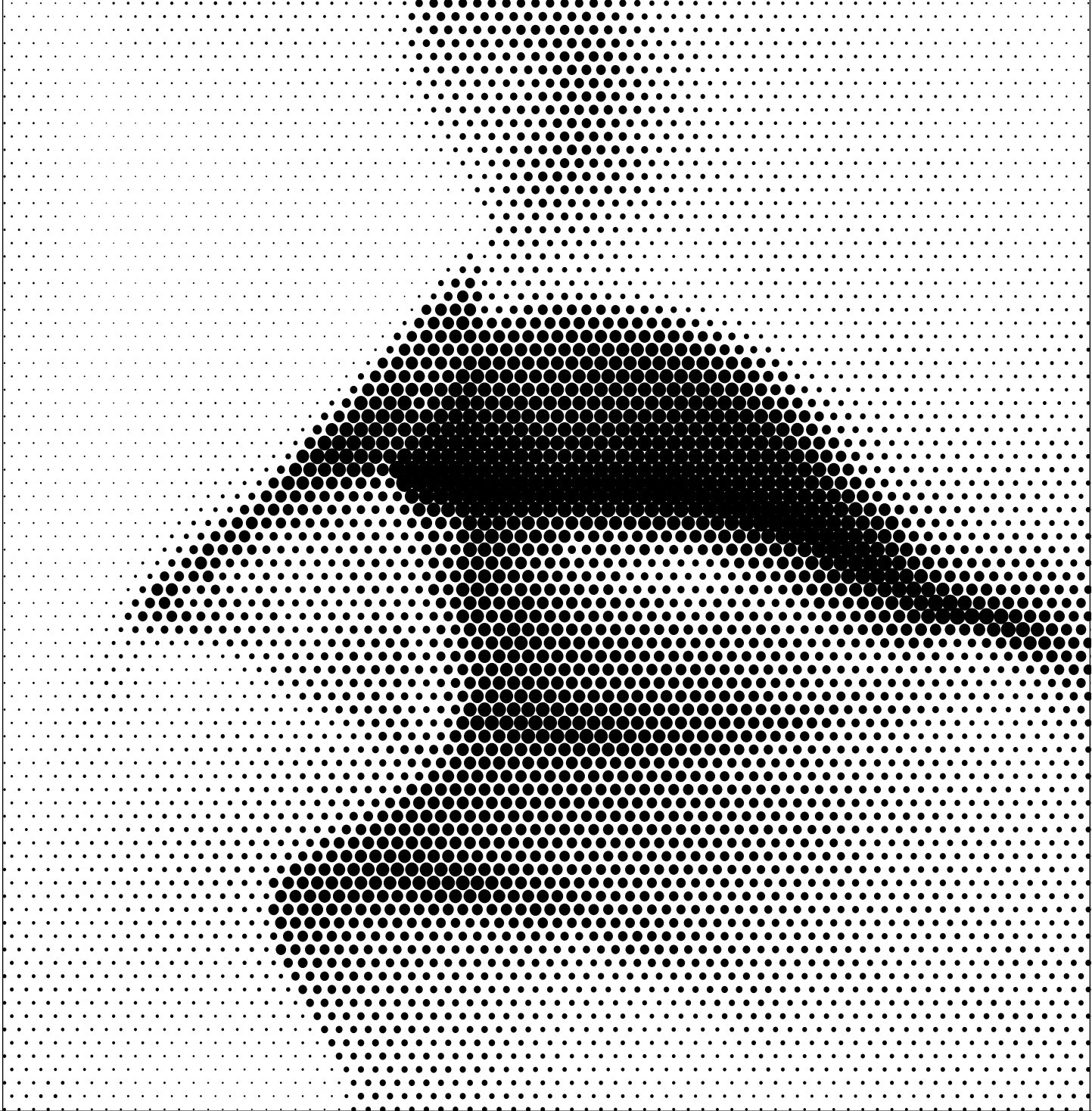


THE CONFERENCE

# NOT YET WRITTEN STORIES. WOMEN ARTISTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



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THE CONFERENCE

**NOT YET WRITTEN STORIES.  
WOMEN ARTISTS IN CENTRAL  
AND EASTERN EUROPE**

**2-3 OF SEPTEMBER 2021**

KONFERENCJA

**HISTORIE JESZCZE NIENAPISANE,  
ARTYTKI EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-  
WSCHODNIEJ**

**2-3 WRZEŚNIA 2021**

**CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE:**

Barbara Borčić, Sandra Križić Roban, Marika Kuźmich,  
Lana Lovrenčić, Andra Silapētere

**ORGANISERS:**

Arton Foundation, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art-  
LCCA Riga, Center for Contemporary Arts - SCCA-Ljubljana  
& Office for Photography, Zagreb

Official language of the conference is English and will be  
translated to Polish

We would like to invite you to take part in the conference **Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists in Central and Eastern Europe**, which will be held on 2–3 September as an online event (on the Zoom platform). The conference is organised by the Arton Foundation (Warsaw), the Latvian Center for Contemporary Arts (Riga), SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts, (Ljubljana) and the Office for Photography (Zagreb).

The scholarly sin of omission, and the exclusion of works by women from the canon of art history have resulted in the erasure of the achievements of numerous women artists. Such "amnesia" in history writing processes has been widespread and has been happening regardless of the socio-political situation. However, women artists as well as art historians, critics, curators and gallerists in culturally and economically "peripheral" countries, such as those behind the Iron Curtain, and in the former Yugoslavia, have been at risk of double exclusion on the grounds of both geopolitics and gender. In parallel to the development of new states and socialist societies after WW2, women built themselves up not only politically and culturally, but also artistically. Nevertheless, instead of the anticipated advancement of women in various fields, society and its power structures continued to support the traditionally predominant patriarchal view. To counteract that situation, the Arton Foundation (Warsaw), the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts (Riga), SCCA-Lju-

**KOMITET ORGANIZACYJNY KONFERENCJI:**

Barbara Borčić, Sandra Križić Roban, Marika Kuźmich,  
Lana Lovrenčić, Andra Silapētere

**ORGANIZATORZY:**

Fundacja Arton, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art- LCCA Ryga, Center for Contemporary Arts - SCCA-Lublana oraz Office for Photography, Zagrzeb

Konferencja odbywa się w j. angielskim, jest tłumaczona na j. polski

Serdecznie zapraszamy do uczestnictwa w konferencji **Historie jeszcze nienapisane. Artystki w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej**, która odbędzie się w dniach 2-3 września 2021 jako wydarzenie w trybie zdalnym (platforma zoom). Organizatorami konferencji są Fundacja Arton (Warszawa), Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts (Ryga), SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts (Lublana), Office for Photography (Zagrzeb).

Wykluczenie twórczości kobiet z kanonu historii sztuki doprowadziło do wymazania dorobku wielu artystek. Tego rodzaju zaniedbanie występowało powszechnie, niezależnie od sytuacji społeczno-politycznej. Jednak artystki, historyczki sztuki, krytyczki, kuratorki czy galerzystki w kulturowo i gospodarczo „peryferyjnych” krajach, takich jak państwa za dawną żelazną kurtyną czy w byłej Jugosławii, były zagrożone podwójnym wykluczeniem – zarówno ze względu na położenie geograficzne, jak i płeć. Wraz z rozwojem nowych państw i społeczeństw socjalistycznych po II wojnie światowej kobiety umacniały swoją pozycję nie tylko politycznie i kulturowo, ale także artystycznie. Jednak na przeszkodzie ich prognozowanemu awansowi w różnych dziedzinach stał tradycyjnie dominujący pogląd patriarchalny, wspierany przez społeczne struktury władzy. Aby zmienić ten stan rzeczy, Fundacja Arton (Warszawa), Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts (Ryga), SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts (Lublana) oraz Office for Photography

bljana, Center for Contemporary Arts (Ljubljana), and the Office for Photography (Zagreb) in 2019 collectively launched the project *Not Yet Written Stories: Women Artists' Archives On-line*. It focuses on women artists from Poland, Latvia, Croatia and Slovenia in order to raise awareness of recent historical events in Central and Eastern Europe and consequently stimulate new readings of history. The project not only maps regional contexts and collaborations, but also aims to reconsider common points of history-writing processes while investigating gender in a social, political, cultural, and artistic context within Central and Eastern Europe. Taking this project as the starting point, the partners are now organising the conference *Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists in Central and Eastern Europe*. The conference presents a wide context of the roles of women in the arts and culture with papers reflecting the topics in twelve countries, from Latvia to Bulgaria and from Ukraine to Croatia.

The two-day conference will comprise seven panels devoted to issues such as the work of women artists in the field of both new media and textiles, for example, women's artistic education, socially and politically engaged art, and many others.

The conference will be inaugurated by a lecture by Professor **Leonida Kovač** entitled ***Subversion of the normative heterosexuality in the self-representational works of Nasta Rojc***.

The accompanying events will include the screening of **Sonja Savić's** films and a performance by **Ana Čigon** entitled ***Dear Ladies, Thank you*** (2011-2013).

The project is part of the Creative Europe program. Co-financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Marika Kuźmicz [marika.kuzmicz@fundacjaarton.pl](mailto:marika.kuzmicz@fundacjaarton.pl)

(Zagrzeb) w 2019 roku wspólnie zainauguowały projekt pt. *Not Yet Written Stories: Women Artists' Archives On-line / Historie jeszcze nienapisane. Archiwa artystek online*, który skupia się na artystkach z Polski, Łotwy, Chorwacji i Słowenii w celu zwiększenia świadomości na temat ich twórczości, postaw, biografii w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, a tym samym stymulowania nowych odczytań historii. Projekt nie tylko mapuje regionalne konteksty i sieci współpracy, ale także skłania do ponownego przyjrzenia się wspólnym punktom w procesie pisania historii, rozpatrując płęć w społecznym, politycznym, kulturowym i artystycznym kontekście środkowoeuropejskim. Konferencja pt. *Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists in Central and Eastern Europe / Historie jeszcze nienapisane. Artystki w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej* jest częścią tego wieloletniego projektu. Konferencja prezentuje szeroki kontekst roli kobiet w tworzeniu sztuki i kultury, dzięki prezentacjom uczestniczek i uczestników z dwunastu krajów, od Łotwy przez Bułgarię, Ukrainę i Chorwację.

Na dwudniową konferencję złoży się siedem paneli poświęconych zagadnieniom takim jak twórczość artystek w obszarze zarówno nowych mediów, jak i tekstyliów, np. edukacja artystyczna kobiet, sztuka zaangażowana społecznie i politycznie i wiele innych.

Konferencja zostanie zainauguowana wykładem prof. **Leonidy Kovač** pt. ***Subwersja normatywnej heteroseksualności w autoreprezentacyjnych pracach Nasty Rojc***.

Wydarzeniami towarzyszącymi konferencji jest projekcja filmów **Sonji Savić's** oraz performans **Ana Čigon** pt. ***Dear Ladies, Thank you*** (2011-2013) z wprowadzeniem artystki.

Projekt jest częścią programu Kreatywna Europa. Współfinansowane przez Ministerstwo Kultury, Dziedzictwa Narodowego i Sportu

W razie pytań prosimy o kontakt z dr. Mariką Kuźmicz [marika.kuzmicz@fundacjaarton.pl](mailto:marika.kuzmicz@fundacjaarton.pl)

**CONFERENCE PROGRAMME:**

02.09.2021

9.00 - 10.00 AM

Lecture by **Leonida Kovač** *Subversion of normative heterosexuality in the self-representational works of Nasta Rojc.*

**Leonida Kovač**, PhD is an art historian and theorist, curator and the full professor at the University of Zagreb, Academy of Fine Arts. She is concerned with contemporary art, feminist theories and critical theories. She has curated several retrospective exhibitions of women artists, to mention here Dorothy Cross, Rita Duffy, Katarzyna Kozyra, Orshi Drozdik, Nan Hoover, Duba Sambolec, Edita Schubert, Nasta Rojc. She published nine books among which are *Anonimalia: Normative Discourses and Self-representation of 20th Century Women Artists* (2010); *Tübingen's Box: Essays on Visual Culture and Biopolitics* (2013); *In the Mirror of the Cultural Screen: Jagoda Kaloper* (2013); *Mrđan Bajić: Disenacting Transversals* (2016) and numerous academic articles. She was curator of the Croatian Pavilion at Sao Paulo Biennale in 2002, and at Venice Biennale in 2003. From 2002 to 2005 she was the elected Vice-president of the International Association of Art Critics – AICA. She has organized and co-organized several international academic conferences, the most recent is *Memory, Word and Image: W.G.Sebold's Artistic Legacy* (University of Amsterdam, 2019).

**PANEL #1**

10.00 - 11.30 AM

**moderator:**

Marika Kuźmicz

**Urška Savič**

*Reflections on the Archive as a Strategy for Re-writing Histories*

**Urška Savič** is a critic and journalist active in the fields of visual arts and cultural politics, working also as a photographer and radio artist. She finished her BA in photography at FAMU (Prague, 2014) on the topic of collage and photomontage. Her master's thesis at the Department of Sculpture at ALUO (Ljubljana, 2020), on the use of documentation and archiving practices in contemporary art, received the Prešeren Award for Students from the Academy. Since 2017, she has been an active participant in cultural programming at Radio Študent, one of Europe's oldest and strongest non-commercial, alternative radio stations. There, she has been a curator of the open radio (art theory) research platform RADAR since 2019.

**ABSTRACT:**

In search of the lost and forgotten histories typical for the marginalized of a patriarchy-based society (be it woman/man, migrant/citizen, East/West, etc), the starting point for research is archives. The archive itself is an ancient institution, and its complex meaning nowadays has been discussed in contemporary writings under such terms as "archive fever" (Derrida, 1996) or "an archival impulse" (Foster, 2004). This article aims to discuss the process of returning to forgotten archives while conducting research, and multiplication of the archive into new forms of existence through renewed strategies of classification and distribution. Even though reformed in an analogue or digital version of itself, the archive, stuck in an accumulating manner as befits capitalistic logic, cannot help but maintain the hierarchies and power relations that are, after all, embedded in its name. A psychoanalytical parallel can also be drawn in the concept of returning to the archive, where obsessively accumulating materials works as a strategy against memory loss and deals with the death drive. What is the difference between the mere collection of documents, visual or otherwise, that represent the cornerstone of the archive, and the ability to tell forgotten stories through them? The gesture as a document and the body as an archive was a method for artists in the rise of performance and body art practices to dismantle art institutions, which are archival in their character. The body acted as a tool or a place of consignment. However, the inevitable documentation of such processes, many times in the form of photography or video, requires them to be stored, and if we choose the stockpile archival mode there is a risk of falling into a vicious cycle of re-forgetting what is once remembered (as many times initiatives of autonomous archiving fade out once the financing is exhausted or the "project" is finished).

**Karolina Majewska-Güde**

*Telling Stories about Feminist Art in Socialist Europe, or an Archive as a Place of Cross-Generational Re-doing*

**Karolina Majewska-Güde** (PhD) is a scholar of art and culture, curator and author. She completed studies in art history (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) and visual histories (Goldsmiths, Universi-

## PANEL #1

ty of London). She is a doctoral student at the Department of Art and Visual History at Humboldt University of Berlin, where she is preparing a doctoral thesis on the artistic practice of Ewa Partum. She won a scholarship from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (2016). Her research involves Eastern European avant-garde art, transnational and feminist art history, and artistic studies.

### ABSTRACT:

The text focuses on a historization and new interpretation of Ewa Partum's diploma intervention (1970) analysed in relation to the artist's diploma thesis and the installation *Area Arranged by Imagination*. To articulate the meaning of this fragment of Partum's artistic practice, the author proposes to frame it within a discourse on art infrastructures. The silent object of the study is the notion of institutional critique, which is being revised and rewritten following the paradigm of horizontal art history and the concept of the parallax effect.

### Tia Čiček

#### *Examining women's roles at the ŠKUC Gallery in the 1980s*

**Tia Čiček** has an MA in art history from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), where her master's thesis included various archival works and was entitled *The Professional Work of Ana Schiffrer in the Carniolan Provincial Museum* (2019). For the last few years, she has worked as a curator and producer of contemporary art in various spaces such as the Centre for Urban Culture Kino Šiška and DobraVaga, and she is the current artistic director of Škuc Gallery (all in Ljubljana). In 2018 she attended a course at the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg led by Ruth Noack and Grace Sambok entitled *Thinking with Works of Art*, and she recently finished the two-year curatorial programme at the World of Art School for Curatorial Practices and Critical Writing (SCCA, Ljubljana).

### ABSTRACT:

The ŠKUC gallery has been operating at premises at Stari trg 21, Ljubljana, since 1978 as part of the Student Cultural and Artistic Centre (ŠKUC), which slowly became one of the pillars of non-governmental culture in Slovenia. Within this organizational framework, the visual arts section of the ŠKUC gallery (currently known as Škuc Gallery) has become a prominent international art centre for exhibitions, different artistic and musical events, publishing and documentation. In my research, I aim to examine the work by women artists and women curators who made their impact through the ŠKUC gallery between 1978 and 1989.

After the ŠKUC association acquired spaces at Stari trg 21 in Ljubljana in 1978, its visual arts section entwined with the music and publishing sections, slowly became an alternative culture hub centring around the idea of exploring new expressive possibilities of visual language, while at the same time rethinking the traditional system of reading a work of art and viewing it only as a useful object with a market value. Through interviews, researching archival materials, and readings of existing publications, catalogues, books and articles, I wish to examine the work of the first artistic directors of the ŠKUC gallery. These included (mainly women) curators/writers/cultural workers Taja Vidmar Brejc (1978–80), Dušan Mandić (1980–82), Marina Gržinić (1982–86) and Barbara Borčić (1982–85). The aim of this presentation and article is to establish a clearer history of women's work at the ŠKUC gallery in the 1980s as well as establish a more accurate image of various women artists who exhibited or whose work and projects have been presented in the gallery space.

### Wanda Janakiewicz

#### *Urszula Czartoryska as theoretician and founder of the Photography Department at the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź*

**Wanda Janakiewicz** is a fifth-year student of art history at the University of Łódź (Poland). The topic of her BA thesis was "Self-portrait of the artists of the Great Avant-garde: Study of a self-portrait in photography." Her master's thesis is entitled "Entangled in gender: The discursive image of the woman in Polish photography of the second half of the 20th century." Last year she participated in two scholarly conferences organized by the History Students' Club at the University of Warsaw and the "dzień dobry! kolektyw kultury"

## PANEL #1

foundation, and gave lectures entitled "Representation of death in Polish photography of the second half of the 1940s" and "The presence of women in the magazine *Świat Fotografii*, 1946–1952." Since last year she has also worked with Dr Lech Lechowicz on the scholarly publication *History of photography, part 2, 1939–2020*. In her spare time, she has given art history lectures to a senior group. In the future, she would like to undertake doctoral studies and develop research on the history of photography and popularize knowledge in this field.

### ABSTRACT:

Urszula Czartoryska (1934–98), called the "grande dame of Polish photography," was one of the greatest authorities in the field of artistic photography in Poland. From 1956 she was associated with the magazine *Fotografia*. She was equally interested in artistic practice and its theoretical context. She was one of the first Polish critics referring to new methods of contemporary humanities: sociology of art, semiology, and structuralism. She participated in the process of breaking the existing isolation of the photographic community in Poland in relation to other artistic circles. Her two books, *Artistic Adventures of Photography* and *From Pop Art to Conceptual Art*, summarized the effects of her dual interest in artistic issues: photography in the context of contemporary art and new interspecies phenomena in art. Czartoryska's professional interests expanded in 1977 to include the new sphere of the functioning of art. At that time, she started working as manager and curator of the newly created Department of Photography and Visual Techniques at Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, managed since 1966 by her husband, Ryszard Stanisławski. I would like to trace how she created the programme and managed the museum's collection of international media art. How was her current interest as a critic in phenomena going beyond the traditional artistic disciplines reflected in the shape of the collection, consisting mainly of works created in direct relation to the main trends of modern art in the 20th century? How did she combine the competences of a critic and a museologist? Did it affect her writing work? Was her way of running the department at Muzeum Sztuki consistent with the museology strategies at the time? How did it relate to the work of female artists? I would like to take up this issue because, although the activity of Urszula Czartoryska has influenced a whole generation of artists and researchers, her work has not yet received the in-depth analysis it deserves.

## PANEL #2

12.00 - 13.30 PM

### moderator:

Andra  
Silapētere

### Tatiana Bogacheva

#### *Social Reproduction in the Eastern European Art*

**Tatiana Bogacheva** is a researcher interested in the art history of socialist countries, internationalism, post-colonial and Marxist feminist theory, and their entanglements. She defended her master's thesis in 2020, supervised by Gal Kirn, on the history of curating of Eastern European and post-socialist art, and will be working on a PhD with a focus on feminist art of socialist countries. She frequently contributes to socially engaged art projects, and her video work was recently shown as part of the Post-Soviet Studies project.

### ABSTRACT:

The focus of the paper is the work of artistic couples in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. The heterosexual nuclear family was the only accepted union in communist and socialist countries. Notwithstanding the limitation of this legal and cognitive framework, I suggest that the work of married artistic couples is the most useful for thinking through the art of socialist countries from a materialist feminist perspective (Griselda Pollock). The artworks created by artistic duos frequently thematized intimacy, domesticity, and parenthood, thus valorizing these themes in relation to the category of art (similarly to the American feminist artists of the same period). Besides that, archival photographs often depict female artists engaged in domestic chores or "labour of love" during unofficial exhibitions. To recognize reproductive labour as an integral, even if not visible, part of the artworks of artistic duos, rather than an obstacle for self-realization of female artists, I draw on social reproduction theory (Silvia Federici, Marina Vishmidt, Kerstin Stakemeier). By focusing on reproductive labour, I suggest a framework for re-evaluation of the art of Central and Eastern Europe (including couples where the name of the woman artist was completely omitted) from a gender-sensitive perspective that challenges the myth about the absence of feminist art in socialist countries. Moreover, following Silvia Federici and Marina Vishmidt, I suggest that reproductive labour that remains unacknowledged in art history can be the key moment of potential autonomy of art and of feminist struggle.

## PANEL #2

### Anne Pfautsch

#### *The Archive of Sibylle Bergemann: Questions of Memorialisation and Reinterpretation*

**Anne Pfautsch** is a PhD candidate and associate lecturer at Kingston University London. Her thesis focuses on the Ostkreuz Agency of Photographers and scrutinizes 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 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, and feminist and Marxist methodologies in art history. She also works as a freelance curator of contemporary art and photography, including such exhibitions as *La condition humaine* (co-curated with the Ostkreuz Association of Photography, La Vieille église Saint-Vincent, Bordeaux) and *Postindustriale* (Tapetenwerk, Leipzig).

#### **ABSTRACT:**

This article discusses the memorialization and reinterpretation of Sibylle Bergemann's photographs through the archive administered by her daughter Frieda von Wild and granddaughter Lily von Wild. Bergemann was a renowned German photographer in the German Democratic Republic and one of the few photographers to quickly rise to prominence after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Her photographs form part of museum collections worldwide, including Tate Modern in London and MoMA in New York. Nevertheless, Bergemann's photographs are treated almost exclusively in the context of "dissident" photography, and thus confined to a recently concluded German past. Frieda and Lily von Wild are trying to change that narrative, releasing the photographer from this art-historical prerogative of interpretation. Through the archive, the two women are trying to shift the emphasis from the GDR to Germany, yet the question arises of whether a change is indeed necessary. While being excluded from Western art historiography, would her removal from a Central and Eastern European background not turn Bergemann into a "lost" woman artist, reinforcing the marginalization of her work? Thereby issues of respective strategies of memory emerge, questioning the role of archivist and art historian and the broader political and social context the photographic oeuvre is embedded in. How can the discussion of Bergemann as an East German photographer contribute to a feminist (re)reading of women artists in Central and Eastern Europe?

### Miha Colner

#### *Triple exclusion and fierce determination: Case Studies of Dragica Čadež & Duba Sambolec*

**Miha Colner** is an art historian who works as a curator at GBJ—Božidar Jakac Art Museum in Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia. He is also active as a lecturer and publicist, specializing in the fields of photography, graphic arts, moving image and various forms of (new) media art. In 2017–20, he curated the programme of the Švicarija Creative Centre, an arts venue managed by MGLC—International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana. He worked as a curator (2006–16) at the Photon Centre for Contemporary Photography in Ljubljana. Since 2005, he has published articles in newspapers, magazines, and professional journals, as well as posting them in his blog. He lives and works in Ljubljana and Kostanjevica na Krki.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

In my presentation I will focus on case studies of two female artists, Dragica Čadež and Duba Sambolec, in order to showcase and discuss different ways in which women were marginalized and excluded from dominant canons of art history in Slovenia. Both of these sculptors achieved certain acclaim throughout their careers, but they often faced severe hardships in relation to state institutions and thus official historiography. Therefore, I will outline some general impulses for the apparent lack of gender equality in the world of art in Slovenia before 1989, as well as crucial geopolitical circumstances that often kept female artists from the "periphery" on the margins of international art scene. These arguments will be substantiated with case studies, based on interviews with both artists. Besides local (gender) and international (geographic) marginalization, Čadež (born 1940) and Sambolec (born 1949) were also faced with the disadvantage of being unable to store and/or preserve their large-scale art works, while museums were not interested in (or were incapable of) acquiring their works. Čadež was unable to preserve a number of her public sculptures, and in the absence of other options, she later donated most of her works to regional

## PANEL #2

institutions, such as the Božidar Jakac Art Museum, which holds most of her oeuvre. In the 1980s Sambolec had to temporarily store her large-scale pieces in a local factory, but they disappeared in the turbulent privatization process. Both artists also struggled to gain positions in academia. Čadež became the first female sculpture professor in 1988 but was still unable to teach at the "prestigious" Academy of Fine Arts, while Sambolec moved abroad to (successfully) pursue an academic career in Norway. Now one could perceive the careers of both artists as a success story, as against all odds they managed to maintain their practices and to secure their places in the local history of art, though still insufficiently represented. But the struggle to get to that point reveals symptoms of the systemic exclusion that has prevented many female artists from achieving the critical acclaim they deserve.

## PANEL #3

14.30 - 16.30 PM

**moderator:**  
Barbara Borčić

### **Kateryna Iakovlenko**

#### *Art Between Manhood and Activism: Role of Ukrainian Women Artists During Political Transformations*

**Kateryna Iakovlenko** is a contemporary art researcher, art critic and journalist. She earned an MA in journalism and social communication at the Donetsk National University. For six years she has been researching the transformation of the heroic narrative of Donbas through new media as a postgraduate thesis at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. For more than seven years she has been writing about art and culture in various Ukrainian and European media. She worked as deputy web editor for *The Day* newspaper (2013–14), curator and program manager in the Donbas Studies Research Project at Izolyatsia, a platform for cultural initiatives (2014–15), and researcher and curator of public programs at PinchukArtCentre (2016–20). Her current research interest touches on the subject of art during political transformations and war, and explores women's and gender optics in visual culture. She was the editor of the books *Gender Studies* by Donbas Studies Research Project (2015), *Why There Are Great Women Artists in Ukrainian Art* (2019), *Euphoria and Fatigue: Ukrainian Art and Society after 2014* (special issue of *Obieg* magazine, co-edited with Tatiana Kochubinska, 2019), and *Curatorial Manual* (co-edited with Oleksandra Pogrebnyak and Dmytro Chepurny, 2020).

#### **ABSTRACT:**

Despite the strong and long-time presence of female figures in Ukrainian art, it was mainly perceived through the male gaze and was mediated by the male presence. For example, during Soviet times the idea of art as a heroic deed, a result of a constant struggle and an example of the manhood ethos, was a dominant assumption among female artists. The hierarchy of the Ukrainian artistic community was mainly man-centred, while female artists had to work much harder than their male colleagues just to be recognized as an artist. Therefore, artistic talent was generally associated with personal characteristics rather than artistic skills. In popular imagination, a good female artist is one with a strong backbone, persistent and goal-oriented. In the 1960s, such personal characteristics as "manhood" were also linked to political virility and justice, becoming consistent verbal tropes of nonconformist art. Manhood and heroism are once again valued more than the artistic merit of the works, ethics more than aesthetics. At this particular time, a generation of "strong" female artists appeared all over the country, such as Alla Horska, Ada Rybachuk, Halyna Zubchenko, and many others. Horska became one of the informal leaders of the artistic and activist movement in Ukraine. This generation of monumental artists tend to ignore the socialist realism canon, appealing rather to social and political injustice, proclaiming ideals of humanist art. What happened to this activist tradition and the hegemony of "strong" female artists in the years that followed? The crisis of the Soviet Union and its artistic structures, the subsequent Perestroika and independence of Ukraine, brought fundamental economic and social changes, putting this tradition of nonconformist female art on hold. These trends re-emerged only in 2004–5, in the wake of the Orange Revolution and the emergence of a new generation of artists. Yevgeniya Belarusetz, whose artistic practice successfully incorporated elements of the social activism tradition, became one of the most significant representatives of the Ukrainian art scene in the 2000s. reinforcing the marginalization of her work? Thereby issues of respective strategies of memory emerge, questioning the role of archivist and art historian and the broader political and social context the photographic oeuvre is embedded in. How can the discussion of Bergemann as an East German photographer contribute to a feminist (re)reading of women artists in Central and Eastern Europe?



## PANEL #3

### **Adele Bea Cipste and Ieva Melgalve**

#### *Ways of Forgetting: The Faded Image of Women Artists in Periodicals of the Latvian SSR*

**Ieva Melgalve** is a writer with education in social and cultural anthropology, currently studying at the Art Academy of Latvia. Her research interests are linked to feminism and queer studies, taking an in-depth look at the margins of social norms and viewing arts research as a space where an unconventional approach is always possible. Her personal hobby: to give an understandable shape to complex ideas.

**Adele Bea Cipste** is a writer, art director, and student at New York University Abu Dhabi, where she is pursuing a double BA in art and art history, and film and new media. In autumn 2020, Adele coordinated the exhibition *I Remember, Therefore I Am. Unwritten Stories: Women Artists' Archives*, organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Earlier in 2020, she worked at the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, where she authored and led the publishing of multiple curatorial and media texts for promoting contemporary art in the Persian Gulf region. Projects that she worked on include *The Sovereign Forest* by Amar Kanwar and the campaign #5WomenArtists (in partnership with the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC). Adele's main research interests are ethics of representation and power relations in media. Previously, Adele's writing or artworks have been featured in the *e-flux* journal (2020), *Exit 11* journal (NYU-affiliated, 2018), at the Riga Art Space Gallery (2016, 2017), the Latvian National Museum of Art (2020), NYU Tisch School of the Arts (2018 Showcase), and the Cube Gallery (2018). Adele aspires to be an art director for film teaching at the university level while regularly contributing to visual culture studies through publications.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

Women artists were active contributors to the Latvian SSR art and design scene, in fields as diverse as industrial design, monumental sculpture, and painting. Despite female participation in Soviet artistic and cultural processes, the national canon of art history in post-Soviet independent Latvia (1991–now) remains predominantly male, raising the question in what ways the mechanics of historical memory are gendered.

In our paper, we explore this question through the lens of print media, specifically Soviet Latvian periodicals, recognizing the potency they had in shaping public thought and memory. We reviewed more than 5,000 articles about women artists, to investigate how their work and private lives in the Latvian SSR were framed differently from those of their male contemporaries. Applying discursive analysis, we identify common biases and linguistic modes of describing women's artistic practice. Drawing on Alexei Yurchak's work and speech act theory, we uncover several tentative answers to how and why women artists have partially been erased from the historical memory of Soviet Latvian art.

We argue that despite the nominal feminist ideas embedded in socialist ideology, women artists' advancement in fine arts was systematically discouraged in popular discourse, by framing positions in art education, crafts, design and fashion as most suitable for their gender. Even though women were given voice and gained significant influence over people's taste in those four areas of work, in establishing a national canon, Latvian art history focused mainly on other, "superior" art forms, which were linguistically framed as "masculine." Our research was conducted for the exhibition *I Remember, Therefore I Am. Unwritten Stories: Women Artists' Archives* at the Latvian National Museum of Art, and aided the preparation of its written materials and commissioned artworks.

### **Magdalena Worłowska**

#### *Spiritual and Rational Witches - Ecological Art of Female Artists in The Polish People's Republic*

**Magdalena Worłowska** (PhD) earned her doctorate at the University of Wrocław in 2020 with a thesis on the beginnings of ecologically engaged art in Poland. She holds degrees in applied linguistics and Romance philology. During her doctoral studies she published numerous pieces in Polish and international monographs and scholarly journals and delivered several papers at Polish and international conferences on ecologically engaged art. In 2019 she began her work as a curator, co-curating with Natalia Krawczyk the exhibition *Harvest Disaster* at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Opole.

## PANEL #3

### ABSTRACT:

The attitudes of women in ecological art of the Polish People's Republic were heterogeneous: close to the chthonic experiences and rituals of female essentialism on one hand, and characterized by the depersonalized language of conceptualism on the other. In the paper I would like to present the works of Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Teresa Murak, Natalia LL, Wanda Gołkowska and Ludmiła Popiel. In their works they rehabilitated femininity in connection with nature, with its spiritual but also rational aspect. Second-wave feminists used the figure of the witch, considered closer to nature, to challenge patriarchy. They became shamans, emphasizing the importance of rituals and ephemerality in art. On the other hand, female artists created conceptual works, unfulfillable and often existing only in the mental sphere. Ecological art consisted also of technological language, often treated in a subversive way. The artists discussed in my paper are similar to each other in their affirmative approach, seeking the mutual determinants of what is human, nonhuman and posthuman. According to Ewa Domańska, the affirmative humanities allow us to interpret works of art in the spirit of empathy, critical hope, hospitality, friendship and love. In this perspective, I would like to ponder the following questions: How is the art of the artists discussed related to ecofeminism? In what way were their works precursors of the concept of sustainable development? Have male artists intercepted the "witch's discourse"? Are their attitudes and actions an inspiration for contemporary artists?

## PERFORMANCE

18:00 PM

### Screening of the performance by Ana Čigon *Dear Ladies, Thank you* (2011-2013)

**Ana Čigon** (b. 1982) is an artist from Slovenia who mainly works in video, film, animation and performance. Having received a BA in Painting and an MA in Video from the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design, she was awarded an MA in Interface Cultures by the University of Art and Design Linz (Kunstuniversität Linz) in Austria. Her documentary films mostly deal with feminist and social issues. She is also a video artist for theatre and an active contemporary visual artist who has shown her works at individual and collective exhibitions in Slovenia and internationally, receiving awards and nominations for her video works and films.

## DAY2

03.09.2021

## PANEL #1

9.00 - 10.30 AM

**moderator:**

Barbara Borčić

### **Slađana Petrović Varagić**

*Archiving female performance in Yugoslavia*

– *Dragana (Jovanović) Žarevac*

**Slađana Petrović Varagić** is an art historian, curator and producer. She holds an MA in art history from the Faculty of Philosophy (2001) and an MA in film and media from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Belgrade (Serbia). Since 2006 she has been a member and programme coordinator at the Independent Film Centre Filmart, which carries out several projects, such as Criticism on the Spot (Kritika na delu), Photo-documents (Fotodokumenti), IVA.lab (residency for video art), International Student Film Camp Interaction, and International Documentary Masterclass Interdoc. In 2002–5 she was programme manager and custodian at the Pozega Art Gallery (Pozega, Serbia), in 2005–6 worked as a curator at the Vojvodina Museum of Contemporary Art (Novi Sad, Serbia), in 2009–16 ran the public cultural institution Pozega Cultural Centre as manager (director), and worked there as a custodian (2016–17). She has created, curated and organized numerous exhibitions and projects in the field of contemporary visual arts and film. She has produced more than ten video artworks, one short fictional Slovenian-Serbian film, and several documentaries. She is a member of the International Association of Art Critics–AICA Serbia, NUNS–Independent Journalists' Association (IJAS), and the EU working group Arts Rights Justice.

**ABSTRACT:**

In spite of academic recognition of the art practices from the '70s and '80s, current historiography in Serbia has not covered all of it, particularly not the women artists. This paper argues for the idea of creating spaces for public recreation and archiving the fragile female art practices. Starting from the Fluxus perspective and the equivalence of art and life principle, Dragana (Jovanović) Žarevac moves into the art-world with sound performances in SKC Belgrade, in 1979. Since the '90s, the experts have recognized her solely as a video artist known as the ZKM (Karlsruhe) awardee. However, her early Belgrade phase (1979-1988), related to performance, was omitted. More than 15 solo or in-pair performances have been performed in the galleries of SKC Belgrade, SC Zagreb, ŠKUC Ljubljana, Biennale of Youth - Rijeka, Hamburg (Boris Nieslony's artist centre), Düsseldorf (Klaus Rinke's class). This indicates that her performances were staged in the most important galleries in Yugoslavia, those which founded conceptual and post-conceptual art, but outside of the mainstream art-scene memory and thus, unfairly neglected. By the end of the 70's and the beginning of the '80s, the alternation of two waves of visual art happened in Yugoslavia: *New artistic practices*, based on the achievements of the avant-garde, and postmodernist tendencies. Since she integrates the elements of both standpoints, a more comprehensive research and historicizing of the Žarevac's work represents a missing link between the '70s and the '80s in the context of heterogeneous Serbian and Yugoslav visual art. Musically educated, integrating minimal music, the achievements of the OHO group, La Monte Young and body art, Dragana Žarevac, dedicates herself to analytically structured performance staging archetypal polarities. Drawings, scores, synopses, textual and photographic material provide insight into the very structural processes of building the artwork and carry the potential of archiving performance.

### **Iliyana Nedkova**

*Why Have There Been No Great Contemporary*

*Bulgarian Women Artists?*

**Iliyana Nedkova** has lived and worked in Liverpool and Edinburgh since 1996. She is an independent curator, writer, translator and producer exploring the relationships between public art, activism and creative practices. Her research interests include women artists, peacebuilding and the arts, environmental humanities, artists' moving image culture, literature in translation, and artists' residencies. She holds an MPhil in curating contemporary art from Liverpool John Moores University and an MA in English and American studies, and the history and theory of culture, from the University of Sofia.

**ABSTRACT:**

The epochal 1971 essay by American art historian Linda Nochlin "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" will serve as an important impetus for the rediscovery of women artists in the history of Bulgarian contemporary art in the 1980s. Critical attention will be turned particularly to the emerging performative and video art practice of Albena Mihaylova-Benji, who was born in 1959 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, spent

## PANEL #1

her formative years in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1968–72, studied at the Fine Arts Academy in Sofia in 1980–85, performed and exhibited across Bulgaria for a decade thereafter, and since 1994 has studied video art, practised and settled in Basel, Switzerland. This will be the first monographic attempt to focus on Benji's early works, spanning 1980–89, as the female protagonist of performance art in Bulgaria and by now an established Bulgarian Swiss video artist and documentary filmmaker. The paper will present a thorough investigation of Benji's seminal performative works from the 1980s and trace their engagement with political activism, aesthetic anarchism, the carnivalesque, improvisation, feminism, public art, body politics, conceptual art, experimental theatre, action, happening, video art, and non-conventional art forms. This in-depth analysis will draw on primary research methods, including interviews with the artist and exploration of the artist's own archive and diaries of the 1980s. The secondary research sources will offer a close and critical reading of both contemporaneous and more recently published theoretical, historical and cultural studies that briefly mention some of Benji's early works. This investigation will feature a broad range of Benji's early works, including *Lake and Tape* (1985), a body art performance at Murla Lake in the foothills of the Central Balkan mountain range; *Breathing Exercises* (1989), a participatory performance set on the rooftop of the Union of Bulgarian Artists building in central Sofia, as if drawing a breath of fresh political air and escaping the interior confines of the bastion of socialist realism; as well as *Burning the Documents* (1989), a solo performance and an act of political resistance referencing historical acts of self-immolation. I would argue that Benji's early works have lit fires in the minds of other Bulgarian women artists who were to follow in Benji's footsteps and collectively move away from the Soviet ideological sphere of art influence from the 1980s to date.

### Kateřina Štroblová

#### *There Is Nothing Like Women's Art. Work, Positions and Emancipation of Female Artists in Czechoslovakia during the Normalisation Period*

**Kateřina Štroblová** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Theory and History of Fine Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Ostrava (Czechia). In her research, she focuses on the contemporary art practice of Central Europe. She is also an independent art space curator and art reviewer.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

In the eponymous survey led by Czech art historian Věra Jirousová in 1993, focused on the positions of female artists in the region, one of the authors stated that there was nothing like "women's art."

The question of women's art was (and still is) at stake: Does it really exist? Is it different from men's art (i.e. art as such)? A common and very general characteristic of women's works is that they are concerned about specific female experience in the world. They are not necessarily feminist works. The artist works often with her own corporeality, analyses stereotyped roles and female features, or it can be art mapping the artist's gender-conditioned subjectivity. Before the Second World War, the situation of women artists in Czechoslovakia was difficult. But after the war, following the forced emancipation of women during wartime and the socialist ideology of equality and participation in the "new society," a very strong generation of female artists arose. Most of them were part of newly established art collectives, which were very democratic and bound by friendships and relationships. Here, a very interesting phenomenon can be spotted: a high number of artist couples. Women were respected as partners and mostly did not feel any discrimination. Instead of fighting against social inequality, they were all rather fighting for freedom during the tough normalization era.

The conference paper will examine the term "women's art" and its connotations in the Czechoslovak art scene during socialism. Focusing on the artistic and social milieu of that time, it will try to find out why there were such negative feelings about feminist ideas among female artists of the region, and how the artists perceived their positions and opportunities. Comparing the work of important artists (such as Běla Kolářová, Adriena Šimotová, Eva Kmentová, Naďa Plíšková and Zorka Ságlová), it will show significant features of their approach and artistic methods, questioning whether there are any similarities or common features that can be interpreted in the context of specific female experience.

## PANEL #2

11.00 AM - 13.00 PM

**moderator:**

Marika Kuźmicz

### Ivor Glavaš

#### *The figure of the woman author: Tatjana Ivančić*

**Ivor Glavaš** is a filmmaker and independent researcher. With a background in anthropology and philosophy (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), he works as part of the Multimedia Institute (MI2, Zagreb) as a film programmer, podcast author, and AV producer. With an interest in the history of media, his goal is to explore formal possibilities of story-making. Continuously active through Klubvizija Lab (Zagreb), he is a photography educator and photobook maker. In the springtime he runs a small cinema on the rooftop of his building.

**ABSTRACT:**

From the mid-1950s on, Yugoslavia had an immensely prolific cine club scene. At one point most of the cities in the federation had one, culminating with one of the first and most important amateur and experimental film festivals, GEFF, held in Zagreb in the 1960s. This culture potentiated the authorship of now renowned avant-garde filmmakers like Tomislav Gotovac, Želimir Žilnik, and Dušan Makavejev. The record of the members of Cineclub Zagreb counts many workers and students, and one housewife. She was Tatjana Ivančić, who with her Super 8 camera brought a completely autonomous view into short documentary form. She made 75 films, but her work remains almost unseen. Due to the efforts of only one film scholar, Petra Belc, Ivančić's films are not being erased by history but are finding ways to be re-seen. Through the case of Tatjana Ivančić, the text will imagine the possibilities for re-seeing and re-telling the story of a muted auteur. Cultural history doesn't commit to works per se but to the roles it gives to auteurs. In storytelling, the figure of a woman auteur is established and viewed through preordained narrative categories. The intention is to explore frames of language for a more meaningful position of the facts themselves.

The text will consider different aspects of conditions and possibilities of telling one filmmaker's story in the context of canonization as a political agent, valorization within the system of arts and movements, the social and material conditions in which films were produced, the moral and aesthetic values established in the works itself, and inspirational significance for further artistic exploration. Through this, the goal of the inquiry is to see the effects brought by figure-establishing. Before re-telling broken histories, writing about unknown Eastern European women artists can be a chance for careful listening in the service of a more vivid and potent meaning-making.

### Łukasz Mojsak

#### *Between History and the Future. On Sonja Savić's Videos*

**Łukasz Mojsak** is an independent curator of art and film, writer, and translator. He holds an MA in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths, University of London. Between 2011 and 2016, he worked at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. He currently collaborates with the Arton Foundation in Warsaw and was the co-curator of the Polish Pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale.

**ABSTRACT:**

Sonja Savić (1961–2008), a star actress of 1980s Serbian cinema, was also a filmmaker whose independent work from the 90s and 2000s remains unknown. Her complex video pieces engage with ex-Yugoslavia's political situation and portray her generation's intellectual and countercultural scene, disillusioned by official socialist state culture and forced to endure the war (*Super Real*, 1997, *Play* 1997). Savić developed a trancey collage of found footage, animation and staged acting scenes, where motifs freely travel between pieces and unhinged, almost entropic, visuality resonates with her country's condition in the 80s and 90s.

Savić worked with a commune of performers who staged for her absurd activities, obscure rituals and manifested cultural, gender and queer identities. She collaborated with the cult band Supernaut, whose members made acting, visual and musical contributions to her work (*Supernaut – Belgrade Underground*, 1996), and later formed a "troupe" of young performers (*Waiting for God*, 2006). Remaining conspicuously absent from her films and eschewing celebrity status, Savić diluted authorship for the sake of collaborative experimentation.

## PANEL #2

Living out the heritage of 80s video art, strongly allied with counterculture, she captured the moment when the alternative scene reinvented itself in the 90s with new tendencies, such as rave culture (*Super Real*, 1997, the first Serbian "techno vaudeville"). This paper sheds light on how Savić's pioneering yet marginalised artistic experimentation addressed the troubled past and present by using a future-oriented filmmaking idiom, which anticipated 21st century post-internet developments in visual arts.

## PANEL #3

14.00 - 15.30 PM

**moderator:**  
Andra Ailapētere

### **Katalin Balázs**

*Little material, lot of thought*

*Margit Szilvitzky and experimental textile / fibre art*

**Katalin Balázs** graduated in Art History and Hungarian Literature and Linguistics at ELTE Budapest. She held various scholarships at the Jagellonian University and at the University of Florence. She completed the doctoral program of ELTE and is working on obtaining her PhD. Apart from periods spent at Ludwig Museum and working as a junior researcher grantee at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, she taught at various schools and universities like the University of Film and Theatre or the University in Eger. She has been working at acb ResearchLab since 2020. In her work, a special focus is placed on the art of the 1980s, photography and performance art and since recently, textile/fibre art.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

The focus of my paper is the work of the artist Margit Szilvitzky (1931–2018) and the position of the Hungarian "experimental textile" movement in the history of the region's neo-avantgarde art. The textile-based collages, objects, and installations created by Szilvitzky, who started her career as a fashion designer in the 1950s, made her one of the leading figures of the "new textile" movement in Hungary starting from the *Textile/Wall Image exhibition* (1968) throughout the 1970s to the early 1980s. She also became a regular participant at international exhibitions and biennials, while also obtaining a significant position as a professor at the University of Applied Arts, organizing a Bauhaus-inspired "preliminary course" composed of studies of form and structure. Partly in connection with the new generation of fibre art emerging in Poland, her early pieces used applications and embroidery. In the mid-70s she discovered the folded white canvas, inspired by Joseph Albers' famous paper exercises, as a medium to the visual representation of thought processes. She also intended to explore the possibilities of space, joining the international trend of post-war abstraction that allowed a central role for textiles. My paper aims to analyse her work especially in an international context, but also intends to give an insight into the field of Hungarian fibre art and its institutional background through studying the system of the Szombathely Textile Biennials and the textile symposia in Velem. Szilvitzky was one of the main driving forces behind these events and a regular exhibitor at the biennials. Szilvitzky's generation contributed largely to spatial textiles (fibre art) becoming a noteworthy area for Hungarian neo-avantgarde art. While analysing the institutional and theoretical aspects of the textile movement Szilvitzky was part of, I aim to explore the position of the Hungarian "experimental textile" movement. While fighting for its emancipation as a form of art instead of a craft, "new textiles" functioned at the periphery of political attention, under less severe ideological and bureaucratic control than the fine arts, also because it was practised mainly by female artists in the mostly male-dominated official and even non-official art scene. embracing new cultural tendencies and collective work formats? Was Savić's approach unique? Why is it still unrecognized?

### **Stefanie Proksch-Weilguni**

*Unraveling the Fibre Art of Geta Brătescu*

**Stefanie Proksch-Weilguni** is a doctoral student from Austria whose research focuses on feminist art of the 1970s. She has worked and published peer-reviewed articles on contemporary Romanian performance art. Her dissertation is on the Austrian artist Maria Lassnig and the group Women/Artist/Filmmakers, Inc. in New York. Her project is based at the institutes of art history at the University of Vienna and the University of Basel and has been supported by the eikones Graduate School in Basel, the Maria Lassnig Foundation, and the Swiss National Science Foundation.

## PANEL #3

### ABSTRACT:

During the 1960s and 1970s, Romanian artist Geta Brătescu (1926–2018) integrated textile fabrics in her artistic practice. She expanded her collages of geometrical paper with collages of hand-sewn textile patches. I chose this Romanian case study of the 1970s in order to expand a post-war notion of abstraction with a female, tactile material, and peripheral perspective. This paper argues that Brătescu's abstract textile collages convey her marginalized gender identity, which also transcended her geographical marginalized position in Eastern Europe. Since the 2017 Venice Biennale, Brătescu's art has received international recognition, but as Adrienne Rich argued in her "Notes toward a Politics of Location" (1984), a woman's peripheral situation does not begin in a country, but with the geography of her body. For the first time, this original research sheds light on Brătescu's artworks with traditional female and tactile materials such as textiles, yarns and fibres. In 1978 Brătescu created the series *Vestiges* with textiles that carry Brătescu's personal memories, as she used her mother's old clothes. Her textile collages refer to Romanian traditional female craftsmanship, personal relations, women in mythology, and pictorial traditions of abstract painting. During the 1960s and 1970s, women painters in the art centre of New York tried to utilize abstraction's emancipatory potential as a non-binary formal language. However, for women artists, abstraction has always also been an ideological rather than a neutral aesthetic category. I claim that abstraction's aesthetic promise and ambivalence connect Brătescu's textile collages to a transnational but peripheral location as a woman artist. Thus, this case study proposes a social art-historical and formalist approach to overcome oppositional juxtapositions between centre and periphery and pursue a nuanced transnational perspective on women's art of Eastern Europe.

### Johana Lomová

*Exclusion through specialisation Membership of Women Artists in the Czechoslovak Artists' Union in the 1950's and 1960's and its consequences for writing art history*

**Johana Lomová** is an art historian specializing in Czech art of the second half of the 20th century. Her interests include the institutional framework of art production and the relationship between fine arts and applied arts. She studied art history at the Charles University in Prague and received her PhD from the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague (UMPRUM) based on a thesis about textile designer Olga Karlíková. In the past decade she was an editor of journal *Art+Antiques* and has been teaching at UMPRUM, mainly on contemporary art and art criticism.

### ABSTRACT:

As one of the reasons for the small number of woman artists included in the history of art, Linda Nochlin identified an institutional precondition, or to be more precise, that through education women were excluded from the possibility to practise the most praised format of painting, history painting, and only less prestigious genres such as portraiture, landscape and still life were left for them (1971). In my paper the hierarchy of genres will be replaced by the hierarchy of art forms (fine arts vs. applied arts). Following T'ai Smith's statement about the position of crafts at the outskirts of art history (2016), I will pay attention to the consequences this situation had on the representation of Czech female artists active in the 1950s and 1960s in the history of art. The separate histories of fine arts and applied arts are specifically problematic in the history of Eastern European post-war art, as the decision to become a painter or a textile designer was not a solemn result of personal choice. It was also a combination of individual ambitions and interests and one's political engagement, as painting and sculpture were supposed to play a key political role. Furthermore, the institutional precondition lay in the fact that the specialization studied at art school anticipated officially one's future employment in the structure of the socialist labour market, as the definition of an artist as a profession was based on education. In my paper I would like to analyse these preconditions in the case of two textile designers, Olga Karlíková and Zora Smetanová, and their life, work and legacy.

## PANEL #3

### Eda Tuulberg

#### *The Abdomen is Over-Etched*

**Eda Tuulberg** is an art historian based in Tallinn, Estonia. She is a curator at the Kumu Art Museum and doctoral student at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her field of research is Soviet and contemporary art, with a focus on the work of women artists and the problematics of gender issues. She is currently working on a research and curatorial project exploring the legacy of the late Soviet Estonian women graphic artists.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

The paper focuses on a distinct phenomenon in Estonian art history: women's graphic art of the 1960s and 1970s. Art historians and critics have often treated women graphic artists and their oeuvre as a coherent whole, and it has been written into the history of Estonian art as an example of the depiction of the "women's world." This on the other hand has shaped the somewhat one-sided view of the artists' legacy. Looking closer at the works of these women artists (Vive Tolli, Silvi Liiva, Mare Vint, Marju Mutsu, Naima Neidre, Kaisa Puustak, to name just a few), it's obvious that their artistic positions varied quite a lot, and there is so much more in their picture planes than the specifically "feminine worldview" that researchers and critics have pointed out when conceptualizing this part of Estonian visual culture. The aim of the paper is to critically analyse the discourses that formed thinking about these versatile artistic positions in the Soviet period, showing that the discourse formation was very much related to the concept of femininity, rooted in traditional perceptions of gender and gender roles. Charting, analysing and conceptualizing the problematics of these discourses is one part of a wider study to revise the legacy of Estonian graphic artists. To look closer at the reception of art in the Soviet period and map the most prevalent notions used when writing about women's graphic art provides a basis for analysing and understanding how the thinking about this phenomenon was formed and what kind of ideologies lay behind the discourse formation.

## PANEL #4

16.00 - 17.30 PM

#### **moderator:**

Lana Lovrencić

### Uschi Klein

#### *Picturing the female gaze: photography as a form of cultural resistance during Romania's communist era*

**Uschi Klein** (PhD) is a lecturer and early career researcher at the University of Brighton (UK). With an eclectic interest in all aspects of photography, her current research focuses on Romanian photography as a form of resistance in communist Romania, as well as on decolonizing the photography canon to broaden knowledge and perspectives by including marginalized voices. Her recent publications include a chapter in the volume *The Camera as Actor* (Routledge 2021) and various articles in academic journals.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

This paper explores photography as a form of cultural resistance during the communist era in Romania (1948–89) by discussing the works of female photographers and visual artists Hedy Loeffler, Geta Brătescu and Elena Tulcan. They worked in the context of one of the severest dictatorships among the nations of the former Soviet bloc, where every aspect of cultural, economic, political and social life was attentively and exclusively controlled by the regime and the secret police, which was ubiquitous in a society under strict surveillance. Although photography was widely practised and encouraged as a benign form of expression, it was increasingly deprived of its artistic, social and documentary power, confined to the realm of amateurship and controlled by the communist regime. Amateur photographers had to be registered members of the regime's only officially endorsed and financially supported Association of Artist Photographers (AAF). Their photographs were accepted because they seemingly had no social or political implications and sugar-coated "socialist reality," an ideology of what life was supposed to look like without displaying the harsh conditions of everyday life during the communist era. However, there was a seemingly deliberate confusion of photography's status: Artists were discouraged from using photography in their art, as "photographic art" was only practised by members of the AAF. Questioning this paradox in relation to gender, this paper frames photography as an ongoing event that is interwoven in webs of power, resistance and agency and involves multiple choices and participants. Drawing on three female artists/photographers, resistance is understood as both opposition and survival, no matter how small these acts of resistance are. Within this framework, female artists/photographers were able to find a space to resist the imposed classifications in subtle ways and take an oblique political stance against the oppressive regime.



## PANEL #4

### **Maria Anna Rogucka**

#### *Alina Ślesieńska's Self-awareness? Why and What Kind of Artist's Image Creation through Photographs in Mass Printed Media?*

**Maria Anna Rogucka** received a BA in European studies with German from the University of Essex, followed by an MA in the history of art with the special option "Contacts and Contexts in Russian Art c. 1905–1945" from the Courtauld Institute of Art. Currently, she is completing her second MA, in art and visual history, at Humboldt University of Berlin. Her research investigates political agendas in exhibition-making processes during the Cold War period, within a case study of Steve Poleskie and his solo exhibition at Galeria Studio in Warsaw in 1979. Based in Berlin, she has recently cooperated with Slavs and Tatars Studio. Her latest publication in the Art Special Issue of the *MDPI Journal* is "Teresa Żarnower's Mnemonic Desire for Defense of Warsaw: De-Montaging Photography."

#### **ABSTRACT:**

After a string of successes in the second half of the 1950s and in the 1960s, the sculptor Alina Ślesieńska (1922–94) disappeared from the world of art, and for years she has been present in the pages of art history only in repeated, unspecified, perfunctory mentions. Why exactly is that? How come the natural rival of another successful Polish sculptor, Alina Szapacznikow, who has accrued a much longer local and foreign bibliography, has been almost forgotten and erased from the art history canon? Ślesieńska, acclaimed in Paris, further studied in London with Henry Moore, and was at first extraordinarily present in the press. She cultivated her media image and posed for photographers in line with the latest trends in studios and at exhibitions. Ślesieńska fit the model of the new woman: independent, self-confident, and successful. After returning to Warsaw in 1970, where she continued to create, she was almost completely pushed out of the institutional art circuit until her death. It was only in 2007 that the art world remembered her again, thanks to an exhibition organized by Ewa Toniak at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art. Therefore, through the analysis of works of art and creation of the artist's self-identity, the aim of the presentation is to deconstruct the unsuccessful press media campaign that established for Ślesieńska a rather ephemeral status in the art world, and the enormous gap in the historiography in the canon on women artists behind and between the Iron Curtain. The presentation will further inquire whether such mediative methods were indeed necessary to assure recognition in the masculine art world of the second half of the 20th century.

### **Tihana Rubić & Ana Šeparović**

#### *The Construction of Gender in Interwar Photography: An Interdisciplinary View*

**Tihana Rubić** is an assistant professor at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb (Croatia). She is the author of the book *Nezaposleni u gradu: Antropologija rada i neformalne ekonomije* (Unemployed in the City: Anthropology of Labour and Informal Economy) (hed-biblioteka, 2017). Her research interests encompass family relations, the labour market and the informal economy, urban anthropology, urban marginalized groups, green public space, and qualitative methodology. She is enrolled as a researcher in the Croatian Science Foundation project "Exposure: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today" (2020–24).

**Ana Šeparović** is a research associate and works at the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb. She is the author of the monograph *Jerolim Miše: između slike i riječi* (2016) and the exhibition *Jerolim Miše: od buntovnika do barda* (National Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb 2020), co-author of the book *150 godina Hrvatskog društva likovnih umjetnika: Umjetnost i institucija* (2018), and co-editor of the book *Jerolim Miše. Dokumenti, vrijeme, kritike* (2020). Her research interests cover Croatian painting and photography in the first half of the 20th century, with a particular focus on art criticism discourse. She is enrolled as a researcher in the Croatian Science Foundation project "Exposure: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today."

#### **ABSTRACT:**

The aim of this presentation is to analyse, in an interdisciplinary manner, from an art-historical and cultural-anthropological perspective, the construction and representation of men and women, masculinity and femininity. The focus will be on photographs published in Croatian and Slovenian magazines specializing

## PANEL #4

in photography during the interwar period: the Zagreb-based *Fotografski vjesnik* (1926–27), *Fotograf* (1928–36) and *Foto revija* (1932–41), the Ljubljana-based *Foto-amater* (1932–35), and *Galerija* (Ivanec, 1933–34). Although this corpus does not represent the sum total of all the photographs presented to the public in those years, this sample can still be considered representative because these are photographs that were showcased in exhibitions. As such, they can provide insight into the patterns of representation of masculinity and femininity in the framework of Croatian and Slovenian bourgeois society of the time. Based on an analysis of the depicted characters (from the poses they struck, paraphernalia they are surrounded by or holding, activities they are engaged in, and spaces they occupy), we will deconstruct the dominant characteristics of these patterns. For example, the imperative of beauty and youth is dominant in the choice of models for nudes (which are exclusively female) and female portraits, while in male portraits we conclude that this imperative does not exist because the protagonists are dressed, are from different age groups, and have distinct physiognomies. Furthermore, women in the photos often smile, while the men are serious, unsmiling; women pose more often, while men are portrayed engaged in some activity, at work. As for the physical space (environment, ambience) they occupy and activities they are engaged in, women are most often shown in nature, with small children (motherhood) or in the context of leisure (sunbathing, walking, chatting), while men are more often shown in the interior (for example, in the study) and are engaged in some form of intellectual work (reading). In the analysed photographs, the photographer's (re)presentation of the protagonists is a reflection of a patriarchal construction of masculinity and femininity that functions on the principle of binary oppositions: male/female, strong/weak, reason/emotion, culture/nature, public/private, activity/passivity, seriousness/frivolity, spirituality/matter, domination/subordination, independent/dependent. Indeed, they reflect the structure of social relations during the interwar period. The research hypothesis was that, as a matter of principle, these photographs can (partially) also represent a medium (factor) which may have had an emancipatory potential for the social, cultural and political position of women, with its content, interpretation and approach, given that this is a historical period when efforts were made to advance certain social groups (e.g. the peasantry) in political and artistic terms and improve their social position. We realized there was no such content; that is, it existed only in exceptional circumstances, and the women photographers who published in these magazines are visibly underrepresented. This led us to conclude that with these photographs the magazines contributed to the perpetuation and strengthening of the patriarchal pattern, and photographers, men, members of the bourgeoisie, used photographs to reinforce existing gender roles, stereotypes and asymmetries, thus naturalizing them.

### Šelda Puķīte & Indrek Grigor

#### *Silver girls: Retouched history of photography*

**Šelda Puķīte** is a Latvian freelance art critic, curator and researcher living in Estonia. She studied art history at the Art Academy of Latvia, receiving both bachelor's and master's degrees. Šelda's special interest is projects examining the contact points between socio-political issues, mass culture and art executed through interdisciplinary research and whimsical presentation. In recent years she has worked on several important exhibition projects, curating educational programmes and creating catalogues for art festivals, as well as participating in local and international discussion boards, symposia and lectures, and writing reviews and essays for Baltic press and publications.

**Indrek Grigor** works as head of the Exhibition Department at the Tartu Art Museum. He is an art critic for a number of publications in the Baltics, a podcaster and radio host at Estonian National Radio, and an occasional lecturer at the Estonian Academy of Arts, the University of Tartu, and the Pallas University of Applied Sciences. He studied semiotics and art history at the University of Tartu. He previously worked as gallery manager of Tartu Art House.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

In 2019, curators Šelda Puķīte and Indrek Grigor initiated curatorial research into early women photographers from the geographical area of Latvia and Estonia. The research led to the exhibition *Silver Girls: Retouched History of Photography* and a book (project homepage: [silvergirls.eu](http://silvergirls.eu)). During the conference we would like to introduce the curatorial research done about five early women photographers from Latvia and what exhibiting strategies were used to reveal the complexity of their stories. Until recently, no Latvian pre-war women photographers were featured in any photo history books. This has supposedly to do as

## PANEL #4

much with the general tendency of leaving women out of history, as well as with photographers still not being really celebrated as artists. In this context, women photographers' position is even more diminished, as many of them, even though professional photographers, worked in studios that were to a large extent owned by men. The heritage of these women differed vastly, ranging from almost no images preserved from cherished landscape photographer Emilija Mergupe to more than 1,000 glass negatives by Marta Pļaviņa that have survived. In search of a uniform approach, we chose to portray and revive the artists rather than research the role and position of the artists in the wider context of the history of photography. The latter approach, which was framed as a question about the role and function of the lost and forgotten heritage, became a central point of *Silver Girls*. From the point of view of the mechanics described by cultural semiotics, it is self-evident that a lost, destroyed, fragmented heritage is inevitably more fruitful than a well-documented, rigid archive, as the latter leaves much less space for interpretation. The lost and forgotten, as well as the process of losing and forgetting, combined with (re)discovering, plays a far more important role in the dynamics of history than is usually granted to it. The vibrance that women's history research has brought to the research on the history of Latvian photography is a good example.

## FILM

19.00 PM

### Screening of the films by Sonja Savić:

*Play*, 1997, 22'

*Superreal (Superstvarnost)*, 1997, 57'

**Sonja Savić** b. 1961 in Čačak, Serbia. Following her debut in 1977, Savić became a star actress of 1980s post-Yugoslav mainstream cinema. In the 1990s, she focussed on independent work in theatre and visual arts, as the founder of an alternative theatre group and a video artist. Her little-known video productions engage with the Ex-Yugoslav counter cultural and artistic scene, as well as the troubled history of the Balkans in the 1990s. Based on the manipulation of found footage and staged acting scenes, these pieces feature a dynamic, trancy collage aesthetic that interweaves and loops motifs and imagery. Savić died in 2008 in Belgrade. Her estate is in the custody of the Nadežda Petrović gallery in Čačak.

Courtesy Nadežda Petrović Gallery, Čačak, Serbia