

CONFERENCE

The Art–Labour Relationship in Contemporary Art in Central and Eastern Europe, 1991–present

May 9–10, 2024

Sapieha Palace, L. Sapiegos g. 13, Vilnius



KONFERENCIJA

Meno ir darbo santykis Rytų ir Centrinės Europos šalių šiuolaikiniame mene po 1991-ųjų

2024 m. gegužės 9–10 d.

Sapiegų rūmai, L. Sapiegos g. 13, Vilnius

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With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the restoration of democracy in Central and Eastern European countries, radical changes in all spheres of life were accompanied by equally remarkable changes in artists' working practices and conceptions. Eastern bloc countries, especially the former USSR members, rushed to embrace art practices and art histories they had missed under the control and censorship of now-collapsed regimes. New art forms and strategies (performance, installation, public interventions, collaborative practices, media art) flourished, and conceptual acuity and organisational competencies grew in importance alongside professional artists' skills, often even overshadowing them.

As observed by sociologists, the free-market economy reform and institutionalisation of democracy in European post-socialist countries coincide with more general changes in the capitalist system. These changes were marked by the rapid transnational accumulation of capital, the introduction of information and communication technologies in most areas of business and everyday life, and the acceleration in the pace of change in the labour market, which became more and more reliant on flexible, interchangeable, and episodic employment. The theme of labour – one of the most politicised and subordinated themes in visual arts in socialist countries – became again a subject for some artists who aimed to reflect the new economic, political, and social conditions of their practices. This self-awareness manifests itself both in new approaches to the subject of labour in works of art and in critical rethinking on the ways artists organise their work.

Although the conference focuses on the art-labour relationship in Eastern and Central European contemporary art since the 1990s, such a focus extends beyond these temporal and geographical contexts: newly emerged forms and meanings of artistic labour encourage us to look for comparisons or theoretical influences in other economic, political, and cultural environments. The conference brings together researchers, PhD students, and artists to address questions of the art-labour relationship, its local and regional histories, as well as its futures, in a globalised world where rapidly developing AI technologies provide not only new tools but also challenges established preconceptions about creative labour. Lastly, this urges us to rethink the social role of the artist in a time of ever-deepening political, social, and ecological crises.

Plyšus Geležinei uždangai ir atkūrus demokratijas Vidurio ir Rytų Europos šalyse, radikalius poslinkius visose gyvenimo srityse lydėjo ne mažiau ryškūs menininkų darbo praktikos ir sampratos pokyčiai. Rytų bloko šalys, ypač buvusios SSRS narės, suskubo perimti meno praktikas ir įsilieti į meno istoriją, kurią praleido kontroliuojant ir cenzūruojant dabar jau žlugusiems režimams. Suklestėjo naujos meno formos ir strategijos (performansai, instaliacijos, intervencijos į viešąją erdvę, bendradarbiavimo praktikos, medijų menas), o konceptualumas ir organizavimo gebėjimai tapo vis svarbesni, neretai netgi nustelbė menininko profesinius įgūdžius.

Sociologai yra pastebėję, kad ekonominės laisvosios rinkos reformos ir demokratijos institucionalizavimas Europos posocialistinėse šalyse sutapo su platesniais kapitalistinės sistemos pokyčiais. Šiai kaitai būdingas spartus tarptautinis kapitalo kaupimas, informacijos ir komunikacijos technologijų diegimas daugelyje verslo ir kasdienio gyvenimo sričių ir nuolat kintanti darbo rinka, vis labiau orientuota į lankstų, nepastovų ir epizodinį užimtumą. Darbo tema, kuri socialistinėse šalyse buvo viena iš labiausiai politizuotų ir kontroliuojamų vaizduojamojo meno temų, daliai menininkų, siekusių atspindėti naujas ekonomines, politines ir socialines sąlygas, vėl tapo meninės praktikos tema. Ši savimonė regima tiek naujame požiūryje į darbo temą meno kūrinuose, tiek meninio darbo organizavimo būdų kritinėse refleksijose.

Nors konferencijoje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama meno ir darbo santykiams Rytų ir Vidurio Europos šiuolaikiniame mene nuo XX a. 9-ojo dešimtmečio, tačiau ji peržengia šias laiko ir geografines ribas. Naujos meninio darbo formos ir reikšmės skatina ieškoti palyginimų ar teorinių įtakų kitose ekonominėse, politinėse ir kultūrinėse aplinkose. Konferencijoje dalyvaujantys tyrėjai, doktorantai ir menininkai kelia klausimus apie meno ir darbo santykį, jo istorijas konkrečioje šalyje ar regione ir jo ateitis globalios rinkos valdomame pasaulyje, kuriame sparčiai vystomos DI technologijos ne tik duoda naujus įrankius, bet keičia daugelį metų galiojusias kūrybinio darbo sampratas. O tai savo ruožtu skatina permąstyti socialinį menininko vaidmenį vis stiprėjančių politinių, socialinių ir ekologinių krizių laikais.

PROGRAMME / PROGRAMA

May 9 / Gegužės 9 d.

- 10:30 Welcome and Coffee
- 11:00–12:00 Keynote. Moderated by Edgaras Gerasimovičius
Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen
Neurons and Ruins – Behind the Scenes of Social Reproduction Since the 1990s
- 12:00–13:00 1st session. Moderated by Edgaras Gerasimovičius
Janice Mitchell
Giving Time – Artistic Practice Between Labor, Critique and Capital
- Jens Schröter (online)
Automatization and De-automatization in Art
- 13:00–14:30 Lunch at Miesto laboratorija
- 14:30–16:00 2nd session. Moderated by Lina Michelkevičė
Aušra Trakšelytė
Cemetery Of Artworks – A Service That Frees the Artist from Overproduction
- Jorge Sanguino
Extraction from the Informal Economy or Solidarity? The Relationship Between Informal Work and Mexican Art
- Tobey Yunjing Pan (online)
Archiving and Desiring the Alienated Self: From Self-Portrait with a Flag (1989) to KwieKulik Archive (1968–2024) of Zofia Kulik
- 16:00–16:30 Coffee
- 16:30–18:00 3rd session. Moderated by Paulius Andriuškevičius
Júliusz Huth (online)
The Hungarian Salon – The Crisis of Artists' Associations and Debates around Salon-Type Exhibitions in Post-Socialist Hungary
- Kristóf Nagy (online)
Artistic Work Beyond Precarity. Labor in the Orbán-regime's Hungarian Academy of Arts
- Sophie Mak-Schram
Socially engaged art as civic labour? Marina Naprushkina and Practices of (Art) Educating and Organising
- 18:00–19:00 Guided tour in the Sapieha Palace exhibition *Refuge*
- 19:00–20:00 Wine & Snacks at Sapieha Palace

May 10 / Gegužės 10 d.

- 10.30 Welcome and Coffee
- 11:00–12.00 Keynote. Moderated by Inesa Brašiškė
 Josefine Wikström
A Dance of Abstractions: The Dance Exhibition as a Critical Form in Contemporary Art
- 12:00–13:00 4th session. Moderated by Inesa Brašiškė
 Friederike Nastold, Thari Jungen
Curating as Caring and Mourning
- Lena Pozdnyakova, Janette Helm, Luise Willer
Critical Reflections on Artists as Organisers: Marina Naprushkina's Neue Nachbarschaft and Caroline Woolard's Institutional Possibility
- 13:00–14:30 Lunch at Miesto laboratorija
- 14:30–16.00 5th session. Moderated by Aušra Trakšelytė
 Marija Weste (online)
A Case Study of Confluence in Art, Labour, and Censorship in Soviet Latvian Film
- Agnė Bagdžiūnaitė
How to Talk About Labour Herstories Through Art
- Anne Pfautsch
OSTKREUZ – Agency of Photographers: Facing the Unknown Together
- 16.00–16.30 Coffee
- 16:30–18:00 6th session. Moderated by Karolina Jakaitė
 Jakub Banasiak
Painting as a Labour and a Critique of the Post-communist Transition: The Case of Przemysław Kwiek and Polish Art Scene of the 90s
- Julija Fomina
Everyone is an Artist but Only Artists Know That. Narratives of Lithuanian Contemporary Art in Exhibitions Curated by Artists and Art Critics
- Maija Rudovska
Fluctuations: Artist as Curator and Their Modes of Labour During the time Frame of Late 1980s and Early 1990s
- 18:00–19:30 Panel Discussion
 Edgaras Gerasimovičius, Vitalija Jasaitė, Robertas Narkus
Fantasies and Realities of Making Art While Doing Something Else: Experiences of a Small Art Scene

ABSTRACTS / ANOTACIJOS

SØREN ANDREASEN AND LARS BANG LARSEN

Neurons and Ruins – Behind the Scenes of Social Reproduction Since the 1990s

Our presentation intertwines the voices of artists and academics/curators, short-circuiting divisions of labour and enunciation in the art field. Put differently, in our dramatisation of recent history, the two of us are both symptoms and agents in the terrain that is the object of critique.

Considering art and labour in a *longue durée* from the 1990s until now, we set out to trace established epistemes (understood as 'sensitivity-templates'), and the contours of possible new ones, across discourse formations of art/aesthetics and labour. In an echo of sociological analysis that addresses micro and macro, we try to stake out a terrain where we keep an eye open for pockets, shadows, and lacunae that may offer divergent forms of agency, resistance to subsumption, and other temporalities within the dominant structures.

We will discuss four scenarios:

- 1) As a preamble to the fall of the Soviet Union, the crash of the art market in 1989 coincided with the first reports in the 'West' from the conceptual art scenes in Eastern and Central Europe, stimulating a rethinking of art as a micro agency (praxis).
- 2) After the end of bloc politics, the 'West' had little use for the Cold War era battle cry of 'freedom'. Other concepts, subjectivities, and sensibilities were now called for in the name of flexibilisation of aesthetic autonomy. How to work immanently with art and aesthetic questions within such a dynamic?
- 3) In the ensuing neoliberal regime, the Third Way project reconfigured the ideology of the aesthetic that led to the push for an integration of art and aesthetic tropes into social reproduction and subject production, generating a pervasive disruption of micro and macro perspectives.
- 4) As a way of posing the question of 'now what?', the notion of irritation might promise a type of post-dialectical, double-bound, embodied historical self-reflection vis-à-vis cultural phenomena whose reach into our being is fundamental.

SØREN ANDREASEN (b. 1964) is an artist, writer, and curator based in Copenhagen. He has taken part in exhibitions such as *A Contrafactual Exhibition*, CHPEA Museum, Herning, Denmark (2023), *The Plasma Incident*, Bonamatic, Copenhagen (2021), *Fuckers*, Galerie der Stadt Schwaz, Austria (2020), *Post Institutional Stress Disorder*, Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark (2019), *The 8th Climate*, 11th Gwangju Biennale (2016), *The Real After Psychedelia*, CAC Vilnius (2015), *Literacy-Illiteracy*, 16. Tallinn Print Triennale (2014), and *Leisure, Discipline and Punishment*, Contour 6, Mechelen, Belgium (2013). His publications include *Demon Slayer* (emancipa(t/ss)ionsfrigten, 2023), *Chang Yee/Mass and Order/Exoburg* (Antipyrine, 2019), *Towards a Lightness of Mind and Matter* (emancipa(t/ss)ionsfrugten, 2017), and *The Critical Mass of Mediation*, published together with Lars Bang Larsen (2012/14).
www.sorenandreasen.net.

LARS BANG LARSEN, DR., (b. 1972) is an art historian, curator, and writer. He is Head of Art and Research at AHC (Art Hub Copenhagen). He has (co-)curated exhibitions such as *Incerteza Viva*, São Paulo Biennale (2016), *Georgiana Houghton: Spirit Drawings*, Courtauld Institute, London (2016), and *Mud Muses. A Rant about Technology*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019). His books include *Palle Nielsen. The Model. A Model for a Qualitative Society* (MACBA, 2010), *Networks* (MIT / Whitechapel Gallery, 2015) and *Arte y norma* (Cruce, 2016). His PhD in art history dealt with the transculturation of art and psychedelia in a neo-avantgarde context.

JANICE MITCHELL
*Giving Time – Artistic Practice Between Labour,
 Critique and Capital*

Since the 1970s, labour has shifted towards being ‘increasingly based on cognition, knowledge, communication and affect there is a whole tendency for the whole person to become labour power’ (Isabell Lorey), a development that Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (*The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 1999), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (*Empire*, 2000) and Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi (*The Soul at Work*, 2009) have described as well. At the same time, Frithjof Bergmann’s theory of New Work popularised labour as an activity that should also reflect a person’s passions, dreams, and values, while Richard Florida’s concept of the creative class positioned the artist as the ideal worker. Work today is no longer purely characterised by the production of a physical object or the management of people and resources; it is ‘bios’, or ‘life itself’ that is put to work through our ability to self-organise around formal and informal rules, be resourceful outside of the official workday, and use our social ingenuity to get things done’ (Peter Fleming, *Resisting Work – the Corporatization of Life and its Discontents*, 2014).

Through a discussion between Pilvi Takala’s *The Trainee* (2008), Maria Eichhorn’s intervention *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* (2016), and Claire Fontaine’s concept of the Human Strike, I will show how labour has come to bleed over into every aspect of our lives, becoming an integral part of our identity, as well as how many of the qualities inherent to being an artist, such as creativity, ingenuity, and the desire to create, have been co-opted by capitalism, leaving little room for resistance or escape. Against this backdrop and framing my inquiry within the art- historical discourses surrounding institutional critique and in relation to Hannah Arendt’s differentiation between labour, work, and action, I will show how the work of these artists encompasses a critique of labour within neoliberalism and under contemporary capitalism.

JANICE MITCHELL is a researcher, writer, and curator of contemporary art. From 2018 to 2020, she was the Terra Foundation Collection Research Fellow in American Art at the Museum Ludwig, where she curated the exhibition *Mapping the Collection*. Her research focus lies on 20th and 21st century art and internet culture at the intersection of art, society, and politics. She is currently a PhD candidate at Central Saint Martins and works as a curatorial assistant at the Bonner Kunstverein in Bonn, Germany.

JENS SCHRÖTER

Automatisation and De-automatisation in Art

‘When studying poetic language – be it phonetically or lexically, syntactically or semantically – we always encounter the same characteristic of art: it is created with the explicit purpose of de-automatizing perception.’ This statement from Viktor Shklovsky’s famous text ‘Art as Device’ (1917/1919) shows the central role of the notions of automatization and de-automatization in Russian formalism. Shklovsky wrote this only a few years after the first assembly lines were installed. So, there might be a connection between the automatization and algorithmisation of work and production (and even of subjectivity) in capitalism as well as the reactions of art and art theory, where, at least in some strands, the idea is perpetuated that art is a kind of critical deconstruction of this process of automatisisation in modernity. In my essay, I will try to trace some of these developments and its contradictions, finally tackling the question of whether there are recent artistic approaches that try to ‘de-automatize’ our perception, automated by digital media technologies, in contemporary cognitive capitalism.

JENS SCHRÖTER, PROF. DR., has been chair for media studies at the University of Bonn since 2015. Between 2008–2015, he worked as Professor for Multimedia Systems at the University of Siegen, Germany, and was Director of the graduate school Locating Media at the same university from 2008–2012. He has been a member of the DFG-graduate research centre Locating Media at the University of Siegen since 2012. Schröter was (together with Prof. Dr. Lorenz Engell, Weimar, Germany) Co-director of the DFG-research project *TV Series as Reflection and Projection of Change* from 2010–2014. Between 2016–2018, he was a speaker of the research project *Society After Money – A Dialogue* (VW Foundation; together with Dr. Stefan Meretz; Dr. Hanno Pahl and Dr. Manuel Scholz-Wäckerle). Since 2018, he is also Co-director (together with Anja Stöffler, Mainz) of the DFG-research project *Van Gogh TV. Critical Edition, Multimedia-Documentation and Analysis of Their Estate*, and a speaker of the research project *Society After Money – A Simulation* (VW foundation; together with Prof. Dr. Gabriele Gramelsberger; Dr. Stefan Meretz; Dr. Hanno Pahl and Dr. Manuel Scholz-Wäckerle). In 2014, Schröter participated in the John von Neumann fellowship at the University of Szeged, Hungary, working as Guest Professor at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, People’s Republic of China later that year. In 2014–2015 he was a senior fellow researcher at the research group Media Cultures of Computer Simulation; in 2017, a senior fellow at IFK Vienna, Austria; in 2018, a senior fellow at IKKM Weimar; in 2020, a fellow at the DFG special research area 1015 ‘Muße’, Freiburg, Germany. Recent publications include: *Postmonetar denken* (as part of the project *Society After Money*), Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018; *Society After Money. A Dialogue*, London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2019; *Markets* (together with Armin Beverungen, Philip Mirowski, Edward Nik-Khah), Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press and Lüneburg: Meson (Series: *In Search of Media*), 2019; *Medien und Ökonomie*, Wiesbaden: Springer 2019. Websites: www.medienkulturwissenschaft-bonn.de / www.theorie-der-medien.de / www.fanhsiu-kadesch.de

AUŠRA TRAKŠELYTĖ
*Cemetery Of Artworks – A Service That Frees
the Artist from Overproduction*

This paper aims to explore the roles and positions of artists under perpetual pressure to create new products. It will look at the means of promoting artistic production and the reasons for the growing number of works that in some cases become a burden for the artist. The denominator that connects these issues is the Cemetery of Artworks, which was established by Juozas Laivys in 2015 and is a unique phenomenon both in Lithuania and internationally.

Cemetery of Artworks, matured throughout many years of creative practice, aims to amortise the excess of artworks through a specific art burial service for artists. It provides an opportunity for every artist to bid a respectful farewell to their work, advocating a clean and unpolluted world of conscious creators. The separation of the artist from the artwork that takes place at the time of the burial is based on the right of the work not only to an independent life, but also to death.

AUŠRA TRAKŠELYTĖ, DR., is a researcher at the Institute of Art History, Vilnius Academy of Arts. She has served as Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, since 2023. Since 2020, she is also Project Manager of the peer-reviewed periodical *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, published by Vilnius Academy of Arts. Her research interests include contemporary art (with a focus on sculpture, objects, and site-specific art) and contemporary art theory and criticism.

JORGE SANGUINO
*Extraction from the Informal Economy or Solidarity?
 The Relationship Between Informal Work
 and Mexican Art*

In Latin America, a large number of inhabitants work in the informal economy. Informal economy refers to all economic activities carried out by workers and economic units that are not covered or are insufficiently covered – by law or in practice – by formal arrangements. Examples such as Francis Alys' 1994 work *Turista* or *Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing*, Melanie Smith's 2002 piece *Tianguis*, or Mauricio Limón's 2011 video *El primero que ría*, consolidate an artistic practice of contemporary Mexican art that reinterprets, reincorporates and establishes negotiations with labour activities subscribed to the informal economy. The work *Tourist* is a photographic documentation of a performance by the Belgian-born artist Francis Alys. Alys, leaning against the fence of Mexico City's central square Zocalo, waits – as do the men around him – to be occasionally hired to earn a day's living. They all play various trades: plumber, electrician, painter, etc., which are described in hand-painted, vibrant-coloured signs placed on the ground. Alys' sign reads 'tourist,' turning an immigration status into an insecure trade. Smith's *Tianguis*, in turn, is a video titled after the Mexicanism used to designate a public Mexican street market set up in the streets with several individual stalls selling seasonal foods, fabrics, clothing, traditional medicines or medicinal herbs, flowers, or live animals. The video features the voices of informal vendors advertising their goods. *El primero que ría* is an installation by Mauricio Limón featuring Flama and Gordo – two inhabitants of Iztapalapa who earn their living cleaning car windshields around the city. This paper, through the examples mentioned above, seeks to understand the relationship between artists and workers in the informal economy. Is it an 'extraction' of labour practices outside the art world, or, on the contrary, a reflection of the artist's work in the informal economy?

JORGE SANGUINO (b. Cali, Colombia) lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany. He is a curator with a BA degree in philosophy from the Universidad Javeriana and an MA degree in visual history and art history from the Humboldt University of Berlin, specialising in photography. He is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Cologne in Art History; a board member of the Association for the Promotion of German and International Art Archives and Art Market Research (Zadik); and a member of the Extractivism Working Group at the University of Essen Duisburg.

'Together with Alexandra Meffert, I co-founded wildpalms, a space dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art practices from Latin America with a focus on community and environment. Through this work, I have achieved the introduction of multiple prominent artists at an institutional level in Germany, including Karen Paulina Biswell, Felipe Castelblanco, and Mauricio Limon. I have also organised several series of talks with other artists from the continent under the title Hortus Americanus. Since 2020, I have regularly published articles in publications such as *Esfera Pública* and *Artishock*, in which I analyse the international art market and look at the consolidation of the European art canon, highlighting its exclusionary character. Before founding wildpalms, I worked in the production and curatorial teams of KW Contemporary Art, Berlin, two editions of the Berlin Biennale, the Schinkel Pavillon, the Mexican Embassy in Berlin, and with private actors such as galleries and institutions.'

TOBEY YUNJING PAN
*Archiving and Desiring the Alienated Self:
 From Self-Portrait with a Flag (1989)
 to KwieKulik Archive (1968–2024) of Zofia Kulik*

In 2011, KwieKulik's Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation (PDDiU) was collected by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN) with the support of the Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland. There are two things worth highlighting. First, PDDiU, once an alternative art space that KwieKulik created for themselves and their peers, which served as an antidote to the artistic reality in socialist Poland (Załoski 2018), is recreated as an art installation, KwieKulik Archive (1968–2024). Second, the Museum's website indicates that Kulik was the only source of this collection. The reconstruction of the KwieKulik Archive as part of MSN's art collections (rather than its Artists Archives) marks that the once alternative and marginalised are now institutionalised, which is not unusual for many 'neo-avant-garde' artists from East-Central Europe active in the late socialist period. How should feminist art history, in which Kulik and her work have been more frequently analysed, deal with or even endorse such an endeavour?

In this paper, I will discuss the institutionalisation of the KwieKulik Archive as part of Kulik's change in artistic method, which started as early as the late 1980s after she became independent from KwieKulik. In contrast to the spontaneous performances she co-produced with Kwiek, Kulik made visually complex and 'labour-intensive' photograph-based works, with 'Self-Portrait with a Flag' (1989) as the first example (Dimitrakaki 2019). Further developing my previous argument that this change in method indicates Kulik's break from the silencing and humiliation she experienced in KwieKulik (Pan 2022), I will demonstrate that Kulik's change in method may also represent the artist's realisation of, and strategic response to, the differences between what it means to be a (woman) artist in Poland in the late socialist and global neoliberal contexts. I will explore whether her methodological change, as showcased in *Self-Portrait* and *Archive*, marks a moment when the artist started to desire a transformation of her own labour-power, rather than her artwork, into her commodity and property available freely on the market. Such desire is, I will argue, historically specific and gendered.

TOBEY YUNJING PAN is currently a PhD candidate in History of Art at the University of Edinburgh. Her PhD project, funded by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) and Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Doctoral Training Partnership, focuses on artistic methodologies in East-Central Europe in the two decades before 1989. The PhD examines experimental art produced by women artists from the region through the lens of labour. Her first published peer-reviewed article in *Third Text* (2022), titled 'KwieKulik through the Lens of Feminism,' is based on her Master's thesis completed in 2019, for which she conducted research in Zofia Kulik's archive in Łomianki, Poland. She is also involved in *Understanding 1989 in East-Central European Art: War vs. Revolution*, a seminar series led by the Piotr Piotrowski Centre for Research on East-Central European Art at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and supported by the Getty Foundation.

JÚLIUSZ HUTH

*The Hungarian Salon – The Crisis of Artists’
Associations and Debates around Salon-Type Exhibitions
in Post-Socialist Hungary*

In the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, a centralised institutional system operated that kept the fine arts under strong ideological control, but at the same time, it also provided an economic and social safety net for artists. In Hungary, the Union of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists functioned as the administrative body of fine arts, and the Art Fund of Hungary was responsible for financing the art world. Since the early 1980s, the system has undergone significant changes. While the marketisation of the system has increasingly taken place, the art policy of the late Kádár-regime gave more and more space to artists who followed international contemporary trends and had previously been marginalised. After 1989, these processes accelerated, and the newly emerging artistic field divided into camps of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of the system change. The rehabilitation process of the neo-avant-garde generation went together with the institutional takeover of art that was considered contemporary. A similar process took place in most of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, provoking resistance from artists associated with the fine art traditions represented by the Artists Unions. In Hungary, the major debates were triggered around the exhibition policy of the Budapest Kunsthalle [Múcsarnok], especially around the so-called Salon exhibitions, which were mainly fuelled by the needs and ambitions of those artists who had enjoyed financial security in the old system, but after 1989 found themselves in existential crisis. These conflicts did not stop at the borders of the field of artistic production. They became typical examples of the symbolic politicisation of the leading liberal and national-conservative factions. The politicians and the media presented the debates merely as symbolic struggles often concealing the economic basis and stakes. In this paper, I focus on the 1990s history of the Union and the successor-organisations of the former Art Fund, especially on the conflicts between the leadership of the Kunsthalle and the Union around Salon-type exhibitions.

JÚLIUSZ HUTH is an art historian based in Budapest. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Art History department of the Doctoral School of Philosophy at Eötvös Loránd University, an assistant professor at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, and a researcher at the Central European Research Institute for Art History (KEMKI). His PhD research deals with the political and economic changes around 1989 and their effects on the field of visual or exhibited art. At KEMKI, his research focuses on the history of art criticism and the changing institutional system of exhibited art in Hungary in the 1980s. He is also an active art critic and member of the Hungarian section of AICA.

KRISTÓF NAGY

*Artistic Work Beyond Precarity. Labour in
the Orbán-regime's Hungarian Academy of Arts*

On my first day of research at the Hungarian Academy of Arts (HAA), the cultural flagship institution of the Orbán-regime, I realised that it is an art institution where unpaid work is an unknown phrase. Such an observation can serve as an entry point to argue that labour is a crucial category to understanding right-wing regimes' cultural institutions. However, artistic labour and authoritarian regimes are rarely analysed jointly. Labour is an emergent category in understanding artistic production, emphasising the precarious, self-exploiting nature of culture producers (Sholette 2010; Praznik 2021). In contrast, cultural institutions of authoritarian regimes are generally framed as oppressors of artistic freedom, but their labour relations are mostly omitted.

While both perspectives bring vital insights, I argue their combination is essential but not yet complete. To bridge this gap, this paper mobilises ethnographic materials from my year-long participant observation at the HAA. Through the labour perspective on this flagship institution with hundreds of employees, the paper makes a twofold contribution. First, it demonstrates that cultural institutions of new regimes are not merely united vanguards but are divided by labour conflicts. As I argue in the case of the HAA, the most central is the clash between its members – who are artists and receive a generous lifetime annuity – and its employees – who work as wage labourers. As a result, a gendered and aged class conflict between artists and bureaucrats structures the Academy's operation. Second, the paper argues that emotional labour can be a central concept to understanding prosperous hegemonic institutions of arts. Despite the HAA's wealth, a self-exploiting militant labour regime is widespread among its bureaucrats. Through these two arguments, the paper demonstrates that it is worth bringing the lens of labour into the analysis of dominant cultural institutions. Such an angle indicates that the labour perspective is fundamental in analysing dominant arts institutions. It also highlights that precarious and well-paid forms of artistic labour co-exist in contemporary capitalism.

KRISTÓF NAGY is a Budapest-based researcher of art, culture, and society. Previously he was trained at The Courtauld Institute of Art, and now he is finishing his PhD at the Central European University. His dissertation project examines the cultural politics of the Orbán regime via an ethnography of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. He serves as an editor of the social theory journal *Fordulat*, and is a member of the Helyzet Working Group for Public Sociology. He is also affiliated with the Central European Research Institute for Art History and Eötvös Loránd University.

SOPHIE MAK-SCHRAM
Socially Engaged Art as Civic Labour?
*Marina Naprushkina and Practices of (Art) Educating
 and Organising*

The 1990s saw both the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the art historical 'beginning' of both socially engaged art and the Educational Turn across Europe and the US (Kester, Finkelpearl, Wilson and O'Neill, Springgay). Labour in and as art is significantly reimagined as discourses on socially engaged art and art as education emerge: the artist becomes the facilitator, teacher, community worker and more, and the artwork becomes immaterial or documentary. These shifts in the socio-political function of the artist and the 'where' or 'when' of the artwork is not only concurrent to but also affected by the emergence of new conceptions of public space, governance and civic society across large swathes of Europe. This paper deals with the implications of this imbrication of artist's changing civic function and access, and subsequent political as much as symbolic claims on what artistic labour is, in relation to the Belarussian artist, Marina Naprushkina, and her work with neighbourhoods in post-1989 Berlin.

This paper explores Naprushkina's *Neue Nachbarschaft Moabit* (2013–) and *Strandbad Tegelsee* (2021–) as projects in which she re-positions the artist as educator and organiser, respectively. Within *Neue Nachbarschaft*, the provision of language tuition functions both to serve a community's educational needs, and to reclaim civic agency for refugees. Similarly, *Strandbad* proposes a new use of public space; that of a leisure beach, which is now being managed as a social enterprise by Naprushkina and collaborators. This paper will reflect on these repositionings of the conception of artistic labour and the role of the artist in relation to the civic stakes in education and organising, and will discuss the impact the conflation of these forms of labour has.

SOPHIE MAK-SCHRAM is trained as an art historian and experiential educator. She works across artist development, artistic and pedagogical research, and art history. Her current research was partly conducted in the academic frame of the EU: Horizon 2020 funded FEINART project, where she recently completed a PhD at Zeppelin University in Germany. The focus of her research was on thinking 'nearby' (in reference to Trinh Minh Ha's formulation of 'speaking nearby'), contemporary alternative educational projects about pedagogical propositions that work through art in order to propose ways of learning (to be) together. Mak-Schram currently is a Curriculum Redefined fellow and Lecturer of Art Pedagogies at the University of Leeds, as well as one of 7 commissioned artists working on decolonising National Museum Wales in 2023–2025, and co-convenor of Gentle Gestures, a research group on alternative pedagogies. She is particularly interested in radical pedagogies, decolonial knowledges and the 'and' between art and education.

JOSEFINE WIKSTRÖM
*A Dance of Abstractions:
 The Dance Exhibition as a Critical Form
 in Contemporary Art*

Since its inception in the late 18th century, modern art has had an inherently dialectic relationship to the capitalist mode of production embodying a distinct form of commodity and artistic labour. In the 1960s, as a generic concept of performance was established in the institution of what was to become contemporary and post-conceptual art, this relationship was accentuated further. Emerging out of an advanced art experimental context in North America, the artwork as performance came to reflect the social form of abstract labour through then novel artistic forms such as task-dance and the event-score. Since the 1990s, a range of new artistic forms have emerged directly out of these 1960s performative strategies. Departing from Marx's concept of value as a specific historical social form and what Patrick Murray has described as practically abstract labour, in this lecture I want to focus on the 'dance exhibition' as a novel artistic form as it has appeared in the institution of contemporary art since the early 2000s. As an emblematic example I will focus on Romanian artist Alexandra Pirici, whose work is sculptural yet uses dance and choreographic techniques in exhibition spaces. Whereas some have argued that the incorporation of dance and performance in the exhibition space should merely be seen as an extension of contemporary art's partaking in the creative industries paradigm, in this lecture I want to argue for the dance exhibition as a critical artistic form. By focusing on some of the structural changes of the capitalist mode of production that has taken place since the 1990s this lecture asks: How does the dance exhibition mediate the specific historical specificities of value as a social form in contemporary capitalism? How might we see the dance exhibition as an elongation of a critical tradition within modern and contemporary art as artistic labour? If the latter, what specifics of contemporary capitalism in the period – often described as 'the neoliberal era' – does the dance exhibition mediate, and how?

JOSEFINE WIKSTRÖM, DR., is a writer and a researcher working as Senior Lecturer in Aesthetics at Södertörn University, Stockholm. Her research focuses on the role of dance and performance within a critical and contemporary concept of art and its dialectical relationship to contemporary capitalism. Her research also includes philosophy of art from early German Romanticism and onwards, as well as Marxist theory and contemporary readings of his thought, the Frankfurt School, and the intersection between cultural theory and aesthetics. Her work has been published in publications such as *Radical Philosophy*, *Performance Research Journal*, and *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, among others. She is the author of *Practices of Relations in Task-Dance and the Event-Score: A critique of performance* (Routledge, 2021) and co-author of *Objects of Feminism* (The Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki) and *Kritik av konstens frihet: en motrapport* (Hägarsten: 1|21 Press, 2022). She works as an art and dance critic and is one of the editors of *SITE Zones*.

FRIEDERIKE NASTOLD AND THARI JUNGEN

Curating as Caring and Mourning

2022, following the Russian attack on Ukraine, the Western Ukrainian artists/curators collective Asortymentna Kimnata from the town Ivano-Frankivsk set up several storage bunkers in undisclosed locations to save artworks from destruction. The collective, originally founded 'to support the independent art scene', claims that 'now we must not only support it but also protect it. This form of artistic labour reminds us that the verb 'to curate' etymologically derives from the Latin word *curare*, which means to worry, care, or look after. Caring, understood as labour, implies the production of relationships between people and objects, people and systems, people and media, or even infrastructures and institutions; however, it is a form of labour that is neither economically, nor socially highly valued, if at all.

Ever since the 1960s, the Marxist-feminist author Silvia Federici has argued that the devaluation of care work and its historically developed invisibility are tied to the economic interests of capitalism. Her historical research *Caliban and the Witch* shows that both domestic work and social reproduction exist outside the capitalist regime. That is because there is no labour without social reproduction, there are no commodities without production, and there is no capital accumulation without commodities. In other words, both reproductive fields constitute indispensable elements in the chain of capitalist value creation.

Against this background, we understand curating, as in the case of Asortymentna Kimnata, as an interventionist care practice that is not limited to representing inter-subjective or inter-objective relations (cf. Sternfeld 2014) but is a form of solidarity. Here, the critically negotiated mission of 'caring' and 'preserving' becomes a survival strategy instead of interrogating the 'museum' as a medial structure or network of relational historical narratives. Elke Krasny pushes this argument further by stating that 'the museum is the storehouse of the non-living' (Krasny 2021). Is it then the work of a curator to not only care for the artworks but also create a space for mourning? These are questions that seem crucial to us in the face of current regimes of violence. Therefore, we want to critically examine the entanglement between caring and curating as a possible form of solidarity. In doing so, we want to seek alliances with non-human entities and explore feminist curating practices as forms of mourning.

FRIEDERIKE NASTOLD is trained as an artist and art historian. Currently she works as Junior Professor of art history with a focus on gender studies at the Institute for Art and Visual Culture, Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, as well as Deputy Director of the Centre for Gender Studies (ZFG) in Oldenburg. Previously, she was a substitute professor at the Institute of Art at the PH Karlsruhe and a staff member at the Kunsthochschule Mainz as well as at the Kunsthochschule Burg Giebichenstein Halle. In Halle, she curated and organised the exhibition *juicy things. An Exhibition with International Symposium in Three Acts* (2022). In 2015, Nastold founded the collective TOYTOYTOY which operates at the intersection of art, mediation, and theory from a feminist perspective. Her research focuses on art and cultural studies, gender studies, psychoanalytic cultural theory, affect theory, queer theory, and visual culture studies. Most recently, her monograph *Between I See You and Eye Sea You. Gaze, Representation, Affect* (2022) was published by VDG-Verlag.

THARI JUNGEN, DR. PHIL., is an artist and theorist specialising in artistic research. She holds a doctorate in philosophy from the Graduate School Performing Citizenship Hamburg and works as a lecturer at the Universities of the Arts in Linz, Berlin, Hamburg, and Halle. In 2015, she founded the artistic research collective Institute for Falsification (IFF). In 2023, she was a visiting professor at Kunsthochschule Mainz. Thari's research focuses on practices at the intersection of the aesthetic and political, examining topics like collaboration, memory studies, truth/fake, and the garden.

LENA POZDNYAKOVA, JANETTE HELM, LUISE WILLER
*Critical Reflections on Artists as Organisers:
 Marina Naprushkina's Neue Nachbarschaft and
 Caroline Woolard's Institutional Possibility*

In the inaugural year of the Collaborative Research Centre Intervening Arts, two different events emerged from artistic practices, each exploring labour conditions and modes of interaction with diverse audiences. These two projects exhibited considerable divergence in their conceptualisation and contextualisation, both within the confines of their institutional framework and artistic methodologies pertaining to artistic labour, organisation, and participation.

The first project was led by Marina Naprushkina, a Belarussian artist who focuses on establishing para-institutions for refugee communities in Berlin. It took an outward-facing approach and unfolded as a publicly accessible event, attracting a diverse array of participants, including students, professors, and Neue Nachbarschaft members. It employed various strategies to engage the participants, such as somatic exercises, writing activities, and on-site material sculpting.

The second project, an internal workshop on Institutional Possibility, was facilitated by Caroline Woolard, a US-based artist and organiser. She is renowned for her work at the intersection of art and the solidarity economy, emphasising collaboration and collective work. Woolard, a founding member of numerous cooperatives, aimed to scrutinise the institutional framework of the CRC and the underlying structures and relationships. The format enabled colleagues to collectively imagine structural change for their community while at the same time fostering relations and informal networks by bringing to the fore individual skills of building community and resisting oppressive systems.

The two workshops were funded by the CRC but initiated by three scholars who, in different ways, deal with the question of how institutional change can be implemented through artistic practices. They exemplify two distinct strategies that artists take beyond these instances but also in relation to a specific institutional context. The workshops raised pressing questions and invited people to critically engage with labour, the managerial and collaborative strategies of artists and cultural practitioners, and, notably, the role that institutions play in researching and facilitating collaborative projects and engagement with the public. This threefold perspective, as articulated in this position paper, enables a critical examination of the varied modes of collaboration and general interactions between artists, different publics, and institutions.

LENA POZDNYAKOVA is an artist, curator, and researcher from Almaty, Kazakhstan, currently based in Berlin, Germany. The scope of her work in collaborative projects and research involves questions related to the culture-nature relationship and blurring the boundary between life and art. Since 2016, Pozdnyakova has been working towards expanding her work to embrace more socially engaged projects through collaboration, practices of care, intergenerational work, and community involvement. She is currently a doctoral student at Free University Berlin, Institute of Art History, and an associate member of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) Intervening Arts, where she looks at practices that critically incorporate affective labour and forms of care.

JANETTE HELM is a cultural researcher. She currently works as a research associate at the Humboldt University in Berlin and is a member of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) Intervening Arts. As a researcher, she explores specific artistic interventions within the CRC and the conflictual relationships that arise in the process within the framework of empirical-theoretical research, the potential of which lies in illuminating the interrelationships of various contentions. Previously, she worked as a research assistant and curator in various museums in Germany. In her work, she examines organisational forms such as cultural institutions and investigates from an ethnographic and collaborative perspective.

LUISE WILLER is a Berlin-based researcher and organiser. She is currently a member of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) Intervening Arts at Free University Berlin. In her research and projects, Willer is interested in socially oriented artistic practices, in particular their forms of assembling and organising. She examines such practices for their visions of futurity and their notion of solidarity through collaborative processes. Willer studied global art history and museum studies at the University of Heidelberg and the École du Louvre, and has worked as a curatorial assistant at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

MARIJA WESTE
*A Case Study of Confluence in Art, Labour,
and Censorship in Soviet Latvian Film*

In my presentation, I will discuss the relationship between artists, labour, and the right to create in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. In the Soviet system, every artist, if they were not a member of a pertinent centrally organised union of writers, composers, artists, etc., had to work in the socialist industry. The active participation in the labour market as well as the engagement in a related union of creatives imposed limitations on the freedom of artistic expression. The film *Četri balti krekli* (*Four White Shirts*) is an outstanding case study for these tensions between labour and art – both as an artwork and as an instance of film production in a totalitarian state. Produced in 1967, it was immediately banned from screening. The film was released and screened in Latvia in 1987, and gained international recognition only in 2018, when the film was included in the Classics programme of the Cannes Film Festival. The screening of this film in Cannes not only recognized the artistic developments of the 1960s in Latvia and incorporated these into the cultural dynamics in European cinema, but also contributed to the discussion on the confluence of art, labour, censorship, and artistic legitimacy. The film is imprinted in the cultural memory of Latvians, despite being prohibited, through its music and songs recorded for the film, which were later covered by popular bands. The protagonist is an amateur poet and composer who works as a phone installer by day. By night he immerses himself in the artistic environment with his band The Optimists. As he finds himself repairing a phone at a professional artist atelier, his doubts about artistic legitimation become literally loud as he recalls a song he once wrote. My presentation attempts to analyse the (re)presentation of art and work in this sequence, which is referential for the entire film. The space (re)presented in the film is constructed by several permeable layers of musical and theatrical performances, footage of art, cameos of Latvian artists, and presentations of non-artistic work. How is it possible to survive as an artist in this complex environment, where the demands of labour productivity and ideological conformity of the 1960s in the Soviet Union define not only artistic expression but also physical survival? The film poses this question without suggesting an answer; still, its open-endedness leaves space for hope.

MARIJA WESTE holds a MSc in Communication Studies, University of Latvia, and an MA in Baltic Sea Region Studies, Humboldt University, and is currently a PhD student in Linköpings University, Department of Language and Culture. She is also a reviewer at *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* published quarterly by Routledge on behalf of the International Association for Media and History.

AGNĖ BAGDŽIŪNAITĖ

How to Talk About Labour Herstories Through Art

The formal science of history is not quite open to people's stories, which are always mixed up with affect, loss of memory, imaginings, and projections of feelings. However, the complexity of stories on the subject of pure labour during a time when labour was considered a religious sacred matter, and also worked as a basis for social life, pleads for reading all the necessary layers, which can be difficult to unravel. My research seeks to delve into the intersections of gender, labour, and memory within the post-Soviet space. This exploration aims to uncover and understand the complex dynamics at play within these areas, particularly in the context of historical and societal shifts following the Soviet era. Archival work, ethnographic approaches, and feminist research methodologies place the analysis of the labour herstories in an interdisciplinary realm that may be regarded by professional historians as gossip. Thus, where did I get with my collection of labour herstories from the time of Soviet Lithuania? What can be understood and misunderstood about the forms of labour and the perception of it when analysing women's stories about work in the Soviet time? How can it be relevant for today's perception of work in art?

AGNĖ BAGDŽIŪNAITĖ is an artist, curator, and researcher. She has obtained three different MAs: one in Fine Arts from the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm; one in Political Studies from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas; and one in Gender Studies from Central European University in Budapest. Her practice and research are based on the methodologies of people's history, feminist ethnography, and the theory of social reproduction. She has conducted several studies on Lithuanian labour history focusing on women's work and the textile industry in the Soviet times and the time of transition. In September 2023, Bagdžiūnaitė opened an exhibition featuring a sound installation at Kaunas Picture Gallery titled *Women's Voices. Stories from Kaunas Textile Industry*. Currently Bagdžiūnaitė is a cultural worker at Kaunas Artists' House whereas this year she has started a program of exhibitions, performative and educational events *Dream Belly-Up (Dog or Fish?)* exploring the multifaceted nature of sadness.

ANNE PFAUTSCH

OSTKREUZ – Agency of Photographers: Facing the Unknown Together

OSTKREUZ – Agency of Photographers (hereinafter referred to as Ostkreuz) was established in 1990 by seven East German photographers. The majority of the founding members were in their forties when the German Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as GDR) collapsed, which is why, initially, the agency was conceived of as a survival strategy to continue their work as photographers and to face the major social and economic effects of the post-reunification period together. Nowadays, it is considered as one of the most prestigious agencies in Germany with twenty-six photographers from (the former) East and West.

The period after the fall of the Berlin Wall was characterised by a lack of knowledge about and an enormous interest in the former GDR. Hailed as ‘experts of the East’ by West German magazines and newspapers, Ostkreuz quickly rose to fame in the 1990s and established itself on a pan-German market. The members follow a twin-track approach of photographing for assignments and realising their individual photo-series, which are then presented in exhibitions. This reflects the way in which freelance photographers worked in the former GDR. Yet, the transformations of the media landscape as regards subject matter and technological possibilities at the beginning of the 2000s resulted in conflicts between the photographers and discordance on how to deal with these changes and organise the future operations of the agency. The presentation pursues the question of whether Ostkreuz successfully transitioned from socialism to capitalism by discussing the changes the agency underwent to prevail in a free market economy. At the same time, I question whether the members’ strategies are sustainable in the long term.

ANNE PFAUTSCH, DR., is a research fellow at the Central Institute for Art History in Munich, Germany. From 2022–2023, she worked as curatorial fellow at Haus der Kunst München, where she was curatorial assistant to the exhibition *Inside Other Spaces. Environments by Women Artists 1956–1976*. For her PhD thesis ‘Ostkreuz – Agency of Photographers: Tracing the Legacy of the German Democratic Republic in Post-Socialist Photography and Exhibition Making’, Dr. Pfautsch was awarded the Jutta-Held-Prize 2023. From 2019–2021, she participated in the Getty Foundation’s Connecting Art Histories Programme entitled *Gender Politics and the Art of European Socialist States*, led by Prof. Dr. Agata Jakubowska. Dr. Pfautsch is associate lecturer at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and has previously lectured on topics of feminism, gender and queer studies, and methodologies of art history at the School of Art, Kingston University, London, where she was also a bachelor’s thesis supervisor for students on the Fine Arts, Art History, and Photography programmes. She has written for peer-reviewed journals, exhibition catalogues and feminist archives, amongst others *Miejsce* and *Humanities*. Her research interests include photography, culture and gender politics in late and post- Soviet times, memory and identity as well as decolonial, feminist, and Marxist methods in art history.

JAKUB BANASIAK

*Painting as Labour and a Critique of
the Post-communist Transition: The Case of Przemysław Kwiek
and the Polish Art Scene of the 90s*

With the post-communist transition began an era that Octavian Esanu called 'The Postsocialist Contemporary.' The epistemology associated with it – as in economics or politics – favoured neoliberal individualism. The understanding of art as a social activity functioning under the protection of the labour rights and the care of the state was associated with communism and defined as a relic of a past system. The result was a rapid pauperisation of the art community (at least in Poland). Many artists withdrew from the profession, others had to do commercial work, and still others experienced poverty. This affected both traditional artists, those organised in artists' unions, and artists of the neo-avant-garde.

In my presentation, I will discuss two series by Przemysław Kwiek entitled *Avant-garde Paints Lilacs* and *Avant-garde Trades Lilacs*. Kwiek, co-founder of the legendary neo-avant-garde duo KwieKulik (1971–1987), was one of the few Polish artists who actively opposed 'The Postsocialist Contemporary' formula and the neoliberalisation of the art profession. Treating art as labour was crucial here. Kwiek had been showing that an artist is a worker who performs daily, repetitive work, for which decent pay and social benefits are due. This attitude condemned Kwiek to poverty: his kitschy paintings were rejected by both new art institutions of the 'The Postsocialist Contemporary' and commercial clients.

JAKUB BANASIAK, DR., is an art historian and art critic, Assistant Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Faculty of Artistic Research and Curatorial Studies. He is the author of the book titled *Proteus Times. The Decay of the State Art System 1982–1993* (2020), for which he was nominated for the Jan Długosz Award. He is a member of the editorial board of the academic journal *Miejsce* and *Szum* art magazine. He focuses on research of art, art history, and the state art system of the Post-communist transition period. Recently, he took part in the conference *What is to be Done? Methodological Challenges to Art Historical Research in CEE* (ICMA, Iasi, Romania, 10.2023), and curated the exhibition entitled *Tectonic Movements* at the Museum of Art in Łódź (2022–2023, director Jarosław Suchan's programme), where he presented the results of his research on art of the Post-communist transition period. He is currently completing a book on the same subject.

JULIJA FOMINA

*Everyone Is an Artist but Only Artists Know That.
Narratives of Lithuanian Contemporary Art in Exhibitions
Curated by Artists and Art Critics*

'Everyone is an artist but only artists know that' is a conceptual language-based artwork by Pierre Bismuth, written on the façade of the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius in 2001 for Pierre Bismuth and Johnatan Monk exhibition *Our Trip Out West*, curated by Raimundas Malašauskas. This phrase, echoing Joseph Beuys, has become a riddle for many contemporary art lovers and haters in Lithuania. It also marks the process of autonomisation of the field of contemporary art in Lithuania that started in the last decade of the 20th century. Alongside artists, exhibition curators also played a very important role in the formation of contemporaneity and the conceptualisation of contemporary art. Leaving aside the unproductive question of whether artists or curators have more power in the field of art, the presentation will focus on the creative strategies employed by Lithuanian artists (such as Deimantas Narkevičius, Algis Lankelis, etc.) and art critics (including Kęstutis Kuizinas, Raimundas Malašauskas, etc.) in the exhibitions of Lithuanian contemporary art of the last decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The aim of the paper is to analyse the similarities and differences of the narratives of Lithuanian contemporary art created by different agents actively working in the field of art, each with their own individual creative agendas.

JULIJA FOMINA, DR., (b. 1982) is an art critic and exhibition curator. From 2004 to 2023, she worked as a curator at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius. Since autumn 2023, she has been working as Director of PhD Studies in Art History and Theory at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. In 2015, she defended her doctoral thesis 'Curating Art Exhibitions in Lithuania: Concepts and Development' at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. She teaches courses on contemporary art and curating at Vilnius Academy of Arts and Vytautas Magnus University. Her research interests include the history of exhibitions and curating, methods of conceptualising art in exhibitions, and the impact of exhibitions on the development of art and its perception.

MAIJA RUDOVSKA
*Fluctuations: Artist as Curator and
Their Modes of Labour During the Timeframe of
the Late 1980s and Early 1990s*

The proposal focuses on the formation of a curatorial discourse in Latvia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the country experienced a shift from the late Soviet period to the restoration of an independent state. The author, Maija Rudovska, aims to look at the origins of a curator – the figure that was created hugely by artistic contribution and art activism, a movement interwoven with the processes of National Awakening in late 1980s. The paper will examine the role of an artist as curator during the political, ideological, and institutional shift, and the forms of art labour that were at place during that time.

In the beginning of 1990s, formerly dominant institutions like the Artists' Union that governed artistic life for a few decades during the Soviet times, was replaced by the newly created Soros Centre for Contemporary Art. What did this transition mean for art workers? What kind of art–labour relationships were in place, especially within the practice of 'artist as curator'? A few examples that shaped the art scene in Riga at that time will be explored in this paper, among them the influence of Art Days (*Mākslas dienas*), which, as the author argues, laid the foundation for different forms of art activism adapted later in the 1990s. Being based on a kind of collective practice, Art Days involved in equal measure the creator of art and its viewer. What did the collectiveness comprise? What modes of labour artists who acted as curators practised? The 1990s unwittingly inherited the model cemented by artists (as curators) in the 1980s, yet, by integrating in the new reality, artists also gradually began to apprehend that part of the functions, which they had performed on their own and/or collectively at the time, were beginning to be taken over by the newly created institutions such as the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art. What did this new reality mean for an artist-curator? How did the labour of art workers shift? These, among other questions, will be examined in the presented paper.

MAIJA RUDOVSKA is a Riga-based independent curator and art critic. Currently she is a PhD student at the Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn. She holds an MA in art history from the Art Academy of Latvia, Riga (2009), and has completed postgraduate studies in curating from Curatorlab in the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm (2010). Over the past fifteen years, Rudovska has worked as an independent curator, art critic, cultural agent, art historian, and educator. She has gained expertise and visibility in both regional (Baltic/Nordic) and international realms of contemporary art, and has worked with the Manifesta Biennial (for the 13th edition in Marseille), Foundation Ricard (both FR), Komplot, Bozar Centre for Fine Arts (both BE), Futura (CZ), Moderna Museet (SE), Kim? Contemporary Art Centre (LV), Rupert, Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (both LT), KUMU Art Museum (EE), Living Art Museum (IS), and HIAP (FI), among other art institutions across Europe and overseas.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Edgaras Gerasimovičius, Vitalija Jasaitė, Robertas Narkus

Fantasies and Realities of Making Art While Doing Something Else: Experiences of a Small Art Scene

The conference will conclude with a discussion among three Vilnius-based organisers of contemporary art projects on the peculiarities of working within a small art scene. It will address topics of self-organisation, forms of collaboration, places of frictions and blind spots, the multiplicity of art workers' professional roles, and the relevance of the term 'art scene' in contemporary contexts. While the discussion will take as its starting point the intersection of three different work practices that are closely related to Vilnius's cultural life, it will also raise more general questions regarding changes in artistic labour, the regional and international art market, and the relationship between art and politics.

EDGARAS GERASIMOVIČIUS is Head of the art programme at Sapieha Palace in Vilnius, the director of the contemporary art platform Swallow, and a PhD student in art history at Vilnius Academy of Arts. Among the projects he has curated and initiated are *Refuge. The Inaugural Exhibition at Sapieha Palace* (with Virginija Januškevičiūtė), Vilnius (2024); *In Beginning was the Deed!* Kaunas Artists House (with Vaida Stepanovaitė), Kaunas, Lithuania (2023); and *Alexandra Pirici, Pulse: Enlivenment of the Kaunas Ninth Fort Monument* (with Valentinas Klimašauskas), Kaunas, Lithuania (2020).

VITALIJA JASAITĖ is a co-founder and curator of the art space Editorial in Vilnius. Currently she also serves as the editor of *Echo Gone Wrong*, an online magazine on contemporary art in the Baltics, and a producer at SODAS 2123, a cultural complex in Vilnius. From 2017 to 2021, Jasaitė was the deputy director of Rupert Centre for Art, Residencies and Education. From 2012 to 2015, she was the running director of Vartai Gallery in Vilnius, where she organised solo exhibitions featuring artists like Deimantas Narkevičius, Knut Åsdam, Jaime Pitarch, and Žilvinas Landzbergas, among others.

ROBERTAS NARKUS is an interdisciplinary artist based in Vilnius. He studied at Vilnius Academy of Arts and the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. Narkus is the initiator and host of the experimental arts management and food organisation Autarkia, as well as the founder of the Vilnius Institute of Pataphysics, the experimental engineering camp eeKūlgrinda, and the platform for artist and private business cooperation Vizionierius. Narkus's solo exhibitions have been held at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, the David Dale Gallery in Glasgow, and the Tenderpixel art gallery in London. His works have also been presented in important group projects at the 12th Baltic Triennial, the 5th Marrakech Biennale, de Appel arts centre in Amsterdam, and others. He represented Lithuania at the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2022 with his project *Gut Feeling*.