

## Art Criticism in Central and Eastern Europe After 1989

The Project realized together with AICA Slovakia, AICA Czech Republic and AICA Hungary with the support of the Visegrad Fund.

The aim of the project is to reflect on the state of art criticism of Visegrad countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) after 1989 till today. It consists of a panel discussion about the differences between art criticism of Central and Eastern Europe vs. Western Europe organized online, and selecting critical texts (in the field of contemporary visual art), translating them into English, and publishing them in an anthology, divided into several applicable Categories (chapters). The project will be accompanied by discussions by art critics from the thematic areas of the publication in each of the partner countries.

The main issue with visual art criticism (reviews of exhibitions, events, trends etc.) is that it is mostly published in mother languages, so it is unavailable for research or reference for scholars or art critics from different countries in the region. Our aim is to collect the dispersed material and make it available for research for international scholars and art critics, also from Central and Eastern European countries. In the contemporary art history of Central and Eastern Europe (after 1989), systematic research on art criticism is very rare and so are the books collecting dispersed texts written by art critics, and almost always they are published in their original language. If there are such books published, these are collections of texts by one author and mostly they deal with earlier periods – 1970s and 80s. This field lacks an anthology of texts illustrating the vital discussions in which art criticism was engaged parallelly in all CEE countries in the post-1989 period. It results in the absence of the history of art criticism in the region, the lack of a sense of its continuity, and the lack of knowledge of its meaning in the culture of a given period. It also makes comparative studies within the CEE region impossible in the realm of art criticism. Art criticism from the CEE region is also not widely known internationally, for the same reason – the texts are dispersed and only available in mother languages. Therefore, international scholars are unable to read, analyze and compare them.

To address the issue, we need the critical texts to be translated into English. The roundtable discussion will be an occasion to reflect on the peculiarity of art criticism of Central and Eastern Europe. Its transcription will serve as main introduction to the anthology. The texts, (80 pages from each country) will be published in chapters: 1. Art during the transition period, 2. Gender and body, 3. Feminism, 4. Otherness and politics of identities, 5. Institutional Critique, 6. Political (Engaged) Art and Censorship, 7. Art in public spaces, 8. Critique of critique, 9. Critique on art from before 1989. This will organize art criticism and facilitate future research. With Partners we will organize international discussions about various issues relevant to art criticism in the region (eg. ecology, feminism etc.). It will promote the Project and create an opportunity to popularize art criticism outside of our region and make possible the exchange and communication between art critics within the region. It will also be an opportunity for self-reflection on the state of art criticism in the region and the discussion on the differences and similarities within the region, as well as between the CEE and Western Europe. During these discussions, we'll have an opportunity to think over the main points of the introductions to the chapters of the book. Each national section of AICA involved in the Project will organize such a discussion in their country. Also, during the Project, we will re-publish texts from all countries in art magazines of all involved countries. Every Partner will choose one art magazine.

There hasn't been any similar multi-national initiative so far. The publication of an anthology translated into English and organized into thematical chapters, as well as the longer-term cooperation of art critics from our countries, takes place for the first time.



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The project started with a round table discussion as part of the AICA International webinar series, with the editors involved in this publication. It helped to identify key features of critical writing on art and culture in CEE after 1989. It will function as an extended, collective introduction to the anthology. Departing from included texts, the panel aimed to synthesize the most significant characteristics of the era as they unfolded in relation to the local, regional, and global developments in art, culture, socio-politics, technology, and ecology. The panel attempted to identify what chronotype (time-space) has been produced in and through critical discourse on the notions of seven conceptual categories forming the chapters of the book. The round table was transmitted online and later the transmission will be embedded in the website dedicated to the project, together with an Anthology available in pdf. It will be the first attempt to look at art criticism from CEE, published after 1989, holistically. The anthology will be the first step of the long-term collaboration of the partners from Central Europe and the starting point of the creation of an extended bibliography of critical texts from the field of contemporary art criticism in CEE countries which we plan to develop in the future.

The round table, organized as part of the helped to answer vital questions, such as: What role does 1989 play in the critical discourse in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)? What kind of exchange took place among critical writing and discourse across CEE? What does critical writing on art and culture have in common across CEE, and what are the (local, national) differences? How has critical writing transformed with communication technologies and social media? How has critical writing engaged the dangers of impending new authoritarianism in CEE? Has critical writing engaged in the production of a new political economy after 1989? How has critical discourse engaged in the production of new collectivity (within and beyond the circuit of art)? Is it possible to name dominant themes, styles, positions in critical writing on art and culture in CEE after 1989? How has critical writing after-1989 envisioned the position and place of CEE in the world? Have the dichotomies of the second half of the twentieth century (such as East vs West) continued shaping the conversations? How has critical writing on art and culture in CEE engaged with the discourse on decoloniality, racial capitalism, extractivist capitalism, logistical capitalism, ecological sustainability, etc., which dominate the global conversation on art's engagement with the urgencies shaping the world today? Asking these questions is vital for the intellectual development of our region, its self-awareness, and the decolonization from the (so-called) Western culture.

Participants: Dorota Monkiewicz (AICA Poland), Jana Gerzova (AICA Slovakia), and Attila Horanyi (AICA Hungary). Moderator: Arkadiusz Poltorak (AICA Poland). Project co-ordinator Malgorzata Kazmierczak (AICA Poland).

*The project is co-financed by AICA International and the Governments of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia through Visegrad Grants from International Visegrad Fund. The mission of the fund is to advance ideas for sustainable regional cooperation in Central Europe.*

Bios:

## AICA POLAND

**Dorota Monkiewicz**, is an art historian, curator and art critic. For nearly two decades she has been working as a curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Museum in Warsaw. In the years of 2005-2007 she was also working on the Programming Committee of



the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Warsaw. Since March 2009 she was a head of the project of founding a new museum of contemporary art in Wrocław. She served as a founding director of the **Wrocław Contemporary Museum** in the years of 2011-2016. A President of Polish Section of AICA (2003-2009). She has curated numerous exhibitions and conferences on contemporary Polish and international art and published over one hundred texts, including essays, articles, catalogue entries, exhibition reviews, catalogues and books, on modern and contemporary art, museum collecting, and curatorial practice. Her fields of interest include conceptual, feminist and politically engaged art and also the history of art in the region of Eastern and Central Europe. Recipient of the Jerzy Stajuda Award for Art Criticism in 2017.

## AICA SLOVAKIA

**Jana Geržová**, art historian and critic, editor-in-chief of the magazine Profil.

Before 1989, she cooperated with several artists on the unofficial scene. After 1989, she co-founded the fine art magazine Profil, and since 1992 she has been its editor-in-chief. She specializes in various aspects of contemporary art and the art of the second half of the 20th century. She was president of the Slovak section of AICA (2000 – 2007) and worked at the Academy of Fine Arts at the Institute of Arts and Sciences (2002 – 2012). Her research has resulted in several publications: *Slovak fine art 1949 – 1989 from the point of view of contemporary criticism* (2006); *Painting Talks. Slovak painting through oral history* (2009) and international symposia: *Conceptual Art at the Turn of the Millennium* (cooperation with Erzebet Tatai), 2000; *Painting in the Postmedial Age* (2012).

## AICA HUNGARY

**Attila Horányi** is the director of the Institute for Theoretical Studies at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. He has an MA in Art History and a PhD in Aesthetics, both from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Dr. Horányi was a Fulbright scholar at the Cultural Anthropology Department at Northwestern University. He received the Kállai Grant for three years and is the recipient of the prestigious Németh Lajos Prize (given to art historians and art critics), for one of his book reviews he received the Opus Mirabile Prize and was awarded the Art Critic Prize by the Horváth Art Foundation. He has been the member of numerous boards, the most notable of which was the Photography Board of the National Cultural Fund, which he also led for two years. Between 2015 and 2017 he chaired the Capa Grand Prize Jury. Dr. Horányi frequently organizes conferences in art history, theory of photography and visual culture. His areas of research include photography theory, design theory, and the philosophy of art and art history. Besides teaching and researching he enjoys writing reviews for various art magazines. Presently he serves as the president of the Hungarian Section of AICA, the International Association of Art Critics.

## MODERATOR

**Arkadiusz Póltorak**. Curator and writer based in Kraków; works in the Department of Performance Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Secretary of the Polish Section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA). Graduate of De Appel Curatorial Programme (2018). He has contributed to numerous art-related publications including the monographs *Kinship in Solitude – Perspectives on Notions of Solidarity* (eds. Anna Jehle and



Paul Buckermann, Hamburg: adocs 2017) and Trouble with Value (ed. Kris Dittel, Eindhoven: Onomatopée 2020). His recent and upcoming curatorial projects include the group show While I Kiss the Sky (co-curator Goschka Gawlik; part of curated\_by, Vienna 2019), and individual exhibitions by Maria Loboda (Elementarz dla mieszkańców miast, Kraków 2020) and Jasmina Metwaly (Galeria Arsenal, Białystok 2020).

