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Magistarska teza:

**STATUS KUSTOSKIH PRAKSI
U POSTSOCIJALISTIČKIM USLOVIMA**

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Master thesis:

**STATUS OF CURATORIAL PRACTICES
IN THE POSTSOCIALIST CONDITION**

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APSTRAKT

Magistarska teza pod nazivom *Status kustoskih praksi u postsocijalističkim uslovima* odnosi se na problematiku savremene profesije kuratora. Specifičnije, ova teza se bavi pitanjem sistema umetnosti u regionu poznatom kao 'Istočna Evropa' (Centralna, istočna i jugo-istočna Evropa), sa posebnim naglaskom na statusu kuratorskih praksi u post-socijalističkom stanju. Ovde se pod terminom 'post-socijalističko stanje' podrazumeva širi period nakon revolucionarnih događaja 1968. godine, preko perioda Titove (Josip Broz Tito) smrti 1980. godine i pada Berlinskog zida 1989. godine, do danas). Teza je fokusirana na metodologije formulisanja savremenih kuratorskih diskursa i savremenih kuratorskih praksi u kontekstu globalizacije, a posebno na svest o kulturnim implikacijama proširenja Evropske Unije (EU) i imperativu za integrisanjem određenog umetničkog prostora u regionalne i šire evropske kontekste. Istaknut je termin 'evropski' jer je tendencija za približavanjem zajedničkom i ujedinjenom evropskom umetničkom prostoru (u okviru sadašnjeg i budućeg globalnog društva) danas u porastu i dobija sve više značaja.

Istraživanje može biti locirano u šire okvire savremene teorije umetnosti, sa posebnim naglaskom na političkim, istorijskim i društvenim uslovima u kojima se tretiraju pitanja umetnosti i kulture vezana za glavnu temu. Istraživanje u tom smislu ima interdisciplinarni karakter, čiju okosnicu predstavljaju sledeće discipline: politička teorija, istorija umetnosti i umetnička kritika, menadžment umetnosti i kuratorske studije. Osnovna istraživačka hipoteza odnosi se na: pitanja reprezentacije Istočne Evrope i savremene istočno-evropske umetnosti (u okviru problematike organizacije izložbi u kontekstu globalizacije), kao i na ulogu kuratora savremene umetnosti (u poređenju sa ulogom savremenog menadžera umetnosti). Ova hipoteza zasnovana je na sledećim pitanjima: Kako je moguće razmatrati i dizajnirati globalnu kulturnu sferu u uslovima u kojima učešće savremenog kuratora igra (glavnu) ulogu u procesu tog dizajniranja?

Koja logika funkcioniše iza procesa dizajniranja/koncipiranja izložbi, i kako se ona može formulirati s obzirom na uključivanje prethodno “nevidljivih” oblasti (poput Istočne Evrope) u korpus vidljivog polja aktuelne umetnosti?

TEZA ovog istraživanja treba da dokaže u kojim uslovima se današnji kuratori mogu identifikovati kao menadžeri, kao i razloge zbog kojih njihova pozicija (pored osnovne, teorijske i političke pozicije) stiče nove (menadžerske, organizacione, i institucionalne) karakteristike, kao neophodne činioce za ispunjenje pretpostavljenih profesionalnih zadataka i uslova rada. Njihova misija, međutim, nije određena strategijama učestvovanja u procesima “dekonstruisanja” takvih uslova, nego upravo suprotno: strategijama razvijanja sekundarnog diskursa (u okviru kuratorskih zajednica, timova, i “korporacija”, poput transnacionalnih inter-institucionalnih tela u akciji, suprotno prethodno dominantnom patrijarhalnom poretku individualnog, van-institucionalnog, ili “nezavisnog”/“free-lance” Master-Kuratora, Kuratora-Gospodara). Sekundarni diskurs kuratorskih timova ovde je shvaćen kao paralelan menadžerskom i organizacionom karakteru globalnog diskursa, kakav se danas operacionalizuje u velikim zajednicama: transnacionalnim korporacijama, ili čak - u zajednici evropskih nacija – Evropskoj Uniji.

KLJUČNE REČI: kurator; kuratorske prakse; savremena umetnost; sistem umetnosti; Istočna Evropa; postsocijalizam; postkomunistički postmodernizam; teorijsko i političko pozicioniranje; globalni kapitalizam; Gržinić, Marina; Erjavec, Ales; Groys, Boris; Misiano, Viktor

ABSTRACT

The MA Research Thesis entitled *Status of Curatorial Practices in the Post-Socialist Condition* centers on the understanding of the issue of contemporary art curatorship. More specifically, it addresses the system of art in the area known as 'Eastern Europe' (Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe), with a particular emphasis on the status of curatorial practices in the post-socialist condition (broadly considered as a period following the 1968 revolutionary events, through the death of Tito in 1980 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, until the present day). It focuses on methodologies in terms of formulating contemporary curatorial discourses and practices in the context of globalization, and stresses awareness of the cultural implications of EU enlargement and the imperative for an artistic space to become integrated into regional and broader European contexts. Particular emphasis is to be placed on the term 'European' because there is an increasingly strong tendency in many parts of Europe to strive for a unified European artistic space within the overall present and future global society.

The research could be located within the broader notion of contemporary art theory, with a strong emphasis on political, historical and social frameworks of art and culture related to the subject. In this respect the research is meant to be interdisciplinary, with the main related disciplines being political history, art theory and criticism, art management and curatorial studies. The general hypothesis to be explored is focused firstly around the issues of the representation of Eastern Europe and contemporary Eastern European art, in terms of organizing exhibitions in the context of globalization, and secondly the role of a contemporary art curator as compared to the role performed by a contemporary cultural manager. This hypothesis relates to the following: how is the global cultural sphere being envisioned and designed with respect to the contemporary curatorial participation in this process? What logic operates behind the very

process of an exhibition design and how is it to be formulated in relation to the inclusion of the previously “invisible” areas (such as Eastern Europe) into the visible field of actual art?

Accordingly, the THESIS of this research is to show that curators are nowadays being identified as managers because (beside their essential theoretical and political position) the new, *managerial, organizational, and institutional* curatorial position is a necessary component of fulfilling this task. Their mission is, however, not determined within the strategies of taking part in the “deconstructive” processes of such a condition, but exactly the opposite: within the strategies of building up a secondary discourse (of curatorial communities, teams, and “corporations”, as transnational inter-institutional bodies of action, as opposite to a previously dominant patriarchal order of individual, non-institutionalized or “independent”, “free-lance” Master-Curators), and parallel to the very managerial and organizational character upon which the global discourse is being operationalized in large communities (such as communities of transnational corporations, or even the community of European nations – the European Union itself).

KEYWORDS: curator; curatorial practices; contemporary art; art system; Eastern Europe; Post-Socialism; Post-Communist Postmodernism; theoretical and political positioning; global capitalism; Gržinić, Marina; Erjavec, Ales; Groys, Boris; Misiano, Viktor

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BELGRADE 2005

INTRODUCTION

*“Every act is political and ... the presentation of one’s work is no exception.”*¹

Daniel Buren

*‘It is through modes of display that regimes of all sorts reveal the truths they mean to conceal.’*²

Marina Gržinić

In his short but significant essay from 1998 entitled *ART SYSTEM (S): Curator without a System*,³ Viktor Misiano, a Moscow-based critic, curator, and Editor in Chief of *Moscow Art Magazine*, analyses the role of curatorial profession in the so-called “societies in transition” with regard to the institutional framework that constitutes this profession in social and cultural terms. Misiano actually gives a very clear statement about this relationship, arguing that “the Curator as a social and cultural figure is a product of contemporary institutions, of the Contemporary Art System.” As I wish to articulate my thoughts about the phenomenon of curatorial practices in the former Eastern European cultural and political space, my idea is primarily bounded by the institutional identity of collective curatorial work, in terms of organizations, associations, networks, and project-based initiatives, that are being prominent today in (former) Eastern Europe. The lack of a specific curatorial discourse (both in theoretical and practical sense), and hence the lack of visibility of the profession itself within specific conditions in the post-socialist Eastern European space (and more precisely, in Serbian cultural space) is a fundamental starting-point. Paradoxically enough, the number of curators is increasing and the ways the profession is

¹ Cf. Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition. New Art in the 20th Century*. University of California Press, Ltd, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998, p. 254. See also: Daniel Buren, “Beware!” in *Art International*, March 1970, pp. 100-104.

² Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Edition Selene, Vienna 2000, p. 39.

³ Viktor Misiano, “Art System(s): Curator without a System”, in *AFTER THE WALL: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, Bojana Pejic and David Elliott (eds.), Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1998, p. 137.

emerging are diverse, multiple, and confusing. It makes us think of the ways that contemporary art is being used as a kind of tool to acquire specific goals outside of the curatorial profession itself, where different techniques, methodologies, principles, and strategies are experimented, exploited and applied without a real system of reference. The curatorial profession in the field of cultural activism today is another point in question, and touches upon the techniques and mechanisms of artistic and curatorial interference with the social and political realities of a contemporary global world. The questions I would like to pose are therefore connected to the very (im)possibility of curatorial work in the environment lacking a firm institutional infrastructure for a stable, long-term, and sustainable profession: how does contemporary art intersect institutionalism in the field of curatorial practices, and how the curators in post-socialist societies encounter the lack of institutional infrastructure for group initiatives and joint work? How to define a model for group activities and still to resist the threats of assimilation and conflict of interest, without losing starting positions and values of concepts? What kind of methodology is to be implemented into the very process of work without losing awareness about the context of fragile political and social realities influencing this process? Going back to Misiano's essay, an institutional crisis is what determines the Eastern European societies in transition:

"The lack of art institutions and the System of Contemporary Art inevitably presumes the lack of art (in its contemporary sense). But the lack of art doesn't mean the lack of artists. Because of several circumstances – cultural tradition, influence of the West, etc. – artists in the "societies in transition" still exist. And where artists exist, a curator is also present. A very specific kind of curator – let's name it a "Curator without a System."⁴

* * *

⁴ V. Misiano, "Art System(s): Curator without a System", *Ibid.*, p. 137.

The MA Research Thesis entitled *Status of Curatorial Practices in the Post-Socialist Condition* centers on the understanding of the issue of contemporary art curatorship. More specifically, it addresses the system of art in the area known as 'Eastern Europe' (Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe), with a particular emphasis on the status of curatorial practices in the post-socialist condition (broadly considered as a period following the 1968 revolutionary events, through the death of Tito in 1980 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, until the present day). It focuses on methodologies in terms of formulating contemporary curatorial discourses and practices in the context of globalization, and stresses awareness of the cultural implications of EU enlargement and the imperative for an artistic space to become integrated into regional and broader European contexts. Particular emphasis is to be placed on the term 'European' because there is an increasingly strong tendency in many parts of Europe to strive for a unified European artistic space within the overall present and future global society.

The research could be located within the broader notion of contemporary art theory, with a strong emphasis on political, historical and social frameworks of art and culture related to the subject. In this respect the research is meant to be interdisciplinary, with the main related disciplines being political history, art theory and criticism, art management and curatorial studies.

Since the research is offered at the Department of Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies, which still lacks the Group for Curatorial Studies as an official academic program (just as elsewhere in the region), its location within the curriculum of the University of Arts in Belgrade is specific. At the Studies of Interculturalism, Cultural Management and Cultural Policy in the Balkans, the research would represent an addition or an extension of the extant curriculum of Cultural Management, with a strong emphasis on the proliferation of new curatorial strategies and their respective organizational/managerial perspectives within cultural institutions, and demands of cultural policy related to the area of

the former communist/socialist countries in Eastern Europe. At the Studies of Theory and Philosophy of Art the research represents a broadening of the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on theoretical discourses coming from (or related to) the Eastern European post-socialist artistic and cultural spheres.

I will propose the possibilities of approaching contemporary curatorial discourses and practices from a critical standpoint with a strong emphasis on the inherent ideological mechanisms of power within the art spaces in the contemporary global world, through an attempt to make a set of relations between the institutions of display (museums and galleries) and the bureaucratic system *visible*. By producing the distance towards the myth of the neutrality of the exhibiting space, this analysis tends to focus on the system of power as much as on its effects, and thus to propose a critical investigation of the relationship between post-socialist curatorial practices and an overall cultural policy in the region, i.e. to examine the role of a contemporary art curator (as a “selector”) with regard to the role performed by a contemporary cultural manager (as a “producer”).

The general hypothesis to be explored is focused firstly around the issues of the representation of Eastern Europe and contemporary Eastern European art, in terms of organizing exhibitions in the context of globalization, and secondly the role of a contemporary art curator as compared to the role performed by a contemporary cultural manager. This hypothesis relates to the following: how is the global cultural sphere being envisioned and designed with respect to the contemporary curatorial participation in this process? What logic operates behind the very process of an exhibition design and how is it to be formulated in relation to the inclusion of the previously “invisible” areas (such as Eastern Europe) into the visible field of actual art?

What is important is an attempt to explain the fundamental reason behind the current interest in this region’s cultural production and to introduce

conclusions which require the necessary transformation of the status of curators alongside with their discourses and practices around 'Eastern European' art, and with special regard towards the notion of power, cultural hegemony, and principles of assimilation of 'cultural minorities'. In order to fulfil this task, I attempt to synthesize art theory and critical discourses around contemporary art practices, on the one hand, and management of art and culture, on the other, through the intermediary role of contemporary art curatorship.

The main aim of the research project is to raise awareness within academic circles regarding the importance of contemporary art curatorship and the status of the respective professionals in this field. In doing this I shall be putting forward an analytic model for critical interpretation of curatorial practices from (or related to) the post-socialist Eastern European countries. The motive for this specific approach lies in an attempt to identify the strategies coming from those structures in the art world that are professionally oriented towards selective and mediatory operations related to the practices of displaying art. Those structures are nowadays found in the roles played by curators as cultural managers and art producers.

Having in mind that the rising interest in curating exhibitions of contemporary art dealing with the Balkan region, and/or the South-East European region, and/or the East European region, emerges from the socio-political features of the area, the project is aiming at fostering more powerful reception of new currents within the critical approaches towards the issue from a broader perspective. This perspective openly seeks to draw together two critical bases of interpretation, namely the theoretical and the practical. This organizing function and the way it is translated into actual, contemporary art production, is even more important in an area lacking the efficient market-system and regulatory policies in the cultural domain (such is the case with Eastern Europe). This kind of analysis requires a deeper look into strict policy demands which determine the existence, development and programming of cultural institutions in

general, and influence the ways in which contemporary visual art is understood in the government reform priorities. A constant awareness about the political and social contexts and institutional power structures that determine the character of a contemporary art world is indeed an urgent issue in relation to current exhibition making. The proposed course of analysis is necessary for an adequate treatment of curatorial practices primarily because of the regulatory changes that need to be introduced and implemented into the highest level of governmental and academic priorities for the benefit of the proper understanding and support of local and regional contemporary visual arts.

This approach to curatorial methodologies puts forward a model of critical reading which deals with the interactive contribution of both theoretical and practical examination. The nature of the approach will be multidisciplinary centering on curatorial theory, yet incorporating the diverse fields of criticism, cultural studies, historical and political perspectives, economic and managerial discourses. It will also be interdisciplinary inasmuch as it shall seek to juxtapose, and evaluate the intrinsic nature of both curatorial concepts related to exhibition making, and their effect in the organizational domain of the institutional practice. I intend to build upon the recent pioneering work carried out in this field notably by Marina Gržinić⁵, Aleš Erjavec⁶, and Boris Groys⁷, as well as the relevant critical statements by curators such as Viktor Misiano.⁸

I would like to limit myself specifically to the South-East European region and to curatorial strategies developed in the last 15 years (1989-2004), with a strong emphasis on the most representative and the most recent critical

⁵ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Edition Selene, Vienna 2000; *The Last Futurist Show: Salon de Fleurus*, K. Malevich, Armory Show, Globalization, Politics, New Media Technology, edited by Marina Gržinić, Maska, Ljubljana 2001; and *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe*, ZRC Publishing, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main 2004

⁶ *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*. edited by Aleš Erjavec, California University Press, Berkeley 2003

⁷ Boris Groys, *Du Nouveau. Essai d'économie culturelle*, Editions Jacqueline Chambon, Nîmes 1995; *The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1992, and *Teorija sodobne umetnosti*. Studentska založba, Ljubljana 2002

⁸ Viktor Misiano, *INTERPOL: The Art Exhibition Which Divided East and West*. Ljubljana and Moscow, 2000

examples regarding the subject. Contemporary curatorship is here conceived as one of the essential elements of resonance of the political, social, economic and cultural changes that have been taking place in the former communist countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc (the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe) and ex-Yugoslavia, ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The theoretical background for this approach (current ideas as proposed by Gržinić, Erjavec and Groys) has been provided by relying on the contemporary rethinking of Eastern European aesthetics and art production in relation to their own political environment. This also relates to the global overall movements that have positioned them within the specific circumstances, conditioned by the hegemonic rules of superior power systems and their respective institutional representatives and financial tools.

I do not consider this research as the most ambitious one: it could serve only as a “sketch” for my own positioning in theoretical curatorial work, that could possibly lead toward a satisfying professional improvement. Nevertheless, it could also help increasing the visibility of issues generally related to the profession that I consider as my personal duty and occupation. Some of the main steps in my future research work towards professional expertise in contemporary art curatorship will refer to the following: how local/ regional/ national cultures are invented and sustained by exhibition making and respective exhibiting institutions through such strategies as standardization of collection’s thematic display, overall exhibitions’ organization and marketing promotion in public media; the historical development of a contemporary art curator and their concepts of exhibiting contemporary art, examining conventions of classification and display, and stressing the link between emergence of art institutions and development of the role of a contemporary art curator in the late socialist and post-socialist Eastern European conditions; issues facing curators today, such as the difficulties they encounter in responding to the competing cultural policy demands and interests of public funding bodies and local or regionally specific communities.

The research project will be developed in the form of an array of precisely planned and examined sub-topics. After a thorough contextualized historical introduction, with regard to the background of contemporary political history, art criticism and cultural theory (Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri,⁹ Fredric Jameson,¹⁰ Mikhail Epstein,¹¹ and Aleš Erjavec¹²), I would focus on theory and practice of curatorial strategies, and meaning of curatorial practices in general: *Thinking About Exhibitions*,¹³ *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition. New Art in the 20th Century*,¹⁴ *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*,¹⁵ and *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*.¹⁶ Later on I will accentuate the core of the research - theories of curatorial practices in post-socialism, divided into suitable chapters, through concentrating on context, status, roles, and positions of the Political East. I shall begin a series of analyses with regard to the critical examples of curatorial practices with the main focus on South-East European and Balkan context. Furthermore, I shall be highlighting their limitations when confronted with curatorial strategies coming from the region, as compared to minor local exhibitions and general conditions of art economy in Eastern European transitional period.

Accordingly, the THESIS of this research is to show that curators are nowadays being identified as managers because (beside their essential theoretical and political position) the new, *managerial, organizational, and institutional* curatorial position is a necessary component of fulfilling this task. Their mission is, however, not determined within the strategies of taking part in the “deconstructive” processes of such a condition, but exactly the opposite:

⁹ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London 2000

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London 1991

¹¹ Mikhail Epstein, *Postmodernism*, Zepter Book World, Beograd 1998

¹² Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition, *Ibid.*

¹³ *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Greenberg, Reesa, Ferguson, Bruce W., and Nairne, Sandy, Routledge, London 1996

¹⁴ Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition. New Art in the 20th Century*. University of California Press, Ltd: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998

¹⁵ *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, edited by Brian Wallis, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York 1986

¹⁶ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. University of California Press, Ltd, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1999

within the strategies of building up a secondary discourse (of curatorial communities, teams, and “corporations”, as transnational inter-institutional bodies of action, as opposite to a previously dominant patriarchal order of individual, non-institutionalized or “independent”, “free-lance” Master-Curators), and parallel to the very managerial and organizational character upon which the global discourse is being operationalized in large communities (such as communities of transnational corporations, or even the community of European nations – the European Union itself).

However, before I start any theoretical and political analysis of the subject relevant for the thesis, I need to define the place I intend to speak from. Defining the place of one’s own speech (the topological place, the point of reference, or - according to the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek - one touchy nodal point of contestation which decides where one truly stands), and therefore one’s particular positioning within the field of theoretical and political discourses, here resonates with an essential theoretical proposition as given by the Slovenian philosopher, theoretician, artist, and curator Marina Gržinić and means: *taking a clear, unconditional stance on a proper condition of working, living, and acting.*¹⁷ This is what I consider of an utmost importance for one’s most relevant point of departure in the critical investigation of any subject concerned.

As Gržinić makes clear, to be firmly grounded in the (artistic and cultural) field of action necessarily involves the reconstruction of one’s personal background and the specific history of one’s professional formation. Connected to the reconstruction of the original intentions and attitudes that gave rise to the theoretical discourse as I am trying to point out here, *the re-politicization of a proper position* is based upon and dependent on one’s individual experiences as well as on one’s historical situation. This means that my attitude is necessarily inflected by my individual experience and historical context of working, living, and

¹⁷ Marina Gržinić, *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe*, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main: ZRC Publishing, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2004, p. 9.

acting in the very conditions of the socialist and post-socialist space of former Yugoslavia, or (more precisely) - in the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions of the late 1970s socialist (Titoist) Yugoslavia, the 1980s post-Titoist Yugoslavia, the 1990s authoritarian Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and the 2000s post-authoritarian (Serbia and Montenegro as being part of) South-Eastern Europe. Besides, my personal 'unconditional' experience reveals my own attitude and the specific history of my individual (intellectual and bio-political) formation in a space between the 'official' (institutional, academic, and mainstream) and the unofficial (alternative, queer, and underground) contexts of the Belgrade political, social, economic, and cultural realities of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Accordingly, my choice of the subject of curating (and the curatorial profession itself) was deliberate ever since the beginning of my interest for contemporary art issues, and was inspired by some of the professionals in the field that I personally had a chance to encounter, talk to, learn from, work and cooperate with (most significant among them being a Belgrade-based curator and art-historian Biljana Tomić and a Ljubljana-based curator, philosopher, theoretician, activist, and artist Marina Gržinić). The subject is therefore conceived not only within the problematic of curating, but within a very precisely determined area of critical curating. Having in mind the main thematic focus of the research (the role and status of curatorial profession and curatorial practices related to contemporary visual art from the East of Europe), critical curating is here based upon exploring wider implications of historically established values of curatorial practices.

The heritage of critical theory provides a firm background for such an orientation. Critical theory is here understood in terms of a broad social philosophy, i.e., as a specific *social* and *activist* tool that provides a guide for human and professional action, taking the form of a critique of ideology (*Ideologiekritik*) and leading toward supplying the knowledge of the necessity of transforming the present social order. Critical theory refers to a whole range of theories which take a critical view of society and the human sciences or which

seek to explain the emergence of their objects of knowledge. The meaning of social philosophy is here bound by the idea of inter-disciplinarity, or interdisciplinary knowledge (as proposed by Horkheimer in 1931) as the agent of revolutionary change, resulting from the need for an integration of disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, economics and history. Drawing on this integration, combining the study of individuals with that of society could facilitate exploring the contradictions and interconnections making possible the reproduction and transformation of society, culture, economy and consciousness. Critical theory is thus not to be mistaken with insisting on negative commentary that tends to be cynical, derogatory and insulting. It is rather understood as a critical method stemming from a specific range of Marxist and, especially, Post-Marxist approaches originating among the members of the Frankfurt School in the early twentieth century (advocating an open-ended, continuously self-critical process that will eventually contribute to social reform), and common among the critical continuers of their thought in the second half of the twentieth century. From that point, I would indirectly rely on the major strand in the work of the Frankfurt School (particularly to the writings of Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer), as well as to the writings of their critical continuers (Habermas, Jameson, Žižek, etc).

Besides, I believe that contemporary curatorial practices are being structured and determined by the fact that a new, *digital paradigm* has a constitutive part in defining the field of curatorial action today. Being involved in digitized environments, contemporary curators use the advantages of technology in order to avoid traditional norms of professional activities by developing networks for circulating not only information but also political work and strategies. I depart from the fact that a *contemporary curatorial discourse* (understood in its broadest - communicative, activist, and transformative - sense) is a possible tool for discussing, questioning, and influencing the most pressing issues dealing with political, social, and economic impacts on today's art and culture, and vice versa. Consequently, I believe that contemporary curators can (must) be identified with

respect to such a broad professional (political) orientation as possible *public agents of change* in today's art and society. In what follows, the analysis revolves around the possibilities, of constructing forms of globality capable of giving speech/visibility/presence to multiple local actors/projects/spaces in ways that are constitutive of forms of globality, i.e. of proposing a distributive network of powers that serves as a strategically built paradigm of different thinking, acting, and parallel living, as an open public discourse, secondary and simultaneous to the hegemonic one that is being recognized today through global media conglomerates (as proposed by Saskia Sassen, among the others).

1. CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY: THE OTHER EUROPE

The Other(s) - Concepts of Contemporary European Identities

*'It is not question of identity - identity is used as a shield for many transactions in art and politics - but a question of the capitalist art system and its connection to the art market and to the cannibalization of new territories. To this process of cannibalization, as capitalism is a cannibal par excellence, every identity is comodified.'*¹⁸

Marina Gržinić

The term *identity* [lat. *identitas*, *-tatis* < *idem* the same] is most commonly used in order to designate an ambiguous process of individuals' recognition of themselves regarding the similar (or the same) and the distinguishing (or the different) features of an individual or social group. As far as it concerns the state of being identical or absolutely the same, it may be of two sorts: *absolute*, which involves exact equality with itself, or selfsameness (as the equation $a = a$), and *relative*, a less rigid sense, which implies a close material resemblance or similarity (as that of the green of two leaves).¹⁹ Also, the distinctive character belonging to an individual refers to the issue of one's personality, or to the state of being that is asserted or described as 'individuality', as opposed to the aforementioned state of being 'identical'. In both cases the issue is taken up to help defining the processes of identification and alienation, based on the way that individuals recognize themselves through a shared condition or quality (be it one of race, religion, gender, sexuality, class, or cultural origin).²⁰

¹⁸ See: Marina Sorbello. 2004. "A Window to the Balkans." *Tema Celeste*, 102: 58-69.

¹⁹ *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition, Chicago: Trident Press International 1996, p. 627

²⁰ Richard Meyer, 'Identity', in: *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds.), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1996, 2003, p. 345.

In her book *Identity and Difference* Kathryn Woodward departs from positioning identity and difference as words in common currency with respect to the following: identity at global, national, local and personal levels; the loss of identity; the search for identity; 'identity crisis'; conflicting, incompatible and polarized identity positions; familial identities; sexual identities, etc. According to her, '*...identity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the world in which we live; (and also) marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not.*'²¹ However, what is of real concern here is related more to the processes of designing/constructing/performing one's identity (and the respective sphere/environment around these processes), than really taking the "identity" as a given form of pure identification. Identities are produced, consumed and regulated within culture - creating meanings through symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions which we might adopt. And if we are to gain a full understanding of identity-related issues as a cultural text or artifact, it is necessary to analyze the processes of representation, consumption and regulation in the field of cultural production, where identity is used and performed as a conceptual tool with which it becomes possible to understand and make sense of social, cultural, economic and political changes.²²

What is the most significant feature here is that the concept of identity is based upon the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations, and understood through the ways in which it raises fundamental questions about how individuals fit into the community and the social world. Also, the criteria of *polarization* (national or ethnic conflict), *inclusion* or *exclusion* (insiders and outsiders, 'us' and 'them'), and *oppositions* (man/ woman, black/ white, straight/ gay, healthy/ unhealthy, normal/ deviant) help us approach the question of Identity as most clearly defined not only by *difference* (that is by what

²¹ Kathryn Woodward, "Identity and Difference", in: Culture, Media and Identities Open University series, edited by Kathryn Woodward, London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi: Sage 1997, pp. 1-2

²² Kathryn Woodward, "Identity and Difference", *Ibid.*

it is not), but by designation/creation/construction/configuration of a specific subject for the benefit of specific purposes. This introduces a logical turn toward contemporary theoretical re-thinking of (producing one's) identity in terms of one's configuration within the unstable field of (temporarily and ideologically constructed) political and social patterns or codes (*Eastern European* identity, for example), but also – of the Other (the Other space, instead of Otherness):

'The difference between Otherness and the Other is crucial: "Otherness" is something that functions as an incomprehensible difference or a disturbance, while "the Other space" is opposite to this: it is a strategically built paradigm of different thinking, acting, and parallel living, which is a powerful re-politicization matrix of a possible different structure. In most cases this Other space is qualified as Otherness in order to shift the strategic power of such a space and reduce it only and solely to pure difference or disturbance connected to everyday existence'.²³

According to Gržinić (and I will explicitly rely on her interpretation of the subject of identity), it is no more sustainable to think in terms of a classical concept of identity - the one being grounded on topographical nodes that rely on positive content, i.e. a process that grounds identity in a concrete space, relying on a predetermined context (such as national groups that are often identified with this type of traditional concept which could be defined as an ethnocentric program of identity). Instead, Gržinić proposes another point of view, grounded in her own and our global experience of predominantly cyber-political beings, capable of operating within the new media spaces (digital media and Internet).

And it is exactly due to the changes induced by the dematerialization of our presence on the Internet and WWW, that identity is no longer attached to a topos, a specific place, but rather to a reconfigured relationship (between body and space) and the digital re-constitution (of temporality versus space). The transformation of contexts and meaning in digitized environments is now made

²³ Marina Gržinić, *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East of) Europe*, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main: Založba ZRC - REVOLVER Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2004, p. 9.

possible and open for our re-thinking of the subject, brought to light by a variety of transformations that are intrinsically connected to the reconstruction of social identity and different contexts in digital media. What Gržinić is pointing out – and this is all the more important for the subject of contemporary curatorial identities considering the roles they are performing in such transformed environments – is a fundamental change that is taking place once we accept the loss of traditional concepts of identity, and based upon the different nominations of identity between “fluidity” and “flexibility”. What is really fluid in today’s “identity affairs” is not identity itself, but the variety of different ROLES we are forced to perform today:

“Being at the same time a Slovenian and/or Croatian intellectual in Diaspora, a woman, video artist, mother, lesbian etc. is not a sign of the fluidity of identity but of an accelerated dynamics of roles that we perform and present as our identity, in order to adjust and position ourselves in time. We have to balance ourselves within different codes today. Identity stays fixed, so to speak, while the matrix of different codes allows for a constant process of the commercialization of identity roles. Quickly changing roles and performing according to different codes is not a process of fluidity, but of flexibility; it is also connected to the loss of the previously mentioned, traditional type of topographically 'fixed' identity. Flexibility regarding roles and codes is - and this is important - first and foremost required from and exercised by those who are not in power. Strategically speaking, artists must be flexible to survive in the first place and this flexibility is particularly effective on the Internet. Flexibility of identity produces a flexibility of contexts.”

Here, however, it is also important to introduce the form of capital which relates to the question of the capitalist art system and its connection both to the art market and to the “cannibalization” of new territories. Capitalism - as perceived by Gržinić - is a cannibal par excellence, to which every identity is commodified. This practically means that the question of, for example, Eastern European identity (as methodologically investigated through the wave of exhibitions of contemporary Eastern European art in the last decade) relies more on the comprehension of this territory through operations of exclusion/ inclusion

in relation to the notion of hegemony (i.e., its absorption within the art market of the First Capitalist World), than on the real comprehension of the identity as such. According to Gržinić, the most important paradigm of this absorbing structure is cloning, which connects the art system with new technology and changes the museums and galleries into laboratories, while the artwork is seen solely as a new brand or mark.²⁴ What is especially significant about this approach is an attempt to discern the inner necessity of the art/cultural system (as many of these exhibitions present themselves as just a moment of discovery – the exhibitions are entitled “searching for this or that” – or even as an act of pure generosity and sharing between different worlds in this era of globalization). The analysis, evolving around the question: through what operations of exclusion/inclusion in relation to the notion of hegemony does this new world itself emerge?, fosters the thesis that the model of the way that global art cultural imperialism functions must be looked for elsewhere, *outside* of the pure cultural context. Gržinić’s efforts are thus directed at answering the following question: how the cloning technologies refer to contemporary exhibition making in enlarged Europe, and how they influence functional principles of a contemporary art system in previously anonymous cultural territories?²⁵

In this respect, I would refer to the micro-political fields of action, seen as *individual strategies developed in a collective way*, in order to transcend obstacles set by the demands of a contemporary art power edifice. What is really important in the field of contemporary art curatorship, and especially in the region

²⁴ Marina Gržinić, from a survey “A Window to the Balkans”, in Sorbello, Marina. 2004. “A Window to the Balkans.” *Tema Celeste*, 102: 58-69. Related to this metaphor of cloning, see also Gržinić’s text “Global Capitalism and the Genetic Paradigm of Culture”, in M. Gržinić (ed.), *The Future of Computer Arts & The History of the International Festival of Computer Arts*, Maribor 1995-2004, Ljubljana - Maribor, 2004, pp. 69-80.

²⁵ In Gržinić’s case, the elements of the exclusion/inclusion machine are to be found in the scientific discourse on cloning, biotechnology and in the notion of the viability of none other than the famous and recently deceased sheep Dolly. Here Gržinić refers to two basic texts that are to be considered: Sarah Franklin’s essay entitled “Dolly’s Viability and the Genetic Capital” (2001) and Donna Haraway’s book *Modest Witness @ Second Millennium: Female Man© meets OncoMouse™* (1997). See: Marina Gržinić. “Global Capitalism and the Genetic Paradigm of Culture”, in M. Gržinić (ed.), *The Future of Computer Arts & The History of the International Festival of Computer Arts*, Maribor 1995-2004, Ljubljana - Maribor, 2004, pp. 69-80.

such as Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, is getting virtually together all those “selectors” (curators and art critics) from the entire European cultural sphere in order to discuss and further develop the aforementioned issues. The exchange of ideas among international fellow curators is, therefore, of an utmost importance not for the proper questioning of multicultural identity, but instead - how the global cultural climate is being formed and put into life. Their joint conclusions must insist on continuous and progressive exchange of relevant curators, art critics and artists among different European regions, in order to mobilize creative potentials of all sides in transferring knowledge and experience in the field of contemporary art, art criticism and contemporary art curatorship. A common framework of their production is, now more than ever, related to the metaphor of selective breeding and cloning as a genetic paradigm of contemporary art production in the globalized art world. This explicitly problematizes the specificity of European cultural micro-systems (“micro-cultures”) that have lost their status of invisibility after the political changes in contemporary Europe, and set up relationships both within the mechanisms of a contemporary art system and art market, and within the larger network of institutional art production in the European Union. My questions are therefore as following: what are the advantages and disadvantages of curatorial breeding techniques, operating in the field of contemporary art world, and how do they influence production of meaning, perception and reception of global movements in contemporary European art world? Finally, is it possible to talk about specifically European art from today’s perspective of a politically re-designed continent, floating in-between a highly capitalist art market in the western sense, and the lack of an established, stable market in the former Eastern European territories? These questions are meant to examine critical art practices and strategies dealing with institutional constraints of a contemporary art system and its respective representative models (curators, gallery and museum structures, art administration, financial and bureaucratic processes, ideological mechanisms of power, etc) all taking part in selective approaches towards *branding* specific cultural micro-territories through contemporary art exhibitions. In an attempt to

approach (but also constantly self-criticize) such a new cooperative structure, it is important to define the elements upon which this structure is about to emerge. So, how can we define the basic elements of this post-socialist condition with respect to a global dynamics that threatens to erase it before its own professional identity-parameters are even established? And how can those that are “not in power” (such as Eastern European cultural protagonists in relation to the Western European mechanisms that produce and sustain power relations within the EU-based cultural world) provide (individually and collectively) flexible identities with regard to those “that are in power”? It is the re-configuration of their respective roles (profiles, statuses, positions, functions) that is capable of encountering and responding to the global dynamics of change, taking into account all the most significant (political, social, economic, and cultural) features and factors that constitute the matrix of different codes today. It is the matter of proper (flexible) positioning within the relational, communicative sphere of professional and institutional identity politics that makes a curatorial role situated within a network of power-structures. It is one of the aims of this work to show that such a role is possible.

Post-Socialist Eastern European Condition

'It is crucial to recognize that the end of the Soviet era was not limited specifically to the territory of the Soviet Union. The Bolshevik experiment, no matter how many specifically Russian cultural traits it developed, was vitally attached to the Western modernizing project, from which it cannot be extricated without causing the project itself to fall to pieces – including its cult of historical progress'.²⁶

Susan Buck-Morss

The Post-Soviet Condition was the title of Susan Buck-Morss's May 2005 lecture, given at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade on the occasion of her first visit to Serbia after her book *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* had been translated into Serbian and published by *Beogradski krug (The Belgrade Circle)*.²⁷ A political philosophy and social theory lecturer at Cornell University (USA), Buck-Morss addressed the Belgrade audience claiming that "we are suffering from a kind of post-partum depression: having long been pregnant with a future to which the world has now given birth (to paraphrase Marx), we are frankly disappointed."

In her book *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass-Utopia in East and West* (The MIT Press, 2000), Buck-Morss takes a clear distance from the Eurocentric terminology of the Cold War, separating "East" and "West" as two distinctive versions of differently positioned and historically bounded realities, and

²⁶ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, The MIT Press, 2000, p. 68.

²⁷ Suzan Bak-Mors, *Svet snova i katastrofa: Nestanak masovne utopije na Istoku i Zapadu*, Beogradski krug, Beograd, 2005; Susan Buck-Morss is a Cornell political philosophy professor and visiting distinguished professor in the Public Intellectuals Program of Florida Atlantic University (USA), the author of *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass-Utopia in East and West*, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project – Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, and *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*

(as she states) challenges the Cold War discursive binary of totalitarianism versus democracy at its core. She does depart from the moment marked by the end of the Cold War and argues that it was exactly this moment that brought into light the essential common ground for both “East” and “West”, namely – (the construction of) mass-utopia, while the shift only happened in a transfer from a collective level toward a personal level, the latter still being identified as a locus preserved for personal utopias, dreams, and dreamworlds. Accordingly, “the profound significance of this event was not so much its political effects – the replacement of “really existing” (state) socialism by “really existing” (capitalist) democracy – as the fact that this fundamental shift in the historical map shattered an entire conception of the world, on both sides, (and) marked the end of the twentieth century.” She stresses similarities rather than differences between East and West, and interprets cultural developments of the twentieth century “within *opposed political regimes as variations of a common theme*: the utopian dream that industrial modernity could and would provide happiness for the masses. This dream has repeatedly turned into a nightmare, leading to catastrophes of war, exploitation, dictatorship, and technological destruction.” She places the construction of mass utopia as a collective dream and the driving ideological force of industrial modernization in both its capitalist and socialist forms, as “the belief that the industrial reshaping of the world is capable of bringing about the good society by providing material happiness for the masses.”²⁸

According to her, critical analyzes around the subject should be defined in terms of power-systems as applied to cultural conditions in East and West, and furthermore - within the Eastern (Soviet) cultural model – they should revolve around an essential distinction between an old (communist) system of power, and a new constellation of power with introduction of new political rhetoric and marketing strategies in the post-Cold War era: “Consumerism, far from on the

²⁸ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass-Utopia in East and West*, The MIT Press, 2000, pp. XIII-XIV

wane, has penetrated the last socialist bastion of mainland China to become, arguably, the first global ideological form.”²⁹

Today, however, it is the new power-system of global capital that is organizing the world in which industrial production continues to expand, provoking new catastrophes. While another dream is taking place, the one affecting an entire conception of the world, Buck-Morss proposes an analytical concept of dreamworld (borrowed from Walter Benjamin) in order to appeal for criticizing the effects of both old and new catastrophes, always in the name of the democratic, utopian hope to which the dream gave expression. Because it is the very essence of “dreamworld” that “acknowledges the inherent transience of modern life (in Benjamin’s terms), the constantly changing conditions of which imperil traditional culture in a positive sense, because constant change allows hope that the future can be better (...) as expressions of a utopian desire for social arrangements that transcend existing forms, (...) and for the benefit of the masses.”³⁰ Her comparison of two dreamworld forms, as well as two cultural forms that existed in East and West, shows inherent and uncanny similarity from today’s, post-Cold War era perspective:

“They may have differed violently in their way of dealing with the problems of modernity, but they shared a faith in the modernizing process developed by the West that for us today has been unalterably shaken. (...) Against the often-repeated story of the West’s winning the Cold War and capitalism’s historical triumph over socialism, these essays argue that the historical experiment of socialism was so deeply rooted in the Western modernizing tradition that its defeat cannot but place the whole Western narrative into question. If the term postmodern is operative here, it is not as the description of a new historical stage – the underlying structures of modernity have far from disappeared – but as the awareness that there are no stages of history in the developmental and optimistic sense that modernity’s dreamworlds once believed.”³¹

²⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, *Ibid.*

³⁰ Susan Buck-Morss, *Ibid.*

³¹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Ibid.*

Her approach to the so-called “Post-Situation” revolves around the fact that nothing so characterizes our era as the proliferation of the terms “Post-“and “neo-“, where the former – post-modern, post-Marxist, post-colonial, post-national, post-hegemonic, post-patrimonial, post-populist, post-globalization - finds its position on the left (as the moment of critical negation), while the position of the latter – neo-liberal, neo-conservative, neo-imperial, neo-Nazi, neo-fundamentalist - forgets about the past and its disappointments, and with striking historical amnesia, attempts to bring the old up to date. Besides, the era of Western modernity also witnessed the situation where, in the mid-20th century, the neos were on the left not the right, with the emergence of the New Left (neo-Marxism and neo-Freudianism, for example, both opposing orthodox Marxism and orthodox Freudianism). In her own words, contrary to today’s disappointment, the previous optimism was not just a mood but a real possibility, as there were progressive political movements whose interests were expressed in neo-Marxism (such as socialism with a human face, for example), and neo-Freudianism (critiques of the *social* origins of mental disorders). While expressing optimism about political change, the New Left was not a neo-Left forgetting its recent past, but an attempt to keep the Left on the left precisely because of the recent past. This dialectics is essential if we are to understand the post-situation, and, more precisely, our present situation, because today both the posts and neos are responsible for producing different political agendas on a global scale. Real political implications of such a left-wing and right-wing global orientations (alongside the new radical political movements) also depend on their connections to public discourse, which is unfortunately not always the case, and often have only an academic, scholastic character, without having relevance in the public arena of influence. Here she gives an American example of its contemporary administration and neo-liberal economy speaking the “official” language of neos, while the Left (that speaks the “unofficial” language of posts) keeps the moment of critical negation alive visibly in architecture, art, and certain strands of the counter-culture.

The question is: how to embrace and oppose this global neo-liberal situation by not applying the prevalent “official” discourse (i.e. the one representing Western liberal-capitalist police/political order, in Žižek’s terms), but rather by an attempt to critically re-consider it from the opposite side? How to come to terms with new global ideology, and which crucial target points are to be attacked, re-considered and criticized? The term *Post Politics* here might serve as a relevant counter-point, just as much as the *Post Socialism* might reflect a specific shift in former communist and/or socialist societies (such as former Eastern European societies, for example) after the failure of the Soviet model of socialism. And concepts of Empire, Europe, hegemony, power, and inclusion/exclusion belong to a set of those most pressing issues that need to be re-thought in the field of global politics just as much as in the field of global art and culture nowadays, if we are to understand the specificities of Eastern European post-socialist (curatorial) discourses: *‘Is then our task today not exactly homologous to Christianity: how to undermine the global empire of Capital not via asserting particular identities, but with the assertion of a new universality.’*³²

Slavoj Žižek, in his essay “The Post-Political *Denkverbot*”,³³ explicitly encounters the issue of post-politics. He departs from the situation of the post-modern post-political suspension of political, i.e. the de-politicization that demonstrates the need of our “post-ideological” era to reduce the political engagement and thought. Offering a possibility to criticize this, Žižek proposes the strategy for *radical re-politicization* as something that he considers to be the only way to revive this thought.

“Passionate political engagement and thought, i.e. profound reflection on our predicament, are usually opposed: is it not that, in order to gain a proper insight

32 Slavoj Žižek, “The Post-Political *Denkverbot*”, in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (exh. cat.), Bojana Pejić and David Elliott (eds.), Moderna Museet (Modern Museum), Stockholm, 1999, p. 95. Also: Alain Badiou, *St Paul ou la naissance de l’universalisme*, PUF, Paris, 1998.

33 Slavoj Žižek, “The Post-Political *Denkverbot*”, in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (exh. cat.), Bojana Pejić and David Elliott (eds.), Moderna Museet (Modern Museum), Stockholm, 1999, pp. 92-96. See also: *Bastard*, No. 1, Dec. 1998, Zagreb, pp. 12-19.

into what goes on, one has to disengage oneself from the passions of daily political struggles? Is it not that true thought begins when the political engagement experiences its fatal limitation? What we would like to demonstrate is how precisely our “post-ideological” era belies this commonplace: in it, the de-politicization of social life goes hand in hand with a kind of silent, but all the more forceful Denkverbot, with the prohibition to even imagine an alternative to the predominant liberal-democratic global capitalist order. Every such attempt is instantly denounced as proto-totalitarian – if consequently realized, it would necessarily end up in some new form of gulag. What, then, if the only way to revive thought is to endorse radical re-politicization?”³⁴

And also:

“Where does the key component of the proper Leftist stance reside as opposed to the Rightist assertion of one’s particular identity? In the equation of Universalism with a militant, divisive position of one engaged in a struggle – true universalists are not those who preach global tolerance of differences and all-encompassing unity, but those who engage in a passionate fight for the assertion of the Truth which engages them.”³⁵

For Žižek’s follower - Marina Gržinić - the task of deconstructing post-Socialism (and its respective ideology) is not a simple critique of post-Socialism; it is rather an analysis and investigation of this ideology through visual culture (and vice versa), and deals with questions such as: how to embrace post-Socialism through the modes of displaying the ideology of the Socialist and post-Socialist systems, and how is post-Socialism displayed through specific artistic and cultural projects? And also: what is it that enables us to unmistakably denote the hidden mechanism which regulates social visibility and non-visibility, and generates these specific concepts? She claims that the generative matrix of specific post-Socialist art projects is ideology itself, and in her book *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, she aims at explaining how particular works, artists and groups, conceived of as the Retro-avant-garde triad

³⁴ Slavoj Žižek, “The Post-Political *Denkverbot*”, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “The Post-Political *Denkverbot*”, *Ibid.*, p. 95.

assumed their relationships with ideology. Here she specifically refers to three art phenomena from former Yugoslavia: Mladen Stilinović from Zagreb (Croatia), the 1980s Kasimir Malevich from Belgrade (Serbia) and the group IRWIN from Ljubljana (Slovenia), especially their Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) Embassy projects. They all count as the Retro-avant-garde phenomena, where the notion of Retro-avant-garde³⁶ stands for a common signifier and a discursive matrix for the former Yugoslav artistic and cultural territory. She explains why it was possible for them to affirm their socio-political character only in the form of a specific critique of ideology in the field of art, and how this triad - thesis, antithesis and synthesis, respectively - might be juxtaposed with Žižek's Hegelian scheme (ideology in-itself, for-itself, and ideology in-and-for itself), as indices of the different concrete historical situations of postsocialism.³⁷

When Gržinić refers to art and culture in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia and Central/Eastern Europe, she uses the term 'post-Socialism' to denote a symbolic, social, artistic or political space, i.e. the basic cultural, social and political condition for most of the Central/Eastern European block. For her, this term is a tool that offers a possibility to deconstruct the modern myth of a global world, a world without cultural, social or political specificity, a world without centers and peripheries.³⁸ In order to apply a strong methodological strategy to her analysis of the subject, she insists on a post-Marxist model as envisioned by Fredric Jameson (*The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, 1991), Slavoj Žižek (*Introduction: The*

³⁶ The term launched by a curator Peter Weibel in the 1990's, on the occasion of an exhibition at the *Steierische Herbst* in Graz (Austria), later to be repeated in an exhibition entitled 'Retro-avangarda' in Ljubljana in 1994.

³⁷ By 'Ideology' Gržinić implies Žižek's notion of ideology as Hegelian triad consisting of (1) a doctrine, a composite of ideas, beliefs, concepts, and so on, destined to convince us of its 'truth,' yet actually unavowedly serving particular power interests (*ideology in-itself*), (2) the process of producing ideology by the Althusserian notion of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), designating the material existence of ideology in ideological practices, rituals and institutions (*ideology for-itself*), and (3) the form of consciousness that fits post-Socialism in the 1990s and late-capitalist post-ideological society, when one encounters the disintegration, self-limitation and self dispersal of the notion of ideology, and the system, for the most part, bypasses ideology in its reproduction and relies on the economic and legal coercion of the State's regulations (*ideology in-and-for itself*). See: Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.* pp. ?

³⁸ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.*, p. ?

Spectre of Ideology, in *Mapping Ideology*, Verso, 1994), and Jacques Derrida (*Spectres de Marx*, Galilée, 1993).

The notions of mapping and spectralization are here essential. In this sense, Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping serves for the analysis of representation while opening up new possibilities to re-articulate the problematic around those social and artistic issues that have long been invisible or unrepresentable, eradicated or ignored from the fields of vision and knowledge. This method is established with regard to complex representational dialectic of visibility/invisibility, "*as a generative matrix that regulates the relationship between the visible and non-visible, between the imaginable and un-imaginable*". It is thus aiming at opening up new ideas while opposing to prevalent forms of knowledge and representation, and digging through, collecting and organizing all those hidden structures that are yet to be brought to light in a rational and comprehensive way.

*"This is a possible way of understanding the notion of 'mapping' post-Socialism. How do we, however, understand post-Socialism itself, as it seems to have been for most of the Central/Eastern European block, the basic cultural, social and political condition? We must not understand it as a new mode of production. Since nobody seriously considers alternatives to Capitalism any longer, it seems easier to imagine the 'end of the world' than a far more modest change in the mode of production. (...) This is an act of mapping that charts not the point at which differences manifest themselves, but the point on the post-Socialist map where the effects of these differences are represented."*³⁹

According to Gržinić, the best way to grasp the post-Socialist system itself is to attempt at re-articulating and re-reading it through different visual displays (of the ideology of the Socialist and post-Socialist systems). The notion of (visual) *display* is here significant: as the best method of concealment (in Lacanian sense), the post-Socialism is here understood as "the signifier on display, rather related to exhibitionism than to scopophilia". As such, it is very much in

³⁹ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, Ibid.

correspondence with Lacanian rhetorical mode of concealing the truth (as in his seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter*) and for Gržinić a specific historic period such as the post-Socialism also has its own rhetorical mode of display, "an excess of which has the effect of concealing the truth of the society that produces it, and for which it can still have a revelatory power."⁴⁰

Theoretical and Political Positioning

One of the possible ways to encounter a complex matter of art and culture in the post-socialist Eastern Europe departs from theoretical and empirical approaches established in contemporary interpretations of the overall political, historical, social, economic and cultural conditions in the former communist and/or socialist countries of the European East. My theoretical approach is here primarily based upon concepts and ideas as envisioned by Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, Saskia Sassen, Thomas Kuhn, Jürgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, Hal Foster, Susan Buck-Morss, Mikhail Epstein, Boris Groys, Rastko Močnik, Aleš Erjavec, Slavoj Žižek, Brian Holmes, Renata Salecl, Inke Arns, and (last but not least) - Marina Gržinić. My empirical approach is based on re-thinking my personal experience of living, working, acting, and cooperating in-between the systems of a (non) capitalist Eastern European, and a capitalist Western European and American contemporary art worlds and art systems. It comes therefore as no surprise that my early professional formation has emerged from a context larger than the local one: it is exactly through these overlapping processes of a locally imposed political contamination and an internationally achieved professional de-contamination that I have been developing my own (theoretical and political) points of reference.

⁴⁰ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.*,

In order to primarily perceive the global situation theoretically, the research is intended to analyse the issue of the post-socialist Eastern European situation with a profound methodological concern revolving around both common and opposing criteria that determine similarities and polarisations between: the First and the Third World, Western and Eastern Postmodernism, Communism and Capitalism, Late Capitalism and Post-Socialism, Consumerism and Ideology, and Aesthetics and Politics. The reason for such an approach is provoked by a strong new structural world order that USED TO BE based on the system of binary oppositions, the crucial one being the opposition between the capitalist and the non-capitalist societies. Since the proposed sets of binary oppositions are not to be understood as clearly and precisely separated from (and opposed to) each other, but rather as two sides of the same historical necessity to upgrade the actual standpoint which would eventually provide a regulated transfer into a future analysis of the global art world, I intend to take a clear stance toward the impossibility of final resolution between these options. This practically means that instead of thinking in terms of binary oppositions (just as it had been pronounced by a modernist logic of division), I actually want to juxtapose these oppositions in a way that reflects the paradigm shift without the possibility of making a severe borderline between each of them. In order to define and justify such a theoretical orientation, let us start with the notion of a *paradigm shift* as suggested by T.S. Kuhn.

According to Thomas S. Kuhn,⁴¹ whose most renown work - *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* – has contributed toward a new understanding of scientific knowledge with respect to the revolutionary changes that help problems be understood and resolved, science is not a steady, cumulative acquisition of knowledge, but rather a qualitatively transformed and quantitatively enriched world by fundamental novelties of either fact and theory. Kuhn brought into light and popularized the term ‘paradigm’, being essential to scientific inquiry and described as essentially a collection of beliefs, a set of agreements, shared by

⁴¹ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, The University of Chicago Press, 1962

scientists in order to provide a better understanding of specific problems. Instead of arguing that scientific advancement is evolutionary, Kuhn's concept of "paradigm shift" is rather *revolutionary*. He understands science as a series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions, where one conceptual world view is replaced by another. The meaning of *change* (*transformation*) is here essential, and presupposes a certain subject that is capable of transmitting the idea of change into the field of action. The field of action is here not restricted only to the domain of science, but to any other political, social, and cultural terrain that is appropriate to serve as a catalyst for a paradigm shift due to an influence provided by relevant **"agents of change"**.

I need to make myself clear about what I have just described, with regard to the subject of my thesis: the post-socialist condition (as a notion common to the overall situation as I am referring to here) denotes not a transformed state of reality we are all experiencing in a particular region of the former European East, but rather the state of reality that has been undergoing an essential change (transformation) as a result of the fundamental shift taking place in the whole world after the failure of the communist project in the Soviet Union and, consequently, in the entire Eastern Europe by the end of the 1980s. Contemporary theoreticians claim (though in a different manner) that what actually happened in 1989 (the most symbolically marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall) reveals, on the one hand, a situation urging to define an essential BREAK (rather than CONTINUITY) between the Western-Eastern European community (Marina Gržinić, for example); on the other hand, there are attitudes defining this failure of the Eastern communist system and its ideology as the most visible sign of failure of the entire "Western Project" (Susan Buck-Morss), where both these failures are perceived as a result of CONTINUITY (of global, utopian-driven catastrophes): provided that the actual lack of the logical counter-point to a capitalist expansion (as communism in the East was considered to be throughout the twentieth-century, and especially after the Second World War), the whole idea of Western modernism and its promised ideals for society seem to be

nothing more than another utopian project destined to die out together with its “hostile” (non-capitalist) point of reference. This transformation (from the paradigm of non-capitalism toward the paradigm of capitalism, as in the East of Europe) has brought to light a shift (a rupture and/or a continuity) that constitutes what we are now appealed to recognize as “transition”, without any possibility to clearly define what this transition really *is*, and what this transition will really come out to be in the future – at least for us, in the East of Europe.

Both a rupture and continuity, this shift is anyhow an ultimate example of “otherness”, the Difference we are fostered to live, but also - the difference that we must re-think, re-articulate and put into question, in order to understand what has actually been going on in the East of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and also: in order to understand what is actually going on in our everyday life, in our micro-worlds, embraced by this changed condition in all our spheres of living, working, and acting. As a possibility to approach such a complex matter, I refer to (discursive as well as visual, theoretical as well as practical, professional as well as institutional, individual as well as corporate) identities of contemporary art curators in post-socialist conditions as potential “agents of change”, able to give justifiable (both utopian and non-utopian, but always critical) propositions for solutions and orientations, a kind of imaginary directories and maps, how to understand and go through this state of reality, here and now. It is the very task of *re-thinking*, *re-articulating*, and *re-positioning* that is imposed to the existing and imaginary curatorial communities if this situation is to be critically taken into account, examined, and defined. And even if the definition (i.e. coming to terms with) of this situation is not going to bring any real change to the given conditions, it will help us articulate our common professional mission by *naming* the subject of reference, by naming the theoretical and political field of existence out of which our personal and collective working conditions are being formulated, rationalized, and put into practice, on a global level today.

How is, then, the paradigm shift justified with respect to the subject of post-socialist Eastern European condition? As a fundamental theme of Kuhn's argument that the typical developmental pattern of a mature science is the successive transition from one paradigm to another through a process of revolution, a paradigm shift (taking place in the global artistic and cultural world after the 1989 revolutionary events in Europe) facilitated the transition in Eastern Europe from a previously dominant (communist/socialist) condition into another (supposedly democratic, reformative) condition. The transition from communism to capitalism thus revealed (or literally - *made visible*) a hidden part of the European continent. At the same time, it opened up a new terrain for scientific inquiry, and made possible the broadening of common knowledge. This is how the term '*Eastern Europe*' is to be generally defined – as an extension of the extant understanding of (visual) history, with a strong emphasis on geo-political (artistic and cultural) areas that tended to be overlooked or ignored in contemporary (art) history, and came into being (in the sense of having been given an opportunity to become recognized and theoretically elaborated) only after the essential political and economic changes that took place on a global scale after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These changes were parallel to the paradigm shift that took place in the post-Cold War Europe, thus providing necessary conditions for a new understanding of previously unknown histories. This initial possibility was formative in taking a clear stance toward the specificities of Eastern Europe, and was consequently justified by different political and theoretical discourses and activities that developed in and around the region, and beyond.

So, instead of talking in terms of “the First and the Third World, Western and Eastern Postmodernism, Communism and Capitalism, Late Capitalism and Post-Socialism, Consumerism and Ideology, and Aesthetics and Politics”, I would insist on taking another point of view, following the propositions beyond “colonial dualisms” (according to Homi Bhabha's “The Location of Culture” as interpreted

by Hardt & Negri).⁴² The end of colonialism and the decreasing power of a nation-state have significantly marked a general transition from one paradigm to another – from the paradigm of modern sovereignty to the paradigm of imperial sovereignty. Theories taking into account this transition have been criticizing the previous forms of government while urging for a total liberation from their concepts and the traces of their heritage today. But (as Hardt and Negri point out), a real target of this criticism should be located elsewhere – toward diverse hierarchies of hybrid and fragmented singularities that all together constitute a new paradigm of power. As an opposite, mutilated form of the previous one, the new paradigm is *yet to be defined*. Therefore, the following theoretical and political re-positioning of the subject is suggested: the First and/or the Third World, Western and/or Eastern Postmodernism, Communism and/or Capitalism, Late Capitalism and/or Post-Socialism, Consumerism and/or Ideology, Aesthetics and/or Politics. I believe that all these criteria constitute what one concerns as the issue of Identity today. The question of identity, in terms of social and political concerns within the contemporary world, is here seen as conceptually important in offering explanations of political, social, economic and cultural (re)constructions through changes that took place at the global level after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Seen as the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations, this question helps us approach the political and economic issues regarding Central, Eastern, and South-East European region, just as much as the art and culture related to it.

42 Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri, *Imperij*, Zagreb: Arkzin & Multimedijalni institut, 2003, pp. 128-130. Also, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000.

The First World and/or the Third World

According to a book that stands for a paradigmatic theoretical reference in embracing the general framework of the subject of post-socialism (*“Empire”* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri), the political constitution of contemporaneity is designated by a simple fact that the contemporary existence is determined by the world order.⁴³ A contemporary world order is the global order, resulting from at least three corresponding processes: (a) the fall of the colonial regimes, (b) the failure of the Soviet model of communist government, and (c) the breach of the capitalist world market into the previously “forbidden” zones of the world. Consequently, each of these three instances has experienced its own further counter-effects: (1) the fall of the colonial regimes has witnessed the failure of the Nation-States’ concept of sovereignty and the final decay of the modern European model of colonialism and economic expansion; (2) the failure of the Soviet model of communist government was - as the most profound alternative to capitalism - symbolically marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989: after being capable to resist the counterforce of the First Capitalist World, a territory of the former Eastern Bloc (protected or isolated from the Western influence of the capitalist market rules) finally opened up and facilitated the increasing penetration of capitalism Eastward; and eventually, (3) this breach of the capitalist world market further into the East (including the former Eastern Bloc and ex-Yugoslavia, the region recognized today as Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe) resulted in an inevitable economic and cultural globalization, bringing into the light a new logic and structure of governing, alongside the global capitalist market and the global mechanisms of production.

⁴³ Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri, *Imperij*, Zagreb: Arkzin & Multimedijalni institut, 2003. Also, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press 2000.

The international order as proposed by the European modernity has, therefore, fallen into a crisis that today shows up the cracks within the notion of legally regulated international relations. The legal structure of an organized humankind, leading towards the international legal order as envisioned by the United Nations (UN Charter, for example), functions as a legislative mediator in a transfer from the international toward the global, and used to be a pinnacle in the genealogy of this process. Furthermore, in the post-Second World War period (1945-1989) it represented *the* centre of the so-called ‘supranational’ legal power performing the supreme role of a legislative body competent in the global scope. This trajectory (from the *Nation-State* via the *International Organisation* to the *Supranational Project*) leads us to the fundamental change that occurred in terms of the constitution of “Empire”, as differentiated from what the “imperialism(s)” used to stand for.

A new political subject is regulating the aforementioned trajectory. Starting from the fact that the former distinction between the centre and the periphery is no more sustainable in the new world order, this political subject is being identified through a comparison between the former notion of sovereignty, i.e. the *imperialism*, and the re-established notion of sovereignty, i.e. the *Empire* - the new political order of globalization. A project of territorially defined sovereignty under the centralized patronage of a European nation-state colonial power has been substituted by another model of sovereignty: a decentralized and de-territorialized apparatus of government, whose sovereignty is provided by a gradual inclusion of the entire global territory within its open and all the more expanding borders. The Empire is therefore an entity that surpasses previous obstacles of the imperialist (euro-centric, nation-based, border-defined) project; it rather avoids centralized forms of power, and governs over the hybrid identities, elastic hierarchies, and multi-fold exchanges through easily adapting imperative networks.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri, *Imperij*, Ibid., p. 8.

The *concept* of the Empire is essentially constituted through the following principles: firstly, as a *regime* that effectively encompasses the spatial entirety of the whole 'civilized' world, the Empire is fundamentally defined by the lack of territorial borders - it knows no space, because the entire space is subjected to it; secondly, as a non-historical and non-temporal regime, the Empire is also defined by the lack of time-limits - it knows no time, it stands beyond history, and it projects the present situation into the eternity; thirdly, beside conducting territories and citizens without literally conquering them (in terms of traditional occupation), the Empire manages all the levels of the social order (including social life and social relations) and thus represents a paradigmatic form of the bio-power; finally, the Empire is always devoted to the ethics of a constant and general peace (although the historical entity is always recognised as showing the bloody side of this principle).⁴⁵

The legal framework of the world order is a factor of crucial importance that explains the problematic of the Empire.⁴⁶ In their analysis of the constitutive processes determining the central legal categories concerning the transfer from the Nation-States' sovereign right to the post-modern global features of the imperial law, Hardt and Negri make a clear terminological distinction in order to describe the transformation of the modern imperialist geography. Conceived within the capitalist modes of production, this transformation was realized (or is still being realized) alongside the accomplishment of the idea of the world market. A conclusion that the former division of the world in spatial terms (the First, Second, and Third Worlds) is no longer sustainable comes out of the fact that the constant overlapping between the First and the Third Worlds have been facilitated by the simple *erasure* of the Second World. The global world today is determined by new and complex regimes of differentiation, de-territorialization and re-territorialization, which means that the capital is easily finding its way to the new territories: its uprising follows the transformation of the dominant

⁴⁵ Hardt / Negri, *Imperij*, Ibid, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Hardt / Negri, *Imperij*, Ibid, p. 17.

production processes while simultaneously new global currencies are constructing their paths and borders.

Central to this analysis is the fact that in the last decade - with a radical shift that occurred with the globalization policy - the processes of liberation and democratization of Eastern Europe from Socialism and Communism in the 1990s were effectively supported and influenced by the newly introduced capitalist system, its respective economy, social values and political demands, but first and foremost - defined by the multicultural ideology and new forms of hegemonies.⁴⁷ Or simply put: any critical discourse about the issue of multiculturalism as the cultural logic of global capitalism revolves around the fact that national states lose control where intensifying globalization makes the hyper-mobile and hyper-flexible global capital float all over the world - it operates for the benefit of trans-national companies, that start running and controlling the world while imposing new criteria on the global market. By introducing the concept of Empire, Negri and Hardt problematize this specific national issue with respect to contemporary globalization from the standpoint opposed to a simple continuation of "imperialism" in the way it has been understood before. What they accentuate in this direction is the necessity to propose a radically different political strategy, provided that we accept the fact that there is no economy without politics and that political solutions alternative to the proliferation of global capitalism are still possible with the creation of new organizations based on *collective (international) resistance*:

"One of the fundamental characteristics of the imperialisms of the 19th century was their competition. Today, competition between the dominant nation states is less important than the co-operation among them. This is one way in which the traditional model of imperialism no longer defines our contemporary era. Two of the fundamental differences between imperialism and Empire are that the latter has no centre and no outside. But to say that there is no centre does not mean that there are no hierarchies within the global system. (...) One must relativise the differences in order to understand complex hierarchies rather than locate the

⁴⁷ See pp. 75-75.

*United States as pinnacle of the system. (...) In any case, this is what we are proposing with the concept of Empire. Rather than a centre of global power, we propose a distributive network of powers that is no less oppressive, in fact in many ways more oppressive. This requires a different kind of political strategy.*⁴⁸

This urge for a new model of collectivism takes me to the first strategic point with respect to the phenomenon of what I intend to name “critical curatorial practices”, or (more precisely) “critical curatorial practices from (the East of) Europe”. Consequently, my starting-point is a theoretical approach as defined through criticism of new multicultural and transnational global ordering of what was previously conceived as a nation-state hierarchy.⁴⁹ As a matter of fact, even in this aiming at locating theoretical references on globalizing issues (with regard to specific cultural micro-systems in relation to dominant macro-cultures), we are encountering and being subjected to the same mechanisms of the global inversions of historical truth: what once used to be a single, dominant paradigm of a proper critical and theoretical reading of the First World and its hegemonic position towards the rest of the globe (the one as postulated by Jameson, for example⁵⁰) now encounters its logical and complementary counterpart in the Third World’s self-centered and critical examination of the remainder of the previous theoretical doctrine.

What is at stake, then, in this endeavor to “look awry” at theoretical motifs? With a “dislocated” perspective of the new world order and an “awry” looking at all its redesigned aspects, the way this “distorted” view operates somehow equals the way ideology is being looked at as a distortion of reality, whose purpose is to camouflage and legitimate unequal power relations. I am indicating here the opposing sides of the *visible* and *invisible* (theoretical) discourses as products of power relations that dominated through the political

⁴⁸ “How Capitalism Went Senile”, C. A. Lundberg and M. Wennerhag in conversation with Samir Amin and Michael Hardt, *Reč magazine* no. 68/14, Beograd, December 2002, p. 275-276.

⁴⁹ *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe*, ZRC Publishing, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main 2004.

⁵⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1991

clashes between East and West, or more precisely, the First and the Third Worlds as projected through perspective of the Cold War division between Western and non-Western worlds.

Western Europe and/or Eastern Europe

The space that used to be reserved for former Yugoslavia is exactly the space where we are supposed to situate the conclusion regarding a theoretically conceptualized division of the world (and what is left of it), and particularly – a division of the “two Europes” (Western and Eastern Europe). This proposition is further elaborated in a contemporary critical discourse coming from the so-called ‘Eastern Europe’. Behind this initiative there is a clear commitment to demystify the imposed continuity between the two worlds (Western European and Eastern European) in the very period of the European integration processes after 1989.

These interpretations must always be observed from a very clear point of view regarding the most actual and most acute political processes taking part in contemporary Europe: (1) integration of European countries into a common EU-unit and (2) expansion of European Union (most notably – Eastward). Why are these processes playing such a crucial part in our understanding of art and cultural changes going on in the former European East? Because we are dealing with the most evident process of *transfer/translation/transition* (from one condition to another, just as if it was a matter of an aggregate change of ice into water, if I may use this outmoded comparative reference).

It is not to be forgotten that the economic and political integration of Europe has evolved into a European Union from its modest beginnings at the proposed integration of six Western European countries’ coal and steel industries in 1950, while monetary union has also been added to the EU list of

accomplishments with the approval of EURO as a common currency (with the exception of several countries that have rejected such an approval, most notably the United Kingdom). Although the historical roots of the European Union lie in the Second World War⁵¹ (the idea of European integration was conceived to prevent such killing and destruction from ever happening again, and was first proposed by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in a speech on 9 May 1950; this date, the "birthday" of what is now the EU, is celebrated annually as Europe Day), the overlapping of *economic* (steel and coal industries) and *monetary* (EURO) interests are the fundamental background of a collaborative political platform. According to such a logic of strategic and market-driven enlargement, the European Union grew during five expansion waves that last culminated in 2004 – with the accession of 10 Southern and Eastern European states on 1 May 2004 (including eight post-communist countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia; Bulgaria and Romania, both being part of the post-communist territory, are expected to join in 2007).

Also, an attempt to define the phenomenon of the European Union could help us approach the *institution-based* strategy of capitalist expansion. According to the official presentation,⁵² the *European Union (EU)* is a “family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not a State intended to replace existing states, but it is more than any other international *organization* (cited by the author). The EU is, in fact, unique. Its Member States have set up common *institutions* to which they delegate some of their sovereignty so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. This pooling of sovereignty is also called “European integration”.⁵³ Departing from such an “institutional” and “organizational” structuring of the subject as concerned here, we can assume that it is the institutional and organizational (or, generally put, *managerial*)

⁵¹ See the official presentation of the European Union at www.europa.eu.int

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

character of European art and culture that could be comparatively defined through the political and economic process of EU-expansion and integration taking place in the last fifty-five years. A contemporary protagonist of art and culture, living and working in the period of such paradigmatic processes, must be aware of a shift influencing the very *status* of his or her own profession, just as much as the *position* of his or her field of professional action. What comes up as a fundamental political question for each and every protagonist of art and culture, and especially the one belonging to the common European civilization but not belonging to the common EU-territory (just as it is the case with the South-Eastern Europe today) is related to the very concept of “Europe”.

A possibly useful tool to develop specific concepts of reading the former Eastern European territory has been proposed by a model for re-thinking Asian space and the so-called Third world (through the concept of the “inappropriate/d Other”, as Marina Gržinić has suggested according to Trinh T. Minh-ha, the Vietnamese-American filmmaker and feminist theorist, living in Berkeley, California, USA).⁵⁴ Gržinić insists on a difference between Eastern and Western Europe and aims at defining a break (rather than continuity, in her own words) between what is often referred to as two stages in the Western-Eastern European Community.⁵⁵ In this respect, she is addressing the notion of history, or (more precisely): the way that history is reconstructed. The difference she insists on emerges, therefore, from necessity to oppose the procedures of erasure (with the EU membership of many Eastern European countries), and to protect the history from being constructed once again in the manner of its artificial appearance, when the fundamental differences are still so evident:

“After the construction of the new Europe a phenomenon emerges that tends to erase the memory of former Eastern Europe. Whereas it was previously said that

⁵⁴ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Vienna: Edition Selene 2000, p. 9. Also: “Shifting the Borders of the other”, An Interview with Trinh T. Minh-ha (August 1998), Heise Zeitschriften Verlag GmbH & Co.KG, www.heise.de/bin/tp/issue/download.cgi?artikelnr=3265&rub_ordner=inhalt

⁵⁵ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

*there can never be enough Europe and that the fall of the Berlin Wall had finally brought back this lost part of Europe and made it a part of the European family again, today things are the other way around and this loss is no longer reflected upon, we are merely integrated. In this respect the East is always out of joint”.*⁵⁶

In her essay ‘The Spectralization of Europe’ Marina Gržinić relies on a statement by Peter Lamborn Wilson, alias Hakim Bey, who (in his lecture at the Nettime meeting in Ljubljana in 1997, entitled "Beauty and The East") also argued for the disappearance of the Second World: the Second World has been deleted/made obsolete, and what is left are the First and Third Worlds; instead of the Second World, there is a big hole from which one jumps into the Third. Starting from this, Gržinić developed the concept to identify two matrices of active players with regard to Eastern and Western Europe and the new media reality: i.e., the Western European "Scum of Society Matrix" and the Eastern European "Monsters Matrix."⁵⁷ In her attempt to encompass these two tendencies within a discourse critical toward the modern myth of a global world (i.e., a world without cultural, social or political specificity, a world without centers and peripheries), Gržinić takes into account the respective historical, philosophical, and psychoanalytical approaches. Thus, from a historical perspective, for example, she accentuates the existence of the fundamental, extant difference between the ‘two Europes’, but keeping always in mind that the break between the two (and the consequent beginning of the new order) is dated differently. Depending on a particular perspective (a Western European and/or an American, on the one hand, and an ex-Yugoslav, on the other), the changes that affected Eastern Europe were symbolically marked by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the death of Tito in 1980, respectively.⁵⁸ This is a

⁵⁶ <http://kontakt.erstebankgroup.net/magazines/issue2/stories/Interview+Marina+Grzinic/>.

Cf. ‘East/West Art, or the Possibility of a Better World’, Birgit Langenberger and Manuela Hötzl in conversation with the Slovenian philosopher Marina Gržinić, in: *Report. Magazine for Arts and Civil Society in Central Europe* [Report. Magazin für Kunst und Zivilgesellschaft in Zentraleuropa], Print issue 2004, Vienna: Kontakt. The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe 2004, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁷ Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.* pp. 13-36. See also: Marina Gržinić, ‘Spectralization of Europe’, in *The Spectralization of Technology: From Elsewhere to Cyberfeminism and Back. Institutional Modes of the Cyberworld*, Marina Grzinic and Adele Eisenstein (eds.), Maribor: MKC 1999, pp. 17-32.

⁵⁸ Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, *Ibid.* p. 37.

statement that already emphasizes a very specific political and cultural position of the former Yugoslavia within the geopolitical region of Eastern Europe.

It is the story of neighborhood (common life/history, the one that has always existed, but was suddenly given a new significance and, accordingly, a new theoretical and political perspective) that stands for an ultimate challenge both to the societies of the East and those from the West. This challenge has been exposed toward both sides once the implications of EU enlargement were taken into account. From a philosophical perspective, Gržinić relies on Kant's reflections in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. This is a result of her intentional deviation from establishing the difference between East and West only on historical premises, which could easily lead her to a DISCURSIVE limit, as she points out. Therefore, she appropriates the distinction between the two ways in which reason falls into contradiction with itself (as borrowed from Kant's mathematical and dynamical antinomies to think the world). In this respect, the Eastern European "Monsters Matrix" relates to the mathematical failure, while the Western European "Scum of Society Matrix" relates to the dynamical failure. The model of the Kantian mathematical antinomy (with the thesis that the world has a beginning in time and is also limited in regard to space; and the antithesis that the world has no beginning and no limits in space but is, in relation both to time and space, infinite) results in the mathematical failure (where its structure of a *contrary* opposition is produced after we had realized that the previous appearance of a *contradictory* opposition between the thesis and antithesis statements is no more sustainable). Eventually, this corresponds to Kant's impossibility of the existence of the world: "*while each argument successfully demonstrates the falsity of the other, neither is able to establish convincingly its own truth. This conclusion creates a skeptical impasse, and the solution he arrives at is the following: rather than despairing over the fact that we cannot choose between the two alternatives, we must come to the realization that we need not choose, since both alternatives are false*".⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1994, p. 218. Cf. Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, Ibid. p. 31. Similarly enough, this failure might

The Western Postmodernism and/or the Eastern Postmodernism

In order to make the analysis of the subject possible, I would like to propose the general (epistemological, chronological, and terminological) frameworks that determine and define a specific macro-culture of post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism as a topic relevant for a contemporary scientific research. These frameworks relate to the concepts of knowledge, time, and language in the following way: **(1)** Terminologically, the subject generally revolves around the notions of 'post-socialism', 'Eastern Europe', and 'postmodernism'; **(2)** Chronologically, post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism can be articulated between the three crucial historical and political events: (a) the 1968 international climate of political dissent across Europe and America; (b) the 1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall; (c) the 2004 European Union eastward expansion - enlargement of European Union through integration of eight former Eastern European countries (Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Apart from (or rather alongside) their clear political connotation, these dates can be interpreted as constitutive in anticipating and defining three symbolical moments: the beginning, transfer, and closure of postmodern cultural tendencies in the East of Europe. Additionally, the death of Tito in 1980, and the fall of Yugoslavia in 1991 might be relevant in determining a possible temporal framework around the subject (especially regarding the territory of former Yugoslavia).⁶⁰ **(3)** Epistemologically, post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism can be articulated between the two general and simultaneous paradigms: (a) the paradigm of late capitalism (according to F. Jameson), and (b) the paradigm of post-communism (according to M. Epstein).

also be associated with the aforementioned **Hardt** and **Negri's** distinction - in terms of the time/space relation - between a border-based imperialism, and a borderless, infinite Empire. This, however, does not stand for the impossibility of the world order as such, but rather for the impossibility of the existence of the Second world (as a previous possibility between the two options - the First World and the Third World).

⁶⁰ See: M. Gržinić, 'Retro-Avant-Garde, or Mapping Post-Socialism', Ibid.

Considering the prefix *'post'* (H. Foster), it will be not used in terms of continuity (of styles, movements, and/or set of tendencies that precede another style, movement, and/or set of tendencies), but exclusively in reference to a paradigm shift that fundamentally changes one's point of view around a given subject, i.e. around a fundamental change that demands taking a clear, new, and critical stance toward what has preceded one situation by pointing out to essentially transformed perception of this new situation.

'Post-modernity' as a term generally denoting the so-called 'post-modern culture' appears therefore to have a predominantly cultural connotation: it stands for a contemporary macro-culture and broadly refers to our current postmodern age, an actual post-historical period that follows the finalization of the previous, modern culture (or modernity). *'Postmodernism'*, on the other hand, is a term generally denoting the so-called 'post-modern art', i.e., it is defined *within* the (Western) paradigm of post-modernity as an artistic style, movement, and/or set of tendencies that are based on taking a critical, corrective, and/or rejecting attitude toward the previous, modernist paradigm and its respective (modern) art and culture. Postmodernism generally refers to the socio-political conditions of postwar/contemporary period, and encompasses new mode of thinking based upon and reflecting new forms of social, political and economic arrangement, while postmodernism refers to the cultures produced under those conditions. Depending on cultural territories the meanings of these terms also vary from one territory to another. Cultural territory does not necessarily presuppose a geographic idea about territories; it rather depends on introducing imaginary constructions (such as "Western Europe" and "Eastern Europe"), i.e. the imaginaries existing neither geographically nor as distinct units which can be defined and demarcated by boundaries, but generally produced under the influence of an international economy, migratory movements, and globally-circulating media images. Territories can also be economic, social, or cultural in nature, but even then, a myriad of other spatial configurations arise. It is obvious, therefore, that the idea of a territory depends on the indicators one considers

most significant for defining a space and its borders. History has shown us that these are variable and cannot be separated from political claims to power exercised over an area.⁶¹

The end of the 1960s is the moment of anticipation of postmodern consciousness and culture. Firstly, it refers to the radicalism of the period, interrogating political, social, and cultural preconceptions characteristic of the epoch, when the international climate of dissent throughout Europe and America was most notably affiliated to the New Left activism, reactive against the foundations of capitalist freedom, America's involvement in Vietnam, and the principles of Cold War diplomacy. This activism was developing together with counterculture movements and international protests, within an atmosphere of students' rebellion, solidarity, and springing up of new directions and alternatives leading toward new and highly self-conscious possibilities to organize the political and social reality differently than what has come before. Secondly, the end of the sixties is the period of situating the peaks of institutional critique. The radical atmosphere fostered the field of institutional critique in the sphere of visual arts (as well as in the political and social spheres), influenced by politics, social issues, art theory and critical theory in general, and based upon looking for new subjects of art that resist, attack and subvert the previous models that seemed no more sustainable. This situation, emerging from the tension between traditional and avant-garde art, began in the later 1950s and continued through the 1960s, culminating with an explosion of dissent among younger artists around 1968.⁶² It also revealed the crisis of authority and controversies around political and institutional contexts of contemporary art that put into question the possibilities for social transformations and institutional changes by means of specifically

⁶¹ Regarding the concept of cultural territories, see the description of a two-year project entitled Cultural Territories organized by GfZK - Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst (Leipzig) and supported by German foundation Kulturstiftung des Bundes. Project team 2003: Barbara Steiner, Iliana Korolova, Adam Budak, Lejla Hodzic, Kostutis Kuizinas, Suzana Milevska, Gregor Podnar, Adam Szymczyk/Andzej Pryzwara/ Joanna Mytkowska, Katalin Timár.
www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de

⁶² Brandon Taylor, *Avant-Garde and After: Rethinking Art Now*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York 1995, p. 7.

targeted measures of art and theory production.⁶³ Thirdly, it refers to the beginning of the early post-avant-garde, recognized as high modernism in the West, and moderate modernism in the East, that turned to late modernism while setting up the first traces toward postmodernity.⁶⁴ The post-avant-garde is here understood as a phenomenon embracing post-socialism (i.e. the art of post-socialism) as its special and distinctive feature, based upon critique and radical shift from previous political and cultural rules, dogmas, and boundaries of post-historic complex of manifestations (opposed to the idealistic utopias of the historical avant-gardes, and to the concrete utopias of the neo-avant-gardes). Finally, the year 1968 also stands for a formative date in terms of curatorial studies, when the Whitney Independent Study Program was set up in New York, USA as the first specialized course in curatorial practice relating to contemporary art, marking the beginning of an international network of curatorial studies programs.⁶⁵ It is precisely at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies that the role of a contemporary art curator, the way we understand it today, became established, with personalities such as Seth Siegelaub and Harald Szeemann. Siegelaub's exhibition project "January 5-31, 1969" (New York, USA, 1969), and Szeemann's "When Attitudes Become Form: Works/Processes/Concepts/Situations/Information - Live in Your Head" (Bern, Switzerland, 1969), stand for two remarkable examples of alternative exhibition forms that changed the course of development in the world of advanced exhibitions, just as much as the transformation of a curatorial role in the world of art.⁶⁶

"When Attitudes Become Form" is a title of the famous exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, and sponsored by Philip Morris

⁶³ Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon, London 1998, pp. 187-238.

⁶⁴ M. Šuvaković, "Impossible Histories", in *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-Avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, D. Đuric and M. Šuvaković (eds.), The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA 2003, p. 31.

⁶⁵ See: www.whitney.org/programs

⁶⁶ "Dematerialization: The Voice of the Sixties" in *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition. New Art in the 20th Century*, Bruce Altshuler (ed.), University of California Press, Ltd: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998, pp. 236-255.

Europe. In Szeemann's own words, this exhibition marked the historical moment, when the image of the creator/curator had become conscious and evident. What he referred to as "creativity" was actually an attempt to "break up the power triangle of studio-gallery-museum, to free the creative process to create an attitude", in a manner that justifies a concept as pronounced by a simple formula: Art = Life = Art.⁶⁷ The rise of the *curator as creator* was also a first step toward a new kind of curatorial power,⁶⁸ and especially - the way it emerged within a historical context of curatorial empowerment strategies after the Second World War.⁶⁹

On the other hand, the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall might represent a counterpoint to the climate of political dissent in 1968: both as a political and symbolical event, it is generally perceived as a breaking-point in the recent history, marking the end of communism and also – the beginning of the new transitional phase of Eastern Europe toward a supposedly democratic transformation, and its integration into the common European territory. In order to answer the question "What does the year 1989 stand for?" I would like to simply re-articulate this question: "What does the year 1989 *really* stand for?" and "How can one take an unconditional stance toward what the year 1989 really stands for"? Theoretical efforts to critically analyze and encounter this, as well as many other questions relevant for the problematic of transition in Eastern Europe, do not seem to bring about an easy and uniform answer. Generally speaking, the post-socialist societies in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe have found themselves in the trap of transition after the 1989 collapse of Eastern European and Soviet socialism. Whilst the Cold War opposition between capitalism and communism had previously set the terms for post-1945 Europe, the new, post-1989 Europe (along

⁶⁷ See: "Making Things Possible", Beti Žerovc in a conversation with Harald Szeemann, *MJ –Manifesta Journal: Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, N. 1, Spring / Summer 2003, pp. 22-31.

⁶⁸ "Dematerialization: The Voice of the Sixties" in *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition. New Art in the 20th Century*, Bruce Altshuler (ed.), University of California Press, Ltd: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998, pp. 236-255.

⁶⁹ Bruce Altshuler, "The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century", University of California Press, 1994. As Arthur Danto notes in his review of the book, Altshuler generally approaches the idea of the exhibition as central in the practice and theory of art criticism today. What comes as a significant point of change in the late sixties, in terms of subverting the traditional exhibition format, is an exhibition organizer (i.e., a curator, and not artists anymore, as it used to be in the first half of the twentieth-century) who generated major innovations.

with the decline of the Soviet Union) heralded the emergence of new historical forces. According to Marina Gržinić, the year 1989 is a relational category, the one that determines a shifting nature of relations between two differently positioned political, economic, and cultural entities, which (due to this shift) are submitted to different types of interpellations. To name (i.e. to detect, identify, and recognize) the subject of critique and analysis is as important as the method one needs to apply in order to offer a possible theoretical intervention into the field of one's research. The question of TRANSITION is essential at this point, and no other question is more urgent for the post-socialist Eastern European societies as this one: because what we are experiencing today is the shift not only in terms of political changes (substituting previous authoritarian socialist regimes by new, democratic governments), but primarily in terms of global economic changes. These changes, following the demise of "really existing socialism" in Eastern Europe, must be determined as fundamentally *economic* which (beneath the surface of political struggle) are now appearing again as dominant. Economic issues coming along the processes of incorporation (of former Eastern Europe) into global capitalism are not appearing as all the more threatening by the single fact that these processes are inevitable today, but actually - by the impossibility to foresee their effects, and find the answers to questions such as: how far, how quickly, and on what terms these processes are going to reconfigure Europe's social structures and our everyday lives in the future?

The meaning of such a radically counter-positioned process of naming (a common subject) could be simplified by a statement (and still not without the need to re-think it) that while there has always been only one Western Europe, in the case of Eastern Europe we are dealing with at least two denominators: a (former) Communist Eastern Europe and a (contemporary) Post-Socialist Eastern Europe. This is how Gržinić actually locates the point of departure in her analysis of Eastern European post-socialism: insisting on an inherent critical difference between Eastern and Western Europe, the idea of which is to offer a possibly useful tool to develop specific concepts of repoliticization/ reading/ positioning (the former Eastern European territory) through a radical theoretization of a particular (Eastern European) position. As she makes it clear

at the very beginning of her book *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avant-Garde* (2000):

*"I would like to define a **break** (rather than continuity) between what is often referred to as two stages in the Western-Eastern European Community. The first stage, lasting until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, may be described as the concept of relations between Western Europe and Communist Eastern Europe. The second stage, considered as commencing in 1989 (the year imposed on Eastern Europeans as that which today denotes without exception le passage a l'acte [the passage to action] of Eastern Europe toward freedom and democracy), is the relation between Western Europeans and their Post-Socialist neighbors".⁷⁰*

Post-socialist (and/or *post-communist*) *Eastern European postmodernism* generally designates a macro-culture related to the so-called Second World societies (i.e. the former socialist and/ or communist societies of the European East) in the late twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. There are at least two distinctive characteristics that help defining the subject of post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism: (1) on the one hand, it is equal and correspondent to other (hegemonic and non-hegemonic) macro-cultures - the First World (dominant, late capitalist, Western European, American, Japanese) postmodernism, and the Third World (suppressed, non-capitalist or "capitalized", non-Western or "Westernized", post-colonial, African, Asian) postmodernism; (2) on the other hand (in terms of its late socialist and post-socialist versions), it is defined within (and corresponds to) the general political context of Eastern European socialism (and/ or communism) as:

(a) *Late Socialism* - a politicized form of historical, authoritarian, ideological, and non-consumerist culture of the late socialist (Cold War) Eastern Europe, in the period ranging from the late 1960s (especially in former Yugoslavia, while in the

⁷⁰ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Edition Selene, Vienna 2000, p. 9.

other parts this date could be fixed around the beginning of the 1970s) until the late 1970s (in former Yugoslavia until around 1980);⁷¹

(b) *Post Socialism* - a re-politicized form of post-historical, post-authoritarian, and post-ideological culture of Eastern Europe, in the period ranging from the late 1970s until the late 1980s (in former Yugoslavia from the beginning of the 1980s until around 1990, with the dissolution of the country), and

(c) *Transitional Period* - a late variant of post-socialist culture strictly defined by the reformative processes of transition/ transfer from communist societies toward capitalist societies in the area of Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, based upon different versions of their approaches toward the idea of European Union (EU) enlargement and integration, in the periods: after 1989 until 2004 (Central and Eastern Europe), from around 1990 until 2005 (South-Eastern Europe, including most parts of the former Yugoslavia), and from 2000 until 2005 (Serbia and Montenegro).⁷²

However, in order to avoid a specifically *spatial*, i.e. geographic, determination of the subject, I insist (following Marina Gržinić) on reading the Eastern European space not as a geographically, but rather *conceptually* articulated phenomenon. Regarding this attitude, the post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism should be located within the context of the former Second World that has emerged (and is still undergoing the processes of

⁷¹ This chronological difference between former Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe is proposed by some contemporary theoreticians (such as Marina Gržinić, in her book *Fiction Reconstructed*), in order to emphasize a crucial symbolic point of reference “where it is possible to claim that something ended and something else began, even though there are no beginnings and no endings”. This fundamental difference in approaching the varieties (political, social, economic, and cultural) of the common heritage appertaining to the so-called “Political East”, stems from the idea about the two opposing criteria, or perspectives (a Western European or an American, on the one hand, and an ex-Yugoslavian, on the other), according to which the phenomenon of “post-socialism” could be possibly grasped. See: Marina Gržinić, “Retro-Avant-Garde, or Mapping Post-Socialism”, in *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Edition Selene, Vienna 2000, p. 37.

⁷² The year 2000 is here bounded by the idea of the turn of the century, as well as by a crucial political event that marked this turn in Serbia (being the last resort of totalitarian ideologies in Eastern Europe): the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević’s regime in October 2000.

emerging) from the previous state of *invisibility*, i.e. while becoming *visible* it is being (temporarily) *recognized as Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe*.

I understand the idea of '*Eastern European*' specificity (in relation to the Western Europe) as coming from the fact that there is no place for us outside our ideologically controlled and mediated society. The meaning, function and effect of Eastern European art and culture (in its complex, discursive field of signification) address the choices one has to make with respect to place, position, and (re)presentation of the Eastern European political and historical entity. Eastern Europe is still functioning on the premises of the safety distance between the two worlds, thus keeping the hygienic border relationship between the First and the Third World. Instead of taking into account only and primarily the New European identity as proposed by the multicultural logic of cultural diversity (that tends to erase – or to double - the traumatic space of the Second World that is situated in the heart of Europe and known as the Eastern European territory), Eastern Europe should be approached from a radically different point of view: as the impossible space, re-articulated and made visible, parallel and juxtaposed to the dominant/absolute/united Europe. Instead of saying that Eastern Europe is the Other (that is: instead of explaining the *difference* between the One and the Other, or *the double / the repetition* of the One) we must insist on the Other as the Two, meaning: to be present at the same time, to be parallel, *not to become the other from the One, the Other after the One* (which is also one of the possible strategies in art and culture, with the effect of radical de-realization; juxtaposing reality and its fantasmatic supplement face to face: and parallel one near the other, just as proposed by Gržinić).⁷³

The term '*Eastern Europe*' is to be generally defined as an extension of the extant understanding of (visual) history, with a strong emphasis on geopolitical (artistic and cultural) areas that tended to be overlooked or ignored in contemporary (art) history. History (re-appropriation of history) is one topic that is

⁷³ Marina Gržinić, *Uselessness, Theory and Terror VS. Abstract Collaboration*. www.absoluteone.com

typical for the East: as Gržinić claims, Eastern Europe is a piece of shit and the bloody symptom of the political, cultural and epistemological failures of the twentieth century, and with references to history, philosophy (Kant) and the arts, we can elaborate the idea of Eastern Europe as the indivisible remainder of all European atrocities. The elaboration of this idea is to be based on a deconstruction and a renewed construction of the same History, but a History which is now augmented by thoughts, images, and facts which were so far inexpressible. It is the “internal re-articulation” engendered beyond the neo-colonial positions of the West, and a process of mirroring and reflection of one’s own self and of one’s own “Eastern” position, when the recycling of different histories does not refer to Western but to Eastern positions and conditions.⁷⁴ To philosophically denote and to articulate a proper Eastern European position, in Gržinić’s words, means: to propose a theoretical-political positioning that refers to the rhetoric and logistic of space. However, the idea of positioning, i.e., of *taking a (conceptual) specific ground*, is neither grounded in the simple game of identity politics, nor bounded by a geographical space or a location on the geographical map of the New Europe. It is rather a *concept*, a *paradigm* of such a space, a militant response to a constant process of fragmentation and particularization.⁷⁵

Eastern Europe has never been a recognized designation for a relatively undefined part of the world comprising many countries and nations, different traditions and languages that (instead of relating to one another) tend to relate to other cultures and regions. Although the concept of “Eastern Europe” as I am referring to it here is not going to be treated in geographic terms, it is important to point out that Eastern European countries can not be considered as a homogeneous macro-region, but as four very distinct micro-regions or sub-regions: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Baltic and the Balkans.⁷⁶ These distinctions are all the more significant once the cultural analysis is fostered: the

⁷⁴ Marina Gržinić, Re-politicization of art through contamination, ???

⁷⁵ Marina Gržinić, *Uselessness, Theory and Terror VS. Abstract Collaboration*. Ibid.

⁷⁶ Milena Dragičević-Šešić, “Cultural policies in Eastern and Central Europe”, ???

idea of Eastern Europe embraces cultures whose identity had been built up under the influence of Mediterranean, Austrian (Austro-Hungarian, or “Central European”), Scandinavian, and Near Eastern spheres of impact. If one still attempts at geographically defining Eastern Europe, this broadly defined region would be recognized today as Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, encompassing the Baltic countries in the North (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland); the former Soviet Union in the East (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the countries of the Caucasus region); the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in the “central” part; and in the South - former Yugoslavia and the parts of the Balkans (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia (including two former autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo), Montenegro, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova).

However, the concept of “Eastern Europe”, as it is to be understood here, is not geographic, but rather political, economic, and cultural. It is recognized as comparable to the concept of “Western Europe”, in the period following the end of the Second World War, in a sixty-year time-span ranging from 1945, through 1989, until the present day (2005).

(a) In *political* terms, the concept of “Eastern Europe” is a product of the Yalta Conference of 1945, created with the intention of outlining zones of influence in Europe after the Second World War division and political re-mapping of the European continent.⁷⁷ In this sense, “Eastern Europe” comprises two comparable sub-regions: the Eastern Bloc and former Yugoslavia. These sub-regions had been divided between themselves by outlining zones of the Soviet influence ever since the Kharkov Congress in 1948. *The Eastern Bloc* stood for a relatively

⁷⁷ In February 1945, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, and Franklin D. Roosevelt met at Yalta on the south coast of Ukraine, where during the summit meeting they decided to allow “liberated Europe” to create democratic conditions of their own choice. Two months later (soon after Harry Truman had succeeded Roosevelt as president of the United States and just before Hitler committed suicide in Berlin), Soviet, British, and American forces met at the Elbe River in Germany, signaling the defeat of Nazi Germany: the countries east of the Elbe were liberated from Nazi control by Russian forces, and those to the west - by American and British forces. The result of this liberation strategy was to be followed by the beginning of the Cold War in 1946.

politically homogenized territory predominantly influenced by the Soviet political model of socialism, or more precisely - orthodox communism, as defined by the Soviet Communist Party and its political leader Josiph Stalin (1924-1953). On the other hand, *former Yugoslavia*, known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (or the second Yugoslavia) under the government of Tito (1945-1980), soon after World War II ended up an initial period of ties with the Soviet political bloc (1945-1948) as a result of resistance towards the repressive Soviet regime, and the rejection of the USSR's influence on Yugoslav politics.

It is important, however, to stress - as far as this distinction is concerned - that former Yugoslavia – to which I am particularly attached by my origin - had an idiosyncratic position due to a set of differentiating characteristics in comparison to both sides in conflict. The Yugoslav case is a peculiar one in comparison to both East and West, and demands a specific perspective: it was a multinational socialist state, that developed a specific variant of the so-called “self-managing” socialism; during the 1960s and 1970s Yugoslavia was the most open Eastern European country (and especially - Westward), while during the 1980s it was a highly liberal socialist state, meaning that the import of foreign ideas from the West was challenging to a certain extent the reigning real-socialist values, thus presenting sort of a political subversion of socialist idealism. The claim that “from a Western European or an American point of view, the changes that affected Eastern Europe were symbolically marked by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall; from an ex-Yugoslavian perspective, this point would be the death of Tito in 1980,” comes therefore as no surprise.⁷⁸

As a country that used to have a very specific political and cultural position within the geopolitical region of Eastern Europe, former Yugoslavia (or more precisely the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – SFRJ) played a key role in global politics with the nonaligned movement (the “third option”, between communism and capitalism): situated between the Eastern and Western blocs,

⁷⁸ See: M.Gržinić, ‘Retro-Avant-Garde, or Mapping Post-Socialism’, Ibid.

the country generated a unique type of socialist system defined by self-management, and this is a fact that distinguished it both from other communist regimes and from the democratic societies of liberal capitalism. This practically means that while Yugoslavia's primary political alliance was to the Non-Aligned Movement (made up mostly of Third World countries) rather than to the Eastern Bloc, it attempted (through the system of "self-management") to develop a society that combined an Eastern European socialist model with a model of direct democracy (the consequence of which was the country's orientation much more to the West than to the East).

(b) In *economic* terms, the concept of "Eastern Europe" is a product of the struggle between the two conflicting economic philosophies: *capitalism* and *socialism*. As the only alternative to capitalism, socialist Eastern European space pursued non-capitalist and anti-capitalist economic and political doctrines, created with intention of defining zones of dominant (Western European and American) capitalist market and bourgeois influence. As it had already been precisely described, "after the Second World War two conflicting political and cultural projects appear: the *liberal bourgeois* one, built primarily on technical and social progress (from an industrial to a postindustrial society and from imperialism to late capitalism); and, on the other hand, the *socialist* one, built primarily on the notions of political revolutionary progress (proletarian dictatorship, bureaucratic system of management, utopia of the classless society and self-management)".⁷⁹ However, the model of economic organization is generally understood in a simplified and deviated manner ("capitalism against socialism", or vice versa), thus usually exaggerating the differences between these two models (mostly due to a specifically antagonistic Cold War perspective). In this respect, the so-called "third way", as proposed and put in

⁷⁹ Miško Šuvaković, "Art as a Political Machine. Fragments on Late Socialist and Postsocialist Art of Mitteleuropa and the Balkans", in A.Erjavec (ed.), *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, California University Press, Berkeley 2003, p. 92.

practice by the Titoist Yugoslavia, clearly confirms the possibility of taking an alternative stance toward both sides in conflict.

(c) In *cultural* terms, the Soviet Union, as the original socialist country and the foremost state of both the Eastern Bloc and international socialism, defined the political and cultural parameters for what became known as “Eastern Europe” based upon the political and economic system of “really existing socialism” (the consequence of which was the model of ideologically controlled, utilitarian cultural production). In terms of Yugoslav art and culture, the situation was equally interesting: while opening up certain possibilities for “innocent” floating on the edge between the two worlds, the East and the West, the official climate was reacted against by all the artists and art institutions that did not accept to succumb to the dominant models of the so-called “socialist modernism”. On the contrary, they proposed another point of view, being more open to a whole variety of contemporary experimental international trends. According to Slovenian philosopher Aleš Erjavec⁸⁰ the dominance of this common political ideology is what determines the primarily *politicized* nature of Yugoslav art (and Eastern European art in general). What is really important in this context is to point out that it was exactly the ideology of the self-managing socialism that provided conditions to bring Yugoslav art close to the West, and, at the same time, set it apart from the Western art, predominantly conditioned by the principles of the late Capitalism and developments of the art market. As a rare example of an artistic atmosphere, simultaneous to other (Western) European (and especially Italian, Austrian and German) artistic tendencies at the times, new media art in the 1970s Yugoslavia could serve as a good point in analyzing the general issue. This specific ambiguous character of Yugoslavia’s self-managing socialism is what counts for a particular positioning of its art (including new media) in the 1970s, with the most prominent examples of experimental art venues such as SKC Gallery in Belgrade, ŠKUC Gallery in Ljubljana,

⁸⁰ See: *Postmodernism and Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, A. Erjavec (ed.), Berkeley, 2003

Contemporary Art Gallery in Zagreb (alongside with places such as Motovun and Brdo in Istria) and the relationships between the phenomenon of new media art and late socialist cultural and political trends (for example, “APRIL MEETINGS” - The International Festival of New (Expanded) Media, launched by SKC Gallery, being one of its most significant features and a remarkable annual program in Belgrade ever since the early seventies). Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that the 1970s Yugoslavia was still not subjected to the capitalist mode of production, nor was it part of the capitalist system as it was the case in the West. The cultural condition in former Yugoslavia, for example, was much more liberal than in any other socialist country, with its self-proclaimed model of self-management socialism and resistance towards the repressive Soviet regime, ever since 1948. After World War II, the country became known as Tito’s socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1980), or the second Yugoslavia. There was an initial period of ties with the Soviet political bloc (1945-1948). By the early 1950s, however, with the distancing of Tito’s Yugoslavia from the Eastern bloc and the rejection of the USSR’s influence on Yugoslav politics and culture, the society opened up to Western modernist art. This was followed by the emergence of self-governing socialism, and a complex, multiethnic federal state (1950-1980) standing, politically, somewhere between the Eastern and Western blocs, building ties with the third world through the movement of non-alignment.⁸¹ As we are reminded by some contemporary historians, “it was not planned socialism like in the Soviet Union, but also not a pure market economy. It was something in between.”⁸² This “in-between” positioning of Yugoslavia (popularly described as “sitting on the fence” between the East and the West), was a logical compromise initiated in Titoist postwar government after the split with Soviet Comintern in 1948 and consequently, in the cultural field, the renouncement of the dominant Eastern European cultural paradigm of Socialist Realism as prescribed by the Russians. As art historian Bojana Pejić summarizes,

⁸¹ See: M.Suvakovic, ‘Impossible Histories’ in D.Đurić and M.Šuvaković (eds.), *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-Avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, Boston 2003, 2-35.

⁸² Interview with Todor Kuljić in “Alternative Economies, Alternative Societies”. See: www.ressler.at

(...) During its existence, Socialist Yugoslavia was indeed exposed to a double-sided optics: to the Westerners, or rather hard-line commies living in liberal democracies (which introduced NATO in April 1949), who frequently came to pay us visits, Yugoslavia was not Eastern-enough. To the Easterners who lived in "peoples' democracies", on the other had, Yugoslavia was perceived as the "West," particularly after the solidification of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955. (...) This attitude in trying to develop a "Socialism with a friendly face", will soon bring the Western aid, and will result in the Yugoslav policy known as "sitting on the fence" between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. One aspect of this was that Belgrade, the capital, became a kind of playground for state-curated exhibitions of Soviet Socialist Realist art (1959), soon to be answered by equally state-organized exhibitions of contemporary American abstract art (1961).⁸³

To conclude: the *post-socialist Eastern European postmodernism* (as here considered) is a subject of an utmost importance because it identifies a fundamental and still existent (theoretical, political, and cultural) lack dependent on the new global world order. The fact that after the end of the Cold War this lack (recognized as the gap between the East and the West) has not been completely bridged, urges for a proper theoretical re-thinking of the field as a whole, and most notably with respect to contemporary situation that, above all, reveals the different conditions in which the cultural discourse in the East and the West had developed *before* the Fall of the Berlin Wall.⁸⁴ The crucial difference is supposed to be identified in different approaches to the phenomena of art and culture: the Western being situated in a *consumerist* desire and defined by economic (market) value, the Eastern – in an *ideologically* controlled desire for the political correctness. In what follows, further theoretical elaboration of this essential difference will be elaborated.

⁸³ Bojana Pejić, "The Morning After: Plavi radion, Abstract Art, and Bananas", in: n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal, Volume 10, Rethinking Revolution, July 2002

⁸⁴ See: <http://www.postcommunist.de>, a project directed by Prof. Dr. Boris Groys, under the auspices of the Federal Cultural Foundation, Germany, in cooperation with the Center for Art and Media (ZKM), Berlin 2004

The Paradigm of Late Capitalism

“Every position on postmodernism in culture - whether apologia or stigmatization - is also at one and the same time, and necessarily, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today.”⁸⁵

Fredric Jameson

Late capitalism, as a theoretical proposition, generally refers to an essay entitled "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" written by the American post-Marxist theoretician and cultural analyst Fredric Jameson.⁸⁶ His 1991 edition of a book entitled *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Verso, London, 1991) is an elaborated version of his famous essay and is structured around issues such as culture, ideology, video, architecture, sentences, space, theory, economics, and film. At the times when this book appeared, Fredric Jameson was William A. Lane Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of both the Graduate Program in Literature and the Duke Center for Critical Theory, Duke University, North Carolina (U.S.A.). Jameson's critique of postmodernism takes place from a Marxist orientation and (as it has usually been explained in his biographical notes) he has published widely on Marxism, literary theory, post-structuralism, and postmodernism. His other books include *Marxism and Form*, *The Prison House of Language*, *The Political Unconscious*, *Late Marxism*, etc.

Ever since it was originally published in 1984 (in *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July-August): 59-92.), Jameson's most famous essay has stood for his program analysis of the postmodern, and a historical document about "an age that has forgotten to think historically in the first place". In Jameson's laying out the differences in culture between the modern and postmodern periods (and

⁸⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London and New York, Verso 1991, p. 3.

⁸⁶ F. Jameson, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Ibid.

consequently - their effects on the individual), postmodernism is not considered as a style, but as a dominant cultural form indicative of late capitalism, or what he calls "present-day multinational capitalism". He clearly states that the term "late capitalism" originated with the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, etc.) and refers to the form of capitalism that came to the fore in the modernist period and now dominates our own postmodern culture.⁸⁷ The protagonists of the Frankfurt School, as Jameson points out, stressed two essential features in applying the term to their own times: a tendential web of bureaucratic control, and the interpretation of government and big business ("state capitalism") as related systems.⁸⁸

However, the new understanding of the production of reality is what characterizes a late capitalist society today, in comparison to what this term used to stand for in the first half of the twentieth century. Instead of the older concept (the expansion of the state sector – Nation-State, and bureaucratization), the dynamics of a new system ("a world capitalist system", or the system of global capitalism, in the most contemporary sense of the word), together with new forms of business organization, is taking place. Under this radical shift, that caused a fundamental distinction from the older (imperialist) vision of the world, Jameson implies the emergence of new forms (more thoroughgoing and all-pervasive) of postmodern transformation.⁸⁹

Late capitalism as the pervasive *condition* of our own age, speaks both to economic and cultural structures. What is of an utmost significance for our analysis is Jameson's insisting on drawing a common line between these two phenomena: culture and economy. This is the way that helps us (1) to associate

⁸⁷ F. Jameson, "Introduction", *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Ibid., XVIII

⁸⁸ F. Jameson, "Introduction", Ibid.

⁸⁹ Under this Jameson implies: new forms of business organization (multi-nationals, trans-nationals) beyond the monopoly stage, an internationalization of business beyond the older imperial model (also applying to the new division of labor), a new banking structure, new forms of media interrelationship, advances in computer automation, planned obsolescence of goods, and American military domination. See: F. Jameson, "Introduction", Ibid., XIX

late capitalism with the so-called First World Civilization (or the *capitalist* societies and cultures, meaning: European West, American North, and Pacific Region, most notably Japan and Australia), that are clearly distinguished and differently positioned (primarily in economic terms) from the so-called Second World Civilization (*non-capitalist* societies and cultures, such as Russia and the former Eastern Bloc, former Yugoslavia, etc.), and the so-called Third World Civilization (colonized societies and cultures, such as Africa, Asia, etc), and (2) to understand the interdependency between the processes of *universality* and *fragmentation*, especially with regard to the notion of the space: in the era of global capitalism spatial differentiation is more important than temporal differentiation (which was dominant in past eras), because late capitalism aspires to a *total* space of *universal* power (facilitated by multi-corporate transnational networking); while Cold War tensions between the super-powers had still provided relevance for the existence of the Second World (at the times when Jameson analyzed the subject, in the early 1980s), today, however, contemporary theoretical discourses tend to present the Second World as a non-existent anymore. The Second World is an empty space, erased from the geopolitical map due to the fact that the fall of the communist project (symbolically marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) also represents the fall of the civilization imbued with the very same communist ideology. *Communist ideology* is here understood as the (last) alternative or counter-part to the prevailing and dominant *capitalist ideology*, embodied in the social and (multi)cultural principles of a liberal market economy and/ or global consumerism. Once communism failed, and the concept of the Nation-State disappeared, the capitalism overcame the last obstacle toward the universal reign: it got the possibility to spread beyond any national border in order to establish new economic territories of expansion. The reasons for such an expansion of capitalism Jameson identifies in several instances: *control* (supposed to be maintained over the world market), *exploitation* (of workers from poor countries, continued in support of multinational capital), *media manipulation* (provided that the media's version of reality is filled predominantly with capitalist values), *mass production* (increased in order to

provide an ever greater profit-margins for multinational corporations), *continuous innovative production* (making an illusion of an all-the-more novel supply of goods to the market), etc. Jameson still believes that global culture is resulting from and is inevitably connected to an American (military) paradigm of a super-power, but the more recent analyses tend to dislocate this dependency of interpretations of global capitalism on a strictly nation-based (most notably American) hierarchy, while at the same time emphasize its *supra-national* character (“*The postmodern culture is the internal and super-structural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror*”). In comparison to this point of view, contemporary analysts of global capitalism (accordingly with the idea of the Nation-State concept’s failure, and the over-empowerment of supranational economic government) tend to dislocate this notion of hegemony from a single state (even the United States) into the field of multi-corporate networking, governed by capital itself.⁹⁰ This is also what Antonio Negri accentuates in a documentary interview done for a French television company: it is neither the issue of *American* capitalism, nor even of *French* capitalism, but the issue of (global, supra-national, all the more expanding, borderless) *Capitalism* that one should oppose to and fight against today.⁹¹

In terms of art and culture, late capitalism implies phenomena appertaining to those societies and cultures that we are able to identify as “late capitalist”, or (more precisely) – that are applying the modes of artistic/ cultural production (and participate in the production of meaning and values) within the continuous capitalist system of mass-production, mass-exchange, and mass-consumption (of both objects and information).

As Jameson claims:

⁹⁰ Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri, *Imperij*, Zagreb: Arkzin & Multimedijalni institut, 2003.

⁹¹ See: Toni Negri de Pierre-Andre Boutang et Annie Chevally, *DES ANNEES DE PLOMB A "L'EMPIRE"*, Editions Montparnasse, DVD, 2004, www.editionsmontparnasse.fr

“Aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation. Such economic necessity then find recognition in the varied kinds of institutional support available for the newer art, from foundations and grants to museums and other forms of patronage.”⁹²

Generally speaking, these processes are in no way separate from the economic mechanisms of production processes characterizing the logic of late capitalism. In what we could term as consumerist culture (or commodity fetishism, in Marxist terms), everyday life is overdetermined by the dominant role that mass-culture is playing in these societies. The social life is here undergoing regulation processes according to consumerist values, enjoyment of fictionalized objects of desire, and entertainment, but at the same time this social life is deliberately organized in a way that is attempting to produce a controversial effect: due to the importance of individual (meaning: “each and every particular subject”) participation in the ideology of consumerism, a proposed individuality is being clearly enhanced and supported; on the other hand, as the weakening of the individual (meaning: “a political subject”) is also being enhanced and supported this way, any radical collective action (against such a state of reality and social life) is deliberately avoided - the political subject is decentralized and displaced from the political realm (of radical collective action) into a sterile, bureaucratic and technocratic social realm where any production depends exclusively on the logic of multinational market systems.

The real political communication is thus being substituted by a simulated/ fictionalized social networking that hardly ever produces any possibility for a radical change of given conditions, but only perpetuates this imposed state of fragmented, anonymous communities. This is also how the logic of

⁹² F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Ibid., p. 4-5.

multiculturalism works: instead of a previously dominant *international* culture, we are dealing today with a supranational network of different cultures all taking part in the power-systems of transnational and multinational economic and financial entities, and always under the patronage of a rather benign term – “cultural diversity”. Marina Gržinić applies such a theoretical pattern to analyze the current state of contemporary art affairs in an enlarged Europe, taking *Manifesta 3* project in Ljubljana for a perfect example. In her own words:

“Multiculturalism is the cultural logic of global capitalism, as new spiritualism is its ideology. Multiculturalism is not about nivelization, but about multiplication. This is why global capitalism needs particular identities. In this triangle of global-multicultural-spiritual, the post-political must be seen not as the conflict between global/ national ideological visions that are represented by competitive parties, but as abstract collaboration. As Jacques Rancière developed in his theory of the post-political, it is about the collaboration of enlightened technocrats (economists, lawyers, public opinion experts) and liberal multiculturalists. Manifesta 3 is, in its absolutely abstracted version, the international legitimization of the internal enlightened technocrats of post-socialism (Cankarjev dom, etc) by international multiculturalists. It also shows a radical discord between the effects of resistance and the institutions and mechanisms of power that provoke them and the complicity of power, private capital, and thought, with mastery.”⁹³

What she suggests, if the problem is to be resolved, is that

“we have not to recreate the natural situation, but rather to articulate the artificial interventions and nevertheless to make a path, to transpose the museum from an instrument of repression to an instrument of criticism, to traverse the universe of the museum from conservation to confrontation.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Marina Gržinić, “Does Contemporary Art Need Museums Anymore?”, in CIMAM - The International Committee of ICOM - The International Council of Museums of Modern Art Conference, Budapest, 2000. See also: Marina Gržinić, *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe*, ZRC Publishing, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main 2004, pp. 109-123.

⁹⁴ Marina Gržinić, “Does Contemporary Art Need Museums Anymore?”, *Ibid.*

This is a line of thought that Slavoj Žižek had already emphasized in his text “Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism”, while deliberately paraphrasing Jameson’s famous title.⁹⁵ In what both Gržinić and Žižek refer to as the omnipresent post-politics today and its logic, we identify neoliberal capitalism and globalization, respectively, whose “administration of social issues” relies on cooperation of technocrats and liberal multiculturalists. This logic allows a global perspective of Eurocentric indifference, and a contemptuous view of all really Other. It actually remains careless for a real universal emancipation, although it pronounces a global concern. But this concern is led by nothing else but the interests of Capital – and what Žižek detects as an utmost task (if this indifference is to be overcome) is the task of politicization, the struggles within each particular cultural identity in the name of real universal emancipation. Because the privileged position that Capital holds in the economic and political struggle is a real proof of the permanent financial crisis, and not the fear that any possible disobedience to this privileged position could shake an objective necessity of economic life:

“And, of course, the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism, the attitude which, from a kind of empty global position, treats each local culture the way the colonizer treats colonized people – as ‘natives’ whose mores are to be carefully studied and ‘respected’. That is to say, the relationship between traditional imperialist colonialism and global capitalist self-colonization is exactly the same as the relationship between Western cultural imperialism and multiculturalism: in the same way that global capitalism involves the paradox of colonization without the colonizing Nation-State metropole, multiculturalism involves patronizing Eurocentrist distance and/ or respect for local cultures without roots in one’s own particular culture. In other words, multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a ‘racism with a distance’ – it ‘respects’ the Other’s identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed ‘authentic’ community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position. Multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he doesn’t oppose to the Other the

95 Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism”, *Arteast 2000+*. *The Art of Eastern Europe. A Selection of Works for the International and National Collections of Moderna galerija Ljubljana*, exh.cat, Orangerie Congress - Innsbruck, 14-21 November 2001, Wien, Folio Verlag, 2001, pp. 34-52. Also: *New Left Review* (London), No. 225, September/October 1997.

particular *values of his own culture*), but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures – the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority.”⁹⁶

Contemporary global culture is actually (and unfortunately) an appropriated version of economically oriented global marketing: its effect of “internationalization”, “exchange” and “communication” is actually reflecting the way how global capitalism flows, circulates, and functions – how it accelerates the global dynamics without actually leaving any space for the transformation of such a condition. And what is really evident (and important for such an articulation of the global capital) is that global capitalism teaches its consumers to ENJOY such a condition, just as much as they enjoy the fictionalized (ready-to-buy) objects of their desires.

The Paradigm of Post-Communism

‘Post-communist Postmodernism’ is a term not easy to define. Its meaning is clearest if one starts with its application to the Eastern (European) version of Western postmodernism, or (more precisely) to Russian postmodernism, as initially proposed by Russian literary theoretician Mikhail N. Epstein.

Epstein concerns us here as the first author who treated Russian postmodernism as an overall artistic, ideological, and methodological phenomenon. In his books *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (published in English in 1995), and *Postmodernism*,⁹⁷ Epstein focuses on the discourse of totalitarianism and its

⁹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism”, *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹⁷ Curiously enough, the first edition of this book was published in Serbian (Mikhail Epstein, *Postmodernizam*, Zepter Book World: Beograd 1998), while some of the articles had previously been published in Russian magazines. Its English edition appeared under the title *Russian Postmodernism: New*

influence on the development of Russian art by the end of the twentieth century. Born in Moscow in 1950, he graduated from the Faculty of Philology at the Moscow State University in 1972, and collaborated with leading Russian magazines through writing on contemporary issues of literary theory. In the 1970s he was active at the Moscow Institute for World Literature (Department of Theory), and was lecturer at several faculties and schools in Moscow. He was one of the main proponents of postmodernism in Russia and the founder and Chair of the Laboratory of Modern Culture, Experimental Center of Creativity, Moscow. The author of twelve books, he has lived in the United States since 1991 and has taught literature, semiotics, and philosophy at Emory University (Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature, Emory University).

Epstein's early theoretical research, published in the mid-seventies, centered around the issue of contemporary Russian culture and its interaction with the most actual trends of the humanistic Western thought. His specific position within the theory of literature and cultural studies results from his outstanding scientific approach toward literary and intellectual movements in Russia after the Second World War. Due to his instrumentalization of structuralist and post-structuralist methodologies, he was the first one to thoroughly investigate Russian literary movements of the 1970s and 1980s (meta-realism, presentism, and conceptualism), together with many aesthetic and interdisciplinary issues, mostly concentrating on intersections between literature and other cultural phenomena.

Epstein's addressing and investigating of the phenomenon of Russian post-modernism provided him a pioneering role and a central position in the contexts of Russian literary science and Western interpretation of the Slavic culture. Being devoted to the advancement of interdisciplinary ideas and new

Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), and was edited together with Alexander Genis and Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover.

methods in the humanities, and relying on his knowledge of cultural and literary theory, the history of Russian literature (especially Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky and the 20th century poetry), contemporary philosophy and religion, postmodern trends in Western and Russian cultures, and (most notably) ideological discourse, he was the first to describe ideas of the late Soviet Marxism conceived as an ideological system of the postmodernist period. The rise of Russian postmodernism (as analyzed and presented in Epstein's essays gathered in his *Postmodernism*) investigates various manifestations of this crucial cultural trend for the 1970s and 1980s Soviet Russia. Exploring the dialectics of 'Hyper' (and nature of the transfer from Modernism to Postmodernism), literary and cultural Manifestos, relationships between: Postmodernism and Communism, Socialist Realism and Postmodernism, Socialist Realism and Sots-Art, Postmodernism and Spirituality, etc., Epstein provides a point of departure and a valuable guide to an area of contemporary literary-cultural studies which is still insufficiently represented in both Western and Eastern European scholarship. Focusing on the work of Soviet artists (such as Ilya Kabakov, for example), he introduces many authors who have never before appeared in a reference work of this kind and renders this book essential reading for those interested in the latest trends in Russian intellectual life.

In Epstein's terms, post-communism is a phenomenon parallel to postmodernism, or (more precisely) – post-communism is a postmodernism of the social and political spheres, where there is the same free play of signs and reality, signifier and signified, as in postmodernist poetics.⁹⁸ The postmodern, as he sees it, is essentially the same in the East and the West (in spite of economic differences). In the East, the underlying patterns of cultural postmodernism are not economic, but ideological. Epstein draws upon Engels and Lenin who had emphasized long ago that, in different countries and under different circumstances, ideology may take place of economics as the basic structure of

⁹⁸ "Postcommunist Postmodernism. An Interview with Mikhail Epstein", *Common Knowledge* vol. 2 no. 3, Ellen E. Barry, Kent Johnson, and Anesa Miller-Pogacar (eds.), New York 1993.

society, which was precisely the case with the communist countries – ideas produced the material, not vice versa.⁹⁹

Instead of attempting to re-define the subject of post-socialism, I would rather quote an existent definition the way it had been revealed to me as a possible field of specialist research:

“Post-socialism is a post-modern state of the former real-socialist societies and states. It is described as a transitional period between bureaucratic real-socialist society and liberal late capitalism. There is a paradoxical link in post socialism between distinct and heterogeneous social systems and forms of production and consumption in the culture. For example, real socialism, liberal capitalism, and national bourgeois early modern capitalism are all present in society at once. At issue here is the relationship between a real state order (the confrontation of the institutions of real socialism and late capitalism) and a fictional state order (the confrontation of the ways of presenting postmodern sources of the nation and society, the omitted or censored phases of modernism in the times of real socialism and the unachieved forms of consumption or enjoyment of late capitalism).”¹⁰⁰

Post-socialism evidently does not have an easily definable meaning. According to the given interpretation, it should be positioned within a set of binary, yet complementary, oppositions providing quite a syncretic character of the term and of the possible specialist field of study and research. It is defined as a certain state, i.e. a condition, environment, or context (in terms of social, political, economic, and cultural systems, formative of a specific overall climate) floating between bureaucracy and liberalism, real-socialism and late capitalism, production and consumption (enjoyment), but most notably – between the two orders: a real state order and a fictional state order, denoting a shifting character (and consequently the situation of change, movement, transfer, translation, i.e. “transition”) of transitional societies from a previously dominant (generally

⁹⁹ “Postcommunist Postmodernism. An Interview with Mikhail Epstein”, Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See: M. Šuvaković, “Impossible Histories”, Ibid., p. 32.

conceived as “socialist”) paradigm toward a new, still indefinable (yet generally foreseen as “capitalist”) paradigm. What is even more important lies in the fact that this transition (although highlighting the impossibility to separate economic and political conditions formative of the same (post-socialist) societies), paradoxically reveals a paradigmatic split or separation between the political and the economic, or witnesses about the transfer from a previously dominant *politicized* condition (in terms of the old, socialist ideology) toward an upcoming, *economically* dominant condition (in terms of a new, capitalist ideology).

Post-socialism, instead of denoting a cultural movement that necessarily follows (emerges from) another dominant movement while elaborating and developing the preceding values and meanings, here rather has an ambiguous meaning, standing in-between the continuity and discontinuity, or *revivalism* and *distance*.¹⁰¹ It refers to the notions of both Past and Future, and is quite similar to the term *la différance* (or ‘*razluka*’, according to Slovenian theoretician Braco Rotar) - a schism denoting a clash without the possibility of a solution; it refers to a historically finalized period that belongs to the past, but it departs from it, puts it into question, and enters into another - unpredictable, future, (a)historical – period, the one without the possibility to be clearly defined. The term ‘post-socialism’ here seems a contradiction, but its transcendental character (finalization, self-critical rethinking, and entering a transitional/ trans-historical period between the two, the past and the future, the East and West) is a result of its proper logic of functioning after the end of a certain paradigm (discourse), and the emergence of another (not necessarily new) paradigm (discourse). The ‘post-socialism’ is being developed exactly between the two paradigms, and produces meanings in the space of a ‘paradigm shift’, i.e., in the space providing a possibility to take a radically different point of view.

¹⁰¹ Hal Foster, ‘Re: Post’, *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Brian Wallis (ed.), The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York 1986, pp. 189-201.

The term ‘socialism’, on the other hand, is used to designate a political system, political doctrine, and/or an overall (political, social, economic, and cultural) ideology that used to characterize all the societies and cultures belonging to the former Eastern Europe, and dominated by the ideological state apparatuses that had determined the experience of countries once part of the Eastern block and former Yugoslavia. As a system of social and economic organization (planned, attempted, or achieved through various methods), ‘socialism’ determines the smallest common denominator of all these countries in terms of their political system which was an actual one-party (mostly state) socialism. From a contemporary perspective, based upon the most actual condition of global and expanding capitalism, “the ‘socialist bloc’ was the true ‘third way,’ a desperate attempt at modernization outside the constraints of capitalism.”¹⁰²

One of the basic characteristics of socialism is identified in the public collective ownership or control over the basic means of production, distribution, and exchange, with the avowed aim of operating for use rather than for profit, and of assuring to each member of society an equitable share of goods, services, and welfare benefits.¹⁰³ As such, socialism was seen as the last counter-model against all the more expanding capitalism, and the last resort to preserve main elements of a non-capitalist social and human condition (according to contemporary theoreticians, these elements might be roughly described as: collectivity, fraternity, social equality, needs/ distribution of wealth according to the needs, class politics/ social class, collective ownership/ common property).¹⁰⁴

The term ‘socialism’ is here consciously employed as different from the term ‘communism’ and I will consciously use it with respect to the way it is used by

¹⁰² Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative. Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, p. 222.

¹⁰³ See: *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition, Chicago: Trident Press International 1996, p. 1191.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 1997, 2002. See also: Endru Hejvud, *Politika*, Clivo: Beograd, 2004, p. 103-104.

Aleš Erjavec in his book *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*.¹⁰⁵ According to Erjavec, the term communism is a problematic one due to different and quite opposing interpretations *within* the Eastern European ideological space itself (most notably the Yugoslav discourse vs. the Soviet one), as well as within the relationship of these discourses *toward* the capitalist (Western European and American) interpretations of the term. Distinctions therefore emerge ranging as far as the original Marxist interpretation (communism as a “movement,” leading the working masses via revolution from capitalism through a transitional period of socialism into communism),¹⁰⁶ through the Soviet bureaucratization of socialism and the proclamation (by Khrushchev in 1961) of a late entrance into the early stage of communism not before the 1980s (provided that the main traits of communism pertain not only a classless society, but also the distribution of wealth “according to one’s needs”, a goal that the Soviet society still had not managed to achieve before that period), to a specific case of Yugoslavia whose option toward socialism was established “not only to dissociate the “Yugoslav way” from capitalism, but primarily to avoid the pitfalls of the Realsozialismus of the Soviet Union and its satellites, with the Soviet Union being perceived since 1948 as the prime external political and military threat; (consequently) “Yugoslavia was building (especially from the implementation of the 1974 constitution) the so-called “self-management socialism,” a socialism which was to resurrect the principles at the historical roots of the contemporary workers’ movement, i.e. those of the Paris commune.”¹⁰⁷ Erjavec hence clearly explains his pleading for the term “socialism” as distinct from “communism” in the following way:

“In Western Europe and especially in the United States these countries were usually referred to as “communist.” While I don’t dispute the benefits of this widely accepted usage, I shall nonetheless employ the term “socialist,” for even in the Soviet Union (and more or less the same applies to all countries of the Soviet bloc)

¹⁰⁵ Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism, Aleš Erjavec (ed.), California University Press, Berkeley 2003.

¹⁰⁶ Aleš Erjavec, “Introduction” in *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, Ibid., p.11.

¹⁰⁷ Aleš Erjavec, “Introduction”, Ibid.

the political system was called “actually” (or “really”) existing socialism (Realsozialismus) or, just as often, “state socialism,” with the term “communist” being primarily applied to the political parties and their members. In Yugoslavia, as a special case, since the early seventies the League of Communists implemented a more decentralized political system of self-management within which the notion of the “state” and of a centralized power center lost much of its previous meaning, making notions such as “state socialism” inappropriate. The smallest common denominator of all these countries in terms of their political system was therefore an actual one-party (mostly state) socialism, with the period under discussion in this book being primarily the period preceding its demise. For this period the terms “late socialism” and “postsocialism” will be used.”¹⁰⁸

Consumerism and/or Ideology

As I am willing to generally identify myself as a (post-socialist) *neighbor* (in Gržinić's terms) to my EU-colleagues, if I am to defend the subject, method and ideas proposed in this paper, I would like to re-think the ideas behind the art economy in the post-socialist situation. This especially refers to the state of contemporary art system in the East of Europe perceived from this “neighborhood-perspective”, and exclusively through the issues dealing with economics and the way in which society is generally structured and how it functions; or, more precisely: I intend to pose questions (without any obligation to give the most accurate answer) about the global capitalist market and the way it influences the structure of a contemporary global society. I believe that art (and various discourses related to art, most notably – a contemporary curatorial discourse as understood in its broadest, performative, communicative and transformative sense) is a possible *tool* for discussing, questioning, and influencing the most pressing problems and issues dealing with economy's impact on today's society.

¹⁰⁸ Aleš Erjavec, “Introduction”, *Ibid.*

The relation between *culture* and the *marketplace* stands for a fundamental point of reference in contemporary re-thinking of economic implications in the global art world, and in posing questions such as: why is it important to think about economy in relation to art? Besides: why is it important to think about the transitional economy in relation to the post-socialist Eastern European art? Is it possible to talk about the ways in which contemporary art represents economic processes, and (if the answer is positive) what kind of meaning this artistic discourse brings to light? How this art can be read and how this discourse can be interpreted as a source of knowledge about contemporary economy? Is it possible to identify a concise historical overview of such art practices and should they be approached from a single perspective, provided that some artists are critical about the issue of economy, while others take an outright affirmative position? Is it possible to offer an alternative for the one-sided, neo-liberal discourse in the world of economics and in the media, through analyses of economic mechanisms in the contemporary art projects and artworks?

I start from the fact that cultural and critical theories (and consequently, critical curatorial theory and practice) are very closely bound up with the (capitalist) economic system. Let us pose a simple question: how is the Eastern European post-socialism positioned with regard to the contemporary global capitalism? The term 'positioning' is here essential: according to an economic definition of the word, positioning refers to processes of 'choosing a market niche for a product, taking into consideration price, promotion, distribution, packaging, competition, marketplace needs, etc.'¹⁰⁹ The logic of the market is therefore what comes up once we are determined to talk about contemporary art. I personally became aware of this close relationship between (Eastern European) art and (global) economy thanks to two distinguishing phenomena: one is established in contemporary art theory (with Jameson, Foster, Žižek, Sassen, Groys, Holmes,

¹⁰⁹ See: http://www.advfn.com/money-words_term_3749_positioning.html

and Gržinić, as the most relevant examples), another in contemporary art practices (with practitioners such as Oliver Ressler from Vienna, *Reinigungsgesellschaft* (Dresden), *Orgacom* (Amsterdam), *Big Hope* (Scotland/Hungary), etc.), all of them problematizing the very existence of various critical economic and social issues within the project-based art discourses dealing with them. They are trying either to analyze the process of transition from one model of economy (most notably – a socialist, centrally-planned economy) to a capitalist mixed-market economy with respect to differing conditions for art and culture in the East and the West (Groys), or to critically posit the contemporary global state of economy from a profound theoretical and interpretative perspective related to contemporary art and art system, art market, and global exhibition making (Gržinić, for example).

This is even more significant for the societies being part of the former political East. The transition from socialism to capitalism in former socialist economies after the collapse of communist political ideologies in Europe helps us understand not only a shift from one economic model to another, but also (and that is even more important) how transition contributes to the dynamics of large-scale institutional (organizational) reforms, thus providing necessary conditions for a capitalist expansion worldwide. This is, without any doubt, not only an economic issue, but a *political* one, affecting not only the lives of the former Eastern Europeans, but the global world as such. Therefore, in order to analyze the issue from this global point of view, we are obliged to talk not only about *economy* as a discipline, or an abstract field of scientific discourse, but about *political economy*, being dependent on political decision-making operations and processes, and thus influencing our everyday existence. The first task therefore lies in an attempt to define the fields of (1) economy (political economy) and cultural economy, and (2) the way of positioning a new curatorial subject from the East of Europe in relation (or rather – through) the ideas of contemporary global economy and contemporary global art market.

Economy is a word closely connected to (or, in Marxist terms, simultaneous with) the idea of production. *Economic system* is thus understood as an organizational system based upon decision-making processes leading toward the production of commodities, their distribution, and exchange. However, what we are dealing with here is not a single economic system, but actually a conflicting situation emerging from a fundamental difference between the two economic systems, or economic philosophies: *capitalist*, on the one hand, and *socialist*, on the other. These two systems, or philosophies, determine the critical line I intend to exploit in order to analyze and position the post-socialist Eastern European art (and contemporary curatorial practices related to it) with regard to the logic of the art-market and the expansion of global capitalism in contemporary world. If we are to approach these two systems from a 'black and white' perspective, it will be easier to perceive their fundamental differences just as much as our perception of the global capitalism as a vital characteristic of our epoch: (1) *the capitalist economic system* is characterized by (a) the market value of an expanding *exchange of commodities*, (b) *private* property and ownership of the means of production, (c) *market* laws (based upon offer and need) that dictate the economic life, while (d) a *self-oriented* logic of interest supports the forces of labor; (2) *the socialist economic system*, on the other hand, is determined by (a) the *exploitation* of production systems according to the human needs, (b) *collective* social property and ownership of wealth, (c) *planned* and rational organization of production and distribution of resources, and (d) *cooperative* work for the benefit of the *entire* society;¹¹⁰

However, depending on specific economic and political circumstances (as well as on different cultural and historical backgrounds), different societies have developed particular models of either capitalism or socialism, according to the given conditions. Therefore it is more than incorrect to perceive the global state of economy from a perspective that perpetuates a Cold War-idea about socialism

¹¹⁰ See: 'Economic Systems', in Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan 1997, 2002. Also: Endrju Hejvud, *Politika*, Klio: Beograd 2004, pp. 340-341.

as being a single resistant alternative to capitalism, but rather to think in contemporary terms of *capitalisms* and *socialisms*,¹¹¹ or (more precisely) – of *capitalisms* and *alter-capitalisms*. It is true, however, that with respect to the Eastern European post-socialist art and culture we are still conditioned by the fact that socialism, in its real, existing form had presented a counter-model for capitalism until its collapse. As stated in a project recently initiated and directed by media theorist and professor Boris Groys (and organized under the auspices of the German Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with the Centre for Art and Media – ZKM from Karlsruhe, Germany, 2003-2004), more than a decade after the end of the Cold War the gulf between east and west that developed during this period has not been overcome, and the essential, still existent difference between the art system in the West and its counterpart in the East, is determined by the inherited polarization between a Western type of a market-driven logic as applied to arts, and an Eastern type of an ideologically conditioned (politicized) art:

“The fact that the art market in the western sense did not exist in the east created, in addition, completely differing conditions for the functioning of art. The institutions common in the west, galleries, art societies, museums, private collectors, did not exist in this way in the east and, for this reason, were not a part of the corresponding public sphere. The western difference between non-marketable and marketable artifacts did not apply in the east. In the west the relation between culture and the marketplace had stood for decades in the center of critical self-examination, among intellectuals as well as among artists, and their theoretical and artistic designs had chiefly aimed at curbing the influence of the marketplace and the establishing of the primacy of politics. In contrast, in the communist east the marketplace had long since been eliminated and the primacy of politics was pervasive. For the east the marketplace thus represented utopia. As a result eastern intellectuals and artists placed their faith in a marketplace of a western character – even, and especially, if their discourse and works of art shared the same emancipatory impulses as those of their western counterparts. Whimsically put, radical intellectuals and artists in the west embraced Marxism, while those in the east became card-carrying Reaganites – all this in the framework of the same emancipating projects.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ ‘Economic Systems’, Ibid.

¹¹² See: *THE POST-COMMUNIST CONDITION. Art and Culture After the Fall of the Eastern Block*, International Conference (10-12/06/2004, Das Moskau, Berlin) and Exhibition (16/05 – 26/06 2004, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin) - <http://www.postcommunist.de>

Starting from the facts that an art market in the western sense did not exist in the east and that, consequently, conditions for the functioning of art in the east were completely different from those in the west, this project is important because it explores the relation between culture and the marketplace. It poses a simple question: how, now that the transformations in the model of modernization have taken place in the east, will the reality of the marketplace be reflected in theory and art? And what should be done to further the accomplishment of the formulation of a new theoretical discourse, which is faithful to the post-communist situation? This most recent example of a serious international conference shows another possibility for rethinking the status and position of contemporary Eastern European art and culture, especially through posing a proper question about the formative critical and theoretical discourses.

Speaking about an essential difference between the eastern artist and the generic type of western artist in the context of global art markets, Groys uses two competitive media that produce value, and explains that the meaning of artworks in the West comes from the outside, i.e. from somebody who is *buying* these things: their value is produced by *money* (market), and is fundamentally determined by the *intention* of the buyer - the works had a meaning but only the one who would buy them would know it. This is a completely neutralized meaning, resulting from extreme atomization, individualism and self-commodification in terms of commodification of the personality of the artist himself who presents himself as a commodity. Western artists encounter, in fact, a very slippery and open situation which is very market-driven and where every approach is legitimate; they try to avoid every possibility of being *ideologically identified*, because, according to Groys, people - being compatible with a possible set of expectations and being bought by people who maybe don't share their attitudes - just don't want to define themselves in ideological terms. In the East the value is produced by *language* (ideology), turning the meaning of artworks to the production processes coming from the inside. The meaning in the

East is ascribed through a certain producer of value, i.e. the ideological mechanisms of value production. Eastern artists use a strategy that is quite opposite to their fellow colleagues from the West - a strategy of organizing *discourse as value*. The situation in the East has been determined by a strong value order, but (no matter how deep the capitalism intrudes the body of Eastern Europe), this situation still provides a possibility to connect both value productions, the possibility of interplay between discursive value production and commercialization in both directions: the eastern system, which was almost exclusively a system of discursive value production, is capable of functioning like a kind of machine that turns discursive value production into market value production and also in the opposite direction.¹¹³ Groys names a possibility of such interaction (at least a possibility to convert discursive value production into market value production and back) by the idea of *collectivism* (group activity).

The idea of collectivism is connected in essential ways to the communist system and its heritage and not only was property considered to be collective, but the structure of society as well. Art in Eastern Europe, too, has been connected in essential ways to the idea of the group – and especially to the idea of belonging to a collective social (or spiritual) body – in contrast to the prevailing individualistic positions taken in Western Europe and, even more so, in the United States.¹¹⁴ For Groys, such a group activity is determined by nothing else but micro-discursive value production, a kind of a micro-space and micro-politics that are created within these converting (both-ways) activities: they discursively reflect on western phenomena such as global media and global market, while at the same time they create simulacra of Eastern spaces whose content acquires symbolic value (here Groys gives an example of the soviet group *Medical Hermeneutics*).

¹¹³

¹¹⁴ See: "Collectivism", *Sedem grehov: Ljubljana-Moskva, ARTEAST razstava / Seven Sins: Ljubljana-Moskva, ARTEAST Exhibition* (exh. cat.), Z. Badovinac, V. Misiano, I. Zabel (eds.), Ljubljana: Museum of Modern Art, December 2004 – February 2005, p. 8.

Another theoretician points out this double-fold manifestation of micro-discursive value production, relying on the experience of a theory of totalitarian societies - as offered by the French historian and political philosopher Claude Lefort. At the very beginning of his introductory chapter to the book *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, Aleš Erjavec argues that it is the formation of a *secondary discourse* (parallel to the *first*, ideological or *totalitarian* one) that enables the articulation of a critique in the societies where (opposite to traditional democratic bourgeois societies) power and ideology have the same locus, a single location (the Party, for example). Since totalitarian discourse doesn't allow the subject to distance himself from the discourse and "demands his identification with power and with the person or persons who retain it at the top of the State", to articulate this secondary discourse in the form of the primary ideological discourse means not only to "alienate from" but to "*identify with*": not simply to distinguish from the public sphere, but to exist parallel with it, to delicately subvert it while exploiting the strategy of mimicry, "of conscious and complete *identification* of their secondary discourse with the ideological discourse, thus paradoxically revealing the inconsistencies of the latter".¹¹⁵ This is the very same procedure that is taking place today, with different (both Eastern and Western) artists and art groups in the era of globalization acting in the micro-political field of action, as Groys describes it: the value production is based on a micro-discursive level that itself stands for a secondary discourse in relation to the primary and dominant, (market-driven) discourse. It is exactly in-between these discourses that I identify a critical curatorial subject today.

¹¹⁵ *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, Ales Erjavec (ed.), California University Press, Berkeley 2003, p. 8-9.

2. THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CURATORIAL STRATEGIES

Concepts, Paradigms and Ideologies of Curatorial Practices

In order to approach the issue of curatorial re-positioning in international (global) and regional (Eastern European) conditions, I intend, first of all, to reflect on the historical and contemporary notions of *curator* and *curating* and, more precisely, the notions of *curatorial theory* and *curatorial practice* with regard to a specific *status* of professionals in the field of curating contemporary art, and their respective (political and theoretical) *positioning* in the domain of cultural and political affairs.

What I will try to point out is a possibility of identifying curators of contemporary art as new *political* subjects, where the political legitimating (in Jameson's terms) comes from "*the fundamental level on which political struggle is waged, (i.e.) the struggle over the legitimacy of concepts and ideologies*".¹¹⁶ To be identified as a "political subject" here precisely implies the professional identification and configuration of a contemporary art curator as a political activist, able to interfere the broad cultural sphere through a set of engaged social and political activities, i.e. a being with a high-level of political awareness and activity, functionalized from its proper professional sector of operational efficiency, and not as a parliamentary-involved and engaged subject (acting out of his professional sector or only for the benefit of his/her own political community). Art's political potential is therefore not signaled only in terms of its preconceived overlapping with non-artistic (side) effects, but in terms of its ability to coordinate and control the state of art with constant reference to these non-artistic (side) criteria that are imposed by political, social, and economic decision-makers. I depart from the belief that the decision-making process in

¹¹⁶ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and the Market', in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso: London 1991, p. 263.

contemporary art and culture should no longer be treated only as reflecting the totality of political reality (just as it had been the case in totalitarian societies of former Eastern Europe), but as influencing particular segments of such a reality through art's ability to respond to the demands and criteria controlled by other public sectors. This attitude toward political (re)configuration of a curator as an activist responds to the ways that political power relations are articulated in the sphere of art, theory, activism, and culture, and also – to the ways that this sphere is related to the effects of ideology, hegemony, hierarchy, and political legitimacy. The question of interest here is: if there is no autonomy of culture from politics and the economy, what are the cultural dimensions of globalization, and how is this specific implication being recognized today in the field of curatorial practices?

While insisting on such a theoretical proposition, I intend to understand contemporary curatorial practices not even in their *relation to*, but exactly *through* contemporary political practices. Coming mostly from the field of a formal, academic, art historical discourse (being educated as art historians, with exceptions of not being formally educated in art history at all, such as the case with a Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, for example), contemporary curators are being transferred either into the field of an official cultural discourse, or activist practice. Thus similarities between political systems and strategies, on the one hand, and art systems and strategies, on the other hand, are supposed to lead toward the most pressing object of research: a relation between the contemporary global art world and the global capitalism with regard to the notions of power, hegemony, and dominance (and their respective counterpoints) in the field of cultural (curatorial) action.

To summarize: in what follows, I explore the issue of critical curatorial concepts, paradigms, and ideologies, focusing especially on the roles played by curators as political, managerial, and decision-making subjects in the (hyper) institutional field of cultural action. These preliminary patterns will be

problematically considered with respect to the concrete historical examples of curatorial models, taking into account two relevant experts (Biljana Tomić and Marina Gržinić). Providing a coherent framework for these otherwise quite divergent curators, I would like to outline a possible history of curatorial (philosophical, theoretical, and political) views and explain how they all count as designers/managers of particular *artistic and cultural* concepts and ideologies (tendencies, atmospheres, environments, paradigms), while reflecting particular *political* concepts and ideologies (tendencies, atmospheres, environments, paradigms), and at the same time - influencing our common perception of artistic, cultural, and political realities appertaining to a given space and time.

Curator as a Cultural Manager: Towards a Contemporary Definition of Curatorship

“Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships.”¹¹⁷

Michel Foucault

Curating and making exhibitions have over the last decades developed into an identifiable *cultural* practice, on the one hand concerned with presenting, reflecting upon and interpreting art-production and on the other with actively producing meaning. The role of a curator is thus being defined through the creative, constructive methods of “making appropriate combinations of people” and thus positioning the dominant values within the structures of power in the

¹¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Penguin: Harmondsworth 1981, pp. 96.

world of art and, consequently, imposing control and designing the image of the profession as “artistic” itself. This artistic aspect of contemporary curatorship is not only concerned with curators’ visions, the very source of their getting closer to the profession of artists, or the dreams they base their concepts on and develop through further projects and exhibitions. What is really important in relation to this connection between the curatorial and the artistic work is not only supported by the mutual phantasmatic projections of their invisible ideas towards the visibility of the outside world, but by their mutual interdependence which possibly makes the connection between the functional principles of art and of the entire environmental conditions visible. Therefore, beside the standard notion of an artist in the most traditional sense of the word, another two types of “artists” are growing prominent in today’s’ art world: one of them being *curators*, identified as designers of the broad cultural sphere, and the other, *cultural managers* and/or art administrators, as active organizers or producers of conditions for the adequate functioning of this sphere. The question is: how are these two types connected? Through their mutual orientation toward productive mechanisms in the power systems, and the capacities they are able to perform within the institutional hierarchy of professional positions.

The questions of *power* have always been an important issue in contemporary art debates, presupposing the implicit logic of the critique of institutions and a progressing necessity to organize the forms of resistance. This protest is still challenging for the defense of critical autonomy that artistic production has had from institutional, economic and political forces in the period after the Second World War. The concept of power, defined as the capacity to dominate or control someone or something else, shares much with the concept of hegemony (referring, in its most common sense, to the dominance of one group, nation, or culture over another). Apart from a popular (but outdated) twentieth-century connotation (of superpowers’ political dominance, especially in regard to the concept of a nation-state, such as the United States, or China – as the most ‘dangerous’ threat to the actual world order), hegemony has a complex

meaning and could be understood even as constitutive of lived experience. In theoretical writings of Antonio Gramsci, one of the possible ways to encompass the meaning of hegemony is through relationships between classes. What makes hegemony a real threat for any society is its character of consent, in case hegemony is not only understood as ideology (expressing the interest of a dominant class), but rather as acceptance of all those sets of regulations that are being presented and mediated to a subordinate class as 'acceptable', 'normal', 'common', and 'correct'. This is largely due to the fact that hegemony enters the social order while existing within the cultural life of any society, being situated in its institutions, ethic codes, behaviors, ideas, relationships, etc. In terms of resistance, Gramsci pleads for a parallel form of hegemony, a 'new' hegemony which (in order to overthrow the previous one, most probably bourgeois by character) needs to establish itself while addressing the needs and interests of a larger number of groups. This is the way to oppose the first hegemonic discourse as the only (universal) one, and to propose *a second discourse* that would be able to counter-fight for the benefit of a subordinate social majority.

In his analysis of contemporary art and culture from the non-hegemonic post-socialist world, Aleš Erjavec starts from the notions of power and discourse as offered by Claude Lefort. According to Lefort's theory of totalitarian societies, the difference between political and ideological discourse and power is annihilated in both: in the struggle to attain total social control, the totalitarian discourse must identify itself completely with power and those who possess it.¹¹⁸ Additionally, what distinguishes a totalitarian ideology from a democratic one is that totalitarian ideology implies the purpose of a certain center, which moves from one sector of the civil society to another, but which in the heart of the State apparatus retains power and knowledge. Totalitarian discourse doesn't allow the subject to distance himself from the discourse and demands his identification with power and with the person or persons who retain it at the top of the State.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Aleš Erjavec, 'Introduction', *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, ed. Aleš Erjavec, Berkeley: California University Press, 2003, pp. 16-92.

¹¹⁹ Aleš Erjavec, 'Introduction', *Ibid.*

Confronting the unprecedented shifts in power that led to the state of global capitalism, contemporary art confounded the omnipresent significance of the dominant art paradigm as constituted in the West, and largely contributed to recovering the social force of art. As a mode of resistance, it managed to transcend the innocent aesthetic practices of activity-for-itself. It heightened the similarity of life and art while at the same time it systematically emphasized distinctions between Reality and Art(ificiality). In a methodical elaboration of practicing differently self-imposed tasks, curators are supposed to challenge the contemporary state of mind in the world threatened by power-relations, while examining their own practices in a multifold direction. Opposing to the traditional mimetic function of art, that was largely supported by overlapping interests of dominant political, economic and social powers (and their respective proponents and representatives within the art system itself), curatorship - as a possible method to alter society – must plead for a systematic change, that can be achieved through a strategic resistance in the micro-political field of action. The apparatus of art mechanism, critically examined and approached, can be one of the targets against which curators are capable to react: As Guy Debord would have stated, “(...) In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation”.¹²⁰ Accordingly, curators have turned their backs to the modern conditions of production through fighting the modern perception of representation. What is more important, they are fighting against the media-projected society and the “irresistible truth” of spectacularity for the masses, while cynically repeating the principles of this spectacularity for the benefit of a non-mediated spectacularity of the pure existence.

¹²⁰ Cf. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Beograd: anarhija/ blok 45, 2002, p. 17.

At this point, we are getting closer to the domain of what would easily be understood as “politicization of art”. And this is not without reason. But I would like to propose not to examine the relation between art and politics, but rather to think about art *through* politics. If we accept curating and its strategies of struggle and engagement towards capitalism as a possible form of resistance and disobedience, we will be ready to identify those political subjects in the broadest sense that justify such a positioning of certain curators, artists, art practices and art phenomena in the contemporary global world. By defining a common point of reference, both for the global political system and the global art system, it will be easier to achieve the goal this thesis is about to bring. In this respect, one question seems to be more provocative than others: is it possible to protect a politically incorrect curatorial gesture from a politically ‘correct’ consumerism based on a (sado-masochistic, under the veil of multiculturalism) relationship between the dominant, hegemonic cultures and all the other “marginal” cultures subjected to them? This is an issue opened up by numerous art projects in the last decade, following not only the fall of colonial empires in the twentieth century, but also the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. Opening up of the region, on the one hand, evidently facilitated the initiation of new strategies, making possible the independent and autonomous production of contemporary art, while on the other hand, it provided the background for a more serious and efficient analysis of contemporary society in the period of growing mistrust in social institutions and institutional forms of public action.

Curating (as applied to contemporary visual arts) is a theoretical and practical discipline revolving around the ideas, concepts, strategies, and meanings of visual display. As such, curating implies both theoretical and practical involvement with issues concerning all aspects of the way art is being submitted to the processes of classification, selection, and representation, due to specific conditions imposed by art production, criticism, exhibition space, and art reception. The theoretical aspect of curating here specifically refers to curatorial theory (a), while the practical aspect of curating refers to curatorial practice (b). It

is by no means that these two disciplines should be separated. On the contrary, they complement each other, and it is the overlapping character of contemporary curatorship that I intend to put into focus here.

(a) *Curatorial theory* is here understood as a specific theoretical discipline determined as a linguistic or discursive activity. Curatorial theory as a linguistic or discursive activity outlines the contemporary field of curating through its aspects of language and discourse, i.e. the discursive scholarly forms of analysis dealing with fundamental questions facing curating. As such, curatorial theory is not meant to be understood as a self-referential discipline: it rather departs from the common body of knowledge as accumulated in related theoretical disciplines (art theory, art criticism, philosophy and critical theory, art history, visual and cultural studies, media studies, sociology of art, theoretical psychoanalysis, etc.). Being identified as part of the common family of disciplines, curatorial theory denotes its cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary character, most notably determined by its relation toward art theory, and by its appurtenance to the world of art and the art system. (1) If the framework of art theory is determined by speech and language which denote art, the framework of curatorial theory is determined by speech and language which denote displaying values of art. (2) Also, if curatorial theory is situated inside the world of art and the art system, it is possible to determine curatorial theory as a system for communicating information within the given coordinates of art production and the consumer's response to this production.

The first hypothesis helps us identify those involved in curating today as protagonists of discursive (language-based) communication and activities. The second hypothesis helps us identify them as protagonists of productive (object/project-based) communication and activities. Discursive (language-based) communication and activities are here understood as referring to all aspects the meaning of language is being produced: written language (curatorial statements, texts, essays, articles, critical reviews, interviews, documents, etc), spoken language (speech, dialogue, discussion, debate, conference, lecture,

etc), and ‘silent language (of ideology)’ - communication as the field of unspoken and unwritten rules.

(b) *Curatorial practice* is here understood as a specific (practice-oriented) discipline, determined as an organizational and productive activity. The choice of the term *practice* deliberately has a two-fold character: on the one hand, it refers to the practical (non-theoretical) side of curatorial work (along with theoretical work), considering professional decision-making, curatorial strategies, and the shifting role of the curator (along with evolution of contemporary art practice); on the other hand, it implies an expanded perspective on curating contemporary art and culture in general (along with curating an art exhibition), considering the modes of artistic and cultural production and organization, the investigations beyond the traditional museum and gallery exhibitions, and even beyond the “autonomous” fields of the art-world and art-system. Curatorial practice thus refers to relational elements of art production within a broadly conceived (political, social, economic, and cultural) framework that puts those art-worlds and art-systems into specific contexts, and consequently – generates and produces their systems of beliefs, ideas, meanings and values. The latter (just as the “silent language” of curatorial theory) helps determining the ideology of exhibition, what I would also accept as a possibility to approach a definition of the *curatorial ideology*. Accordingly:

“The ideology of exhibition is not an aggregate of oriented and entirely rationalized intentions of its organizers (curators, authors of concept, financiers, cultural workers, politicians). The ideology is a precarious atmosphere (environment) of conceptualized as well as non-conceptualized possibilities, decisions, symbolizations, solutions, proclamations, oversights (erasure), fortuitous choices, selections, proposals, values, tacit insights, censorship, the effects of public and tacit taste, justifications, desires and social functions that form some sort of acceptable reality of the exhibition from the perspective of society and culture. In other words, the ideology of an exhibition or a family of exhibitions is not the order (text) of messages that the authors of exhibition are projecting and proclaiming in their introductory or accompanying texts; it is that

difference between the intended and the unintended, the acceptable and the unacceptable in relation of the public and the tacit scene: the conscious and the unconscious, i.e., the literal and the fictional. The ideology of exhibition is not that which is meant to be accepted by public opinion (doxa) but, paradoxically, that which constitutes doxa and represents its expression (a single case) in some sort of exchange of 'social values' and 'social powers.'"¹²¹

In traditional art-historical usage the term 'curating' is broadly synonymous with *exhibiting* art. However, I would claim that curating in a contemporary sense conceives the phenomenon of exhibition only as one (not even the most important, though most visible) out of many fragments constitutive for the working process of a contemporary curator. Considering the popular description of exhibiting practices as the "*politics of display*" or "*politics of representation*", this connection between art and politics is a challenge to what we take to be the contemporary view of Eastern European (or any non-hegemonic) art as a realistic mirroring of the world. It is, in fact, only apparently realistic and offers us instead the paradoxical formula that this art is a realized abstraction. The question is not whether there is a connection, but what that connection tells us about Eastern European art and the art itself; how we see and interpret the art in the light of it; how the meaning is being produced through the lenses of contemporary reality, and how the representation of this reality constructs the common values beyond the level of art. This diversification has also resulted, in the last few decades, in a further classification of the art system in general. It is not a notion of hidden meanings that produces such formula, but rather the notion of a world that is understood in terms of an assemblage of visibly accessible meanings and at the same time - revealing of previously invisible connections, divisions and political preferences. Hence, I am especially interested in the following issues: (1) The fundamental extant difference between the "two Europes" in the very period of European integrative processes after 1989 and the relevant theoretical and interpretative instruments for a proper

¹²¹ Misko Šuvaković, "The Ideology of Exhibition: On the Ideologies of Manifesta", in *platformaSCCA*, No. 3, Ljubljana, January 2002, SCCA, Center for Contemporary Art - Ljubljana, 2002.

recognition of artistic projects in Eastern Europe; (2) The relation towards a market economy and the new objectives of transitional cultural policy, emphasizing the principles of institutional reconstruction and emancipation of a local/regional art scene through its strategic integration into the field of the international art world; (3) The analytical approach towards the role of a contemporary art curator in respect with the so-called global art exhibition projects: the overthrowing of the father-curator and introduction of the mediatory concept of an international curatorial team working in cooperation for the benefit of the joint, long-term project.

Starting mainly from the standpoint of professional institutionalized work relationships, but also from constant changes of global artistic, political and institutional concepts, new roles have been attributed to old professions, thus conceiving new critical positions out of which the experts are about to launch their effective ideas. Here I primarily think of curators, and curators as different from the easily confusing term of *custodians* (whose professional orientation is supposed to be more connected to the aspects of museology).

As far as the terminology itself is concerned, *curating* has wide applicability. The Latin origin of the word could be identified in the verb *curare* (to care for) and the noun *cura* (care, a cure). The most evident meaning of the term is therefore *medical* by its origin, and refers to the ideas of solicitude, carefulness, and remedial treatment. This is how some other Latin words, related to the former one and always with reference to 'curating', should be understood (for example: *curatura*, *curatus*, *curabilis*, *curate*, *curation*). Besides, this is how a specific discipline of curating art (within the context of traditionally conceived exhibition spaces such as classical museums) used to be understood: as a practice of *protecting* (the institution of art and aesthetic values while taking care of) displayed (secured and sheltered) art objects. Additionally, possessing power or tendency to cure, or being related to the cure of diseases (according to the English adjective '*curative*') is possible to connect with the theological meaning of

the noun *'curate'*, referring to a clergyman assisting a parish priest, rector, or vicar (the practice of whom is officially described as *'curateship'*).

However, the meaning of curating, although it originates from the medical, emphatical, and/or religious connotations (that are to be understood and accepted with the fundamental etymological concern) does not only and necessarily revolve around these terms.¹²² It could also be deduced from another (*legal*, referring to a law) meaning of the Latin verb *cura*, the one that seem to be even more important for this analysis. It refers to the ideas of *orientation* (guidance, directing, conducting), *management* (administration), and *control* (tutorship, supervision). Accordingly, a *'curator'* is a person having charge (as of a museum or library) or a superintendent; a guardian appointed to take charge of the property of a person not legally qualified to act for himself; and even (in some European universities) - a member of a board of managers.¹²³

What this rough typology reveals is a possible double-fold character of the phenomenon of curating: the one related more to an etymologically correct genesis of the word in its ancient, original Latin form (reflecting its *scientific*, medical and remedial background), and another, related to a more contemporary, interpretative line of thought (reflecting its *legal*, administrative, and institutionalized character). *The actual meaning of the term 'curating', therefore, is to be deduced from the space in-between the Science and the Law, or - from the specific theoretical and practical discourses related both to scientific and legal strategies as applied to curating in its most contemporary sense.* These two points of reference (scientific and legal) are the formative grounds that I want to explore as points of reference in my encountering the phenomenon of curating contemporary art.

¹²² Another meaning in this direction (psychological, emotional connotation) is connected to the idea of an unhappy love affair, or love-suffering. See: *Rečnik latinsko-srpsko-hrvatski (Dictionary of Latin and Serbo-Croatian terms)*, Jovan D. Čolić (ed.), Beograd: Dereta (1936) 1991, p. 124.

¹²³ With regard to this, the noun *'curatorship'* is defined as either a *curator's office or position*, or a *body of curators collectively*. See: *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition, Chicago: Trident Press International 1996, p. 316.

Under the term '*scientific*' I imply a certain method of inquiry (in science or applied to scientific study or investigation) that is dependent on the rules and principles of exact, accurate, and systematic analysis of relevant data, and leading towards the construction of a hypothesis (or a set of hypotheses) in order to articulate and resolve a certain problem. What is of an utmost importance (with respect to scientific work and methods) is an inherent possibility of taking a *completely different point of view* after this hypothesis (or a set of hypotheses) is approved, and what once has been defined only as an experimental approach towards the problem becomes a structurally and systematically deduced version of knowledge, reliable and accurate by its consistency with given hypotheses and data. This is the way I want to approach different methodologies in relation to theoretical discourses appertaining to both art history and cultural history, in order to set up another, narrower and more specific approach - toward curatorial history and curatorial discourses.

Under the term '*legal*' (as applied to contemporary global art and culture in general, and more specifically - to contemporary curatorial practices and discourses) I imply the question of *legitimacy*, i.e. a framework of institutional power hierarchy (a set of practical institutional constraints) that is established upon different mechanisms of power within the contemporary art system, thus making the functional processes of this very system sustainable and productive. The basic and most essential question that I would like to pose in this direction is: WHO has the right to be identified as a curatorial subject today, i.e. who has the right to be professionally involved with contemporary curatorial practices and to reserve, establish and protect such a privileged professional/political position in contemporary art world? Also, how is this position being realized, operationalized and sustained? Because, as some theoreticians would state, "the question of *who* is allowed to design an exhibition, conference, round table and participate in the organization of an artistic event needs to be reconsidered and pointed out alongside questions of *how* and *why* certain themes and issues are approached" (Marina Gržinić).

As it is now evident and possible to set up the basic hypothesis, *curating (at first sight) has almost nothing to do with art*. This, however, is not a negative hypothesis: it helps us understand the side-axis of art in its most actual line of development, and with regard to supposedly non-artistic frameworks that are being constitutive for the significance of theoretical and practical acting in the field of contemporary art today. By pointing out at this side-axis (the framework simultaneously *generating* and *surrounding* the values of contemporary art today), I particularly mean: the *conditions* that generate, produce, articulate, and influence both the theoretical discourses and practical involvement in the sphere of *art*, and especially - in the sphere of *contemporary visual art*. This distinction between 'art' and 'contemporary art' is necessary to accentuate, because of the inevitability to accept the following fact: although each and every involvement with art today must be defined as 'contemporary' or at least as 'belonging to (a certain) value of contemporaneity', not all the protagonists of the contemporary art world are willing to accept it or admit it. This results in their conscious or less conscious refusing of the fact that the art of today is being *based upon* and developed *through* the overall contemporary conditions of (cultural) production. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that even the attitude of refusing one's own contemporaneity is being conditioned by and/or is reflecting (being reactive toward) the very same object of refusal (i.e. that very "contemporaneity"); this finally and paradoxically positions all those 'outcasts and misfits' alongside and together with their counterparts (who overtly accept the actual moment as the constitutive one for their life and work) - in the same sphere of contemporary world and contemporary art world. The notion of the *frame* (framework, context, environment) is here to be considered as the first step in encountering the previous (non-artistic) significance of curating with the most actual significance of (contemporary art) curating. It also explains the fundamental difference between the Western and Eastern concepts / systems of art: rather than being determined by a market-driven and profit-oriented logic of capitalist consumerist societies in the West, it is *within a framework of a certain discursive political / ideological order* that socialist systems used in order to produce (artistic) value, and it is this

framework (condition) that still distinguishes Eastern and Western approaches toward the issues of art (Boris Groys).

In order to approach this complex and, as I believe, crucial issue concerning any critical discourse related to contemporary artistic/cultural/curatorial practices, I will rely on theoretical propositions as given by Marina Gržinić. She names this institutional hierarchy – *The Institution of Art* (or *The Art Power Edifice*).¹²⁴ What constitutes it today might be identified through elements such as: system of (artistic) production; system of perverted (late) capitalism; market laws; art practice; production of goods (artworks); forms of distance and elitism; but also - strategic projects encountering the need for democracy, social rights and a classless society in both the art world and political life. In her attempts to analyze the complexity of issues dealing with power-positions and power-relations within the global art system, Gržinić claims that the Art Power Edifice (i.e., the power mechanisms within the Institution of Art) relies today on obscenity and promiscuity, and that this is, beside the art market, what the story is about in art and its relation to power.¹²⁵ Drawing upon the psychoanalytic heritage (and especially the relations of power-position and sexuality, according to Slavoj Žižek's concept of the phantasm formation that sustains the subject's "sense of reality" within contemporary art and culture¹²⁶), Gržinić also points out that the art institution holds the subjects and exercises power over them through mechanisms of phantasmatic eroticization and obscene disavowed fantasy rules (here she interprets the Žižekian so-called *over-identification* processes within the obscene art institution, as an elaborated concept of libidinal relations between differently positioned protagonists in the art world).¹²⁷

¹²⁴ M. Gržinić, "Tanja Ostojić: 'Yes It's Fucking Political' - Skunk Anansie", *Strategies of Success: Curators Series 2001 – 2003*, Tanja Ostojić (ed.), Belgrade and Bourges: Studentski kulturni centar & La BOX, 2004, pp. 11-31.

¹²⁵ M. Gržinić, "Tanja Ostojić: 'Yes It's Fucking Political' - Skunk Anansie", *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²⁶ M. Gržinić, "Tanja Ostojić: 'Yes It's Fucking Political' - Skunk Anansie", *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹²⁷ M. Gržinić, *Ibid.*

Having this in mind, I would like to approach the scientific and legal frameworks of contemporary artistic production through *curatorial systems*, i.e. a set of theoretical and political strategies as applied to contemporary curatorial practices and re-thought as the ultimate sign of a hyper-institutionalized (and hyper-libidinal) global cultural system the way we encounter it today. I believe that discussions about the possibilities of approaching contemporary curatorial practices from a critical standpoint require a specific emphasis on the questions of (a) a scientifically (theoretically) justified legitimization, and (b) a politically legalized (institutional) appropriation of art and artists by exhibiting institutions and their strategies of displaying art. This, however, presupposes the inherent ideological mechanisms of power within the spaces for exhibiting art in the contemporary global world, and it is the issue of *institutional curatorship* (curating *within* art and cultural institutions and their respective projects) that I find as the most significant today.

A bi-lingual publication (in French and English) edited by the Paris-based curators Jérôme Sans and Marc Sanchez entitled “*What do you expect from an art institution in the 21st century?*” presents a collection of statements by internationally selected protagonists of contemporary art and culture regarding the role of art institutions in the future. As it is stated in the brief editorial preface, this initial publication aims to offer a forum to all those who have dreamed and continue to dream of institutions that are different: venue-laboratories, places of adventure, open to all questions, contradictions, risks.¹²⁸ I refer to this publication only because I want to point out to a single statement that I could possibly identify with. It expresses the opinion of a curator Ami Barak. This statement is more than relevant because it comes from a person who has been appointed director of Frac Languedoc-Roussillon (Montpellier) at the times when the publication was edited, but also - the board member and president of IKT

¹²⁸ What do you expect from an art institution in the 21st century?, Palais de Tokyo, Tokyobook 1, Paris 2001, 2002, 2003, p. 5. For more information refer to: Palais de Tokyo (or ‘PDT’ as it is popularly nicknamed), Site de creation contemporaine, 13 avenue du Président Wilson, F-75116 Paris, www.palaisdetokyo.com

(International Curators Association) for the period 2003-2005.¹²⁹ It goes as following:

“(... an art institution in the 21st century should be) instantaneously transgressive, shifted, poor, under-staffed, politically-incorrect; that it annoys, destabilizes, disturbs; that it is funded outside the political field but that it is integrally part of the city; that it does not fetishize the space and that it remains on a human scale.”¹³⁰

IKT (International Curators Association) is an organization based in Paris.¹³¹ Although it is a French organization, it has a clear international scope and brings together about 400 members, including directors and cultural managers from non-profit exhibition spaces and museums as well as free-lance contemporary curators from Eastern & Western Europe, Japan, Australia and America. As the information goes (given at the official IKT web-presentation <http://www.iktsite.org>), to become a new member of IKT, one is invited to send a short CV and the names of two IKT members as references to the board of IKT e-mail who will have to approve it; new IKT members are welcomed officially every year at the annual IKT congress, and the required annual membership fee is EUR 50. I insist on these almost banal pieces of information because, since they make a constitutive part of the official process of becoming a member of a certain international curatorial network (such as this one), they also reveal a basic administrative procedure, the preliminary step toward becoming officially part of the global professional community. Why is it important to become officially part of the global professional community of contemporary art curators?

¹²⁹ Beside Ami Barak, the IKT board 2003-2005 consists of: **Katrina Brown** - curator Dundee Contemporary Art Centre (Scotland), **Dirk Snauwaert** - Nouveau Musée/IAC Lyon (France), **Isabel Carlos** - curator Lissabon and artistic director Sydney Biennale 2004 (Portugal/Australia), **Penelope Curtis** - The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (U.K.), **Nicolaus Schafhausen**, Frankfurter Kunstverein (Germany), **Lars Grambye** - director Malmö Konsthall, Malmö (Sweden). See: IKT Official Presentation at <http://www.iktsite.org>

¹³⁰ What do you expect from an art institution in the 21st century?, *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹³¹ IKT c/o Chez accès local, 15 rue Martel, 75010 Paris, Tel/Fax: 01 43 38 80 42, mail@iktsite.org, <http://www.iktsite.org/>

The way it is structured, IKT functions as an international network for professionals working in the contemporary art field. By interchanging ideas and knowledge on different cultural activities from a variety of countries and cities through the whole world, IKT explores and widens international relations. In this way IKT finds new opportunities for artists and institutions and also investigates the ever changing position of contemporary art centers in relation to production, distribution and conservation. The answer to the aforementioned question would therefore consist in the following: the principal advantage of being part of the international curatorial (managerial) organization such as IKT lies in its possibility to facilitate, and stimulate the debate concerning the conception and realization of contemporary art exhibitions; it practically means that IKT members find partners for co-productions of exhibitions, catalogues and congresses, and make an international community connected by common or similar professional needs, goals, and interests.

IKT is the main point of reference in my encounter with the issue of institutional framework for contemporary curatorial politics and the way I imagine the institutional future of curatorial cooperation, especially as far as the destiny of Eastern European curators is concerned. I insist on identifying the *institutional identity* of a contemporary curator just as much as his or her *professional identity*, exactly through the processes of *mapping* the international (local, regional, global) curatorial networks - academic and non-academic, virtual and non-virtual - in order to analyze and define the possible mechanisms, tools, and options for cross-border curatorial cooperation in the times of corporate identity. This is primarily important from the standpoint of *curatorial teams* that all the more substitute the institution of a master-curator that used to dominate the international scene ever since the late sixties, if not even before (with Harald Szeemann, for example). And I believe that the possibilities for a regulated teamwork are more probable to emerge from a precise and clear long-term trans-institutional cooperation and networking, than from singular, arbitrarily constructed and short-term connections. However, no matter how significant and

successful this connection among institutions can be, it is more than necessary to emphasize that institutional network is based upon the principles of human network, inter-personal communication and cooperation. I presume therefore that before we come to any conclusion regarding the meaning and values of institutional networking (as an abstract form of administrative regulation of professional relations, that eventually turn into a very material finalization of the professional tasks and obligations), it is the question of *human capital* that counts as the primary source of establishing a proper professional community. In this sense, I would rather argue for decoding *inter-personal* relations than only *inter-institutional* relations, in order to get to the point of how contemporary curatorial (or any other) mechanisms really operate. This is exactly what has been pointed out at the 2004 IKT Congress (held in Vitoria-Gasteiz, near San Sebastian, Spain) revolving around the subject *Coherence or Dissonance in Curatorial Practice*, exploring the motives behind putting together a curatorial team (alongside questions such as: how do decisions to engage solo or team curators produce results which tend either towards synthesis, or towards fragmentation, and does the sense of curatorial responsibility (or the lack of it) result in coherence (or dissonance) in thematic and survey exhibitions?). Each year IKT organizes an annual congress for its members with high level speakers on an actual and relevant subject, and each year the congress is hosted by another city: so far conferences have been held in Spain (2004), Holland (2003), Copenhagen (2002), Siena (2001), Edinburgh (2000), Lisbon (1999), Budapest (1998), Barcelona (1997), Lyon (1996), Venice (1995), Malmö/Copenhagen (1994). The 2005 IKT Congress took place in Krakow (Poland), one of eight post-communist countries that joined EU in 2004, which – at least from an Eastern European perspective – gives a possible positive orientation towards the issues of inclusion of Eastern European curators into the common field of corporate curatorial networking. But instead of talking about “networking”, I would rather propose a discussion about “hierarchy”, and this takes me, first and foremost, to the idea of contemporary art system(s). Therefore, I would rather re-articulate

curatorial hierarchies as seen through the phenomenon of a *contemporary system of art*.

The system of (contemporary) art (the term first used and theoretically defined by Achille Bonito Oliva in his work *L'Arte e sistema dell'arte*, 1975) stands for a network of diverse instances taking constitutive part in definition, formation and production of meaning and knowledge in contemporary art. All these instances represent and/or relate to different institutions and institutional parameters, as much as to the institutionalized roles and responsibilities in the professional field of contemporary art. Therefore, it should be made clear that the reference towards Contemporary Art in general is here principally bound by the idea of the System of Art, conceived of the Institution of Art, its broadest context (political, social, economic, historical, theoretical) and the very specific conditions in which these particular contexts are being intertwined and influential in producing the discourse of power.

I dare to refer to the system of art as to a *networked system of hierarchy*, in order to show how the above mentioned elements form interdependent links among each other, thus participating simultaneously in the production of certain discourse(s). Some of the most important, and most evident, structural elements within this system may be described as following: museums, galleries, public/private collections, art magazines, culture industries, foundations, museum directors, gallerists, art dealers, collectors, art administrators, artists, critics, theoreticians, art historians, academics (professors, lecturers, etc.), audience, etc.¹³² All these instances show, even at first sight, that the system they make part of is a highly complex and classified structure. This is only one side of the coin and it is based on the *visible* hierarchy of the participants within the machinery of contemporary art. The less transparent one consists of a whole range of different, more abstract components (such as attitudes, values,

¹³² Miško Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950. godine* (*Glossary of Modern and Postmodern Visual Art and Theory After 1950*), Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti & Prometej, Beograd-Novı Sad, 1999, p. 310.

meanings, forms of behavior, representational models, modes of communication, etc.) which equally constitute the operational dynamics of the art system. What this second category reveals, or better to say *hides* under the veil of the first one, is the ideological power system constructed upon the financial and political hierarchy, the rules of which are strictly determined by the relations of different sources of influence and inter-exchange. It is important to stress the notion of these relations (professional / institutional / system relations), because it is the *relational sphere* that makes a formative part in today's contemporary art world and contemporary art business. As far as the issue of business (i.e., the *capital*) is concerned, it comes to the fore of the present analysis through the obvious interrelationship between its cultural and social variants (*cultural capital* being conceived as a combination of education, knowledge and technology embodied in the organization and functioning of a society, while the social utility of cultural capital embodied in social organization refers to the *social capital*). Besides, an equally significant conditioning comes from the field of the *symbolic capital*, and in such a way that the overall political atmosphere influences the system by provoking the ability of a community to structure and organize common memory, tradition and identity.¹³³

A project entitled *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* (initiated by a Vienna-based artist Oliver Ressler in 2003) questions exactly the existing power relations of the capitalist system and representative democracies, while at the same time attempts at re-thinking other socio-economic approaches (usually labeled as utopian, devalued, and excluded from serious discussion) that used to, or still stand for the counter-models for existing hegemonic economic and political systems. It is significant because it makes evident that economic systems cannot be perceived apart from political systems: the state of economic affairs influence and determine the state of political affairs (in Central, Eastern,

¹³³ Sanjin Dragojević, "Utjecaj kulturnog, društvenog i simboličkog kapitala na razvoj zemalja Srednje i Istočne Europe" [The Influence of the Cultural, Social and Symbolic Capital on the Development of Central and Eastern European Countries], M. Meštrović and A. Štulhofer (eds.), *Kulturni kapital i tranzicija u Hrvatskoj* [Cultural Capital and Transition in Croatia], Zagreb, 1998, pp. 71-86.

and South-Eastern Europe just as much as in the rest of the world); and the distribution of political power is conditioned by the distribution of financial power in contemporary world just as much as in the previous epochs. On the other hand, world governments are trying to control the economic development, thus provoking economic and political divisions in contemporary societies. *Political economy* (as a core issue to be put into focus regarding the idea of art systems), is therefore a political system of organization determined by economic laws and mechanisms that take a constitutive part in forming a political scene, and consequently – artistic and cultural scenes as well. As Fredric Jameson who, once again, writing about a Marxist practice of politics, reminds us that:

“ (...) Political thinking in Marxism, when it is not practical in that way, has exclusively to do with the economic organization of society and how people cooperate to organize production. This means that “socialism” is not exactly a political idea, (... also ...) that we do have our homologues among the bourgeois thinkers, but they are not the fascists (...), but rather the neo-liberals and the market people: for them also, political philosophy is worthless (...), and “politics” now means simply the care and feeding of the economic apparatus (in this case the market rather than the collectively owned and organized means of production).”¹³⁴

A critique of such a bourgeois, neo-liberal, and market approach toward the very institution of art (as embodied in the cultural programming of a contemporary Museum) is elaborated by Brian Holmes in his essay “Reflecting Museums: Art in the Mirror of Political Economy”.¹³⁵ Holmes poses a simple question at the very beginning - “What does a museum produce?”, and elaborates his standpoint through an example as given by the exhibition *Century City* at the new Tate Modern. He argues that an educational role of the museum is established in an aestheticized use-value that the museum offers to its local publics and to the rest of the world, as a trademark urban image.¹³⁶ This role has

¹³⁴ Fredric Jameson, ‘Postmodernism and the Market’, in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso: London 1991, p. 265.

¹³⁵ Brian Holmes. “Reflecting Museums: Art in the Mirror of Political Economy”, in *Hieroglyphs of the Future*. WHW & Arkzin, Zagreb 2003, pp. 73-86.

¹³⁶ Brian Holmes. “Reflecting Museums”, *Ibid.*, p. 76.

nowadays shifted from passive consumption into an interpretation based upon consuming the images (of the cities, or – the transformation of the city into an image, especially as performed in the style magazines such as *Dazed and Confused* and *The Face*, for example) as world-class sites in an economy of tourism, where a spectator is turning into a “reflexive tourist”. Holmes actually situates the relation between this production of the self as interpretive mobility, and the physical space where the museum is located in the advertising appeal of images, serving the aims of the real-estate operations on a particular location where the speculators can easily make good business deals today. This is what he calls “the existential experience of a city that is being valorized – as a trademark quality in the metropolitan competition”.¹³⁷ Such a museum-strategy (in a longer-term educational sense) is eventually targeting the social body (or at least a part of it), aiming at integrating it into the cultural and informational economy of globalized capitalism. As Holmes concludes, reflecting on the meaning of a phrase “the transnational capitalist class” (as the business sociologist Leslie Sklair paraphrases the Marxist version of the term), this is upheld and rendered desirable by the “culture-ideology of consumerism”, manifested notably in the emergence and consolidation of “global brands”: what the Museum (such as the Tate Modern and its exhibition programming) provides is facilitating corporate globalization through economic, political and culture-ideology work” - a fact that visiting a museum and consuming the experience with one’s own particular style, means: to become a global flâneur – and to increase one’s chances of becoming a property owner, or a *rentier*, in a “world-class” city like London.¹³⁸

There is a strange coincidence emerging from this terminology: capital (in terms of finances) and capital (in terms of a metropolis, a chief city). It comes as no surprise that one’s wish to analyze the situation of global capitalism today departs from its dynamics as developed and accelerated through processes of

¹³⁷ Brian Holmes. “Reflecting Museums”, *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹³⁸ Brian Holmes. “Reflecting Museums”, *Ibid.*, p. 77.

circulation of financial power, and the flows of economic expansion and protrusion within the networks of global cities, and their respective institutions.

It is the question of financial migration (circulation, accumulation, flow) that I am trying to conceptualize here theoretically as one of the main issues for analysis of global art and culture today. And more precisely – it is the question of global cities performing the temporary stations (like bus-stops) where capital is constantly arriving, flowing through, performing its role, and heading elsewhere, just as much as communities and minority residents of these global cities, experiencing the impacts of financially conditioned circuits and thus provoked refiguring of urban spaces. New global cities today become more and more the locations of economic and financial dynamics, the strategic centers of corporate capital. Also, the fact that a global city today stands for a place of political intervention where (alongside official, parliamentary decision-making processes) criminality, instability, destruction, anarchy and terrorism also take place in defining the atmosphere of everyday life, brings new polyvalent significance to contemporary urban spaces. How critical curatorial and artistic interventions in the public urban domain today reflect these changes, dynamics, “movements”, this state of constant tension, where the politics of circulation, travel, migration and nomadic life are constitutive for the contemporary image of a World City? Or, how are we supposed to deal with the mobile conditions of the world cities today, while being trapped in what could now easily be situated between the phenomena of Tourism and Terrorism, for example? As Boris Groys put it in his essay “The City in the Age of Touristic Reproduction”:

“We are now prepared to be attracted and persuaded particularly by artistic strategies capable of producing art that achieves the same degree of success regardless of the cultural context and conditions in which it is viewed. What fascinates us nowadays are precisely not locally defined differences and cultural identities but artistic forms that persistently manage to assert their own specific identity and integrity wherever they are presented. Since we have all become tourists capable only of observing other tourists, what especially impresses us about all

things, customs and practices is their capacity for reproduction, dissemination, self-preservation and survival under the most diverse local conditions."¹³⁹

In Gržinić's view of the subject (in her essay "*Does Contemporary Art Need Museums Anymore?*")¹⁴⁰ the questions go as following: does the Western museum of modern art need art anymore, and how does this affect or undermine the set of parameters of the museum in itself? Gržinić departs from the idea about the end of the historical notion of the museum (and not of the museum itself), according to Peter Weibel. This goes in line with all the more evident relation between an increasing proliferation of museums in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, and the increasing amount of money that is subsidized by state institutions as financial support to the construction of new museums, or the rebuilding of existing ones. In order to conceptualize this intriguing relation, she focuses her attention (and the object of her critique) not onto the institution of museum as such, but rather – onto the very institution of art as represented and embodied by the public museum, and further - as an institution of hierarchic relations, of stratified power and dynamics, i.e. the institution of (political and financial) power corresponding to the new situation of a contemporary globalized world:

*"We must recognize the redistributed relations of power and the new inner agents and forces in the very institution of Art. Museums are among those structures that institutionalized the processes of art and culture in a way that allows us to think about art as an institution. It is a public sphere of need, production, and consumption in art that is regulated and institutionalized by museums. Museums are institutions that in the modern world have codified and structured art."*¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Boris Groys, "The City in the Age of Touristic Reproduction", ART-e-FACT : STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE, No 2, Zagreb, http://artefact.mi2.hr/_a02/lang_en/write_groys_en.htm

¹⁴⁰ Marina Gržinić, "Does Contemporary Art Need Museums Anymore?", in CIMAM - The International Committee of ICOM - The International Council of Museums of Modern Art Conference, Budapest, 2000. See also: Marina Gržinić, *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe*, ZRC Publishing, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main 2004, pp. 109-123.

¹⁴¹ Marina Gržinić, "Does Contemporary Art Need Museums Anymore?", *Ibid.*

Gržinić actually approaches the museum of the 1990s through the social and symbolical sphere of art perceived as Institution. In her analysis of the current position of the museum (and its historical power or non-power relations, in terms of financial, economic, and symbolic power of the museums of modern art in the West), she proposes a strictly theoretical (philosophical, psychoanalytical, artistic and historical) reviewing of *fantasies* about this position. In her words, what had not been fulfilled (made explicit or visible) in the previous epochs (the spectral power of the 1970s museum) is being visibly confirmed today (the real power of the 1990s museum). Gržinić evidently relies on Jacques Derrida's notion of the 'spectre' (the elusive pseudo-materiality that subverts the classic ontological oppositions of reality and illusion) as given in his book *Spectres de Marx*; also, the very distinction is described by who else but Slavoj Žižek in an introductory chapter to the book *Mapping Ideology* (here I will refer to an entire paragraph as cited by Gržinić in her book *Fiction Reconstructed*):

"We should recognize the fact that there is no reality without the spectre, that the circle of reality can be closed only by means of an uncanny spectral supplement. Why, then, is there no reality without the spectre? [Because for Lacan] reality is not the 'thing itself,' [rather] it is always-already symbolized... and the problem resides in the fact that symbolization ultimately always fails, that it never succeeds in fully 'covering' the real... [This real] returns in the guise of spectral apparitions. 'Spectre' is not to be confused with 'symbolic fiction'... reality is never directly 'itself'; it presents itself only via its incomplete-failed symbolization, and spectral apparitions emerge in this very gap that forever separates reality from the real, and on account of which reality has the character of a (symbolic) fiction: the spectre gives body to that which escapes (the symbolically structured) reality."¹⁴²

Gržinić reveals in fact that the new situation with the museum of the 2000s brought to light the underlying fantasy of the 1970s: in transparently asserting its connection to capital, money and architecture, the contemporary museum of modern art *acts out* the perception of a museum as Institution of Power, meaning

¹⁴² Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology," in *Mapping Ideology*, Verso: London and New York 1994, pp. 26-28. Cf. Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde*, Edition Selene: Vienna 2000, p. 14-15.

- a real threat to the art community, based upon a really restrictive logic of the machine, and an artificial extension of art - the artificial social construction of the location reserved for Art (without actually being the location for art).

Theoreticians such as Saskia Sassen elaborate the subject concerning the meanings and roles of architecture and urban design in today's large complex cities (or global cities) very much in line with Holmes's critical point: through emphasizing the crucial place of cities for architecture. However, while Holmes is indicating the place of the city as a market-driven and advertising space of desire (for real-estate operations and corporate business development), Sassen is encountering the problem from a standpoint about the growing importance of *design* in relation to the notion of work, or (more precisely) – creative, artistic work. The cities she is referring to are the cities marked by digital networks, acceleration, massive infrastructures for connectivity, and growing estrangement, and all urging for articulation of newer meanings - the growing importance of networks, interconnections, energy flows, and subjective cartographies. This is exactly what architects need to confront today, in order to reply to challenges facing architecture and planning as practice and as theorization today, because they are “able to navigate multiple forms of knowledge and introduce the possibility of an architectural practice located in spaces - such as intersections of multiple transport and communication networks - where the naked eye or the engineer's imagination sees no shape, no possibility of a form, pure infrastructure and utility.”¹⁴³ Additionally, another type of subversive interventions into the space of global capitalism lies in the possibilities of new media artists using computer centered network technologies to represent and/or enact politico-artistic projects: based upon the formation of alternative networks, projects, and spaces, as well as on influence of the free software movement, a new type of cross-border work is enabled, centered in multiple localities yet intensely

¹⁴³ Saskia Sassen, “Economy and Art in Today's Political Economy: Design as Blurring Mediation/ Art as Intervention”, www.ejhae.elia-artschools.org/Issue1/02%20Dublin%20Keynotes/Saskia%20Sassen.doc

connected digitally. This is what she names *non-cosmopolitan forms of globality*, where through the Internet (or, more generally, internetworking) local initiatives and projects can become part of a global network without losing the focus on the specific of the local actor/project/imaginary.

According to her, design acts nowadays as a profit-adding kind of creative work, with the effect of repositioning creative work to circuits that are now central to the economy, including the global economy:

“One way of thinking about globalization today and what it means for these types of issues, is as a mix of dynamics - economic, political, cultural, of the imaginary - that destabilizes existing formalized arrangements and configurations. In some ways the world of design is continuously engaged with destabilizing existing meanings, shapes, iconographies. We often call this fashion or new styles. What concerns me here is a set of deeper, structural changes that can be quite ambiguous or diffuse, and difficult to grasp.”¹⁴⁴

In an attempt to identify domains that can escape this commercialized design practice and bring in art and artists into spaces now increasingly taken over by design, she proposes a typology based upon three conditions in today's political economy within which it might be helpful to situate this ascendance of design as the blurring between artistic work/practice and profit-making work or as a mediation that blurs that distinction: (a) the ascendance of process and flow and networks rather than final product per se, where designers are seen as intermediaries and actors of intervention; (b) the unsettling of existing arrangements and boundaries by globalization with great velocity, where designers are seen as narrators of this unsettling; (c) the importance of giving form/shape to designers (most notably – a political form, in the sense of expanding the category of design to the larger social world than their work in large corporate firms) due to a sharp increasing of new products, systems, configurations that they are pushed to innovate; political, as Sassen points out,

¹⁴⁴ Saskia Sassen, “Economy and Art in Today's Political Economy”, Ibid.

here stands for a possibility of "making present," of giving speech, opposite to "design" which is meant to give added utility (added profit). These suggestions provide a possibility for a radical turn toward what she names as *counter-geographies of globalization*:

*"These interventions are deeply imbricated with some of the major dynamics constitutive of globalization yet are not part of the formal apparatus or of the objectives of this apparatus (such as the formation of global markets and global firms). These counter-geographies thrive on the intensifying of trans-national and trans-local networks, the development of communication technologies which easily escape conventional surveillance practices, and so on. Further, the strengthening and, in some of these cases, the formation of new global circuits are embedded or made possible by the existence of a global economic system that pushes for the development of various institutional supports for cross-border flows. These counter-geographies are dynamic and changing in their locational features."*¹⁴⁵

Why is Sassen's statement important with regard to curators and curatorial practices in the post-socialist East of Europe? Because it gives a possible orientation, a direction to be experienced and followed once we come to the point of changing conditions taking place in the very space of the European East that is being increasingly relinquished to the logic of a global economic system. Curatorial teams, groups or individuals concerned with a variety of the most pressing questions should not omit a single fact that being involved in digitized environments can use the advantages of technology and gain terrain even as global media conglomerates, for all kinds of alternative networks, projects, and spaces. It is the possibility of using technology as a necessary and approachable tool to subvert corporate globalization, or (in Sassen's words): "the possibility of constructing forms of globality that are neither part of global corporate media or consumer firms, nor part of elite universalisms or "high culture", but the possibility of giving *presence* to multiple local actor/projects/imaginaries in ways that are constitutive of forms of globality or,

¹⁴⁵ Saskia Sassen, "Economy and Art in Today's Political Economy", Ibid.

obversely, global forms.”¹⁴⁶ This possibility can force contemporary curators to avoid traditional norms of professional activities by developing networks for circulating not only information but also political work and strategies.

With respect to aforementioned propositions, I am willing to introduce *critical curating* as a necessary operative tool in contemporary discussion about the professional curatorial field of action.

(a) The term ‘*critical*’ here corresponds to the self-aware processes of working with established and emerging artists, art groups, and art institutions, through actions that intend to investigate new ways of recognizing, selecting, evaluating, criticizing, presenting, interpreting, and documenting a range of contemporary artistic and, especially, cultural practices, always within the context of historical and current political, social, economic, and critical theoretical discourses.

(b) The term ‘*curating*’ (as I see it, from my ‘emerging’, but always a specific Eastern European perspective), referring to the profession of curators in a contemporary sense (i.e. to questions of curatorial practices and contemporary display of art) implies (or should primarily imply) the following: (1) acquisition and development of knowledge from the area of contemporary visual culture and cultural activities, particularly current models of curatorial practices and activities of curators as cultural promoters and mediators of cultural values; (2) research work - becoming familiar with the strategies of the functioning of the art market and artistic establishment as well as their technical determination, with an aim of the development of the collective awareness about the necessities, ranges and results of the new model for cultural policy in Eastern Europe; (3) professional improvement with an aim of future active participation in local, regional, and global initiatives in culture; (4) affirmation of young, unaffiliated artists in taking

¹⁴⁶ Saskia Sassen, “Economy and Art in Today’s Political Economy”, *Ibid.*

over dynamic role in the formation of new cultural identity of Europe, and their integration in wider context; (5) elimination of the negative effects of commercialization of culture, and institutionalization of democratic relations in cultural business; (6) readiness for responsible and competent participation in the creation of local, regional, and global projects and models of cultural policy, especially in the area of art galleries and museums.

Critical curating is thus an institutionalized theoretical and practical, activist and performative, communicative and transformative discipline that puts in focus the most pressing issues of contemporary global society. It starts from an approach as applied to art criticism in general (related to analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and study of works of art), but develops with an aim to address the growing need for curators and critics who have theoretical knowledge and practical experience in analyzing institutions and the mechanisms of their work, preparing displays and communicating about contemporary art. This is an emerging professional field in Eastern Europe that looks directly at the roles and responsibilities of curators and critics as mediators between objects, institutions, experiences, individuals and groups. While this involves investigating and negotiating a number of disciplinary fields, from ethnography to aesthetics, organizational behavior to cultural studies, the main focus is on contemporary conditions of display and understanding. *Critical curators* are individuals who are able to engage productively with critical discussions of art and visual culture, capable of developing and working with new modes of exhibition, able to work creatively in both traditional and innovative situations, and to be familiar with issues and institutions affecting contemporary art.

The status of curatorial practices in the post-socialist conditions applies to the way the curatorial research is challenging the basic conditions of art reception within a context broader than aesthetics and visual studies, while offering and indicating new forms of critical discourses and interpretation. What is particularly important are new relations between what is traditionally conceived

as “art” and what contemporaneity demands from protagonists in the domain of art today. These new relations are being produced among the existing ones, helping to identify both artists and curators of today as a kind of ‘*semionaut*’ (as a Paris-based curator and theorist Nicolas Bourriaud maintains): someone who invents trajectories among signs. This Western opinion refers to the relational sphere of contemporaneity, through which possible solutions for change could be established and put in motion, and which transcends the phenomenon of different disciplines in order to establish another one:

“Le nouveau squatter (the new squatter), a term applied to today’s artist as an attempt to define his/her highly re-considered position squeezed between the demands of contemporary society and cultural restructuring, refers to this effort of someone inevitably involved in the geopolitical fevers of the new world to keep the status of an equivalent participant sustainable. The contemporary artist inhabits all the other forms of art. The problem is not to produce new forms, but to invent various habitats. This involves inhabiting forms of art that are already historicized by reactivating them, as well as inhabiting other cultural domains. This is exactly what is happening in the art of the 2000s: the artist is permanently squatting every other field. This is no longer creating, but rather surfing on existing structures. (...) At the same time, these squats are also shelters: art today has become a kind of general refuge for all sorts of projects which are not immediately efficient or productive for industry or the consumer society.”¹⁴⁷

In addition to this pattern of proposed ‘interdisciplinarity’ as a justifiable contemporary method of producing values and systems of values related to art, in the global context of economic over-empowerment art is not to be taken as a serious (supposedly “creative”) subject. Instead, artists and curators should rather work on finding out and improving the possibility to actually react socially and politically, and to find places within the system, not in terms of being productive, but to develop ways of resistance: in terms of changing, in a utopian way, changing the cultural, social and political context (according to Marina Gržinić). What Gržinić insists on therefore (and her statement is almost to be

¹⁴⁷ Nicolas Bourriaud, "Qu'est-ce que l'art (aujourd'hui)?", in: BeauxArts magazine, numero special, edition 2002, p.14.

taken for a credo, especially in reference to what art *should* be today in the global context of economic over-empowerment) is “to change and to talk about cultural practices, discover cultural practices as new forms of art (...), not to think about art, but about *practices* that can change, motivate, put upside down this unbelievable lightness of the system” because “if any art matters, it is maybe such practices not perceived as art, it is cultural practices, working, questions of networking, the global movement, of opening to what is going on in the field of labor and in which way to break this self image of the god of capitalism”.¹⁴⁸ This radical shift in comprehending art and the cultural sphere matters inasmuch we are able to make a radical u-turn against what is imposed on all of us as social and political beings in these times of capitalist upheaval. Otherwise, no social transformation is to be expected without taking this stance against what counts as a universal pattern of economic relationships in the contemporary world.

While these two – Western and Eastern - perspectives might resonant as having a similar attitude toward the same problem, we must not easily believe that a common goal departs from a common background. This is all the more so if we are to discuss the very complex issues within the global context of change and transformation. Furthermore it is important that, after opening the common ('universal') ground of research, we focus on particularities that still impose idiosyncratic methodologies and concepts depending on each theoretical position respectively. If my common ground is to be found in global capitalism and its respective economic, social, political and cultural implications, I am to locate my position with regard to specific Eastern European (or more precisely - Yugoslav) perspective “in order to situate or reformulate the post-socialist (transitional) condition of the East of Europe, within the matrix of relations and structures of power known precisely as the New Europe”.¹⁴⁹ Because what really effects

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Marina Grzanic by Kerstin Kellemann for Augustin, homeless people magazine, February 2005

¹⁴⁹ Marina Grzanic, "The Other Space", in M. Grzanic, "Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East of) Europe", Ljubljana - Frankfurt am Main: Založba ZRC - REVOLVER Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2004, pp. 136-152.

political and cultural changes in the former Central and Eastern European countries is the very process of enlargement of the European Union, which (as Gržinić reminds us), together with imposing criteria onto the so-called “reform states”, increases the possibility of developing new forms of inequality and accordingly - the new productive anti-global and anti-hegemonic tendencies in art and culture.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, what we are dealing with here is a strong new structural world order based on the whole system of binary oppositions. In order to perceive this global situation theoretically, we are led to analyse the issue with a profound methodological concern aiming at unmasking the proposed universality through examining the overall political, social, economic and cultural condition appertaining to both sides of these (East and West) binary spheres.

¹⁵⁰ Marina Grznic, "The Other Space", *Ibid.*, p. 136

3. THEORIES OF CURATORIAL PRACTICES IN THE POSTSOCIALISM

The last part of the research is focused on a specific issue of curatorial practices in post-socialist conditions, as well as on theoretical and political concepts, paradigms, and ideologies standing at the forefront of contemporary curatorial discourses in the East of Europe. In order to get closer to an “obliterate” subject such as this one, and to try and initiate a broader public discussion about it, I intend to focus my attention in this chapter on some paradigmatic examples of Eastern European post-socialist curatorial protagonists and projects, that describe the nature of the professional expertise in the field of curating, and give a possible orientation toward its future. My attention is here specifically focused on the role and professional (theoretical and political) status of contemporary art curators originating from, working within, and/or operating with the artistic and cultural representations of the former Eastern European, or the present Central, Eastern and South-East European (theoretical, political, social, economic, and cultural) space. Consequently, the general problems to be explored are primarily focused around (1) the issues of representation (of “Eastern Europe” and contemporary Eastern European art), in terms of organizing exhibitions in the context of late- and post-socialism, and secondly, around (2) the status of curatorial practices in post-socialist conditions as different from previously anonymous/ invisible practices of the professionals in this field. The focus is on the role of a contemporary art curator identified as a new political subject who is applying curatorial methodologies and developing specific communicative actions (theoretical and visual discourses), revolving around the political, social, and economic contexts of the so-called “Post-socialist Eastern European Situation”.

My personal interest for this problematic has been provoked by the rising interest in curating exhibitions of contemporary art dealing with the Balkan and the South-East European region, and/or the Central European region, and/or the East European region in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s. This situation has emerged both from the socio-political features of the area and the cultural implications of EU enlargement in the post-Cold War period. Projects such as *After the Wall* (Stockholm, 1999), *Aspects – Positions* (Vienna - Budapest, 2000), *In Search of Balkania* (Graz, 2002), *Blood and Honey: The Future is in the Balkans* (Klosterneuburg, Vienna, 2003) or *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (Kassel, 2003) - only to name the most symptomatic examples - have put in focus in the global art world the relation between the critical art practices in the region and the cultural stereotypes related to it.

As the thesis of research emphasizes a relation between the contemporary global art world and the global capitalism through a specific Eastern European post-socialist perspective, the chapter starts from questioning the fundamental lack concerning (1) a systematic critical and theoretical discourse around the issue of post-socialist art and culture in Eastern Europe, and (2) a comprehensive system of reference for post-socialist art and culture in Eastern Europe.

The first issue departs from the fact that no comprehensive critical and theoretical work of this kind, as well as a research on post-socialist curatorial practices in general, has been done so far, at least when the Eastern European region is concerned. Besides, curatorial studies still do not figure as an existing field of specialist research in academic curricula at Eastern European universities (apart from a single non-academic program in Eastern Europe oriented towards practical and theoretical education in the field of contemporary art curatorship - a curatorial course and training program initiated and organized by SCCA, Center for Contemporary Arts - WORLD OF ART: School for Contemporary Art - in

Ljubljana, Slovenia). This makes my task as difficult and complex as responsible and demanding.

The latter issue departs from the fact that a system of art in Eastern Europe (or its simulated version) has been, throughout the twentieth century, dependent on a largely fragmented system implying separate and isolated national sub-systems, as well as on a dominant (Western) paradigm of art-historical discourse. Accordingly, both presumptions take into account this *fragmented* system of the post-socialist Eastern European art, under which I imply art that used to be accepted only within the national borders of each particular former socialist country, just as much as the lack of any other referential system that could possibly provide a *unified* scheme for this art (as opposed to the official - Western - art history).

Toward a Curatorial Discourse of Eastern European Post-Socialism

“In Eastern Europe (also known as the former communist countries, East & Central Europe, or New Europe) there are as a rule no transparent structures in which those events, artifacts and artists that are significant to the history of art have been organized into a referential system accepted and respected outside the borders of a particular country. Instead, we encounter systems that are closed within national borders, most often based on argumentation adapted to local needs, and sometimes even doubled so that besides the official art histories there are a whole series of stories and legends about art and artists who are opposed to this official art world. But written records about the latter are few and fragmented. Comparisons with contemporary Western art and artists are extremely rare.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ IRWIN, East Art Map. In: BLUT & HONIG / ZUKUNFT IST AM BALKAN (Blood & Honey / Future's in the Balkans), ex. cat., Sammlung Essl Privatstiftung: Klosterneuburg 2003, 273.

What has been provoking debates in broad international circles around the issue of curating (and of a curator as the participatory element in the structure of the system of art), is mostly related to the ways the curator's role has been redefined throughout the second half of the twentieth century. This issue arose first as a reflection on the changes promulgated by curators since the late sixties, and later on it was more focused on the moment of an evident breakpoint in the period since the late eighties, when the discourses of post-modernism began to impact on curatorial practice together with the changing relationships between art critic and curator. This transformation has been detected in the late 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, by the emergence of the new status of an art critic, whose responsibility was primarily to try and overcome the crisis of the art-market (being functionally disabled after the conceptualists' rejection of an objects-production principle). Thus, it became a model for institutionalized practices the main purpose of which was in giving a curator the representative function of his/her own institution. Being defined within the institutional framework, an art critic was supposed to modify his traditional role of supporting and communicating with the art world, into an active role of a constructor/creator of the art world itself. His approach was therefore changed from the status of a mere object/translator, into an active role of a subject, the creator and participant in the currents of emerging art scenes and phenomena. This switch provoked a number of questions over the constitutive practices of the art world, getting closer together the constructive forces in the production of meaning related to art in general. The market-driven forces in a mass-cultural reality took over the authority of art itself, being a symptom in which different practices and elements are intertwined and interconnected in order to participate in the production of collective identity for the audience. What makes this audience a point in question is the fact that specific worlds are being given a chance to be constructed for a specific audience. This power of mass-media production of identification has been proved in contemporary visual arts exactly by being the most fashionable media phenomenon for representation of art in general. Such a fashionable

spectacularity of contemporary exhibitions includes all systems of mass-cultural production, whose main responsibility nowadays is on behalf of cultural entrepreneurs, be they either curators or, in certain cases, art managers. Warhol's efforts in this sense seem to stand for an anticipatory model of designing one's own "factory" whose productive material is found in everyday public spectacles, the productive space – in a studio of the designer of these spectacles, and finally the products which are going back to the selected audience in a boomerang way – through the production of mass-spectacles in which cultural elite takes the dominant role. In the 1990s, the concept of a *curator-mediator* was proposed by Viktor Misiano, alongside with an idea of process or dialogue, as being based not only upon the involvement of artists but also of non-artists and intellectuals in the broadest terms, showing the necessity to overcome the idea of homogeneity since no unifying concept seems to be possible today. The concept of a curator-mediator is here justifiable because of the importance given to someone who is "in the middle just to help others to speak with each other, (...) the idea similar to the function of a mediator at a conference, round table or colloquium who is responsible for the topic of the colloquium or for the topic of the exhibition, for bringing together appropriate people, for making appropriate combinations of people. Because if you combine Mr. X with Ms. Y you get one result, but if you add Ms. S you will get a completely different result."¹⁵²

In this chapter I would like to re-think the position of contemporary curators with regard to the multiplicities of their professional identities. In an attempt to give a personal, imaginary map of the historical development of a contemporary art curator and their concepts of display, I would concentrate on a typology that offers four paradigmatic examples, models, and/or modules, that examine the role of the curator as the selector, author of the exhibition,

¹⁵² V. Misiano, "An Interview about the Role of the Curators and the Concept of the Interpol Exhibition", INTERPOL: the art exhibition which divided East and West, E. Cufer, V. Misiano (eds.), Ljubljana and Moscow, 2000, pp. 59-75.

interpreter and co-creator of an exhibition's context. According to this typology, a possible line of curatorial development could revolve around four distinct and yet intertwining paradigms, all of which are based upon the notion of collecting. The first one is being identified within the realm of an outmoded sense of an art custodian (curator as museologist); the second – within art criticism (curator as critic); the third – within “show-business” and entertainment (curator-superstar); and finally – the last one, within cultural business (curator as manager). Non of these are meant to exclude another one: it is just a matter of different contexts, times, and spaces, that highlights one specific characteristics more than another.

These analogies are supposed to offer and facilitate a possible interpretative tool. The proposed typology is based upon examining conventions of classification and display, as well as upon the link between emergence of art institutions, historical transformations of political, social, and economic contexts, and development of the role of a contemporary art curator according to these transformations, as designers/managers of particular *artistic and cultural* concepts and ideologies while reflecting particular *political* concepts and ideologies, and at the same time - influencing our common perception of artistic, cultural, and political realities appertaining to a given space and time.

In order to facilitate my (presumably “European”) approach toward these issues, I attempt not only to refer to and depend on the respective domain of Eastern European art and culture with regard to contemporary European cultural and political space (most popularly recognized as the New United Europe), but instead - to articulate this relation through an existing paradigmatic relationship between another large micro-cultural entity (Latin America) towards its own hegemonic field of reference (North America). The application of such a parallel concept will hopefully provide a complementary basis upon which the processes of re-configuration, re-thinking and re-positioning of contemporary curatorial practices from the East of Europe would be encountered with a relevant historical and critical background.

In her essay “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation”¹⁵³ Mari Carmen Ramírez analyzes how the dynamics of identity politics, at both the transnational (global) and the local (multicultural) levels, have impacted on curatorial practice.¹⁵⁴ For her, the case of Latin American art in the United States presents an ideal starting point from which to chart this significant transformation of curatorial agency. She points out that “since the mid-eighties, we have seen a steady rise in the number of exhibitions setting forth particular notions of identity for Latin American art, as well as a proliferation of exhibition catalogues and critical articles both validating and contesting the various discourses in which these identities have been inscribed.” Alongside the issue of the representation of Latin American art (meaning the arts of Mexico, South and Central America, and the Caribbean) as the core issue in the United States at the epoch, what is even more significant (and relevant for the issue of the representation of Eastern European art in the era of EU-integration processes after 1989) is the fact that the debates encompassing these exhibitions marked the transformation of the curator of contemporary art from behind-the-scenes aesthetic arbiter to central player in the broader stage of global cultural politics.¹⁵⁵

Curatorial discourses about (and/ or coming from) the former Eastern European (Central, Eastern and South-East European) cultural contexts could be understood as a particular phenomenon of its own kind, that emerged in the 1990s after the global political changes. At the same time, these new discourses cannot be conceived exclusively as autonomous and self-sufficient phenomena because of a few reasons: a) The fact that Eastern European art only represents the other side of the common cultural dominion of the Western cultural system,

¹⁵³ Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation”, in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, R. Greenberg, B. W. Ferguson, and S. Nairne, (eds.), Routledge, London 1996, pp. 21-38. This essay is a revised version of a talk given at a working seminar at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 15-17 April 1994.

¹⁵⁴ At the times when this essay was published (1996), **Ramírez** was curator of Latin American Art at the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, and adjunct lecturer at the Department of Art at the University of Texas, Austin (USA); she was also the editor of *The School of the South: El Taller Torres Garcia and its Legacy* (Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery and the University of Texas Press, Austin, 1992). See: *Thinking About Exhibitions*, *ibid.*, p. XVIII

¹⁵⁵ Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Brokering Identities (...)”, *Ibid.*, p.21.

but developed in different historical conditions from those prevailing in the states of the Western Capitalism; b) The emergence of contemporary Eastern European art (as represented at the exhibitions which exploded throughout the European cultural space in the 1990s and early 2000s) has been initiated, intentionally promoted and conceptually supervised by the prominent Western gallery and museum system; c) Due to the Eastern Europe's lack of the art market and an overall economical instability, the financial background for the realization of these exhibitions has been provided by the Western foundations and financial bodies interested in promoting contemporary Eastern European art, through exhibitions and art-related projects.

The aforementioned statements clearly posit Eastern European art in relation to an external point of view. If we accept the fact that what is at stake in contemporary art world is far from earlier identification and clear distinguishing of national schools of art and international movements (according to precisely definable and immediately recognizable formal characteristics), and realize that contemporary art is to the utmost degree contextual, than it means that today's artists and curators from all over the world employ the same forms and devices by using them in different cultural and political contexts. Therefore, we could pose an inevitable question: Can the Eastern European art be said to possess a distinctive character? As Boris Groys put it in his speech "The Complicity of Oblivion" (on the occasion of the symposium *East of Art - Transformations in Eastern Europe*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003), Eastern European art is first and foremost an art that is subjugated to the external point of view, and being subjected to this external judgment on it, this art becomes Eastern European; becomes informative about what Eastern Europe is.¹⁵⁶ One might add that this must include the Western art world's interest in the so-called emerging markets, the desire of the countries in question to join Europe, and European financial involvement in the culture of countries that are not yet members of the EU - otherwise a reduced visibility would come as a final result.

¹⁵⁶ Boris Groys, "The Complicity of Oblivion", ARTMargins, 2003, www.artmargins.com/content/moma/groys.html

I believe that my approach toward the issue of curating (art exhibitions as well as art discourses) in the context of globalization today, in 2005, must revolve around the cultural implications of European (EU) enlargement. Why is it so? One of the possible interpretations draws upon the most actual political, social, and economic situation on the European continent, and accentuates the proposed cooperative and communicative side of international cultural action. Let me start by relying on the official discourse as proposed by *Manifesto for Cultural Cooperation with South East Europe* (Amsterdam, 2003):

“Culture, having a major role to play in building Europe, has a crucial role in creating a new space for dialogue and interaction both within different European regions and between a particular region and the EU. It is considered to be the powerful driving force in countering prejudice and reconciling differences, and thus enabling citizens to cope with complex environments. In order to establish the firm platform for mutual cultural cooperation between the countries of non-EU regions and the rest of Europe, it is inevitable to state the importance of culture being more prominent on Europe's political agenda. The 2004 enlargement of the European Union presents, in that sense, new challenges and opportunities to European countries not being part of the Union. Taking into account that these countries, the neighbouring territory of the European Union, already belong to the common European cultural space, it is now important to acknowledge their cultural contexts, vitality and diversity, and their common ground for official cultural cooperation with Europe, in terms of their appropriation of all necessary legitimate standards concerning relevant cultural issues.”¹⁵⁷

How to respond to such a challenge? In the field of contemporary art, a new curatorial discourse could contribute to the harmonization of Europe's diverse art systems on the basis of professional standards which should be laid down within each and every particular art institution taking part in it. Its overall aim would be to encourage the establishment and development of progressive collaborative art networks and procedures at local, national, regional, inter- and

¹⁵⁷ For more information refer to: “Manifesto for Cultural Cooperation with South East Europe”, adopted by the participants in the first “Enlargement of Minds” seminar “Crossing Perspectives”, Amsterdam, 16-18 June 2003.

trans-regional level, and to promote respect for the principles of an internationally regulated art system.

On the other hand, being aware of the imperative for particular artistic space to become integrated into regional and broader European contexts, particular emphasis is to be placed on the term “*European*” because there is an increasingly strong tendency in many parts of Europe to strive for a unified European artistic space within the overall present and future global society. As proposed by Belgrade-based art historian and art critic Ješa Denegri in his recent overview of the contemporary Serbian art scene in an international context “*no closed borders, especially not narrow local and national ones, can continue to exist, and the borders that have until recently been, or still continue to be referred to as intra-Balkan and Eastern European, will also disappear. In place of these limiting categories we should advocate and implement the idea of an entirely unified European cultural and artistic space in which every region, including ours, will have an adequate and appropriate place.*”¹⁵⁸ The questions raised by these distinctions between a proposed universality and an immanent particularity, according to the classification as proposed by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek are therefore strategic:

*"The ideological dream of a united Europe aims at achieving the (impossible) balance between the two components: full integration into the global market; retaining the specific national and ethnic identities. What we are getting in post-communist Eastern Europe is a kind of negative, dystopian realization of this dream - in short, the worst of both worlds, an unconstrained market combined with ideological fundamentalism"*¹⁵⁹

The current reality of contemporary art curatorship emerges from the selective principles imposed by power systems and their respective institutions.

¹⁵⁸ Jesa Denegri. "Savremena srpska umetnicka scena u medjunarodnom kontekstu", Kontinentalni dorucak - Beograd, 45. Oktobarski salon (ex. cat.), Beograd 2004, pp. 56-66

¹⁵⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Spectre is Still Roaming Around - An Introduction to the Communist Manifesto*, Bastard Books, Publisher Arkzin d.o.o.; Zagreb, 1998, p. 73

One may however pose the following question: what makes the contemporary global art world different from what the art world used to be before? And what keeps this world united and still unified beside all the differences that separate one art scene from another? The ultimate question to be raised, in respect to the way that global culture imperialism functions, is: *what has the contemporary political re-designing of the European map contributed to a new interpellation of particular marginalized cultures into the subjects of defined cultural micro-systems?*

Curatorial Theories in Eastern European Post-socialism

Generally speaking, the post-socialist societies in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe have found themselves in the trap of transition after the 1989 collapse of Eastern European and Soviet socialism. Whilst the Cold War opposition between capitalism and communism had previously set the terms for post-1945 Europe, the new, post-1989 Europe (along with the decline of the Soviet Union) heralded the emergence of new historical forces. According to Marina Gržinić, the year 1989 is a relational category, the one that determines a shifting nature of relations between two differently positioned political, economic, and cultural entities, which (due to this shift) are submitted to different types of interpellations. Therefore to name (i.e. to detect, identify, and recognize) the subject of critique and analysis is as important as the method one needs to apply in order to offer a possible theoretical intervention into the field of one's research. The meaning of such a radically counter-positioned process of naming (a common subject) could be simplified by a statement (and still not without the need to re-think it) that while there has always been only one Western Europe, in the case of Eastern Europe we are dealing with at least two denominators: a (former) Communist Eastern Europe and a (contemporary) Post-Socialist Eastern Europe. This is how Gržinić actually locates the point of departure in her

analysis of Eastern European post-socialism: insisting on an inherent critical difference between Eastern and Western Europe, the idea of which is to offer a possibly useful tool to develop specific concepts of re-politicization/reading/positioning (the former Eastern European territory) through a radical theoretization of a particular (Eastern European) position.

One of the main methods for approaching the issue of curatorial practices in the post-socialist Eastern Europe must be explained from this theoretical standpoint. It designates the existence of the fundamental, extant difference between the 'two Europes' in the very period of the European integrative processes after 1989, and pinpoints the way to encounter the core of the problem related to the issues of post-socialist art and culture. The theoretical approach as proposed by Gržinić departs from the urge for theory, the fact that *'the East has not provided the West with the relevant theoretical and interpretative instruments to recognize the uniqueness, idiosyncrasies, diversity and originality of artistic projects in Eastern Europe'*, because of which *'there is very little documentation of this history'*. The attitude expressed here had thus been provoked by a strong belief that Eastern European art practices lacked the critical theoretical background which would offer and provide critical interpretation and self-reflection on those projects and phenomena. This urge for theory was explicitly declared as early as in the 1980s by one of the most prominent contemporary art phenomena in Eastern Europe, the Slovenian movement Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK):

*"NSK needs theoreticians, thinkers, to verbalize our activities, since we would like the creative act to be accompanied by a certain argumentative discipline, whose opinions and theses also enter the game of creation. Just like a painting, we consider a philosophical work an object, which in the centre of its conceptual constellation raises the question of the conditions and possibilities of awareness in general."*¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Anne Tronche, 'Interview with IRWIN (Paris 1988)', in Inke Arns (ed.), *Irwin: Retroprincip 1983-2003*, Berlin, Hagen, Belgrade, 2003-2004, 250-251.

I would like to re-think the project EAST ART MAP (Irwin, Ljubljana, 2001) - initiated by the Slovenian artists' group Irwin (as part of the NSK collective), and realized in cooperation with a team of curatorial experts from a particular (Eastern European) political and cultural territory - in two different, yet complementary directions: (1) Firstly, I want to avoid approaching it exclusively as an "art" project, but rather as a cooperative, even "corporate" project (both in terms of work conditions that presuppose team management, and in terms of defining the outlines of a corporate identity of the subject of research, i.e. of the twentieth century Eastern European art avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes); here, under the term "curatorial" I imply professionals relevant for the production of knowledge in the fields of art history, theory of art, art criticism, and curatorial practices. (2) Secondly, I want to approach it from the background of the set of "mapping" projects and their relation both to art practices and political aims.

EAST ART MAP is an intentionally constructed Eastern European development of modern art, as opposed to the canonical construction originating from the famous Alfred H. Barr's model. I would like, for that reason, to take into account the phenomenon of "Alfred H. Barr, Jr." - the founding director of one the world's greatest museum institutions (the Museum of Modern Art in New York) in order to approach the hypothetic reasons for IRWIN's project.

*"Alfred H. Barr, Jr., first Director of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, has achieved worldwide recognition as a brilliant and authoritative writer on modern art. As scholar and critic, Mr. Barr has authored such classic studies on twentieth-century art and artists as Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, and Matisse: His Art and His Public. Mr. Barr is equally well known for his presentation of pioneering exhibitions during his directorship, and he has played a principal role in making the twentieth-century collections of the Museum the most significant in the world."*¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ *Cubism and Abstract Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936 (1974)

This is how the role of a Museum director is described on the back-cover of the reprinted exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art* published by The Museum of Modern Art New York, 1936 (1974). The terms that I would identify as the most intriguing (with respect to the role and function of any curator performing the role of a Museum director) from this sample are as following: *worldwide recognition, authoritative, scholar, Picasso, Matisse, directorship, the most significant in the world*. While “*worldwide recognition*” and “*the most significant in the world*” clearly stand for global (universal) aspirations of the subject (something that could be recognized today not necessarily in terms of directing the most important art museum in the world, if there is any such contemporary case, but simply in curatorial aspirations toward curating a Biennial of high reputation, such as those in Venice, Kassel, Istanbul, or Sao Paulo), the hidden meaning of the rest could also be deduced in a similar perspective: “*authoritative*”, and “*directorship*” (the latter easily confused, even in reading, with *dictatorship*) as legal instruments directed to the fulfillment of the universal reign (most probably determined by the universally recognized financial rule behind the managerial structure of an institution); “*Picasso*” and “*Matisse*”, as two artistic (or rather cultural) elements providing an intellectual support to such instruments and aspirations (later to be doubtlessly identified as canonic figures, the masters of any academic discourse around European modernism, and the authors whose works used to represent, or still does, a point of reference for capital-driven speculations and manipulations at art-auctions and art-dealers), and quite a disputable notion of “*scholar*” (considering the fact that Barr actually did not really figured as a classical, standard academic figure in the art world, but rather someone whose construction of histories of modern art and artists were largely drawn from personal experience and questionnaires mailed to the artists, since he had not been a scholar who would otherwise pursue a standard methodology of scientific investigation).

My intention is to posit Barr’s role within a hegemonic discourse. The traditional view of “non-Western art” has always been conditioned by the

canonical art historical concepts coming from the West, and by the fact that art history developed first as a study of Western art. Here the notion of the West refers primarily to the “symptom of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.” as a person whose concept of the history of modern art, as postulated in the 1930s, was made in order to construct the history of modern art through a famous diagram of the development of Abstract Art (i.e. by tracing the origins and development of modern art and showing how one artist and/or one art form influences another). This notion also refers to the dominant, over-powerful and capitalism-driven states in the times of the emerging modernism and modernization, giving a unique perspective and a universally accepted formula for the progressive tendencies in the state of modern art ever since Winkelman and the beginning of contemporary history of art as a scientific discipline.

Even before the eighteenth century, with the rise of theoretical discourses within the field of the Renaissance scientific thought, strong attempts have been made in order to canonize a single (Italianate) concept of the image, in Albertian (Leone Battista Alberti) sense, as a standardized version of a universally introduced meaning of the Image. This production of meaning, and a consequently deductive set of values attributed to art works in general, is supposed to be part of the internationally recognized process of cultural appropriation, in which all that is different from the standardized vision of reality, is eventually supposed to be subjected to the regulatory processes of forced modification, unification, and finally – identification with the dominant art system. The new mapping of vision is thus becoming a form of a protective shield which is used by governing instances against the plague of cultural inconsistency. Paradoxically enough, on the other hand, this inconsistency with all its heterogeneity contributes, through its characteristic multiplied reflection in the mirror of the global state of mind, to the “absolute” consistency of international multicultural society. The conflict between the systems of particularity and the one of (imposed) universality should, therefore, be enhanced by “the struggles

within each particular cultural identity in the name of real universal emancipation.”¹⁶²

Similar proposition has been made in the 1980s by Svetlana Alpers in the field of art theory, by suggesting a different approach towards the classification of broadly considered Northern art in comparison to the recognized model of its traditionally conceived Southern counter-part.¹⁶³ Alpers’s attempt in that sense has come as a challenge to the reigning doctrine of art historical thinking and was insistent upon reformulating the theoretical principles by which is characterized the art of the North. Her claim for the essentially visual culture of the North as distinct from the textual culture of the Italian Renaissance (and therefore demanding of “readings” different from the traditional iconological method) was the turning point in the application of an interdisciplinary analysis, which still relies on the struggle between the distinctively national (particular) concepts of representation, being provoked by the technological/optical powers of the epoch.

This “new mapping” of art historical fields (territories) has still been defined by this essential antagonism of different national schools, in its commonly rooted ground of territorial/spatial differentiation conditioned by different contexts. What is at stake now is a conceptually new differentiation of strongly opposed particularities against the powers of a universally reigning canon of the historical thinking, established not exclusively on this territorial limitation, but rather on the principles imposed by the global market system and the financial power. Therefore, this national concept of borderlines has been exchanged for a broader concept of trans-national collaboration. The new mapping of Europe has thus brought to light the very actual phenomenological break between the East and

¹⁶² Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Globalisation, and the New World Order”. In: *The Ticklish Subject, The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London, Verso.

¹⁶³ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

the West (previously considered as Eastern and Western Europe), horizontally overcoming the previous vertical (North versus South) line of difference.

Specific re-designing of contemporary European landscape thus makes a logical reference to Alpers's meta-historical mapping impulse, a method which brings her results to bear on specific types of Dutch landscape views: by turning to contemporary meaning of the notions such as sight and seeing, and specifically to the model of the picture offered by Kepler's analysis of the eye, she actually deals with the problem of what a picture is (in Holland), just as much as we are dealing with questions: what a picture is in Eastern Europe, and furthermore, what is "the Picture of Eastern Europe" in the specter of a contemporary changeable reality?

Barr figures in contemporary thought around the twentieth-century art history as a canonic curatorial figure, playing a central role in the formation of a dominant, hegemonic view about the phenomena of modern art and art history as such. His role is not, however, based only upon his curatorial engagement, but rather his managerial position fortunately intertwined with the status of a curator, and (more precisely) a managerial/curatorial position within a highly representative (probably most powerful) art institution at the times. Working in the field of art gallery, he had become known as a director (from 1929 to 1943) of one of the most prestigious modern art institutions - The Museum of Modern Art in New York, focused particularly on European modern art. These two facts – *managerial appointment* and *introduction to modernism* – could be posited as essential in approaching Barr's future curatorial and managerial role, and its significance for the subject.

Beside the fact that his concept of art history was a construct of "isms" linked in a linear fashion, explaining the rise of abstract art "independently of historical conditions", his managerial role (and not the one of a collector, or even of a curator) was an essential one because it dealt with the issue of legitimacy,

i.e. of the official approval of such a historical construct by a highly positioned institutional status of a Museum director. It is more a question of cultural and financial elites' decision-making and involvement with art-business, than a simple involvement with artworks and art history, that determine the outlines of a possible canonic construct (such as Barr's interpretation of the genesis of abstract art). As it has been stated elsewhere, hired by the wealthy art collecting elite to validate their tastes by creating a museum for their art, Barr acted as their advisor and procurer of art during the early years when the Museum bought almost no art at all. In the first half of the 1930s, Barr's main job was to advise the trustees of the museum on their personal art purchases (the museum spent only \$1000 on art purchases the first six years of its existence).¹⁶⁴ It is exactly this interrelationship between his empirical, professional and institutional identities that constituted him as a leading figure whose interpretations were established and accepted as dominant ones throughout the largest part of the 20th century.

To conclude: Barr's role is most closely associated with the acceptance of modern art as part of the Western artistic tradition, especially in the United States, which of course had a central role to play in the future of the movement. It may be that the demands made by the mounting of exhibitions caused him to stress the discrete character of the movements which made up modern art, but, whatever the reason, Barr gave us the means of organizing this body of style and the ways in which they reacted to one another in a form which is now a standard part of art-historical exposition: the chart.¹⁶⁵

'The Development of Abstract Art' is a chart that Barr prepared for the jacket of the exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art* published by The Museum of Modern Art New York, 1936.¹⁶⁶ According to the information as given

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ *Art History and its Methods. A Critical Anthology*, Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ As a museum director, Barr instituted aggressive advertising campaigns for the museum at a time when few other art museums did, insisting that exhibition catalogs be accessible both financially and intellectually to the public. According to Lawrence Alloway, a British critic and curator, even the standards for exhibition

in a reprinted edition of the original publication,¹⁶⁷ the exhibition has been selected from the international (mostly private) collections ranging from Mrs. Alexander Archipenko (Hollywood, California, USA), and a number of other individual contributors, through several American, French, British, and Italian galleries, to The Kröller-Müller Foundation (Wassenaar, The Netherlands). The exhibition was supported by a board of trustees (that we usually recognize as financial power magnates) including, among others, A. Conger Goodyear (president), Nelson A. Rockefeller (1st vice president), Mrs. John S. Sheppard (2nd vice president), and Samuel A. Lewisohn (treasurer). It is this famous chart (“the means of organizing this body of style”, as previously described, i.e. a form of structuring and organizing certain theoretical and political discourses, a way of constructing historical knowledge into a dominant and presumably stable scientific paradigm) that interests me the most at this point. It deals with representational methodologies of curatorial constructions, just as much as with principles employed in order to present certain constructions as universally legitimate and valuable. The chart as a specific curatorial representational form might serve as a possible tool in the processes of deconstruction (of thus established universally legitimate and valuable constructions, of curatorial or any other character), and relates to a methodology that we may broadly recognize today as *mapping* (or *re-mapping*).

Mapping is here a relevant strategy of illustrating one’s own beliefs responding to the principles and criteria of: recognition, naming, accumulation, classification, elimination, selection, combination, and representation. All of these can be associated with the principles that are formative and inevitable in curatorial work, especially if we associate curatorial work with practices of exhibiting/display (but not necessarily). This is all the more significant once we

catalogues were set originally at the Museum of Modern Art in the forties by Alfred Barr and James T. Soby. See: L. Alloway, The Great Curatorial Dim-Out, in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson, and S. Nairne (eds.), Routledge, London 1996, p. 227.

¹⁶⁷ The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1974; the original publication appeared as: Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1936. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1974

are determined to apply an investigating strategy based upon the dialectics of visibility and invisibility, i.e. the one that is applicable in detecting all those data that do not necessarily respond to the aforementioned principles and criteria, but also the reasons explaining why this is so. The surveys as established by the processes of mapping (i.e. applying certain maps as methodological forms of surveying analyses and procedures) help us approach the field of representation as a curatorial (social) construct. This is how particular master narratives, closely linked to discussions of historicism, are being practically and universally enforced: by producing meanings that are dependent on idealizing tendencies in organizing a story which will provide an ultimate explanatory framework in relation to which all historical events (including art and culture) can be understood. Master narratives presuppose a systematic dialectical opposition based upon the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and it is this problematic that counts for embracing the history of art as constructed by Barr: it is due to inclusion that a degree of visibility is provided to a narrative that could possibly develop into a master one, while the exclusion of other narratives keeps the hidden part of the story invisible, and without a possibility to emerge as equivalent to the dominant discourse. Consequently, this will be a practical way to encounter historical examples of artistic and cultural constructions as deduced from specific (dominant or suppressed) theoretical and political discourses, most notably those that are of an utmost importance for this research – the representation of Eastern European art.

Inke Arns, a Berlin-based theoretician who has largely contributed to the processes of re-articulation of (a Western-dominated) art history, especially in her critical and theoretical investigation of the Slovenian art phenomenon NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst), approaches Alfred H. Barr's chart as a possible tool to analyze the concept of Eastern Modernism, and consequently – the general perception of modernist project as such. Barr's chart ('The Development of Abstract Art' or 'Diagram of Stylistic Evolution from 1890 until 1935', as named in Arns's text "Irwin Navigator: Retroprincip 1983-2003") is here understood as the

formative, starting point of the “grand narratives” of a Western-dominated art history that continues to prevail to this day, and an entity that was central to the definition and derivation of modernism.¹⁶⁸ In comparison with this chart (i.e., the West), Irwin’s EAST ART MAP is consequently one of the first projects comprehensively mapping art history in Eastern Europe from its own (presumably “non-Western”) perspective. In carrying out the EAST ART MAP project, 20 art critics, curators and artists from various countries were invited to compile a list of ten of the most significant art projects conducted over the past 50 years in the countries of Eastern Europe, among them: Inke Arns, Iara Bubnova, Calin Dan, Ekaterina Degot, Branislav Dimitrijević, Marina Gržinić, Viktor Misiano, Edi Muka, Piotr Piotrowski, Igor Zabel, etc. These experts, acting as partners in the project and coming forth with a choice of artists who, in their opinion, represent the essential shifts in the understanding of art in the field they are most familiar with, are a clear sign that acting within the art field is crucial in establishing the position of the creators (managers) in the cultural space we live in. As one of the possible means of orientation in the field of art, the project creators developed a unifying basic scheme in which various artists, extracted from their specific national backgrounds and classified in a shared context, work side by side. EAST ART MAP is divided into 27 sections - the time periods are key (from the 1920s to 1964) - and some of the sections are divided into further two parts (a,b). The artwork/project/period/cultural phenomenon is always presented through photographs and a short text. Thus a mosaic of possible relations is created, crossing through an incongruous culture and geographic entity, which shared a certain fate during a certain historical epoch. The creators of the project are intentionally working with a paradox. Very few people from post-communist countries (especially in Central Europe or the Baltic Republics) would proudly declare that they belong “to the East”. Nevertheless, and especially through the West’s eyes, the post-communist world stands out as its own cultural identity. A similar struggle for cultural independence from ideological

¹⁶⁸ Inke Arns, “Irwin Navigator: Retroprincip 1983-2003”, in *Irwin: Retroprincip 1983-2003*, Inke Arns (ed.), Berlin, Hagen, Belgrade, 2003, p. 14.

structures has taken place in all of the individual countries and attempts at parallel solutions to similar problems as in the West have appeared. As a (re)construction of the history of contemporary art in Eastern Europe, it is a generalization, but at the same time, it is a decisively progressive attempt to show the “advertising” potential of hegemonic power systems through the strategies of construction of dominant point of views. This mapping of art in the East, with its schematic line of possible relations, does not propose to be a single, ultimate and unalterable truth. Instead, it seeks polemical responses and a platform for further discussion. Being primarily structured around the issue of the overall context of the development of post-socialist art and culture in Eastern Europe, EAST ART MAP helped responding to a great need not only for comparative research, but also for a methodological rethinking of the field as a whole (the field of Eastern European art, of European art, of art history as a scientific discipline, and of History as an inevitable eternal construct).

Curatorial Practices in Eastern European Post-socialism

At the very end, I would like to focus on two figures who constitute the histories of contemporary curatorial practices in Eastern Europe, or, more precisely, in former Yugoslavia. One of them has been formative for the theoretical part of this research - the Slovenian philosopher, artist and curator *Marina Gržinić*¹⁶⁹ - and her essay entitled *Global Capitalism and the Genetic Paradigm of Culture* stands for a fundamental theoretical starting-point in my own encounter with the critical re-thinking of contemporary (post-socialist, Eastern European) curatorship.¹⁷⁰ As a theoretical (and cyber-political) figure, she has been constitutive for my own positioning within the field of curatorial theory and practice, and (at this point) she interests me primarily as a curator. This,

¹⁶⁹ Gržinić (born 1958) is a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at the ZRC SAZU (Scientific and Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art), Ljubljana (Slovenia). She is Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She also works as a freelance media theorist, art critic and curator, and has been involved with video art since 1982. In collaboration with Aina Šmid she has produced more than 40 video art projects, a short film, numerous video and media installations, Internet websites and an interactive CD-ROM (ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany). Gržinić and Šmid have received several major international awards for their video works, including Videonale, Bonn 1992; Deutscher Videokunst Preis/Multimediale 3, ZKM, Karlsruhe 1993; San Francisco International Film Festival, 1994 and 1995; FIV Buenos Aires, 1995. Gržinić has published extensively and (co) edited 13 books. During the 1997-98 academic year, she held the Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research of the Japan Society for the Advancement of Science in Tokyo. She was based at the Tokyo Institute of Polytechnics. She took part in the Apex Art Residency Program, New York, 2001. She has been writing extensively on different issues and her bibliography includes: *Spectralization Of Technology: From Cyberfeminism to Elsewhere and Back* (1999), *Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avant- Garde* (2000), 'Exposure Time, the Aura, and Telerobotics' in: *The Robot in the Garden: Telerobotics and Telepistemology in the Age of the Internet* (2000), 'Strategies of Visualisation and the Aesthetics of Video in the New Europe, in Culture and Technology' in: *The New Europe: Civic Discourse in Transformation in Post-Communist Nations* (2000), *Spectralization of Europe in: Net_Condition* (2000), *The Body Caught in the Intestines of the Computer: Women Strategies or Strategies by Women* (2000), *The Last Futurist Show* (2001), *Gallery Dante Marino Cettina - Future Perspectives* (2001), *The Real, The Desperate, The Absolute* (2001), *The Body*, a special issue of *Acta Philosophica*, (2001), *Stelarc: Political Prosthesis – Knowledge of the Body* (2002), *Biotechnology, Philosophy and Sex* (2002), 'Aesthetics of the digitized body', in: *Selected Papers of the 15th International Congress of Aesthetics* (2003), 'Neue Slowenische Kunst', in: *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991* (2003), *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe* (2004).

¹⁷⁰ Marina Grzinic, "Global Capitalism and the Genetic Paradigm of Culture" in Marina Grzinic, ed., *The Future of Computer Arts & The History of the International Festival of Computer Arts, Maribor 1995-2004* (Ljubljana: Maska; Maribor: MKC, 2004), pp. 69-80.

however, does not mean that it would be easier to separate her theoretical, philosophical, artistic, and curatorial work, in order to approach her solely and exclusively as a (female) curator. Things are getting even more complicated once one discovers the multiplicity of her professional and bio-political perspectives: an alternative, sub-cultural one (related to the art and cultural scene in the 1980s Ljubljana), academic, scientific one (related to the philosophical research at the Scientific Institute in Ljubljana), activist engagement, and pedagogic, educational one (related to her tutorial and lecturing activities at the Department for Post-Conceptual Art Practices, The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna). How is then possible to approach Marina Gržinić as a curator? Exactly by not approaching her solely and exclusively as a curator, but rather - as a cyber-political body performing the flexible roles (of curators, among the rest) in a comprehensive network of multiple (yet always single) identities. This method is also a fundamental point of reference about how a single body performs the curatorial role in a multidisciplinary professional network of powers. This is what I consider to be the first criteria a contemporary curator needs to fulfill. Her role, in that respect, has been presented here due to what has been conceived as a theoretical conception of the research. Another curatorial figure (Biljana Tomić) has been constitutive for my practical curatorial positioning in the specific post-socialist conditions, and I would like to dedicate the final part of my research to her.

Biljana Tomić is a forerunner of experimental curatorial practices in former Yugoslavia. Born in Novo Selo in 1940, she stands for a 'grand-mother' of contemporary Yugoslav art and one of the most outstanding figures of the Belgrade art scene ever since the late 1960s. As a curator of the SKC Gallery (a gallery space within the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade), she used to be in charge of directing visual arts program there in the period 1976-1999, and later on – from October 2000 until early 2003. Her curatorial and critical activities began much before, though: in the six-year time (1968-1973) she managed a peculiar visual art program accompanying BITEF (*The Belgrade International*

Theatre Festival), being a professional associate of the Student Cultural Center (since 1971) and assisting the SKC Gallery's head-curator – Dunja Blažević – at the times. In 1976 Biljana Tomić established her main curatorial position and ran the SKC Gallery until her official retirement in 2003. During this long period she realized numerous manifestations, exhibitions, and events in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and abroad. She promoted young, unaffiliated, emerging artists, as well as reputed and well-known ones, on a number of 'serious' occasions (Paris Biennial, Kassel Documenta, Venice Biennial, Ankara Biennial, International Video Festivals in Locarno, Montreal, Kyoto, Lyon, Vienna, etc.). Nevertheless, she has been active in the 2000s ever since her departure from SKC Gallery as a self-organized, experienced curator, and together with Dobrila Denegri took part in many local and international art events, the most famous one being her initiative for the establishment of annual international meetings of art students from all over the globe in Belgrade. This initiative turned into a regular practice since 2001, when the First European Meeting of Art Students (entitled "Real Presence – Generation 2001") took place at the premises of the former 'Tito's Museum' (Museum 'May 25', devoted to the memory of former Yugoslav president's birthday), at the outskirts of Belgrade, in a very attractive neighborhood called Topčider.

It is important to stress two things at least: the independent *curatorial* and *managerial* role of Biljana Tomić (who was herself one the most active protagonists of the Belgrade art scene since the early 1970s), and the *institutional* (political, social, and cultural) aspect of the period concerning the art matters presented here. On the one hand, the role of Biljana Tomić corresponds to the reception of experimental curatorial strategies in the so-called late socialist conditions. On the other hand, an overview of political, cultural, theoretical, curatorial and institutional practices related to new media art in the 1960s–1970s Belgrade (and Yugoslavia) contributes toward more comprehensive reading of how the so-called 'new art practices' originated together with specific artistic atmospheres in elitist Yugoslav centers (Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade) in the

period after students' riots in 1968, and how they related to a particular positioning of artists, art critics and art institutions within the dominant political and cultural climate in the country once known as "Yugoslavia".

Before being engaged at the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade, she used to work as a program editor of the Fine Arts BITEF in the period 1968-1973. *The Belgrade International Festival of Experimental Theatre*, being organized in 1967 for the first time, served as an ideal occasion to realize an initiative launched by a wide circle of friends and collaborators and to find a new exhibiting space where visual programs could develop in parallel to theatrical events. This space was found in the *Atelje 212* (Atelier 212), the Belgrade theatre famous for its avant-garde reputation, where, for example, the first Yugoslav premiere of Jarry's "Ubu Roi" was held. According to Tomić herself, "at that time, the program concept was derived out of a sphere of wide-open cooperation and the linking of different artistic and multidisciplinary aspects of work."¹⁷¹ Her statement shows how much the emergence of this early endeavour to institutionalize and facilitate the progress of the new forms of art was dependent on mutual cooperation and inter-relationships among the protagonists of the current art system in Yugoslav cultural centers (Beograd, Zagreb and Ljubljana). The network thus formed included professionals such as: Irina Subotić, Ješa Denegri, Želimir Košćević, Tomaž Brejc, Marko Pogačnik, Milenko Matanović, Dunja Blažević, Bojana Pejić, etc., but also significant figures from the international art world (Germano Celant, Tommaso Trini, Achille Bonito Oliva, Catherine Millet, etc.).¹⁷²

It is also true that the magnitude of a big international theater festival, such as BITEF, was a perfect tool to incorporate gallery activities (international by orientation) into the financially more powerful and sustainable framework of an

¹⁷¹ Biljana Tomic, "Fine Arts BITEF 1966-1973", *Video-umetnost u Srbiji II* (Video-Art in Serbia II), Center for Contemporary Arts, Belgrade 2000

¹⁷² Barbara Borčić, "Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism", in D. Đurić and M. Šuvaković (eds.), *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-Avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, The MIT Press: Boston 2003, p. 493.

annually held theatre event, whose head-organizers (Mira Trailović and Jovan Ćirilov) supported the idea about the *Atelje 212 Gallery* from the beginning and thus contributed to the debut of Yugoslav and international activities of the New Art. This was also the way to bring closer contemporary visual arts to the mass-audience interested in cultural manifestations that are more 'spectacular' by nature, like experimental theatre itself, than still not widely recognizable and anonymous language of visual arts. Besides, it was logical to connect the practices of performance, actions and happenings to their genetic matrix of theatre, and the theatre festival was therefore more than an occasion for a proper promotion of these forms. On the other hand, this spectacularity of the theatre-world might be taken as a conceptual framework for the foundation of an alternative visual arts scene in Belgrade, but also - for quite a "theatrical" character of the early performances of Belgrade artists, thanks to which (according to some critics) Belgrade new media scene generally suffered from inaccurate classification and some kind of "infantile" reputation.

In the similar vein, the role of the curators involved with an "excess" such as this one should be accentuated to the extent where experimental curatorial practices in the late- and post-socialist conditions merge with the equivalent artists' practices in the same environment. In this context, one of the key figures of contemporary curatorship in Serbia and ex-Yugoslavia is Biljana Tomić, who had actively been involved with curatorial programs and decision-making in the domain of new media art throughout the 1970s. Her role is mostly related to the phenomenon of "a-critical critique", non-subjective, non-interpretive and non-validating methodology of art criticism (as proposed by Susan Sontag, for example, in her essay "*Against Interpretation*"), but rather concerned with the role of a critic as an artist's direct accomplice in developing art concepts. It relates to critic's personal activating, properly and dynamically, within the given cultural and social conditions through documenting and informing about artists' work, and reacting against all limitations emerging from the given socio-cultural situation. The term "a-critical critique" was based on a critical methodology dealing with

organizational, documentary and impersonal presentation of artists' work, and introduced by the Italian art critic Germano Celant in 1970 with a reference toward demands of *arte povera* and conceptual art as specific requests imposed by the protagonists of these art practices to their respective critics. These intertwining relationship between simultaneous art criticism and art practices was an urge for cooperation, and against any mutual subjection or exclusion. Curatorial (exhibiting) practices were thus one module that Biljana Tomic incorporated into her particular role of a contemporary art critic in the late- and post-socialist Yugoslavia.

The institutional framework for emergence and development of new art practices in the late socialist and post-socialist Yugoslavia revolves around the particular historical conditions that determined the functional principles of art and cultural institutions (and their respective curatorial and managerial teams) that were wholeheartedly supporting such practices, both locally and internationally. Being particularly developed on the Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian art scenes (in institutions such as the Atelje 212 and the visual arts program organized within the BITEF Festival in the late 1960s and around the year 1970, SKC Gallery in Belgrade (as part of the SKC - Student Cultural Centre), Contemporary Art Gallery and Student Center in Zagreb, and Modern Art Gallery in Ljubljana), the new art practice was actively promoted through media events based on performance, happenings, actions, Fluxus-like activities, video-art, photography, polaroids and xeroxed images, etc. The youth or "student" character of the cultural institutions standing behind these events was itself a symptomatic feature related to the subject concerned here. According to one of the more recent essays describing the situation with video-art in ex-Yugoslavia "around 1970, the student cultural centers in the Yugoslav capitals (most notably - SKC in Belgrade, and SKUC in Zagreb) moved beyond their initial function as gathering places for young people to become forums for progressive ideas and the transformation of art. (...) Younger Yugoslav artists knew of the revolutionary ideas of the 1960s and the 1970s in the West. They identified with conceptual

art, current at the time, in one area above all: that of confronting the conservative art institutions that sustained the academic hierarchy of the art world and classical forms of expression. As they questioned everything, they discovered different, more independent channels.”¹⁷³ These channels were exactly found in those supporting structures in the institutional field that articulated this rebellious, anti-institutional kind of energy through their well planned and strategically developed critical and curatorial programs.

At this point, I am trying to emphasize the fact that the complex nature of the art system (constituted on the network of different power mechanisms functioning in-between art, theory, criticism, curatorship and politics), enabled such a prominent distribution and strategic promotion of new Yugoslav art in the period after students' riots in 1968 and within the context of the late- and post-socialism as a pervasive cultural condition in former Yugoslavia (which was still dominated by the state-supported cultural paradigm of “socialist modernism”, through the respective cultural establishment and the socialist administrative apparatus). It should not be forgotten that this peculiar type of late modernism, later to be described as “socialist aestheticism”,¹⁷⁴ was reflecting the moderate version of Titoist communism as opposed to its extreme counterpart in the USSR. This form of modernism (as a moderate version of Stalinist socialist realism, deprived of its openly agitprop purpose, but equally open to the Western type of abstraction), was enjoying the state-support as the official state-art for the same ideological reasons that dismissed the previous formula as dangerous: “socialist aestheticism” was neutral enough not to put the dominant one-party ideology, its respective functional principles, and power-mechanisms in question. Thus “purified”, the official state art was seemingly autonomous from any ideological interference. But it was exactly this imposed state-of-art, channeled through all institutional and media networks (including museums and galleries,

¹⁷⁴ Sveta Lukić, “Socijalistički estetizam” (‘Socialist Aestheticism’), in *U matici književnog života 1953-1983*, Gradina: Niš 1983, pp. 67-69.

art criticism, art academies and art-related programs functioning through the official system) that fostered the emergence of critically directed future protagonists of the new art practice in ex-Yugoslavia. In such historical circumstances, they pleaded for another type of autonomy: the one that does not alienate art from its social practice, but reacts against all mechanisms of aesthetical and canonical force and provides a critical distance and emancipating and socially grounded function of artistic production.¹⁷⁵

This urge for critical intervention was a constituent part of many individual and collective projects within the phenomenon known in ex-Yugoslavia as the “new art practice”. The term itself was introduced with the exhibition *Nova umjetnička praksa (New Art Practice) 1966-1978* held in the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 1978. The exhibition catalogue, edited by Marijan Susovski, still provides one of the best, though rare, analytical sources identifying the issue of “alternative” Yugoslav art in the 1970s, with texts contributed by the most prominent Yugoslav art critics, theoreticians and historians at the time: Marijan Susovski, Ješa Denegri, Tomaž Brejc, Nena Baljković, Ida Biard, Jasna Tijardović; besides, the catalogue includes statements about specific artistic phenomena, written by artists or art groups themselves: Mirko Radojičić, Balint Szombathy, Vladan Radovanović, Ratomir Kulić, Vladimir Mattioni, The Group 143. The year 1966 is taken for the official starting point of this differently conceived artistic communication, when artists of the new generation, born in the late forties and the beginning of the fifties, started their art activities in quite a different manner from what had been traditionally understood as “art” in their local environments, most notably in Ljubljana, Zagreb, Novi Sad, Subotica, Beograd, Split, etc.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, according to Branka Stipančić (in her text “Some Aspects of Croatian Contemporary Art 1949-1999”, for the exhibition catalogue “Aspects-Positions” curated by Lorand Hegyi, which was an attempt to

¹⁷⁵ See: *Oktobar '75 (October '75)*, ex. cat., SKC Gallery, Beograd, 1975 [especially: Zoran Popovic, “Za samoupravnu umetnost” (“For the self managing art”)]

¹⁷⁶ Marijan Susovski, “Introduction”, in: M. Susovski (ed.), *Nova umjetnička praksa 1966-1978 (New Art Practice 1966-1978)*, Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti 1978, pp. 3-4.

give the first historically and scientifically founded overview of the history of Central European Modernism and contemporary art between 1949 and 1999)¹⁷⁷ these artists shared an interest for interventions in public spaces, both urban and natural, as well as installations in exhibition spaces. A powerful liberating energy was concentrated in these events (which occurred shortly after the events of 1968), which generated changes in the perception of the concept of art and artistic behavior. They pushed forward the boundaries between the existing artistic disciplines, and the artists turned to the endless sphere of life and began making use of a far wider range of materials and media. Often they used photography, they welcomed new media, especially video and performance, and their work emphasized the working process rather than the final object.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, as the Belgrade-based art critic Ješa Denegri explains in his overview of artistic practices in the 1970s Serbian cultural space, the neologism “new art practice” - appropriated from Catherine Millet and used for the first time for the abovementioned exhibition in Zagreb - “enhances the following meanings in its constitutive parts: the term *new* reveals that we are dealing with an innovative avant-garde phenomenon which is substantially different from all previous currents in our society (moderate modernism, art informel, new figuration, neo-constructivism); the term *artistic* tends to remove every doubt about whether we are dealing with art (not the non-art or anti-art); finally the term *practice* underlines the fact that we deal with processes, operations, doing, acting, executing, carrying out of artistic actions and artists’ behavior, rather than with the fine and final aesthetic objects (pictures and sculptures) as the untouchable techniques and genres in the formerly ruling art disciplines”.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Central/Eastern European art situation, as presented in the “Aspects-Positions” (concerning the period from 1968 until 1980) was generally described as the situation of “convergence and divergence”, implying: “the coexistence of various ideological and aesthetic strategies in the art scene of the Socialist countries; different artistic developments in major Central European cities after 1968; different models of artistic interaction between East and West; and perspectives for new positions in the international art context and awareness for a Central European avant-garde.”

¹⁷⁸ Branka Stipančić, “Some Aspects of Croatian Contemporary Art 1949-1999”, in: *Aspects-Positions*, ex. cat., 1999.

¹⁷⁹ Ješa Denegri, *Sedamdesete. Teme srpske umetnosti (The Seventies. Topics of the Serbian Art)*, Svetovi: Novi Sad 1996, p. 23.

What is more significant is that these early curatorial and organizational strategies, as envisioned by Biljana Tomić, opposed the severe socialist administration and its respective bureaucratic apparatus and, consequently, through “the dynamism of new generations in their permanent mobility, (...) across the border, escaped the grasp of the local arbiters passively “moving in spot” in the official cultural policy”.¹⁸⁰ As some art theorists would claim, this was the way to provide a “clearly conceptualized position vis-à-vis the local (real-socialist, self-management, late-socialist, and post-socialist) context and vis-à-vis international (East European, West European and American) artistic and political context”,¹⁸¹ exactly the way European (and especially Italian) alternative art was introduced into the Yugoslav art scene by the end of the 1960s. Thus it becomes less difficult to understand how and why the programs presented during this period (1968-1973) included events (still traditionally bounded by formulations) such as: Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Land Art, Action and Happening, Experimental film, Video film / documentaries, and Performance. These years were marked by visiting guests who gave the first impetus to the alternative art scene in Belgrade: in 1968/69 - the Slovenian OHO Group performed the happenig “Passion”: Milenko Matanović, Tomaž Brejc, Tomaž Šalamun, Andraž Šalamun and Zvona Ciglič realized a kind of artistic action incorporating their idea into an expressive, perceptual, audible, plastic, psychological, emotional and ludistic spectacle, provoking a spontaneous cooperation between the protagonists and their audience, turning the whole event into a joint, dynamic, open and permanent game (this was presented together with their exhibition of graphic and typographic design, concrete and visual poetry, visual communication issues, signals and signs, developed objects in space, mobile useless objects, paintings conceived as centric visual fields, paintings-collages, etc.); in 1970 - Michelangelo Pistoletto was presented with his theatrical group “Lo Zoo”; in 1971 - Achille Bonito Oliva presented contemporary Italian artists

¹⁸⁰ Biljana Tomic, “Differences: moving in spot - moving in spiral”, *Video-umetnost u Srbiji II*, Ibid., p. 39

¹⁸¹ Misko Suvakovic, “Indexing and Mapping Modern and Post-modern Art in Serbia after 1945”, www.eastartmap.org

(Kounellis - the single one, beside Oliva, who visited Belgrade for that occasion, Gulio Paolini, Vettor Pisani, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini, Mimmo Germana) within a set of four exhibitions/spectacles entitled "Persona" and curated by Oliva; the conceptual basis for the event was provided by the real corporal presence of an artist (or his idea) during the performative act and in front of the audience, instead of the presence of a material art object. Kounellis, for example, was thus performing a piece entitled *Hommage á Morris Louis*, hiring a pianist who was supposed to play the same rhythm from the Stravinsky's famous piece, for one hour, while his hand was coloured in the manner of Morris Louis's recognisable coloristic pattern; in 1971 - the exhibition "In Another Moment", organized first in Zagreb, later in Belgrade, by the couple Nena Baljković and Braco Dimitrijević, was meant to bring together and present to the Yugoslav audience a collection of the projects by the most actual international artists and tendencies at the time, including: Giovanni Anselmo, Robert Barry, Joseph Beuys, Stanley Brown, Daniel Buren, Victor Burgin, Jan Dibbets, Barry Flanagan, Douglas Huebler, Alain Kirili, Jannis Kounellis, David Lamelas, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Ian Wilson, and Yugoslav artist Goran Trbuljak, together with the members of the OHO Group and the Group Kod (Code).¹⁸² That very same year an exhibition was organized that gathered young emerging artists (Generation '71) of which an informal group of six was created that included Marina Abramović, Neša Paripović, Raša Todosijević, Zoran Popović, Gergely Urkom and Era Milivojević (most of them had already been friends during their student years in the late 60s, and had already developed a full confrontation with the academic system). Later on, the exhibition ASPECTS '72 jointly presented foreign artists from the 1972 issue of DOCUMENTA (Beuys, Ben, Christo, Dibbets, Baldessari, De Dominicis, Chiari, Buren, Schum) together with local ones (the Group A3, Zoran Popović, Slobodan Milivojević Era, Goran

¹⁸² Jesa Denegri, "In Another Moment", in: J. Denegri, *Studentski kulturni centar kao umetnicka scena (Student Cultural Centre as the Art Scene)*, SKC: Beograd, 2004, pp. 22-24.

Trbuljak, Nuša and Srečo Dragan), and in 1973 - INFORMATION '73, with the works of the most important European and American galleries.¹⁸³

This brings us forward from reflecting the meaning of particular artists and art works of the time into the institutional field of a respective art system as it existed in the 1970s Yugoslav capitals (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana), therefore providing the quality of both “dissident” (in relation to the dominant cultural mainstream) and “elitist” artists (in relation to cultural centers to which they either belonged or were appropriated by). On the other hand, this brings us into discovering the postponed, delayed meaning of those particular artists and art works coming from very much institutionally independent fields of action and isolated, “peripheral” and non-hegemonic cultural territories, (such as Split, Subotica and even Novi Sad)¹⁸⁴ that for this reason or another used to figure as ‘footnote references’ in official overviews of new art practices in ex-Yugoslavia, only to be critically analyzed and re-discovered in the period from the 1990s up till today.¹⁸⁵ This is also due to the radical behavior of those artists and art groups who consciously and openly refused to be ‘exhibited’ through regular displaying practices of alternative art institutions (and these offers were not rare), in order not to be institutionalized, and to preserve the authenticity of their radically conceived ideas. This ethical stance is also one of the reasons why their work has been put aside for a long time. What is even more important (and to a certain extent paradoxical, but still holds true) is that these “provincial” artists (such as Slavko Matković from Subotica, for example, who was founder of the famous group BOSCH+BOSCH, together with Balint Szombathy) - although marginal (in

¹⁸³ Biljana Tomic, “Fine Arts BITEF 1966-1973”, *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁸⁴ The situation in Novi Sad was peculiar as we take into account that although it was the provincial, but still capital-city of the Northern Serbian province of Vojvodina, it developed specific cultural and artistic atmosphere within the institution named Tribina mladih (The Youth Forum) ever since the 1960s. Apart from this, and opposite to both Belgrade and Novi Sad, the marginal border-town of Subotica relied more on impacts from the adjoining Hungarian cultural territory (especially Budapest and Szeged) and even from the Slovenian and Croatian ones, than on alternative art forms as seen from the Serbian (and at the time - Yugoslav) capital city of Belgrade. This might explain why phenomena such as Slavko Matković (and the group Bosch+Bosch, together with Balint Szombathy), or Slavko Bogdanović (and the group KOD) have only recently been analysed from this non-hegemonic critical perspective and established as parallel to or even anticipatory examples of early media art in ex-Yugoslavia.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, the 2005 catalogue dedicated to Slavko Matković’s retrospective exhibition held in Novi Sad, Belgrade and Subotica (*Ich bin Künstler. Slavko Matkovic*, with texts by Nebojša Milenković, Balint Szombathy and Ješa Denegri, Museum of Contemporary Art: Novi Sad, 2005)

terms of being situated in non-elitist, peripheral cultural zones, such as Subotica) even in relation to “marginal” (non mainstream) artists situated in one of Yugoslav capital cities - were better artistically positioned and more radical in their zeal toward the New, regarding their open and conscious conceptual relying on the most innovative exemplary figures of the past. Matković’s and Szombathy’s historical foundation in the heritage of the Hungarian avant-garde, with Lajos Kassak as one of its most prominent and controversial activists, provided the firm background to their radical positioning within the framework of new art practices in the 1970s, thus confirming their true anticipatory role in the Serbian neo-avant-garde at least. While conceptualizing this memory, and at the same time - strongly believing in the possibility of continuous moral aspects of the early avant-garde (therefore staying aware of the historical social experiences of this modernity, as Peter Weibel would say), these artists did not really lose socio-political experience of their chosen predecessors: on the contrary, by struggling against the extinction of historical experience (what actually happened with the neo-avant-garde of the West, which - being more related to the mass-media and the emerging culture industry - emptied this avant-garde of its social roots and built the basis for the enjoyments of the products of culture and consumer industry),¹⁸⁶ the Eastern neo-avant-garde was in relation to its Western counter-part more or less what radical, non-elitist Yugoslav conceptualism was attempting and striving for ever since its beginnings - or at least it is what is being brought to light today, after almost 40 years. Even if this statement might seem a bit exaggerated, it still shows how the hegemonic institutional principles and their effects update and interfere our consciousness about certain phenomena and this is not only true in terms of being observed from the “outside” (supposedly the West), but exactly from the very “inside” out of which these same phenomena fluctuated for decades on the very edge of their definite appropriation by alternative cultural systems.

¹⁸⁶ P. Weibel, “Arteast: Retroavantgarde”, in *Arteast 2000+*, The Art of Eastern Europe, A Selection of Works for the International and National Collections of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana (Bolzano/Vienna: Folio Verlag, 2001), 7-8.

CONCLUSION

Personal (Curatorial) Positioning

The Status of Curatorial Practices in the Postsocialist Condition was an attempt to point out the necessity for one's own professional (theoretical, practical, political, and social) positioning in the environment suffering from the lack of a clear (academic and institutional) infrastructure for the proper development of such a position. It has been figuring out as a utopian demand for a more profound analysis of what really presents a problematic field of professional orientation, while at the same time - a challenging terrain for critical intervention, that would eventually help filling this void.

The core subject of the research - the very status of a professional field that one recognizes as *curatorial practice*, as well as its relevant professional protagonists (i.e., contemporary art curators) – has been thematized and problematized with regard to the emerging aspirations of young professionals from the specific (South)East European context to engage and perform the curatorial roles today as a way of overcoming the misconceptions and disbalances in the professional sphere of contemporary art and culture related to the region.

Although this research can be considered as only a weak starting-point in mapping the field of one's own professional commitment, I strongly believe it is an essential first step in providing a relevant theoretical background for the upcoming (practical and institutional) curatorial engagement as I envision it as my future profession.

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITE DES ARTS DE BELGRADE

UNIVERSITE LYON 2

Etudes Interdisciplinaires de 3^{ème} cycle

MANAGEMENT ET POLITIQUES CULTURELLES DANS LES BALKANS – Chaire UNESCO



Thèse de troisième cycle :

**LA POSITION DES PRATIQUES DE CURATEUR
DANS LES CONDITIONS POST-SOCIALISTES**

Par

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Supervisé par :

Miško Šuvaković, PhD

Belgrade, juin 2005

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L'ouvrage de recherche du troisième cycle, intitulé « *La position des pratiques de curateur dans les conditions post-socialistes* », se concentre sur la compréhension de la question de conservation de l'art contemporain. Plus spécifiquement, il s'occupe du système d'art de la région connue comme l'« Europe de l'Est » (l'Europe centrale, de l'Est et du Sud-est), soulignant particulièrement la position des pratiques de curateur dans les conditions post-socialistes (période suivant les événements révolutionnaires de 1968, la mort de Tito en 1980 et la chute du mur de Berlin en 1989, et qui dure jusqu'à nos jours). L'ouvrage se concentre sur les méthodologies en terme d'organisation des discours et des pratiques de curateur contemporaines dans le contexte de la globalisation et insiste sur la perception des implications culturelles de l'élargissement de l'UE et de l'impératif d'intégrer un espace artistique dans des contextes européens régionaux plus larges. Il faut particulièrement mettre au point le terme « Européen », vu la tendance croissante dans de nombreuses régions d'Europe de lutter pour un espace artistique européen unifié dans le cadre de la société globale présente et future.

La recherche pourrait se lier à une notion de théorie d'art contemporain plus large, soulignant fortement les cadres politiques, historiques et culturels de l'art et de la culture relatif au sujet. A cet égard, la recherche est censée être interdisciplinaire, ayant comme sujets principaux l'histoire politique, la théorie et la critique d'art, le management de l'art et les études de pratique de curateur. L'hypothèse générale à explorer est concentrée, en premier lieu, sur les questions de la **représentation de l'Europe de l'Est et de son art contemporain, en termes d'organisation d'expositions dans le contexte de la globalisation et**, en deuxième lieu, **sur le rôle d'un curateur d'art moderne, comparé au rôle d'un manager contemporain dans le domaine de la culture**. Cette hypothèse se rapporte au suivant : comment la sphère culturelle globale est-elle envisagée et conçue dans ce processus par rapport à la participation contemporaine de la pratique de curateur? Quelle logique est-elle mise en œuvre derrière le processus même de la conception d'une exposition et comment la formuler en relation avec l'inclusion des régions auparavant invisibles (comme l'Europe de l'est) dans le champ visible de l'art contemporain ?

Par conséquent, la THESE de la recherche est de démontrer que les curateurs sont identifiés aujourd'hui comme des managers (à part leur position théorique et politique essentielle) parce que leur nouvelle position gestionnaire, organisationnelle et institutionnelle de pratiques de curateur est devenue une composante nécessaire pour la mise en oeuvre de leurs devoirs. Cependant, leur mission n'est pas déterminée dans les stratégies de participation aux processus de « démolition » de cette condition, mais c'est tout à fait le contraire : dans les stratégies de construction de discours secondaires (de communautés de conservation, d'équipes et de « corporations » comme ensembles d'action inter institutionnels transnationaux à l'opposé de l'ordre patriarcal antérieurement dominant de « free-lance » Maîtres Curateurs individuels, non institutionnels ou indépendants) et parallèles au caractère même du management et de l'organisation par le biais duquel le discours global devient opérationnel dans de larges communautés (comme celles des corporations transnationales ou même les communautés des nations européennes - l'Union Européenne elle-même).

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« *Tout acte est politique et...la présentation d'un ouvrage n'en n'est pas une exception* ».

Daniel Buren¹⁸⁷

L'ouvrage de recherche du troisième cycle, intitulé « ***La position des pratiques de curateur dans les conditions post-socialistes*** », se concentre sur la compréhension de la question de conservation de l'art contemporain. Plus spécifiquement, il s'occupe du système d'art de la région connue comme l'« Europe de l'Est » (l'Europe centrale, de l'Est et du Sud-est), soulignant particulièrement la position des pratiques de curateur dans les conditions post-socialistes (période suivant les événements révolutionnaires de 1968, la mort de Tito en 1980 et la chute du mur de Berlin en 1989, et qui dure jusqu'à nos jours). L'ouvrage se concentre sur les méthodologies en terme d'organisation des discours et des pratiques de curateur contemporaines dans le contexte de la globalisation et insiste sur la perception des implications culturelles de l'élargissement de l'UE et de l'impératif d'intégrer un espace artistique dans des contextes européens régionaux plus larges. Il faut particulièrement mettre au point le terme « Européen », vu la tendance croissante dans de nombreuses régions d'Europe de lutter pour un espace artistique européen unifié dans le cadre de la société globale présente et future.

La recherche pourrait se lier à une notion de théorie d'art contemporain plus large, soulignant fortement les cadres politiques, historiques et culturels de l'art et de la culture relatif au sujet. A cet égard, la recherche est censée être interdisciplinaire, ayant comme sujets principaux l'histoire politique, la théorie et la critique d'art, le management de l'art et les études de pratique de curateur.

¹⁸⁷ Cf Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition, New Art in the 20th Century*, University of California Press, Ltd, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998, p. 254. Voir aussi: Daniel Buren, "Beware" à *l'Art International*, Mars 1970, pp 100-104.

Vu que le travail de recherche a été offert au département des études interdisciplinaires du 3^{ème} cycle qui manque encore de Groupe pour les études de pratique de curateur comme programme académique officiel (tout comme dans le reste de la région), sa position au sein du Programme de l' Université des Arts de Belgrade est spécifique. Dans le cadre des études de l'Interculturalisme, du management culturel et de la politique culturelle dans les Balkans, le travail de recherche serait une extension du programme officiel existant du management culturel, tout en accentuant fortement la prolifération de nouvelles stratégies de pratique de curateur et de leurs perspectives respectives dans le domaine de l'organisation et du management, au sein des institutions culturelles ainsi que les revendications de la politique culturelle liée aux pays ex-communistes et ex-socialistes de l'Europe de l'Est. Aux études de la Théorie et de la Philosophie de l'Art le travail de recherche représenterait un élargissement du programme des études avec un accent fort sur les discours théoriques en provenance (ou en relation avec) de l'Europe de l'Est et de ses sphères artistiques post-socialistes et culturelles.

Je voudrais proposer des possibilités d'approche aux discours et aux pratiques de curateur contemporains d'un point de vue critique, tout en accentuant les mécanismes idéologiques inhérents du pouvoir dans les espaces artistiques du monde global contemporain, par l'effort d'établir des relations visibles entre les institutions qui présentent les expositions (musées et galeries) et le système bureaucratique. En créant une distance envers le mythe de la neutralité de l'espace d'exposition, cette analyse tend à se concentrer sur le système du pouvoir, aussi bien que sur ses effets, et ainsi propose une enquête critique de la relation entre les pratiques de curateur post-socialistes et une politique culturelle globale dans la région.

L'hypothèse générale à explorer est concentrée, en premier lieu, sur les questions de la **représentation de l'Europe de l'Est et de son art contemporain, en termes d'organisation d'expositions dans le contexte de**

la globalisation et, en deuxième lieu, **sur le rôle d'un curateur d'art moderne, comparé au rôle d'un manager contemporain dans le domaine de la culture**. Cette hypothèse se rapporte au suivant : comment la sphère culturelle globale est-elle envisagée et conçue dans ce processus par rapport à la participation contemporaine de la pratique de curateur? Quelle logique est-elle mise en œuvre derrière le processus même de la conception d'une exposition et comment la formuler en relation avec l'inclusion des régions auparavant invisibles (comme l'Europe de l'est) dans le champ visible de l'art contemporain ?

Ce qui est important, c'est l'effort d'expliquer la raison fondamentale qui se cache derrière l'intérêt actuel pour la production culturelle de cette région et d'introduire des conclusions qui exigent **la transformation nécessaire de la position des curateurs ainsi que de leurs discours et pratiques concernant l'art de l'Europe de l'Est, spécialement à l'égard de la notion du pouvoir, de l'hégémonie culturelle et des principes d'assimilation des « minorités culturelles »**. Dans le but de remplir cette tâche, j'ai essayé de faire la synthèse de la théorie de l'art et des discours critiques autour des pratiques de l'art contemporain d'un côté, et du management de l'art et de la culture de l'autre, par l'intermédiaire des curateurs de l'art contemporain.

Le but majeur du projet de recherche est **d'augmenter la prise de conscience à l'intérieur des cercles académiques vis-à-vis des curateurs de l'art contemporain et de la position des professionnels respectifs dans ce domaine**. Par cela, je voudrais avancer un modèle analytique pour l'interprétation critique des pratiques de curateur provenant (ou étant en relation avec) des pays post-socialistes de l'Europe de l'Est. Le motif de cette approche spécifique réside dans l'effort d'identifier les stratégies provenant des structures du monde artistique qui sont professionnellement orientées vers des opérations sélectives et médiatrices, en relation avec les pratiques d'exposition de l'art. Aujourd'hui, ces structures se retrouvent dans des rôles que les **curateurs jouent en tant que managers culturels et producteurs d'art**.

Ayant en vue que l'intérêt croissant pour la préparation d'expositions d'art contemporain relatif à la région des Balkans et/ou de l'Europe du Sud Est et/ou de l'Europe de l'Est émerge des caractéristiques socio politiques de la région, le projet a pour but d'adopter une réception meilleure de nouveaux courants dans le cadre des approches critiques vis-à-vis la matière, vue d'une perspective plus large. Cette perspective cherche ouvertement à établir deux bases critiques d'interprétation, l'une **théorique** et l'autre **pratique**. Cette fonction d'organisation et la façon dont elle est traduite en production actuelle d'art contemporain est encore plus importante dans un domaine qui manque de système efficace de marché et de politique régulatrice dans le domaine de la culture (comme c'est le cas en Europe de l'Est). Une telle analyse exige d'examiner plus profondément les demandes d'une politique stricte qui détermine l'existence, le développement et la programmation des institutions culturelles en général et, influence les façons selon lesquelles l'art contemporain visuel est compris dans les réformes prioritaires du gouvernement. Une prise de conscience constante des contextes socio politiques et des structures institutionnelles du pouvoir qui détermine le caractère du monde de l'art contemporain est en effet une question urgente liée à l'organisation actuelle des expositions. Le procès d'analyse proposé est nécessaire pour un traitement adéquat des pratiques de curateur, surtout à cause des changements de règlements qu'il est nécessaire d'introduire et de mettre en œuvre comme priorités gouvernementales et académiques de premier rang, pour le bénéfice de la compréhension propre et du support à l'art visuel contemporain local et régional.

Cette approche aux méthodologies de pratique de curateur exprime un modèle critique de compréhension qui est lié à la contribution interactive **d'un examen théorique et pratique**. L'approche sera **multidisciplinaire** et concentrée sur la théorie de pratique de curateur, incluant en même temps les domaines divers de la critique, des études culturelles, des perspectives historiques et politiques et des discours concernant l'économie et le management. Elle sera aussi **interdisciplinaire** dans la mesure où elle juxtapose et évalue la nature

intrinsèque des concepts de curateur qui sont en relation avec la mise en oeuvre d'expositions tout autant qu'avec leur effet sur le domaine de l'organisation de la pratique institutionnelle. J'ai l'intention de bâtir sur le récent travail pionnier exécuté dans ce domaine notamment par **Marina Grzanic** (Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism & The Retro-Avant-Garde, Edition Selene, Vienna 2000 ; The Last Futurist Show, salon de Fleurus, K. Malevich, Armory Show, Globalization, Politics, New Media Technology, edited by Marina Grzanic, Maska, Ljubljana 2001; Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art, Theory and Activism from (the East) of Europe, ZRC Publishing, Revolver – Archiv fur aktuelle Kunst, Ljubljana – Frankfurt am Main 2004), **Ales Erjavec** (Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism, California University Press, Berkeley 2003), et **Boris Groys** (Du Nouveau. Essai d'économie culturelle, Editions Jacqueline Chambon. Nimes 1995 ; The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-Garde. Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1992, et Teorija slobodne umetnosti (Théorie de l'art libre), Studentska založba, Ljubljana 2002) ainsi que les exposés critiques relatifs par les curateurs comme **Viktor Misiano** (INTERPOL: The Art Exhibition Which Divided East and West, Ljubljana et Moscou, 2000).

Je voudrai me limiter à **la région de l'Europe du Sud Est** et aux stratégies de pratique de curateur développées pendant les quinze dernières années (1989-2004), accentuant surtout les exemples critiques les plus récents et les plus représentatifs concernant le sujet. Le travail du curateur moderne est conçu ici comme l'un des éléments essentiels de la résonance des changements politiques, sociaux, économiques et culturels qui ont eu lieu dans les anciens pays communistes du soi-disant Bloc de l'Est (l'ex Union Soviétique, l'Europe centrale et de l'est) et l'ex Yougoslavie, dès la chute du mur de Berlin en 1989. L'arrière-plan théorique de cette approche (idées proposées par **Grzanic, Erjavec** et **Groys**) s'est formé en s'appuyant sur la pensée contemporaine esthétique et la production d'art de l'Europe de l'Est relatives à leur

environnement politique propre. Cela se rapporte également aux mouvements globaux qui les ont placés à l'intérieur de circonstances spécifiques conditionnées par les principes hégémoniques de systèmes de pouvoir supérieurs, ainsi que par leurs représentants institutionnels respectifs et les outils financiers. L'attitude exprimée ici est provoquée par une forte conviction que les pratiques actuelles relatives aux expositions ne sont qu'un reflet du fait que les expositions sont devenues le médium par l'intermédiaire duquel l'art en général devient connu et reconnu comme une partie visible de la culture contemporaine. Par ailleurs, tout en mettant l'emphase sur les perspectives courantes des stratégies d'exposition et de production d'art on réussit à marquer la naissance de nouveaux discours qui se lient à l'exposition, à étudier la politique d'exposition en dehors des débats traditionnels et des interprétations de l'art strictement historiques et à se rapprocher du rôle de curateur d'art contemporain (en tant que sélecteur) et du rôle joué par un manager culturel contemporain (en tant que producteur). Certaines étapes principales de mon travail de recherche concernant l'expertise professionnelle de la conservation d'art contemporain se rapportent au suivant : de quelle manière la mise en œuvre d'expositions et les institutions d'expositions respectives peuvent-elles créer et soutenir les cultures locales/ régionales/ nationales tout en tenant compte des stratégies telles que la standardisation d'expositions thématiques de collections, l'organisation globale d'expositions et la promotion du marketing dans les médias ; le développement historique d'un curateur d'art contemporain et ses concepts d'exposition d'art contemporain, en tenant compte de l'étude des conventions de classement et de présentation tout en soulignant la relation entre l'apparition des institutions d'art et le développement du rôle de curateur d'art contemporain dans les conditions récentes socialistes et post-socialistes de l'Europe de l'est; les questions confrontant les curateurs aujourd'hui telles que les difficultés qu'ils affrontent en réponse aux exigences compétitives de la politique culturelle et aux intérêts des structures de fonds publics et des communautés spécifiques locales ou régionales.

Le projet sera développé comme un système de sous thèmes précisément planifiés et examinés. Après une introduction historique complète et un coup d'œil rétrospectif sur l'arrière plan de l'histoire politique contemporaine, de la critique et de la théorie d'art, je voudrai me concentrer sur la théorie et les pratiques des stratégies de pratiques de curateur et de leur interprétation en général. Plus tard je mettrai l'accent sur le cœur de la recherche – les théories des pratiques de curateur à l'époque du post-socialisme divisée en chapitres correspondants, et se concentrant sur le contexte, le rôle et la position de l'Est politique. Je commencerai par une série d'analyses se rapportant aux exemples critiques des pratiques de curateur en me concentrant le plus sur le contexte de l'Europe de l'Est et des Balkans. De plus, je mettrai l'accent sur leurs limitations quand elles sont confrontées aux stratégies de pratiques de curateur provenant de la région, en comparaison aux expositions locales mineures et les conditions générales de l'économie de l'art dans la période de transition de l'Europe de l'Est.

Par conséquent, la THESE de la recherche est de démontrer que les curateurs sont identifiés aujourd'hui comme des managers (à part leur position théorique et politique essentielle) parce que leur nouvelle position gestionnaire, organisationnelle et institutionnelle de pratiques de curateur est devenue une composante nécessaire pour la mise en oeuvre de leurs devoirs. Cependant, leur mission n'est pas déterminée dans les stratégies de participation aux processus de « démolition » de cette condition, mais c'est tout à fait le contraire : dans les stratégies de construction de discours secondaires (de communautés de conservation, d'équipes et de « corporations » comme ensembles d'action inter institutionnels transnationaux à l'opposé de l'ordre patriarcal antérieurement dominant de « free-lance » Maîtres Curateurs individuels, non institutionnels ou indépendants) et parallèles au caractère même du management et de l'organisation par le biais duquel le discours global devient opérationnel dans de larges communautés (comme celles des corporations transnationales ou même les communautés des nations européennes - l'Union Européenne elle-même).

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Marko Stamenkovic détient un diplôme en histoire de l'art de la Faculté des Sciences Humaines, Université de Belgrade, Serbie (depuis juin 2003, obtenu chez les professeurs Jerko Denegri et Lidija Merenik) et est engagé dans la programmation des arts visuels et dans le management de projet à la Galerie SKC (Centre Culturel des Etudiants) à Belgrade en fonction de curateur assistant (depuis septembre 2004 avec le curateur Stevan Vukovic). Il est candidat au diplôme en Management culturel et Politique culturelle à l'Université des Arts de Belgrade (sous la supervision des professeurs Misko Suvakovic et Milena Dragicevic-Sesic). Il est en train de se spécialiser en Etudes de curateur et de management de galeries d'art et ses intérêts dans le domaine de la recherche varient entre les analyses interdisciplinaires des arts visuels contemporains et de la théorie d'art, et les études de curateur et d'administration d'art. Sa recherche en cours, basée sur la pensée post-marxiste, s'occupe de la pratique de curateur d'art contemporain et se concentre sur les thèmes suivants : la position des pratiques de curateur dans les conditions post-socialistes, les implications culturelles de l'élargissement de l'UE, les méthodologies centrées sur la mise en oeuvre d'exposition dans le contexte de la globalisation, l'emplacement critique dans la sphère globale de la production d'art et les projets ayant à faire explicitement aux caractéristiques politiques, sociales et économiques de l'art contemporain et du système d'art.

Son expérience antérieure : écrits sur les arts visuels contemporains (articles dans les journaux jusqu'aux essais théoriques) ; soutien à l'organisation de curateurs dans le cadre du programme de stage en entreprise au sein de la

galerie Artists Space à New York (2001) en collaboration avec le curateur Lauri Firstenberg ; pratique en organisation et administration dans les programmes de la galerie SKC à Belgrade (avec la collaboration de l'éditeur des programmes d'art Biljana Tomic, 2002/2003) ; participation à Peggy Guggenheim Collection dans le cadre du programme de stage en entreprise à Venise en 2004. Son but professionnel majeur est lié à la profession de curateur dans son sens contemporain, voire aux questions liées aux pratiques de curateur et à la présentation contemporaine d'art. Il y sous-entend le recueillement et le développement des connaissances dans le domaine de la culture visuelle et des activités culturelles, particulièrement les modèles actuels des pratiques et des activités de curateur en tant que promoteur de la culture et médiateur des valeurs culturelles ; le développement professionnel avec en but la participation active future aux initiatives locales et régionales dans le domaine de la culture; l'affirmation de jeunes artistes non affiliés pour la prise en charge d'un rôle dynamique dans la formation d'une nouvelle identité culturelle en Europe et leur intégration dans un contexte plus large ; le travail de recherche – familiarisation avec les stratégies de fonctionnement du marché de l'art et de l'instauration artistique ainsi que leur détermination technique dans le but de développer une compréhension collective des nécessités, de la portée et des résultats du nouveau modèle visant les politiques culturelles en Europe du Sud Est ; l'élimination des effets négatifs de la commercialisation de la culture et de l'institutionnalisation des relations démocratiques dans le cadre des affaires culturelles; la capacité de participer de manière responsable et compétente à la création de projets locaux et régionaux et de modèles de politique culturelle, spécialement dans le domaine des galeries d'art et des musées.

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Marko Stamenković (1977) holds a BA in art history from the Faculty of Humanities, University of Belgrade, Serbia (since June 2003, under professors Jerko Denegri and Lidija Merenik), and has been involved with Visual Arts Programming and Project Management at the SKC Gallery in Belgrade, as a Curatorial Assistant (since September 2004, under curator Stevan Vuković). He is an MA candidate in Cultural Policy and Cultural Management at the University of Arts in Belgrade (under the supervision of professors Miško Šuvaković and Milena Dragičević-Šešić). He is specializing in Curatorial Studies and Art Gallery Management and his research interests vary from interdisciplinary analyses of contemporary visual arts and art theory to curatorial studies and art administration. His current research, based on the post-Marxist thought, revolves around the issue of contemporary art curatorship, focusing on themes such as: the status of curatorial practices in the post-socialist condition, cultural implications of EU enlargement, methodologies in terms of organizing exhibitions in the context of globalization, critical positioning within the global sphere of art production, and discursive projects dealing explicitly with political, social, and economic features of contemporary art and art system.

His previous experience is related to: writing on contemporary visual arts (from newspaper reviews to theoretical essays), assisting with curatorial organization during the Internship program in the New York gallery *Artists Space* (2001) in cooperation with the curator Lauri Firstenberg; gaining organizational and administrative practice within the SKC Gallery Programs in Belgrade (in cooperation with the art program editor Biljana Tomic, 2002/03); participating in the Peggy Guggenheim Collection Internship Program in Venice (Italy), 2004.

His primary professional aim refers to the profession of a curator in the contemporary sense, i.e. to questions of curatorial practices and contemporary display of art. Under this he implies: acquisition and development of knowledge from the area of visual culture and cultural activities, particularly current models of curatorial practices and activities of curators as cultural promoters and mediators of cultural values; professional improvement with an aim of future active participation in local and regional initiatives in culture; affirmation of young, unaffiliated artists in taking over dynamic role in the formation of new cultural identity of Europe, and their integration in wider context; research work - becoming familiar with the strategies of the functioning of the art market and artistic establishment as well as their technical determination, with an aim of the development of the collective awareness about the necessities, ranges and results of the new model for cultural policy in the South-Eastern Europe; elimination of the negative effects of commercialization of culture, and institutionalization of democratic relations in cultural business; readiness for responsible and competent participation in the creation of local and regional projects and models of cultural policy, especially in the area of art galleries and museums.