

ABSTRACTS OF THE SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

Ieva Astahovska (LV). Post-Soviet Condition in Contemporary Art in Latvia

Interest in the so-called post-Soviet reality has become a topical tendency in contemporary art. After the “amnesia” of the 1990s and early 2000s, it seems possible to view the past in a more dispassionate way. Young artists are the first to negotiate their “relationship to history”, take up “archaeology” of socialist period and the complex related issues.

Establishing concrete strategies in this field of “excavations”, various tendencies emerge. The spectrum varies from ironic, post-colonial reflections on the local social reality as a European province and still persistent otherness visually and mentally shaped by the Soviet period, to nostalgic enthusiasm about the gradually disappearing imprints of socialism in the everyday culture. Anonymous or private stories about either recognised or hidden traumas hindering adaptations to the today’s capitalism can be contrasted with progressive “post-communist condition” in which the Soviet heritage can serve as a critical instrument of contemporary reality. In this presentation, the author will attempt to identify which of these strategies predominate in Latvian art.

Dovile Tumpytė (LT). Artistic Imagination & the Glimpses of the Socialist Past

The presentation will focus on a strategy of dealing with the Socialist Past and modernity in the Lithuanian contemporary art practice of the recent decade that does not seek to reveal traumatic experiences, but rather prefers to play intellectual and perceptual games with aesthetics of forms, mentality or certain social and cultural phenomena, and myths of Socialist reality. The post-memory artistic imagination shows its transformative power to reshape the memory of the past approaching it differently – as a cabinet of curiosities. The traumatic experience is being defeated (or neutralized) by the desire for intellectual satisfaction.

Rael Artel (EE). Your Periphery Is My Centre

In her presentation Rael Artel will introduce the project series titled as Your Periphery Is My Centre and discuss the artistic practices of younger generation artists from Eastern Europe. She is interested in the attitudes of the artists who face and participate in the process of transformation and reflect to the ideological clashes in Eastern European societies.

The project Your Periphery Is My Centre is imagined as a framework to explore, map and present the contemporary artistic positions that take a critical stance towards the social, political and cultural surroundings generated during the last two decades after the fall of the Wall.

Vytautas Michelkevičius (LT). Nida Art Colony as a Place of Exoticism: Between Nature Sites and Post-soviet Reality

It is already the third year when artists are coming to Nida to spend from 1 to 4 months in the residency. Most of them are from Western Europe and Northern America and one of the reasons which bring them

here is unknown post-soviet reality of Eastern Europe. One of their goals is to get to know the other side of the Europe. The short overview of the residency activities will be followed up by critical questions. How does the residency function in the context of myths on tourism, post-soviet reality and (post)romantic nature? How does the residency function as a (critical) tourism agency? Why do people come to remote place and how do artists/curators live and work for a longer time in the periphery?

Arnis Balčus (LV). Photographing the Forgotten and Invisible

Arnis Balčus has been dealing with Latvian identity in his works already for several years, especially focusing on collective memories and models of behaviour. These are most clearly manifested since the series Amnesia that actualises various Soviet-time everyday rituals, up to the most recent series Latvian Notes in which the artist explores the public space and people's gathering habits in Riga and smaller towns of Latvia.

Sophia Tabatadze (GE). Pirimze

In her presentation artist will tell about her on-going research project titled Pirimze. Pirimze building was built in 1971 in Soviet Georgia. It had 6 floors and hand-workers of all kinds were employed there. Basically everything could be repaired here, shoes, watches, glasses, jewellery, bags, suitcases, belts, hairdryers, kitchen machinery... Knives and scissors could be sharpened, hair could be cut and shoes polished. People in the whole city would use Pirimze's services. All the hand-workers had their private-like booths. These booths had personal interiors – covered with cut-outs from foreign glossy magazines, photos of naked girls, hand drawn advertisements. In summer 2007 all the workers were dismissed from their work and Pirimze was torn down. In the place of old Pirimze now stands Pirimze Plaza. The word "plaza" in Georgian language is a foreign word, showing the direction Georgia is taking, changing names into exotic sounding definitions without changing people or fundamental direction. Pirimze Plaza will be yet another shopping centre and business offices. Some hand-workers from the old Pirimze will also be employed there paying high rent and getting a small workplace in cellar with no daylight. The interviews with former employees show an interesting parallel of what has happened to the building together what is happening to the whole country.

Tanel Randel (EE). East Europe in the Neoliberal Reality and the Decolonial Option

Eastern Europe that is based on difference from the West has become a myth, although some kind of difference still exists. What is the meaning of this difference and could this be the content for a new discourse of East Europe? The presentation introduces the decolonial option as a possibility to re-articulate the East European discourse.

Mārtiņš Kaprāns (LV). Communism Remembered: Unveiling the Latvian Biographical Discourse about the Soviet Era

The paper will reveal the thematic network supporting Latvia's biographical discourse of the Soviet period. Theoretical and conceptual analysis of a number of Latvian autobiographies (those of intelligentsia, former officials and deported persons) published since 1991 will be provided. The author will pay a special attention to the transformations of themes organising the biographical discourse over time.

Viktorija Eksta (LV). Project Time Travelling: Industrial Route with Poetic Stops

The author will present a paper on her research of the former Riga Film Studio production of the Documentaries Department – films, newsreels, their authors and aesthetic trends they represent.

Most people, when thinking about the Soviet films, first remember feature films like “Limuzīns Jāņu nakts krāsā” (Midsummer Night-coloured Limo) or mega-hits of the USSR. Such notions and names as “Riga School”, “Riga Poetic Documentary School”, Hercs Franks, Uldis Brauns, Juris Podnieks, Par 10 minūtēm vecāks (Ten Minutes Older), Vai viegli būt jaunam? (Is it Easy to be Young?), Šķērsiela (Side-street), are more specific but still quite well-known phenomena that influenced not just the history of Latvian documentaries. To understand why these films could be created exactly this way, it is important to outline the “background” and its expressive means as well – the wide field of films, newsreels and other “side products” encompassing, for instance, educative, industrial, popular-science and other “documentary” films.

Lina Michelkevičė (LT). People into (art)work: shaping the spectatorship in Lithuanian contemporary art

After the Soviet experience of “art to the people”, the post-Soviet artists adopted the vice versa strategy of bringing “people into artwork”. Spectators became “accomplices” making the complete existence of the artwork possible. Yet they did not collaborate as much as “participated” or became “involved”, the latter terms enabling artists and curators distinguish between those who have to remain anonymous participants and those who have to bear the burden of authorship.

If in the 1990s “participation” and “involvement” were mere an implicit sememe of popular art critical keywords, since the last decade they are among the slogans of (wannabe) contemporary art discourse. On the one hand, projects taking the form of events require a new quality of public participation. On the other - when collaboration, involvement and participation are to be the principal objective of a project, it seems that curators would readily curate a mere sense of communion, leaving it to participants to worry about the content of the project.

Analysing examples from Lithuanian contemporary art scene, the presentation will focus on distinguishing different types of audiences (accomplices, companions, watchers) and asking if the participator is about to put the observer in the shadow?

Magdalena Radomska (PL). How to Follow Marx Classy - Post-communist Art in Post-communist Europe

The lecture will focus on the criticism of capitalism in Post-communist Europe both after the fall of the communist regime and since the financial crisis of 2008.

Artists active during the seventies and eighties and still working after 1989 are equipped with the tool of Marxism and therefore able to perceive the oppressive and totalitarian nature of the regime. The financial crisis of 2008 strongly influenced and changed paradigms of contemporary art and parallel theoretical structures may be observed in numerous work of art, internet images and texts of post-Marxist philosophers.

The lecture will accentuate the evolution of artistic means within the scope of over twenty years. The theoretical framework of the lecture will be founded both with the text of Boris Buden pondering over the

necessity of the mutual conditioning of democracy and capitalism and with contemporary texts of post-Marxist thinkers such as Hardt and Negri, Žižek, Badiou, Agamben, etc.

Davor Mišković (HR). Socialism's Legacy: Utopia

Legacy of socialism is still present in the world. That is something that even conservatives are admitting, but where they see a problem I see an opportunity. For example, in a lecture by history professor Alan Charles Kors (<http://vimeo.com/21613629>) it is stated that socialism is based on the wrong premise that wealth is a consequence of natural environment, and socialism is not taking in account that wealth is a consequence of human labour and endeavour, like in liberal thought. What Kors and those alike don't see is the fact that capitalism itself doesn't see wealth as a consequence of human labour, but as revenue from capital and in its neo-liberal version, capital should be always and everywhere private.

Since socialism doesn't see wealth as a consequence of human labour it doesn't take into account human beings as unique beings with specific needs, endeavours and aspirations. For socialism key idea is equal distribution of wealth, no matter how much effort, intelligence and skill is invested in production of wealth. Socialism is simply unfair for those who are investing more.

However, vision of socialism in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia is positive. From the personal experience of those who lived in both systems widely spread belief is that socialism was a better one. People know that this was achieved on the expense of personal freedoms but they value social security more. Of course, today's vision of socialistic times is nostalgic but it is a cornerstone of our imagination of better future, future that is more just, equal and safe. And in that vision human being and his/her needs, aspirations and endeavours are taken into account...

Alesya Bolot (UA). Presentation about the IZOLYATSIA Platform for Cultural Initiatives and its context in the post-Industrial city

About the architecture of the factory complex and the whole city and what impact it is having now, program of activities related to this post-Soviet context.

Tamta-Tamara Shavgulidze (GE). „Gaudy butterfly neither fly away nor stay” or The last ten years of Georgian monumental sculpture

Georgian sculpture that was proclaimed in the public space for the last 70 years is like a visual documentation of frequently shifted national or social values in XX century, initiated by the different regimes in Georgia.

Since the 50's of XX century Georgian sculptors became the main actors in Georgian culture re-shaping process. They were connected with the visualization process of ethno-cultural identity. The sculptural discourse established then, didn't change till 2000s. In 2003 a new generation came. Previous president and parliament were the last functionaries of the Soviet times. The new generation of politicians presented themselves as the generation with Western education, who were ready to overcome the evil of Soviet times. At the first glance the beginning was not bad. But if one thinks about the sculpture policy the new government carried out since 2003 till 2013, we notice that they started to replace the key historical

sculptures and to erect statues of foreigners (or the streets named after them) who are hardly connected to Georgia, while one cannot find any sculpture that would remind, for instance, about the August of 2008 and those Georgians who were killed in this war. Obviously since 2003 the cultural decentralization process has started in Georgia, and the monumental sculpture is telling witness of this process.

What does a country, a nation and a society mean? They should have at least one similar feature – common values. Mixed vectors that lead nowhere are visualized in contemporary Georgian sculpture that reminds of a Georgian song about a little butterfly which is allowed neither fly away nor fly back.