy Manhattanu, organised by Józef Robakowski in Łódź in 1989. The Pitch-In Culture could emerge in Łódź because the ability to self-organise was of a high level within the numerous artistic communities. During martial law a demonstration of its power (and the power of the Pitch-In Culture) was the Art pilgrimage (1983) that was an exhibition in private spaces visited together doorto-door. It became the inspiration to organise the Christmas call (1984) in Koszalin. It was organised by Andrzei Ciesielski, who first ran the Presbitery [Na Plebanii] Gallery 1986-90 and then My Archive [Moje Archiwum] 1990-2002. There emerged a network of meeting points and art presentations, out of which those that were the most popular started to be called galleries or other names that suggested their quasi – institutionalisation (and alternative nature), such as the Consultation Point run by Antoni Mikołajczyk, the Archive of Contemporary Thought run by Maria and Ryszard Waśko. The model of private art functions was practiced then in all milieus (in Warsaw for example it was the Calypso Gallery run in the studio of Waldemar Petryk, the studio of Daniel Wnuk or Jan Rylke). Another model was the functioning of art within at church spaces, although here traditional forms of art dominated that had nothing to do with the practice of conceptual art.

In Łódź the first home gallery of the eighties was the Carpet Cleaning [Czyszczenie Dywanów] Gallery (run by Andrzej Paczkowski and Radosław Sowiak for a few months in 1982). Here Ewa Partum presented her action Hommage à Solidarność for the first time. In 1982 the so called Strych [Attic] space started to be active at Piotrkowska 149, whose owner was Włodzimierz Adamiak and who later left Poland and made Marek Janiak, the leader of the Łódź Kaliska Group (that emerged in 1979) its host. Its continuation was the U Zofii [At Zofia's] Gallery (run by Zofia Łuczko from December 1986 to June 1987). The activity of the Strych [Attic] is a very interesting example, because it functioned long enough to grasp the changes in the Pitch-In Culture. First the Gallery was broadly open to (inter) milieu initiatives (it was here where the organising group of Construction in Process continued to work, reaching the well-known conceptual art form of an exhibition in the form of a catalogue, (this is how the publications Fabryka and later Tango emerged).35 The same character had the Nieme kino [Silent movie] festivals -1983, 1984, 1985. But in the second half of the eighties, the Strych started to be identified solely with the activity of the Łódź Kaliska Group and the community that it created (per analogiam with FFW one may say the Łódź Kaliska circles). The last event that took place in the Strych was the 10th anniversary of the Łódź Kaliska Group celebration in 1989. The specifics of the Łódź Kaliska Group art practice was shaped during the period of the Pitch-In Culture, although it is not identical, which is the impression that Janiak and some art critics like Jolanta Ciesielska try to maintain.<sup>36</sup> The Pitch-In Culture in the original, social sense, perfectly fit what Susan Sontag referred to as camp aesthetics (or myth) of party life created by the Łódź Kaliska Group. In art their creative art practice with time the Łódź Kaliska more and more broadly and consciously applied the method of a collective work (by the members and occasional co-workers) in the production of their artworks, especially photographs and films. The basic method became here 'performance for camera' which was also a FFW's method. They used mainly pastiche and auto-irony in the narrational sphere (although at the same time, especially in the beginning in the formal-artistic sphere, their works are based on conceptual patterns, especially photo-film structuralism and expanded cinema, good examples of which they had on hand in Łódź in the art of FFW). So the art of the Łódź Kaliska Group was already par excellence postmodern art.

The models of the FFW, Construction in Process, the Pitch-In Culture and the studio-galleries presented in Łódź influenced the emergence of galleries such as the Wschodnia Gallery (from 1984 run by Adam Klimczak, Jerzy Grzegorski), that is still active today, continuing actively the model of self-organisation within the artistic community. At the same time, Construction in Process was being continued as an initiative that travelled around the world, organised by artists (the main role has been played by artists originating from Fluxus: Emmet Williams, Anne Noel and Ryszard Waśko with his wife Maria). In 1985 it took place in Munich and came back to Łódź in 1990.<sup>37</sup> The emergence of the Artists' Museum (1989-97) in Łódź was also associated with the organisation of the Construction in Process events.

In Lublin, in 1985 there emerged the Biała Gallery, run by artists (Jan Gryka and Anna Nawrot), at a house culture and in the nineties the Gallery played an important role in the development of installation art forms (New Spaces for Art project).

A new impulse for the development of the gallery movement came from Gdańsk. Grzegorz Klaman founded the Wyspa Gallery there (1985-2002) at the Academy of Fine Arts. Today its continuation is the Wyspa Art Insitute, that is

situated in a space at the historical Gdańsk shipyard. It is the largest exhibition space in Poland and in the artistic programme an emphasis is put on the social radicalism of art. To celebrate its tenth anniversary in 1995, the Wyspa Gallery organised a gallery meeting called "The Site of an Idea - The Idea of a Site". It was the first attempt to create a gallery movement after 1989 and after the change of the political system. Two initiatives came together in 1997 lead by the Wyspa Gallery and Józef Robakowski in order to create a movement under the name the "Living Gallery". The name comes from a film-catalogue by Robakowski (FFW) from 1975 (invited artists had around one and a half minutes to present themselves in front of a camera in whatever form they pleased). The idea of the movie came from the same aspiration as the one in which artists self-organise independently from the official channels of distribution and art promotion. The Living Gallery is also the title of a collective survey on progressive art of the seventies in Łódź.<sup>38</sup> The Living Gallery organised meetings, it was also published as a newspaper entitled The Living Gallery, edited each time by a different community (6 editions), in which the list of "galleries and conducive people" was published. Its contemporary continuation is in the form of an internet portal http://livinggallery.info. The Living Gallery meetings were: Poznań, 1998 (as well as 2001 and 2004), Bydgoszcz (1999), Łódź (1999). In 2000 the meeting in Gdańsk was connected with an exhibition in CSW Łaźnia and a debate in the Wyspa Gallery. It also published a CD-ROM with presentations from 33 galleries (2004). Between December 11th and 13th 2004 there was one of the most well attended meetings in the Zacheta Gallery in Warsaw (featuring 40 spaces and organizations and around 100 participants from the whole of Poland; for the first time the organisation of the meeting was supported by the Ministry of Culture and it was organised by Małgorzata Winter and Łukasz Guzek). But after the meeting the intensity of the movement decreased, most likely due to the changes in the way the art scene functions in the contemporary social and economical reality of Poland.

In the late eighties in Kraków, there appeared the gt Gallery (1987-89, run by artists Artur Tajber and Barbara Maroń, that was based at the Mandala Theatre). The Gallery initiated contacts with performance artists from Ireland, which opened the field for a long-lasting collaboration subsequently the art of Irish artists was one of the important impulses for the development of performance art in Poland (especially the influence of Alastair MacLennan).<sup>39</sup> There was also the QQ Gallery in Kraków (1988-99), first in a small basement, set up by Krzysztof Klimek, Cezary Woźniak and Łukasz Guzek who since 1994 ran the Gallery individually in the attic of his own house. Its activity summed up the eighties, as it stemmed from the political oppositional thinking of the eighties, even though it was active in the nineties. Its programme included site specific installations and (mainly) performance art. A similar programme, but including a broader milieu was realised by the Fort Sztuki Association. The association was also the organiser of the Fort Sztuki festival (1993-2005), that also published *Fort Sztuki* magazine (four editions, available at www. fortsztuki.art.pl).

In Wrocław, in 1988 Alicja and Mariusz Jodko started to run the Entropia Gallery. Although it is a gallery that operated under a local administration, its programme was worked out by artists, exactly in the same sense as the above described galleries of the sixties and seventies and in this respect it also provides and an example of how the model created by the gallery movement in Poland functions contemporarily. Also in Wrocław, since 1989, Wioletta and Piotr Krajewski have created the WRO International Sound Basis Visual Art Festival, now called the

WRO Art Center, an institution dedicated to media art. The festival now functions as a Biennale. WRO stems from the tradition of the Polish ARI movement. In its programme, especially in the beginning, a great deal of space was devoted to live art. An important role was also played by historical research, showing the continuity of media art. However, the main merit of the WRO was the promotion of the status of video and digital art within the Polish art scene and creating the bonds between this kind of art in Poland and abroad. Therefore it played the same role in the promotion of these kinds of art, as did the conceptual galleries of the seventies. The WRO Art Center in Wrocław and Wyspa Art Institute in Gdańsk are now the largest working institutions that stem from the model of the self-organisation of the art world in Poland. As their history shows, they are very persistent in their artistic aims and very resistant towards bureaucratic hardships.

In Warsaw, in 1989 there emerged the Działań Gallery [Gallery of Action] at the local house of culture in the neighbourhood of Ursynów). It continues to be active, run by Fredo Ojda, an artist who amongst others, works in the genre of action art. In its artistic programme performance art has played an important role, and in addition also installation art, artists books and art theory.

The art scene of the nineties was opened by the event "Real Time Story Telling" (1991) in the BWA Gallery in Sopot, organised by Jan Świdziński. It was an international event and, what was important, it travelled around Poland and had the character of a performance art festival. In the nineties, apart from the previously mentioned festival organised by the Kont Gallery, two annual, international performance art festivals began: the Castle of Imagination (1993-2005), the BWA Gallery, Bytów, Słupsk, Ustka, whose curator was Władysław Kaźmierczak and InterAkcje (1998 - till now), the ODA Gallery, Piotrków Trybunalski organised by Piotr Gajda and Gordian Piec, under the artistic patronage of Jan Świdziński. Both festivals were the initiatives of artists or conducive people. There were also numerous occasional shows featuring this art form. It proves, how important live art became within the Polish art scene during the previous two decades. Performance art also played a leading role in the whole decade of the nineties, and its legacy is the radicalism of art. The capacity of artistic radicalism, understood in various ways from the sixties until now is the main characteristics of the gallery movement or more broadly - the self-organisational movement of the art world, by the initiatives of artists and 'conducive people'. And radicalism has to be linked with independence.

- 1 Mieczysław Porębski, "Tradycje i awangardy," in Sztuka a informacja, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986), 168.
- 2 Brian O'Doherty, "Context as Content," in *Inside the White Cube*. The *Ideology of the Gallery Space*, (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 65-86.
- 3 Jan Świdziński, "Dwanaście punktów sztuki kontekstualnej," in *Konteksty*, ed. Grzegorz Kondrasiuk, Tomasz Majerski, and Waldemar Tatarczuk, (Lublin: Galeria Labirynt, 2010), 90. See also "Twelve Points of Contextual Art," in *Art as Contextual Art*, (Warszawa: Galeria Remont, 1977). The manifesto "Art as Contextual Art" emerged in 1976 on the occasion of the exhibition entitled *Contextual Art* in the St. Petri Gallery in Lund.
- 4 Jan Świdziński, Art, Society and Self consciousness (Calgary: Alberta College of Art Gallery, 1979).
- 5 About the specific role of performance art during a totalitarian political system in Poland before 1989 I wrote in: "Above Art and Politics Performance art and Poland," in *Art Action 1958 1998*, ed. Richard Martel, (Quebec: Intervention, 2001).
- 6 Anna Markowska, Sztuka w Krzysztoforach: między stylem a doświadczeniem (Kraków-Cieszyn: Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Grupa Krakowska-Uniwersytet Śląski, 2000).
- 7 Michael Kirby, *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1965). 21. See also: Tadeusz Pawłowski, *Happening* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1988). 181.
- 8 Piotr Piotrowski, ed. Galeria odNowa 1964-1969 (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe, 1993). Exh. cat.
- 9 Joanna Mytkowska, Małgorzata Jurkiewicz and Andrzej Przywara, eds., *Tadeusz Kantor: z Archiwum Galerii Foksal* (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal CBWA, 1998).
- 10 Jerzy Ludwiński, Epoka Błękitu (Kraków: Otwarta Pracownia, 2003). 49, 128.
- 11 Adam Kotula and Piotr Krakowski, Malarstwo, rzeźba, architektura (Warszawa: PWN, 1978). 289.
- 12 The term 'protoconceptualism' showed up in the first editio of Bożena Kowalska's book Awangarda malarska from 1973. She referred then mainly to Roman Opałka, Andrzej Pawłowski, Jerzy Rosołowicz and Ryszard Winiarski. See also Bożena Kowalska, "Protokonceptualizm polski," Sztuka i Dokumentacja, no. 6 (2012): 15-19.
- 13 Luiza Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009). 101. 14 lbid. 37.
- 15 "Galeria," Odra no. 11 (1968): 68.
- 16 "Galeria," Odra no. 6 (1969): 89. The title is a play on words "Tubki Farb" in Polish means "Paint Tubes".
- 17 Mytkowska, Jurkiewicz, and Przywara, eds., Tadeusz Kantor: z Archiwum Galerii Foksal, 19.
- 18 Luiza Nader, "Sympozjum Wrocław '70: przestrzeń 'niemożliwego'," Dyskurs, no. 3 (2006): 148.
- 19 Anna Maria Leśniewska, *Puławy 66: I Sympozjum Artystów Plastyków i Naukowców*, 2-23 sierpnia 1966 (Puławy: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Puław, 2006).
- 20 Komitet Wykonawczy Muzeum Artystów, ed. "Muzeum Artystów" międzynarodowa prowizoryczna wspólnota artystyczna Łódź (Łódź Muzeum Artystów, 1996).
- 21 Jerzy Hanusek, ed. *Katalog Wystawy Spotkania Krakowskie IX (1981) / X Wolne Miasto Kraków (1995)* (Kraków 1995). Exh. cat.
- 22 Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, ed. *Warsztat Formy Filmowej 1970-1977* (Warszawa: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 2000). Exh. cat.
- 23 Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, "Mechaniczna wyobraźnia kreatywność maszyn," in *Warsztat Formy Filmowej 1970-1977*, ed. Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, (Warszawa: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 2000), 16. Exh. cat.
- 24 Leszek Przyjemski, Museum of Hysterics (Poznań: Galeria Arsenał, 2001), Exh. cat.
- 25 Łukasz Guzek, "Najbardziej radykalne postawy w ruchu galerii konceptualnych lat siedemdziesiątych (Galeria 80 × 140 Jerzego Trelińskiego i galeria A4 Andrzeja Piegrzalskiego)," Sztuka i Dokumentacja, no. 4 (2011): 48-68.
- 26 Maryla Sitkowska, ed. *Sigma, Galeria Repassage, Repassage2, Rerepassage* (Warszawa: Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 1993). Exh. cat.
- 27 Ibid., 32.
- 28 Bożena Stokłosa, ed. *Performance* (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1984). See also Katarzyna Urbańska, "Galeria Remont. Nieznana awangarda lat siedemdzesiątych," *Sztuka i Dokumentacja*, no. 6 (2012): 133-39.
- 29 Tomasz Sikorski, ed. Pracownia Dziekanka 1976 1987 (Warszawa: ASP, 1990).
- 30 Isabelle Schwarz, "Exchange Gallery or: Galeria Wymiany," in *Archive fur Kunstlerbulikationen der* 1960 er bis 1980 er Jahre, (Brema: Salon Verlag, 2008). See also Polish translation: Isabelle Schwarz, "Galeria Wymiany," Sztuka i Dokumentacja, no. 4 (2011): 5-29.
- 31 Bożena Stokłosa, "Galerie autorskie. Przegląd koncepcji," in *CDN*, ed. Katarzyna Banachowska and Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski, *Studia artystyczne*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1980), 38-51.
- 32 Grzegorz Dziamski, "Przestrzeń artystyczna galerie autorskie," in Szkice o nowej sztuce, (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1984), 118-53.

- 33 Józef Robakowski, ed. 70-80. Nowe zjawiska w sztuce polskiej lat siedemdziesiątych (Sopot: BWA w Sopocie, 1981).
- 34 Krzysztof Jurecki, "Komentarz oraz diariusz wybranych wystaw fotograficznych i interdyscyplinarnych z uwzględnieniem wideo i filmu eksperymentalnego w latach 1980-1987," in *Polska Fotografia Intermedialna lat 80-tych*, (Poznań: BWA, 1988). Exh. cat.; Jolanta Ciesielska, "Anioł w piekle (Rzecz o 'Strychu')," in *Co słychać*, *Sztuka Najnowsza*, ed. Maryla Sitkowska, (Warszawa: Andrzej Bonarski, 1989), 203-08.
- 35 Józef Robakowski points out that based on the same rule, the international video magazine *Infermental* (1980-1990) was published, which he actively co-created himself.
- 36 Jolanta Ciesielska, "Kultura Zrzuty," in *Kultura Zrzuty 1981-1987*, ed. Marek Janiak, (Warszawa: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 1989), 8-15.
- 37 Subsequent Construction in Process festivals took place in Łódź 1993, Israel 1994, Melbourne 1998, Bydgoszcz 2000. Now the return of the festival to Łódź is being considered, which proves the power of its tradition.
- 38 Józef Robakowski, ed. Żywa Galeria. Łódzki progresywny ruch artystyczny 1969-1992, vol. 1 (1969-1981) (Łódź: Łódzki Dom Kultury, Galeria FF, 2000).
- 39 Artur Tajber and Barbara Maron, "Galeria gt," Sztuka i Dokumentacja, no. 3 (2010): 40-41.

### **KATALIN BALÁZS**

## EPHEMERAL ART AND COUNTERCULTURE. ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SELECTED CASES FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ART INSTITUTIONS IN HUNGARY

The subject of this paper is closely related to the research and presentation series that have been dealing with the Hungarian 'second' or 'alternative' public since the sixties.¹ That is why I have chosen to focus on institutions rather than specific examples of artwork. The volume of studies published by the Knoll Galleries in Vienna and Budapest – that focuses on the history of Hungarian art over the centuries – has been to this day the most comprehensive literature on this topic.² However, the topic is also connected to several 'work in progress' research and their results are expected to appear shortly. I will return to this later.

The extraordinary complexity of the topic of ephemeral art, shows that there are many possible ways of approaching and explaining it. We can consider it as an 'attitude' which takes place in artistic genres such as happenings, performance, conceptual art, ephemeral and site-specific installations or we can see it as an 'approach' to create a collective, group or community on an informal basis. I decided to try to focus on two main circles of initiatives which took place in the seventies and which already have historical dimensions, but are still influential and active today. I talk about the venues and possibilities led by the cultural policy in order to reveal some characteristics specific to Hungarian society.

The representatives of art magazines and publications could be another important topic because of the relationship building nature of the ephemera, its potential for collective creativity, its openness, emphasis on manual work, and the do-it-yourself approach. The story of the assembling of magazines and compilations has been taken up by Géza Perneczky in detail.3 I do not wish to deal with the issue of samizdat publications – although it is inevitable that all 'unofficial' publications relate to the sphere of samizdat to a greater or lesser degree. In the seventies and eighties the network also connected Hungarian artists on one hand into the genre of mail art and on the other hand into the circulation of the magazine-compilation. At the beginning of the line stands the Szétfolyóirat (Flowing paper, 1971-73) by Árpád Aitony and Béla Hap. The first half of the publications were preserved and the other half were 'recreated'. There are also other, individual-man made issues like Gábor Altorjay's Laura from the seventies, or the issues edited by Bálint Szombathy and Slavko Matković (like Wow) (1974-80), the Actual Letter by Artpool, which included the middle of each issue arranged around one topic, the Sznob International (1981-84?), the Világnézettségi magazin [World-viewing Magazine], a samizdat magazine by the group of artists called Hejettes Szomlyazók, (1984-85) and the Csere [Exchange] (1983-88), which also worked as a group working on the edgeof philosophy and art. The LazaLapok [LoosePages] was compiled and distributed by Gábor Tóth. Bloom Folders by Ákos Székely followed on at the end of the nineties. A different approach was represented by the magazine Fölöspéldány [Spare Issue], featuring collected works by poets, writers and musicians and attempted to highlight the possibilities of sound poetry. But this is another subject not to be analysed here.4

Tibor Valuch writes in his book *Hungarian social history in the second half of the 20th century*,<sup>5</sup> that no comprehensive research has been carried out regarding

the changes since the collapse of communism, including changes in the practices of cultural consumption.

This perplexing issue also became evident during the conversations I had with the artists and former participants while preparing this text.

It became clear that texts related to Hungarian history of art have not clarified the role of the avant-garde in Hungarian culture until today. A definition of the behaviour – which is called avant-garde (mostly by artists) – and a harmonisation with the concept of underground that is without doubt equivalent to a community or rather a social class characterized by open-mindedness is also missing in the same way. Even if they represent different values, these underground communities do have one experience in common in that they see themselves as outcasts. However, the fact cannot be ignored that under political pressure other creative and recognized artists also moved toward the underground. Extreme cases can occur, like in the sixties: the artists who represented geometric styles of artworks were considered as an elite in the USA, found their counterparts in Hungary within the underground too. It should be remembered what the term neo-avantgarde meant in Hungarian cultural life and to what extent it was actually a culturalpolitical 'umbrella term'. The term was planted and reinforced by the publication Neo-avantgarde edited by Miklós Szabolcsi.<sup>6</sup> It identified the '-isms' and has been considered a basic source of reference due to the translations included. Indeed, it seems that the 'counter-culture' of the previous system was born from the very general 'underground-ability', and it should have come to an end with the change of political system, as having to adapt to new institutions would undermine the groups that had mostly been organised on an informal basis. Since the change of system the role of the cultural underground and related types of behaviour become very difficult to define. The intensive club-life - which had enriched the cultural (and musical) map of (mainly) Budapest with several alternative venues around the time of the change of system ended up being bound by the inflexible structures of the new authorities in the nineties, but their history is still unfinished. In Budapest the previous formations live together today, but - due to the 'ruin-pub' myth which has attracted publicity to the city - alternative communities have developed, as well. A notable example is the Tűzraktér which was closed due to a regrettable local government decision last year and now runs with significantly limited activity in the fourth location in its history: in a Spa from the Turkish era, named Vízraktér. Besides staging musical events the location functioned essentially as a theatre in a factory building. For the longest period in its history the Tűzraktér was housed in an empty school building in the city centre and it aimed to resemble the characteristics of a squat in Berlin. A Vj centre, a noise music workshop, an independent street theatre and a circus company and studios were all run on the premises.

In the case of the initiative of László Lantos Triceps – which was started in the mid-nineties after he left Vojvodina (in Serbia, former Yugoslavia) and moved to Hungary at the beginning of the decade – the cultural diversity of the underground during the nineties continued. In Budapest it operated under the name of the BlackBlack Gallery, after some time it was renamed Merz House (recalling obvious references to Kurt Schwitters and the 'classical avantgarde'). It was an underground initiative led by artists that was organized in an informal way and beside the visual arts (it took up the name BlackBlack, because at first it organized only black exhibitions) it also diversified in the direction of theatre, music and performance. The first Japanese Performance Festival was organized at Merz House in 2003, about which Bálint Szombathy has written a text. They housed improvised

music experiments, film clubs and exhibitions which became environments in some cases, filling up the whole exhibition place. They worked together in many cases with one of the country's Xerox-art groups, the Árnyékkötők and with one of the artists belonging to a small town in the Curve of the Danube, close to Budapest, Szentendre. The artist was Viktor Lois, a sculptor who uses recycling and re-arranges into sculpture machines and instruments. The BlackBlack Gallery operated with the support of the local government. This was a sign of the authorities' change of attitude after the institutional chaos around the time of the change of political system when the institutions could find loopholes. Merz House finally fell victim to this process of institutionalization, but during the spring of 2012 it was reopened.

Significantly, Valuch's work indicates that the past regime tried to homogenise society, suggesting that the majority of the population were workers, that is, members of the working class that should have been dominant according to the ideology of the time. In reality, of course, this society consisted of many more classes, whose members gradually began to 'extricate' themselves from the idea of homogeneity, either in an economic or a cultural sense (from the seventies the social sciences were also allowed to be gradually involved in more realistic analysis.)

We know that from the sixties the culture-politics of György Aczél defined the opportunities for culture, artists and intellectuals according to the three 'T's' (tiltott = prohibited, tűrt = tolerated, támogatott = supported). This by the way referred to both traditional high- and mass culture, placing them under the watchful eye of the authorities. Besides the official venues like major exhibition spaces run by the state, semi-official venues offered the chance for artists to exhibit, but only at their own costs.

Three exhibitions, which served as a reference point for the generation of artists at the end of the sixties, were staged at non-official places and covered the area of the Hungarian 'second public' from the hard edged to pop-art-like genres. The two *IPARTERV*-exhibitions (1968, 1969) were opened in the headquarters of a construction company but were banned by the Bureau for Fine and Applied Arts which used to judge and censor the official art exhibitions. The second *IPARTERV*-exhibition also included live artists such as Tamás Szentjóby, one of the participants and organizers of the first happening in Hungary in 1966. The *SZÜRENON* exhibition was organized (1969) by the artist Attila Csáji in the progressive Lajos Kassák Cultural Centre. These exhibitions all fulfilled a community-forming role. The *SZÜRENON* exhibition created an almost constant exhibitor-collective for participating artists and even the excluded participants were a collection of almost 'elite' professional artists.

Of course, if we look at the most significant sites for presentations of ephemeral genres, such as live art and consider the variety of experimental genres in the seventies, the various youth groups and clubs operated by institutions responsible for cultural management cannot be left out of the picture. They are not initiatives established by artists, but as the venues for arts events they cannot be ignored. The most important was the Young Artists' Club (YAC or Fiatal Művészek Klubja - FMK) and the Kassák Cultural House. Like the ELTE club (Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest) and other locations attached to the university (such as the University Stage, where the first Fluxus concert would have been organized in Budapest by Beke and Szentjóby, if it had not been prohibited in 1973), there were also 'semi-official' initiatives: the Bercsényi College, the club and the faculty of Architecture at the Technical University stand out. The documentation of the

activity of Bercsényi is available thanks to the work of Csilla Bényi. These locations became cult places; the first place had already been cult at the beginning of the sixties. The program organizer of YAC between 1973 and 1976 was the art historian László Beke, a prominent supporter of neo-avant-garde art. He could enjoy some independence from political control, and could invite foreign artists with whom he developed informal relationships. The detailed assessment of FMK's activity is under way. I would emphasize the appearance of Robert Filliou, Ken Friedman and Petr Štembera at exhibitions and events and events such as the experimental slide show and cartoon exhibition. As for experimental theatre, Péter Halász and his group worked at the Kassák Cultural House and from 1972 at the apartment of Halász but was forced to leave the country eventually in 1976. His relocation resulted in the Squat Theater in New York. So, as we might see, the contradiction of the system of György Aczél (the three T.) was hidden in the constant two-way balance in order to avoid inclusion in the 'forbidden' category.

Beside the official cultural venues, the position of cultural centres and worker communities from the inter-war period became stronger, providing opportunities for experimental approaches to take place in these various cultural and community centres, trade union centres and factories. Alternative or 'experimental' initiatives were given a clandestine title 'workshop' or a 'study circle' – therefore these community centres, university clubs became the locations of the non-official 'scene'.

Whilst talking about the different activities, first of all I would like to mention some pedagogic initiatives. The creative practices led by the most outstanding, almost mythical figure of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde, Miklós Erdély which he and his fellow artists ran in the GANZ-MÁVAG Machine Factory Cultural Centre as a workshop. It had a profound influence on the mind-set of a whole generation of artists and also established the most prominent group for Hungarian conceptual art, the INDIGO Group. A detailed account is available about Erdély's activity thanks to Annamária Szőke and Sándor Hornyik. The GYIK Műhely was started parallel to Erdély's educational activity. Under the guidance of the artist Árpád Szabados it operated for different target groups; after class workshops were held in a suburb of Budapest, which, in turn, were attended by primary and secondary school children. (The workshops are still running based on the principles laid down by Szabados, and their popularity is unbroken.) The practices that emphasize the central role of creativity and those which resulted in some way from the contemporary 'spirit of the age' show some surprising similarity. However the different methods used by their leaders and the different ages of the participants, as well as the differences resulting from the activities, illustrate the impact of their activity in other areas. I think it is appropriate to mention the work of similar workshops here (from which I highlight the following two due to their historical role). These workshops played a central role in the familiarisation with and transmission of an understanding of contemporary art. Szabados was asked to start the GYIK by one of the largest cultural institutions, the Hungarian National Gallery. This was due to his former successful educational work, which also promoted the development and submission of an internationally recognized art-education method. He worked in the GYIK with colleagues of experimental theatrical and musical groups (such as the Group No. 180). However, the approach of both theatrical and musical groups was fully contemporary: e.g. montage (in which Erdély was also interested), the experience of basic artistic sensations, the issue of sequentiality in photography, experimental film and land art experiments all played a role and they showed surprising similarities to the practices of Erdély and his fellow artist, Dóra Mauer (such as binding the hands of two participants to illustrate the experience of common drawing).

As an interesting early example and case-study, I need to mention the activities of Pécsi Műhely [The Workshop of Pécs] in the early seventies. The Pécsi Galéria [The Gallery of Pécs] has links to these activities dating back from 1977 because of its director, Sándor Pinczehelyi who is a former member of the group<sup>11</sup>. Its specific Hungarian conceptual art influences and traces of geometric origin were based on the experiments of those young people who had attended the Visual Workshops of László Lantos, a geometric painter in Pécs. <sup>12</sup> The early land art experiments of the artists (under the name of landscape transformation experiments in their own words) are inevitably connected to the ephemeral 'way of thinking' and show connections to the work of the Bosch + Bosch group in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia. The documentations of these early works of the Pécs artists were recently sold to the collection of Marinko Sudac in Zagreb. The activities of the Pécsi Műhely were more or less isolated, but the members explained that they continuously updated their knowledge of Contemporary Art from international journals and by regular travel for which they had access and capabilities.

If one would like to position the activities of the Pécsi Műhely on a map of Hungarian art during the first part of the seventies then the history of the artist camps inevitably appears, a history that is still living today. The artist camps became the most important locations for experimental ideas, similar to the workshops that were granted permission but provided the authorities with the possibility of exercising overall control at the same time. Such artist camps could be found in Dunaújváros (intertwined with metal sculpting due to the presence of the Ironworks), in Velem (connected to textile art), in Villány (concentrating on stone sculpting), in Paks (founded as an experimental camp in 1979 by Károly Halász, a former member of the Pécsi Műhely), Makó (engaged in experimental graphic art) or the artist camp of Tokaj, which had the widest range of participants.

An initiative which became eventually a kind of artist community in the beginning of the seventies, tried to benefit from the opportunity of one-day-long studio exhibitions for which permission was not needed: it was the Chapel Studio of György Galántai lead by the artist himself in Balatonboglár between 1970 and 1973. The events were finished there by action of the authorities and the Chapel Studio was closed in 1973. The history of Balatonboglár became the origin of Hungarian progressive art with which all of the already mentioned phenomena and personalities had close links: Miklós Erdély and his circle, the geometrical style artists of different fields, the whole IPARTERV generation and groups such as the above mentioned Kassák Theatre Group of Péter Halász, as well as groups like the Pécsi Műhely that also had exhibitions there in 1972 and 1973, all helped to increase its recognition. In fact, the Chapel Studio was literally the first major 'Artist Run Initiative' as Galántai was an artist with a classical high-level of education. Balatonboglár was run as an introductory experimental field and due to the informal networks the artistic initiatives from Budapest and all other parts of Hungary could also find a place there. In some cases, artists arrived even from abroad, like the Bosch + Bosch group from former Yugoslavia and others from Poland and the former Czechoslovakia. Besides the group and solo exhibitions, Balatonboglár also became an experimental field for live art and photoactions. Here I have to mention the role of László Beke who, as an art historian, started several projects by sending 'calls' to artists and thus contributed to the recognition of conceptual approaches. He thereby underlined that an art piece might be in fact the document of an idea

and by being dematerialised, it can avoid the official censorship. One of the most important among these projects was in 1971 the *Elképzelés / Imagination (The artwork is the documentation of the imagination)*, an early example of issues arising from conceptualism in the country.<sup>13</sup>

Beke's activities were very much engaged with the activities at Balatonboglár. The publication<sup>14</sup> summarizing both the events the authority documents and the official reports on the Chapel Studio were co-edited by Edit Sasvári and Julia Klaniczay. The initiative Artpool (http://www.artpool.hu) is operating as a continuation of Balatonboglár. It is the main Research Center for Alternative Art even today, co-founded and still directed by György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay. They collect all kinds of documents concerning exhibitions, festivals, artists and live art events, they publish books of documentation and have an exhibition place (recently inactive). Artpool has an extremely important collection of mail art since it has been part of the network since its beginning in 1979.

Parallel to the activities centred around the Chapel Studio at Balatonboglár, there was another unique phenomenon in Hungary, which later became just as central to other initiatives as the above mentioned one. It is the Vajda Lajos Studio composed of artists belonging to Szentendre. It is unique because it was initiated specifically by outsiders who were amateur artists. As they reached the official artist status, they 'exploded' into the public life of Hungarian culture with a strong anti-elitist attitude. The phenomenon is still represented nowadays and it has a fundamental kinship with ephemeral thinking.<sup>15</sup>

During one of our conversation, Gábor Tóth, a conceptual artist, noisemusician, mail art, Fluxus artist and multimedia creator - whose activity ran through the Hungarian avant-garde-underground decades like a subterranean stream - described that the ephemeral ways of thinking encourages the viewer to change viewpoints, attitudes, understanding and also the way of thinking, a part of the activity of all 'alternative' artists. It fully reflects the activity of the artists of Szentendre, the bizarre, fascinating and association based texts, or to the sand sculptures made at the Danube during the 'art camp' in Szentendre, in 1969. Interestingly, all effort made to create a spirit of total art essentially peaked in the most adequate way: by the activity - band concerts and performances - of the Albert Einstein Committee founded by the Szentendre artists (the original word 'committee' was not acceptable to the authorities, but the 'senseless', irrational inclusion of the name 'Albert Einstein' was accepted). These activities were created by the Vajda Lajos founders including EfZámbó István, FeLugossy László, András Wahorn, Sándor Bernáth/y painter-musicians. The Vajda Lajos Studio was established in 1972, but István EfZámbó and László FeLugossy started as teenagers laying the Vajda's artistic foundations in Kecskemét in the late sixties. Tihamér Novotny, a critic close to the Studio dealt with the sociological art aspects of the 'counter-culture' represented by the 'Vaida attitude' several times. 16 Their activity was basically fed by an interest in musical subculture and by their discovery of dadaism and surrealism. This revealed a specifically Western image of counterculture which, however, was much more intuitive and far less conscious and political than it could be assumed from their productions. They established clubs in Kecskemét which were banned in scandalous circumstances. They were described by the press as a 'specific Hungarian hippie group'. They did, however, share some common ideas with their American 'colleagues', eliminating the political ambitions of the original subculture and subordinating everything to the cult of freedom. They organized the first Outdoor Exhibitions in Szentendre and Kecskemét, without any permission. In the first year, in 1968, five people staged outdoor exhibitions on Várhegy [Castle Hill] in Szentendre. In 1969, there were ten times more. There were no limits; the exhibitors continuously arrived and set up their work throughout the day. The initiative became a unique 'happening', an 'urban environment' which was repeated every year. When Laszlo FeLugossy managed to avoid compulsory military service (psychiatric treatment was ordered), István EfZámbó decided to organize a happening to mark this occasion in the main square of Szentendre. EfZámbó read out his own text (he had already written art books and manifestos) and in addition useless objects, which had been collected by Laszlo Terebessy, were distributed among the spectators by EfZámbó. The event was named Nalaja happening because of the Dadaist-surrealist 'nalaja' mode of speech which was used by the group. The happening was ended by the police, resulting in the remand and conviction of several participants, including EfZámbó. The Szentendre – counter-culture myth started from here, although essentially it was a series of naive actions that led to the young people of Szentendre 'circumventing' the system. Due to their fear of the young artists the city and the county council decided to essentially legalise their operation in order to control their activity. The group formed a study circle following the above-mentioned system of norms and they took on the name of Lajos Vajda, who was working in the city before the Second World War, thereby acknowledging the importance of classical avant-garde art in Szentendre. The studio exhibits, as the works of a community of amateur artists, were judged by the Népművelési Intézet (an Institute for Culture, responsible for the activities within community and cultural houses, amateur groups and the transmission of culture) according to the rules of Aczel's system. As the judges usually enjoyed 'honoured' status and were sympathetic to the studio, the city gave the artists a permanent exhibition place (originally a workshop) in 1973, which is still operating today. In essence, the Vajda Lajos Studio – the timetable of individual responsibilities which is still doubtful and debatable – was founded on the principle of freedom, as an intellectual community of like minded people, artists 'from outside' but from professional circles. Some of them come from the INDIGO group like János Szirtes who has been working with László FeLugossy in their performances. It is important to note that the 'core' of the Vajda Lajos Studio, namely the concept – that declares the unity of life and art to be self-evident - also called for participation in official artistic circles (such as seeking access to exhibition space as well as admission to the Young Artists Studio and the Arts Fund, which was the only way to become official in the seventies). EfZámbó is still living in the same house in Szentendre, which is continually changing, being rebuilt and is well understood to be an artistic environment, inevitably evoking the famous house of Clarence Schmidt, thus strengthening further the parallels with Outsider Art.

The Performansz és Nehézzenei Fesztivál [Performance and Heavy Rock Music Festival] – which was initially in the late eighties and resumed again at the end of the nineties – grew from the catchment area of the Vajda Lajos Studio at the Művészet Malom (Art Mill) in Szentendre. The festival's history still arouses debate and the idea of reviving it has arisen. The festival organisers - who believe that performance art is the 'freest' surviving genre have extended the scope of the festival to include experimental, so-called 'alternative' music of an international direction. The intention was that performance-festivals would revive Szentendre in the contemporary art scene. What is more, it would emphasise that (by positioning itself as distinct from the general popular mass culture) it would occupy the space between the continued presence of alternative culture for decades and the

'romantic' tourist attraction of Szentendre, thus making both plausible.

It is clear that many more initiatives and phenomena could have been included in this short text.<sup>17</sup> I wanted to show two very different, but somehow still linked major circles of initiative partially or totally active in the 'ephemeral' art scene. Even though one is closer to the 'higher' levels of alternative culture and the other is absolutely coming from the bottom up – their similarities illustrate the heterogeneous nature of so-called counterculture.

- 1 A comprenhensive analysis confronting Polish (especially Łódź) and Hugarian undergrounds and samizdats in the seventies and eighties can be found at http://www.c3.hu/~ligal/111lt.html. It was written by Tibor Várnagy (an artist who has run the Liget gallery from 1983). See also: Erika Rissmann, ed. Szamizdat: Alternativ kultúrák Kelet és Közép-Európában 1956-1989 [Samizdat: Alternative Cultures in Eastern and Central Europe 1956-1989] (Budapest: Stencil Kiadó Európai Kulturális alapítvány, 2004). Exh. cat.
- 2 Hans Knoll, ed. A második nyilvánosság [Second Publicity] (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2002).
- 3 Géza Perneczky, *The Magazine Network*, *Assembling Magazines 1969-2000* (Budapest: Arnyekkotok Foundation, 1993).
- 4 See Pál Deréky, Né/ma?: tanulmányok a magyar neoavantgárd köréből [Mute. Studies on the Hungarian neo-avantgarde] (Budapest: Ráció, 2004) and the research led by Csilla Bényi, "Egy underground lap a 70-es évekből: a Szétfolyóirat [An underground magazine from the 1970s: Szétfolyóirat]," in Reflexiók és "mélyfúrások" [Reflections and in-depth research], ed. József Havasréti and Zsolt Szijártó, (Budapest: Gondolat, 2008), 187-201 and "AL / Artpool Letter Aktuális levél 1983-1985," Ars Hungarica no. 2 (2004): 405-33.
- 5 Tibor Valuch, Magyarország társadalomtörténete a XX. század második felében [Hungarian Social History in the Second Half of the 20th century] (Budapest: Osiris, 2005).
- 6 Miklós Szabolcsi, A Neoavantgarde, ed. Katalin Krén (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981).
- 7 Bálint Szombathy, "Ütős performanszok a Távol-Keletről (Japán-Ázsia Performansztalálkozó) [Striking performances from the Far-East. Japan-Asia Performance Festival]," *Magyar Műhely*, no. 128-129 (2003): 100.
- 8 Csilla Bényi, "Művészeti események a Bercsényi Klubban [Artistic events at the Bercsényi Club]," Ars Hungarica no. 1 (2002): 123-65.
- 9 Annamária Szőke and Sándor Hornyik, Kreativitási gyakorlatok, FAFEJ, INDIGO Erdély Miklós művészetpedagógiai tevékenysége 1975-1986 [Creative excercises, Fantasy Developing Exercises (FAFEJ) and Inter-Disciplinary-Thinking. (InDiGo) Miklós Erdély's Art pedagogical Activity 1975-1986] (Budapest: MTA Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2008).
- 10 The abbrevation stands for Gyermek és Ifjúsági Képzőművészeti Műhely (Fine Arts Workshop for Children and Youth).
- 11 The aim of the Gallery was to introduce to contemporary art. The thematic multilateral exhibitions made the name of the Gallery well known (NŐ/WOMAN, RAJZ/DRAWING, VONAL /LINE, A TERMÉSZET / NATURE).
- 12 For the history of the workshop see: Tamás Aknai, *A Pécsi Műhely [Workshop of Pécs]* (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1995) or Katalin Keserü, *Lantos* (Pécs 2010).
- 13 He addressed 28 artists to reflect on the actual state of art in Hungary and come up with suggestions to bridge the well-known difficulties of exhibiting. The result is a collection of documentation of the ideas of the participating artists.
- 14 Edit Sasvári and Júlia Klaniczay, eds., Törvénytelen avantgárd (Galántai György balatonboglári kápolnaműterme) 1970-1973 [Illegal Avant-garde. The Chapel Studio of György Galántai in Balatonboglár 1970-1973] (Budapest: Artpool-Balassi, 2003).
- 15 Tihamér Novotny and Tiborral Wehner, eds., A szentendrei Vajda Lajos Stúdió (Antológia) (Szentendre: Vajda Lajos Stúdiót Támogató Alapítvány, 2000). Tihamér Novotny, ed. A Szentendrei Vajda Lajos Stúdió: 1972-2002. (dokumentum és szöveggyűjtemény) (Szentendre: Vajda Lajos Stúdió Kulturális Egyesület, 2002). Exh. cat.
- 16 Tihamér Novotny, "A Szentendrei Vajda Lajos Stúdió [The Vajda Lajos Studio, Szentendre]," in *A Modern Poszt-jai [The Positions of the Post-Modernism*], ed. Katalin Keserü, (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, 1994), 43-74.

17 Most of these initiatives took place in various locations, mostly private apartments, like (among others) the exhibition space run by the politically engaged Inconnu group in 1984/85 or the apartment Gallery Iroda [Office] organised by Zsuzsa Simon which resulted in the Rabinec Gallery in 1982. Another example is the activities (actions) by a group of young artists (mostly students of the College of Fine Arts) at the Rózsa presszó [Rose bar] from 1974 or the Platon barlangja [Plato's Cave] run by the Cseresorozat Nemzetközi Filozofikussági Művészetelőreiskola and the Hejettes Szomlyazók group in 1986/88. The SZETA (Szegényeket Támogató Alap. [Fund for Support of the Poor]) founded by intellectuals and artists in 1979 organised auctions and became an early example of social involvement of artists. A research should also be done on the initiatives undertaken in the territories populated by Hungarian artists beyond the borders of Hungary.

#### TOMÁŜ POSPISZYL

### ARTIST RUN INITIATIVES (ARI) – THE GENERAL FEATURES AND THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED HISTORICAL EXAMPLES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In Eastern Europe there is a history of unofficial art spaces, often run by the artists themselves and they form a key element in the local history of post-war art. During the Cold war, state-run and state-sponsored institutions had to follow the lines of an official ideology. There were clear limits to freedom of expression. Semi-official events in apartment galleries or public spaces were relatively free from external or internal censorship. It was there where most of the interesting developments in visual art took place. It is natural that art historians of post-war art often focus on such places. But also in the contemporary context of the year 2012, artist run initiatives (ARI) have their clear mission and are vital places for a variety of experimentation not confined by the limits of big institutions.

I am not going to describe the history of a specific space or ARI, historical or contemporary, but rather I will try to elaborate on more general topics connected with them. I will provide no comprehensive case studies, but will attempt to make a few historical comparisons. Especially for art in former Czechoslovakia, the year 1989 is considered as the beginning of a new era. Before and after 1989 present dramatically different sets of rules under which institutions operated. That date became as symbolic as The Iron Curtain itself.<sup>2</sup> There were ARI in Czechoslovakia - and later in the Czech Republic - before and after 1989. It is quite tempting to compare their general conditions and to see if they are really that dramatically different from each other. I believe in advance that in some respects they are quite similar. Maybe the best known ARI working before year 1989 was the Jazz Section, originally established as a branch of a UN supported organization uniting jazz music lovers. In the seventies and eighties in Czechoslovakia this institution escaped strict state control and become very active in all fields of culture, including rock music, theatre and art, practically forming an alternative to official cultural policy. The Jazz Section semi-officially published books, organized exhibitions and invited artists from the West. Due to their activities, some of the organizers of the Jazz Section were jailed.<sup>3</sup> To name an example of ARI created after 1989, which tend to be much more specialized than the Jazz Section, let me mention Gallery Display, working from 2001 to 2006 in Prague. At that time there was no art space in Prague that would bring interesting contemporary art from abroad to Prague, so a group of young artists and curators established such a place by their own initiative.

ARI appear in times when the traditional institutional system is in crisis – political or economical – and is not providing the kind of service that is needed by the art community. Artists then have no other choice but to resign their activities, or to go on and start their own gallery. The political crisis of totalitarianism and economic crisis of global capitalism are different in their nature, but lead to the same reaction: Let us make our own institutions as independent as possible. Throughout Eastern Europe a strong tradition of creating a parallel community within the arts can be found. The Aktual Group in Czechoslovakia, Gorgona Group in Croatia, Collective Action in Soviet Union, OHO Group or NSK in Slovenia, they all modelled themselves as a utopian society operating in a different space from the rest of their

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ZAKÁZANÉ UMĚNÍ I.



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Anatoly Shiskov, Artists-Participants, Apartment Exhibition "On Bronnitskaya Street", Leningrad, November 1981.
Published in The Space of Freedom, Apartment Exhibitions in Leningrad, 1964-1986, University of Richmond Museums, Virginia, 2006.
Courtesy Museum of Nonconformist Art, Pushkinskaya-10 Art Centre, St. Petersburg, Russia

Underground Gallery of Jazz Section, Prague, 1983. Published in Výtvarné umění, The Magazine For Contemporary Art, Zakázané umění I., 3-4/95, page 85. Photo by J. Kučera

Art historian Jiří Valoch speaking at the opening of an exhibition at the Veterinary Institute, 1970s, photo private collection.

Exhibition at the corridor of psychiatric clinic in Kroměříž, 1985., photo private collection.

Cover of Výtvarné umění, The Magazine For Contemporary Art, Zakázané umění I., 3-4/95, devoted to forbidden art. Opening at the Galerie Jelení, 2009, photo priváte collection

Exhibition Konfrontace, April 1986, photo Hana Hamplová

Opening at Galerie Nashledanou in Volary, 2011, Photo Jan Freiberg

Exhibition by Igor Korpaczewski, Galerie Benzinka Nera Slaný, June 2008, Photo private collection

environment. Staying in Czechoslovakia, we can mention the art historian and poet Ivan Martin Jirous and his wide spread ideas of a cultural underground. Since people were not given the culture they wished, they had to do it themselves. Jirous went so far as to compare Czech underground community to medieval religious sects and heretics, who had to fight for their faith.<sup>4</sup>

The cultural underground in the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia or in Poland aspired to create an independent society with its own rules, values and aesthetics. In a sense it can be seen as the practical fulfilment of an idea for Temporary Autonomous Zones (T.A.Z.) invented and popularized by American writer Hakim Bey.<sup>5</sup> TAZ represent space that eludes the formal structures of control and even within a hostile environment can present an island of freedom.

But were and are Eastern European ARI true T.A.Z.? Were they really so autonomous that they could be compared to pirate republics of the Caribbean? Even if they tried, they were and today still are connected to existing political systems by many ties. Autonomy is never absolute, but in fact quite limited. If we look closely at many ARI before 1989 in Czechoslovakia, the majority of them were to a certain degree state-run. Simply by the fact that they were operating in state owned buildings. A special double issue of *Výtvarné umění*, *The Magazine for Contemporary Art*, in 1995 focused on 'forbidden art'. About one third of the examples in the magazine in fact describe activities of artists and curators working in state sponsored institutions that were just trying to have a programme free from ideology. Artists – no matter how opposed to the political system they felt – still graduated from state art schools provided and controlled by that very same system they opposed. Also today it is common – and vital – for ARI to apply for state or European grants.

Another quality of ARI close to the idea of T.A.Z. is the fact that many ARI were and are truly temporary. They existed for a limited time, just for a few months, days or even hours during which it was possible to carry out the program. It is true also about contemporary ARI. The reason for their short lives is not in the field of politics, but in the economy. But we do not have to go to the American anarchist writer Bey in order to provide a fitting definition of ARI. There are several attempts to do so within the discussed region, which is natural, given the local traditions in Eastern Europe. For example Boris Groys sees unofficial social structures created by the artists of Moscow conceptualism in seventies as a key product of their activities. Writing about Collective Actions group Groys concludes that "the goal of alternative artistic practices of individual artists and groups, like Collective Actions was to create alternative social communities and milieus in a time in which such an ideologically independent social activity was not only suspiciously watched by the authorities but even strictly forbidden." Art was blurred with life there, but not only that. If for Western conceptualism theoretical context was important - manifestoes, reviews, texts - for Russians it was the social network and collaborative nature of their actions that truly defined their movement. Similarly, in the nineties, Victor Misiano writes about 'tusovka' - the communal character of contemporary Russian art – that is more important than the actual art production. 'Tusovka' has come about as a direct result of the breakdown of official culture and its institutions. [...] 'Tusovka' is a form of the artistic milieu's self-organization, in a situation where other institutions and state protectionism are altogether lacking. At the same time, the 'tusovka' cannot be reduced to the underground, that typological alternative to official culture. [...] 'Tusovka', in contrast, is a form of the artistic milieu's self-organization that found itself without any kind of external repression, in a situation in which the principle of consolidation based on the ideological concord of opinions, the ethics of opposition, and 'work in common' had already exhausted themselves." In this sense there is little difference between before and after 1989.

In many ARI we can detect a conflict between the communal type of activity and individual responsibility. Many ARI looked like a communal movement, but were actually run by devoted individuals, often a person that risked his or her position or even freedom. This was all done in the name of forging the possibility to develop an independent cultural program. Truly communal institutions run by a huge collective of artists are in fact quite rare. ARI are understood as places of connection or even for international relations. But to create an ARI is also a clearly self-defining gesture that is valid in every political regime. You define yourself against the background of your usual environment. ARI are therefore selective and excluding spaces. In order to belong to ARI, you have to keep certain rules.

Another attribute of the ARI is a great deal of creative improvisation and variability. Many ARI were strongly connected to the space where their activities were taking place. Artists proved to be capable of creating a gallery space almost everywhere. The easiest strategy was to take over an official gallery and to start an independent programme within it. When there was no such possibility, artists before 1989 created galleries or temporary exhibition places in their private apartments, studios or country houses. In Czechoslovakia before 1989 we can find art exhibits and festivals in such environments as in a basement, paint shop, courtyard, monastery, veterinary institute or in a psychiatric clinic. In this sense Czech artists today are no less creative. We can find contemporary galleries in an abandoned gas station, in a no longer operating coalmine, in the shop window of a grocery store, in a kiosk at an industrial exhibition ground and even in a never functioning, but fully built funeral home. In

It may sound like a weird subject for generalisation, but another thing that is typical for ARI is the bad quality of their documentation. This is not only caused by the difficult circumstances or lack of funds in do-it-yourself spaces, but I believe it may have other reasons as well. It is as if there was no real need for a detailed record such as in a museum-like manner. In documentary photographs — both historical and contemporary — we see more than the exhibitions themselves, the gatherings of people. They were clearly and mainly social events livened-up by some art. Art is there as a mere pretext for desired social activity. When reporting on such ARI, photos are less important than a verbal introduction that summarises the social context under which the event took place. As a methodology, oral history rather than scientific topology is applied. Recently we can see an influx of different publications mapping different short-lived or still operating ARI in the Czech Republic. These publications always include two main elements: an interview with the organisers of the place subjectively summarising their activities and a chronology.<sup>11</sup>

This brings us back to Groys and 'tusovka', but it would be a mistake to think about the social character of ARI as something specific for Eastern Europe. The Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) run by Tom Marioni in San Francisco comes to mind here. Established in seventies, this institution has all the qualities of typical Eastern European ARI: Art production or hypertrophied theoretical context is not important here. What is important is the opportunity to meet people and to spend

a good time together. This is clear in the ongoing performance action by Marioni: His piece *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends as the Highest Form of Art* consists exactly of what the title suggests. How Eastern European – including the alcohol – but independently developed in far away California.<sup>12</sup>

But the history of the social context of the art in the past can also be an art project of itself. I refer here to different activities by the Czech artist Barbora Klímová, who in recent years maps forgotten art communities or individuals working outside the mainstream centres in the seventies or eighties. She creates exhibitions, performances and publications based on close collaboration with these artists of older generations. Then she tries to connect elements of their work with similar strategies employed by a younger generation of artists in order to establish a multi-generational dialogue.<sup>13</sup>

Some of these characteristics of ARI bring them close to collaborative art projects or art activism as it is known in recent years. It also means trouble for their critical evaluation. Traditional values of art criticism are not sufficient here. The works clearly have not only an aesthetic value, but also an ethical one. Blending these two together is not an easy position for a critical analysis, but both have to be considered. However the values of ethics are quite different from art values.<sup>14</sup>

I believe that the reason why we are so interested in historical ARI today is often not the art itself, but the anti-establishment gesture that was connected to their existence. And I think similar sentiments make ARI so popular in today's art community as well. They are laboratories where art history is realized, but also places of social movements and histories. It is a paradox, but on the one hand they represent a disintegration of the old value system connected with visual art and on the other hand they come close to the old avant-garde goal of creating new life instead of a just new art.

- 1 We can find specialised publications of unofficial galleries or exhibitions in a given location, or general art history books using the perspective of existing art institutions resisting state control. For example see Richard Waller and Joan Maitre, eds., *The Space of Freedom: Apartment Exhibitions in Leningrad*, 1964-1986 (Richmond: University of Richmond Museums, 2006) or Luiza Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009).
- 2 This is not only the case of art institutions and the year 1989, but refers to the understanding of society as a whole. This understanding is reflected in the way history is cut into distinct and separate periods in history textbooks, which is mentally difficult to bridge. See for example a title of an anthology covering recent history in Central Europe: Jürgen Danyel, Jennifer Schevardo, and Stephan Kruhl, *Crossing 68/89: Grenzüberschreitungen und Schnittpunkte zwischen den Umbrüchen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2008).
- 3 For more details see Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz\_in\_dissident\_Czechoslovakia.
- 4 Ivan Martin Jirous, "A Report on the Third Czech Musical Revival," in *Primary Documents*, *A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*, ed. Laura Hoptman and Tomas Pospiszyl, (New York: MoMA, 2002), 56-65.
- 5 Hakim Bey, T.A.Z., The Temporary Autonomous Zone (New York: CreateSpace, 2011).
- 6 Výtvarné umění, The Magazine for Contemporary Art, no. 3-4(1995).
- 7 Boris Groys, "Art Clearings," in *Empty Zones, Andrei Monastryrski and Collective Actions*, ed. Boris Groys, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 8. Relation of non-conformist art groups to its audience and global art context is also discussed by Boris Groys in his book *History Becomes Form, Moscow Conceptualism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

- 8 Viktor Misiano, "An Analysis of 'Tusovka'. Post-Soviet Art of the 90s," in *Art in Europe*. 1990-2000, ed. Gianfranco Maraniello, (Milan: Skira, 2002), 162.
- 9 Gallery of the Jazz Section was situated in a basement. Galerie Zlevněné zboží operated in paint shop in Brno between 1986 to 1989. The courtyard was the place for a self organised exhibition titled *Konfrontace* in Prague in 1987. A gound-breaking exhibition of non-conformist photographers, curated by Anna Fárová, took place in Plasy monastery in 1981. Artist Jiří H. Kocman organized exhibitions in a veterinary institute in Brno, where he worked in seventies and eighties. Occasional exhibitions took place in a psychiatric clinic in Kroměříž in the eighties.
- 10 Examples refer to Gallery Benzínka (Slaný, 2006-2009), Gallery Jáma (Ostrava, 1998-2003), Gallery Potraviny (Brno, 2009- till present), Gallery 36 (Olomouc, 2006-2010), Gallery Nashledanou, (Volyně, 2010-till present).
- 11 These recent publications include: Galerie Jelení Gallery 1999-2009, CSU, Praha 2010. Benzínka, Fotograf, Praha 2012, Galerie Na shledanou 2010-2011, Městské muzeum ve Volyni, Volyně 2012. Brněnská osmdesátá, Muzeum města Brna, Brno 2010.
- 12 Maybe it is not a coincidence that Tom Marioni had contacts with Eastern European artists. In 1975 he travelled to several countries behind the Iron Curtain (Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia), made contact with local underground artists and in 1976 published a special Eastern European issue of his Journal *Vision*. More in Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 2003). 141.
- 13 Such projects include For those who were not born here from 2007, concentrating on the independent art community in Olomouc, or Our Business from 2009, mapping activities for Gallery of the Young in Brno. They are all documented at www.barboraklimova.net. Since 2010 she has worked on a comprehensive project titled Private archives, working with wide selection of artists (Vladimír Ambroz, Pavel Büchler, Josef Daněk & Blahoslav Rozbořil, Jiří Havlíček, Vladimír Havlík, Marie Kratochvílová, J. H. Kocman, Marian Palla, Miroslav Sony Halas, Jiří Valoch, Petr Váša, Aleš Záboj).
- 14 See Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum* (February 2006): 178-83

#### **JOZEF CSERES**

## THE ATTRACTION OF HESITATING BETWEEN THE VIRTUAL AND THE POSSIBLE. EPHEMERAL ART IN CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS AND THOUGHTS ON ART WITH THE EXAMPLE OF SELECTED ARTWORKS BY CONTEMPORARY SLOVAKIAN ARTISTS

In 1965, Stano Filko (b. 1934) together with Alex Mlynárčik and Zita Kostrová, announced the HAPPSOC manifesto – social happening (as well as happy socialism) - as a demonstration of a complex and non-stylized embracing of reality. Its basis was the theory of anonymity, in which they explained the raison d'être of their happening by the need to include into artistic practice not only reality itself, but also the relations and circumstances corresponding to the perception and interpretation of reality. But it was Filko's first independent HAPPSOC III in 1966 that extended its operational domain and besides the concept of spatial phenomena, included also temporal 'items', such as the concept of future. Filko had been sporadically flirting with the concept of future at that time and by the eighties this flirtation has grown into full activity. This, of course, happened at the cost of refusing the past and stressing the present as a more adequate platform for expressing the gnoseological impotence of the subject in a gradually globalised world. The three dimensions of space were accompanied by the fourth - time. This enabled the viewer to consider the temporal aspect of the static perception of classical genres of visual arts, which are now dissolved in their universal environments, prospects and concepts. The HAPPSOC IV manifesto had the visual form of a spaceship and invited its viewers and participants to experience "mental and physical travelling in space." The blue colour in the Filko triad has become a symbol for cosmology, or, in his own words, for "the idea of the existence of the universe and the existence of man within the universe."

Beginning with HAPPSOC V, the attributes of the present started to transcend into 'pure emotions'. In the second half of the seventies they eventually travelled into a fifth dimension beyond time, represented by the colour white, which covers everything and nothing. The centrifugal tendency of this continual process is gradually being replaced by the centripetal aiming at the inner values of the subject, which is exclusively perceived in its essential substance. Art is hereby becoming an expression of the almost Hegelian absoluter Geist and acquiring a touch of transcendental meditation. The surface aesthetics (always side-tracked in Filko's work) gives ultimate space to the ethics. Instead of art, Stano Filko offers us transcendental contemplation. He is trying to make us think that art as well as life must not just be an illusion meaning that reality can be phenonomenologically bracketed out.

In 1972, Milan Adamčiak (b. 1946) sent some of his friends the piece titled *The Match Music for 53 Sundays*. The original label on the common match box was replaced by a new one, handmade by artist, with a written instruction "Every Sunday strike one match, look at the flame, and think of music." The match box contained 53 matches, one for each Sunday of the year. A little 'concepto' for a Sunday musician with 52 reprises. The contrasts between the quick loud strokes and slower tranquil flames must be fascinating, physically, perceptually and conceptually as well as the inclusion of perhaps small sounds that can become real, plausibly and pleasurably audible. The possible ephemeral performances that would last only for

a moment, but would embody the transient physical form of the flash of an eternal message from timelessness to a voluntary decoder in the present moment.

Although Adamčiak is known mostly in the music world — as a composer, cellist, musicologist, creator of acoustic objects, installations and non-conventional music instruments — he contributed also to the visual and performance arts and experimental poetry as well. Traditionally trained but influenced by the poetics of Cage and Fluxus, from the late sixties till mid nineties he created a large body of work that transgresses the conventional definitions of artistic creativity and soon moved towards the concept of *opera aperta*, action music and various intermedia forms. The main features of Adamčiak's personality are intermedia and interdisciplinary creativity. Adamčiak's work simply denies conventional classifications and institutional labels. He always felt himself better in between — in between media, codes, sorts, genres, forms, instruments, institutions, etc. In 1989 he founded the ensemble Transmusic comp., as a natural result of his miscellaneous activities which he had developed continuously since the mid sixties.

The musical thought process of Milan Adamčiak represents the radical, in the context of the Slovakian art scene it is a rare departure from tradition and illustrates a shift to conceptual positions. This development proceeded forward hand in hand with the thorough deconstruction of 'pure' media and with the intermedialisation of creative activities. In music, the open form, broadly conceived sonority, non-conventional score, improvisation and action, became its symptomatic signs; they contributed in various degrees to the resulting synergic form, inclining alternately to more expressive or to minimal poles. Adamčiak also did not avoid experiments with electronic media; he is the author of electro-acoustic and concrete compositions but the live electronics best suited his poetical principles.

In Transmusic comp. Adamčiak surrounded himself with younger artists (Martin Burlas, Peter Cón, Peter Machajdík, Michal Murin, etc.) and an original intermedia avant-garde was born from this poetical mergence of two generations. The group based its creative philosophy on the deconstructed fusion of various forms of music and stage action, with improvisation and a conceptual way of composing. Existing in different variations until 1996 (and re-formed last year at the occasion of the 65th birthday of its leader), it resisted the sterile sonoric transparency of the electronic music of the seventies and eighties, and resisted also jazz mannerism as well the stylised expressivity and excessive narratives typical for most of performance art. Instead of these, the Transmusic comp. group offered the audience an authentic art form, due to its spontaneous vital eclecticism. Nevertheless, it was not a case of textbook postmodern for the sake of postmodern, or any other of its fashionable brews. Aware of Cage but not knowing Foucault, they dissipated the author purposes of collective 'unconsciousness'. The group's variable cast offered equal performance possibilities to musicians as well as to non-musicians but mostly the visual artists were able to meaningfully use the chance offered.

The avant-garde poetics of the Transmusic comp. did not ignore the heritage of the past. A revaluating dialogue with traditions of various kinds and origin was often present in their projects, evident through various symbols and symptoms. Only the measure of transparency and stylisation varied. This poetics was very radical and at the same time it was liberal. It did not negate, it revised. It was heretic but never egocentric neither pathetic, which very much differed it from the elitist Slovak modernist music. Even in its most aggressive excesses (breaking the violin, burning the gramophone records) this poetics either took into consideration

contextual relations, or it established new ones. It openly acknowledged direct influences (Kagel, Cage, Fluxus and even Slovak folk music) and never tried to hide or camouflage them. As with *The Match Music for 53 Sundays*, most of Adamčiak's visual and instructive scores do not fix any specific tones in a conventional way and they often do not contain any instructions that can lead to concrete sounds. Anyway, members of the Transmusic comp. every time unerringly found the right way to perform the realm of sounds although they did not follow the scores of the 'boss' too strictly. They relied on the help of invention, empirism as well intuitivism, and they even accepted the chance to play games. Uniting spontaneously individual expressions they caught a lawless chaos into more or less an organised structure. When the situation asked for it, they threw off conventions and created a new form of possibilities and rules.

One of the members of the Transmusic comp. and Adamčiak's close collaborator is Michal Murin (b. 1963). In his latest project he first adopted and then calligraphically developed the actual signature of his prematurely deceased father. Having accentuated and literally increased the dimensions of the signature's calligraphic specifics, Murin grasped it as a totemic fetish: "It is my sign - my signature is more than 50 years old and I inherited it - I took it, appropriated it from my father who died more than 20 years ago (1981). My father used it for thirty years. I have been using it on and off for 20 years, though some common elements can be traced also from the signatures of my grandfather and great-grandfather. Of course, our family signature has undergone some changes during the last 100 years." The changes Murin speaks about are developments of the material qualities of a signature in the signatory practice. But he consciously manipulates the natural continuity of a formerly spontaneous process, fetishising and re-contextualising the very medium of the signature. On one hand, he tries to anchor his subjectivity within the context of family history and cultural awareness; on the other hand, he dissolves it in stylized modifications of an author's signature.

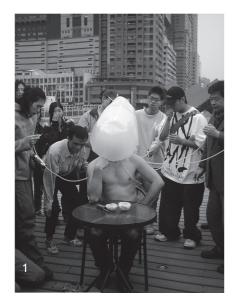
Murin's signature project openly explores subjectivity. His interest in its awareness, definition and manifestation has been evident in his art since the mideighties, mostly within the *Ego-Deo* project. It is a persistent motif in all of Murin's work and a recurrent existential refrain that emerges according to necessity, when the realities of life ask him to amplify his own identity. However, subjectivity cannot be reduced to the frequently used opposition between individual subject and society.

Murin in his project questions the original function of signing – the necessity of the signatory's uniqueness by repeated un-repeatability – and transforms the signature into an impersonal and routine multiple act 'without aura'. Is it possible for signatures to refer only to themselves without transforming into meta-signatures? Certainly, in Derrida's deconstruction where writing (écriture) 'exists' in the form of a doubtful signature, or in Deleuze's and Guattari's 'tragic' regime of signs where signs endlessly refer only to signs, it is the only possible way of reference. In terms of proclaimed iterability we can of course also imagine more effective signatures (electronic signature or e-mail address), but the sign initialled by hand, as Murin tries to convince us (as well as himself), is a "representation of individuality, a trace of our physical presence, an image and reflection of its author, a carrier of something more that any word can carry in times when the meanings of words are becoming empty and words are losing their justification and meaning." Yet does this also apply to the signature's alternative technological (silkscreen, computer)

counterfeits and copies? Can these also represent an author's idiosyncrasy and carry something 'more' than what semantically empty words do? And what exactly is the 'more' that should immanently embody the signature according to the author?

It is known that visual images, as opposed to words, are not capable of expressing non-existence. Thanks to a perceptible visual appearance, everything that is depicted turns into existence. It is a doubtful gain because appearance can be also fictional, or simulated. But once something is depicted, it starts to exist; it is hard to persuade someone that what he/she sees in the picture does not exist. You can say in words that something does not exist but immediately when you depict it, it is there and so it exists. Similarly the silk-screen signature only simulates the absent presence of the author. It is no longer a trace and becomes a sign. It can indeed refer to the author but only through another sign. Moreover, when adjusted into a stylized package, it starts to evoke a product commodity, a trademark. Murin highlighted the perfect perversity by directly printing some 'author's' signatures on the packages that supposedly protect them, so they themselves became servile emballages. In this case, more means less. Paradoxically, the signature does not represent the signer anymore and it also loses the ability to communicate more than the empty words that it supposedly replaces.

This proves the truth of the prophetic words by Roland Barthes: "Having buried the Author, the modern scriptor can thus no longer believe, as according to the pathetic view of his predecessors, that this hand is too slow for his thought or passion and that consequently, making a law of necessity, he must emphasize this delay and indefinitely polish his form. For him, on the contrary, the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin - or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins."<sup>2</sup> It would be very interesting to further monitor the ontological specifics of the process of a textsignature transformation into an artistic text. We are, however, more interested in the signature-event, the whole signing act together with accompanying paraactivities, than in the signature-trace. The actual investigations into aspects of a signature are interesting mainly because they serve as pointers to other spheres of Murin's interest - acoustic, action and architectonic ones. They do not only participate in the visualization of language but also in its performativeness, including the phonic qualities of visualized texts (in our case – the original signatory acts). In Murin's signatures we can therefore observe a sort of cryptogram; their stylised initialling conceals gestures and tries to avoid (or at least postpone) the invasion of paralingual occurrences into visual culture. Not even Murin's attempts to aestheticise his own signature can stop the process of discourse concerning visual art. Murin therefore also offers performative versions to the spectator: his own signature as a musical score or the spectator's name within Murin's signature, or Murin's signature with the spectator's name. It is obvious that Murin's artistic interests as well as his strategies directly or indirectly support Derrida's deconstructive revision of logocentrism that convincingly showed how the important phonic, gesture and action qualities of language are disappearing due to the fixing of live language, its petrifaction, whether in writing or electronic data carriers. All arts are actually composite and all media are mixed because they combine various codes, discursive conventions, channels, ways of perception and seeing. Derrida pointed out that writing not only represents and visualizes the language but it also deconstructs the possibility of a pure image or text.



1 József R. Juhász, Smoking Place. 2 Michal Murin, Museum of Contemporary Art in Signature. 3 József R. Juhász, Underground Biking. 4 József R. Juhász, Open Air Biking.





But Murin does not care merely for pure conceptualization and he wants more than just to doubt the purity of the media and to erase programmatically the borders between them. Although in his very being, he is the intermedia creator with a conceptual and deconstructive strategy, his parallel ambition actually is to expand, sign new spaces and territorialize. Deleuze with Guattari gave detailed explanations and argued to us that territorialisation is a rhythmic act, valid even in art. They find its germinal forms among animals that mark their territories and build dwellings. The appropriative essence found in art is compared to a poster or a placard. The artist is then seen as a marker or a setter of boundary stones: "Property is fundamentally artistic because art is fundamentally poster, placard. [...] The expressive is primary in relation to the possessive; expressive qualities, or matters of expression, are necessarily appropriative and constitute a having more profound than being. Not in the sense that these qualities belong to a subject, but in the sense that they delineate a territory that will belong to the subject that caries or produces them. These qualities are signatures, but the signature, the proper name, is not the constituted mark of a subject, but the constituting mark of a domain, an abode. The signature is not the indication of a person; it is the chancy formation of a domain."

Murin, too, endlessly and in machine-like rhythm, repeats his signature and by the recurrence of "a pure gesture of inscription" he patiently "traces a field without origin", a territory where he projects his desires, where he "creates a new Universes of reference", where he builds an auto-referential monument to his own ambitions – Museum of Contemporary Art in Signature.

Let's look at what sort of space Murin invites us into, or what sort of trap he lures us into. It is of course a digital space, simulated but three-dimensional. It was created by an extension, or more likely explosion, of two dimensions – by lines of a stylised, calligraphic signature. However, it is not a virtual space because it can be realized. Deleuze with Guattari strictly differ between the virtual that undergoes a process of actualization and the possible that undergoes a process of realization. <sup>4</sup> The possible, unlike the virtual, is opposed to the real. And because it is open to realization, it can be understood as the image of the real, while the real is expected to resemble the possible. On the other hand, the actualization of the virtual happens through a difference. Actualisation and differentiation are always creative. That is why when Murin repeats his signature, he creates but at the same time triggers the mechanism of actualization of the virtual, the unrealizable Idea of repeatability of the unrepeatable. But when he initiates the ground-work in the shape of one (singular) signature, then builds the three-dimensional (though immaterial) Museum, he consequently realises the possibility that will resemble the future outcome of his realisation. This difference must be highlighted for at least one fact: "Any hesitation between the virtual and the possible, the order of the Idea and the order of the concept, is disastrous, since it abolishes the reality of the virtual." 5 And presumably, a catastrophe is desired neither by the author nor by the visitor of this unique "bloc of feelings, i.e. compounds [un composé] out of percepts and affects" - Museum of Contemporary Arts in Signature. Its visitor could perhaps only object to the adjective 'contemporary' in the title of the construction; Museum of Possible Arts in Signature would be a more apt title and description of the building as well as the remarkable concept behind it.

I already stated that Murin's *Museum* is a monument because it does not celebrate the past and neither does it appear to actualize any virtual event. However, it materializes and embodies this event — "it gives it a body, a life *universum*", as Deleuze with Guattari say. So, does Murin represent the construction or does he

construct the representation? It is obvious that he repeats; and when we assume that the repetition itself is an object of representation then he does both at the same time. Unable to overcome, avoid or even destroy the powerful institutional frames of artistic representation (in this he develops the diverse practices of Smithson, Broodthaers, Buren, Baldessari, Acconci, and other artists), Murin tries to stage a representational strategy that would, in terms of institutional frames, possibly guarantee its project the most independent existence. With the help of a computer-assisted representation (simulation), Murin projects trajectories for his desires and integrates the future into an existing art form. The corridors and walls of Murin's possible Museum are virtual; however, they are not restricted to accommodate the technical images of real artifacts created in the future by the author (or possibly other authors). And because every closed space automatically changes into a container of sounds (remember Cage's anechoic chambre) whose characteristics and broadcasting conditions depend on the size and shape of a given space, Murin also congests his Museum with sounds, naturally with the sounds that acoustically animate and replicate the transformations of his signatures.

In 2001, at the Open Art Platform festival in Szechuan, China, József R. Juhász (b. 1963) was both riding a bicycle in mid-air hung up from the tall factory chimney or buried upside-down in the ground. In his performances, laconically titled *Open Air Biking* and *Underground Biking*, he seemingly intended to attract attention to the very bravery of his act. The avant-garde, in this case a mechanical-motoric movement forward had an absurd character to it. Physical extremity was connected with spiritual despair in order to join together the **impossibility** to reach some destination by bike. Although the mechanical cog-wheel transmission, generating (and evoking) the straightforward movement was in full effect, the human factor that drove it, was cornered despite extreme effort. The realisation of the possible was paralysed in spite of its legitimated expectations of success; after all, the real bicycle functioned correctly and also the biker was right in the operating of his vehicle. The performer-biker controlled both moving mechanisms (his own as well as of bike) but he lacked stabile ground under the wheels and this exact deficit caused a failure of the movement, also awaited probably by the viewers.

However, the author's intention did not fail. The viewer could await the (im)possible but the performer connected his ambitions with the virtual. The (im) possible is (im)possible because it can be (un)realised while the virtual can be 'only' actualised. The question therefore is: What in fact did Juhász actualise with his performances? For sure he didn't intend to suppress the expression in order to attract the viewers neither did he try to simulate a strained effort by dramatic means, as the viewers witnessed the genuine extreme actions of the performer and it was their bare form that brought both performances closer to Artaudian poetics of cruel theatre. Juhász's bicycle rides in mid-air under the purposely hindered or even disabled physical conditions were first of all the acclaimed actualization of the virtual concept of impossibility, to move forward in the mind of the artist, and to move forward in the minds of the viewers' awaiting. The main reason why this concept as well as its actualisation sound absurd is the artist's decision to represent the apparent (and awaited) concept of catastrophe by a state of despair and it is, as we all know, oriented to future – it is connected with a never fulfilled awaiting. Suggestion of the state of despair is for sure a very effective means in terms of catharsis and because it is open to various interpretations too, the viewers thereby dispose of many easy interpretations.

Smoking Place, the other collaborative piece by Juhász, also requires an extreme physical performance. It was premiered in 2004 at the NIPAF '04 festival in Nagano, Japan, and recreated later slightly modified at the performance art festivals in Taiwan, Hungary, Serbia, Poland, USA and Vietnam. The performer asked several viewers to smoke a cigarette and to exhale the smoke into plastic tubes leading under transparent foil, which air-tightly wrapped the performer's head. Juhász, himself a heavy smoker, voluntarily undertook the involuntary role of the 'passive smokers', it means people who are, often against their will exposed to harmful exhalations of the nicotine pleasure of the others. However more than by the harmful exhalations from smoking, the performer was endangered by the acute decrease of breathable air under the foil and of course the lack of oxygen could kill him should he not finish the risky performance in time. At the festival in Szczecin, for example, it was exactly this fear that caused an early end to the performance, after one female viewer could not bear further to watch the artist in danger of suffocation. At some performances, just to make the piece more effective, the performer used to cut red pitaya fruit (hylocereus undatus), suggesting morphologically a human heart, while he was inhaling the cigarette smoke.

It could seem that the Juhász performance Smoking Place is first of all an engaged protest against smoking in public space or a kind of apology by the smoker to the non-smoking part of population; this kind of interpretation is partly true although the piece also related to ecological and ethical convictions indirectly. Despite the floating (nicotine) haze of despair, it engaged in a strange way. As in the case of the extreme bike ride, also here the artist is dealing with the immanent aspects of radical art expression and the ontological status of art as such. More than bordering between the ecological and non-ecological or between the ethical and non-ethical, he is attracted by the borders between art and non-art, that is between art and life. These are the boundaries which he balances on with pleasure and sometimes he let his viewers experience the same. In the current liberalised art world any (also nonaesthetical) entity, idea, phenomenon, concept or action can be the work of art, the bizarre bicycle ride and smoking or inhaling harmful substances can become art as well. The borders of art are where the borders of life are. We can only say about them that they are unstable - they are moving and changing according to various contexts and conventions as well as under the influence of technological progress. With his extremely provoking behaviour Juhász simply performs a social activity and the intensity of his engagement lies just here.

Juhász's engaged acts and gestures are nourished by despair. Paradoxically, this is not the same despair that gives birth to pessimism; by contrast, it is a creative, motivating despair – despair as an alternative for the non-avant-garde impossibility to move forward. Despair, as perceived and represented by Juhász in his art, is a permanent state of obsession to reconstruct the past, the present results and future expectations of which the artist doesn't want to accept. That is why he continues to invent absurd rituals; contrary to mythical rites, Juhász's rituals do not make present (do not actualise) the factual (virtual) past but only the potential of its variants. It is the interpretational dubiousness, caused by a morbid attempt to reconstruct past, that gives birth to a permanent disaffection – despair. We can therefore call Juhász's creative method as an engaged correction of the past, regardless of the "real" perspectives of the future. We also see that the distance through absurdity can be an effective creative strategy and that the impasses in development (though fictional ones) can have a specific charm as well. Not many

tried to reconstruct them just for charm's sake. József R. Juhász did.

Social happening by Stano Filko, instructive and visual music scores by Milan Adamčiak, simulated art museum by Michal Murin, and extreme performances by József R. Juhász are four different ephemeral art forms hesitating between the virtual and the possible. Nevertheless, due to this hesitation, the actual art endeavours to defend against devastating institutionalisation. This kind of art is ephemeral and fragile not only in terms of its forms but also in terms of communication and presentation. That's why it often requires and uses specific institutional frameworks, ways and means. Often it is difficult or even impossible to integrate them into the conventional cultural running and establishments. Four artists, presented here, have own experiences with existential aspects of their nonconventional art. Filko tried to solve his problems by emigration (1981-90), Adamčiak and Juhász founded their own art platforms. Adamčiak's SNEH - Spoločnosť pre nekonvenčnú hudbu (Society for Non-Conventional music) – existed twelve years (1990-2002), Juhász's Studio erté twenty (1987-2007). Without these subjects the art world in Slovakia would be apparently less open and less interesting. For a period of their existence, the festivals Transart Communication, organised by Studio erté, Festival intermediálnej tvorby FIT [Festival of Intermedia Creativity] and Sound Off, organized by SNEH, produced hundreds of art events and created hundreds opportunities for vital meetings and collaborations between the versatile artists who still resist the current art world consolidated and corrupted by technocratic and trendy curators and their commissioned "art" commodities. Whether this resistance will survive global crises of representation is of course questionable, but because the symbolism and world-making are anthropological constants, the hope in the ability of art to transform itself to new kind of sensibility, corresponding with our postmodern condition, still lives.

<sup>1</sup> Michal Murin, "Múzeum súčasného umenia v signatúre," ARCH, no. 11 (2003): 38-39.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image - Music - Text*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 146.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London-New York: Continuum, 2004), 348-49.

<sup>4</sup> Together in the book: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991) and Deleuze in the book *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 212.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze and Guattari defined the work of art in these words.



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# PART 2 CASE STUDY 4<sup>TH</sup> ART AND DOCUMENTATION FESTIVAL. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND PROJECTS Foreword

In Part 1 of the *Ephemeral Fixed* publication we outlined a historical background to the concept of ephemeral art with reference to the region that today we call the Visegrad countries. These countries share the experiences of a common political history which influenced the way the artistic community functioned. Historical social and artistic factors crossed, resulting in conceptual art, which was a broad, overwhelming and predominating tendency during that period. That artistic tendency could be traced across various aspects of art practice, such as conceptual galleries (artist run initiatives) and works of art themselves. Both were ephemeral by nature and this therefore raises the issue of documentation. The documentation of durational works now become original works of art themselves: we find ourselves now discussing artworks based on their documentation, which has in fact become the only original form that exists.

Contemporary art owes a lot to the conceptual art history of the past. The role of documentation is a part of this heritage. In Part 2 of the *Ephemeral Fixed* book, we describe and discuss selected projects that were presented during the 4<sup>th</sup> Art and Documentation Festival which here became a case study for the concept of the ephemeral that is fixed by an art form. According to its name, the Festival deals with various forms of art documentation and strategies for the presentation of contemporary works of art. The core concept of those artworks is conceptual, therefore their deep nature is ephemeral, however it is or could be presented the material form of an aesthetic object or registered as a film or photo.

Here, the concept of ephemeral art which is fixed by its documentation was highlighted in a few projects which very well illustrate the category of ephemeral art as the broadest possible category, comprising art forms that belong to such trends as actionism, conceptualism and all kinds of art installations including ones based on new-media.

The description of materials collected with reference to the 4<sup>th</sup> Art and Documentation Festival allows us to trace the development of the forms and strategies in which contemporary art is documented. The festival is organised by the Art and Documentation Association which is also an ARI (artist run initiative) created by artists, researchers and art organisers. Therefore, the festival organisers as well the editor of this book have an insight into the nature of an ARI and the way they function, as well as the ephemeral character of the art which is created by them, and of the role that documentation plays in contemporary art.



#### THE AUTONOMY OF DOCUMENTATION. BETWEEN EVIDENCE AND A WORK OF ART

Possible approaches to contemporary art documentation are closely related to their degree of independence from the original work of art.

We should consider two extreme approaches to documentation: as evidence that a work of art took place and as a work of art in itself. When we treat it as evidence, the documentation seems to be totally dependent on the original work of art. However, the results of documentation can be interesting enough to become autonomous *post factum*, e.g. upon an artist's decision, but the traditional superiority of the original work of art over the documentation is preserved.

Documentation as a work of art acquires a status of independence that results from the accepted concept of what a work of art is. When the difference between the original work of art and a document disappears, the hierarchy of value traditionally ascribed to them, fades away accordingly. At the level of artistic practice, the independence of documentation is manifested as forms of presentation, transfers between media, as well as more advanced ways to find dialectical connections between media which cause new intermedia entities to arise. The level of comprehension and interpretation is manifested through new narrations. Therefore, as documentation gains the status of an independent work of art, it expands both the concept of the work of art and art discourse on the whole (understood as discussing art in the context of other art).

Probably the first known act of producing independent documentation was the chess game by Marcel Duchamp and the naked Eve Babitz in the space of his retrospective exhibition in the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963 (the game was held against a background of *The Large Glass* becoming an expansion of this collage in terms of both form and content). The trend to make documentation independent was established in conceptual and action art, as well as in the installations of the 70s. Afterwards, also in modern art, such artistic behaviour became obvious and naturally accepted in the documenting of artworks and projects, becoming a prevailing formula in artistic practice.

#### The correlation between original work and its documentation.

Apparently between these extreme approaches, there is a lot of room for many other solutions. Nevertheless, it is indicated here how to categorise works of art. The basic method relates to the artistic (formal) independence of works. The fact that documentation as a work of art has become independent causes the concept of an original to disappear (as only original works exist). If an artwork comes into being based on a project then its starting point is the idea (of the given project) and, in the language of Kosuth, its end result is connected with "making meaning" (through various forms of presentation, media transfers during the process of documentation and intermedia forms).

Seeing the documentation as an artistic practice in the most general perspective, not only allows us to categorise the phenomena but also makes a historical process perceptible and enables its role in art to be redefined all over again; therefore after the modernist rejection of history, followed by the post-modernist "historical collage", the possibility of describing the phenomenon of documentation in a diachronic way, that is its historisation, comes back.

#### ARI and art praxis

The Art and Documentation Festival — in Polish: Festiwal Sztuka i Dokumentacja (FSiD) was held for the fourth time in 2012. Since 2009 the Festival has taken place every year in Łódź. The festival formula allows many institutions and curators to take part in it, pursuing their own initiatives within the general theme of the relationship between art and its documentation. Materials that are collected during the Festivals' exhibitions are archived and contribute to art research.

The general assumptions of the festival are reflected in various projects. The artworks are examined from many historical perspectives. The Ephemeral Fixed event held during the 4th Festival in 2012 offered a perspective on the issue of art documentation from a local point of view shared by geographically close countries - Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The countries also share a common political history, through their experience of totalitarian regimes in postwar Eastern Europe. Even though the political regimes collapsed more then twenty years ago and the societies in these countries underwent deep changes, the culture of these countries is still created in the shadow of their totalitarian past. This also has consequences for art, including a strong tradition of self-organization within art milieus. Of course, it makes sense in times of censorship, state control and lack of democratic institutions. In such circumstances artists, art workers and art lovers - all of them organized themselves to make their own "other" art world located away from the state, but at the same time - away from society. Finally, they felt different and separate from the rest of society and the social reality to which they were subjected in many ways which was obviously a paradox. They celebrated a "splendid isolation". Such a social attitude is the legacy inherited after the period of time when art combined with an anti-governmental way of thinking to form the only possible way to survive and keep its minimal level of independence. Such a general refusal to participate in the official program (refusal to collaborate in particular) was a strategy to hide from total surveillance. For that reason art in these countries is still a world in itself and there is still room for a pure form of art. However, reality forces artists to change their attitude. Finally, the topics discussed in contemporary art and issues undertaken in the works of art, often stem from the social realm and surrounding reality. But still, despite all the changes and cultural shocks, the attitude that comes from this type of thinking dominates within the art world of the region and is a basic element for shaping the individual artistic identity. The articles published in Part 1 of this book outline background features of the local culture in detail. The research proved that the ARI were a vital aspect of the art of the Visegrad region and there are still ARI founded and operating with a strong sense of mission to create an "other" art world, complementary to the world of the official institutions.

The Art and Documentation Festival and the *Ephemeral Fixed* event was organized by the Art and Documentation Association, which stems from the above described cultural background and was created based on similar assumptions.

Its founders and organizers assume that they are able to undertake and elaborate upon art issues that they consider to be the most important for contemporary art outside of the official art institutions — museums, galleries and the art market that are still a step behind the real art dynamics. They all usually focus more on themselves than on the vital art issues. Therefore, the Art and Documentation Association was created and it serves here as a case study.

The Art and Documentation Association was founded in 2009 from an initiative by the Organizational Committee of the Art and Documentation Festival. The Association is the publisher of a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal Art and Documentation, whose aim is to publish the results of contemporary art research and primary sources. The Association collects art documentation for the purposes of education, scholarly research and promotion. The members of the association are actively engaged in contemporary art. It groups together artists of various media, curators, art critics, art historians and academic teachers.

The Association's founder members are: Łukasz Guzek, art historian and art critic, a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Józef Robakowski, one of the most well known Polish media artists, currently teaching at the PWSFTiTv (Film School) in Łódź; together with Izabela Lejk-Robakowska they run the Exchange Gallery in Łódź. Ryszard W. Kluszczynski, new media art specialist who teaches at the University of Łódź. Tomasz Komorowski, artist and curator who works in the Film Museum in Łódź and teaches at the PWSFTiTv (Film School) in Łódź. Aurelia Mandziuk, artist and graphic who runs the Biblioteka Gallery in Łódź and teaches at the AHE and Polytechnic in Łódź. Adam Klimczak, artist, a co-organizer of several editions of Construction in Process; together with Jerzy Grzegorski (photographer) and Ewelina Chmielewska they run the Wschodnia Gallery in Łódź. Stanisław Piotr Gajda and Gordian Piec, who since 1998 have organized Interakcje - an International Performance Art Festival that takes place every year in Piotrków Trybunalski (near Łódź). Anka Leśniak, artist and art historian; since 2006, together with Karolina Jabłonska, art critic and historian they have run an art web site www.Łódź-art.eu and the English-language www.livinggallery.info. Agnieszka Kulazinska, art curator, who works in the Łaznia Art Center in Gdańsk. Norbert Trzeciak, artist, photographer, graphic designer. Małgorzata Kaźmierczak, historian, English translator, who also runs www.livinggallery.info.

The Art and Documentation Association is part of a long lasting tradition of independent, self-organizing art movements in Eastern Europe. Although many artist run initiatives have been created throughout history, most of them had short lives. However, there are ARI that have worked through many years despite all obstacles and difficulties. They are ephemeral and they come and go, firstly because the organizers work in their free time and secondly because of their artistic program, which predominantly includes time based art or live art forms. Such initiatives are usually run by artists, critics, curators, etc. The most intense development of the ARI movement took place during the seventies, when the main genre was conceptual art. Thus, based on the chief conceptual art premise, any artistic idea could become an artwork or could be considered as such. This artistic attitude overlapped the political conditions in the region which has been already pointed out above, and became a basis to understand the activity of ARI. Such initiatives are always understood as an artwork, which means that they are highly individualized. Life equals art and this leads to the creation of such venues and organizations (institutions) and provides the energy to maintain them.

In Poland a special name was coined for such an activity, which also gave name to the movement of these initiatives and which was an informal forum for ARI activists. Its name was *The Living Gallery*.

The Living Gallery was the title of Józef Robakowski's film from 1975. It is a film-catalogue that documents the works of selected artists. The structural principle of the movie is that each artist had the same amount of time (1,5 min.) to present himself/herself and his/her piece of art in a free manner. A novelty role for a movie director not to present artists from his point of view, but to give them the possibility of free and boundless expression. This way he became conducive to art and the artists. The Living Gallery newspaper appeared in 1997 along with an exhibition titled The Living Gallery - The Progressive Art Movement of Łódź, held in the Zacheta Gallery (no. 0). Since then five issues have appeared, each one edited by a different art community. The publications were followed by meetings of the members of the movement. In every issue there was an updated LIST OF THE CONDUCIVE GALLERIES AND PEOPLE. The word "conducive" is one of the key-words that enables us to understand the specifics of ARI in the region. "Conducive people" could work as founders of artist run galleries, but also in the "official" institutions which were not at all "conducive". So this was a category that helped to include the wider ARI community including all those who were eager to be involved in this movement without involving the entire institution and not comprising of all its staff at the same time.

The first meeting - a forum of independent venues was held in the Wyspa Gallery, Gdańsk, as part of its 10th anniversary in 1995. This was when the ARI movement's motto: "The Site of the Idea - The Idea of the Site" emerged. The next meeting was held in Poznan in 1998 (there were two more Living Gallery meetings in Poznan – in 2001 and 2004), one in Bydgoszcz (1999) and one in Łódź (1999). In 2000 the meeting was held in Gdańsk again, linked to the exhibition in the Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art and a debate in the Wyspa Gallery. The meeting is documented on a CD-ROM: 33 galleries and other places in Poland (published in 2004). The meeting during the art fair Art Poznań in Stary Browar, 2004, seemed to be unsuccessful in the minds of many participants due to the fact that the exhibition took place in commercial galleries. However, at that time the art market in Poland was meager and it was not separated from the Polish art world yet (separated from genuine artists). The photos and notes on independent galleries appeared in the catalogue published especially for that occasion. The last meeting of the Living Gallery forum took place in Warsaw, from December 11-13, 2004. It was the biggest meeting so far, during which forty galleries and organizations presented their recent activities and ca. 100 members and followers participated, representing a wide range of art milieus from Poland. It appeared that we are a powerful lobby! For the first time the Ministry of Culture joined in to organize the meeting (Ministry of Culture, Dabrowski, also showed up). The activity of the livinggallery info website and its staff and community is a form of continuation of this tradition in a digital sphere.

The independent art movement in Poland thrives. However, the way we understand and the manner in which we practice our independence and look for an alternative have changed. It meant something different in the seventies under a "light" communist totalitarian regime, than it did during martial law in the eighties and it was something different again during the political and economical transformation in the nineties. It also has a different meaning nowadays. The activity of the Art and Documentation Association proves that it still takes up new shapes and meanings.

#### Independence, but what does it mean?

'Independence' is another key-word very often used and abused in statements and discussions about the ARI movement, both in the past and now, during the Living Gallery meetings or in private talks. 'Independence' is an ongoing and recurrent issue, but ARI are not self-sufficient. Usually they are supported by various grants obtained from various authorities, both local or state institutions. On the other hand, 'independence' is a true feeling shared by the members of ARI. One reason was already mentioned above. It was a social and political attitude towards the surrounding reality that was shaped in a previous era and that made the Polish and regional art world locate itself beyond the actual social reality. What the creators of ARI learned (and we can learn from them) is that 'independence' is not something that you can have and possess once and for all, but it is something that one has to constantly strive for. Finally, we have to take into consideration that a counter culture was created, which means that 'independence' is not only the self-consciousness of the representatives of a particular art world or generally their state of mind. It is also a number of artistic and cultural facts that should not be ignored. 'Counter culture' seems to be an outdated term. It describes a cross generational conflict, characteristic of a rapidly changing world; a huge gap that emerged between the generation of parents and their children; a difference that is impossible to be absorbed by culture and overcome through the natural process of change. But the term 'counter culture' seems to be useful for our considerations on ARI and their 'independence'. 'Independence' as a state of mind and attitude of the creators of ARI, stems from the feeling and belief that there is a huge gap between institutions like ARI and the "official" ones - run by the government. This is a cultural gap. In history this was a gap between state controlled institutions and places of a more private nature that served relatively "free" art activity. Now, it is a gap between bureaucratic "official" cultural institutions and the self-organizing activity. There is no communication between these two worlds, however everyone can point out such gaps as examples (which is the common excuse of bureaucrats who inhabit art institutions). When there is a gap in culture, the counter culture inevitably emerges.

#### Counter culture - creation or crisis?

Counter culture originates from a crisis which can be of a various nature. Here, we talk about the crisis that arises from the unsolvable conflict between an individual need for creation and the organized global world. Counter culture derives from negation. However, it is capable of both creating artifacts and making meanings. ARI with their efforts to remove the institution and achieve independence are good examples here.

Counter culture was well defined by Jan Świdziński. Świdziński was a conceptual artist, one of the most radical ones during the conceptual art era. His basic activity in the field of art was writing, talking and discussing art issues. In the seventies he held numerous panel discussions, meetings, conferences, lectures and curated art events - all these were his artworks or more precisely - they were treated as such. This was art as a pure intellectual deliberation on art and its nature. It was genuine conceptual work - free from visual conventionally understood aesthetics and thereby an expression in any form of an object. Later he worked with performance which meant that he chose as intangible form of art as possible

(he also used photography in a few of his works, which were mostly based on found images, so they were art works without the artist's personal touch when they were made). His landmark text-manifesto on art was entitled "Art as Contextual Art" and it was written in the 1976. In 1979 he published a book Art, Society and Selfconsciousness, issued in Canada, as then there was no room in the Polish art world for such a radical attitude towards art. The book is an extended version of his "Art as Contextual Art" manifesto and its thesis. Its title points out its core idea. His artwork-text represented the late conceptual art era, when art had gradually lost its interest in logic and linguistics and turned towards social issues. In Joseph Kosuth's terms we can call this turn 'anthropological'. Świdziński named this new drive 'contextual'. 'Contextual' always means 'social' or more precisely - located within a social sphere and concerned with society. It was also a new location for art, placed closely to social issues. Thus the social became the artistic; art and life started to blur their limits and merged with one another. Such a unification of art and praxis of life was then a part of the official political communist ideology in Poland, which previously, shortly after World War 2, emerged as social realism in art and its ill fame was still remembered in the seventies. Art milieus in the countries of the region tried hard to separate from it by building a "monadic" isolation, as was mentioned above. Art was a shelter where one could hide away from the state ideology. Since Świdziński's attitude to art evoked such associations, there was no room for his "leftist" art idea in Poland. But his theory found a fertile ground in Western art milieus, particularly in Canada. The book Art, Society and Self-consciousness was translated into Polish, Świdziński's mother language, only in 2010, which proves how difficult its reception was for East European artistic minds.

In the book *Art*, *Society and Self-consciousness*, Świdziński outlined a wide historical, social and economical cultural background and considered art issues to be closely related to the rules that govern societies both in historical epochs and now (he called these rules 'logics'). Each of the successive 'logics' created its own historically different 'context' for art. Contemporary 'logic', a 'game logic' is subjected to several impact factors - a counter culture is one of them. Świdziński's definition of counter culture is general and ahistorical, which enables us to avoid mixing up counter culture with current particular discussions and makes it a useful explanatory category even today.

#### Świdziński says:

"Civilization, which was to bring man freedom from submission to the lows of nature which govern him, imposes a still greater dependence. Now man is dependent on the forces which he himself put into motion while creating civilization. Man, in this way, has been opposed to his culture, imposing order onto nature."

"What modern man is against is not the definite forms through which our civilization reveals itself, or social relationships, or forms of government, or social inequalities, but civilization itself. It does not mean however, that everything that the modern world has created the malfunctioning of the disenchantment everywhere. We cannot say that the malfunctioning of the institutions created by our civilization is the cause of the contemporary situation, but conversely, that the level of development which our civilization has reached becomes the cause of the malfunctioning of its institutions.

Discontent with culture is not the discontent with its actual state, but with culture as the principal of confining man in the artificial worlds which he created himself, the rigours of which are still more ruthless then the rigours of nature."<sup>2</sup>

We have a diagnosis now, we know the origin of the disease attacking our modern culture. What is the cure and how can one find one's own place within the social realm of culture?

In a chapter entitled: "An Artist's Activity: What? How? And Why?" Świdziński answered the question:

"1. We are aware of the fact that the *effect* which art has depends not only on what we do as artists, performing our art, but also in what context it will be functioning. We as artists, and our art, function at present in the context of a specific structure of institutionalism to which we have been subordinated. That which subordinates us is the self-interest of a certain social group. We are aware of the fact that the interest of one group may match that of another, but there might occur a reverse situation.

We have doubts as to whether an art which suits the interests of everybody exists at all. We have doubts as to for whom contemporary art really functions.

2. We are aware that we are also under the spell of myths of art and for art. However, we are should not want things of this sort to justify us. Myths function efficaciously when they become an orthodoxy; when they adopt a form of eternal low binding everyone everywhere.

We are aware of the fact that we remain inobjective in regard to our own myths as long as we remain inside the context in which they are obligatory as *institutions*. We also know that going beyond the area of our own myths we undergo the influence of other myths. However, we are not interested in substituting one orthodoxy with another one.

3. What then are we not interested in? we are not interested in the passive assimilation of culture through spectacular and occasional forms of activity such as exhibitions.

What are we opposed to? We are opposed to institutional structures which, while acting in the universal interest of art act in reality in the specific interest of a defined group.

What then are we interested in? We are interested in direct contact with reality, to which end we direct our activity. We are interested in concrete social practice which, through the process of self-consciousness of every man (a self-consciousness of incessantly changing relations between reality and its images), leads to self-decisions concerning our own position in reality. We are interested in ceaseless work within a concrete social group, without division into those who *know* and those who *get to know*.

4. What do we propose then? We propose substituting the institutional network of art with non-formal spontaneous social groups formulating themselves in order to solve real problems; true people who cannot be substituted by notional idealizations and stereotyped images of man."<sup>3</sup>

This collection of quotations, may seem a bit too long, but Świdziński's theoretical considerations are not very well known, unlike Kosuth's and they are crucial in this text as they enable us to constitute an explanatory basis for the specifics of ARI and their art.

Contextualism, which is a form of late conceptual art in the late seventies, after more then a decade was further developed in the nineties, under a different name. The human being as its subject, played a pivotal role - as both subject matter and providing the forms of art making. Thus art became anthropologised, which means that it is neither an illustration nor expression, it is not a representation (it does not symbolise) either, but it is actual.

#### Contextual and relational - two complementary art descriptions.

Such encounters and the individuality that happens in the field of art is a general artistic issue discussed by Nicolas Bourriaud is his important book *Relational Aesthetics*. The book is about art in the nineties. Reading it I had a strong impression that Bourriaud's analyses seem to follow Świdziński's pathway of contextual art, however he never quoted Świdziński. The contextual and the relational issues both refer to the social dimension of art and these replaced its traditional first reference point which was previously its visual form. Since Świdziński in his book does not discuss particular examples of contemporary artworks, Bourriaud seems to provide case studies which explain Świdziński's ideas.

Bourriaud states in the beginning: "Artistic activity is a game, whose forms, patterns and functions develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts; it is not a immutable essence."

Świdziński also described his contemporary artistic activity as a 'game logic', which was a predominant art form during his time. Of course, a 'context' as a 'social context' is a basic element in art which merges art with life. Then art becomes contextual. If we take context into consideration, we should also consider the features of modern civilization as an 'acceleration', says Świdziński. That is why our reality is uncertain. It also excludes any kind of metaphysics in general. Therefore we give up all hope of stability. There is no certainty in this world. We are taking up decisions in a state of uncertainty and lacking complete information - this is the game we play. It is just like playing cards, like a poker game - "It is the kind of logic which is used by card players. They have to make decisions not knowing either their partner's cards, or his intentions, his reactions, or what degree he is able to predict our actions." - wrote Świdziński about the 'game logic' that rules the contemporary world (he often used the comparison with a card game). We know nothing for certain, but we play and take a risk. It is like that both in life and in the art we make. No wonder now that our contemporary art has a predominantly time based nature.

Another notion from Bourriaud's vocabulary is the expression 'cultural plan'. It constitutes a broad background out of which grows contemporary art. This comparative method which grounds our contemporary considerations in a historical context is also used by Świdziński in his book *Art*, *Society and Self-consciousness*. In this historical perspective, the features of contemporary civilization and culture such as the lack of an 'immutable essence' and 'uncertainty' resulting from an 'acceleration', became more convincing and easy to picture in visual art forms. Also,

this historical perspective provides a comprehensive interpretation for them.

In the chapter "Art as a social interstice" Bourriaud used the word 'interstice', which seems to promise something here for us to consider. It offers a key for the understanding and interpretation of the role played by ARI and the artworks/projects they made, discussed both within the society and within the realm of art itself. Finally, it explains their 'relational' role. The author is aware of that when he states:

"The possibility of *relational* art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetics, cultural and political goals introduce by modern art. To sketch a sociology of this, this evolution stems essentially from the birth of a world-wide urban culture, and from the extension of this city model to more or less cultural phenomena."

The 'social context', understood as created by the art communities, reminds us of the 'local activity', a term used by Świdziński in his description of 'contextual art'. In his art practice, he searched for a model of 'locality' outside of the 'civilised world' in the villages of the rural areas in Poland. Because of state control and censorship in Poland, his escape from the context of the city and his turn towards ethnography seems to be a safer choice, a way in which to take up art issues which bear political meaning, since the city was more "visible" for the authorities and remained under strict political control. Of course, there was an artistic and intellectual motivation for this search for examples of 'counter culture' or self-organized culture ('counter' or remote culture in comparison to culture which is established as "ours") and for the examining of models which could be useful to other communities. Finally, the results of the project were shown in galleries and were transferred back into an urban context where they were used to further develop art ideas. It was a trans-media shift - from an ethnographic context to a conceptual artwork. This quest for new ideas far away from the art world that ended up with a return to it, meant drawing a circle of rebellion against art and the return to art anew. One can call it an art milieu catharsis, a historical ritual in modern/postmodern art practice. In Kosuth's words, Świdziński's 'local activity' was an example of an 'anthropologisation' of art, based on ethnographic research, because it was also his own experience (Kosuth studied anthropology). Then, the 'local activity' as it was described in Świdziński's book Art, Society and Selfconsciousness became an intellectual pattern for the concept of artists organizing and running their initiatives who relayed only upon themselves. Yet Bourriaud's analyses of the particular artworks and the artists' communities within their natural environment called a gallery, placed in the framework of conceptual art as an artwork and read as such, could be taken as a relational art project (or relational aesthetics). Contextual or relational both mean social in any understanding.

"This interstice term was used by Karl Marx to describe trading communities that elude this capitalist economic context by being removed from the low of profit: barter, merchandising, autarkic type of production etc. The interstice is a space in human relations which fits more of less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities then those in effect in this system. This is a precise nature of the contemporary art exhibitions in the arena of representational commerce: it creates free areas and time spans

whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us."  $[...]^7$ 

"Contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavors to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue."8

'Interstice' as it is understood by Bourriaud, reminds us of another landmark statement "Cross the Border - Close the Gap". This is a title of an article by Leslie Fiedler published in 1969, in *Playboy* magazine. It was the same year in which Kosuth published his text-manifesto "Art after Philosophy" which began the conceptual art era in the art world, also in Eastern Europe. Finally, the conceptual breakthrough in art announced the end of modernism and the arrival of postmodernism in the visual arts. Postmodernism came five years later, together with the next article by Kosuth - "Artist as anthropologist" in which he dismissed his previous assumptions as sheer modernism. Then came 'anthropologised art' and 'contextualised art'. Fiedler's text began the postmodern era in literature and culture. It derived from the same counter culture movement which at first demanded that changes in society and politics are made through culture. For Kosuth it was his activity in the AWC - Art Workers' Coalition - a political-artistic movement founded in 1969, which demanded changes in art institutions and policy towards the art milieu in New York galleries and particularly in MoMA. Undoubtedly his political activity contributed to conceptual art and made Kosuth rebuild his idea of art into art which is an idea. "Art as idea as idea" is a political idea as well, even only in a narrative sense, as it is political just like a gesture of counter culture. Its statement - the title of the series of works, not only turned the art world upside down, but also the politics of art, the rules of the game played by the actors of the art world - on the one side artists, gallery owners, art dealers, curators and museum directors, art critics and art historians, that is all those who made 'institutional theory' come true in practice and on the other side, all those for whom the first ones declared to act on behalf of the public, consumers, onlookers, readers, fee payers. Is there a border to cross or a gap to close? Certainly, there is, but I am far away from drawing the conclusion that all of this is mere utopia and political idealism. There are a lot of artworks that were created through the decades of counter culture practice. For many, it became a lifestyle or raisone d'être in art and their art activity brought results that were elaborated on further by others and in this way they contributed to culture. It does make sense even if it does not brings results that would be in accordance with their assumptions. Borders are held firmly and gaps become wider, "Crossing borders - closing gaps" took place in the field of pop culture. Pop culture was hostile for Kosuth due to its commercialisation and he ignored it and for Świdziński it was nothing but rubbish. They both share the opinion that art is not entertainment and the artist is not an entertainer, even if certain forms of performance art emulate shows of various kinds. One can play, but in a serious way; we show our sense of humor with serious consequences. We know that we are homo ludens. Pop is mere playing, but it lets us think about our culture in a global sense (and in terms of globalisation), so its subject matter is profound and worth taking up. We are talking here about the gap that, accordingly to Fiedler, postmodernism has overcome. One can argue that postmodernism along with modernism buried the avant-garde, but probably we should not dismiss the avant-garde totally.

There is one point that the avant-garde shared with pop - as it crossed borders and closed gaps in society. This is the main concern of the avant-garde, however in art history we usually follow the change of form, but what makes the avant-garde contemporary is its social ideas and the way they are applied in art. For Fiedler, pop or mass culture elevated to a higher level of art, (literature) was the perfect tool to liquidate social gaps, just as in the way ARI played the same role, both in the history of the avant-garde and now. This is especially true when we think about the eternal conflict between the artistic milieu and art institutions (museums - art market complex). The following is a set of quotations that can be read this way - with reference to the social function of ARI.

"The notion of one art for the 'cultural,' i.e., the favored few in any given society and of another subart for the 'uncultured,' i.e., an excluded majority as deficient in Gutenberg skills as they are untutored in 'taste,' in fact represents the last survival in mass industrial societies (capitalist, socialist, communist — it makes no difference in this regard) of an invidious distinction proper only to a class-structured community. Precisely because it carries on, as it has carried on ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, a war against that anachronistic survival, Pop Art is, whatever its overt politics, subversive: a threat to all hierarchies insofar as it is hostile to order and ordering in its own realm. What the final intrusion of Pop into the citadels of High Art provides, therefore, for the critic is the exhilarating new possibility of making judgments about the 'goodness' and 'badness' of art quite separated from distinctions between 'high' and 'low' with their concealed class bias."

"In fact, Post-modernism implies the closing of the gap between critics and audience, too, if by critic one understands 'leader of taste' and by audience 'follower'. But most importantly of all, it implies the closing of the gap between artist and audience, or at any rate, between professional and amateur in the realm of art."

"But in time of Closing the Gap, literature become again prophetic and universal - continuing revelation appropriate to a permanent religious revolution, whose function is precisely to transform a secular crowd into a sacred community: one with each other and equally at home in the world of technology and the realm of wonder."

The avantgarde is a commune of believers / art lovers who build up their own reality, such as independent art spaces and a self-organised society. Thus we point out its social role, more than its formal achievements, making it ahistorical and contemporary at the same time. The avant-garde has closed an institutional gap during all periods of time throughout the activity of ARI. Anthropologised-contextual-relational - these three categories, elaborated during various times (however on the basis of conceptual art), describe ARI, both as the ones that belong to the history of the avant-garde and now. The examples from Visegrad countries collected in this book prove that it is an international phenomena. In terms of contemporary art forms, anthropologised-contextual-relational categories point out their origins in conceptual art and the development of the ephemeral concept which thus appears as a diachronic line that is possible to trace through art and which makes the documentation a primary art form. This discrepancy between art and documentation reflects our project's title - Ephemeral Fixed.

#### To conclude

Henry David Thoreau in *Civil Disobedience* (1849) set up conditions under which one can pursue an activity despite the power structure, authorities, government and state. The unjustly low border line imposed on individuality generates an inner conflict within the self. One can call it a self-consciousness or simply awareness, moral values or liberty of conscience, maybe it is enough to say: "beliefs" or a "way of thinking". It is something outer, alien and unaccepted. Of course, Thoreau did not mean art. But art should be radical in every aspect, otherwise it does not exist. Yet institutions deprive art of its radicalism. No wonder then that artists search for alternatives and run their own initiatives instead of only obeying the rules imposed by (art) institutions. Each of the ARI is a political (critical) one by its nature and such is art and its artistic documentary status.

I would like to propose a 'game', which could provide a new reading of Thoreau's text: replacing the word "government" with the word "(art) institution". I hope, that this will reveal the very nature of the institutional art system and confirm the critical role of ARI. Here are only a few examples, obviously one can find more possibilities in this text.

<sup>&</sup>quot;That government is best which governs least" (after Jefferson)

<sup>&</sup>quot;Government is at best but an expedient"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Government never of itself furthered any enterprise"

<sup>&</sup>quot;All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now."

<sup>&</sup>quot;If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth - certainly the machine will wear out."

<sup>1</sup> Jan Świdziński, Art, Society and Self - consciousness (Calgary: Alberta College of Art Gallery, 1979). 66.

<sup>2</sup> lbid. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002). 11.

<sup>5</sup> Świdziński, Art, Society. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 14.

<sup>7</sup> lbid. 16.

<sup>8</sup> lbid. 17.

# KATALIN BALÁZS

# **'EPHEMERAL' IN HISTORY AND IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE ART**

It is difficult to find a balance between the accounts of history given by historians and those given by artists. This is one of the reasons I was very much looking forward to the *Ephemeral fixed* event that took place in Łódź in March. The programme promised a series of events, distinguishing these histories from each other while also reinforcing them. It also showed a significant interest in a socio-cultural/sociological approach which gave the event added relevance. Thanks to the Visegrad Fund, artists and art historians / critics gathered from the four Visegrad countries to exchange their experiences, their histories and, most of all, their art.

Choosing Łódź as the location was the other reason that made me enthusiastic about the project. The legendary role in the international avant-garde played by Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro and Henryk Stażewski and the stories I heard of the underground cultural life of this large industrial city during the dark times of martial law, like the activity of the Łódź Kaliska as well as the first edition and the renewal of the Construction in Process exhibitions all contributed to creating the image of Łódź as an extremely important centre in the last 70 years with a slight do-it-yourself character, as a result of which the splendid collection of the city's Art Museum has been founded and enriched.

The three day event, curated by Małgorzata Kaźmierczak, took place at the Galeria Wschodnia, one of the most important artist-run-initiatives in the city. On the third day we were given an opportunity to hear about its history since it was founded in 1984 by the owner, the artist Adam Klimczak. It seems that the Galeria Wshodnia is not only a very significant place for art and private living but has also created and continues to maintain a community as well, with a kitchen where the food is always being cooked and where art and life definitely unite.

That is the reason why I found the remark made by Tomáš Pospiszyl on the day of the symposium by very important regarding the community and autonomy-building nature of the 'ephemeral', referring to Hakim Bay's Temporary Autonomous Zone. If we consider that the majority of the efforts made by 'progressive artists' from the end of the Second World War were intended to create a community in which experimentation could take place and which provided an appropriate audience, mostly of friends and sympathisers, the concept of the 'autonomous zone' becomes clearer. I am reminded of the 'head' of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde, Miklós Erdély, when he was asked about his artistic activity and declared that while creating pieces and solving problems that had been important for him, he had also created his (appreciative) audience. However, he have to consider the temporariness of such phenomena as well. It becomes even more significant if we examine the historical circumstances of the countries in question and the operation of their the totalitarian systems even though each one had its own separate features.

Adam Klimczak performed as well, on the first performance night with a piece that I found deeply moving. He built a monument of words and gestures for the Gallery, recalling dates and names related to the history of the space. It beautifully evoked the acts performed by pilgrims at holy places (crawling up the

stairs on knees), adding elements of intimacy (touching the walls while listing the names) with a very personal history-telling and so it provided a worthy introduction to the three-days festival.

The two days of performances partly reflected the problems of the 'ephemeral nature' of the genre, thus they reflected on their own features. I found a great poetic effect in the piece of **Linda Van Dalen** which featured immediately disappearing words (I breathe, I feel, I came here to live) made of dog food (eaten by Emil, the dog of Jiří Surůvka, who is rather a performer himself) and by the same words painted on white walls in white paint. A play reminiscent of Manzoni was performed by **Daniel Dida** who blew up plastic bags with his own breath, creating a site specific, randomly formed installation by the end of the first night. The artist's breath could be taken away or left at the site, as an ironical game with the romantic image of the artist and the ephemeral nature of the genre and, in my opinion, of art itself.

Jiří Surůvka reflected on the same subject of the nature of art by creating a contemporary commedia dell'arte about the roles and duties of artists and the participants in the "art scene" by putting them all into the frames of a soap opera, in a form of a happening and giving it a tone of sarcasm. Marek Pražák's piece recalled many dadaist references and also drew attention to the national references of the four-nation gathering. Likewise, Péter Vályi conducted a performance given by members of each of the represented four nations, with them reading out their national anthems simultaneously. This bizarre and absurd chore was a homage to the 'four strong nations' and in the meantime it questioned the legitimacy of such a claim. He showed on his personal cell phone the leftovers of the dinner eaten by the participating members of the four nations from a video we had made in the restaurant before the evening started. The dinner was consumed by the members of the four nations, therefore the partecipants of the event. It reminded me of the above mentioned community-building nature, and made me think about the "zone" we created over the three days.

We saw the elaborate piece of **Anka Leśniak** and **the PUL-Group**, who employed methods and means of performances for specific use by women artists. In this case the female body was not only shown in its pure nakedness but it highlighted the duality of body and soul or rather, spirit since it underlined the connection between writing as a sign of knowledge and as the ability of self-expression as well as emphasising the lack of the same opportunities for self-expression for those (women, from all over the world) who cannot use this tool due to illiteracy.

Jana Zimčíková's serious play with a pair of tights treated the same theme: a lady's equipment turned to be a tool of torture, nearly suffocating the artist. Surprisingly, the second evening of performances were based on strong gestures and strong ritual references.

**Bálint Szombathy's** (Sombati's) recurring motif, the blood which happens to be the artist's own, appeared in a very rhythmical, slow piece, performed with a small mirror placed in the centre of a gingerbread heart (which is common in Hungary), the banal symbol of love. He cut his fingers with the mirror and painted his face with his blood to the dark melody of a melancholy love song. The purity, simplicity and strong ritual allusions became however united in a very poetic approach.

We were also treated to a strict ritual-based and extended piece by **Imre Dénes** who used not only strong and symbolic gestures, with both Christian and Far-Eastern culturally determined references, but special symbolic materials as

well. József R. Juhász performed a more political piece referring to the nature of power and public involvement by recalling the famous 'If you see something say something' sentence. It can naturally be extended towards current issues such as terrorism and free speech as well as the basic freedom to express an opinion in the shadow of generalised anxiety and fear. I was particularly impressed by the tools he used in the beginning while walking around among the audience. He used extra long nails and put them close to the head of the selected member of the audience, recalling a Hungarian saying according to which 'something bangs a nail into one's head' meaning 'someone is having an idea'. His gestures though positioned the nails as tools to heal with as well.

By mentioning the video performance by **Józef Robakowski** I have to turn back to the beginning of this subjective report. Robakowski's pioneering role in experimental artistic approaches was dramatically demonstrated in this piece in which the artist calls on the audience to raise the current of electricity passing through his body. It recalls the language of the radical and risky body art pieces from the early days of performance art while it is also reminiscent of the uncanny social psychology tests in which empathy towards each other was examined. Robakowski's role in the artistic life of the city and whole country can be seen in his presentation on his initiative, the Exchange Gallery which epitomises *par excellence* the bottom-up endeavours initiated by artists.

The third day, when the artists' presentations took place after the symposium of the day before, the picture of the city's artistic life and even its socio-cultural status seemed to be clarified. Within the frames of the symposium **Lukasz Guzek** told us about the history of non-conventional galleries in Poland and **Tomáš Pospiszyl** gave a thoughtful presentation about the problems facing such initiatives. However, we still have not reached any conclusion as to the definition of 'ephemeral', whether it is truly live art or an umbrella term of conceptual approaches. Should we consider all these phenomena genuinely artistic or do they belong to social and informal activity in times of institutional crisis (which gives a very relevant dimension to the subject matter)?

The artists' presentations told an alternative history, the history of the 'makers' of the communities. We were given an opportunity to hear about the Exchange Gallery (and, in Łukasz Guzek's presentation the day before, parallel initiatives from all over Poland), the Performance Festivals in Ostrava, the Art & Documentation Festival and Interakcje and two artist run initiatives in Hungary and one in Slovakia.

Altogether, the different points of view provided an extended picture of the opportunities of writing such a history from a wide range of perspectives, be they sociological, artistic, historical or even purely aesthetic. In Hungary we still have to write the history of the Szentendre Performance Festival, as well as of other festivals and events.

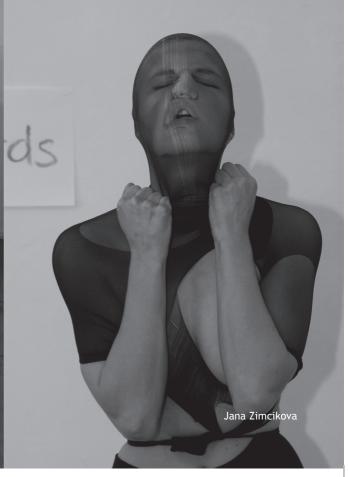
Yet it occurs to me that while thinking over the problems related to the informal communities and their autonomy, we should question what exactly needs to be addressed within the history of the ARI besides the documentation and reconstruction of events. There is justification for examining bottom-up initiatives and their social role within the history of institutionalisation. Is there a justification, however, for research into the differences looking from the perspective of non-artist run initiatives? Is there any justification for looking at all of this from the perspective of an entire culture? Is there any reason for carrying out research on these phenomena within the frame of a whole Central-Eastern-European study?

If we found more similarities or more differences, would we find details that would make it easier to understand the data behind the cultural phenomena? What does independence mean in a historical context - financial independence perhaps, or spiritual independence? What do financial and spiritual independence mean in a wholly politicised system of cultural institutions and what did they mean forty years ago? Is it in the interest of the 'official' system of institutions to examine any bodies that stand beyond itself and what is its connection to the artistic canon? And last but not least, is it right to raise the issue of the *genius loci* in connection with our subject matter in this short report?

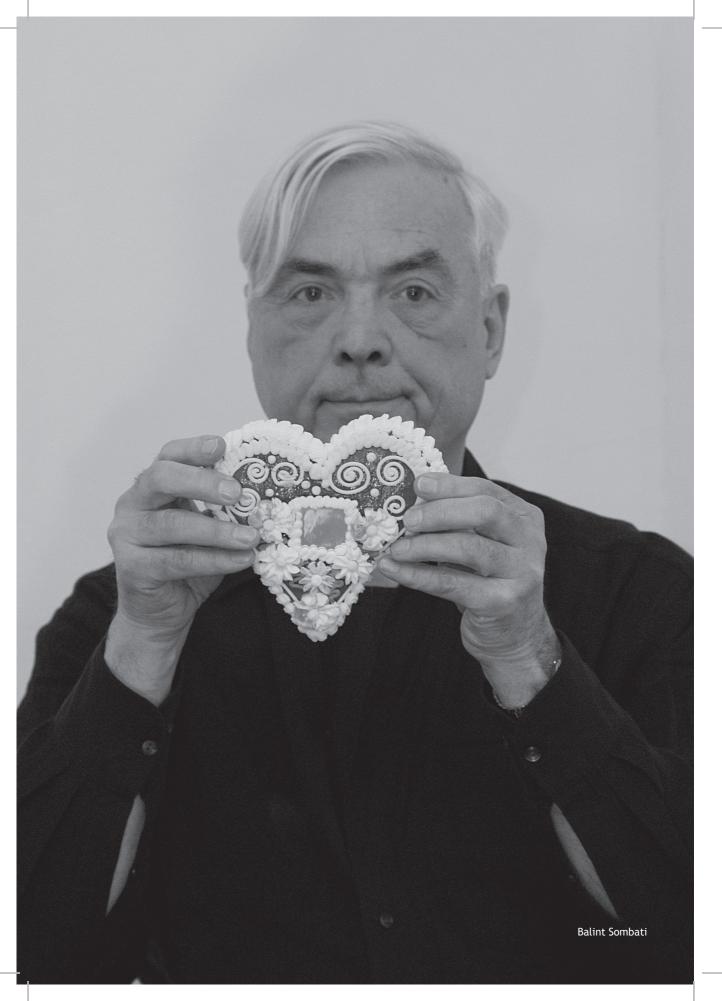


















# ANKA LEŚNIAK. ŁUKASZ GUZEK

# IT HAPPENED AND IT STILL HAPPENS – A REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF ARTISTS AND CRITICS FROM VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

Between March 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Łódź there was a meeting of artists and critics from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, entitled Ephemeral Fixed. Ephemeral art - history documented. The aim of the event was a reflection on ephemeral art in Visegrad countries. We had the opportunity to participate in two nights of performance art, a presentation of artists' run galleries/initiatives and a symposium, leading to a publication in English. Everything took place in the Wschodnia Gallery - an alternative art space in Łódź. The event was organised by the Art and Documentation Association and it was a cross-generation initiative featuring artists: Adam Klimaczak, Marek Pražák, Daniel Dida, Péter Vályi, Linda Van Dalen, Jiří Surůvka, Anka Leśniak, Jana Zimčíková, Bálint Sombati, Imre Dénes, József R. Juhász, Józef Robakowski. Critics: Łukasz Guzek, Jozef Cseres, Katalin Balázs, Tomáš Pospiszyl. Curator: Małgorzata Kaźmierczak.

The meeting officially started on March 15<sup>th</sup>, at 6 pm with a performance entitled *A sign of the times* by **Adam Klimczak**, the owner of the host Wschodnia Gallery. It was kind of an introduction to the subsequent actions. Klimczak started his performance on the ground floor of a staircase (the Gallery is on the first floor). Crawling up the stairs on his knees, at each step he listed a sequence of dates from the date the Gallery emerged (1984) to 2012. Then he entered the gallery and walked around it, touching the Gallery walls and listing the names of all the artists who presented their art in the space. Among the listed artists there were Jan Berdyszak, Mimmo Catania and Peter Downsborough. It's worth mentioning that the Wschodnia Gallery organised the well known Construction in Process festival and during the time of communism and the iron curtain, this gallery was a kind of bridge between Polish and foreign artistic communities.

After Adam Klimczak there was a performance by Marek Pražák from the Czech Republic, who presented a musical performance that included voice modification effects and the use of props like a cello and a huge suitcase out of which he took some items. The performance was entitled A Mass for Poland. It was an adaptation of the composition "Missa de Profundis" interpreted by the artist. The action was based on the absurd and that is why it evoked associations with Dada and Cabaret Voltaire. The artist, dressed in shining "decorative clothes", resembled a bard, shaman or a minister, but the image was a grotesque figure at the same time. The action was very dynamic, full of unexpected turns. It was funny and scary at the same time.

For the entire evening there was a durational performance by **Daniel Dida** from Slovakia entitled *Take away breath*. One could take away the artist's breath in the form of a transparent plastic bag blown into by Dida. He filled subsequent bags with his breath and left them in various spots in the Gallery. At the end of the day there were so many of them that they formed a kind of *in situ* installation.

This simple action of Dida's, based on one gesture, provokes questions about the essence of ephemeral art; even if it leaves objects or documentations, the basis of its creation and reception is the presence of the action in this particular place and time.

Péter Vályi from Hungary presented a performance entitled *Strong Nations*. He asked four people from four countries to read the lyrics of their national anthem. The "nations' representatives" were Jiří Surůvka (Czech), Gordian Piec (Poland), Linda van Dalen (Slovakia) and Katalin Balázs (Hungary). The anthems were read simultaneously. The loudest was Gordian Piec's reading (maybe because Poland has the largest territory out of the four Visegrad countries). Jiří Surůvka put in the most heart and creativity in his anthem. In fact, Péter Vályi's performance started earlier - during the lunch in a restaurant. The artist waited until everyone left the table, then gathered up and ate all the leftovers. He recorded a video on his cell phone from this situation and on the same phone he presented this video in the Gallery.

Linda van Dalen (Slovakia) performed her action with the co-operation of Emil - Jiří Surůvka's dog. Out of dog food she formed words on the floor. It was difficult to read them, as Emil ate them immediately. Then she painted the same words with white paint on the white walls: "I breathe, I feel, I came here to live", a reference to her asthma. When the paint dried, the words became invisible. Just like Dida, the artist touched upon the subject of presence and fleetingness, bringing to mind the saying *carpe diem*.

The evening ended with a performance by **Jiří Surůvka**. It was a coincidence, that Surůvka was going to perform once again in Łódź two weeks later - in the Manhattan Gallery. Therefore he suggested a performance in episodes entitled: Jorje, the life of an artist - a soap opera. His action started with a story about his mother, who began to look at the world from the perspective of a soap opera. The Latino artist "Jorje" from the title was in fact Surůvka (Jiri is Jorje in Spanish). According to people's imagination and what is often shown on TV, an artist is a guy who sits at an easel and paints a model. A model should of course be naked and fulfil a lot of roles in the artist's life. The artist is constantly tired and it's hard for him to finish his work and therefore to sell it. Even if he finishes his work, no one knows if he finds a client to buy it. The task is difficult, a portrait has to be as good as Mona Lisa, in order to please the buyer's taste. Other heroes of the soap opera were a model, art merchant, police woman, punk, domina-woman and death. The roles were "played" by members of the public. There was no script, so Suruvka's action thanks to the audience's intervention, turned into a never-ending story. Here also the context of place and the element of the unexpected in art action had their meaning. The main prop was Surůvka's easel, owned by Adam Klimczak. But because the last time Klimczak had used his easel was when he was in the art school (and since then it remained in the basement), it almost fell apart when it was unfolded for Suruvka's action.

During the second day (March 16<sup>th</sup>) at 2 pm the symposium started entitled "It happened and it still happens. Ephemeral art in Visegrad countries - practice and theoretical reflection." The papers dealt with artist run initiatives in a historical context in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. There will be an after-symposium publication in English including the texts by Katalin Balázs, an art historian from Hungary, Łukasz Guzek - an art critic and art historian from Poland who focuses on performance and installation art, Tomáš Pospiszyl - an art critic from Czech Republic and a lecturer of Prague Film School and Jozef Cseres from

Slovakia, a lecturer at the University in Bratislava. The texts will be published in Polish in the fall issue of the journal *Art and Documentation*.

The second evening of performance art began with the action of Anka Leśniak in co-operation with the PUL Group (Paulina and Ula Korwin-Kochanowski and Ludwik). The main part of the action took place in a corridor covered with a black cloth. The audience was asked to enter from the staircase one person at a time. They saw three women - one naked with her eyes covered and two totally covered like Muslim women, with only eyes uncovered. A CD played one sentence that had been recorded: Take a lipstick and write on my body the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word "woman". Then each spectator received two pieces of paper joined with a pin. He/she was requested to keep quiet and not to unpin the paper until the action ends. Then each spectator entered the main room of the gallery, where there was a video projection with body imprints of the artist and words like: freedom, independence, money, power... In the end, Leśniak entered the main room as well and on the wall placed a sentence: "Which of these words have you written?"

Then there was an action by Jana Zimčíková from the Czech Republic. Her performance was based on one gesture. As her prop the artist used ladies tights. One pair she wore normally - on her legs, the other on her arms and head. She tried to free herself from the layers that were limiting her movements. In the end the tights were torn and she gained back her freedom. This is how she ended the action.

Bálint Sombati from Hungary made a performance which was very economic with gestures. He sat on a table and showed the audience a colourful heart made of ginger bread into which he placed a mirror. To the rhythm of a love song, he ate the heart until only the mirror remained. Then he started to cut his fingers with the mirror and then, in a complete silence, smeared the blood on his cheeks marking tears. The combination of a frosted mirror heart and true blood is a bold contrast. On one hand it may be kitsch, on the other it may symbolise, love and suffering very often inseparable emotions. Whose reflection is in the mirror? The artist's or our own?

Next we saw a performance by Imre Dénes from Hungary. The artist based his performance on sounds, gestures and the use of symbolic materials such as grains and milk. The performance resembled a ritual. The longest part of the action was the moment when Dénes stood under a plastic bag hanging from the ceiling which was filled with milk that dripped on his head. He was showing various gestures with his hands and the action was accompanied by music composed of far-eastern sounds. The artist also used props reminiscent of far-eastern culture, for example artificial, song birds. He spilled grains on the gallery's floor to end his action.

József R. Juhász presented a performance entitled *Trust 2012*. He started by using nails. He moved around chosen people from the audience, with the 30 cm nails. Meantime he wrote on an illuminated screen words, that in the end made a sentence "If you see something, say something" (which is the sentence that one may come across in the New York subway system after the 9/11 attacks). He approached a cube consisting of a few blocks of paper and he drew on the edge a paragraph symbol. Then he put two nails to his eyes and asked a person from the public to blindfold him with a white band. He undressed himself and stood for a while holding nails in one hand and a piece of paper in the other which had the sentence written on it.

The evening was finished by Józef Robakowski who presented the documentation of his performance *I'm electric*, in which he subjected himself to electricity of higher and higher voltage, increased by the members of the audience (the performance was done in a TV studio). As he mentioned, the impulse for the action was the fact that he suffered an electric shock in the past. After that Robakowski presented one work from a series of performances to camera that are characteristic for him. On the video we saw the artist with his head laying on a keyboard. Moving his head he produced low, monotonous sounds. The sounds encouraged his cat to participate in the action. Walking on the keyboard made his "cat's music".

On Saturday March 17th, also at 2 pm, the presentations of ARI - Artist Run Initiatives began. This part was entitled "It happened" and it aimed at presenting the history of independent initiatives that have been not institutionalised in Visegrad countries. The presentations were started by Adam Klimczak who presented the history of the Wschodnia Gallery that is situated in his studio. From the very beginning it has been run by Adam Klimczak and Jerzy Grzegorski and is sponsored by them. Its programme focuses on alternative and experimental projects, and also presenting art in unconventional places - shops, factories, public space. For ten years it was also a place in which the artists were awarding other artists with the Katarzyna Kobro award, funded by brothers Dariusz and Krzysztof Bieńkowski. The Gallery regularly presented works by artists from around the world.

Józef Robakowski presented the activities of the Exchange Gallery that he established in 1978 with the co-operation of Małgorzata Potocka. It contains an enormous collection of video, films, photographs, leaflets, visual poetry and artists' documentation. The collection is based on the exchange of artworks between Polish and foreign artists. In the collection there are works by Henryk Stażewski, Dick Higgins, Richard Nonas, and the Łódź Kaliska Group. The Gallery also publishes art books and organises exhibitions and symposiums. Izabela Lejk currently co-operates with the Gallery. It is a rule that the Gallery does not apply for any public grants or institutional support. It is situated in a private apartment in one of the tall buildings in Łódź called the "Manhattan" estate and it is possible to view the collection by appointment.

Łukasz Guzek presented the activities of the Art and Documentation Association that has gathered together artists and art theoreticians since 2009. It has currently organised four Art and Documentation festivals (2009-2012) and published five issues of the journal *Art and Documentation*, that includes scholarly articles mainly devoted to ephemeral art, plus the history of contemporary art, artists' manifestoes and documentation of the non-commercial gallery movement in Poland from the 70s till present.

Piotr Gajda and Gordian Piec showed documentation from the festival Interakcje, which has been organised for 13 years in Piotrków Trybunalski. The first festival took place in the Europa Restaurant, then an "exclusive place" in the centre of the town and the participating artists were from Poland and France, thanks to the contacts of artist Ryszard Piegza who has lived in France for many years. The idea for the presentation of action art in Piotrkow Trybunalski, where the public was used to more traditional art forms was a bit unconventional, but successful. The Interakcje festival has a large and dedicated audience. The festival's patron is the performance artist and art theoretician Jan Świdziński. For a few years now the artists have had a gallery space at their disposal, where the festival regularly takes place.

Bálint Sombati showed the activities of the Magyar Műhely Foundation from Budapest, that is also the publisher of the *Magyar Műhely* magazine, publishing texts on art and literature and includes examples of visual poetry. The journal has a long tradition. It emerged in 1962 in Paris, as an initiative of Tibor Papp (a Hungarian poet, artist, writer and translator). The Magyar Műhely Foundation, apart from publishing the journal and other publications about contemporary art, also runs a gallery with regular exhibitions.

József R. Juhász showed the artistic program of the Kassák Centre for Intermedia Creativity in Nové Zámky (Slovakia) which is very close to the Hungarian border. The name of the gallery comes from the name of Lajos Kassák - a Hungarian poet, writer, painter and architect. The basic aim of the Kassák Centre is coordinating the cooperation between the organisations and artists that focus on intermedia art acting outside of state structures (museums, state galleries etc.). The Kassák Centre organises the Transart Communication Public Dialog Festival, that focuses specifically on the border region between Slovakia and Hungary and the co-existence of Slovaks and Hungarians in contemporary times.

Imre Dénes prepared a presentation about the Monar Gallery that is located in a small town near Budapest called Monor. Its aim is to present contemporary art to a small town community. The Gallery has existed since 2009 and since then has organised quite a few exhibitions, performance art events and installation art shows.

The presentations were concluded by Jiří Surůvka who showed the activities of the Jama Michal Gallery in Ostrava and the Malamut Festival, devoted to performance art. The first festival was organised in Ostrava by Petr Lysáček and Jiří Surůvka. It was later continued in Prague then came back to Ostrava in 2007 under the former name Malamut. The name of the festival comes from the breed of dog that looks almost like a wolf, but has a very mild and friendly character. Unfortunately the city authorities in Ostrava are not too friendly towards the festival. The actions of artists in the city space are too unconventional for the authorities and the events are not sponsored by the town.

The organisers of *Ephemeral Fixed*. *Ephemeral art*. - *history documented* hope that the event will be the beginning of co-operation between artists and art critics from Central Europe and that due to publication and translation of the texts into various languages it will be possible to popularise and deepen the knowledge of ephemeral art and the role of the non-commercial gallery movement among researchers. The project was supported by the Visegrad Fund and organised with the co-operation of partners: The Magyar Műhely Foundation from Hungary, The Kassák Centre of Intermedia Creativity from Slovakia and the Jama Michal Gallery from the Czech Republic.

# ANKA LEŚNIAK DOCUMENTATION OF ART /ART OF DOCUMENTING

In April and May the 4th Art and Documentation Festival took place in Łódź (Poland). The festival is held once a year. It is dedicated to issues connected with the documenting of the contemporary art, with particular emphasis on ephemeral art forms such as an installation and performance art. the Art and Documentation Festival is organised by the Art and Documentation Association, whose main aim is collecting, researching and disseminating testimonies and archives concerning non-institutional activities and artist run initiatives (from the seventies to the present day).

After merely forty years since the birth of conceptual art and consequently a wider presence of time-based and site-specific art forms, one can see how much information is missing. Sometimes we only have fragmented material from the activities of that period, for example, one photo from a performance, someone's testimony or a manifesto by the artist. Traditional forms of documentation reproductions and museum index cards, appropriate for artifacts, aren't suitable to capture the essence of ephemeral art. Good quality camera equipment was not available for artists during the time of communism in Poland. Today a camera is widely available. Both professionals and ordinary people can make a video or a photo of an artistic event. Do these opportunities actually generate more and more documentation? Does this documentation give a better idea of the nature of documented work? And perhaps the documentation may become a work of art by itself, which can exist independently and be considered separately, without references to the work documented. The Art and Documentation Festival has collected various forms of documentation (video, photo, press articles, radio and TV broadcasts) for several years, but it is also looking for other unconventional ways for the documentation of a work of art or an artistic event.

Submitted works were presented at an exhibition entitled *Art Object Registration*, organised for the fourth time. This year it was hosted by the Imaginarium Gallery (ŁDK) and over 50 participants from Poland and abroad took part in it. There was video documentation of a pre-event to the Art and Documentation Festival, entitled *Ephemeral Fixed. Ephemeral art - history documented*, presented on a screen in the centre of the room. The event "Ephemeral fixed" was concerned with the issues of ephemeral art in Visegrad countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) and the contribution of artist run initiatives in this kind of activity. Krzysztof Lewandowski showed some fragments of "Ephemeral Fixed" including performances and also other events in his 40 min. video. A video-documentation in this case is a more appropriate term than a documentary film or a video-clip, in which the input of the director is more important and more visible.

The opposite perspective to Lewandowski's recording could be The *Abandoned Masterpieces* by Sławek Kosmynka. It is a video of just a few minutes long, in which the background music plays an important role. The video consists of photos showing the activities of the LUND - an underground scene in Łódź during the eighties. On the video we could see graffiti works, paintings and photos from the actions. The LUND exhibition took place in 2011 in the Manhattan Gallery (Łódź).

Several submitted video works oscillated between documentation and creation. Tobiasz Jędrak and Jan Moszumański showed Bardzo fajny film o czasie. [A very nice film about time]. The action takes place between two blocks of flats, perhaps in different housing complexes. The main character here is a camera, which is delivered from one flat to the other by a taxi during which time the device is filming the whole route. The image from the camera shows random fragments of reality from a 'fish eye' perspective. The moments when at first - the sender and then the receiver of the camera walked with it, were reminiscent of Józef Robakowski's films Mechanical-Biological Recordings, where the device registered movements of the camera operator's body. When the camera was in the taxi, it registered the surroundings from such points of view which were impossible to see normal human eye level. This is the type of documentation, in which a camera is detached from the eye of the camera operator.

Monika Szydłowska presented the documentation of her performance. It consisted of a video recording and a model which presented the arrangement of the audience during the performance, in which the artist sat at a table and read the instructions that are to be followed after the explosion of an atomic bomb. At the same time, a camera was recording and transmitting the image of what was happening under the table onto a monitor. The image showed the performer's legs gradually parting. The video shown during the exhibition was a live recording of the performance.

Malgorzata Kazimierczak submitted a video entitled *Contexts* ... between ... sentences recorded during the "Contexts" Festival in Sokołowsko in 2011. The artist asked participants of the event to write directly onto plates prepared beforehand by her. They were requested to write an open sentence, meaning a phrase to which it is impossible to give an answer "yes" or "no". Every participant of the action was asked to present his/her sentence to the camera. Kazimierczak's video is both the documentation of the action and an autonomous work of art. The film is in black and white and highly contrasted.

When it's raining, people are reluctant to leave home, except for a commemoration. Topp & Dubbio showed the documentation of a performance devoted to Yuri Lunacharsky (1978-2008) who was an unknown Russian artist. The action took place on Sunday, June 19, 2011. The performance was a kind of farcical parallel to formal ceremonies. In front of the Museumplein in Amsterdam, where at that time John Baldessari's work was presented, Topp & Dubbio placed a display case with photos of Lunacharsky's flags and also a display with Lunacharsky's name. The display was a reference to a similar, but much larger display device -Baldessari's artwork placed on the facade of the Museum. On Baldessari's display one could see the names of people who registered on his project's web site. The names flashed for 15 sec. As befits the memory of the Russian artist, Topp & Dubbio in the company of other people, were drinking Stolichnaya vodka and exploding firecrackers (which was not easy in the pouring rain). Then they saluted, there was also a speech - a kind of mockery. The "ceremony" lasted until dusk, when Yuri Lunacharsky's name flashed for 15 seconds on the facade of the museum. Given the nature of the event we are not even sure whether Lunacharski really existed. During the exhibition, one also could see the album Topp & Dubbio containing pictures and descriptions of their many actions. An interesting graphic form also interprets it into an artistic book.

Mikołaj Podworny showed video-documentation of his performance made before Christmas in 2011 in Poznan (Poland). He drew attention to the contemporary

approach to the Christmas carols that we hear from November in supermarkets and in other commercial spaces. So we are in fact confronted with them in completely different contexts than before. In connection with the use of carols in shopping areas, to which we are already accustomed, the artist decided to sing Christmas carols himself - whilst being hidden in the places where one could least expect it. The artist climbed a lamppost and then sung well known Christmas carols one after another through a megaphone. As the police considered his performance to be disturbing to public order, the artist was fined and he attached a copy of the fine to the exhibition.

For last year's exhibition in the City Gallery in Gdansk *Miasto Zdarzenie*. *Rekonstrukcja przemocy* [City, Happening. The Reconstruction of Violence], Dorota Nieznalska presented a reconstruction of the Gdansk shipyard gate destroyed by a tank on December 16th, 1981 (during the famous strike of workers against the communist authorities). Nieznalska, during the exhibition in Gdansk presented the reconstruction of the destroyed gate, with all marks of the devastation caused by the tank. On August 17th, 2011 the reconstructed gate was transported to the gallery. The video submitted to the Art & Documentation Festival shows the loading and transportation of the gate from the blacksmith's and locksmith's workshops to the gallery and its installation in the exhibition room. The gate, which is a reconstruction in 1:1 scale was recreated through archival materials and photos from the IPN [the Institute for National Memory that traces crimes against Polish nation, including those committed during the communist regime]. She also referenced descriptions and testimonies of witnesses of those events.

The PUL Group (Paulina and Ula Korwin-Kochanowski, and Ludwik) showed a multimedia presentation, Will I be missed. The work dealt with the nineteenth century architecture of Łódź, which is slowly disappearing as tenement houses and old factories fall into ruin and are systematically demolished. Łódź wasn't destroyed during World War II allowing the unique architectural complex from the turn of the century to be retained, but due to the subsequent ignorance of city authorities and property owners for almost 70 years is has been gradually devastated. The artists made a neon sign with the question "Will I Be Missed?", and then they placed it on ruined buildings. In addition, they prepared a digital map of vanishing houses and postcards which were "sentimental in style", showing photos of those buildings

Beate Hecher and Markus Keim showed a video work entitled All Inclusive which was based on a panoramic photo. On the video we see a monumental building located in a desert, which moves horizontally behind the author who stands in the foreground. This is an unfinished hotel and as the authors wrote - "a yesterday, which won't see tomorrow ... a despotic figure in a landscape".

Marcus Bering showed the documentation of the installation process of his artwork entitled *Reading PI*, prepared for a group exhibition *Między-Przestrzen* in the El Gallery in Elblag (Poland). The construction of the work was also an artistic action, because the artist asked different people to stick numbers from 0 to 9 (components of the number PI) on white screens. Each of the persons asked, attached the numbers in whatever way they pleased. The video shows both the process of the creation of the work and its context - the place and people from the El Gallery.

Rebecca Cunningham submitted documentation of a performance entitled One. In the description we could read: "... one life / one person sitting opposite / one exchange / one sample of DNA / it can happen (one) million times ...".

During the performance the artist collected a single hair from each viewer - a hair being something that contains DNA. Cunningham asks whether, in a world where it is difficult to draw a line between privacy and the public sphere, we are only occasionally in situations in which we can trust somebody, are we able to trust the artist and give her our one hair containing something very personal - our DNA? The performance took place in Brisbane In Australia, September 8th, 2011 and will be continued. The documentation presented in Łódź consisted of several photos and one original object - a plastic bag containing a hair.

Tom Swoboda presented work from a project entitled *Konterfekt*. The main concern of the project is to legitimise the spiritual aspect of human life, in this case with relation to Christianity as the leading religion in Poland. The author is looking for people who have a tangible relationship with God - for example, through miraculous healing or a vision. Swoboda documents these individual bodily experiences through photos, drawings, casts, and also a spiritual contact with God -through maps, notes, schemes. The author tries to document the invisible - in this case, the image of God. The work - *Konterfekt No. 14* depicts the story of a man who almost had a fatal accident - a machine crushed his head. However the man survived and as he believes - his head was restored by God. The documentation consists of drawings, photos, video, hospital records and letters.

Aurelia Mandziuk-Zajączkowska made an attempt to reconstruct the original appearance of a bunny toy made by Katarzyna Kobro. This famous artist earned her living by making toys. One of them was a rag bunny which she sewed for her daughter - Nika Strzemińska. The last owner of the bunny is Monika Krygier (the daughter of Strzeminski's friend), who received the bunny when she was a child. As a result of the ups and downs of its life the bunny was stripped of legs. By using sketches, measurements and descriptions thanks to information from Monika Krygier, Aurelia Mandziuk reconstructed the data on the bunny. Mandziuk, in order to reconstruct the information about the bunny, used a questionnaire concerning the strategy of ephemeral art conservation (provided by Elżbieta Wysocka). Mandziuk's work combines the dry language of the technical description of the work with an emotional and sentimental layer - the reconstruction of a toy made by Kobro for her child. At the same time she shows the context of making Kobro's works and provides new information on the well-known artist.

Arek Parasite (Artist-Parasite) presented his *Manifesto of a Parasite*. This is a project in process. Artists, especially in the Polish art world, are the social group which paradoxically has the worst status in the art world. For example, in contrast to the directors of art institutions who receive high salaries, statistics show that a Polish artist (even with artistic achievements) is a person without money, who has no social and health insurance. Arek who wants to both make art and survive, has chosen a strategy of sponging on art institutions which means that he lives "for free" in galleries and "by the way" undergoes his art project there. Documentation of the days spent as a parasite he publishes on his blog. The Artist-Parasite creates art that is almost entirely in parallel with his life and at the same time he makes an auto-documentation. Here there is an interesting relationship - a non-stop performance action with simultaneous registration of events by the usage of video, photo and a blog.

In addition there are also people who deal with the issue of art and documentation over a longer time and they have presented their works during the Art-Object-Registration exhibition every subsequent year. The works by Iza Łapińska

and Jolanta Wagner are worth mentioning. This year, we could see another series of photos by Łapińska, in which the artist captures scenes from movies - this year she showed black and white images from *Trial* (based on Kafka's novel), directed by Orson Welles. Photos of the film were taken, without stopping the frame.

Jolanta Wagner continued a series of drawings entitled General Census in which she records, makes inventories and systematises different objects. This year she worked with objects designed by Władysław Strzemiński and Roman Modzelewski. The drawings were made with the use of such tools as a French curve, set square, compasses, razor, carbon paper on a typewriter and a ball point pen, which were very popular among designers not so long ago but today they are unused. The drawings were supported on old drawing boards, purchased from the architectural office "Miastoprojekt - Łódź" which a few years ago was closed down. The artist showed two drawings. In the first one Jolanta Wagner reconstructed from memory the furniture designed by Strzemiński: a desk, bed and a couch, which she had seen during her visits to Roman Modzelewski's house. The second drawing shows the Amulet yacht designed by Roman Modzelewski. Modzelewski worked on it at the end of the sixties with the help of his students including Jolanta Wagner. The yacht stayed for several months in a former sculpture studio in The Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. These design projects, which seem very modern even today, were made decades ago and they never went into mass production. Jolanta Wagner wanted to save them in order that other people could remember them.

Vladimir Havlik showed a series of archival photos, on the one hand documenting his performances (from the seventies till today), on the other hand showing his private life in the context of his performances. The author tries to remember what happened before the performances and later, what went according to plan and what mistakes or unexpected situations happened. The work is a kind of reflection, in which the author asks the question about the border between life and art, an action and documentation.

The works / documentation mentioned here are just a few examples of more extensive material presented at the exhibition <code>Art-Object-Registration</code>. Many of the submitted works were in fact documentation in the basic meaning of this term - they just provided information about an artistic event or work of art in the form of a photo, video, boards with descriptions etc. The presentation and archiving of such documents is one of the aims of the festival, because, as Aurelia Mandziuk - the curator of the exhibition noticed - we are unable to see events in person. The exhibition <code>Art-Object-Registration</code> reminds us of them and the archive of the Art and Documentation Festival preserves information about them. In addition work on publishing a chart to indicate the contents of the archive on the Internet is in process.

This year in comparison with previous festivals, we could see more works that play with the idea of registration and documentation in general (not only in art). Maybe not without significance there was a greater, participation of artists from abroad than in previous years. In Poland, the idea of the documentation of art is rather a new topic. The exhibition at first seemed to be addressed only to professionals, but actually it was very egalitarian - open to proposals not only from artists but also from the audience, people from outside of the artistic community. The latter have not revealed their archives so far. Maybe it will happen next year.

More at www.doc.art.pl

### ANKA LEŚNIAK

# A SHIFT IN TIME AND SPACE. THE ARTICULATE PROJECT SPACE IN ŁÓDŹ

The Articulate Project Space is an initiative of a group of Australian visual artists who have a studio or some other connection in common with 497 Parramatta Road, Leichhardt (Sydney). These artists' diverse practices share an interest in the relationships that artworks form with their various locations. The Articulate Project Space combines features of a studio and a gallery. The exhibition *Project Space Project*, prepared for the 4th Art and Documentation Festival by Margaret Roberts and Sue Callanan from the Articulate Project Space, was presented in May and in the beginning of June at the Biblioteka Gallery (Łódź, Poland).

The project space project aims to explore the idea of project spaces as an exhibition practice that focuses on the thinking processes that go on in art making, and on the relationships that are formed between artworks and the places in which they are made. 1 The exhibition presented the results of artists' activities who Callanan and Roberts invited to work in the Articulate Project Space. From September 2011 to March 2012, each of the invited artists could use this space in his/her own way. More important than the results in the form of art objects was an interaction with this specific place. The Articulate space is approximately 35 meters long and 4 meters wide, which means that it is difficult for an artist to work and exhibit there without taking into account the nature of this place. Each of the artists had two weeks for his/her work in the Articulate Project Space, and after (or during this time), their work was presented to the public. Artists could work individually or invite other people to collaborate. The artists who took part in the project were: Lesley Giovanelli, Alan Schacher, Ben Denham, Terry Hayes and Robin Hungerford, Kathryn Ryan, Heidelberg, Joan Grounds, Chantal Grech, Toni Warburton.

In the Biblioteka Gallery the documentation of the Australian artists' activities during the project was presented. This documentation in many cases differs from video recordings and photographs generally used for that purpose. During the exhibition in Łódź we could see mainly drawings, objects, prints, texts and installations. The artists prepared the documentation with regard to the space, where it would be presented. The documentation presented in the Biblioteka Gallery was a kind of summary of the ideas contained in the actions taking place in the Articulate Project Space. The distance between Poland and Australia, which obviously causes high shipping costs, even for small parcels was a significant factor. The objects sent for the exhibition consisted of paper, carbon paper or felt thus they preserved a kind of ephemeral nature and temporary quality, characteristic for works and performances prepared in the Articulate Project Space.

For the audience entering through the corridor of the academy building to the Biblioteka Gallery, their attention was at once attracted by red tape stuck to the floor. The tape indicated the dimensions of the Articulate space in 1:1 scale, thus giving the idea of the area in which the artists worked. Only one quarter of the Articulate space "fit" in the Biblioteka Gallery, so it was also necessary to use the corridor area and the library located at the other end opposite to the gallery. This

installation titled Common Ground was devised by the curators of the exhibition - Sue Callanan and Margaret Roberts.

Every few metres there were also square metal plates attached next to the red tape. This was the documentation of Chantal Grech's work Points of Departure, which also consisted of a video and a poster with the plan the Articulate space. In her video, Grech stopped at various places within the Articulate Project Space and read texts. The texts referred to the myth of Ariadne's thread and to the idea of home that exists not in a physical location, but moreover in a nation of people. The metal plates indicated the exact points in the Articulate space, in which Chantal Grech read the texts.

Opposite to the video by Chantal Grech, there was a small object also referring to the idea of home. It was made of sketches drawn on carbon paper by Joan Grounds who asked other people to describe the ideal place for them to live in. Any real possibilities of the realisation of their ideas were unimportant and the form of description was unrestricted. According to Project space Project the artist referred online to the question of the documentation of art, writing: (...) it is always the most stressful part of making any sort of real time process based temporal work for me. I see it, more or less, as a necessary but disturbing compromise. It seems to me that documentation is always some sort of strange disembodied translation with a fair share of interpretation and sometimes misinterpretation by the documenter, myself included.<sup>3</sup>

On the wall between the gallery's windows there was a print documenting Lesley Giovanelli's action in Articulate, which strictly related to the nature of the space. In that work the artist referred to her memory of an exhibition in Madrid titled Monochrome where she saw sculptures arranged by their colours in a narrow long space. The artist exhibited 18 objects in the Articulate Project Space. She presented the documentation of this event in the form of a long and narrow scroll stretching from the ceiling to the floor of the Biblioteka Gallery. On the "scroll" there were printed photos of her objects.

Kathryn Ryan presented a booklet with drawings. It was a very delicate object made of different kinds of paper. It also had ground glass attached to the cover. Ryan, in the description of her work, cites an excerpt from Paul Auster's book In the Country of the Last things.

"It is an odd thing, I believe, to be constantly looking down at the ground, always searching for broken and discarded things. After a while, it must surely affect the brain. For nothing is really itself anymore. There are pieces of this and pieces of that, but none of it fits together. And yet, very strangely, at the limit of all this chaos, everything begins to fuse again...As an object hunter you must rescue things before they reach a state of absolute decay. You can never expect to find something whole—for that is an accident, a mistake on the part of the person that lost it—but neither can you spend your time looking for what is totally used up. You hover somewhere in between, on the lookout for things that still retain a semblance of their original shape-even if their usefulness is gone." Paul Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 35-36.

The artist considers herself as an object-hunter. She collects unnecessary and useless things, putting them together to create poetic and metaphorical works. Her work with found objects is reminiscent of the surrealists' idea of the object *trouvé*. We can see Ryan's work at her blog. In the context of the exhibition in the Biblioteka Gallery her works reflect on the fact that documentation retains only

the remains of the work. It doesn't transmit any of the sensations contained in the work which can be experienced only in the presence of the work itself. However it preserves a kind of trace and Ryan's booklet is a very poetic object by itself.

Next to Ryan's booklet we could see Heidelberg's composition Sophie: Piet. Through the use of red, black and white colours and simple, geometric shapes, the composition evoked associations with neo-plasticism. Heidelberg's composition was transferred onto the wall of the Biblioteka Gallery with a template prepared by the artist. The work was made felt and buttons, pencil and paint. Heidelberg draws attention to elements that appear in the artworks of the Swiss artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Piet Mondrian. In the Articulate Project Space Heidelberg made number of works undertaking this issue.

Toni Warburton showed documentation titled Eye of Horus. Lost and Found which related to his Template Panorama - a changing wall situation rather than installed exhibition, which the artist arranged in the Articulate Project Space. During this process Wiliam Seeto made a photo of the work and published it on Facebook. This photographic image showed a very provisional moment within the process of the development of Warburton's work. Making a reflection on art as documentation Warburton asks the question: "What is a work? Is it a form of artist's intervention, a stoppage that nonetheless enters a new dynamic?". On the basis of Warburton's interest in scans made by John von Sturmer, he invited von Sturmer to participate in the work in Articulate. After a few days cooperation, von Sturmer wrote texts in which he wondered what reality is (in relation to what he heard or saw in his surroundings or in the media) and he also scanned various objects. As documentation of both artists' activity, we could see a large format drawing made on fleece. On semi-transparent material, Warburton drew with great precision the contours of the ceramic vases he works with. Above the drawings there were von Sturmer's printed scans. One could also read his text Reality Check.

Terry Hayes intended the Polish public to participate in his action. He sent 24 sheets of paper to the Biblioteka Gallery on which he rewrote 24 times a short story (probably an episode from a book). In subsequent versions of the text he left out a letter of the alphabet. He asked for a translation of the story and for a rewriting of the text in the same way in Polish. The Polish version had to be prepared in the same way as the English one, that meant it should be written with a non-permanent marker, then soaked in water, dried and hung below the English text. (During the preparation of the Polish version of the work, it turned out that is not easy to find a non-permanent marker in Poland and achieve the same visual effect as in the work prepared by Hayes). It was interesting for the artist to play with the language - with difficulties arising when translating text into another language and when we often have to give up the literal translation, to avoid artificial phrases. After receiving the Polish version of the text the artist plans to translate it into English again ...

Alan Schacher's project titled One-Day collaboration was based on his collaboration with other artists. Each day of his activity in the Articulate Project Space he collaborated with a different artist. The activities ranged from text, sound, photography, installation, performance, photography, video, dance, sewing, cooking or mere conversation. The documentation presented in Łódź consisted of the photos from a performance with WeiZen Ho, a video with Ruark Lewis and a script from a performance (based on dialogue) with Linden Braye. The idea of the preservation of this improvised dialogue in the form of a script, instead of a video, has both the function of documentation as well as opening up new

possibilities for this work. The script is reminiscent of a form of performance score, but also evokes associations with theatre. Some artists consciously opted out of the video documentation, arguing that it "may be shelved, possibly never to be revisited", touching upon the problem of archiving art just for archiving. Perhaps to paraphrase more than 100 years later a slogan "art for art's sake", today we could postulate a "documentation for documentation's sake". Braye's and Schacher's documentation of their dialogue in the form of a script, is much more versatile and allows for the possibility of it to be used by other artists in other ways, such as the continuation of the dialogue or to conduct it in a different context. This work touched upon a currently very important issue of the conservation of ephemeral art and the re-enactment connected with it.

Ela Wysocka developed a questionnaire for artists dealing with forms of ephemeral art. The questionnaire contains questions concerning both the course of an action and also the possibilities of repeating it by someone else. Ephemeral art evokes many questions about the role of documentation, not only for theoreticians and curators but especially for the artists themselves. Situations created by artists are often impossible to repeat in another place and time. So the question arises, what would they like to preserve from their actions? Direct participation in the artistic action and the knowledge of it gained through documentation, could be compared to the reading of a book. However, without direct participation in the artistic situation we will never be able to feel it and only through the documentation, get to know something about the work. So should the role of documentation be to provide knowledge about the work? About its form or the idea that inspired its creation? When does the documentation become independent of the documented object/ situation? Such questions inspired the exhibition by the Australian artists. Can the materials sent by them still be considered in the category documentation of art, or perhaps we should treat them as independent works of art? The audience in Łódź did not see the original actions, and could see only a little part of artists' activities in the Articulate Project Space taking place over nearly half a year. But it turned out that their succinct, original form was sufficient to stimulate the imagination. What we saw in the exhibition was not the documentation of art, but documents of art. They did not provide the knowledge about the whole work but about the idea of it, which could indeed be developed, perhaps even by other artists.

- 1. Sue Callanan & Margaret Roberts curatorial text at http://www.doc.art.pl/articulate\_eng.htm
- 2. The author of documentation: Sue Callanan
- 3. Ideal Homes by Joan Grounds

#### **ŁUKASZ GUZEK**

#### IAM – AN EXHIBITION BY ANNE SEAGRAVE – A REVIEW

I am - says Anne Seagrave in the title of her most recent project exhibition. One could say: "I am back". Anne Seagrave is well known for her actions in the form of dance performance. However, the artist has recently decided to retire from live dance performance. But this does not mean that she has stopped making art. If one has art in their blood, or if one is a true artist - it is impossible to simply stop creating art.

Her latest project shows, her new artistic direction is. She uses her dance performance experience, which for her now becomes the starting point to develop art forms in subsequent stages on which her recent project is based.

The artist often based her earlier dance performances on her biography. In the current project also a certain biographical detail became a starting point. Anne Seagrave has lived for almost two years in Poland, in Kraków (and even speaks Polish quite well). Usually, when we find ourselves in a new environment, we observe it with care and notice interesting details. Walking around a city that was new to her, she observed low sculptural reliefs showing human or animal figures above doorways. First she photographed the sculptural reliefs, and collected them into a database - an archive of images. Then the digitalised images became a starting point for a performance to camera. She created a video work, on which we see the artist naked against a neutral, white background, adopting a series of poses inspired by the reliefs. This is the first series of transmedia transformations, leading from a site-specific location (the architectural decoration), through photography, performance, to video.

However, the artist has developed one more series of transmedia transformations - this time using more traditional media. Digitalised photos of the naked artist were a starting point to make linear drawing compositions. Body images were projected and drawn onto paper, but it was done in such a way, that several drawings became a hybrid of a few images. As a result, the drawings present figures that are often deformed, almost abstract, and sometimes they become decorative patterns consisting of a few multiplied figures.

Next, the drawing on a sheet of paper became a stencil. Technically, the internal plane was masked, and the paper sprinkled with watercolour paint. As a result, on a completed work, we can see a silhouette and the expressive gesture of sprinkling the paper with various watercolours.

A series of aquarelles made this way was presented in Anne Seagrave's latest exhibition at the Domek Ogrodnika Gallery in Łódź. In the exhibition, there is a certain trick that deceives the spectator. The paintings are displayed together with a series of photographs of the sculptural reliefs. The watercolours themselves, seen in purely artistic categories seem to be banal. Only a very careful spectator notices the connection between the photographs and the paintings. And only the exhibition's title I am drives our attention beyond the material and beyond the formal aspect of this art. However, after understanding the whole series of transmedia transformations, the shifts of artistic values and the directions in which

the narration goes, we are able to understand the project of Anne Seagrave and her new post-performance art.

Moreover, during the exhibition, the artist was adding a further aspect to her project - it was an action within the space of the specific gallery. Drawings - outlines of the silhouettes, were re-created from the stencils and painted directly on the Gallery walls, around windows and doors, where they created decorative borders - frames.

One may say, therefore, that the project has a circular structure. The starting point were sculptural reliefs, that decorate the architecture, in symbolic terms they were known as apotropaions - representations that have the power of averting evil from a certain place. After a series of transmedia transformations they were brought to the walls of the Gallery and placed in similar spots as a decorative form, equipped with the power that the artist has given them as works of art.

#### 4 Art & Documentation Festival

#### **PROGRAMME**

Pre-event - 15-17.03.2012

#### Ephemeral fixed. Ephemeral art - history documented

Wschodnia Gallery, Łódź

Project focusing on all kinds of ephemeral practices in Visegrad countries: performance art shows, symposium and discussion panel and presentations of the documentation of the artist run galleries.

April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Thursday 5pm

4th Art and Documentation Festival - opening of the festival and Art-Object-Registration 4 exhibition

Łódzki Dom kultury (ŁDK) - Łódź Imaginarium Gallery ul. Traugutta 18 until 6th May 2012

The exhibition Art - Object - Registration is the festival's main exhibition. It consists of the documentation of artworks, exhibitions, projects, art actions performed by artists and the art viewing public - both individual and institutional.

The documentation presented during the exhibition Art - Object - Registration must be made during the last year - 2011.

The form of the documentation and its medium are not defined, it may be photography, video, TV reports, radio programmes, newspaper articles, websites. We also invite all kinds of innovative and creative ways of approaching the issue of documenting art and the forms of presenting it.

The works to be presented at the exhibition is evaluated by the 4th Art and Documentation Festival's Organising Committee.

Participants of the exhibition Art-Object-Registration 4:

Riccardo Attanasio, Terry Buchholz, Daria Baiocchi, Marcus Bering Izabelle Carvalho, Rebecca Cunningham, Claudia Castellan / K.M Artur Chrzanowski, Marek Firek, Aleksandra Godlewska, Beate Hecher/ Markus Keim, Vladimir Havlik, Barbara Kalina, Małgorzata Kazimierczak, Barbara Kubska, Paweł Kwaśniewski, Sławomir Kosmynka, Jarek Lustych, Izabela Łapińska, Tomasz Matuszak Marcin Mierzicki, Tomasz Musiał, Roberta Myszkowska Jan Moszumański/ Tomasz Jędrak, Aurelia Mandziuk Dorota Nieznalska, Heidi Neubauer-Winterbum, Aaron Oldenburg Bartosz Palej, Mikołaj Podworny, Nieformalna grupa PUL Przemysław Paliwoda, Arek Pasożyt, Mirosław Rajkowski Bartek Smoczyński, Tomasz Sokołowski, Tom Swoboda Filip Szczurek, Monika Szydłowska, Topp & Dubio Radosław Tomczyk, Tahir Un, Inari Virmakoski / Hannes Renval Jolanta Wagner, Marek Wagner, Hubert Wińczyk / Dariusz Karnicki Beata Wąsowska, Anna Zdebska

6pm-7pm

**Fotozofia** (25 min), by Jacek Jóźwiak - screening - premiere. Meeting with Andrzej Różycki.

Cinema ŁDK

Łódzki Dom kultury (ŁDK) - Łódź

ul. Traugutta 18

7:30pm

The project space project - exhibition.

Articulate project space, Sydney

Biblioteka Gallery - Łódź

ul.Sterlinga 26

until May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012

A group of visual artists with studio or other connections to 497 Parramatta Road, Leichhardt, and whose diverse practices share an interest in the relationships artworks form with their locations.

8pm

I am - Anne Seagrave's exhibition

Domek Ogrodnika Gallery - Łódź

ul. Rewolucji 52

until May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 (exhibition then moved to the Mała Gallery in Piotrkow Trybunalski, opening May 7<sup>th</sup>, during the InterAkcje Festival).

9pm

Mikołaj Smoczyński (1955-2009). Artist's document - exhibition

Wschodnia Gallery - Łódź

ul. Wschodnia 29/3

April 13th, 2012, Friday

5pm

Pitch-in Culture - publications and photography - exhibition

Exchange Gallery - Łódź

ul. Piłsudskiego 7/29

6pm

What was / has been the Pitch-In Culture? - symposium and panel discussion. Łódzki Dom kultury (ŁDK) - Łódź

ul. Traugutta 18

The Pitch-In Culture was a cultural phenomenon of the eighties, happening in Poland at various artistic milieus.

The Pitch-In Culture was raised at the ground level. In artistic terms it was a trend based on post-conceptual art. On the one hand it expressed the ending of modernism, and on the other - the beginnings of postmodernism in Polish art. Therefore, it gathered together the most progressive art at that time.

It closed the past of avant-garde art, and at the same time it opened new post-avantgarde perspectives for art. Therefore it was the Pitch-In Culture that caught the continuity of Polish art during the turn of modernism / postmodernism, and the continuity broken in other fields by martial law.

The eighties in Poland are a specific time of interest - of the fall of communism and of economical and political crisis. Martial law was the last stage of that decadent era. However, as it turned out, the oppression of the authorities was not

able to overcome the freedom movement of the society, happening during a short period of the so called 'first Solidarity' between August 1980 and December 1981. The freedom movement was also noticeable within the artists' community and more broadly - people associated with art.

The often dramatic hardships and limits, in social and political life in Poland of the 80s directly caused the Pitch-In Culture. Its emergence not only had an artistic dimension, but it gained the status of cultural phenomenon - an expression of the whole era presented in art. From the perspective of time, one can see it as a cultural movement that united artists, but also attracted everyone sympathetic towards art. Therefore, it was also a social movement. The Pitch-In Culture was also a symptom of the grass roots ability of the artistic community to unite and to self-organise in a social dimension, under martial law (an inspiration for which was also the experience of the so called first Solidarity, common for all participants of the Pitch-In Culture). This ability to create a milieu, despite individual differences, focused the artistic community and contributed to the later process of creating independent artists' movements in the democratic, citizen based society of the nineties (e.g. the Living Gallery). The consequences of that movement are valid today in the form of emerging initiatives that connect various milieus (such as the Polska Biennale). Seen in this perspective, the Pitch-in Culture of the 80s is a phenomenon of unusual importance that had its consequences in art and society in the whole of Poland.

In the symposium there will participate witnesses and artists - the participants of the Pitch-In Culture, as well as scholars.

In the first part of the symposium direct evidence will be collected - the subjective stories on one's own participation in the Pitch-In Culture, and how it was perceived by others.

In the other part, materials will be made available for scholars of various disciplines - art historians, culture and film experts etc. who will develop their research based on them.

A part of the symposium will be a discussion panel with the Pitch-In Culture participants and scholars.

The materials will be published in the *Art and Documentation* journal (in autumn issue 2012).

#### Panellists:

Józef Robakowski, Marek Janiak, Krzysztof Jurecki, Włodzimierz Adamiak, Aleksandra Jach, Jolanta Ciesielska, Wojciech Ciesielski, Zofia Łuczko, Tomasz Snopkiewicz, Grzegorz Zygier, Zbigniew Bińczyk, Jacek Jóźwiak, Andrzej Różycki. Moderator: Łukasz Guzek

8pm

Off Camera. Films screening about The Pich-In Culture. Selected by Józef Robakowski

Cinema ŁDK

9pm

Grupa Czarny Karzeł (Black Dwarf Group) - films screening. Selected by Małgorzata Winter.

Cinema ŁDK

April 14th, 2012 Saturday 5pm Registered - opening of the Anka Leśniak's exhibition The Film Museum - Łódź Pl. Zwycięstwa 1

The artist based her work on conversations with women artists who began their careers in the seventies and have been active till now, and asked the question why so few of them have remained active, compared with male artists from the same generation.

Today it is a common belief that many women practice as artists and the problem of equal rights for men and women has been solved. Anka Leśniak in her project *Registered* asks the question, whether this belief can be supported with facts. Has indeed the number of exhibitions by women artists in art galleries substantially increased over the last three decades? Are there many more women lecturers in art schools? And finally, do women artists today feel that the problems which the older generation of artists came across still exist?

Registered consists of a video installation, paintings and an art book. The starting point for the installation consisted of interviews that Anka Leśniak conducted with young artists. The video installation is a kind of a dialogue between artists and it presents a lively image of the situation of women in contemporary Polish art. Anka Leśniak also did research in the archives of selected galleries that have been active since the seventies. Based on the data collected, she compared the number of female to male exhibitions throughout the years. The statistics were shown in the form of apparently abstract paintings that contain, however, encoded information. The art book includes fragments of statements that influenced the artist the most when talking to artists of her own generation.

In the project *Fading Traces* the artist stood to one side, as a mere listener of the stories told by older artists who were reconstructing the atmosphere of their youth based on memories, creating an "oral history", that is different from the history written by art historians.

In the project *Registered* she voices her own opinions as she is also part of the current art scene. Problems that are currently talked about are her own problems as well, and she questions her contemporaries born in the seventies and eighties. A time loop that demonstrates both the changes, and also the persistency of stereotypes appears. A continuing process emerges that talks about the pioneer role of women in art of the seventies, that prepared the ground for the today's women artists.

The artists participating in the project are: Karolina Breguła, Izabela Chamczyk, Agnieszka Chojnacka, Iwona Demko, Monika Drożyńska, Magda Komborska, Anka Leśniak, Katarzyna Majak and Kamila Mankus.

text: Karolina Jabłońska

translation: Małgorzata Kaźmierczak, Anne Seagrave

This project was supported by an award from the Creativity Promotion Fund. More on the project's web site: http://www.lodz-art.eu/zarejestrowane

Anka Leśniak is active as an artist in genres such as: installation, art action, painting, video-art. She has participated in more than 40 individual and group shows. In her art she mainly focuses on the history of women and makes site specific artworks. In 2003 she graduated from Art History in the University of Łódź. In 2004 she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź with honours. In 2011 she received a Stipend from the Creativity Promotion Fund of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

#### 6pm

Why women-artists disappear? - panel discussion with participation of the artist together with Anna Markowska and Izabela Chamczyk. Moderator: Eliza Gaust co-organizer: Łódzki Klub Krytyki Politycznej

The Film Museum - Łódź

The project entitled *Zarejestrowane / Registered* is another work by Anka Leśniak that focuses on the role of women in history and art history. *Registered* continues with the themes undertaken in the work *Fading Traces*, in which the artist tried to investigate why the names of women artists faded away from art history.

#### 7pm

Film on Art - historical category and contemporary filming possibilities Film screening.

The Film Museum - Łódź

The Film on art show is another regular feature of the Art and Documentation Festival. The aim of the curator - Tomasz Komorowski is to renew a formerly popular type of a documentary film, that is the film on art.

Films of that group were mainly short-features, very often presented as supplements before the 'main' film. At that time the Review of Films on Art was held in Zakopane.

These films had to be made by cinematographers due to the requirements of production and technology. Today everybody can make a 'film on art'. The technologies that are available now allow film documentation to adopt various artistic forms and illustrate a variety of aesthetic images. They also show the various professional approaches to art.

Curator noted that a formerly popular type of documentary film, that is the film on art has ceased to exist nowadays. However, films on art belonged to a separate category in the whole cinematographic production. Here, two different approaches were possible, e.g.: film-albums based on exhibited works, as well as impressions or metaphors where pictures and film resources were to bring up associations with the works of art. Among them there were many film forms and methods to present art and the artists. In the seventies the category also included film experiments being created within the conceptual art main-stream (actually each structural or extended film is a film about film and therefore a film on art). These films had to be made by cinematographers due to the requirements of production and technology. For example, films made at WFO were well prepared theoretically as it was compulsory to prepare the screenplays and specifications in advance, and therefore the role of the cinematographer was essential. Works exhibited at FSiD were mainly films, as film made the best documentation of works of art and the technical resources to create them were accessible.

Today everybody can make a film on art. Subsequent editions of the Festival will continue presenting archival films on art. Moreover, starting from the Festival 2012, films on art being currently made will be presented in an open competition. That is why we would like to restore an art film category. It concerns both an interest in making such films and a return to the theoretical reflection analysed from different research perspectives, its formal-artistic independence and the discussion by authors upon how art can be documented in a film. This year a discussion after the show in the Film Museum, attended by cinematographers, cameramen, curators, artists and documentary filmmakers has proved that the general concept of the film on art comprises a great number of different topics and creative attitudes.

Films based on performances exemplified the tasks faced by documentary filmmakers - creators of films on contemporary art. The discussion afterwards has revealed that filmmakers pay attention to the image first while curators primarily focus on presenting the essence of the performance. Moreover, it indicated potential areas for exchanging experiences. Nowadays modern technical possibilities reduce such limitations as the length of a film and there are no longer any requirements from FSiD in this respect. These aspects show that the possibilities in film and art are enormous. At the same time, is the creation of an engaging film more important than reflecting the true content of documents? At current FSiD it has been discussed that performance art requires paying attention to its artistic specificity and corresponding film resources, though this approach concerns any kind of art. Thus the discussion relates not only to categorizing film approaches but also categorizing art genres (e.g.: the types of performance art). The films presented as part of the Film on art show during the 4th Art and Documentation Festival were made specifically by the directors in response to the cinematographic category: 'film on art'.

The 'film on art' category is a subject of constant theoretical reflection as part of the festival, with reference to the research on its methodology and categorisation.

The festival projections are connected with discussions between filmmakers about the ways art can be documented in the form of a movie. The discussions are attended by cinematographers, cameramen, curators, artists and documentary filmmakers.

The works from the 'film on art' category will be presented as part of an open competition. We would like to renew an interest in making such movies, in order for the category to gain a formal and artistic independence as documentary cinematography.

#### Programme:

Strefy kontaktu, by Małgorzata Potocka
Trzy wnętrza, by Małgorzata Potocka
Gdzie wiatr poniesie, by Andrzej Papuziński
Brzuch, by Andrzej Papuziński
Dokumentacja 81, by Ryszard Waśko
Wernisaż, by Ryszard Waśko
Gerard Jurgen Blum-Kwiatkowski, Centrum Sztuki Galeria El w Elblągu, by Róża
Fabjanowska, Sławomir Malcharek (2011)

April 15th, 2012, Sunday

6pm

Trajektoria - Julia Kurek - exhibition

ODA - Piotrków Trybunalski

ul. Dąbrowskiego 5

*Trajectory* is an installation based on the documentation of performative action from the series entitled 'actions with my parents'.

The presentation of actions with parents will be on to LCDs. Between them, there will be a photo on the wall, that you can see below.

The photo was taken on May 31st, 1985, on my first birthday. Video documentation

#### My Dad and I

5<sup>th</sup> Performance Art Festival, CSW Toruń

I entered a room full with people and I saw my Dad. I hugged him to say hello. Next to us there was a projection of a photo of us, taken on my first birthday. We were standing like this for around 15 minutes, until my Dad became very tired. He whispered to my ear that he can't keep standing like this and he left the room. I was standing for a while yet and left through a different exit.

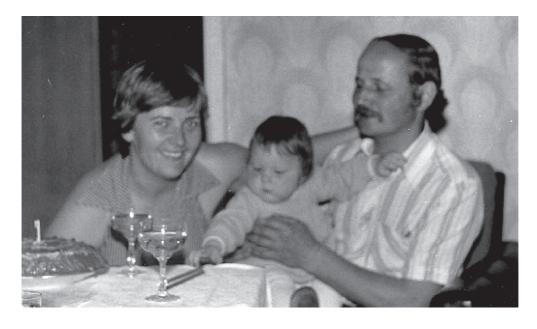
Video documentation

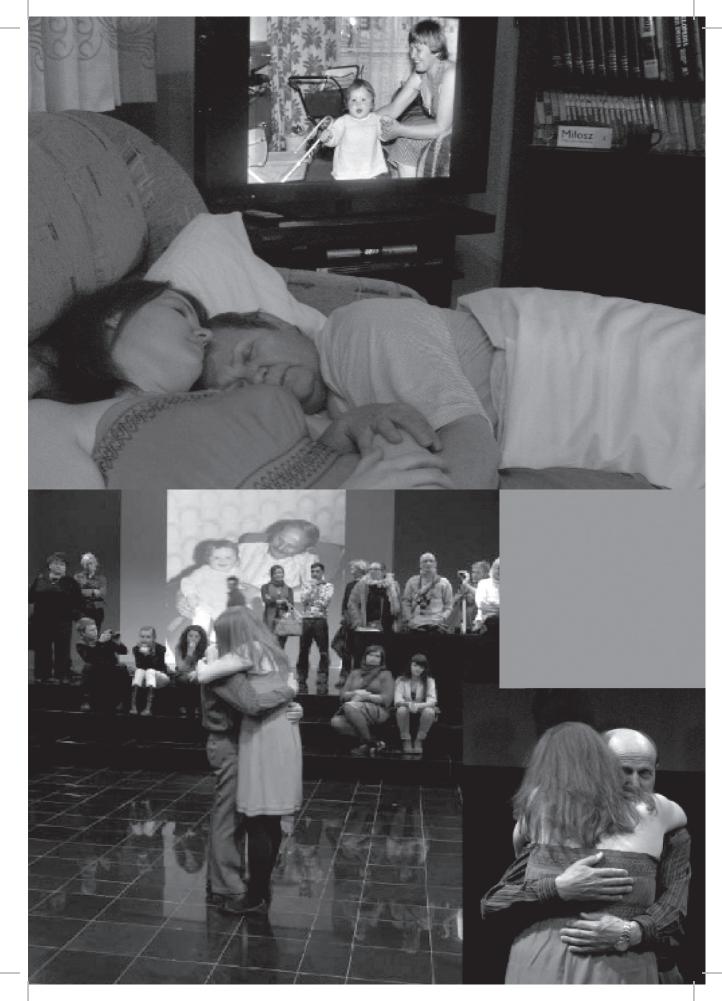
My Mum and I

My house, Radom.

My Mum is in bed, a moment later I came to her and layed down next to her. On a TV screen close to us, there is a photo of us, when I was a little girl. It was taken on my first birthday. I was laying next to my Mum holding her hand, we were talking for a while. My Mum was telling me that she is weaker than she used to be, that she get tired more easily. When she fell asleep I kissed her forehead, I turned off the light and left.

text: Julia Kurek





April 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 2012, Wednesday, Thursday 6 pm A show of Artur Żmijewski's films Świetlica Krytyki Politycznej in Łódź: ul. Piotrkowska 101, lewa oficyna, I piętro A two day show of the most important works of Artur Żmijewski.

A two day show of a dozen of the most important works of Artur Żmijewski at Świetlica Krytyki Politycznej in Łódź will accompany the premiere of the book: Żmijewski. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej (Żmijewski. Krytyka Polityczna\_s guide) - an illustrated guide presenting the art of probably the most important Polish representative of crtical art practice. We will show both older works such as Lekcja śpiewu (Singing Lesson) or a film Berek (Game of Tag) that was removed from the exhibition Obok (Side by Side), as well as newer movies: Powtórzenie (Repetition) and Wybrane prace (Selected Works).

Artur Żmijewski, (born in 1966) - is a visual artist, who between 1990 and 1995 studied at the Sculpture Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, where he received his diploma under the tuition of professor Grzegorz Kowalski. In 2005 Żmijewski represented Poland at the 51st Art Biennale in Venice, with his movie: Repetition. He is currently Art Director for Krytyka Polityczna, magazine. In 2007, he published a collection of interviews with various artists entitled Drżące ciała (Shivering Bodies). He is the author of a manifesto entitled Stosowane sztuki społeczne (Applied Social Arts), which is one of the mostly discussed texts about contemporary art. Among others he created Wybrane prace (Selected Works), 2006-2007, Demokracje (Democracies), 2009, Katastrofa (Catastrophy) 2011. In 2012 he will be a curator of the Berlin Biennale.

#### **Visual Text**

Gallery of the Andrzej Pierzgalski. Publication of art works in the *Art and Documentation* #6 journal. Throughout the history of modern art, there have been many art forms featuring text. Beginning from cubist paintings, in which there were letters, numbers, words, fragments of sentences and collages of texts, through abstract poetry, simultaneous recitation in Dada, Marcel Duchamp's language games, visual poetry and *poesia visiva*, the importance and the meaning of a word in Fluxus, from Pop Art on the one side, to conceptualism on the other.

However, apart from our experiences of text in art, each of us also has our own experience of text in everyday life. When we walk down the street, we read all the time, constantly creating collages made by fragments of words and sentences. Furthermore, the nature of our thoughts is textual.

Inspired by these two sources - the discourse of art and everyday life - we can find material for new artistic activities based on text.

As part of the 4th Art & Documentation Festival, we opened the Andrzej Pierzgalski Gallery, named after the legendary founder of the A4 Gallery in Łódź in the seventies. This is organised in the form of a presentation of works in A4 format, attached to the *Art and Documentation* journal. It may consist of artists' texts, quotations and artists' statements, mini-essays, registrations of conversations, handwritten notes, etc. These may take various graphic and typographic forms.

Please send your proposal as an already prepared textual or graphic work in A4 format, or in the form of an electronic file. All submitted work should be black and white. Colour can be used if it is in a close relationship with the text.

Works will be evaluated by the Festival's Organising Committee.

The first publication of the gallery's works was in the 6th issue of the *Art and Documentation* journal.

Please, send your proposals to the *Art and Documentation* journal's office: ul.Wschodnia 29/3 90-272 Łódź Poland

e.mail: sid@free.art.pl





• Visegrad Fund