

Title, The Romance of my Young Days, the Future of my Nostalgia

Participating artists, Zbyněk Baladrán, Anetta Mona Chisa, Petra Feriancová, Dorota Kenderová, Peter Kerekes, Marian Kusík, Michal Moravčík, Lucia Nimcová, Ivan Ostrochovský, Pavol Pekarčík, Isa Rosenberger, Jiří Skála, Lucia Tkáčová, Jaroslav Varga, Little Warsaw – András Gálik, Bálint Havas

Curator, Mira Keratová

Web, www.workingmemory.sk

Place, Central Slovakian Gallery (Stredoslovenská galéria), Praetorium building, S. Moyses sq. 25, Banská Bystrica, SR

Exhibition lasts, from 16. January until 28. February 2010, Tue–Fri 10am – 5pm, Sat–Sun 10am – 4pm

Grantor of Central Slovakian Gallery is Banská Bystrica Self - Governed Region

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Scene

Concept of the Romance of my Young Days, the Future of my Nostalgia includes case study about the notion of nostalgia and romanticism in relation to contemporary Eastern European art. Point of departure comes from research of popular culture of the 1980s, which has defined the modern consumerist “West-world”. However, it is zoomed on the milieu of mainstream culture of former Communist Eastern-European Block, which has randomly adopted part of the spectrum of Western pop culture – segments that for some reason could pass through the ideological censorship. The discourse of this influential, but to a certain degree coincidental, imported pop culture was developed on a poor material base and shaped by the random access to the authentic consumer-driven pop. The phenomenon of imported pop did not inundate the society as a huge wave, but permeated through the system’s holes. This distinctive soc-pop-alternative of the 1980s regained its hallmark of exclusivity, nostalgic significance even decades later, today. Its basic characteristic is romanticism, which should not be linked to Western neoromanticism. Local romanticism was constructed differently. It has originated from the fact that simply anything of romantic nature was considered to be ideologically acceptable and therefore permitted in socialistic societies (e.g. the extreme popularity of Depeche Mode, or trashy B-movies, as French Angélique or German Vernet, which became an object of collecting frenzy in Communist Bloc). The actual *reality of non-availability or selective-availability of consumerist culture* made romanticism to expand. Import of romanticism was state-controlled and state-coordinated (e.g. films as Angélique were even used politically, when ie. it was TV-broadcasted during growing frustrations in a society or during demonstrations, as is the case of Candle demonstration held in Bratislava, 1988).

All these aspects, spreading of romanticism, *affected one entire generation, which grew up in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, by the intense life-feeling of nostalgia* – the need to remind of or reconstruct the past, to search for a moment, which never came (e.g. the revolution, which didn’t use its historical chance to create new model of society). In Germany it might be called the ‘Ostalgia’ and is generally simplified as an explanation of nostalgia for a security lost. The environment of Socialistic era serves as a source of information, providing a platform for the research, emphasizing the generation-feeling of nostalgia - feeling of being short of something, or sort of permanent waiting to get what was already spent; for that, some of explanatory factors are mentioned *import of romanticism and its development through given models of working time and free time* experienced in past. The theme deals with the socialistic mass-culture, forced collectivism, not efficient to supply strong cultural schemas of ownership and privacy; no competition supplying models for spending free time, money, etc., isolation, having a plenty of free time left, secured and never progressive work, running away to the little fields, special TAZ of Socialism – gardens, cottages, country houses – development of mass phenomenon of gardening; the definition of free time and working time impacted by the condition of permanent waiting – passive waiting on what will happen, in terms of everydayness – waiting lists and under-the-counter culture. Permanent waiting and being stuck, altogether with material deficits, leading into a state of despair, which could only be escaped through the DIY creativity, self-help home crafts, collecting, or likewise, and romanticism.

Summary

The exhibition *the Romance of my Young Days, the Future of my Nostalgia* focuses on analysis of connections and relations with *the past*. It explores possibilities of research, reconstruction, approaching and understanding of vanishing past – either of *social history* or *personal stories* and their mutual intersections. The object of interest of selected works is recent past of *Socialistic period* in Central Europe, which is in particular artworks revaluated on *rationalized base* of discourse analysis and at the same time on *transcendental* – *aesthetical* or *emotional level*. Exhibition as a whole compose analytical artistic approaches with intuitive access to the topic.

One of the project's framework is based on search for reasons for updating or reminding of an *older aesthetics* (e.g. *from 1970s*), or re-establishing of *older methods* (as for example *oral history*) within so called Eastern European contemporary art. The exhibition mediates processes of discovering and re-enactment of publicly too little explored knowledges, memories, insufficient spent chances, past acts or destinies, which left unfulfilled. Respective works presented at the show provide repeated replay of memories, while *transcending beyond existing archive evidence*. Presented artworks compose interpretations, witnessing, commentaries and fragments displaced from their original context. Spectators are guided to the *sphere of motivations placed in a background*. Selected works incorporate *inter-sphere of „period's experience“*, which allows us to *access context*. Archives related to individual or collective memory create specific nature of contemporary presentations *producing memory about past processes and their meaning* created in context.

Exhibition is constructed as an open work following logic of exhibited artworks. It considers choreography of viewer – in an introductory part (*Rhetoric of Fiction*) leading spectators to the action and explaining them the background (backstage) of researched phenomenons and their relations in a charismatic building of former cinema *Hviezda (Star)* in B. Bystrica, which is about to be tear down. In a continuation of the project (*Praetorium* building of Central Slovakian Gallery) spectators are lead to environments, stories and characters, presentation of which exceeds to the utilitarian spaces of the gallery.