

90 s

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International
Conference

**Scars:
Reflections
on Art and Society
in Central-East Europe
in the 1990s**

Conference Programme &
Book of Abstracts

Organizers

Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Institute of Art History, Zagreb

Conference Concept

Sanja Sekelj, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

Janka Vukmir, Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Scientific Committee

Konstantin Akinsha, PhD, independent researcher and curator, USA/Ukraine

Michal Koleček, PhD, Faculty of Art and Design, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem

Ljiljana Kolešnik, PhD, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

Ivana Mance, PhD, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

Ksenia Nouril, The Print Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Organizing Committee

Sanja Sekelj, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

Janka Vukmir, Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Jadranka Vinterhalter, Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Darko Šimičić, Tomislav Gotovac Institute, Zagreb

Ana Ćurić, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

The conference is organized within the research project “History of Artistic Institutions in Croatia” (PU-IPU-2019-6), conducted at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb.

The conference was originally organized in collaboration with the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka to accompany the exhibition 90s: Scars, within the project Rijeka2020: European Capital of Culture.

The conference is financially supported by the Institute of Art History, Goethe Institut Zagreb, City of Rijeka, Rijeka2020: European Capital of Culture.



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Introduction

The conference *Scars: Reflections on Art and Society in Central-East Europe in the 1990s* has been organised to accompany the exhibition *90s: Scars*, featuring artworks from around twenty Central-East European countries that deal with social situations and political changes of the 1990s that are still present in personal and collective memories, and/or visible in the social reality and public space. Since the last decade of the 20th century only recently began receiving more scholarly attention in Croatia, the main goal of the exhibition and the conference is to initiate further interest in the research of the period, as well as to engage in a dialogue with researchers who deal with the countries that share similar or comparable political histories and cultural backgrounds. By gathering a wide array of academics, independent researchers, curators and theoreticians from thirteen countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Latvia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand, Ukraine, the United States of America), some of who are early-career scholars, while others actively have participated in the cultural field of the decade in question, the aim of the conference is thus to engage in a transnational and intergenerational dialogue.

The conference addresses a wide array of topics, ranging from the challenges of defining the Central-East European region and the accompanying terminological issues, networks of power relations after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the interrelationship between the national, international and transnational social and cultural spaces in the new countries, as well as the self-organisational and self-institutionalising strategies of the actors in the cultural field. In addition to the examination of the interfaces between art and political activism, the conference also touches upon the role of the new networks that emerged in the 1990s, such as the Syndicate mailing list or the network of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, as well as the artistic phenomena that originated or gained greater prominence in the 1990s, like socially engaged art, net art or public art. With the wide range of topics and approaches and a number of distinctive spatial perspectives, we hope that this conference will serve as a contribution to a horizontal interpretation of the art of the region, while simultaneously offering new insights and perspectives that will contribute to our understanding of the changes in the cultural field and its relation to the wider socio-political frameworks in the decades that followed.

Conference programme

DAY 1

Friday, 9th July 2021

10.00 – 10.15

Introductory remarks

Janka Vukmir, President of the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb

Sanja Sekelj, Institute of Art History, Zagreb

10.15 – 11.00

Chair: Sanja Sekelj

Konstantin Akinsha (independent researcher and curator, USA/Ukraine):

Art on the Ruins of the Empire. Ukrainian Contemporary Art during the 1990s

11.00 – 11.15

Discussion

11.15 – 11.25

Pause

Session I

11.25 – 12.40

Chair: Asta Vrečko (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana & Božidar Jakac Art Museum, Kostanjevica na Krki)

Cristina Moraru (The George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași):

Art Exhibitions as Instruments for Social and Political Change in Central-East Europe in the late 1990s

Christian Nae (The George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași): Critical Curating and Self-Institutionalizing Strategies: Institutional Critique in Romanian Art during the “long 1990s”

Barbora Hájková (Faculty of Art and Design, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem): The establishment of the role of curator in the Czech Republic in the 1990s

Discussion

12.40 – 13.10

Pause

Session II

13.10 – 14.05

Chair: Lea Vene (Organ vida, Zagreb)

Anne Pfautsch (Kingston University, London): Othering the East: The Ostkreuz – Agency of Photographers

Miha Colner (Božidar Jakac Art Museum, Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia):

Narratives in Opposition. Socially Engaged Photography as Art in Slovenia in the 1990s

Discussion

14.05 – 14.40

Pause

Session III

14.40 – 15.35

Chair: Stevan Vuković (Belgrade)

Stella Pelše (Institute of Art History, Latvian Academy of Art, Riga):

An Introverted “Spatial Turn” in Latvian Contemporary Art of the 1990s

Darko Šimičić (Tomislav Gotovac Institute, Zagreb): POINT BLANK. Art, Life and

Politics in the Work of Tomislav Gotovac in the 1990s

Discussion

DAY 2

Saturday, 10th July 2021

10.00 – 10.45

Chair: Sanja Sekelj

Andreas Broeckmann (Leuphana University Lüneburg / Berlin):

Histories of Media Art in Deep Europe in the 1990s

10.45 – 11.00 **Discussion**

11.00 – 11.10

Pause

Session I

11.10 – 12.25

Chair: Željko Blaće (artist and researcher in new media, Croatia)

Anya Smirnova (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London): Beyond East and West:

The Case of “Deep Europe”

Keiko Sei (independent researcher, Bangkok/Yangon): Utopia, Open Society and Temporary Autonomous Zone: the Impact of Art of Central-Eastern Europe in the 1990s on the World

Dijana Protić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka): Exploring the Influence of Media-Scape on the Croatian Media Art Scene in the 1990s

Discussion

12.25 – 12.35

Pause

Session II

12.35 – 13.50

Chair: Lujo Parežanin (independent researcher, Zagreb)

Kaja Kraner (independent researcher): Tactics of Defining: an Example of Defining Eastern Art by the Museum of Modern Art in Slovenia

Bojan Ivanov (independent researcher, Skopje) & Jon Blackwood (Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen): The Short Century, the Long Nineties and the Present: Visual Culture and the New Contemporary in Macedonia

Milena Dragičević-Šešić (UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy and Management & University of Arts, Belgrade): Artistic Counter-public and its Self-Organized Models: Stories of Dissent and Rebellion from Serbia

Discussion

13.50 – 14.30

Pause

Session III

14.30 – 16.00

Chair: Janka Vukmir (Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb)

Jadranka Vinterhalter (Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb): Contemporary Art Documentation of the SCCA Network – Aim, Content, Range, Present State

Sandra Bradvić (University of Bern): In Transition to a Transnational State: Curatorial Agency in Bosnia-Herzegovina based on the Example of SCCA Sarajevo

Jasna Jakšić (Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb) & Tihana Puc (independent researcher, Zagreb): The Development of the SCCA Network – Case Study Croatia

Željka Tonković (Department of Sociology, University of Zadar) & Sanja Sekelj (Institute of Art History, Zagreb): From Cultural Narratives to Social Structure: A Qualitative Structural Analysis of the Soros Network in Croatia

15.30 – 16.00 **Final Discussion**

Keynote lectures

KONSTANTIN AKINSHA

Art on the Ruins of the Empire. Ukrainian Contemporary Art during the 1990s

The formation of the Ukrainian contemporary art scene started at the end of the 1980s with the establishment of the local version of trans-avant-garde. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has no developed tradition of underground art. By the beginning of the 1980s, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was the most ideologically conservative part of the USSR. Kyiv Art Institute, the leading institution of higher education, was more reminiscent of the Bolognese Academy of the 17th century than a contemporary art school. However, young Ukrainians found an unexpected application for the skills in academic painting, converting antiquated painterly devices of Social Realism for the new purpose. Having a quite superficial understanding of the ideas of Achille Bonito Oliva, they used reproductions in western art magazines as a source of inspiration.

In 1991 the Soviet empire broke down, and Ukraine declared its independence. The 1990s became the period of the chaotic efforts of the new state to formulate its artistic policy manifested by the regression of the Soviet institutions, the complete absence of state funds to support culture, the struggle of different conservative art groups for domination over the national art scene and the official rejection of contemporary art for the sake of the nationalistic salon.

The establishment of SCCA (the Soros Center of Contemporary Art) first in Kyiv and later in Odessa became a game-changer. The institution soon turned into the alternative Ministry of Contemporary Art, providing not only generous support to the artists but organising essential exhibitions and events as well. It is not an overstatement to state that SCCA dominated the artistic landscape in the country during the first half of the 1990s. The proposed presentation will analyse the period of Sturm und Drang of Ukrainian contemporary art and the formation of the cultural policy of the country.

Konstantin Akinsha is an art historian, curator and cultural journalist. He received the title of Candidate of Science from the Research Institute of Art History in Moscow (1990) and PhD from the University of Edinburgh (2012). From 1996 to 1998, he held the position of Chairman of the International Advisory Board of Soros Centers of Contemporary Art. For his journalist activities, Akinsha was awarded the George Polk Memorial Award for reporting on culture (1991), the National Headliner Award (1996) and The Society of Silurians Excellence in Journalism Award (2009). Among the exhibitions that Akinsha has curated are: *I am a Drop in the Ocean. Art of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Künstlerhaus, Vienna, Austria, 2014), *Russian Modernism: Cross-Currents of German and Russian Art, 1907–1917* (Neue Galerie, New York, USA, 2015), *Permanent Revolution: Ukrainian Art Today* (Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary, 2017), *Between Fire and Fire. Ukrainian Art Now* (Semper Depot, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna, Austria, 2019).

ANDREAS BROECKMANN

Histories of Media Art in Deep Europe in the 1990s

The 1990s were a decade of transformations, both political and personal. For some people a period of violence, of separation and loss, while for others they were a decade of encounters, of joyful and frustrating experimentation. Everyone was on their own trajectory, also in the ever-emerging media art field, however, there were meeting places in which our paths crossed, oases and caravanserais where we shared ideas and food and stories. In this talk I want to review some of the sites of artistic production and international encounters that were happening at the time and that for me personally constituted some of the most formative stopovers in the coming-together-apart of Post Cold War Europe. They include the Infermental video project, Van Gogh tv's Piazza Virtuale, the Ostranenie and wro festival series, Metaforum and the Next 5 Minutes conferences, as well as the various meetings of the Syndicate network. One of these meetings, at *documenta X* in Kassel, ran under the title of *Deep Europe*, referring to the essential layering and shifting of multiple identities that has formed the ground of culture in Europe for centuries. The 1990s might be significant for our present situation because it was then that the sometimes-unbearable tension between locality (with its burden of tradition and false certainties) and translocality (with its fatal loss of relations and a sense of place) was first felt as a new and generalised contemporary condition.

Andreas Broeckmann is an art historian and curator who lives in Berlin. He works at Leuphana University Lüneburg and has been engaged in the research and documentation project, Les Immateriaux Research, since 2015. He was Visiting Professor for Art History and Media Theory at the Academy of Fine Arts, Leipzig (HGB, 2017–2020), and at Oldenburg University (2016–2017). He has curated exhibitions and festivals in major European venues, including transmediale and ISEA2010 RUHR. Broeckmann maintains the Spectre mailing list (since 2001) and was one of the founders and coordinators of the Syndicate network (1996–2001). He holds a PhD in Art History from the University of East Anglia, Norwich/UK, and lectures internationally about the history of modern and contemporary art, media theory, and digital culture. He is the author of *Machine Art in the Twentieth Century* (MIT-Press, 2016).

**Abstracts of
conference presentations**
(Listed alphabetically)

SANDRA BRADVIĆ

In Transition to a Transnational State: Curatorial Agency in Bosnia-Herzegovina based on the Example of SCCA Sarajevo

On grounds of the Dayton Peace Agreement from 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina found itself divided into two ethnically different entities by its constitution. Former cultural state (Yugoslav) institutions were lost in the transition from one to the other socio-political system and have remained caught in the legal limbo until this very day. Self-organised collectives and non-profit organisations, on the other hand, were strongly concerned with social and political conditions of their own artistic and curatorial practice, understanding it as a medium to create a new, participatory public sphere.

Nevertheless, many authors of contributions to art history about “Eastern European art” have focused their research on the singular artwork, adhered to a western-modern, object-oriented perspective, and, in this way, have repeated the method of canonisation, only from the Eastern European perspective. By choosing to treat the complex relational structure of an exhibition as an “object” of the investigation of art history, my examination, instead, dispenses with an ascription of the investigated examples to either Eastern or Western art history, treating them instead as a specific type of curatorial practice.

This conference contribution focuses on SCCA’s involvement in the international large-scale exhibitions of Central and East European art during the 1990s and 2000s. It critically examines the role which both, western and eastern curators played within the scope of the emancipation and mystification of contemporary art from Eastern Europe and seeks to answer the following questions: Should non-profit organisations such as SCCA still be seen as an alternative current, since their counterpart, namely the public art institutions became largely dysfunctional in the 1990s? Were they able to challenge traditional mandates of institutional work that adhered to nationally oriented representation models? Can the integration of curatorial practice in the research field of art history be considered as a constructive way to overcome the dualistic conceptions of the narratives of art history?

Sandra Bradvic is an art historian, curator and art critic. She has worked as both lecturer and curator at several educational and cultural institutions, including the Institute for Art History at Zurich University, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Kunsthalle Basel and most recently Muzeum Susch. In 2017 she founded the Association for research, documentation and artist representation SKLOP in Sarajevo, where she is organizing The ZVONO Award – The Young Visual Artist Award for contemporary artists from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Currently she is working as a scientific collaborator at the Bollag Galleries Archives in Zurich and is completing her PhD thesis *Institution and Self-Organization. Historiography of Curatorial Practice in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1982–2011* at the University of Bern.

MIHA COLNER

Narratives in opposition. Socially Engaged Photography as Art in Slovenia in the 1990s

In my talk I will discuss the transformations in the field of art photography (photography created for the gallery/artistic context) in the 1990s on the territory of Slovenia while drawing parallels with other states of the former Yugoslavia. I will analyse the socio-political contexts and showcase specific practices that critically addressed the political, social and economic changes in the period of the so-called “transition to democracy” throughout the 1990s.

Even though the new political system of parliamentary democracy and free-market economy gave artists the freedom to express their criticism of the anomalies and absurdities in society even more freely than in the 1980s (when they often targeted the paradoxes of socialist ideology), the attempts to critically analyse the new situation were relatively rare. On the other hand, the field of art photography was changing immensely on a technological and a conceptual level, which brought the medium into galleries and museums. Contemporary photography became a powerful means to reflect on the changing reality in the post-socialist society and certain photographers and lens-based artists addressed the issues that were marginalised in the dominant media and public discourses. Based on a case study of Slovenia (with references from other parts of the former Yugoslavia), I will discuss some key political contexts that became the main subjects of certain photographers and artists who addressed phenomena such as the uneven distribution of once common ownership and the consequent stratification of society, changing histories and the creation of new national narratives, as well as the loss of solidarity and the turn to individualism.

Miha Colner (1978) is an art historian who works as a curator at Božidar Jakac Art Museum, Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia. He is also active as a lecturer and a publicist, specialised in photography, printmaking, artists' moving image and various forms of (new) media art. In the period 2006–2016 he was a curator at Photon – Centre for Contemporary Photography, Ljubljana. Since 2005 he has been a contributor to numerous newspapers, magazines, specialist publications and his personal blog (<http://mihacolner.com>). He lives and works in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

MILENA DRAGIĆEVIĆ ŠEŠIĆ

Artistic Counter-public and its Self-organised Models: Stories of Dissent and Rebellion from Serbia

The dissolution of Yugoslavia, wars and socio-political transition have influenced existing cultural and educational institutional systems. Re-etatisation, nationalism and isolation (socio-political, economic and cultural embargos) have reshaped cultural values and policy priorities, as well as the entire cultural realm. Numerous artists, curators, theoreticians have left institutions, choosing different strategies of inner and outer exile as well as strategies of self-organisation, rebellion and active dissent.

In this paper I will explore the cultural and artistic counter-public in Serbia that strived to self-organise through numerous artistic collectives (Led Art, Škart, FIA, Magnet etc.), one-time projects relying on private spaces (exhibition *Public-Private*) or through marginal public spaces such as railway stations, car parks, parks, green markets in Serbian cities supported by Radio B92 (curator Darka Radosavljević). The focus will be on the transmediality of artistic work that used a transdisciplinary approach, connecting different media formats in communicating the artistic message (i.e. performative art forms that connected walks with photography, video recordings and installations).

At the same time these events were organised, the transcultural regional and European links and networks had been generated, starting with Dibidon and Counter Dibidon (Ljubljana–Belgrade 1994) that were first “international crossings” of Serbian artists under embargo until the *Art Generator* exhibition (Brussels, 2000), connecting self-organised artists and curators from the Balkans. The research explores three phases of the rebellious artistic scene: 1) Urbazona 1991–1994 (artistic collectives and Radio B92 as the “curator”); 2) cultural platforms REX, SCCA and CZKD (1994–1999), and 3) self-organised endeavours (1999–2001).

The paper will address how networks and civil society platforms, through festivals (*AlterImage*) and workshops (*Against Windmills*, digital education for visual artists, REX) contributed to the reshaping of the artistic scene, its “responsibilisation” and its dialogue with the critical counter-public that would lead towards the new phase of artistic activism through theory (2001 onwards).

Milena Dragićević Šešić, PhD, is the former president/rector of the University of Arts in Belgrade. She is currently the Head of the UNESCO Chair in Interculturalism, Art Management and Mediation. She is a UNESCO expert and civil society activist, while her research interests include cultural policy and management, art activism, alternative art, intercultural dialogue and the culture of memory. She was a member of the National Council for Science (2006–2010), head of the Art and Culture sub-board of the Open Society Foundation (2000–

2007), board member of ENCATC and ELIA. She is a Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Palmes Academiques (French Ministry of Education 2002), and ENCATC laureate in 2019. She has held guest lectures at numerous universities across the world and has published 20 books and more than 150 articles that have been translated into 17 languages: *Art and culture of dissent* (2018), *Vers les nouvelles politiques culturelles* (2015), *Art and alternative* (2012), *Art management in turbulent times: adaptable quality management* (2005).

BARBORA HÁJKOVÁ

The establishment of the role of curator in the Czech Republic in the 1990s

The presentation will give an overview of broader curatorial activities, as well as a theoretical and historical contextualization of the curators' agency on the Czech art scene during the nineties. The role of curators, as we know it from the international art scene, began to fully form in the Czech Republic during the "transformation" period – after the revolution in 1989. Based on selected examples, the presentation will offer a comprehensive analysis of the formative process of the establishment of the role of curator, as well as the establishment of the exhibition as medium, used as a means of communication and as a method for formulating opinions and defining art tendencies.

Although the development of the Czech art scene had its specificities during the transformation period, it is nevertheless possible to trace paradigmatic divisions and tendencies that reflect global development: 1) the postmodern turn, represented by curators such as Jana and Jiří Ševčík, Milena Slavická and Ludvík Hlaváček, who set up the Soros center in 1992; 2) re-politicization and social engagement, which appeared in the first half of the 1990s under the influence of New Genre Public Art and is represented by curators such as Ludvík Hlaváček, Marek Pokorný and Michal Koleček; 3) the new media turn, absent from the Czech art scene in the communist period, and reflected in the work of curators such as Milena Slavická, Ludvík Hlaváček or Miloš Vojtěchovský; and finally 4) the reflection of gender, which appeared in curatorial activities and theoretical reflections with a greater delay, and is represented by the work of curators such as Martina Pachmanová. By describing different curatorial strategies, my aim is to show how and to what extent specific curators influenced the direction and the development of contemporary art in the Czech Republic.

Barbora Hájková has a degree in Curatorial Studies from the Faculty of Art and Design, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. She is enrolled in the postgraduate program of the same university since 2019. Her research focuses on curatorial activities and the way they can influence and shape private collections

of contemporary art. She regularly publishes recorded interviews about current exhibitions at the UMA Audioguide platform and publishes articles in Flash Art Czech and Slovak edition. Barbora Hájková occasionally organizes art projects and curates exhibitions of contemporary art.

BOJAN IVANOV & JON BLACKWOOD: The Short Century, The Long Nineties and The Present: Visual Culture and the New Contemporary in Macedonia

This paper will consider visual culture in Macedonia from its independence day in September 1991 until around 2006. Addressing the changed ways in which artists, audiences, institutions and independent initiatives interacted during this time, it will present the notion that the 1990s were, in fact, a “long decade,” characterised by the emergence of a visible but thinly populated contemporary art world that lost the Yugoslav audience and struggled to build a new following amongst the new country’s transitional bourgeoisie.

The paper will consider three main topics of interest. What was called the New Art Practice elsewhere in Yugoslavia came very late to Macedonia. The 1990s, therefore, were a decade where these new(ish) practices began to assume a simultaneous hegemony and obsolescence as the patterns of consumption and production of art changed fundamentally. Secondly, with so many urgent and pressing priorities in the crisis years of 1991–1993, it was little surprise that the funding of culture and the maintenance of the cultural network in Macedonia suffered. This section would look at the fate of the institutions during the 1990s and early 2000s. Finally, we will consider the ways in which being an “independent” artist mutated in the long 1990s in Macedonia, in the timespan between the dissolution of Group Zero at the very beginning of the 1990s to the emergence of new artistic partnerships such as OPA (Obsessive Possessive Aggression) at the turn of the century.

These three broad areas of discussion, presented by means of a critical dialogue, will give an overview of the impact of the long 1990s on visual culture in Macedonia and suggest how this very specific and contingent context can map meaningfully onto developments elsewhere in the region. Time will be given at the end of the presentation to listening to the echoes of the long 1990s in contemporary visual culture.

Bojan Ivanov is an art historian and the former director of the National Museum of Macedonia. From 2007 to 2012 he directed the independent Mala galerija in Skopje. He works today as an independent activist and cultural producer.

Jon Blackwood is a curator and historian of contemporary art based between Aberdeen, Sarajevo and Skopje. He is a reader in contemporary art at Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, and the author of *Contemporary Art in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Duplex 100m2, 2015) and *Critical Art in Contemporary Macedonia* (Mala galerija, Skopje, 2016). He has curated shows of contemporary art across the UK and in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

JASNA JAKŠIĆ & TIHANA PUC

The Development of the SCCA Network – Case Study Croatia

The presentation aims to trace and analyse the development of Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA) network in the 1990s in the countries that emerged from the break-up of Yugoslavia. The main focus will be on the SCCA Zagreb, however, the presentation will also touch upon the activities of the centres established in Ljubljana, Belgrade, Skopje, Sarajevo and Tirana, the central venue of the network in Budapest, as well as the centres with which the SCCA Zagreb has had joint and collaborative projects, such as Sophia, Prague, Bratislava, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and Kiev.

Founded in Budapest in 1992, as a part of cultural policy of the Open Society Institute, the SCCA network introduced not only new practices in the documentation, dissemination and presentation of contemporary art in post-socialist countries but in project-based organisation and collaboration between the Centers as well. At the beginning of the 1990s, when art institutions and organisations in those countries were striving towards the West, the SCCA network promoted collaboration between the art scenes of Central and Eastern Europe. With the aim of situating SCCA Zagreb into the wider network of SCCAs, it is precisely the relations emerging from these collaborations and their implications on the participating actors that are the focus of the presentation. In order to explore the development and the character of the network established through the activity of the SCCAs and the links between the actors involved, the data about collaborations and exhibitions will be collected and analysed computationally. The distant reading of the network data will enable the unveiling of the underlying structure of the network and the relations between the nodes that mediated the collaborations and artists' circulation. Furthermore, the data about the artists who participated in the SCCAs exhibitions will be collected and analysed to examine the impact of the network on their trajectories with respect to both the regional and broader international context.

Tihana Puc graduated in art history and ethnology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. She holds a PhD in the Management and Development of Cultural Heritage from the IMT Institute for Advanced Studies in Lucca. She has worked at the Department of Art History at the University of Rijeka (2005–2008), at the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (2004, 2008–2010), and she is currently employed at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia.

Jasna Jakšić graduated in art history and Italian language and literature, as well as librarianship at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. She has been working in the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb since 2004, and she manages the Library and Documentation and Information Department. She has curated numerous exhibitions and coordinated international collaboration projects such as *Digitizing Ideas* (2010–2012) and *Performing the Museum* (2014–2016).

KAJA KRANER

Tactics of Defining: An Example of Defining Eastern Art by the Museum of Modern Art in Slovenia

In one of his articles from 2004 Slovenian art historian and curator Igor Zabel detected an important change in the understanding of – and by it necessarily valuating – the geographical and cultural position of the arts from Central-East European region at the beginning of the post-socialist transition. Namely, at the end of the 1980s, the established methodology of historicising and defining art from the region – i.e. the methodology focused specifically on the validation of “natural ties” with Western art history – was beginning to be perceived as a sign of its “easternness” and by it, provinciality. The 1990s were a period when the concept of the “East” began to mark not so much the (past) political and economic system but the cultural identity (and by it something allegedly substantial), as well as a period of increased interest in the arts of the region by the “Western art world.” The paper will focus on the ways this new situation regarding geographical and cultural positioning of arts of the region was challenged in curatorial and collecting policies of the central national institution for modern and contemporary art in Slovenia – the Museum of Modern Art, from the 1990s onwards. It will, therefore, focus specifically on the Museum of Modern Art’s international collection *Arteast 2000+*, particular exhibition selections from the collection, as well as on some of the history of art approaches this institution is basing its programme on (for instance, the concept of horizontal art history by Piotr Piotrowski).

Kaja Kraner holds a PhD in humanistic sciences at the AMEU-ISH Ljubljana, Slovenia. In the past, she has been active as an art critic, producer and curator of contemporary art (as an associate of Pekarna Magdalenske mreže). She is currently a member of the editorial board of the journal for contemporary art theory and criticism *ŠUM*, active as a freelance researcher and writer about contemporary art, art theory, aesthetics and cultural policies and an associate of Slovenian art institutions and organisations as a freelance lecturer and curator. In her doctoral thesis, she explored the narratives of contemporary art in Slovenia, the relationship between the production of knowledge and value within the art field and paradigms of aesthetic education in art since modernity.

CRISTINA MORARU: Art Exhibitions as Instruments for Social and Political Change in Central-East Europe in the Late 1990s

Given the reconfiguration of power relations after the fall of the Iron Curtain, in which the domination of the centre (towards which any marginal art scene should orient, adapt or integrate) disappeared, a new network of power relations – interconnected at a regional, transregional and transnational level – started to develop, in a continuous process of transformation and reconfiguration. Since the central monolithic power was de-structured, the meta-narration that functioned as a canon of integration in a dominant structure of the art scene (vertical and hierarchical) was disestablished, and new alternative structures (subversive, active and aggressive) were constituted, proposing a series of micro-narrations which functioned as models of resistance, generators of self-legitimising contra-narrativity.

Thus, the artistic counter-narratives are expanding as the marginality is multiplying and the former East European Block is becoming a discursive space, open to an international dialogue. Exhibitions, as mediums of interactivity, are producing and reproducing knowledge and experiences that react to the ideological and socio-political tensions of the moment. Therefore, exhibitional thinking is not just a reflection of some concrete social facts, or some evident social and economic realities, since the exhibition could impose itself as a form of power, capable of modulating – punctually and circumstantially – the public imaginary, and of designating a potential mechanism of the circulation of cognitive and cultural capital that could respond to the hegemonic forms of dominance.

In the former East-European Block, the post-communist transformation of the public sphere could be described as a modality of avoiding the centralisation of mass production and the distribution of the communist ideology towards a resuscitation of an autonomous political-public scene, in which art exhibitions could be seen as ways of reconstructing the state by shaping and expanding the social imaginary and creating alternatives to the old narratives of Central and Eastern Europe.

Cristina Moraru (1987) is an art theoretician, curator and editor from Iași, Romania. She has a PhD in aesthetics and she is working as an assistant professor at the George Enescu National University of the Arts (UNAGE) Iași. She is the editor of the volumes published by the Research Centre of UNAGE and (co)editor of the academic journal *Studies in Visual Arts and Communication*. She is a founding member of The Centre for Contemporary Photography (CFC) Iași. She has participated in numerous international study programmes abroad, such as the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) Iconic Criticism, University of Basel; the Collaborative Research Centre of Affective Societies, Freie Universität Berlin; New Europe College Institute for Advanced Studies, Bucharest; the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Kuldīga; Salzburg International SAFA; the East European Performing Arts Platform (EEPAP), Lublin; Stacion – Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina, and other independent institutions, such as Cose Cosmiche, Milan.

CRISTIAN NAE: Critical Curating and Self-Institutionalizing Strategies: Institutional Critique in Romanian Art during the “long 1990s”

Practising discourse analysis, the paper reviews several paradoxes that took place in Romanian contemporary art during the 1990s from a comparative perspective with the second and third waves of critical curating and institutional critique taking place in former Western countries, regarded as emancipatory cultural practices: the self-colonising desire to implement specialised curatorial practices and adopt capitalist art exchanges; the adaptation of “new institutionalism” to socially-engaged and community-based art under the influence of the Soros Art Centers; the adoption of new media as a “universal” artistic language. In the second part of the presentation, I briefly present several key projects and tactical manoeuvres that addressed the deficiencies of the institutional structure supporting contemporary art at that time: the curatorial critique of the museum as a monolithic and authoritarian entity practised by Judit Angel at the Art Museum in Arad; the revisionist critique of art history as a canonical narrative supporting the state apparatus of power practised by SubREAL in their projects *How to Change Your Wallpaper Daily* and *Serving Art*; and the strategic, long-term artistic critiques of artistic education established by Lia and Dan Perjovschi through the CAA (Contemporary Art Archives) and performances realised in the framework of *Periferic Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Iași. These art projects are all serving as self-institutionalizing strategies which continue the experimental art practice of the 1980s in Romania, forced to invent spaces and strategies for exhibiting in conditions of cultural isolation and censorship. They also question the nascent figure of the curator, imported from the West, from the perspective of the local artist, who was forced to contribute to the curatorial act before 1989.

Cristian Nae (1979) is an art historian and theorist. He is an associate professor at the George Enescu National University of the Arts in Iași. He received research grants and fellowships from the Erste Foundation, Vienna; the Romanian National Research Council (CNCS-UEFISCDI), the Getty Foundation, Los Angeles; the New Europe College Institute for Advanced Studies, Bucharest; and the CAA-Getty International Program. He is currently a senior advisor in the project *Periodization in the History of Art and its Conundrums. How to Tackle them in East-Central Europe* (New Europe College, Bucharest), supported by the Getty Research Institute's programme *Connecting Art Histories*. His latest studies have appeared in *ArtMargins*, *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, and in edited volumes published by Routledge (2018), de Gruyter (2020) and Wiley Blackwell (forthcoming), among others. He has written for the artist monographs *Decebal Scriba. 70s-80s Works* and *SubREAL* published by Kettler Verlag and MNAC/Verlag für Moderne Kunst. He curated the Romanian participation at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019).

STELLA PELŠE

An Introverted “Spatial Turn” In Latvian Contemporary Art of the 1990s

While “spatial turn” is a broad-ranging term in the humanities, related to microcosms, geography, landscape, etc., it is used here in a specific sense of transcending the boundaries of traditional fine arts (painting, sculpture and graphics) towards innovative three-dimensional creativity and the specificity of place. Although the first installations entered exhibition spaces in the 1980s and experiments presented as design solutions and synthesis of arts emerged even before, the 1990s marked a clear shift towards engaging with both real space and new materials. Artists trained in painting, graphics, etc., began to paint on the walls of buildings instead of canvases, created installations or even made land art, sculptors took up manipulations with ready-mades, applied artists used plastic, metal wires, even snake skins, etc. This turn certainly did not affect every artist to the same degree because the art market, replacing the Soviet-period state commissions, was oriented towards abstract, retrospectively stylised or moderately realistic works produced in substantial numbers. However, these are not commonly seen as belonging to the field of contemporary art, usually defined as focused on topical issues of the present.

On the one hand, this “spatial turn” can be explained by the lifting of all restrictions on artistic expression and international contacts when Latvia's independence was restored in 1991, allowing artists to catch up with their Western colleagues' output of several decades. On the other hand, there was also an institutional stimulus, as the Soros Center for Contemporary Art-Riga (established in 1993) became the main supporter of fresh tendencies with its annual exhibitions where the results of these experiments could be mani-

fested. Regardless of similarities to Western neo-avant-garde trends and the ready-made tradition, this “spatial turn” largely turned out as more introverted and asocial, signalling a possibly important local peculiarity.

Stella Pelše is a leading researcher at the Institute of Art History (Art Academy of Latvia). Her research interests include 20th-century art and art theory of Latvia, art criticism, aesthetics and contemporary art. She defended her PhD dissertation, entitled *History of Latvian Art Theory: Definitions of Art in the Context of the Prevailing Ideas of the Time (1900–1940)* in Riga in 2004, published in 2007. She has contributed to numerous publishing projects, such as *Deviņdesmitie. Laikmetīgā māksla Latvijā = The Nineties. Contemporary Art in Latvia* (Riga, 2010), *Atsedzot neredzamo pagātni = Recuperating the Invisible Past* (Riga, 2012), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks* (Leiden & Boston, 2012), *Eesti Kunstimuseumi Toimetised = Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia: Shared Practices: The Intertwinement of the Arts in the Culture of Socialist Eastern Europe* (Tallinn, 2016), etc. She is one of the principal authors and translators in the multi-volume project *Art History of Latvia* launched in 2013 (vol. 4: 2014; vol. 5: 2016; vol. 3: 2019).

ANNE PFAUTSCH

Otherring the East: The Ostkreuz – Agency of Photographers

In this paper I will discuss different types of otherness associated with East Germany, viewed through the lens of photography in the post-communist era. The year 1989 signified the end of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and resulted in the reunification of East and West Germany. This historic moment inscribed East Germany into a democratic political system, which entailed tremendous social and economic transformations. These repercussions facilitated the emergence of an otherness and respectively the othering of East Germany. After the formal reunification, the differences between an Eastern and a Western German identity became apparent; forty years of diverging political, social and economic practices resulted in two societies that promoted the differentness of the other party as well as themselves. I aim to ascertain how photography fed, countered or claimed the portrayal of the Eastern region's otherness by analysing the works of the Ostkreuz – Agency of Photographers, a photo agency established by seven East German photographers in the wake of Germany's reunification. Its foundation in 1990 was informed by the photographers' attempt to develop a strategy for their professional survival. The founding members were well-established photographers in the GDR, and they had some significant ties to newspapers and magazines from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), such as *GEO*, *STERN* and *Der Spiegel*. Ostkreuz's early years were marked by jobs and assignments predominantly located in the

Eastern region. In my presentation, I aim to establish how the seven photographers both mediated and resisted the proliferation of the East German self as the othered identity through their photography.

Anne Pfautsch is a PhD candidate and associate lecturer at Kingston University. Her thesis focuses on The Ostkreuz – Agency of Photographers and scrutinises the impact of documentary photography from the German Democratic Republic on contemporary practice. Her article “The Function of Documentary Photography from the German Democratic Republic as a Substitute Public” was published in the journal *Humanities* in 2018. Anne’s research interests include photography, culture and gender politics in late and post-Soviet times, memory and identity, feminist and Marxist methodologies in art history. She also works as a freelance curator of contemporary art and photography. Amongst other exhibitions, she curated *La condition humaine* (co-curated with the Ostkreuz – Association of Photography, La Vieille église Saint-Vincent, Bordeaux) and *Postindustriale* (Tapetenwerk, Leipzig).

DIJANA PROTIC

Exploring the Influence of Media-Scape on the Croatian Media Art Scene in the 1990s

One of the central roles in the development of media and digital art in Croatia was played by Media-Scape, an international meeting of artists held in Zagreb from 1993 to 1999. Its curators, organisers and founders were Ingeborg Fülepp, Heiko Daxl, Bojan Baletić and Malcolm Le Grice. Although preparations for the first Media-Scape began back in 1991, the first meeting was not organised until 1993 because of the war that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Once a year the curators of Media-Scape managed to gather artists, scientists and theoreticians in the exhibition and symposium to discuss the past and future of the media art. In this presentation I will analyse the influence of Media-Scape on the Croatian media art scene in the 1990s while referencing simultaneously notable international careers that the then emerging artists would later have. I will explore artworks exhibited at Media-Scape by Croatian artists, such as Dan Oki, Sandra Sterle, Darko Fritz, Ivan Marušić Klif and others, in relation to the general development of media art, the artists’ personal poetics, social and political circumstances, while also delineating and examining different artistic methods and strategies used to create art projects. Media-Scape was the international crossroads of many artists and scientists, and many collaborations and connections were made as a result of it. Since this case has not yet received any scholarly attention, this research is the first attempt to map, analyse and interpret this early manifestation of media art practice in Croatia, as well as the significance it had for its later development.

Dijana Protić (Zagreb, 1985) has a masters in fine art (MFA) degree in dramaturgy from the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb. In March 2014, she enrolled in the postgraduate doctoral study of publishing and media at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, within which she is working on the mapping, history and practice of new media art in Croatia and Slovenia between 1988 and 2008. Her research and artistic interests are related to media art, visual arts and moving images, reception of visual information, digital technology and art. Her first directed film was a short documentary film *Kampanja, oliva corcyrae nigra* (Sintoment, 2009). She is currently working on a virtual reality project about women workers in a shipyard on the island Korčula (Siva zona, Sintoment), and as a collaborator in the Centre for Innovative Media at the Academy of Applied Arts, Rijeka.

KEIKO SEI

Utopia, Open Society and Temporary Autonomous Zone: the Impact of the Art of Central-Eastern Europe in the 1990s on the World

For artists, cultural practitioners and society in general in Central-East Europe, the 1990s were the period when the region made an impact on the world: with the correlational aspects of eliminating the wall and the dictatorship, the opening of the opportunities to connect to the world and the emergence of the Internet, the region practically manifested itself as the birthplace of a new utopia. Artists were the forefront of the manifesto, and as a result, the early net art was dominated by East European and Russian artists. There were lively discussions in online forums as well as discussions in person, and international theorists frequented the region to join these discussions. The crucial background of this is the Open Society Fund/Institute and the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) network founded by George Soros. On the basis of Karl Popper's idea of Open Society, they provided local artists with platforms of thinking, creating and communicating while promoting free media. With this near-miraculous combination of factors, Central-East Europe in the 1990s was the time and the place where we could see, perhaps for the last time, artists playing the avant-garde role.

The author travelled around Eastern Europe in the pre-Internet 1980s, carrying information in the form of videocassettes in and out of the region, collaborating with SCCA and early net artists and theorists in the 1990s, and since the 2000s, she has been passing this experience and knowledge onto media and political activists in Southeast Asia. This presentation will thus highlight how the creative activism of Central-East European artists in the 1990s is still relevant and contributes to change in another part of the world even today when anticipation for a new utopian society seems to have faded away and extreme nationalism is creeping into the entire world.

Keiko Sei is a writer, curator and media activist. After having worked as a video curator in Japan, she moved to Eastern Europe in 1988 to research media/independent media in the region. After the region's change, she continued to work on the issue of independent media/media activism and art in the former Yugoslavia in connection to the civil war, as well as in the wider region of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In 2002 she moved to South East Asia to extend her work and research in the farther East where she started film education in Myanmar and helped with the launch of the Wathann Film Festival/Institute. Her curatorial projects include *The Media Are With Us!: The Role of Television in the Romanian Revolution* (Budapest, 1990), *The Age of Nikola Tesla* (Osnabrück, 1991), *Eastern Europe TV & Politics* (Buffalo New York, 1993), *POLITIK-UM/New Engagement* (Prague, 2002), and *Re-designing East* (Stuttgart, Gdansk, Budapest, Seoul, 2009–2013). She writes and teaches worldwide.

DARKO ŠIMIČIĆ

POINT BLANK. Art, Life and Politics in the Work of Tomislav Gotovac in the 1990s

In the time of global political changes during the 1990s, Croatia was involved in a brutal war, the repercussions of which would last for decades. Within this political and cultural framework, I would like to present a short overview of the works of Tomislav Gotovac (1937–2010), a Croatian multimedia artist who created some of his most remarkable works during this period. He was active in a turbulent time in which he persistently tried to find a free space for his experimental and radical art practice, as well as for personal freedom. His uncompromised approach earned him the title of “rebel artist,” while he simultaneously also received prizes for films, had exhibitions in most important contemporary art museums or performed in public places in several cities in Yugoslavia and later in Croatia.

During the 1990s, Gotovac designed several exhibitions and actions in the frame of his long-term project titled *Paranoia View Art*. As he explained: “my life (my art) has been made up of two things: one – observation (gathering) of material, and two: the search for meaning, idea (soul). *Paranoia View Art* is the concentration camp, kitsch, torture, cliché, brainwashing, socialist realism, sadomasochism, repetition, directed by minimalism, Hollywood, irony. An action, performance, happening, or installation is the best suited to a public space and a public space is best suited to brutal political activity.” Therefore, as an artist he took the position of narrator in “movies” directed by other more powerful “directors,” but he still found a way to create his own story about the next global war (Sarajevo, 1990), open his own *Museum of People's Revolution of Tomislav Gotovac* (Franklin Furnace, New York, 1994) or stand firmly as a guardian (*Watch on the Rhine*, Zagreb, 1994).

Darko Šimičić (1957) is an art critic and curator based in Zagreb, Croatia. He was a co-founder of the Tomislav Gotovac Institute in Zagreb, where he is currently working as a researcher and secretary. He has previously worked at the Soros Center for Contemporary Art/Institute for Contemporary Art (1996–2006) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2006–2009). His professional interest is focused on avant-gardes in the 1920s and 1930s (Zenithism, Dada, Bauhaus, photomontages) and groups and individuals in Croatian art in the 1960s and 1970s (Gorgona, Mangelos, Group of Six Artists, Tomislav Gotovac). He was a member of the project team of Tomislav Gotovac's retrospective (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, 2017) and co-editor of the book *Tomislav Gotovac: Crisis Anticipator*, published at that occasion.

ANYA SMIRNOVA

Beyond East and West: The Case of “Deep Europe”

The 1990s saw an increased interest in art from former Eastern Europe, and its introduction into the international art market and biennial circuits. As the Cold War borders were dissolving and the geopolitical basis for identifications such as “Eastern Europe” were disappearing, a critical discourse on “the East” was emerging in the sphere of art and culture. Negotiated through collecting, archiving and curating initiatives, it aimed at critically interrogating the specificities of “the East’s” marginal position vis-à-vis the “West.” Some scholars advocated for the strategic deployment of “the East” as an activist position from which to combat the hegemonising forces of globalisation. This position was met with resistance by others who believed that to use such terms meant to re-inscribe post-1989 Europe back into the Cold War binaries.

The proposed paper will examine how such debates that characterised the early postsocialist period played out in the new media networks that allowed unprecedented levels of international communication and collaboration between artists, curators and media activists. In 1997, the Syndicate mailing list, initially set up with the intention of connecting new media practitioners in the “East” and the “West,” changed its *modus operandi* to a mailing list for “Deep Europe.” This paper will examine the concept of “Deep Europe” as a possible alternative to the East-West dichotomy, contextualising its emergence in relation to a broader shift in postsocialist discourse: from the focus on bridging the gap between the East and West in the early 1990s to formulations that aestheticized European unity in anticipation of the sixth European enlargement. Against the view of new media as proximate to the processes of globalisation and historical amnesia, this paper will discuss the usefulness of technological metaphors for re-conceptualising “the East” in its historical complexity and hybridity.

Anya Smirnova is a second-year PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art and Tate. Her PhD research focuses on new media art practices in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and ex-Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the dissolution of the socialist governments after 1989 and is co-supervised by Prof Julian Stallabrass (Courtauld) and Juliet Bingham (Curator of International Art, Tate). Her thesis will position new media in the historical context of post-1989 political, economic and social transitions, and examine how local histories of art of the 20th century – actively researched, archived, exhibited and increasingly made accessible online throughout the 1990s – have informed activist and critical responses to the neo-liberalisation of former Eastern Europe.

JADRANKA VINTERHALTER

Contemporary Art Documentation of the SCCA Network – Aim, Content, Range and Present State

The documentation of contemporary art, including artists' files and comprehensive documentation, was one of the main tasks of each Soros Center for Contemporary Art within the SCCA Network. The Open Society Foundations in each country allocated funds to SCCAs purposely aimed for managing the documentation of art, which was a unique case. The experts, both SCCA employees and curators and art critics with whom they cooperated, were over-viewing the recent art scene, the production of most distinguished artists as well as emerging young artists, documented their works and projects, interpreted and presented them in various ways. The documentation was the basis for conceiving the SCCA annual exhibitions, common art projects (SCARP), artists' participations in international art events (*Venice Biennial, Sao Paolo Biennial, Documenta, Manifesta* etc.), and further publishing programmes.

This focus on art documentation marked the awareness and importance of enriching both national and international art history and art theory, the understanding of the indispensability of museum and gallery institutions, as well as emphasising the role of curators, art critics and curatorial practices. In some countries the weakness or even lack of contemporary art infrastructure was substituted by the activities of the SCCAs. Consequently, the Centers encouraged the development of art institutions and art production throughout the 1990s, directing them towards neo-avant-garde and post-conceptual art, installations, performances, media art, provoking a great impact on the entire art scene.

Through years of activity during the 1990s, a broad and rich contemporary art archive was built within the SCCA Network. After research and analyses, an overview will be given about the present state of art documentation in each SCCA, providing details of where is it housed or stored, whether is it available for experts/the public, whether it has been digitised and other aspects.

Jadranka Vinterhalter is an art historian, curator and museum counsellor. She graduated art history (museology) at the University in Belgrade in 1971. Her work as a curator has, since 1974, encompassed numerous fields of museum practice: public relations, educational programmes, head of museum collections, exhibition curating, the organisation of workshops and events, publishing projects and visual arts documentation. She has worked in several institutions in Zagreb and Belgrade: the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (1974–1984), the Museum Documentation Centre Zagreb (1984–1994), Soros Center for Contemporary Art SCCA-Zagreb/Institute of Contemporary Art SCCA Zagreb (1994–2000), and the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (2000–2013). She retired in 2013 since then working on several large-scale research and exhibition projects, such as *Bauhaus – networking ideas and practice – BAUNET* (2013–2015) (in collaboration with Vesna Meštrić) and *90s: Scars* (2018–2021) (team member). She was also the editor for the contemporary art segment in the *Likovni leksikon / Lexicon of Visual Arts*, published in Zagreb in 2014.

ŽELJKA TONKOVIĆ & SANJA SEKELJ

From Cultural Narratives to Social Structure: A Qualitative Structural Analysis of the Soros Network in Croatia

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and describe the networking practices that ensued from the network of Soros foundations in Croatia, by way of conceptualising them as “netdoms” (White, 2008), in which common aesthetic, political and social meanings are shared. The Soros Network here refers to the Soros’ Open Society Institute and a number of its spin-offs, such as the SCCA-Zagreb or CDU. Although these programmes have served to build or maintain the cultural infrastructure, encouraged the international careers of many artists, and helped to create conditions for contemporary critical artistic practices, Soros’ presence in Croatia was critiqued by some of his beneficiaries for introducing neoliberal values along with new structures. This paper describes how the Croatian cultural workers see the structure of this network, its main actors and the quality and dynamics of its ties, as well as what kind of values were disseminated through the network and how they influenced the contemporary art scene in Croatia. The analysis is conducted on 30 semi-structured narrative interviews with key protagonists of the Croatian art scene of the 1990s (conducted between 2015 and 2018), in which they reflected on their own networking practices, important actors, projects or places of networking or ways in which the socio-political context affected networking practices. This qualitative analysis of interviews is complemented with network visualisations of the Soros network, based on the data gathered through interviews and additional history of art research, and analysed with the help of social network analysis.

Željka Tonković is an assistant professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Zadar. She graduated in history and sociology at the same university, while in 2012 she gained her PhD in sociology from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Her research interests include network analysis, the sociology of culture and urban sociology. She researches various aspects of networking within the cultural sector, the development potential of cities and local communities, cultural capital and cultural consumption. She regularly cooperates with independent cultural associations. From 2012 to 2018 she was the coordinator of the Sociology of Space section at the Croatian Sociological Association.

Sanja Sekelj is a research assistant at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, Croatia and a PhD candidate at the postgraduate programme in humanities at the University of Zadar from 2015. She is researching artist networks, art associations and art groups of the 1990s and early 2000s, with an emphasis on new media networks and the strategic networking of cultural workers on the independent cultural scene. She was a member of the scientific research project ARTNET (2014–2018) and a member of the curatorial team of the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery (until 2019). She is the executive editor of the scientific journal *Život umjetnosti* and team member of the project “Models and Practices of Global Cultural Exchange and the Non-Aligned Movement: Research on Spatio-Temporal Cultural Dynamics” (Institute of Art History, 2020–2023).

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