**Symposium “Collaborative Artist Networks in the Twentieth Century and Beyond”**

Jacobs University, Bremen, July 6-8, 2015

**Participants**

Croatian Team: Institute of Art History, Zagreb

* Ljiljana Kolesnik
* Lovorka Margas
* Ivana Mestrov
* Petar Prelog

Portuguese Team: University of Porto

* Lucia Matos
* Ricardo Areias

German Team: Jacobs University, Bremen

* Isabel Wünsche
* Nina Blum de Almeida
* Ana Ofak
* Julia Psilitelis

**Program**

Monday, July 6, 2015

15:00-15:30 Opening of the Workshop

Session 1: Collaborative Artistic Networks during the Interwar Period

15:30-16:00 Lovorka Margas: Vjera Biller and the International Avant-garde in the 1910s and 1920s − at the Crossroads between *MA*, *Der Sturm* and *Zenit*

16:00-16:30 Petar Prelog: “Art and Life are One” – The Association of Artists *Zemlja*: Ideology and Artist Networking”

16:30-17:00 Isabel Wünsche: The Great Berlin Art Exhibitions of the 1920s

17:00-18:00 Discussion & Coffee

20:00 Dinner

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

Session 2: Post-War Collaborative Artistic Networks

10:00-10:30  Nina Blum de Almeida: Post-War Collaborative Artistic Networks in Portugal

10:30-11:00 Lucia Matos: Framing Actions: The Vostell Retrospective Exhibition in Portugal (1979)”

11:00-11:30 Discussion & Coffee

11:30-12:00 Julia Psilitelis: Ernesto de Sousa’s Collages in German Art Publications – A Comparative Analysis

12:00-12:30 Ricardo Areias: Wolf Vostell and Ernesto de Sousa – A Friendship that Fostered the Collaboration of Artists between Portugal and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s

12:30-13:00 Discussion

Lunch

14:30-15:00 Ljiljana Kolesnik: The International Movement *New Tendencies* – A Unique Example of Transnational Artists’ Networking in the 1960s

15:00-15:30 Ana Ofak: The Hannover Pavilion – Drafting the Parameters of Modernity in Yugoslavia

15:30-16:00  Ivana Mestrov:

16:30-17:30 Discussion & Coffee

20:00 Dinner

Wednesday, July 8, 2015

11:00 Visit to the Archive of Artist Publications, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen

Lovorka Magaš Bilandžić, PhD

**Vjera Biller and the International Avant-garde in the 1910s and 1920s − at the Crossroads between *MA*, *Der Sturm* and *Zenit***

During the interwar period artist Vjera Biller (Đakovo, 1903−?) participated in some of the most interesting events that were happening all across Europe. She presented her work for the first time as a teenager in 1918 in Budapest at the MA exhibition of graphic art together with the leading protagonists of Hungarian avant-garde. While living in Berlin in the early 1920s she was close to the circle of Herwarth Walden and participated in several exhibitions in his Der Sturm gallery. During the 1920s and 1930s she exchanged letters with Ljubomir Micić, the editor of the avant-garde magazine *Zenit*, who exhibited and published her work (1924, 1926). Although today the majority of her oeuvre is lost and only a small number of prints and drawings from the 1920s have been preserved, it reveals Vjera Biller's interests, artistic sensibility for stylization of form and a special type of visual narration. The paper will consider the work of Vjera Biller in the context of the international avant-garde movement and as an example of networking principle that marked the most progressive art currents of the period.

Petar Prelog, PhD

**“Art and Life are One” – The Association of Artists *Zemlja*: Ideology and Artist Networking**

The Association of Artists *Zemlja*, which had the most specified programme and maintained the most consistent group cohesion in Croatian interwar art, was founded in 1929. The inaugural thought in the title of this presentation – “Art and life are one” – is the last sentence in the Association *Zemlja*'s Manifesto, published in the catalogue of the Association's first exhibition and devised by the architect Drago Ibler. The reasons for founding the Association of Artists *Zemlja* were manifold. First of all, in the second half of the 1920s, the *Spring Salon* – as a platform where artists of the younger generation could achieve their recognition and as a central place of networking for the national art scene – was turned into a routine sales exhibition event which, for many artists, did not provide enough of a challenge. Secondly, the social, economic and political situation in Croatia – as a part of the multinational Yugoslav state – created a need for a more substantial engagement of artists, the formation of art groups and networks, which, in the case of the Association of Artists *Zemlja*, resulted in the articulation of afirmly set and clearly formulated art programme. The Association of Artists *Zemlja* significantly differed from the *Spring Salon*, which, in its twelve years of existence, acted as an open platform for expressing various artistic orientations. In other words, after the *Spring Salon*, unburdened by any ideological connotations, *Zemlja* appeared as its exact opposite. Motivated by its commitment to the politically pronounced left-wing orientation and social engagement, the Association emphasized the necessity of connecting art with contemporary life and social issues. As its main objective, the ideological basis of the Association’s programme emphasized the achievement of “independence” of the national artistic expression, primarily by fiercely opposing the uncritical emulation of artistic paragons from European centres. Furthermore, in its programme, the Association of Artists *Zemlja* recognized the need for creating networks through collaboration – at home and abroad – with the ideologically affiliated individuals and groups. This presentation will touch upon the ideological foundation of the Association of Artists *Zemlja* and, within this context, it will also analyse the features and outcomes of the clearly pronounced aspirations of its members for establishing artist networks.

Isabel Wünsche

**The Great Berlin Art Exhibitions of the 1920s**

The Great Berlin Art Exhibition (Große Berliner Kunstausstellung), initiated in 1893, was an annual show of the visual arts that took place in Berlin with some interruptions between 1893 and 1969. During the First World War, it was transferred to Düsseldorf in 1917 and 1918, and then revived in Berlin under the title Art Exhibition Berlin (Kunstausstellung Berlin) in 1919 and 1920. In the Weimar Republic, the Great Berlin Art Exhibitions, which then took place annually in the newly renovated Crystal Palace at the State Exhibition Park of Berlin, developed into major showcases for presenting contemporary visual art. Starting in 1927, the shows were organized by the Cartel of the United Associations of the Fine Artists of Berlin (Kartell der Vereinigten Verbände Bildendender Künstler Berlins), which had been established to represent the interests of all artists. The exhibition jury included a representative from each of the Berlin-based groups and associations; an additional representative in the jury represented the interests of the artists who were not a member in any of these organizations. The groups were given free reign to organize their own sections in the assigned exhibition rooms.

In 1919 and 1921, the Free Secession (Freie Sezession) still dominated the shows, featuring, in 1921, the Cubists but also artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Oskar Kokoschka. In 1922 the presentation of the November Group (Novembergruppe) included the Polish constructivist Henryk Berlewi and the Russian artists’ couple Xenia Boguslavskaia and Ivan Puni; in 1923 it featured the Dutch Theo van Doesburg, the Romanian H. M. Maxy, and the constructivists El Lissitzky, László Moholy-Nagy, and László Peri. The 1926 presentation of the International Association of Expressionists, Futurists, Cubists, and Constructivists (Internationale Vereinigung der Expressionisten, Futuristen, Kubisten und Konstruktivisten)featured works by the French Cubists, the Bauhaus Masters as well as Alexander Archipenko, Marc Chagall, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Max Ernst, Piet Mondrian, and Enrico Prampolini.

The paper examines the presentations at the Great Berlin Art Exhibitions of the 1920s in order to make visible the dynamics of the Berlin art scene and to analyze the networks of the international avant-garde active in Berlin during this period.

Nina Blum de Almeida, MA

**Post-War Collaborative Artistic Networks in Portugal**

After World War II the majority of the European countries had to mourn a huge loss of human lives, what at the same time meant a loss of the intellectual and artistic elites. Portugal had managed to stay neutral during the war and like this the direct impact on the Portuguese population could be minimized. The gap that had opened up in the cultural life of Europe offered a space for young artists, new trends and tendencies. Portugal, however, could still resort to the already-existing art scene. Nevertheless a new generation of artists started to establish. But those young artists many times had problems to leave their own country, whether due to financial difficulties or due to difficulties in receiving a passport. In addition, the Portuguese state took an influence on art production. In 1933 the SPN (*Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*) had been created. Under the supervision of this organization the anual *Exposições de Arte Moderna do S.P.N./S.N.I.* were established. They were linked to coveted awards, but between 1934 and 1960 not a single foreign artist could win this honour. Into this scheme fits a law that supposedly came into existence in 1941 with the aim to protect local Portuguese artists. It determined the prohibition of state procurement concerning the commission and acquisition of art pieces from foreign artists and artists that had not been graduated at the academies of fine arts in Lisbon or Porto. Establishing serious exchanges through artist networks under those circumstances was extremely difficult.

Hein Semke (1899-1995), a German artist living in Portugal since 1932, was directly affected by the Portuguese cultural policies. Limited in his artistic production by being excluded from the most important exhibitions, he had to adapt his art to a more accessible market – to the area of handicraft – to sustain his life. Moreover, the comparatively small circle of artists in Portugal, with its constant points of reference in style and pictorial language (e.g. José Sobral de Almada Negreiros (1893-1970), Eduardo Afonso Viana (1881-1967) or Carlos Botelho (1899-1982)) complicated the entry for foreign artists.

Lucia Matos

**Framing Actions: The Vostell Retrospective Exhibition in Portugal (1979)**

Beyond collaborative or simply collective actions and informal interchanges with various Portuguese artists, German artist Wolf Vostell enjoyed remarkable institutional visibility in Portugal due to a major retrospective exhibition in 1979, jointly organized by the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Portuguese Secretary for Culture. The exhibition travelled to the Centre for Contemporary Art in Porto, housed in Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, thus expanding the impact of Vostell’s work. Based on period documentation, this paper examines Wolf Vostell’s retrospective exhibition from both a curatorial point of view and its impact on the Portuguese art scene and places it in the wider internationalization effort of public and private Portuguese cultural agencies, in the aftermath of the April revolution.

Julia Psilitelis

**Ernesto de Sousa’s Collages in German Art Publications – A Comparative Analysis**

The Portuguese artist, curator, scholar, and educator Ernesto de Sousa (1921-1988) is considered one of the main actors of the Portuguese art scene of the twentieth century. Despite recent scholarship on him and his art in Portugal, there does not exist a study of De Sousa’s connections to the German art scene.

De Sousa was in contact with numerous international artists and strove to open Portugal to new European artistic tendencies as well as show Portuguese productions abroad. In my paper, I will focus on two collages printed in German art publications: *Untitled [Self-Presentation]* (1980), published in *zweitschrift 7*, and *Untitled [Ich bin Kurt Schwitters]* (1983), produced in the *Kurt Schwitters Almanach*. They show close similarities in form and content which is partially due to their references to De Sousa’s work *Revolution my Body*.

I will discuss the use of photography, the interplay of visual and linguistic elements, the specific customization to the German publications, and, ultimately, De Sousa’s intention. For De Sousa, art has a social function and an artist a social responsibility. In his creations, he responds to political and societal developments. By challenging the audience, he tries to stimulate the viewers in order to provoke a communal effort for large-scale change in human interactions and collective life to overcome individualism and alienation.

Ricardo Areias

**Wolf Vostell and Ernesto de Sousa: A Friendship that Fostered the Collaboration of Artists between Portugal and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s**

The German Fluxus connection with the avant-garde artistic panorama in Portugal had as a privileged vehicle the *intermedia* artist, curator and art critic Ernesto de Sousa, which in the 1960s has contact with the Fluxus movement by interviewing the artists Ben Vautier and George Brecht, and later becoming friends with Robert Filliou and Wolf Vostell. This friendship with the German artist Wolf Vostell resulted in several interventions later in the 1970s in Portugal and Spain, where from 1976 he was a frequent visitor at MVM – Museum Vostell Malpartida in Cáceres.

This relationship with Wolf Vostell also allowed for the opening of the MVM project to the participation of several Portuguese artists, fostering an exchange that reached its higher point at the SACOM II – Contemporary art week at the MVM in 1979, with the curating of the Portuguese presence by Ernesto de Sousa. This friendship culminated in 1982 at the 50th anniversary of Wolf Vostell, celebrated at the MVM in Malpartida de Cáceres, Spain. Based on correspondence, personal interviews and archive material, this paper traces a relationship where art and life blend, giving place to one of the most international long term relations between Portugal and Germany in the Avant-Garde scene, during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Ljiljana Kolesnik

**The International Movement *New Tendencies* – A Unique Example of Transnational Artists’ Networking in the 1960s**

Although there are still other European locations (Zagreb, Ulm) important for the understanding of the initial idea behind the international art movement New Tendencies, the most important activities, which comprise the history of that art phenomena, are the five exhibitions, a number of seminars, roundtables, colloquia and conferences that took place in Zagreb between 1961 and 1973.

Gathering artists, designers, art critics, theoreticians, philosophers and scientists from all over the world, New Tendencies developed a rather interesting models of transnational networking that will be in the focus of our presentation. We shall pay the particular attention to the similarities between NT networking practices and the common features of the contemporary virtual social networks as well as to the relation of NT to a simultaneous and equally unorthodox models of exchange and communication developed by other neo-avant-garde movements of the 1960s.

Ana Ofak

**The Hannover Pavilion: Drafting the Parameters of Modernity in Yugoslavia**

Pavilions at industrial expositions were the concept stores of the 1950s. More than a cumulative platform for presentation of progress in the post-war era, pavilions set a new paradigm for representational aesthetics. Companies and countries participating in the expositions throughout the world were eager to use this platform to communicate their production values through the medium of cultural values. And cultural values were favorably presented through sartorial design. Once an applied art, whose artists ought to be a social creator – to paraphrase the words of Lajos Kassák directed toward the espousal of art and advertising in the 1920s – the revival of design in the fifties was to become a mass consumption compatible phenomenon. Pavilions at industrial expositions did not stay far behind. 1949, at the onset of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, other options were still open. I would like to consider one pavilion that succeeded in shaping an alternate perspective on modernist design. I am referring to the pavilion of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia at the German Industrial Exposition in Hannover.

In the period between 1949 and 1950 the Yugoslav chamber of commerce repeatedly commissioned the work of the architect Vjenceslav Richter and the artists Ivan Picelj and Aleksandar Srnec for the arrangement of pavilions at industrial expositions around the world. A bit more then a year and a half after their participation in Hannover they became founding members of a group of architects and artists called EXAT 51 (*experimental atelier*) in Zagreb. I would like to argue that the commissions were the experimental grounds for things to come for EXAT 51. Moreover, on these experimental grounds an integrative unity was created. While industrial design was on its knees throughout post-war Europe or in exile, this integrative unity not just revoked, but »reestablished the modernist paradigm« as Ljiljana Kolešnik once argued in another context. Furthermore, the integrative unity Richter, Picelj and Srnec constructed should be looked at from different perspectives. It was not solely an industrial design entity that was reproduced in the sphere of further industrial expositions, but in the sphere of art and architecture itself. It is intriguing to inquire, in what way the Hannover pavilion tapped into conceptual networks of the past – e.g. the Bauhaus – in order to establish and expand its artistic practice? Or to use the wording of a *Hannoversche Allgemeine* journalist reviewing the pavilion: In how far did the exhibited »love for experiments« help shape novel concepts in the arts (in regard to EXAT 51), integrating a social vision of modernity?

Ivana Mestrov

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