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Ljiljana Kolečnik

Institute of Art History, Zagreb

A Decade of Freedom, Hope and Lost Illusions. Yugoslav Society in the 1960s as a Framework for New Tendencies

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Abstract

Considering invisibility of the New Tendencies in the dominant narrative on European modernism, ongoing process of consolidation of the new media art might be a platform from which to introduce the New Tendencies into the context of new media art history. However explanations given in the recent interpretations of that international art Movement clearly demonstrate that along the lines of that process

a spatial configuration of the New Tendencies could be significantly redefined. In order to provide a counter-balance to such an attempt, it is necessary to explain the reasons which made Zagreb and Former Yugoslavia unique locations and appropriate ideological and intellectual framework of that international art movement. Such an explanation is the content of this article.

Key words: *New Tendencies, neo avant-garde, neo-constructivism, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, self-managing socialism*

In addition to ongoing discussions concerning a proper definition of the new media art, recent efforts in consolidating and defining such an extensive and heterogeneous field of contemporary art production have resulted in an attempt of locating image technologies in a wider art-historical context and of providing the historical framework for methodological and theoretical foundations of the phenomena which, as Oliver Grau has stated, »only appears to be without a history«.¹ However, within the growing number of studies published in the last five years and dealing with the technologically supported and scientifically funded forms of the art expression in the 20th century,² it is hard to identify any interest in the international art movement New Tendencies (1961–1973). It seems that as for now it is completely excluded from the series of events assigned with canonical status by the new media art history. The occasional, overly superficial remarks on the Movement that can be found in some of those studies are insufficient basis for drawing any conclusion concerning possible reasons for that exclusion. A recent retrospective of New Tendencies entitled *Bit international, Nove tendencije Computer und visuelle Forschung Zagreb 1961 – 1973* held in 2007 at Neue Galerie Graz and in 2009 at ZKM Karlsruhe could make a difference regarding the visibility of that art phenomena in the context of new media art history. Particularly if we take into the account an impressive monograph of New Tendencies, issued instead of the catalogue for the Karlsruhe exhibition, which contains –

amongst others – the essays by Peter Weibel, Ješa Denegri and Margit Rosen, as well as the original writings by the members and »ideologists« of the movement.³ It is certainly an ambitious publication and considering the respectable amount of historical documentation translated to English and for the first time in last fifty years made available for broad circle of potential researchers, it is possible to argue that it has already reintroduced New Tendencies into the media art history. However, neither the articles in the catalogue, or documentation itself are capable of giving the proper answer to the questions – Why the interest for the New Tendencies was so weak and how it was possible that the art phenomena, doubtlessly important for understanding a number of actual problems of new media art, remained almost invisible for such a long time? Armin Medosch, one of quite a few art historians interested in the legacy of the New Tendencies, is probably right when he argues that the general opinion of New Tendencies from the perspective of new media art history is that they »came too early and were too decentralised to have had a significant impact on contemporary media art and that of the recent past«.⁴ New Tendencies indeed belong among the earliest art phenomena in history of post-war art which demonstrate profound interest for technological, philosophical and social implications of the encounter between »man and machine« and it is true that they were finished already at the beginning of 1970s. However, there is a number of other equally »decentralised« phenomena⁵

which, as New Tendencies, »lack a direct continuation« that managed to find their place in master narrative of European modern art. In that respect, temporal argument is not particularly convincing. Much more interesting is Medosch's account on the oblivion of the New Tendencies emphasizing the reluctance of the West European art history and art criticism to engage with art production so obviously informed by leftist political ideology. Pointing to the tendency of art criticism at the end of 1960's to »focus on the visual side and the surfaces« and to the fact that such tendency was »aggravated by ... an ideological power struggle within the art world which mirrored the ideological power struggle between Cold War superpowers«, Medosch comes to the conclusion that the New Tendencies »born on the relatively neutral soil of un-aligned Yugoslavia«⁶ were the 'victims' of that situation, which decisively affected their position in art historical narrative on post-war modern art. Power struggle to which Medosch refers was actually the struggle between artists from various countries who gathered in Yugoslavia – or more precisely – in Zagreb, and West European and American »institutionalised art systems trying to suppress the influence of leftwing post- and neo-constructivism«.⁷ The international membership of New Tendencies was completely conscious of power relations and political interests behind the international art scene. Discussions, documents and programmatic texts produced along with the series of events that were happening in Zagreb between 1961 and 1973 reveal the artists awareness that the resistance to the institutional mechanisms of the art world could have serious consequences regarding subsequent interpretations of the Movement. Those concerns were for the first time clearly and precisely articulated in Radoslav Putars' contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition *tendencies 4*. Putar, who was a steady member of different committees, boards and other informal bodies organizing the exhibitions of New Tendencies, recognized already in 1969 »a joint aggressive, effort of provincial constrain and cultural imperialism ... to wrap in the mist of silence the fact that the seed of NT unfolded, developed and spread its content from the location within this community«.⁸ Although we could interpret his remark from different points of view, it is most interesting as an account on ideologically biased practices of both – West European and (at that point) Yugoslav art history. A course of future events completely justified a sense of resignation lingering in the background of Putar's objection. Already at the end of 1970s the legacy of the Movement was covered with the complete silence. Behaving in almost the same manner as their European colleagues, Croatian/Yugoslav art historians remained for almost fifty years relatively indifferent to the phenomenon of New Tendencies.⁹ It is of course true, that New Tendencies were present in art historical discourse on art of the 1960's but only in rather general terms and more as an emblematic proof of the once cosmopolitan atmosphere at local art scene, than as significant experience of international post-war visual culture. During the last 20 years the relation to New Tendencies was even more restrained. Despite a seemingly positive attitude towards the legacy of the Movement and despite the first comprehensive study

on neo-constructivist practices in Croatian post-war art by Ješa Denegri published in 2003¹⁰ it is hard to resist the impression that the local interpretations of that subject were imbued with the sense of discomfort. The reasons for the discomfort should be sought in the fact that after the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia art historians of former Yugoslav Republics were supposed to produce national art historical narratives that were expected (again) to pertain to Hegelian understanding of nation-as-culture. In that respect, the international character of the New Tendencies resisting the attempts of spatial localisation certainly becomes quite problematic. While Denegri's study, which is the result of a life long interest in avant-garde and neo-avant-garde art tendencies, successfully avoids of narrowing down the New Tendencies to the limits of national art scene, a general standpoint regarding the relation of that art phenomenon to the Croatian post-war art is still to be defined. Circumstances surrounding the retrospective of New Tendencies,¹¹ clearly demonstrated the fact that at this moment local art history is not either ready or willing to come to the terms with that problem.

If we judge upon the standpoints of the contributors to the already mentioned monograph of New Tendencies (with the exception of Ješa Denegri), who are demonstrating tendency to redefine the essential features and geographical configuration of that international art Movement, such an indifference of local art history soon might result in rather serious consequences. Particularly if we take into account the associated interpretation of the poetic structure of the New Tendencies pertaining to rather strict and overly precise terms of classification structure usually applied to the phenomena defining the historical framework for methodological and theoretical foundations of the new media art. Providing categorical requirements necessary for the inclusion of the New Tendencies into particular »teleology of new media art history«,¹² such explanations tend to completely disregard distinct poetic heterogeneity of the Movement as well as the fact that it was a very important and unique source of its vitality. Considering persistence of the cold war perspective, which is persistent even in the most recent art historical explanations of international art scene of 1950s and 1960s, it is not at all surprising. However, it would be wrong to try to explain such an attempt only as the remnant of the ideologically conditioned approach characteristic of the recent past. In our opinion it is also the consequence of a quite problematic attitude of the contemporary West European Art history to the post-war art of East and Central Europe. The essential elements of such an attitude is the inclination to equalize, smoothen or simply erase differences between the countries of the Eastern block, regardless of how significant they might be for understanding specific notion of modernity that was at the disposal to the local communities before the dissolution of dominant political order. Along the lines of the its Cold War habit to approach the entire geo-political space behind the iron curtain through the notion of socialist realism as a unifying, dominant form of art expression, West European art history developed in during the last 20 years a particular type of contextual narrative on socialist culture operating

on the *pars pro toto* principle and compressing the classes of analogous social, cultural and political phenomena into a single occurrence bestowed with meaning universal for the entire geopolitical space of former Eastern bloc.¹³

Lack of interest and indifference towards specific historical experiences of former communist countries (the situation in Poland differed from that in Hungary, which in turn was different from the situation in Bulgaria, etc.) also befalls Yugoslav model of socialism, which nominally remained 'different', but in the recent accounts of East and Central European modern art actually fused with the general image of the Soviet type communist totalitarian rule. In that respect, it would be possible to argue that at this particular moment even a quite general description of former Yugoslavia as »relatively neutral and un-aligned« country, is practically irrelevant for most art historians from the West Europe who have a rather vague idea about the meaning of those terms, as well as about the impact of the non-aligned and neutral politics upon Yugoslav art and culture.

If treated objectively, insufficient knowledge and indifference towards contextual type of explanation are insurmountable obstacles to a proper art historical interpretation. However, it seems that such criteria do not apply or could become quite flexible when it comes to the topics which overstep the borders of the West European art scene of 1950s and 1960s, including the New Tendencies and their relation to Zagreb. Although it would be excessive to interpret the introduction of still other locations in the story of New Tendencies as an attempt to deprive Zagreb of its privileged position on the geographical map of the Movement, the argument supporting the opinion that in particular moment (1961–1965) Paris was equally important for the development of the Movement as it was Zagreb, is not particularly convincing. New Tendencies were International phenomenon and Zagreb certainly was not the only place of importance in their history, but it was in many ways unique. Already at the beginning of 1960s Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art created a friendly environment and reliable organizational framework for diverse activities of the Movement, the same way as numerous discussions, presentations and competitions initiated from Zagreb and connecting one exhibition with the another, provided a sense of continuity of New Tendencies. A sense of continuity was particularly important in moments of crisis which were numerous, complicated and would have been hard to overcome without long and successful engagement of Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar, Božo Bek and Boris Kelemen acting as mediators and communicators committed to maintain the integrity of New Tendencies. We completely agree with Margit Rosen that the most important thing Zagreb could offer to the members of the Movement was »the platform for a young generation, to exhibit, to publish and to meet.«¹⁴ However, contrary to Rosen's opinion and considering the objectives of the New Tendencies, the topics of the discussions and documents produced in Zagreb, as well as the nature of numerous other events comprising the history of the Movement which have happened at this particular location, testifying that in 1960s – at the peak of Cold War conflict – little of that would be possible in some other city

and in some other country. To sustain our claim we shall try to give a comprehensive picture of socialist Yugoslavia in 1960's, explaining specific features of its historical and political situation, particularities of the social organization and the economic system, changes of cultural policies and general atmosphere on the intellectual scene of the country, which provided the framework for the New Tendencies and affected their position within the cultural realm of Socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁵ However, we shall start our discussion in an inverse order, starting with the story of Zagreb and its cultural scene of 1960's

Zagreb in 1960s

Perhaps it is the most convenient to begin our explanation of Zagreb cultural atmosphere in 1960s with the few, general remarks on Zagreb's local modernist tradition, that had its share in general response of local public to the basic assumptions of the New Tendencies. The first encounter of Zagreb art scene with constructivist art practices, happened at the beginning of 1920s, when this city became a central location of Zenitism, 'unparadigmatic' avant-garde art group that at certain point of its six years long history was rather close to ideas of Russian constructivism. Although contested, Zenitist episode was of major importance for the Croatian inter-war culture providing local community with the accurate information on European avant-garde. Zenitism introduced Zagreb art scene with the radical model of thinking on art, preparing the grounds for the reception of the Bauhaus at the end of 1920s. Building a strong foothold within the Zagreb architectural community, the ideology of the Bauhaus penetrated in 1930s¹⁶ into different types of art practices, even into the popular visual culture which started to use particular technical solutions and forms of expression inaugurated by the Bauhaus. Bauhaus legacy played a very important role in the process of internal ordering of inter-war modernist tradition during 1950s, enabling the reconstruction of modernist paradigm after the WW II. Moreover, it was exactly the ideology of Bauhaus that served as key referential point of the neo-constructivist idiom appearing at the Croatian art scene at the beginning of 1950s (art group EXAT 51) and – together with late manifestations of surrealism – making a clean and radical break with socialist-realism of the early post-war period.

In comparison to some other European cities and communities which have had a much more intense and productive encounters with historical avant-garde, in particularly with the constructivism, it would be pretentious to argue that local art audience developed enhanced sensibility for the »rational« types of art discourses, but it was certainly well prepared to meet the receptive demands of the New Tendencies when they surfaced local art scene at the beginning of 1960s. In addition to particularities of the local modernist tradition and to early post-war neo-constructivist experiences, Zagreb also had a rather vivid contemporary art scene and a circle of educated, well informed young art critics, who already

in the mid-1950s gained the reputation of uncompromising advocates of modernity. At the end of the decade, they already gathered around the Zagreb City Gallery of Contemporary Art. Opened in 1954, it was the first institution in the socialist Yugoslavia or in any other socialist country of Europe that was established with the single objective to exhibit and to promote contemporary art practices. In that capacity Zagreb City Gallery would offer and provide the organisational framework for New Tendencies.

Despite cultural and institutional preconditions for hosting such an ambitious cultural project, it would not be possible, if the Yugoslav social and political practice was similar to the practice of other socialist countries. Fortunately, it was quite different. After the expulsion from the »communist brotherhood« at the end of 1940s and after the subsequent decision of Yugoslav Communist party (YCP) leadership to find »its own path to socialism«, Yugoslavia had to pass a rather complicated »trial« period at the international political scene, and to convince East and West alike, that it was determined to remain politically unaligned and to keep its distance from both political super-powers. Although it would continue through the following decades to enjoy a special and the equal attention of both, America and USSR,¹⁷ already at the end of 1950s Yugoslav position at the international political scene was rather stable and unproblematic and the process of the emancipation from the Eastern bloc was finally over. Art, science and culture played a very important role in that process, proving by their objectivity (science) or modernity (art) the image of Yugoslavia socialism with the aura of liberalism. In comparison with other socialist countries, who were also occasionally using those two elements of »social super-structure« to fight the negative perception of dominant social order, in Yugoslav case the freedom of expression, at least in visual arts, was not just a matter of political propaganda. It was the outcome of the political decision made by the YCP already at the beginning of 1950s which has left the fields of science, art and culture pretty much to their own.

Whereas the developments at the national cultural scene were released of the ideological pressure, the communication with the rest of the world through most of the 1950s was under the political control. It really meant that the cultural exchange with other countries had to be officially mediated and organized by the appropriate state mechanisms. Despite such practice, between 1952 and 1960, Yugoslav citizens were able to see in their galleries and museums numerous exhibitions of European modern art,¹⁸ to attend the theatre and dance performances of the companies from both, the West and East Europe, to watch Hollywood movies, but also the best East and West European, Asian and Latin American art films and to read the translations of contemporary world literature. At the beginning of 1960s officially mediated forms of cultural exchange gave up in favour of personal and direct communication between Yugoslav institutions, artists, curators and scientists and their colleagues from other countries. Already in the mid-1960s institutionally independent relations with foreign colleagues became an ordinary practice of Yugoslav intellectuals resulting in a more diversified, rich

cultural production. It was particularly interesting within the fields of music and contemporary art, which already at the beginning of 1950s belonged among the most frequent topic of public debates. Financially supported by the state and the local authorities a development of contemporary art was mostly connected to the art scenes of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, cities that had a rich modernist tradition, the institutions entrusted with the care of the ongoing art production and urban, educated audience ready to be confronted with the more spectacular and intellectually more demanding forms of the art expression. Social, economic and political changes between 1950 and 1960 also changed the very notion of modernity that was at the disposal to the Yugoslav society, and in mid-1960s it became enough flexible to allow and encourage a various types of experimental art practices.¹⁹

In that respect and despite the fact that New Tendencies were among the earliest attempts of research based approach to visual arts in Yugoslav context, they were not a solitary example of an unorthodox creative practice in the Croatian modern art. Most of other, similar art phenomena were either based in Zagreb or closely connected to this city and its lively art scene. Perceived as cultural capital of Yugoslavia up to mid 1970s, Zagreb has gained such flattering position at the very beginning of 1950s when it was acting as a stage for the most dramatic and the most radical departure from the socialist realism²⁰ conducted in a manner which had obvious and strong repercussions within entire cultural space of socialist Yugoslavia. Positive consequence of Zagreb's special position in Yugoslav culture, were particularly felt in the 1960s when it became a central location for most important international cultural manifestations in former Yugoslavia. The earliest one was the Music Biennale (launched in 1961) providing the local community with the opportunity to hear and see the performances of John Cage, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, Dieter Schnebel, Pierre Schaeffer, Ann Halprin & Dancer's Workshop Company, and a lot of other artists from all over the world. Already in 1962 and in connection to Music Biennale there also appeared a group of young dancers and choreographers (Sonja Kastl, Neveka Biđin and Milana Broš) who have introduced Yugoslav culture with the new and different understanding of the dance, completely in tune with the developments on the international dance scene. Between 1962 and 1970 the most important member of this group, internationally recognized choreographer and creator of the Free Dance Chamber Ensemble (KASP), Milana Putar Broš, produced a number of rather complex and interesting performances based upon the interaction of sound, movement and technology that were rather close to the currents of contemporary visual arts.²¹

In addition to Music Biennale and contemporary dance, there was still another, very important cultural phenomena based in Zagreb – the Festival of Experimental Cinema (GEFF). Launched in 1963 and conceived as biannual event it was supposed to confront wider audience accustomed to the contemporary narrative film with the international production of experimental cinema. However already in

1965 GEFf abandoned the initial idea and introduced a completely different concept clearly pointing to the influence of the New Tendencies. The shift of the concept, indicated by the topic of the second issue of the Festival entitled »Research of cinematography and cinematographically aided research«, revealed the inclination of its organizers towards the same, rational approach to art as it was advocated by the New Tendencies. Direct connection between the two phenomena – between research based art and experimental cinema – was established in 1967 when the topic of the GEFf's third issue »Cybernetics and Aesthetics« announced a radical turn in the orientation of New Tendencies, the one that was going to be introduced in 1968 by the international seminar »Computers and Visual Research«. GEFf stepped out from the gravitation field of New Tendencies in 1970 in the atmosphere energized by the requests for personal and sexual freedom generated by student movement of 1968.²²

Whether tied to the institutional or personal efforts – as it was the case with New Tendencies – all of these cultural manifestations, events, collective projects and individual enterprises, managed to empower not only official, but also the alternative culture. Beginning to take shape in mid-1960s, up to mid 1970s the alternative culture would become a birthplace of conceptual art and all other forms of critical art practice marking the final break with modernist culture, which has reached its peak with intellectual adventure of New Tendencies. If we add to the list of the important cultural enterprises of 1960s connected to Zagreb a numerous translations of contemporary literature and philosophy, break-out of rock-music, the expansion of mass-media and popular culture we should be able to get a general outline of the local cultural scene that in many respects was more dynamic than it could be expected for a city of less than half a million inhabitants.

Liberal cultural policy and relatively benevolent attitude of state authorities towards modernism, proved by the substantial financial support to all kinds of modernist cultural production – at least in mid 1960s, before the economical reforms – relied upon a receptive audience and intellectual community prone to communication and cultural exchange.

However, those were not particularly exceptional characteristics that in 1960s could not be found in number of other European countries. It means that there had to be still other equally important reasons enabling Zagreb and Yugoslavia to become one of the most important locations of the New Tendencies, instead of some other country and some other city with appropriate institutional infrastructure and similar, if not much more convincing cultural tradition.

It is a (historical) fact that after the first and almost accidental exhibition of the New Tendencies in the Gallery of Contemporary Art, personal efforts and intellectual investments of the local art critics and curators played a significant role in attracting an international group of artists to Zagreb. But, in our opinion, besides the personal engagement of Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar, Božo Bek and Boris Kelemen, a development of the closer ties between the New Tenden-

cies and the Zagreb cultural milieu, had a lot to do with the overall, positive image of Yugoslavia or – to be more precise – with the way artists who were coming to Zagreb from number of West and East European countries, as well as from the West and South America, have experienced reality of the Yugoslav socialist society.

Yugoslav politics, economy and culture in the first half of 1960s

At the beginning of 1960s Yugoslavia was already playing an important role at the international political scene that was significantly surpassing real economic and military power of the country. Apart from being a creator and leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement actively engaged with the process of decolonization and political emancipation of the Third World, Yugoslavia was actively promoting the politics of »peaceful coexistence« acting as a crossroad and mediating point between Western and Eastern political options. Prestigious position in the international politics was further reinforced by the positive results on the domestic front.

Regardless the totalitarian character of its political order, »Yugoslav brand socialism« belonged at that point in time among the most successful examples of social and economic experiments in the post-war Europe. Economic and political stability at the end of 1950s and at the beginning of 1960s was the result of the unique political and economic development through which the country underwent after the break with Soviet bloc in 1948. Making all possible efforts to dissociate Yugoslavia from the notion of real-socialism and at the same time to retain the distance to Western democracies, Yugoslav political leadership, looking for the new model of social organization, has turned already in 1949 to early writings of Karl Marx, to social practice of Paris Commune and to anarchist legacy of Proudhon. Those were the key referential points of »workers self-management«, a new model of social and political organization that was officially launched in 1950. According to sociologist Tonči Kuzmanić, the designation of self-management actually had three aims, »to translate current inner socialist developments into understandable language which could communicate with outside world ... to continue the 'workers autonomy tradition' as well as the politics of state independency« and to declare itself as »post-ideology or even as 'pure practice' beyond any ideology (primarily beyond state and politics).«²³ The main objective of that new social order, in respect to the overall social organization, was to provide structural framework for transparent and just social relations based upon shared, social ownership over the means of reproduction and to secure a direct participation of the working class within processes of decision making at all the levels of society.

Since the fulfilment of that objective was »fully dependant upon the stage of economic development and self-consciousness of the working class«,²⁴ it was necessary to make occasional adjustments of social and economic relations. Thanks to frequency of those adjustments or 'reforms' it is

possible to claim that from 1952 (when self-management was actually implemented into the social practice) Yugoslav society lived in a state of permanent transition. Elements of self origination, experimentality and permanent, progressive movement towards collective projection of the new society provided the model of self-managing socialism with its utopian, avant-garde character, which at certain points in time echoed within the realms of art and culture. However, at the moment when it was first implemented, Yugoslavia was not capable to sustain its economical development without the external help and turned to US government for technological support and financial loans mostly invested into development of industry and industrial infrastructure.²⁵ At the beginning of 1960s when the story of New Tendencies begun, poverty and hardships of the early post-war years were almost forgotten. Intense economic development has turned the country into regional economic power, the personal standard was slowly but steadily approaching the West European way of living and ambitious foreign policy accelerated the process of democratization at all levels of social and economic relations – except for the realm of politics. Along with intense economic exchange with the West Europe and much more complicated economical relations with the Soviet bloc, Yugoslavia established different types of cooperation with countries of the Third World. In the course of 1960s and particularly of 1970s Yugoslav authors executed a number of project in urban planning and architecture as well as arts (mostly monumental, public sculpture) in Ghana, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Algeria, Egypt and in number of other Third World countries.²⁶

In 1960 all Yugoslav citizens were allowed to get passports and to travel wherever and whenever they want. They were also allowed to import foreign books, magazines, records and consumer goods, the amount of which was restricted by the modest sum of money that was possible to carry over the state border. Significant contribution to the process of liberalisation was also given by tourism, a new type of industry starting to develop at mid 1960s. All these improvements created the image of liberal and open society, overshadowing (relative) freedom of speech and one-party system that was not immune of political repression, as it would be demonstrated by the official response to student rebellion in 1968.²⁷ However, at the beginning of 1960s occurrences of repressive measures were mostly bound to political sphere and almost unknown in the realm of culture. From both, the West and the East European point of view, in comparison to other socialist countries Yugoslavian society seemed to be open, liberal and stable. It was the image shared by foreign visitors and most of the Yugoslav citizens, developing collective pride in their personal freedom and in the independence of their country.²⁸ However, it is important to have in mind that, at that point in time, the collective object of comparison was at the East, while the objects of personal desires were at Western side of the state borders.

Considering the situation in European politics, in particularly the formation of the new leftwing movements, it was not at all strange that Yugoslav model of socialism became a convincing argument against pro-Stalinist perspective

through which – even in the 1960s – most of the official («old») European Communist Parties were still approaching the question of social reforms.

Among the participants of the New Tendencies there were a number of authors, theoreticians, critics who were either actively involved into the New Left movements, or supported left-wing politics. Therefore, Ješa Denegri, the best connoisseur of New Tendencies, is probably right when he claims that turning Zagreb into the »headquarters« of that international art movement, could be interpreted as conscious political act of its members who believed that by gathering in cultural centre of one socialist country they »reveal the establishment of international community, that will operate in complete freedom, without the pressure of art market, without dictate of ruling ideologies, realising a dream of 'art republic' within a community going down the road of its technical and technological progress and coming to the threshold of its social transformation provided by that progress.«²⁹

But was such perception of Yugoslav society completely true? Almost! The institutional framework of the Yugoslav art scene even in the 1960s was still essentially based upon the Soviet model of art production, implemented already in 1947, despite the fact that all other models of organization taken over from Soviet practice were already either abolished or radically changed. However, a complex and distinctively hierarchical structure of various professional associations, academies and art schools that was central mechanism of repression in early post war period during the process of forced implementation of the social realism, slowly faded into the background of the Yugoslav art scene when it started to open to the currents of the European arts scene. At the beginning of 1960s the influence of that institutional apparatus was rather weak and could not affect events at the Yugoslav art scene. Another element taken over from the practice of other socialist countries was model of funding. Up to mid-1960s, arts, sciences and entire realm of culture rested upon federal financial resources. Steady flow of decent sums of money invested into that field of cultural production, made the art market and all other mercantile mechanisms regulating the art production in West Europe unnecessary and almost unknown to Yugoslav artists. Repercussions of such situation in Soviet bloc are very well known. Being the only patron of the arts, the state was in position to control and direct entire field of art production. The Yugoslav experience was a bit different. After demise of socialist-realism in 1949, there was not a single attempt of open political intervention into the course of the events at the Yugoslav art scene. Such attitude of the ruling Party did not mean that state gave up any possibility of using art in political purposes, but whenever political pragmatism justified such treatment it was conducted in a rather subtle manner, without the repression and with the silent consent of the modern artists.³⁰

Without either market influence or ideological control, Yugoslav art scene »existed in an 'interest-less' space, where no apparent external pressures were exerted on the artist to create this or that kind of art.«³¹ Although there were some

rather unpleasant repercussions of that – from the point of view of Western artist – almost ideal socio-cultural and political situation it was really rather specific and generated a number of positive outcomes. Coming from capitalist societies where the art market was positioned as the most relevant mechanism of the evaluation, and defining the fight against the market influence as almost the prime objective of New Tendencies, foreign artists attending exhibitions and events in Zagreb had a chance of the direct encounter with the situation incomprehensible from the point of view of West European world of art. At the same time they could have recognized a number of similarities between the art scenes of their countries and Yugoslavia. Among others things, it was the regulatory function of critical judgement that in Yugoslav case almost completely depended upon formal, poetic or aesthetic characteristic of the art work as well as upon particular, shared understanding of modernity and did not have to accommodate its conclusions either to the requirements of art market, or to the dictate of ideology. Engaged in promotion and support to different, particularly experimental types of art production, art criticism in Yugoslavia – much like in the rest of Europe – became already at the beginning of 1950s the principal ally of modern art, often guiding or even leading the way to its emancipation from the outdated institutional structure of the Yugoslav world of art. Already in 1960s art criticism occupied a prestigious position within the contemporary art scene, dedicated to the task to educate and prepare the audience for ever more demanding and more complex models of art reception. However, the successful fulfilment of that task depended upon the joint effort of art critics and artists, equally involved and equally responsible for their actions. Exactly such type of relation between those two, fundamental activities within the world of art was the cornerstone of the New Tendencies, at least from the point of view of the Croatian artists and art critics involved with the Movement.

Perception of Zagreb/Yugoslavia as a community in which it was possible »to operate with complete freedom«, assigned by Denegri to the international membership of New Tendencies, was rather close to the way most of the native artists experienced their own situation. After the extreme tension in the early post-war period marked by the passive but strong resistance to the implementation of socialist realism, the relation between State and modern artists was quite unproblematic. Apart from abandonment of ideological control and early affirmation of modern art as politically correct and officially acceptable type of cultural discourse, most important element upon which rested the relation of (relative) trust between state and art community was the fact that during WW II majority of Yugoslav artists and intellectuals active in 1950 and 1960 were members of the Popular Liberation Movement (NOP) led and organized by YCP. Therefore they did not accept socialism as an imposed political project, but as the only possible and ethically justified personal choice. From the present perspective it was the most significant difference between Yugoslavia and other socialist countries. Intimate commitment to socialism and political tolerance of modernist art practice, were also two crucial reasons why

in Yugoslav cultural space there were no such phenomena as »dissident modernism« or »artistic underground«,³² but instead a continuous line of artistic currents that run parallel to the developments at the European contemporary art scene. However, forms of expression acquired through the assimilation of the influences of the international art scene, had to be developed in specific social and political context and although formally close to their Western counterparts, at the ontological level they were quite different. There were differences even between Yugoslav republics. Those ontological »misunderstandings«, together with particularities of local, inter-war modernist experiences which strongly determined course of the events at the local art scenes after 1940s contributed to the latent conflict between high modernist type of abstraction (art informel, lyrical abstraction, tachism) and neo-constructivism (EXAT 51, New Tendencies) that occasionally reached the surface of the public discourse. In such occasions it was primarily represented as a confrontation between two distinctive, competing understandings of modernity essentially based upon ethical and not so much on poetic differences. As state had made its choice already at mid- 1950s giving priority to synchronicity of hegemonic high modernism instead of diachronic universality of rational, progressive and socially engaged model of modernity implied by neo-constructivism, conflict was not resolved but continued to persist all through the 1960s. It would re-appear within theoretical discourse surrounding New Tendencies, but in quite different form and within significantly different political circumstances, that were much more favourable in 1960's than in the previous decade.

Yugoslav politics, economy and culture in the second half of the 1960s

The almost rosy picture of Yugoslav social reality started to fade at mid 1960s: radical economic and social reforms, conflicts within YCP leadership, requests for democratization of political life and greater freedom of speech, public clashes between intellectual and political elite, were just a few, albeit the most important manifestations of social and political crisis culminating with student rebellion in 1968. Although different kinds of reforms were not unusual in SFRY, political and economic changes between 1963 and 1968 were the most dramatic ones since the beginning of 1950s and significantly transformed Yugoslav society. The reforms started with major reorganization of state apparatus and culminated with radical interventions into economic system, transferring ownership over 'the means of production' from State to workers. Taking over a full responsibility for their economic reproduction, workers also acquired freedom to freely associate and invest the surplus of their labour, or more precisely, the freedom of private entrepreneurship. Such decision created a paradoxical situation, reviving market economy within the conditions of collective ownership over the means of production, resulting with increased productivity, higher wages, enhanced incomes and stronger working motivation, but also with drastic fall of GDP (for almost 9%), market competition, massive economic

emigration to West Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Austria), unemployment of young educated people, class differentiation, consumerism and much lower degree of social sensitivity on all levels of the society.³³

Troubles in foreign relations, particularly in relations with the USSR between 1958 and 1967 additionally intensified the crisis, making Party leadership much more critical concerning a number of events at different levels of social life, in particularly those that were perceived from the Soviet point of view as to be too liberal and too close to the capitalist system of social and aesthetic values. The consequence of that crisis in regard to cultural production, were several statements by Josip Broz Tito on abstract art issued between 1963 and 1966³⁴ (between 2nd and 3rd exhibition of the New Tendencies). The most famous among those speeches was the one given at the very beginning of 1963 in which Tito claims that abstraction is »irreconcilable with our socialist ethics, something that is attempting to divert the course of our development from the one determined by our revolution.«³⁵ According to the documents produced by the Federal Commission For Cultural Exchange, Soviet pressure on Yugoslav authorities between 1960 and 1963 was extremely high. It has begun to involve art immediately after Yugoslav refusal to take part at the Moscow exhibition *Art of Socialist Countries* (1958-1959) that was supposed to demonstrate cultural unity of the 'socialist world' (including China). Call for active involvement in this exhibition, sent to Yugoslav authorities came in historical and political circumstances marked by renewed USA suspicion regarding SFRY relation to Eastern bloc. It was suspected that USSR could and would be probably misused and interpreted by the USSR leadership as a sign of YCP's intention to reconsider its relation to the »communist brotherhood«. Therefore, Yugoslav government politely declined the offer.³⁶ As the consequence, in the next few years a topic of visual arts would often surface in political contacts between the two countries and not within the particularly pleasant context.

The argument for such interpretation could be found in story of travelling exhibition of Yugoslav art, returning from its Asian tour via USSR in September of 1962. It was stopped in Moscow and according to the records of the Federal Commission For Cultural exchange,³⁷ USSR authorities unpacked the exhibition without any particular reason and withheld the artworks for almost half of the year, initiating endless diplomatic correspondence brimming with soviet comments regarding »unsocialist charater of Yugoslav art«. Such episodes, that were not unusual during the Khrushchev's rule, were – in our opinion – the main motivation for Tito's negative comments on abstract art, and were directed to the audience beyond Yugoslav borders. It certainly helped that Tito himself did not either like or understand abstraction, but it is possible to claim that his public criticism – however convincing it might sound – was not supposed to have any real repercussions in actual art production. Although approached with the respect and framed with the equally sharp, albeit worn-out decoration of usual political formulations, even in the officially monitored press his comments were represented as the personal, non-professional opinion.³⁸ However, as the memory of early post-war years when the opinion and personal taste

of party officials had very important role in the process of art evaluation was still rather fresh, and after Tito's speech some art events were cancelled and some others postponed. Among them was the 2nd exhibition of New Tendencies, first cancelled, than initiated again and finally held, according to the previously made planes, in the August of 1963. The exhibition went without any problems or repercussions, although the atmosphere surrounding that event was a bit more tense, revealing a less pleasant side of Yugoslav »path to socialism«.³⁹ It seems, however that Tito's comments on abstraction did not affect either the relation of the New Tendencies international membership to Zagreb and to the Gallery of Contemporary Art, or their perception of socialism, in particularly of the socialism as it was developing in Yugoslavia in 1960s. Such a claim could be supported by the fact that number of artists who were participating in the 3rd exhibition of New Tendencies also took part at the conference »Self-management as theory and practice« simultaneously held in Stubičke Toplice, a small town near Zagreb in autumn of 1965.⁴⁰

However it is important to have in mind that the entire incident with cancelled exhibition of New tendencies happened at the dawn of the economical reform, in the moment of extremely tense situation at the international political scene and even more tense relations within the YCP leadership, resulting in 1966 with the demise of Aleksandar Ranković, the most powerful member of the YCP Central Committee after Tito himself.

Grave social consequences of the economic reform widened the gap between YCP and left oriented intellectual elite. The gap opened already in 1960, when it became obvious that the dogmatic version of Marxism (dialectic materialism) was *fait accompli* which had to be replaced with a new, more flexible version of Marxist philosophy critical to the shortcomings of the self-managing socialism. Such type of insight was followed by the call for freedom of critical thinking and the requests for public debate with the representatives of all other liberal and left oriented schools of thinking from Yugoslavia and from all other (European) countries.⁴¹ Those were the basic premises of Korčula Summer School of Philosophy, one of the most interesting and – in sense of its influence that spread far beyond the field of philosophy – rather controversial phenomena in Yugoslav culture of 1960s. Through the writings of philosophers, sociologists, artists and literary theorists gathered around Summer School and its counterpart philosophical journal *Praxis*, it is possible to denote the specific perception of major theoretical and practical problems facing the concept of self-managing socialism in 1960s, as wells as the particular understanding of culture, which defines relation between art and society in rather unorthodox terms. Firmly believing that »no one has the monopole or exclusive privilege to any type of criticism«, determined to »cultivate uncompromising criticism of existing reality«, and to »develop vivid revolutionary model of thinking, which requires open and wide discussion that will also include non-Marxists«,⁴² members of Praxis group, the most radical Yugoslav philosophers (Gajo Petrović, Rajko Grlić, Milan Kangrga, Predrag Vranicki, Ljubomir Tadić, Zagorka Golubović, Mihajlo Marković, etc.) managed to gather around the Summer School an international circle of prominent Marxist thinkers (Georg Lukács, Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Kostas

Axelos, Agnes Heller, Ernest Mandel, Henri Lefebvre) from West and East Europe and America. (Re)defining traditional notion of »praxis« as »free, creative activity« and equalizing it with revolution (truth), philosophers of Praxis group advocated socialism as permanent revolutionary process of social transformation fostering development of unharnessed, desalienated, creative human subjectivity. Accepting self-management as the passing stage of »permanent revolution« justified by the necessity of liberation from the dogmatism of state socialism, Praxis severely criticized the behaviour of actual power elite assigning it with responsibility for serious deviation from initial, utopian project of self-managing socialism. Despite almost mythical status it has acquired during 1960s, political engagement of the Group never exceeded the limits of theoretical explanation, persisting upon the criticism of dominant political order from the standpoint of »creative Marxism«. Never the less, influence of Praxis upon generation of young intellectuals was very strong, which became obvious during student rebellion in 1968.

Although often dealing with question of creativity, there are rather few articles by the Praxis philosophers that demonstrate interest in the problems of visual arts and even those do not refer to any particular type of contemporary art practice, except vaguely and in terms that indicate abstraction in the broadest sense of the term.⁴³ In that respect it is at all not possible to come to any conclusion which might be the relation of that influential intellectual circle towards the phenomena of New Tendencies. If we would rely upon deduction and take into consideration Praxis's relation to contemporary technology and technical civilization, which was – according to their opinion – to be blamed of dehumanization and depersonalization of the modern society »turning the human being into the tool of his own tools«, our conclusion would be probably wrong.⁴⁴ Even the claim that the use of technology within art and culture was nothing else than »inhuman, socio-technical manipulation suppressing the importance of theory and power of critical thinking«,⁴⁵ does not relate to the New Tendencies but rather to technocratic mentality which was – from the point of view of Praxis philosophers – the real cause for the most unacceptable deviations of Yugoslav-brand socialism. The resistance or even despise towards technology could also be found on the other side of Yugoslav intellectual scene dominated at that point in time by the influence of existentialism. Existentialism of 1960s was probably the first manifestation of an »intellectual fashion« in Yugoslav post-war culture, with »existentialist literature as de rigueur in Slovenia and Croatia« and Heidegger as »probably the most influential single philosopher of the time«. ⁴⁶ »Heideggerianism« affected poetry, art and literary criticism, and was deeply incorporated within academic discourse of humanities. However it did not provoke public criticism and was mostly acting as some kind of passive resistance to overwhelming collectivism of everyday existence. Resentment towards technological civilisation that according to Heidegger annihilated the original immediacy of human existence, could be found in number of literary texts of that period, but was also affecting art criticism in particularly that segment of art critical scene that was giving priority to existentialist overtones of the artwork.

It would be pretentious to insist on some bipolarity of Croatian/ Yugoslav cultural scene regarding dominant approaches to social reality, but on the other hand it would be equally incorrect to say that those two different standpoints – marxist and existentialist – did not have rather strong, almost decisive influence upon the overall atmosphere of the decade. In that respect Croatian participants of New Tendencies, notably art critics and theoreticians Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar, Božo Bek and Vera Horvat Pintarić, belonged to still another, rather small and not so loud circle of independent intellectuals who were advocating – despite of undeniable difficulties and shortcomings of Yugoslav-brand socialism clearly presented in the public discourse of the 1960s – completely different, active and constructive attitude regarding inter-relation of art, politics and existential reality. The very fact that – from their perspective – freedom of thought, action and creation as the basic preconditions of responsible personal behaviour towards society, was not the question of theoretical analysis but of personal ethics, made a significant contribution to the subsequent interpretation of New Tendencies as the last manifestations of the avant-garde within the post-war Yugoslav art scene.

However, we do not agree with theoretician Miško Šuvaković who – correctly describing New Tendencies as an »engaged, critical and utopian leftist project of social transformation through art and transformation of art through the accomplishment of its social function in designing existential environment«,⁴⁷ claims that avant-garde nature of that international art movement could be recognized through its attempt »to accomplish constructivist project within the context of modern society of 1960s that had all technological and civilising potentials presupposed by the great synthesis of science, technology and arts«. ⁴⁸ In our opinion the avant-garde position of New Tendencies should be sought within theoretical discourse surrounding computer assisted type of visual research that, between 1967 and 1969, managed to set parameters of the new utopian horizon for visual arts directing them towards – at that point in time still non existent – paradigm of new media art. A very important question is whether it would be at all possible if theoretical discourse of New Tendencies would not fall within group of diverse theoretical and philosophical discourses circulating through the Yugoslav cultural space of 1960s like some kind of »floating signifiers« trying to fill in the void generated by the disintegration of the initial utopian projects of socialist self-management, with utopian visions of their own.

In our opinion that utopian, projective timber of the movement was the key element that kept New Tendencies alive much longer than anyone could expected. It is hard to believe that located for so many years in Zagreb, in one of the intellectually most engaged communities of socialist Yugoslavia, that international art movement was not even partially sustained and energized by the quite specific, dramatic and equally utopian project of Yugoslav socialism, which slowly started to disintegrate almost at the same moment as the New Tendencies themselves.

(Translated by Ljiljana Vuglač)

Notes

- 1
OLIVER GRAU, »Introduction«, in: *Media Art Histories*, (ed.) Oliver Grau, Cambridge, 2007, 9.
- 2
See for instance MICHAEL RUSH, *New Media in Art*, London, 2005; *Media Art Histories*, (ed.) Oliver Grau, Cambridge, 2007 (2010); SIEGFRIED ZIELINSKI, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, Cambridge, 2008; EDWARD A. SHANKEN, *New Media in Art*, London, 2009.
- 3
Bit International. A Little-Known Story about a Movement, a Magazine and the Computer's arrival in Art. *New Tendencies and Bit international 1961–1973*, (ed.) MARGIT ROSEN, Karlsruhe, 2009.
- 4
ARMIN MEDOSCH, »The Ultimate Avant-garde: New Tendencies and Bit International«, <http://www.thenextlayer.org/node/731>, retrieved on 21st of July 2010.
- 5
See, for example article by DOUGLAS KAHN, »Between a Bach and Bard Place: Productive Constraint in Early Computer Art«, in: *Media Art Histories*, (ed.) Oliver Grau, Cambridge, 2007, 423–453, dealing with computer aided research in music, literature and visual arts of 1960's.
- 6
All citations from ARMIN MEDOSCH (note 2)
- 7
All citations from ARMIN MEDOSCH (note 2)
- 8
RADOSLAV PUTAR, untitled introductory article in the catalogue of the exhibition *Tendencies 4*, Zagreb, 1969.
- 9
Except for the book *Constructive Approach Art: Exat 51 and New Tendencies* by JEŠA DENEGRI, published in 2000, doctoral thesis by Marina Viculin, recently defended at L'université de Sorbonne and a decade long research by Croatian artist Darko Fritz, there were no other attempts on behalf of Croatian art historians to give comprehensive interpretations of this International art movement. Fritz's work resulted in first retrospective of *New Tendencies* entitled *Bit international [Nove] tendencije Computer und visuelle Forschung Zagreb 1961 – 1973*, that was presented at Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz (28. 4. 2007. – 17. 6. 2007.). It was also presented in the Medienmuseum of Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe. In our opinion it is most likely that the retrospective of *New Tendencies* would never happen if it was not for the personal efforts of Darko Fritz who invested almost a ten years of his life into research of art collections and archives of Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art, discovering a number of previously unknown facts and information about the history of the movement. Fritz also published a several articles based upon his research, see for example Vladimir Bonačić – rani radovi, Zagreb 1968–1971 (Vladimir Bonačić – early works, Zagreb 1968–1971), ČIP 53/7–8, 2006., 52–57; *Nove tendencije (New tendencies)*, *Oris*, 10 / 54, 2008, 176–191;
- 10
Denegri wrote a number of important articles on this subject, see for example *Geometrijske tendencije u hrvatskoj umjetnosti*, Split, 1985.; »Četiri modela 'druge linije' u hrvatskoj umjetnosti 1950.–1970.«, *Književna revija*, 42, 3/4, 2002, 95–106; »Druga linija kao izraz duha mjesta«, *Život umjetnosti*, 50, 1991, 21–27 etc.
- 11
Based upon artworks and documents from the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb an exhibition held in Graz and later on in Karlsruhe, has not reached Zagreb. The MSU is the heir of former Zagreb City Gallery, which means that it is also in possession of the abundant historic documentation on the history of the Movement. However the retrospective of NT was not curated by custodians of that institution, but by media artist Darko Fritz. It is needless to say that among the contributors to the publications on the phenomenon of *New Tendencies* issued on the occasion of the retrospective in Graz and Karlsruhe there is not a single article written by the employees of the Zagreb Museum.
- 12
See the articles by Peter Weibel and Margit Rosen in the monograph of *New Tendencies* (note 3).
- 13
Convincing example of that approach is a student rebellion of 1968 in the Eastern block. Starting with the dramatic and violent events in Poland and continuing in Czechoslovakia where it took the most exuberant and doubtlessly tragic course, student rebellion was also felt in all other socialist countries. In Yugoslavia, for example, where it caused the occupation of the Universities, police violence and the political repression, student rebellion was the first public manifestation of dissatisfaction with the dominant political order after the WW II which profoundly affected all the levels of social life. But, from the point of view of West European observer, the series of analogous yet different manifestations of the self-consciousness of the young generation from Moscow to Belgrade and Zagreb fused into the single image of the Russian tanks on the streets of Prague. However symbolic it really does not say much or almost anything about the transformative power of that historical event that was in a number of different and rather complicated ways deeply inscribed into the cultural production of the Eastern block, as well as into the cultural production and overall intellectual atmosphere of socialist Yugoslavia. For students movement of the Eastern block see NORA FARLIK (ed.), *1968 revisited. 40 years of protest movements*, Brussels, 2008.
- 14
Opinion given in the private correspondence with the author of this article, and incorporated into M. Rosen's contribution to this publication (note 3).
- 15
For comprehensive and well documented account on the history, culture and global politics of 1960 see in: JOHN LEWIS GADDIS, *Cold War: A New History*, London, 2006; *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, (ed.) JUSSI M. HANHIMAKI – ODD ARNE WESTAD, London, 2004; ALAIN TOURAINE, *The May movement; revolt and reform: May 1968 – the student rebellion and workers' strikes – the birth of a social movement*, London, 1971.
- 16
The merit for the introduction of Bauhaus »ideology« into the realm of Croatian culture belongs to members of the Zagreb school of architecture (Drago Ibler, Drago Galić, Mladen Kauzlarić, Stjepan Planić). At the beginning of 1930's they joined a progressive Art Association Zemlja (The Soil), helping the ideas of Bauhaus to affect the other types of cultural practice, in particularly art pedagogy as it was practiced in the communica-

tion of Association's members with the different social groups. See in PETAR PRELOG, *Slikarstvo Udruženja umjetnika Zemlja i nacionalni likovni izraz* (doktorska disertacija), Zagreb, 2006.; *Kritička retrospektiva »Zemlja«: slikarstvo, grafika, crtež, kiparstvo, arhitektura*, catalogue of the retrospective exhibition, Zagreb, 1971.; VLADIMIR MALEKOVIĆ, »Zemlja«: some problems of interpretation: on the occasion of the critical retrospective exhibition, *Život umjetnosti*, 40, 78/79, 2006., 184–189.

17
LORRAINE M. LEES, *Keeping Tito Afloat, The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*, Pennsylvania, 1997.

18
Between 1952 and 1961 there were at least 20 exhibitions offering surveys of French, Italian, American, Swedish, Polish, Czechoslovakian, German modern art and design, that could be seen in capitals of Yugoslav republics. A usual route would be Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and occasionally Skopje. Sarajevo was usually left out from that route; see in LJILJANA KOLEŠNIK, *Između istoka i zapada, Hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 50ih godina/ Between East and West. Croatian Art and Art Criticism of 1950's*, Zagreb, 2006.

19
See in: *Avant-garde Tendencies in Croatian Art*, (ed.) ZVONKO MAKOVIĆ, catalogue of the exhibition, Zagreb, 2007 (the chapters on music, dance, film and theatre); see also in: TOMISLAV BORČIĆ, *Fenomen i kultura kinoklubova šezdesetih godina i utjecaj Novih tendencija na GEF/Phenomenon of cinema-clubs of 1960's and the influence of New Tendencies upon GEF/*, *Up and Underground – Art Dossier*, 11/12, 2007, 28–61.

20
LJILJANA KOLEŠNIK (note 18), 111–217.

21
Apart from KASP, it is also important to mention FONAT Group of the Phonoplastic Atelier–Theatre, and Experimental Free Dance Group that was the first independent dance studio established by Milana Broš, already in 1962. Insisting on the autonomy of movement and developing precise conceptual framework of her choreographies, Milana Broš developed into an icon of contemporary dance in Croatia. The most impressive of her works from 1960's *Ionisation*, *Integrals*, *Typing machines + jazz*, *Opera seria (metronome)* and *Minimal moving* were closely connected to Zagreb Musical biennale, and were documented in the Biennale Archives. See: *Kaspomanija* (DVD), Zagreb, 2002.

22
The topic of the fourth GEF Festival was »Sexuality as the road to humanity«; for more on the history of GEF see in: TOMISLAV BORČIĆ (note 19), 44.

23
TONČI A. KUZMANIĆ, *Managerial revolution discourse: from self-management to management*, Manchester, 2007; <http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2007/proceedings/managementandphilology/kuzmanic.pdf>, retrieved on 17th September, 2008.

24
EDVARD KARDELJ, *Problemi naše socijalističke izgradnje, Beograd/Problems of our socialist development/ Beograd 1954*.

25
LORRAINE LEES (note 17), 155–227.

26
Yugoslav companies were contractors for huge infrastructural projects, representative official and housing buildings and urban

planning. While fostering development of the Third World countries they also exported particular understanding of modernity operative within completely different cultural context and within rather different social and political circumstances. Unfortunately most of those projects are today almost completely forgotten.

27
Between 1957 and 1963 the annual growth of Yugoslav GDP sticking to 9%, has positioned SFRY among the fastest growing national economies of that period. However, vigorous and successful industrialisation, full employment and constant progress in education of the working force, were as responsible for such positive economic results as it was the situation in global economy. Interdependence of national and global economy steadily increased and together with political crisis within Yugoslav communist party became key factor of severe recession which hit Yugoslav society in mid 1960's; see in: MIODRAG ARSIĆ – DRAGAN R. MARKOVIĆ, '68: *Studentski bunt i društvo / '68 Student Rebellion and Society/ Beograd*, 1985, 23–26.

28
During 1960's such impression was particularly influential in the countries of the Soviet bloc (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary), that were also undergoing social and economic reforms. Support to those reforms, in particularly to the Czech Party leadership with which Belgrade had constant and intensive diplomatic communication through the second half of 1967 and 1968, was based upon the notion of »socialism as global political process« advocated by YCP from the beginning of 1950's. Bitter end of the Prague Spring rebellion was received in Yugoslavia with the complete outrage and public demonstrations against Soviet military intervention. Political support to the CCP leadership was so strong and serious that at the beginning of 1968 SFRY was ready to enter with the Czechoslovakia into a monetary and economic union regardless of the possible Soviet military response; more on that subject see in: TVRTKO JAKOVINA, *Titos Jugoslawien der kommunistische Alliierte von Prag und Washington*, in: *Prager Frühling, Das internationale Krisenjahr 1968. Beiträge*, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2008, 571–587.

29
JEŠA DENEGRİ (note 9) 365–366.

30
Instrumentalization of art happened mostly during 1950's, when State was promoting and using modernist type of abstraction as still another proof of essential difference between Soviet and Yugoslav type of socialism. More on that subject see in: LJILJANA KOLEŠNIK (note 12), 361–371; TVRTKO JAKOVINA, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici 1948.–1963. / Socialism grown on American Corn 1948–1963 / Zagreb*, 2003; JOŽE PIRJAVEC, *Tito, Stalin in Zahod / Tito, Stalin and the West/*, Ljubljana, 1987.

31
DUNJA BLAŽEVIĆ, *Who's that singing over there? Art in Yugoslavia and after... 1949–1989*, in (ed.), LORAND HEGY *Aspects/ Positions – 50 Years of Art in Central Europe 1949 – 1999*, catalogue of the exhibition, Wien, 2000, 123.

32
Even in 1980's when there appear a range of post-modernist art practices closely connected to the locations of youth sub-culture and based upon openly critical approach to Yugoslav society, it was impossible to establish any relation between the way they were presented or disseminated and model of operation typical for either East or West European artistic underground. Youth sub-cultural scene was a birth place of that art and the location at which there was the audience able to share in particular type

- of ironic distance from which the authors like Mladen Stilinović, Tomislav Gotovac or art group IRWIN approached political and social reality of that period. Support for such opinion could be found in ALEŠ ERJAVEC (ed.), *Postmodernism and the Post-socialist Condition. Politicized Art under Late Socialism*, Berkeley, 2003.
- 33
Ekonomika Jugoslavije : posebni dio / Yugoslav Economics: special segment/ (ed.) DRAGUTIN ALFIER – VLADIMIR FARKAŠ, Zagreb, 1975, 123–128.
- 34
 They could be found in JOSIP BROZ TITO, *Govori i članci / Speeches and Articles/ XVIII*, Zagreb 1966.
- 35
 JOSIP BROZ TITO (note 34), 34.
- 36
 In the Archive of Yugoslavia, in Belgrade there is a translation of an official invitation to exhibition send by the Soviet government in June of 1958 (if we judge by the note of the official who has prepared the translation, it was not the first invitation to that event) and on the right margin of the document there is a hand written remark by the Chief of the Commission for Cultural Exchange, Marko Ristić »To be refused – smoothly but firmly!«, Archive of Yugoslavia, collection 534/box 45, file 7–9.
- 37
 Archive of Yugoslavia, collection 534/box 45, file 9–11.
- 38
 See for example the representation of Tito's statements on abstraction in the most influential daily newspapers *Vjesnik* (25677, 2.01.1963), *Borba* (4578, 2. 1. 1963) or *Politika* (43897, 2. 1. 1963).
- 39
 More on the organization of the 2nd exhibition of the New Tendencies see in JEŠA DENEGRİ (note 9), 142.
- 40
 Information about that event I have acquired through the interview with Matko Meštrović, held in October of 2009. As far as he could remember, in addition to Radoslav Putar and Vera Horvat Pintarić, most active participants in the discussions during the Conference were Italian artists Enzo Mari and Alberto Biasi.
- 41
 The Congres of Yugoslav Philosophers and Sociologists, Bled 1960.
- 42
 VANJA SUTLIĆ, »Why Praxis?«, *Praxis* 1/I (1964), 3.
- 43
 See the article by RUDI SUPEK, *Humanizacija ljudske sredine i ljudskog stvaranja*, in the catalogue of the exhibition *Nova tendencija 3*, Zagreb, 1965, 13–14.
- 44
 VANJA SUTLIĆ (note 42), 3.
- 45
 VANJA SUTLIĆ (note 42) 3.
- 46
 ALEŠ ERJAVEC (note 32), 137.
- 47
 MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ, *Pojmovnik moderne i post-moderne umjetnosti/Lexicon of Modern and Postmodern Art/*, Beograd, 2002, 436.
- 48
 MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ (note 47), 115–18.

Sažetak

Ljiljana Kolečnik

Desetljeće slobode, nade i izgubljenih iluzija. Jugoslavensko društvo 60-ih kao okvir Novih tendencija

Međunarodni umjetnički pokret Novih tendencija gotovo je nevidljiv unutar dominantne povijesti europskoga modernizma, no aktualni proces konsolidacije novomedijske umjetnosti mogao bi poslužiti kao valjana platforma za uključivanje toga međunarodnoga umjetničkoga pokreta u povijest umjetnosti novih medija, kamo on – u poetičkom smislu – i pripada. Iako je historijski okvir umjetnosti novih medija još relativno nestabilan, obrisi kanonskoga niza likovnih pojava na kojima će u budućnosti počivati već su prilično jasni, jednako kao što je jasna i činjenica da njegovo širenje ovisi o sposobnosti određene likovne pojave da zadovolji zahtjeve teleologije razvojnoga procesa novomedijske umjetnosti, čiju konfiguraciju u ovom trenutku određuje nekoliko vrlo utjecajnih, zapadnoeuropskih istraživačkih institucija. Ako je suditi po načinu interpretacije Novih tendencija, ponuđenom u monografiji toga umjetničkoga pokreta, koju je nedavno objavio Centar za umjetnost i medijske tehnologije (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie) iz Karlsruhea, taj bi proces – uz dobrodošla nova objašnjenja – mogao uključivati i neke radikalnije i ne uvijek uvjerljivo argumentirane zahvate u povijesni tijek odabranih likovnih pojava.

U slučaju Novih tendencija takvi zahvati pokazuju se kao pokušaj redefinicije prostorne konfiguracije pokreta, odnosno kao nastojanje da se uloga Zagreba izjednači s ulogom nekih drugih, europskih lokacija na kojima su se simultano odvijali slični ili identični oblici umjetničkih istraživanja. S obzirom da su Nove tendencije bile međunarodni pokret, njegovo zatvaranje u bilo kakve nacionalno, kulturološki ili ideološki određene granice posve je neprihvatljivo, no jednako je neprihvatljiva i suvremena praksa zapadnoeuropske umjetnosti da likovne fenomene vezane uz kulturna središta bivših socijalističkih zemalja dekontekstualizira i podvrgava svojevrsnoj ideološkoj purifikaciji. U primjeru Novih tendencija – a s obzirom na nesumnjivo lijevu orijentaciju većine pripadnika toga umjetničkoga pokreta – spomenuti je pristup krajnje neuvjerljiv i neproduktivan, a prelama se kroz problematiziranje Zagreba kao jedne od njegovih središnjih lokacija. Razlozi takvoga načina interpretacije, kojima se bavimo u uvodnom dijelu ovoga članka, pronalaze se kako u vitalnosti hladnoratovske perspektive, posebno uočljive u recentnim objašnjenjima umjetnosti 50-ih i 60-ih godina, ali i u stvarnoj nezainteresiranosti zapadnoeuropske povijesti umjetnosti za razlike u historijskom iskustvu zemalja bivšega Istočnog bloka, te u njezinoj sklonosti ujednačavanju i komprimiranju čitavih klasa srodnih kulturnih i umjetničkih fenomena u sumarne i univerzalno važeće predodžbe o prirodi kulturne produkcije s one strane željezne zavjese. Zahvaljujući primjeni principa *pars pro toto*, zamaglile su se i bitne razlike između sovjetskog i jugoslavenskog modela socijalističkoga društva, a time i mogućnost da se kontekstualnim tipom interpretacije objasne razlozi zbog kojih su Zagreb i socijalistička Jugoslavija već početkom 60-

ih godina – u trenutku jedne od najopasnijih kulminacija hladnoratovskoga sukoba – postali odgovarajućim intelektualnim i ideološkim okvirom djelovanja toga međunarodnoga umjetničkoga pokreta.

Polazeći od teze da je u desetljeću u kojem se odvijaju izložbe Novih tendencija gotovo nemoguće pronaći neki drugi grad osim Zagreba i neku drugu sredinu osim socijalističke Jugoslavije koja bi svojom umjetničkom tradicijom, kulturnom praksom i autentičnim modelom društvene izgradnje izravno i spontano izlazila u susret programskim ciljevima toga umjetničkoga pokreta, drugi dio članka započinje prikazom zagrebačkoga kulturnog miljea, odnosno prikazom njegove modernističke tradicije i ranih poslijeratnih iskustava. Ideologija Bauhauza, s kojom se zagrebačka publika upoznala u radu Udruženja umjetnika »Zemlja« te njezino oživljavanje u neokonstruktivističkoj praksi EXAT-a 51 omogućili su lokalnoj zajednici kvalitetan uvid u racionalistički tip avangardne umjetničke prakse i osigurali joj tip historijskog iskustva na temelju kojega je mogla izaći u susret receptivnim zahtjevima Novih tendencija. Zahvaljujući dijelom i takvoj kulturnoj tradiciji, Zagreb je odigrao vrlo važnu ulogu u procesu rekonstrukcije modernizma u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji tijekom 50-ih godina, da bi u 60-ima postao lokacijom niza međunarodnih kulturnih manifestacija koje su ga sve do sredine 70-ih godina činile najvažnijim kulturnim središtem jugoistočne Europe. Na temelju tih historijskih i kulturoloških predispozicija te činjenice da je moguće uspostaviti relaciju između određenih elemenata kulturnih praksi jugoslavenskoga socijalističkoga društva i programskih ciljeva Novih tendencija, moguće je ustvrditi kako specifična uloga Zagreba u povijesti toga međunarodnoga umjetničkoga pokreta nije proizvod slučajnih okolnosti (osim prve zagrebačke izložbe 1961. godine), nego svjesnoga izbora jedne lijevo orijentirane, velike međunarodne skupine umjetnika, koja se u slučaju jugoslavenskoga društva susrela i s mogućnošću praktične provjere određenih segmenata svojega programa u njegovoj kulturnoj praksi. O tome svjedoči spontana ugradnja određenih segmenata »ideologije« Novih tendencija u različite oblike lokalne kulturne proizvodnje 60-ih godina – od filma i televizije, preko dizajna, do plesa i glazbe. Najveći dio umjetničke produkcije te vrste nastaje upravo u Zagrebu, koji je u jednom iznimno složenom historijskom trenutku ponudio pouzdanu organizacijsku strukturu, mogućnost slobodnog izlaganja i susreta umjetnika iz gotovo čitavoga svijeta te se stoga ukazuje kao gotovo 'prirodni' okvir Novih tendencija. No Zagreb ne bi mogao odigrati tako važnu ulogu u povijesti toga međunarodnoga umjetničkoga pokreta da se nije nalazio u zajednici koja pojam eksperimenta izjednačava i sa svojom socijalnom, odnosno političkom praksom. Stoga se u nastavku članka objašnjavaju politička, ekonomska i kulturološka obilježja jugoslavenskoga društva 60-ih godina, s naglaskom na uzrocima i posljedicama procesa liberalizacije različitih

aspekata jugoslavenske egzistencijalne i kulturne prakse, koji se interpretira i kao refleks međunarodnih političkih ambicija tadašnje države. Objašnjenja političke i ekonomske situacije te stanja na likovnoj sceni zemlje nadopunjena su i prikazom osnovnih socijalnih sukoba, njihovih uzroka i posljedica te prikazom odnosa političke i intelektualne elite, koji je tih godina posebno dramatičan, ali i neobično važan za razumijevanje cjelokupne situacije u jugoslavenskoj kulturi druge polovice 20. stoljeća. U zaključku članka iznosi se i teza – suprotna dosadašnjim objašnjenjima avangardne

prirode ovoga umjetničkog pokreta – kako avangardni karakter Novih tendencija ne treba tražiti u dovršenju projekta međuratnih avangardi, nego prije u okretanju problemima medijski podržanog tipa vizualnih istraživanja, koji definiraju novi utopijski horizont suvremene umjetnosti, a taj umjetnički pokret kao jednu od ključnih točaka povijesti umjetnosti novih medija.

Ključne riječi: Nove tendencije, neo-avangarda, neo-konstruktivizam, Zagreb, Jugoslavija, samoupravni socijalizam