



**DEVEDESETE:  
BORBA ZA KONTEKST<sup>1</sup>**

JELENA  
PAŠIĆ

**THE 1990S:  
STRUGGLING FOR  
THE CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>**

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**SAŽETAK:** Devedesete su godine u Hrvatskoj period sveopćeg opravljavanja od ratne traume, ali i vrlo akutnih problema na svim društveno-političkim razinama. Period je to (re)formiranja likovne scene, konstruiranja identiteta nove mlade generacije aktera likovne scene, legitimiziranja umjetničkog stvaralaštva proteklih generacija uspostavljanjem paralela između nove generacije i njihovih prethodnika, ali i period opstruiranja slobode izražavanja i kritičkog mišljenja. Za iduće desetljeće izrazito važnu ulogu imat će formiranje tzv. „nezavisne“ scene, tj. angažiranih umjetničkih praksi.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** devedesete, identitet hrvatske likovne scene, međugeneracijski kontinuitet, nezavisna scena, javno, sloboda izražavanja.

Posljednje je desetljeće 20. stoljeća na prostoru Hrvatske obilježeno nizom političkih, društvenih i kulturnih turbulencija, problema i stanja. Pisati tekst čija je namjera sintetizirati i ocrtati ključne odrednice i događaje devedesetih nije nimalo lako. Godine koje su tema ovog broja još su uvijek dio svježije prošlosti i osobno proživljenog iskustva, dok nam s druge strane proteklo desetljeće, koje nas dijeli od devedesetih, pruža dovoljno vremensko (ponekad i emotivno) distanciranje. Ako u korpusu događaja trebamo posegnuti za samo jednim koji je odredio početak desetljeća (a i njegov daljnji tijek), onda je to nužno raspad socijalističke Jugoslavije, osnutak nove samostalne

hrvatske države i, naravno, Domovinski rat. Uspostavom nove države, s novim, demokratskim uređenjem, dolazi do promjena ne samo na političkoj razini i na razini uređivanja i uspostavljanja novih političko-društvenih odnosa, nego i u mikrosferama manjih sustava unutar područja kulture, dakle i likovne produkcije. Ipak, te promjene pri svojoj realizaciji nisu doprinijele razvoju i ekspanziji civilnog društva, prosperitetu nove države ili uključivanju Hrvatske u sustav šire europske scene (na koji god način – tržišni, privredni, gospodarski, kulturni); naprotiv, cijelo je desetljeće obilježeno naporom dijela javnosti i kulturno-umjetničke scene da se jedna uglavnom mučna i teška politička i društvena situacija – promijeni.

Izlazak iz SFRJ označio je velike promjene, i pozitivne i negativne, čije su se posljedice osjetile na svim poljima. Osim vrlo osjetljive poratne situacije, u kojoj je ratna trauma rezultirala vrlo kompleksnim odnosom prema socijalističkoj prošlosti, događa se i nagli zaokret u odnosu prema europskim državama te ulazak u tranzicijski proces i usmjeravanje državne strukture k sustavu tržišnog gospodarstva. To je označilo ulazak Hrvatske u veliku i dugotrajnu gospodarsku krizu, dok je istovremeno monopol tadašnje desno orijentirane konzervativne vlasti stvorio uvjete za krizu demokracije. Represija, politička manipulacija, različiti oblici nedemokratičnosti te zatiranja ljudskih prava i slobode govora, korupcija, pa čak i elementi monopolističkih i autarhičnih principa

In Croatia, the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a series of political, social, and cultural turbulences, problems, and conditions. Making an attempt at synthesizing and outlining the determining phenomena and events of the 1990s is by no means easy, especially if your memories of the period are related primarily to pre-school and primary-school experiences. The years that are the theme of this issue of *Život umjetnosti* are still felt as part of the recent past and personal experience; and yet, the decade that divides us from the 1990s offers considerable temporal (and sometimes emotional) distance. If we wanted to isolate a single string of events that determined the beginning of the decade (as well as its further development), then it would certainly be the fall of socialist Yugoslavia, the foundation of an independent Croatian state, and, of course, the Liberation War. Establishing a new state with a new, democratic system meant introducing lots of changes (at least nominally), not only at the level of politics or the new social and political arrangements – including the new and increasing waves of intrusion of foreign capital to the Croatian market, as well as its new orientation towards European and global integrations – but also in the micro-spheres of smaller systems in the field of culture, including the artistic production. Nevertheless, these changes hardly contributed to the development and expansion of the civil society, or the prosperity of the new state, and they did not help introduce Croatia into the European system at large

(in whichever way – commercial, economic, or cultural); on the contrary, the entire decade was marked by the efforts of a part of the general public on the one hand, and the cultural and artistic scene on the other, to deal with a largely cumbersome and difficult political and social situation – and to change it. Leaving the socialist Yugoslavia brought a huge change, with consequences that were felt in all spheres of life. Besides the extremely sensitive post-war situation, in which the trauma of war resulted in a very complex attitude towards the socialist past, there was a sharp turn in the relations with the Western European countries, which accompanied the process of social transition and guided the state structures towards the system of market economy. These processes ushered Croatia into a massive and protracted economic crisis, while at the same time the monopoly of the then rightist conservative government created the conditions for a crisis of democracy. Repression, political manipulation, various forms of violation of democracy and human rights, suppression of the freedom of speech, corruption and even elements of monopolistic and autarchic principles of state power, subjection of all mass media (state television, radio, and daily press) to the profit hunger of the official state leadership – are only some of the labels that we can apply to describe the atmosphere of the 1990s. The cultural scene, including that of the visual arts, which had only just emerged and was trying to assert itself in those exceptionally

u državnoj vlasti, podređivanje javnih medija (državne televizije, radija, dnevnog tiska) koristoljublju službenog državnog vrha – samo su neke od sintagmi koje možemo upotrijebiti za opisivanje klime devedesetih. Kulturna ili, uže, likovno-umjetnička scena, koja se tek fomirala i pokušavala afirmirati u tim izrazito nepovoljnim uvjetima, prve jasnije obrise vlastite infrastrukture dobiva tek krajem desetljeća; dotad sputana raznim ograničenjima, koja su rezultirala smanjenom umjetničkom produkcijom i zakržljanim muzejsko-galerijskim sustavom, nepostojanjem adekvatne muzejske institucije i prostora, kao i sustavne likovne kritike, ta je scena funkcionirala više na individualnoj razini te angažmanu i (dobroj) volji pojedinih kustosa i umjetnika. Tek zahvaljujući upornom djelovanju i naporu, primjerice, umjetnika Slavena Tolja, *Art radionica Lazareti* u Dubrovniku, čiji je on voditelj od 1988., kontinuirano djeluje do danas. Kroz *Lazarete* i Galeriju Otok, pa i kroz kasnije osnovan *Festival scenskih umjetnosti Karantena*, u nizu je godina prošao velik broj domaćih i stranih umjetnika i nesumnjiv je njihov doprinos definiranju i razvoju scene, ne samo na lokalnom dubrovačkom području, nego i na širem planu. Zatvaranje pak Galerije Proširenih medija u Zagrebu na samom početku desetljeća zbog ratnih (ne)prilika stvorilo je iskonsku rupu – tek jednu u nizu – u umjetničko-prezentacijskoj infrastrukturi grada, i to upravo za onaj dio umjetničke produkcije koji je i inače teže pronalazio puteve recepcije: naime, za one umjetnike čije

stvaralaštvo obuhvaća različite medije i forme, uglavnom vrlo udaljene od tradicionalnih. Godine 1994. Galerija PM ponovno je otvorena uz *Izložbu jela i pića*, ironičnu problematizaciju aktualnog trenutka i teških uvjeta djelovanja i rada likovnih umjetnika kroz format izložbe.<sup>2</sup>

Kao simptomatičan primjer situacije ranih devedesetih može se predočiti slučaj izlaganja rada Antuna Maračića u prostorima dubrovačkog ogranka Matice hrvatske, na poziv Slavena Tolja. Rad koji je Maračić zamislio, ostvario i izložio još 1991. na izložbi *Sloboda je manifestacija vrhunske neljudskosti*, a dopunio i razradio za izložbu 1994., sastoji se od niza grafika/kolaža koji prikazuju prometne znakove na crnom papiru. Umjesto simbola iz sfere prometne komunikacije, na znakovima su fotografije različitih dubrovačkih kulturnih vrijednosti – od povijesnih crkava, pojedinih spomenika, pa do samoga grada, a naposljetku i ljudi – i ispod njih na ćirilici ispisan tekst „Opasnost!!! Bog“, „Opasnost!!! Lepota“, „Opasnost!!! istorija“, „Opasnost!!! grad“, „Opasnost!!! Mrtvi“. Teško je ne primijetiti ili čak „promašiti“ antiratnu poruku rada. Radi se ovdje „o oznakama u zamišljenu inertnom psihološkom prometu nositelja konkretnoga pisma i jezika, realizirana destruktora svega navedenoga. Najafirmativnije humanističke kategorije, reprezentanti različitih aspekata Života (vjera, kultura, obitelj...) za njih su izvori dubokog straha i izazivaju obranu uništenjem. Kolektivnom mrtvacu u živom tijelu život u

IZLOŽBA EGOEAST,  
UMJETNIČKI PAVILJON, 1992.  
LJUBAZNOŠĆU ALEKSANDRA ILIĆA

EGOEAST EXHIBITION,  
ART PAVILION, 1992,  
COURTESY OF ALEKSANDAR ILIĆ

JELENA  
PAŠIĆ

unfavourable conditions, acquired the first clearer contours of its infrastructure only towards the end of the decade; until then it was thwarted by various limitations, which resulted in a reduced artistic production and a stunted systems of museums and galleries, as well as the lack of adequate museum institutions and venues, or systematic art criticism, so that the scene functioned largely on the level of individuals and owing to the engagement (and good will) of certain curators and artists. Thus it was only owing to the persistent work and efforts of artist Slaven Tolj that *Art Workshop Lazareti* in Dubrovnik, whose manager he has been since 1988, remained in continuous operation until the present day. A large number of Croatian and international artists presented their work at *Lazareti* and *Otok Gallery*, as well as the later established *Festival of Performing Arts Karantena*, and these venues undoubtedly contributed to the scene's definition and evolution, not only locally, in the region of Dubrovnik, but also on a larger scale. Contrary to that, closing down the *Gallery of Extended Media* in Zagreb early in that decade, with the explanation of (unfavourable) wartime circumstances, created an elemental hole – one among many – in the city's infrastructure in terms of art presentation, affecting precisely that segment of artistic production which had always had problems with finding paths of reception: namely, those artists whose work included various media and forms, mostly very distant from the traditional ones. In 1994, the Gallery was reopened with

the *Exhibition of Food and Drink*, an ironic commentary on the current situation in the exhibition format, which discussed the difficult working conditions of the visual artists.<sup>2</sup>

A symptomatic example of the situation in the early 1990s was Antun Maračić's exhibition at the Dubrovnik branch of *Matica Hrvatska*, which took place at the invitation of Slaven Tolj. The exhibited artwork, which Maračić had conceived, produced, and presented back in 1991 at the exhibition called *Freedom is a Manifestation of Ultimate Inhumanity*, and then enlarged and developed it for the exhibition in 1994, consisted of a series of prints/collages showing traffic signs on black paper. Instead of symbols used in traffic communication, the signs contained photographs of various cultural assets of Dubrovnik – historical churches, individual monuments, and even the city itself with its people – below which one could read inscriptions in Cyrillic script such as “Danger!!! God,” “Danger!!! Beauty,” “Danger!!! History,” “Danger!!! City,” or “Danger!!! Dead people.” It would be difficult to ignore or even “misread” the anti-war message of this artwork. It contained “signs in an imaginary, inert mental traffic of the users of this particular script and language, the accomplished destructors of all that. For them, the most affirmative humane categories, representing various aspects of Life (such as religion, culture, or family) are a source of deep fears, provoking defence by destruction. For that collective corpse in a living body, life in all its manifestations presents a threat, since it reveals its own human non-existence. Destroying life, item by

svim svojim manifestacijama predstavlja opasnost, jer razotkriva njegovo ljudsko nepostojanje. Uništenje života, stavku po stavku, znači uspostavljanje globalnog *pejsaža smrti*, ambijenta koji je prisna slika i prilika mrtve duše autora destrukcije.<sup>43</sup> Ipak, nakon tri dana trajanja (od kojih su dva bila neradna), izložba je naprasno zatvorena zbog, kako je autoru (Maračiću) i organizatoru (Tolju) pojašnjeno, neprilicne upotrebe ćirilice. Sam čin zatvaranja izložbe i nepriznavanja prava na izražavanje unutar javnog dikursa krajnje je drastičan i totalitaristički akt koji svjedoči o represivnosti tada aktualnog javnog i političkog sustava.

Međutim, da i u takvim uvjetima postoji ambicija i načini kojima se može pokušati (re)formirati scena i aktualizirati pitanje postojanja

suvremene likovne produkcije dokazuje pojava skupine *EgoEast*, i to već na samom početku devedesetih. Grupa mladih umjetnika na čelu s Aleksandrom Battistom Iličem, Ivanom Keser, Željkom Božičevićem, Ivicom Franićem i Davorom Pavelićem, tek izašlih iz nekolicine tradicionalistički organiziranih klasa Akademije likovnih umjetnosti u Zagrebu, nastojala je nadići manjkavosti obrazovnog sustava, s jedne strane, i umjetničke scene, odnosno njezine nekoherentnosti, s druge. Na *XXIII. Salonu mladih* 1992. godine umjetnici iz *EgoEasta* bili su autorima nešto izmijenjene koncepcije *Salona*; te se godine uz standardnu redovnu revijalnu izložbu radova pristiglih na natječaj održala i zasebna izložba, čiji su autori bili umjetnici *EgoEasta*, u Umjetničkom paviljonu. Izložba – koja



DEVEDESETE:  
BORBA ZA  
KONTEKST

THE 1990S:  
STRUGGLING FOR  
THE CONTEXT

item, means establishing a global landscape of death, an ambience that is an intimate image and replica of the dead soul of the authors of destruction.”<sup>43</sup> However, the exhibition was abruptly closed after only three days (of which two were holidays), with the explanation offered to the artist (Maračić) and the organizer (Tolj) that it used the Cyrillic script in an inappropriate way. The very act of closing the exhibition and the denial of the right to expression within public discourse was an extremely drastic and totalitarian act, which testified of the repressive nature of the current public and political system. On the other hand, the emergence of *EgoEast* in the very beginning of the 1990s proves that even in such circumstances there was both the desire and the ways for trying to (re-)form the scene and to deal

with the issue of the existence of a contemporary artistic production. This group of young artists, led by Aleksandar Battista Ilič, Ivana Keser, Željko Božičević, Ivica Franić, and Davor Pavelić, who had recently come out of the few traditionally organized classes of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, sought to overcome the exigencies of the educational system on the one hand, and the faults and incoherence of the art scene on the other. At the *23<sup>rd</sup> Youth Salon* of 1992, artists from *EgoEast* designed the event in a somewhat altered form; that year, along with the standard revue of competition artworks, there was an additional exhibition of artists participating in *EgoEast*, which took place at Art Pavilion in Zagreb. The exhibition – which stood out as a sort of programmatic statement, supported by

stoji kao svojevrsan programatski iskaz potkrijepljen katalogom i manifestnim tekstom Ivane Keser<sup>4</sup> – okupila je nekoliko generacija hrvatskih likovnih umjetnika i pružila prvi oblik historiografije perioda od četrdesetak godina unatrag. Izložbom je i po prvi put uspostavljen kontinuitet starijih i mlađih generacija umjetnika, u prvom redu upućeno je na postojanje tradicije konceptualnih oblika prakse – od *Gorgone*, *Nove umjetničke prakse* pa do djelovanja sasvim nove, tek stasajuće generacije, ali i na još raniju tradiciju osnivanja umjetničkih grupa, različitih oblika udruženog djelovanja i samoorganiziranja umjetnika. Već u samom nazivu grupe – koji vrlo spretno sjedinjuje riječi „ja“ i „istok“ u treću, koja čitanjem ustanovljuje treći značenjski sloj: „egoist“ – sadržane su dvije osnovne namjere i dva cilja njihova djelovanja. Prvo, *EgoEast* nastoji istražiti i okupiti umjetnike s tzv. „Istoka“ (Europe), dakle čitavog onog područja istočno od nedavno srušenog Berlinskog zida. Drugo, kao tada najmlađa generacija likovnih umjetnika, *EgoEast* nastoji stvoriti „svoje mjesto pod suncem“, i to povezivanjem (i stvarnim, fizičkim – budući da su redovno posjećivali pojedine umjetnike, svojevrsne „pretko“ – ali i ideološkim) s generacijskim prethodnicima i uspostavljanjem kontinuiteta sličnosti. Zanimljivo je da je prvi „institucionalizirani“ pregled suvremene umjetnosti i aktualnih umjetničkih i likovnih strujanja na sceni uslijedio tek nakon ovog *EgoEastova*. Krajem

iduće 1993. godine, naime, otvara se opsežna izložba *Nova hrvatska umjetnost* u prostorima Moderne galerije, Umjetničkog paviljona i Salona galerije Karas. Autori, povjesničari umjetnosti Igor Zidić, ravnatelj Moderne galerije, Zdenko Rus i Mladenka Šolman, okupili su 300-tinjak djela nastalih uglavnom u prethodnih pet godina i ukupno 112 autora, uključivši sve medije likovnog stvaralaštva i inzistirajući na praćenju pluralističke prirode likovne scene. I premda su ambicioznost izložbe, kao i njezin cilj da „stvari prvu *carte d'identite* hrvatske nove umjetnosti“<sup>5</sup> neupitni, ona je ipak na posredan način bila simptom krnje izložbene politike hrvatskih i gradskih upravnih institucija, problema neadekvatnog financiranja kulturnih programa<sup>6</sup> i – naposljetku – nepostojanja prikladne prostorne i institucionalne strukture za izlaganje i produciranje suvremene umjetnosti.<sup>7</sup> Te je probleme djelomično olakšalo osnivanje Soros centra za suvremenu umjetnost (SCCA), koji od 1993. djeluje u Hrvatskoj kao dio Instituta Otvoreno društvo, i otad nastoji suštavno promicati i poticati suvremenu likovnu produkciju – bilo financijski, bilo logistički i organizacijski.<sup>8</sup> Uz to, SCCA-ov doprinos na području dokumentiranja hrvatske suvremene umjetnosti je pozamašan. Godišnje izložbe<sup>9</sup> u organizaciji Instituta okupile su bitnije protagoniste umjetničke scene sedamdesetih i njihovih nasljedovatelja u devedesetima, što je na neki način imalo kulminaciju u retrospektivnoj izložbi

OTVARANJE IZLOŽBE JELA I PIČA  
U GALERIJU PM, 1994.,  
FOTOGRAFIJA BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION OF FOOD  
AND DRINK, PM GALLERY, ZAGREB, 1994,  
PHOTO BY BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

IZLOŽBA JELA I PIČA, GALERIJA PM, 1994.,  
FOTOGRAFIJA BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

EXHIBITION OF FOOD AND DRINK,  
PM GALLERY, ZAGREB, 1994,  
PHOTO BY BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

JELENA  
PAŠIĆ

a catalogue and a manifesto written by Ivana Keser<sup>4</sup> – presented several generations of Croatian artists and offered a first version of art historiography for the previous four decades. Thus, it was the first to establish a continuity between the older and the younger generations of artists, and it drew attention to the existence of a tradition of conceptual art – from *Gorgona* and *New Art Practice* to the activity of a completely new generation that was just emerging, as well as the earlier tradition of founding art groups, collaborative work, and artistic self-organization. The very name of *EgoEast* – which cleverly combined the words “ego” and “east” into the word “egoist”, thus establishing a third layer of meaning – implied the two basic intentions and goals of their activity. Firstly, *EgoEast* sought to explore and gather the artworks and artists of the so-called “East” (of Europe), the entire region east of the recently fallen Berlin Wall. Secondly, as the then youngest generation of artists, *EgoEast* sought to create “their own place under the sun” by establishing a connection (both actual and physical, since they often visited individual artists, their “predecessors” of a sort, and ideological one) with the previous generations, and by insisting on continuity through similarity. It is interesting that the first “institutionalized” overview of contemporary art and the current artistic trends on the Croatian scene followed only after that of *EgoEast*. Late in 1993, an extensive exhibition called *New Croatian Art* was opened at Modern Gallery, Art Pavilion, and the Salon of Karas Gallery in Zagreb. Its authors

were art historians Igor Zidić (director of Modern Gallery), Zdenko Rus, and Mladenka Šolman, and it included some 300 artworks, created mostly within the previous five years by 112 different artists, including all the media of visual arts and insisting on paying justice to the pluralist nature of the art scene. And even though its ambitious concept and its goal of “creating the first *carte d'identite* of new Croatian art”<sup>5</sup> remain unquestionable, it was nevertheless a symptom of the deficient exhibition policy of the Croatian state and the municipal administrative institutions, the inadequate financing of cultural programmes,<sup>6</sup> and – eventually – the lack of adequate spatial and institutional structures for exhibiting and producing contemporary art.<sup>7</sup> These problems were partly alleviated with the establishment of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA), which operated in Croatia from 1993 as a part of the Open Society Institute, seeking to systematically promote and encourage contemporary literary production – be it financially, logistically, or organizationally.<sup>8</sup> SCCA's contribution to the field of documenting Croatian contemporary art has been considerable. Annual exhibitions<sup>9</sup> organized by the Institute summoned some of the crucial protagonists of the art scene of the 1970s and their heirs in the 1990s, reaching a sort of pinnacle with the retrospective exhibition of the *Group of Six Authors* in 1998, which articulated the Group's position in the 1970s and actualized their role in shaping the neo-conceptual scene in the 1990s.

The turn that gradually occurred in the second half of the 1990s,





DEVEDESETE:  
BORBA ZA  
KONTEKST

THE 1990S:  
STRUGGLING FOR  
THE CONTEXT



NASLOVNICA KATALOGA IZLOŽBE  
ŠTO, KAKO I ZA KOGA, 2000.



what, how & for whom  
★ što, kako i za koga ★  
quoi, comment et pour qui

povodom 152. godišnjice Komunističkog manifesta  
on the occasion of 152<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Communist Manifesto

FRONT COVER OF THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE  
WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM, 2000

*Grupe šestorice autora* 1998. godine, koja je artikulirala poziciju *Grupe* u sedamdesetima i aktualizirala njihov udio u formiranju neokonceptualne scene u devedesetima.

Zaokret koji se postupno dogodio u drugoj polovici devedesetih, i koji je rezultirao proširivanjem polja za artikulaciju građanskih prava i slobode govora, a temeljnu potvrdu ostvario u izbornoj smjeni vlasti 2000., svoja je ishodišta imao već u pojedinačnim angažiranim inicijativama iz područja kulturnog djelovanja, kao što je kazališna skupina *Montažstroj*,<sup>10</sup> posvećena propitivanju većine aktualnih društvenih problematika, nacionalnog identiteta i identiteta suvremenog čovjeka, „mitologijama Istočne Europe i tranzicije“<sup>11</sup> i sl., ili pak časopis *Arkzin*, pokrenut u okviru Antiratne kampanje Hrvatske 1991. godine, i programatski usmjeren k temama kao što su ljudska prava i prava manjinskih grupa, važnost postojanja alternativne scene, utjecaj i uloga medija i dizajna, kritika aktualne političke situacije i sl. Premda je uvijek gajio status izdanka prave *off-scene*,<sup>12</sup> uloga ljudi okupljenih oko *Arkzina* dugoročno je sasvim sigurno doprinijela osnutku i razvoju nekolicine nevladinih organizacija i inicijativa u posljednjoj trećini desetljeća (i kasnije).<sup>13</sup> *Arkzin* prestaje izlaziti upravo u to vrijeme, kada je njegova simbolička uloga u pripremanju diskursa, stvaranju teorijskog i praktičnog modela za buduću *alternativnu scenu* na neki način bila ispunjena. Pod okriljem *Arkzina*, ili zahvaljujući njegovu poticaju, dogodili su se pojedini

resulting in an extended field of articulating civic rights and the freedom of speech, which obtained its final affirmation in the change of government at the elections of 2000, had its starting points in the more strongly engaged individual initiatives in various fields of cultural activity, such as that of *Montažstroj* theatre company,<sup>10</sup> dedicated to the exploration of a number of social issues, national identity and the identity of the contemporary man, “myths of Eastern Europe and the transition,” and so on.<sup>11</sup> There was also the *Arkzin* magazine, launched together with the Croatian Anti-War Campaign of 1991, and programmatically oriented towards topics such as human and minority rights, the importance of alternative scenes, the influence and role of design and the media, the critique of current political situation, and so on. Even though it always retained its status as a fruit of the true *off-scene*,<sup>12</sup> in a long-term perspective persons linked to it made quite a significant contribution to the emergence and advance of non-governmental organizations and initiatives in the last third of the decade (and later).<sup>13</sup> *Arkzin* was discontinued precisely at that time, when its symbolic task of preparing the discourse and creating a theoretical and practical model for the future alternative scene had in a way been fulfilled. It was under its wing, or perhaps owing to its encouragement, that certain art projects, such as *Gen XX* by Sanja Iveković,<sup>14</sup> could take place. Sometimes it happened indirectly, as in the case of *What, Who & for Whom*, an exhibition accompanying *Arkzin*'s new edition

umjetnički projekti, primjerice *Gen XX* Sanje Iveković,<sup>14</sup> ili pak, posredno, izložba *Tko, što i za koga*, odgovor na *Arkzinovu* reizdanje *Komunističkog manifesta* 1998. godine, povodom 150. obljetnice njegova publiciranja. Urednici *Arkzina*, Vesna Janković i Dejan Kršić, uz nekolicinu suradnika, 1997. osnivaju *ATTACK – Autonomnu tvornicu kulture*, nezavisnu udrugu koja je nastavila pronositi *Arkzinovu* ideološku misao i u šire polje kulturnog djelovanja, što je najavilo svojevrsni *boom* osnivanja relativno velikog broja umjetničkih i kulturnih udruga, kolektiva i organizacija u sljedećim godinama, neovisnih o većim službenim institucijama sličnog polja djelovanja, s namjerom što većeg širenja umjetnosti i kulture u područje javne sfere, artikuliranja i kritičkog referiranja na aktualne državno-političko-društvene strukture te – u krajnjoj liniji – stvaranja civilnog društva i novog javnog diskursa. Godina 1998. simbolički je obilježena kao ključna za nezavisnu kulturnu scenu, zbog nekolicine događaja. Umjetnik Igor Grubić u suradnji s *ATTACK-om* organizira niz akcija pod zajedničkim nazivom *Knjiga i društvo – 22%*, što je prvi događaj koji je okupio i aktivno uključio čitavu nezavisnu kulturnu scenu Zagreba. Povod projektu bilo je uvođenje poreza na knjige, a znakovito je da je PDV na knjige sljedeće godine ukinut. Činjenica da je dotad „nedodirljivi“ politički aparat, između ostaloga,<sup>15</sup> pokleknuo pred udruženim snagama kulturnih aktera i – šire – javnošću, djelovala je krajnje optimistično na ostatak desetljeća. Mnoga su individualna

nastojanja pojedinih umjetnika rezultirala radovima koji su vrlo kritički i manje ili više eksplicitno doticali problem represije, državne kontrole i distribucije određenog sadržaja u masovnim medijima i javnom diskursu, primjerice rad Ivane Keser *Zagađena voda*, izveden na 33. *Zagrebačkom salonu* 1998. Umjetnica je na podu galerije izložila posude napunjene vodom i natopljenim stranicama dnevnih novina. Simbolički smrad stanja u koje je hrvatsku državu, društvo i kulturu dovela državna politika širio se jednako kao i stvarni smrad raspadajućih novina. Iste je godine na 25. *Salonu mladih*, u okviru koncepcije Tihomira Milovca, u tu preglednu i obično neinventivnu likovnu manifestaciju uvršten niz nezavisnih udruga, između ostalih i *ATTACK* te *Art radionica Lazareti*, čime su vrlo brzo prepoznati važnost i dosezi tih i sličnih organizacija.

Da se nije radilo tek o izdvojenim događajima i akcijama na relativno skromnom polju kulture, nego o određenom kritičnom trenutku u kojem društvo napokon osvještava vlastitu etičku zadaću i preuzima odgovornu inicijativu za određene političke promjene (a kojemu su inicijative nezavisne kulturne scene prethodile i na neki način „otvorile prostor“), svjedoči i osnutak Građanske koalicije i organizacija kampanje *Glas 99*. Ciljevi navedene koalicije i njezine kampanje bili su „potaknuti što veći postotak građana Hrvatske da izađu na (...) parlamentarne izbore. (...) Drugi cilj bio je promicati vrijednosti civilnog društva

DEVEDESETE:  
BORBA ZA  
KONTEKST

THE 1990S:  
STRUGGLING FOR  
THE CONTEXT

of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1998, published on the occasion of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In 1997, the editors of *Arkzin*, Vesna Janković and Dejan Kršić, founded *ATTACK – Autonomous Culture Factory* together with some collaborators: an independent organization that transmitted *Arkzin's* ideological principles into a broader field of cultural activity, heralding a sort of boom of new artistic and cultural associations, collectives, and organizations in the years to come, which would be independent from the larger official institutions active in the same fields. Their intent was to spread art and culture into the public sphere, to articulate and critically refer to the current state, political, and social structures, and – eventually – build up a civil society and a new public discourse. The year of 1998 would prove symbolically “crucial” for the independent cultural scene owing to a number of events. In collaboration with *ATTACK*, artist Igor Grubić organized a series of happenings under the common title *Book and the Society – 22%*, the first event that joined the entire independent cultural scene of Zagreb in a common action. It was a reaction to the introduction of VAT on books, and it is important to note that the tax was abolished the following year. The fact that the hitherto “untouchable” political apparatus, among other things,<sup>15</sup> ceded before the joint action of cultural agents and – more importantly – the public at large had a considerable optimistic impact on the rest of the decade. A number of efforts by individual artists resulted in artworks that were very critical and more or less explicitly tackled the

problem of repression, state control, and topics selected for the mass media and public discourse. Among them, one should mention the installation called *Polluted Water* by Ivana Keser, exhibited at the 33<sup>th</sup> *Zagreb Salon* in 1998. The artist placed containers filled with water and soaked newspaper pages onto the gallery floor. The symbolic stench of the situation into which the state policy had brought Croatia was spreading together with the real stench of decaying newspaper. That same year, the 25<sup>th</sup> *Youth Salon*, that usually uninventive art manifestation of an overview type, was authored by Tihomir Milovac and included a number of independent organizations, among others *ATTACK* and *Art Workshop Lazareti*, which contributed to the prompt recognition of the importance and achievements of these and similar organizations.

The fact that these were not isolated events and actions in the relatively modest field of culture, but rather a specific critical moment in which the society was finally becoming aware of its own ethical task and starting a responsible initiative for political change (preceded by the initiatives of independent cultural scene, which in a way “opened up” the way), was confirmed by the founding of the *Civic Coalition* and the launching of its campaign called *Voice 99*. The aims of this coalition and its campaign were to “encourage the highest possible percentage of Croatian citizens to vote in parliamentary elections. (...) The second goal was to promote the values of the civil society and to endorse long-term interests of non-governmental organizations



i zagovarati dugoročne interese nevladinih organizacija kao institucija civilnog društva".<sup>16</sup> Na važnost političkog, ideološkog i šireg ekonomskog konteksta i vladajućih društvenih uvjeta za proizvodnju i recepciju umjetnosti uputila je u velikoj mjeri već spomenuta izložba iz 2000. godine *Što, kako i za koga*, iz koje će se formirati kustoski kolektiv *WHW (What, How and For Whom)* i u idućem desetljeću postati jednim od najznačajnijih particijanata na lokalnoj kulturno-umjetničkoj sceni, ali i zadobiti svoju prepoznatljivost unutar šireg europskog konteksta. Izložba s podnaslovom „Povodom 152. godišnjice Komunističkog manifesta“ koincidirala je sa smjenom dotadašnje konzervativne desničarski orijentirane vlasti. Mogućnost promjene, ostvarena tim primjerom smjene političkog vrha, urodila je i novim valom različitih oblika akcija, praksi i angažmana koji su uputili na važnost javnog govora o socijalnoj nepravdi, kršenju ljudskih prava, prodorima partikularnih interesa u javnu sferu i sl. Jedna od posljednjih takvih akcija prije ulaska u novo desetljeće i novo tisućljeće vezana je uz problem Studentskog centra, koji je HDZ-ova vlast u devedesetima potpuno okrnjila nizom politički provedenih odluka, dokidanjem i strogim kontroliranjem kulturnih i društvenih programa koji su se tu nemjerljivo slobodnije odvijali tijekom prethodna tri desetljeća. U siječnju 2000. otvara se izložba znakovitog naziva *Novi početak* u organizaciji *ATTACK-a*, u sklopu koje Igor Grubić dijeli letke s pozivom na smjenu Uprave SC-a.<sup>17</sup>

Izložba je okupila mlađu generaciju umjetnika, nezadovoljnih aktualnim uvjetima rada, ali s optimističnim prizvukom nadolazećih promjena.

Devedesete su godine razdoblje izrazito obilježeno definiranjem identiteta – nacionalnog, kulturnog, pa i umjetničkog. Na nacionalnoj razini konstruiraju se oštre opreke u odnosu na prethodnu državu (dapače, konstruirala se i vrlo specifičan, antagonistički način govorenja o proteklom razdoblju, razdoblju jugoslavenske države), dok se na umjetničkoj sceni traže sličnosti i paralele s djelovanjem prethodnih generacija, dajući time legitimitet i umjetnicima šestog, sedmog, osmog i devetog desetljeća 20. st., a istovremeno i najmlađim generacijama. Unutar vrlo pluralističke likovne produkcije u ovom su tekstu izdvojeni oni primjeri koji su, po mojem mišljenju, imali najveće dosege i utjecaj na iduće desetljeće, a objedinjeni u ovom kontekstu predstavljaju tek jednu moguću interpretaciju razdoblja. Radovi su to koji se vrlo angažirano odnose prema aktualnom trenutku, koji u zatvorenoj i ograničenoj sferi, unutar koje „javno“ kao opća dostupnost i opće dobro ne egzistira, otvaraju uvjete za mogućnost kritičkog mišljenja.

<sup>1</sup> Sintagma „borba za kontekst“ preuzeta je iz intervjua sa Slavenom Toljem. Intervju je objavljen u *Homo Volansu (Vijenac)* 2.10.1996. Citirano prema: Tihomir Milovac, „5+“, u: *25. salon mladih*, katalog izložbe, Zagreb, HDLU, 1998., 257.

as civil society institutions.”<sup>16</sup> The importance of the political, ideological, and broader economic context and the prevailing social conditions for the production and reception of art was emphasized by the abovementioned exhibition *What, How & for Whom* in 2000, which resulted in the formation of the curatorial collective *WHW*, one of the most important participants in the local cultural and art scene in the following decade, which also gained recognition in the European context. Their exhibition subtitled “On the occasion of the 152<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Communist Manifesto” coincided with the change in government, which had hitherto been right-wing conservative. The awareness of the possibility of change, brought about by this change in political leadership, resulted in a new wave of various forms of actions, practices, and engagements that emphasized the importance of public discourse on social injustice, violation of human rights, intrusion of vested interests into the public sphere, and so on. One of the last such actions before the onset of the new decade and the new millennium was linked to the problem of Student Centre, which had been completely thwarted during the 1990s by HDZ’s government with a series of politically enforced decisions, such as the abolishment or strict control of cultural and social programmes after they had been taking place there with considerably greater freedom than elsewhere in the previous three decades. In January 2000, an exhibition with the telling title *New Beginnings* was organized there by *ATTACK*, including the

distribution of leaflets by Igor Grubić that called for a change in SC’s administration.<sup>17</sup> The exhibition featured a younger generation of artists, who were dissatisfied with the current working conditions, but with the optimistic undertones of oncoming change.

The 1990s were a period that was exceptionally strongly marked by identity definition – national, cultural, and even artistic. At the national level, one could observe sharp contrasts in relation to the previous state (including a very specific, antagonistic discourse on the past age, the era of Yugoslavia), while the art scene was searching for analogies and parallels to the activity of the previous generations, thus legitimizing the artists of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the youngest generation. Within the very pluralistic art production, I have chosen to present those cases that, in my opinion, had the most far-reaching achievements and impact on the decade to follow, and the way they were brought together in this text is only one among many possible interpretations of the period. Those were the artworks that took a very engaged stance towards the current moment, and which in that closed and limited sphere, in which “the public” barely functioned as a generally accessible notion, while common good was practically non-existing, opened up new ways for the possibility of critical thinking.

<sup>1</sup> The expression “struggling for the context” has been taken over from an interview with Slaven Tolj, published in *Homo Volans (Vijenac)* on 2 October

<sup>2</sup> Izložba je otvorena 5. svibnja 1994. i rezultat je autorske koncepcije Mladena Stilinovića. Izložba je okupila „stare“ izlagače, umjetnike koji su tijekom osamdesetih, od osnivanja Galerije, pa sve do njezina zatvaranja 1991., redovito ondje izlagali. Tema - hrana i piće - bila je zadana, kao i namjerna intencija da se na taj način, egzistencijalnom potrebom za hranom i tekućinom, uputi i prikaže „trajna egzistencijska ugroženost umjetnika na domaćem tlu“ (u: Goran Blagus, „Mikrokozmos na pladnju“, u: *Vijenac*, god. II, 11, 26. svibnja 1994., 27.).

<sup>3</sup> Antun Maračić, „Provincija u glavi ili kako zabraniti izložbu?“, u: *Vijenac*, god. II, 18, 1. rujna 1994., 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ivana Keser, „Kronologija“, u: *EgoEast - hrvatska umjetnost danas*, katalog izložbe, HDLU, Zagreb, 1992., 49–56.

<sup>5</sup> Igor Zidić, „Jedno čitanje Hrvatske“, u: *Kolo*, 11–12, 1993., 963.

<sup>6</sup> Planirani popratni katalog izložbe nikad nije tiskan, navodno zbog skromnih dodjeljenih financijskih sredstava. Tekstovi nekolicine autora (redom: Igora Zidića, Zdenka Rusa, Mladenke Šolman, Tonka Maroevića, Vlade Marteka, Josipa Stošića, Berislava Valušeka, Vladimira Kusika, Fede Vukića, Mladena Stilinovića, Marine Gržinić, Leonide Kovač, Nade Beroš, Miroslava Gašparovića, Ljiljane Kolešnik, Darka Glavana i Željka Kipkea) izloženi na popratnom simpoziju, objavljeni su u časopisu *Kolo*. U: *Kolo*, 11–12, 1993., 962–1029.

<sup>7</sup> Prisjetimo se, središnja muzejska institucija, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, sve do kraja prvog desetljeća 21. stoljeća, dakle još idućih šesnaest godina, djelovala je u sasvim neprikladnoj adaptiranoj povijesnoj zgradi na Katarininu trgu, bez prikladnih izlagačkih prostora i depoa. Isto tako, devedesete je obilježilo i zatvaranje nekolicine galerijskih prostora (Galerija PM, Galerija SC), dok su ostale institucije djelovale uz znatna ograničenja, djelomično gubeći ulogu koju su imale u kreiranju suvremene umjetničke scene u proteklim desetljećima.

<sup>8</sup> Najistaknutiji su tu doprinosi i aktivnosti dviju direktorica Centra, Branke Stipančić (1993.–1996.) i Janke Vukmir (1996.–), kao i Jadranke Vinterhalter i Darka Šimičića.

<sup>9</sup> Primjerice, izložbe *Riječi i slike* (1994.), *Checkpoint* (1995.) itd.

<sup>10</sup> Skupina *Montažstroj* osnovana je krajem 1989. godine s ciljem djelovanja na polju multimedijalne i eksperimentalne scenske umjetnosti pod vodstvom Boruta Šeparovića. Već je vrlo rano vrijednost ove skupine umjetnika prepoznata na internacionalnoj razini; video-spot s izrazito anti-ratnom porukom, „Croatia

in Flame“, prikazivan je na MTV-u 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Agata Juniku, „Glavom kroz Berlinski zid“, u: *Zarez*, god. I, 20, 9.12.1999., 12.

<sup>12</sup> Kao što je to rekao Dejan Kršić, *Arkzinov* urednik: „Projekt *Arkzin*, stjecajem subjektivno objektivnog i objektivno subjektivnog faktora doista nije rezultirao jednom novom *mainstream* publikacijom, čvrsto pozicioniranim magazinom. Ali možda nam to nije bio niti cilj. Primarni cilj uvijek je bio držati mogućnosti izražavanja i mišljenja otvorenim.“

U: Agata Juniku, Sabina Sabolović, „Bebe i prljava voda“, u: *Zarez*, god. I, 21–22, 23.12.1999., 8.

<sup>13</sup> Neke od njih su, uz one spomenute u tekstu, i ženska nevladina udruga Elektra (osnovala ju je 1996. Sanja Iveković sa skupinom kolegica), Multimedijalni institut MI2 (osnovan 1999.), Platforma 9,81 - institut za istraživanja u arhitekturi (osnovan 2000.), [BLOK] Lokalna baza za osvježavanje kulture (osnovana 2001.), Kontejner | biro suvremene umjetničke prakse (osnovan 2002.) i dr.

<sup>14</sup> Na *Arkzinovim* stranicama objavljeni su umjetnički „oglasni“, dio ciklusa *Gen XX*, koji je kritički propitivao više pitanja: od medijskog oglašavanja, manipulacije sadržajem, subverzivnosti i cenzure pojedinih sadržaja, konstrukciju nacionalnog i povijesnog identiteta, pitanje *copyrighta* i sl.

<sup>15</sup> Uvedeni porez na dodanu vrijednost od čak 22% bio je jedan od najviših u Europi i u godini dana njegova provođenja prodaja knjiga znatno je pala.

<sup>16</sup> Tin Gazivoda, „Novo vrijeme za civilno društvo“, u: *Zarez*, god. II, 23, 20.1.2000., 4.

Gradanska koalicija osnovana je okupljanjem tridesetak nevladinih udruga 1999. godine kao reakcija na tek održane parlamentarne izbore, da bi se koaliciji, nakon provođenja kampanje *Glav 99*, pridružilo još gotovo 120 organizacija. O uspjehu te inicijative govori i činjenica o znatnom porastu broja birača izašlih na izbore u odnosu na ranije.

<sup>17</sup> Borbu protiv čelnih ljudi SC-a nastavio je Pokret studentskih inicijativa organiziranjem potpisivanja peticije za njihovu smjenu.

DEVEDESETE:  
BORBA ZA  
KONTEKST

THE 1990S:  
STRUGGLING FOR  
THE CONTEXT

1996. Quoted from: Tihomir Milovac, “5<sup>th</sup>”, in: 25<sup>th</sup> *Youth Salon*, exhibition catalogue (Zagreb: HDLU, 1998), 257.

<sup>2</sup> The exhibition was authored by Mladen Stilinović and opened on May 5, 1994. It gathered its “old” exhibitors, artists who had been exhibiting there regularly during the 1980s, from the Gallery’s foundation until it closed down in 1991. The topic – food and drink – was defined in advance, with the intention of using the existential need of food and drink to indicate and show the “permanent existential threat that the artists are facing in their homeland” (from: Goran Blagus, “Mikrokozmos na pladnju” [Microcosm on a Plate], *Vijenac* II/11 (26 May 1994), 27).

<sup>3</sup> Antun Maračić, “Provincija u glavi ili kako zabraniti izložbu?” [Parochialism of minds, or: How to ban an exhibition], *Vijenac* II/18 (1 September 1994), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ivana Keser, “Kronologija”, in: *EgoEast - hrvatska umjetnost danas* [EgoEast: Croatian art today], exhibition catalogue (Zagreb: HDLU, 1992), 49–56.

<sup>5</sup> Igor Zidić, “Jedno čitanje Hrvatske” [An interpretation of Croatia], *Kolo* 11–12 (1993), 963.

<sup>6</sup> The planned exhibition catalogue was never printed, allegedly because of the modest budget. Some of the texts (by the following authors: Igor Zidić, Zdenko Rus, Mladenka Šolman, Tonko Maroević, Vlado Martek, Josip Stošić, Berislav Valušek, Vladimir Kusik, Feda Vukić, Mladen Stilinović, Marina Gržinić, Leonida Kovač, Nada Beroš, Miroslav Gašparović, Ljiljana Kolešnik, Darko Glavan, and Željko Kipke) were exhibited at the accompanying symposium, and then published in the *Kolo* magazine. *Kolo* 11–12 (1993), 962–1029.

<sup>7</sup> Let us recall that one of the most important Croatian museums, Museum of Contemporary Art, was to operate for the next sixteen years, that is, until the end of the 2010s, in a completely inadequate adapted historical building on Catherine’s Square, without an appropriate exhibition venue or a depot. Moreover, the 1990s saw the closing down of several gallery venues (PM Gallery, SC Gallery), while other institutions had to operate on a much tighter budget, partly losing the role they had played in establishing the contemporary art scene during the previous decades.

<sup>8</sup> The most important contributions and activities have been those initiated by the two managers of the Centre: Branka Stipančić (1993–1996) and Janka Vukmir (1996–), as well as Jadranka Vinterhalter and Darko Šimičić.

<sup>9</sup> Exhibitions such as *Words and Images* (1994), *Checkpoint* (1995), and so on.

<sup>10</sup> *Montažstroj* was founded late in 1989 as an art group led by Borut Šeparović, with the aim of working in the field of multimedia and experimental performing arts. Its value was almost immediately recognized at the international level: their video clip with an antiwar message, “Croatia in Flame,” was shown on MTV in 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Agata Juniku, “Glavom kroz Berlinski zid” [Head through the Berlin Wall], *Zarez* I/20 (9 December 1999), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Dejan Kršić, the editor of *Arkzin*, once said: “Owing to certain subjectively objective and objectively subjective factors, the *Arkzin* project has really never resulted in a new mainstream publication or a firmly positioned magazine. But perhaps that was not our goal in the first place. Our primary goal has always been to keep open the possibilities of expression and reflection.” In: Agata Juniku and Sabina Sabolović, “Bebe i prljava voda” [On babies and bathwater], *Zarez* I/21–22 (23 December 1999), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Besides those mentioned in the text, they included the non-governmental women’s group Elektra (founded in 1996 by Sanja Iveković and some friends), Multimedia Institute MI2 (founded in 1999), Platform 9,81 – Institute for Research in Architecture (founded in 2000), [BLOK] Local Base for Culture Refreshment (founded in 2001), Kontejner | Bureau of Contemporary Art Practice (founded in 2002), and others.

<sup>14</sup> *Arkzin* published the artist’s “ads”, a part of the *Gen XX* series, which critically examined several issues, such as advertising in the media, manipulating the content, subversiveness and censorship, the construction of national and historical identities, the question of copyright, and so on.

<sup>15</sup> The imposed VAT of 22% was among the highest in Europe and in the year following its introduction the book sales diminished considerably.

<sup>16</sup> Tin Gazivoda, “Novo vrijeme za civilno društvo” [New times for the civil society], *Zarez* II/23 (20 January 2000), 4. The Civic Coalition was founded by joining together some thirty non-governmental organizations in 1999, following the recent parliamentary elections. After the *Vote 99* campaign, almost 120 additional organizations joined the coalition. The success of the initiative was reflected in the fact that the voter turnout increased considerably.

<sup>17</sup> Struggle against SC’s leadership was continued by the Movement of Student Initiatives, which organized the petition signing to achieve their resignation.