

**Umjetnost i društveni
pokreti - kak' stvar
s tim stoji?**

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ANA KUTLEŠA,
IVANA HANAČEK,
VESNA VUKOVIĆ

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**Art and social
movements - where
are we at with that?**

Umjetničko je polje 1990-ih godina doživjelo pravi *boom* društveno angažiranih praksi koje su se razgranale u čitav niz podžanrova: intervencionistička, participativna, politička umjetnost, umjetnost zajednice, socijalna praksa... Teorijska refleksija ovog obrata u umjetničkoj proizvodnji uslijedila je prilično brzo, već 1998. godine izlazi knjiga francuskog kritičara i kustosa Nicolasa Bourriauda pod naslovom „Relacijska estetika”, što je ujedno i njegov krovni termin kojim kategorizira nabujale postatelijerske prakse od 1990-ih. Problem s Bourriaudovom analizom leži u tome da takav razvoj u umjetnosti promatra isključivo formalno, ne uzimajući u obzir ni historijat formata ni suvremene društveno-političke okolnosti, pa i sam tvrdi kako njegova relacijska estetika „ne predstavlja teoriju umjetnosti, već teoriju forme”. Iz brojnih rasprava s Bourriaudom valja izdvojiti onu povjesničarke umjetnosti i kritičarke Claire Bishop koja je rezultirala i knjigom „Artificial Hells. Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship” 2012. godine, u kojoj se zalaže za artikulaciju participacije u umjetnosti kao politizirane radne procedure, a ne samo estetske forme. No ono što (nam) je posebno važno kod doprinosa Claire Bishop jest činjenica da u analizu tzv. „društvenog obrata” u umjetnosti vraća njezin društveno-politički kontekst (raspad Istočnog

In the 1990s, socially engaged practices experienced a boom in the field of art, diversifying into a range of subgenres: interventionist, participatory, political art and community-based art, social art practice... to name a few. The theoretical reflection on this turn in art production came rather quickly. As early as 1998, the French critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud published a book “Relational Aesthetics,” which is also the umbrella term under which he categorizes the unbridled post-studio art practice since the beginning of the 1990s. The problem of Bourriaud’s analysis is that his approach is purely formal, without taking into account the history of the form or the contemporary socio-political circumstances. As he, himself, stated, his relational aesthetics “does not represent a theory of art, but a theory of form.” Amongst numerous debates led with Bourriaud, we should mention the one in which the art historian and critic Claire Bishop led the charge and on the basis of which she published a book “Artificial Hells. Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship” in 2012. It is in this book where she advocates for the articulation of the participation in art as an actively politicized procedure, and not just as an aesthetic form. However, what we consider to be the most important contribution of Bishop’s work is the fact that she reintroduced the socio-political context back into

bloka i demontaža države blagostanja), a proliferaciju ove forme promatra na pozadini historijske avangarde i neoavangarde. Ovakva historijska specifikacija otvara prostor za detekciju različitosti uloga i odnosa koje je umjetnička praksa uspostavljala s društvom i političkim pokretima ili vlašću u određenom historijskom trenutku (u njezinoj su analizi participativne prakse od 1990-ih snažno potaknute kulturnom politikom New Laboura od 1997. godine).

Postavljajući si neka osnovna pitanja, kao što su: kako to da društveno angažirana umjetnost cvjeta u doba kad je društveni projekt doživio propast, ili: kako to da umjetničke prakse sve više preuzimaju političku agendu, ili: kakav je odnos između socijalnih praksi i propadanja društvene infrastrukture, uviđamo nužnost inzistiranja na historijskoj specifičnosti suvremenih društveno angažiranih praksi, kao jedinom ispravnom polazištu za njihovu analizu i valorizaciju.

Društveno angažirane umjetničke prakse iz prošlosti, a na čiju se tradiciju nastavljaju suvremene socijalne prakse, bile su snažno povezane s realnim političkim snagama (Komunistička partija, lijeve partije, sindikati). Ako se danas odmaknemo samo malo izvan zaštićenih zidova galerija i muzeja, korak dalje

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the so-called “social turn” in art (the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc, the dismantling of the welfare state) and analysed the proliferation of this form against the historical backdrop of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. Such historic specification enables the recognition of different roles and relationships which the art practice established with the society and political movements or governments at a particular moment in history (according to her analysis, the participatory practices in the 1990s were strongly influenced by the New Labour’s cultural policy, introduced in 1997).

By posing some basic questions, such as: how come socially engaged art flourished during the downfall of the social project?; or: why are art practices increasingly assuming political agendas?; or: what is the relationship between social practices and the deterioration of the social infrastructure?; we came to hold the necessity of insisting on the historical specificities of contemporary socially engaged art practices as the only valid starting point for their analysis and valorization.

Socially engaged art practices in the past – on whose tradition contemporary social practices build upon – were strongly associated with real political powers (the Communist Party, the left-wing parties, labour unions). If we were to take a step

od svečanih otvaranja bijenalnih manifestacija i mimo prebrzih zaključaka o umjetnicima kao progresivnim čimbenicima društvenih promjena, naći ćemo se u poprilično pustom političkom krajoliku: iza više liberalnih ili više konzervativnih svjetonazorskih opcija stoji ujednačena liberalna ekonomska politika koju kroje svjetski centri moći prema interesima kapitala. Koncepti pravedne preraspodjele, solidarnosti, jednakosti, zajedničkog dobra itd., koji glasno odzvanjaju umjetničkim svijetom, povezani su prije svega s lijevom političkom opcijom, koja je danas rasuta u čitav niz mikroformacija, dok snažne, nadsacionalne radničke, socijalističke, komunističke partije nema, kao ni progresivnih sindikalnih udruženja. Postojeće su lijeve političke formacije slabe, nevidljive i lokalno ograničene. Ukratko: lijeva opcija je u političkom polju nepostojeća. Što u okolnostima globalne ekonomske krize, krize demokracije i izostanka centraliziranog društvenog pokreta s konzistentnom i jasnom političkom artikulacijom uopće znači angažirani umjetnik-individualac koji operira u elitnom polju kulturne proizvodnje usmjerene na privilegirane, visoko obrazovane članove društva, jedno je od ključnih pitanja *Života umjetnosti* koji držite u ruci. Kako bismo uopće mogli misliti prevladavanje ovakve ograničene pozicije,

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outside of the protected museum walls and gala openings, a step beyond hasty conclusions about the artists being progressive elements of social change, we would find ourselves in a rather desolate political landscape: behind more liberal or more conservative world-views, lie uniform liberal economic policies tailored by the world's power-centres in order to serve the interests of capital. The concepts of fair redistribution, solidarity, equality, commons, etc., which resonate powerfully within the art world, are primarily related to the left political option, which is dispersed into a series of micro-formations, while powerful, supranational labour, socialist or communist parties, as well as progressive labour unions, are nowhere to be found. The existing left-wing political formations are weak, invisible and highly localized. In short: the left option is non-existent within the field of politics. Taking into account the circumstances created by the global economic crisis, the crisis of democracy and the absence of a centralized social movement with a consistent and explicit political tendency, what is the significance of a socially engaged artist-individual who operates within the elite field of cultural production, focusing on privileged, highly educated members of the society? This is one of the key questions of *Life of Art* that you have before you. In order to be able to even

potrebno je sagledati je analitički, svjesni da odgovor treba tražiti u suvremenim proizvodnim odnosima, ali i na pozadini historijske perspektive.

U želji da rasvijetlimo problematiku navedenih pitanja i skiciramo neke od odgovora, broj smo koncipirale u dvije cjeline. Prvu čine tekstovi teoretičara i znanstvenika, a u drugoj se nalaze perspektive i promišljanja proizvođača (i umjetnika i kustosa) društveno angažiranih umjetničkih projekata, kako u formatu razgovora, tako i vizualnim jezikom, kroz crteže. Most između prvog i drugog dijela čine povijesni izvori, odabrani manifesti umjetničkih udruženja iz razdoblja prije Drugog svjetskog rata, kad je pozicija društveno angažiranog umjetnika bila u mnogim aspektima drugačija. Jaka Komunistička partija među svojim je aktivnim članstvom brojila i umjetnike čiji je angažman unutar društva prije svega bio dio šireg, organiziranog centraliziranog pokreta.

Temu umjetnosti i društvenih pokreta otvaramo tekstom Lidije Krienzer-Radojević koji dekonstruira zabludu o političkom i društvenom angažmanu umjetnika kao slobodnom izboru koji se odvija u pretpostavljeno autonomnom polju umjetnosti. Na primjeru postsocijalističkih transformacija slovenskih kulturnih institucija

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think about overcoming such a restricted position, what we need is to analytically examine it, keeping in mind that the answer should be sought in the contemporary relations of production and without losing sight of the historical perspective.

We have divided this *Life of Art* issue into two parts hoping to shed some light on the problems contained within the abovementioned questions and to provide an outline for some of the available answers. The first part consists of articles written by theorists and scholars, while the second part contains the perspectives and deliberations of the producers of the socially engaged art projects (artists and curators), in the form of interviews, as well as visual contributions (i.e. drawings). The historical sources – selected manifestos of art associations before the Second World War, when the position of a socially engaged artist was different in many aspects – act as a bridge between the first and the second part. Then strong Communist Party counted a number of artists amongst its active membership whose engagement within the society was primarily a part of a broader, organized and centralized movement.

The exploration of the topic on art and social movements begins with Lidija Krienzer-Radojević's text in which she deconstructs the misconception about the political

Krienzer-Radojević razlaže kako je svaka „slobodna” odluka pojedinca uvjetovana širim društvenim kontekstom koji nameću društvene institucije i njihova pravila. U vrijeme neoliberalne transformacije kulturnog polja, na podlozi njezina rastakanje države blagostanja, upravo je uloga institucija da nametnu kulturne industrije kao dominantan model umjetničke i kulturne proizvodnje.

Mario Kikaš u svojem tekstu razmatra odnos umjetnosti i populizma, pri čemu je posljednji dosada tumačen jednodimenzionalno, gotovo moralizatorski, kroz njegovo označavanje kao negativne političke *tendencije*. Kikaš elaborira lijeve misli o *narodu* i interpretacije tog pojma u sklopu lijevih umjetničkih praksi u vrijeme ekonomske krize, Narodnog fronta i Drugog svjetskog rata. Odgovor na pitanje koja je uloga umjetnosti u adresiranju političke poruke Kikaš traži prolazeći kroz niz primjera iz književne teorije, teatrologije, povijesti i povijesti umjetnosti, a pritom posebnu pažnju posvećuje povijesti partizanskog kazališta, koja u domaćoj teatrologiji nikad nije bila primjereno obrađena.

Slijedi problematski tekst Jelene Petrović koji ukazuje na zaokrete u polju umjetnosti od 1990-tih, pritom posebno naglašava „nevolje” s festivalizacijom

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and social engagement of an artist as being a free choice which manifests within the supposedly autonomous field of art. On the example of post-socialist transformations of the Slovenian cultural institutions, Krienzer-Radojević elucidates on how every “free” individual decision is conditioned by a broader social context imposed by social institutions and their rules. During the time of the neoliberal transformation of the cultural field, with the underlying dissolution of the welfare state, it is the role of institutions to impose cultural industries as the dominant model of art and cultural production.

In his text, Mario Kikaš explores the relationship between art and populism, in which the latter has been interpreted one-dimensionally and in a rather moralizing manner by being designated as a negative political tendency. Kikaš elaborates on the left-wing intellectual approach to *the people* and the interpretation of this concept within the left-wing art practices in the time of an economic crisis, the Popular Front and the Second World War. Kikaš seeks to answer the question on the role of art in addressing the political agenda by going through a number of examples taken from literary theory, theatre studies, history and art history, with a special focus on the

feminizma te angažirane umjetničke prakse promatra iz feminističke perspektive. Autorica uvodi politiku afekta kao moguću strategiju za međusobno povezivanje i djelovanje (novih) revolucionarnih umjetničkih praksi.

Pozicije proizvođača angažirane umjetnosti u drugom dijelu predstavljamo u formi rasprave, kroz intervju. S Jonasom Staalom, jednim od rijetkih umjetnika koji je svoju praksu povezo s postojećim emancipacijskim borbama i razvija je u bliskoj suradnji s političkim grupama koje se diljem svijeta bore protiv različitih oblika represije, imperijalizma i kolonijalizma, razgovarali smo o kontradikcijama prevodjenja i funkcioniranja takvog projekta u depolitiziranom svijetu suvremene umjetnosti.

Slijedi vizualni prilog bečke umjetnice i aktivistice Petje Dimitrove. U formatu crteža urgentno pitanje izbjegličke krize Petja Dimitrova obrađuje u prepoznatljivom vizualnom jeziku progresivnih političkih pokreta i recentnih protestnih gibanja.

Za kraj donosimo razgovor o bečkom festivalu Wienwoche s njegovim donedavnim kustosom Canom Gülcüom. Riječ je o manifestaciji koju je osnovala stranka Zelenih, a pod čijim kišobranom svoje aktivnosti proizvodi niz samoorganiziranih umjetnika

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local history of the partisan theatre which has never received an appropriate level of attention within the framework of local theatre studies.

The following text is Jelena Petrović's article which examines the shifts within the field of art from the 1990s onwards, with a special emphasis on the "troubles" with the festivalization of feminism and engaged art practices viewed from a feminist perspective. The text puts forward the politics of affect as a possible strategy for the networking and joint action of (new) revolutionary art practices.

In the second part, we introduce the producers of engaged art through discussions and interviews. We talked with Jonas Staal – one of few artists whose practice is tied to the existing emancipatory struggles and developed in close cooperation with political groups which fight against various forms of repression, imperialism and colonialism around the world – about the contradictions of implementation and functioning of such a project within the depoliticized contemporary art world.

i političkih grupa, što otvara niz pitanja o mogućnostima političkog djelovanja u festivalskim okvirima i metodama apropijacije.

Okupljajući ove analize i priloge željele smo pridonijeti sagledavanju pozicije i uloge umjetnosti u okvirima uvedno opisane situacije. Nadamo se da će biti poticaj za raspravu koja se tek mora dogoditi i koja će u govor o (društveno angažiranoj) umjetnosti nanovo uvesti ključnu lekciju koju izvodimo iz povijesti radikalne umjetnosti: nijedna umjetnička gesta – sama po sebi – ne može biti intrinzično radikalna.

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What follows next is Petja Dimitrova's visual contribution. In a form of a drawing, Petja Dimitrova examines the urgent issue of a refugee crisis through the distinctive visual language of progressive political movements and recent protests.

This *Life of Art* issue ends with an interview with Can Gülcü, the former curator of the Wienwoche Festival in Vienna. Established by the Green Party, this event acts as a frame for the activities of various self-organized artists and political groups, which raises a number of questions about the possibilities of a political action within the framework of a festival and about the methods of appropriation.

By collecting these analyses and contributions we wanted to advance the deliberations on the position and the role of art under the abovementioned circumstances. We hope this will provide an incentive for the discussion waiting to happen and reintroduce into the discourse on (socially engaged) art the key lesson derived from the history of radical art: No artistic gesture – in itself – can be intrinsically radical.

Croatian to English translation: Dunja Opatić



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