

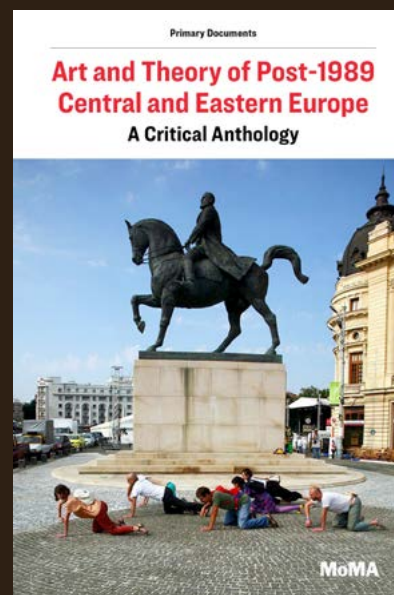
# O umjetnosti Srednje i Istočne Europe — samo negativna referencija



Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci, Ksenia Nouril, ur. *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*. New York: MoMA, 2018. ISBN 9781633450646  
DOI: 10.31664/zu.2018.103.06

Svijet umjetnosti i njegovi (Zapadni) centri okrenuli su se umjetnosti bivših socijalističkih zemalja odmah po završetku Hladnoga rata ili — kako se to u literaturi najčešće navodi — „nakon pada Berlinskoga zida”, sintagme koja svojevrsnom „prirodnom nužnošću” zakriva temeljni preokret: slom socijalističkoga bloka i početak trijumfalizma kapitalizma. Taj se interes najprije pretočio u izložbe velikoga formata, dok se posljednjih desetak godina sve više usmjerava istraživačkim projektima koji se javnosti predstavljaju u formatu publikacija. Te su knjige većinom proizvedene i objavljene na Zapadu, objavljuju ih prominentne izdavačke kuće ili umjetničke institucije, a strukturirane su kao višeglasni zbornici koji „miksaju” glasove srednje i mlađe generacije istraživača, kako iz istočne i srednje tako i iz zapadne Europe.

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Vesna Vuković

[BLOK] Lokalna baza za osvježavanje kulture, Zagreb /

# On the Art of Central and Eastern Europe — Only a Negative Reference



Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci, Ksenia Nouril, eds. *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*. New York: MoMA, 2018. ISBN 9781633450646  
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The world of art and its (Western) centres have turned towards the art of former socialist countries right after the end of the Cold War, or—as it is usually put in literature—“after the fall of the Berlin Wall,” a syntagm whose peculiar “elemental necessity” hides a fundamental reversal: the collapse of the socialist bloc and the beginning of capitalism’s triumphalism. This interest was initially channelled into exhibitions of large formats, but in the last decade the focus has been changing towards research projects that are introduced to the public in the form of publications. These books are mostly written and published in the West, distributed by prominent publishers or art institutions, and structured like multivoiced anthologies which “mix” the voices of the middle and younger generation of researchers, both from Eastern and Central as well as the Western Europe.

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Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci, Ksenia Nouril, ur. *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*. New York: MoMA, 2018. / Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci, Ksenia Nouril, eds. *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*. New York: MoMA, 2018.  
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Jedno od ranijih izdanja, *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, koje materijalizira višegodišnje umjetničko istraživanje grupe IRWIN, najavilo je novi kurs koji je obilježio nadolazeću dekadu.<sup>1</sup> Za razliku od dotadašnjih izdanja, kao što je *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* koje okuplja tekstove povjesničara umjetnosti<sup>2</sup> ili kasnije utjecajno izdanje Piotra Piotrowskog *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*,<sup>3</sup> ton ove publikacije uvelike određuju glasovi umjetnika i kustosa, odnosno praktičara. Kako kartografski odabir naslova i sugerira, publikacija se predstavlja kao „vodič kroz umjetnički krajolik istočne polovice Europe”, najavljujući „neodoljiva otkrića” iz skrivene povijesti umjetnosti „totalitarnih i posttotalitarnih društava”. Činjenica da se promovirala kao *najveći projekt dokumentiranja suvremene umjetnosti Istoka koji je Istok ikad poduzeo*, kao i specifičan kolonijalni žargon i struktura publikacije, odaju polazne pozicije: Zapadni modernistički kanon kao univerzalna mjera, ahistorijsko ne-mjesto, i Istok kao lokalizirana figura bez univerzalnih vrijednosti, jednostavno—historijska lokacija. Slijedom toga narativa glatki razvoj modernizma 20. stoljeća na Istoku je na dobrim pola stoljeća prekinuo komunizam, a svrstavanje uz Sovjetski Savez i socijalistički projekt koštalo je čitavo to geografsko područje izolacije od većine svijeta.

Svojevrsni pokušaj napuštanja ovakvog kolonijalnog pogleda predstavlja izdanje koje se pojavilo deset godina kasnije, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*.<sup>4</sup> Pozivajući se na često citiranu izjavu slovenskog kustosa i teoretičara Igora Zabela „kako svi govore o bivšem Istoku, a nitko ni ne spominje bivši Zapad”,<sup>5</sup> urednici se okreću od hladnoratovske podjele svijeta: u današnjem globaliziranom svijetu i umjetnost moramo prestati promatrati iz rakursa „simplificirane dihotomije Istok—Zapad” i zauzeti globalno očište. Kao što nam sugerira sažetak knjige, suvremena umjetnost nastaje i cirkulira u „postkomunističkom, postkolonijalnom, postideološkom i posthistorijskom dobu”. Ovaj i ovakvi danas dominantni pristupi počivaju na uvjerenju kako se problemi društva razrješavaju na razini diskursa. Ne spuštajući se na materijalnu razinu, u proizvodne odnose i odnose moći koji društva prožimaju i izgrađuju, u osnovi, barem i neintencionalno, reproduciraju jedan od konceptualnih temelja zapadnog modernizma—onaj o umjetničkoj autonomiji.

Najnovije izdanje *Umjetnost i teorija srednje i istočne Europe nakon 1989.: kritička antologija* treba čitati na iznesenoj podlozi: kao nastavak univerzalizirajućega i u osnovi zapadnocentričnog interesa za „druge”, sad u nešto izmijenjenoj retorici koja počiva na ideji činjenja Zapada bivšim (*forming of the West*), čiji je ton zadržao ranije spomenuto izdanje koje joj je neposredno prethodilo.

Proizvodna baza ovoga izdanja može u tom smislu biti indikativna. Ono je rezultat višegodišnjeg istraživanja koje provodi MoMA, najveći i najutjecajniji muzej moderne umjetnosti, odnosno njezin međudjelni interni istraživački program *Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP)*, osnovan 2009. u cilju proučavanja povijesti umjetnosti izvan „hegemonijskih modela Sjeverne Amerike i Zapadne Europe”.<sup>6</sup> U ekspanziji novih teorija koje kritiziraju modernizam MoMA se, kao njegov bastion, ovim programom na deklarativnoj razini obračunava s modernističkim kanonom, a posljedično i s vlastitim fundusom i diskursom. Činjenica da program okuplja više od pedeset zaposlenika iz jedanaest muzejskih odjela, podijeljenih u tri istraživačke grupe (jedna od njih, C-MAP srednja i istočna Europa, iznijela je ovo izdanje) pokazuje zaokret u muzejskoj politici. Nova globalna paradigma sada „globalnog muzeja” zahtijeva nove teritorije i nove glasove, uključivanje „drugih”, pa MoMA-ini kustosi u okviru istraživačkih programa putuju neotkrivenim područjima, kao u vrijeme tzv. „velikih geografskih otkrića”. Proučavanje povijesti umjetnosti izvan „hegemonijskog modela” diktira se iz Muzeja s velikim M, pa se deklarirano otvaranje „drugima” otkriva kao utvrđivanje postojeće hegemonije, samo u izmijenjenom diskursu. Diskurs globaliziranog svijeta umjetnosti i njegove institucije, globalnog muzeja, proizvodi se i reproducira upravo

<sup>1</sup> IRWIN, *East Art Map*.

<sup>2</sup> Hoptman, Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*.

<sup>3</sup> Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> Hlavajova, Sheikh, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*.

<sup>5</sup> Citirano prema: Ceferin, „Far from Home: Contemporary Slovenian Architecture in the Making”, 54.

<sup>6</sup> Janevski, Marcoci, „Introduction”, 12.

One of the earlier editions, *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, which materialised the years-long artistic research of the IRWIN group, announced a new course that marked the coming decade.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the previous editions, such as the *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* that collected texts by art historians,<sup>2</sup> or the latter influential edition by Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*,<sup>3</sup> the tone of this publication was largely set by the voices of artists and curators or, in other words, practitioners. As suggested by the cartographic choice of the title, this publication presented itself as a “guidebook through the artistic landscape of the eastern half of Europe,” and promised “compelling discoveries” from hidden art histories of “totalitarian and post-totalitarian societies.” The fact that it was promoted as *the largest contemporary art documentation project ever undertaken by the East on the East*, its specific colonial jargon and publication structure revealed its starting positions: Western modernist canon as a universal measure, ahistorical non-place, and the East as a localised figure without universal values, simply—a historic location. According to this narrative, the smooth development of 20th century modernism in the East was interrupted by communism for a good half-century, and the price that this entire geographic area paid for aligning itself with the Soviet Union and the socialist project was isolation from most of the world.

1 IRWIN, *East Art Map*.

2 Hoptman, Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*.

3 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.

Another edition that appeared ten years later, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*,<sup>4</sup> represented an attempt to abandon such colonial outlook. Referencing the oft-quoted statement from the Slovenian curator and theoretician Igor Zabel “The East is still the East, although it is now called ‘the (former) East’. (Does anyone speak about ‘the former West’?)”<sup>5</sup> editors began to turn away from the Cold War division of the world: in today’s globalised world, we must also stop looking at art from the standpoint of a “simplistic dichotomy of East vs. West,” and adopt a global point of view. As is suggested in the book abstract, contemporary art is made and circulated in the “post-communist, postcolonial, posthuman, post-ideological, and posthistorical era.” This and similar, now-dominant approaches rest on the belief that society’s problems can be solved at the level of discourse. By not stepping down to the material level, among the relations of production and power that pervade and build societies, these approaches basically, if perhaps unintentionally, reproduce one of the basic conceptual foundations of Western modernism—the one about artistic autonomy.

4 Hlavajova, Sheikh, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*.

5 As cited in: Ceferin, “Far from Home: Contemporary Slovenian Architecture in the Making.” 54.

The latest edition, *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*, should be read on the basis of the above-mentioned foundation: as a continuation of a universalizing and basically Western-centric interest in “others,” now through a somewhat altered rhetoric that rests on the idea of the forming of the West, whose tone was set by the already mentioned edition which directly preceded this one.

In this sense, this edition’s production base can be indicative. It is the result of long-term research conducted by MoMA, the biggest and most influential museum of modern art, or rather by its cross-departmental, internal research program *Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP)*, established in 2009 with the aim of studying the history of art outside the “hegemonic models of the United States and Western Europe.”<sup>6</sup> In the expansion of new theories that criticise modernism, MoMA, as its bastion, uses this program to settle scores with the modernist cannon on a declarative level, and consequently with its own holdings and discourse. The fact that the program includes more than fifty staff members from eleven museum departments, divided into three research groups (one of them, C-MAP Central and Eastern Europe, produced this edition) shows a departure from museum policy. The new global paradigm of the now “global museum” demands new territories and new voices, the inclusion of the “others,” which is why MoMA’s curators, as part of research programs, travel through uncharted areas, just like in the time of “great geographical discoveries.” The study

6 Janevski, Marcoci, “Introduction,” 12.

kroz ovakva izdanja, pa njihova struktura i specifičan žargon pružaju dobar uvid u historijsku situaciju.

*Umjetnost i teorija srednje i istočne Europe nakon 1989.: kritička antologija* opsežno je izdanje od 408 gustih stranica, koje donosi 75 priloga ili—kako se u uvodniku navodi—„primarnih i sekundarnih izvora, naručenih novih tekstova i intervjua s umjetnicima”. Prilozi su podijeljeni u sedam tematskih poglavlja, sljedećim redom: I. Razračunavanje s poviješću, II. Izlaganje „Istoka” od 1989., III. Radeći u arhivu i na arhivskoj građi, IV. Nakon sloma: nelagoda u demokraciji, V. Očuvanje socijalnog u postsocijalizmu: aktivističke prakse i forme kolektivite-ta, VI. Dekonstruiranje rodni diskursa, VII. U globalnom svijetu. U tom tematskom nizu prvo i drugo poglavlje predstavljaju okvir za čitanje: najprije se moramo razračunati s poviješću da bismo se (konačno) mogli orijentirati u globalnom svijetu. U svako se poglavlje čitatelj uvodi istom trijadom: tekstom nekog od vanjskih savjetnika projekta, koji funkcionira kao konceptualna podloga, nakon čega slijedi tekst koji sažima pojedine priloge u maniri klasičnoga uredničkog uvodnika te intervju s nekim od umjetnika ili umjetničkih kolektiva. Ovakva urednička odluka podcrtava višeglasnost izdanja, tu često naglašavanu gestu koja treba razbiti homogeni narativ o Istoku, ali istodobno otkriva i njegovu projektnu podlogu, infrastrukturnu „težinu” nezamislivu izvan konteksta snažne i bogate institucije kao što je MoMA. Ta višeglasnost u ovom slučaju nije rezultirala boljim, kompleksnijim ili nijansiranim čitanjem sadržaja; upravo suprotno, pridonijela je dojmju proizvoljnosti nedostatne uredničke obrade. Uvodnici tako funkcioniraju odviše samostalno u odnosu na priloge koje uvode, odijeljeni su od njihova sadržaja i konteksta, a zaštićeni svojom „konceptualnom ulogom” lišeni su ikakvog odnosa prema sadržaju koji slijedi. Zadatak uvođenja u tekstove u ovakvoj strukturi nije mogao ispuniti ni sažetak koji se zadržao na sažimanju sadržaja pojedinih priloga. Urednički doprinos sveo se na popis dobrih želja, a izostalo je izlaganje očišta i principa na kojima počiva selekcija. Ovome valja pribrojiti i činjenicu da izdanje nema biografija, osim biografija triju urednica na omotu, pa svima koji nisu stručnjaci u polju nedostaju osnovne koordinate. Umjesto toga, na zadnjih osam stranica proteže se popis opremljen kartama, koji iznosi mreže interakcija MoMA-inih istraživača s umjetnicima, kustosima i istraživačima u pojedinim gradovima regije te gostujućih istraživača u MoMA-i. Također, s obzirom na to da okupljeni prilozi ne samo što dolaze iz različitih konteksta nego i iz različitih registara—od historijskih analiza i analiza izložbi, preko monografskih eseja te kustoskih tekstova i najava sve do intervjua s umjetnicima—silno nedostaje njihova temeljna kontekstualizacija, kao i motivacija za uvrštavanje u ovu antologiju. Na kraju, ali jednako važno, vizualno rješenje antologije posve dosljedno prati uredničku filozofiju: riječ je o neprekinutom toku gustoga dvostupčanog teksta, prilozi se nastavljaju jedan na drugi bez stanke (recimo, tako potrebnog kratkog uvoda), sugerirajući neki prirodni niz, lanac ekvivalencija.

Kad izuzmemo uvode, riječ je o već objavljenim priložima, s jednom jedinom iznimkom. Iako deklarativno obuhvaća razdoblje od 1989., prilozi su većinom iz tekućeg desetljeća, slijede oni iz sredine prvog desetljeća, a svega su četiri teksta iz 1990-ih. To osnažuje uvodno iznesenu konstataciju o proliferaciji izdavačko-istraživačkog interesa za umjetnost bivših socijalističkih zemalja u posljednjih desetak godina. Taj se istraživački interes materijalizira u priložima kustosa i umjetnika, dakle praktičara, koji su uronjeni u suvremenu praksu pa im nedostaje historijska perspektiva. Zanimljivo je kratko pogledati i političku geografiju ove antologije: osim relativne dominacije bivše Jugoslavije, u oči upada i izostavljanje Albanije i DDR-a.

Ako bismo nakon iščitavanja podvukli crtu, Srednja i Istočna Europa ostaju samo negativna referencija, a svjedočenja umjetnika i kustosa u naporu za samohistorizacijom i u želji za priznanjem (u Zapadnom kanonu) prožeta su antikomunizmom. On se tako razotkriva kao glavna ideologija u kulturnoj i umjetničkoj historiji

of art history outside the “hegemonic model” is dictated from the Museum with a capital M, and so a declarative opening up to the “others” is revealed as a reinforcement of the existing hegemony, only in an altered discourse. The discourse of the globalised world and its institution, the global museum, is produced and reproduced exactly through this type of publication, which is why its structure and specific jargon provide a good insight into the historic situation.

*Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology* is an extensive publication on 408 dense pages, which features 75 contributions or—as is written in the introduction—“primary and secondary sources, including newly commissioned texts and interviews with artists.” The contributions are divided into seven thematic chapters, in the following order: I. Reckoning with History, II. Exhibiting the “East” since 1989, III. Working in and on the Archive, IV. After the Fall: Democracy and Its Discontent, V. Maintaining the Social in Postsocialism: Activist Practices and Forms of Collectivity, VI. Deconstructing Gender Discourses, VII. In a Global World. In this thematic sequence, the first and second chapter represent a framework for reading: we must first deal with the past so that we can (finally) find our bearing in the global world. The reader is guided into each chapter by the same triad: a text from one of the project’s external advisers that functions as a conceptual basis, followed by a text that summarises individual contributions in the manner of a traditional editor’s introduction, and finally an interview with one of the artists or art collectives. Such editorial decision underscores the edition’s multivoicedness, this often-emphasised gesture that is supposed to shatter the homogeneous narrative on the East, but which at the same time reveals its project basis, the infrastructural “weight” inconceivable outside such a strong and rich institution like the MoMA. In this case, the multivoicedness did not result in a better, more complex or more nuanced reading of content; on the contrary, it contributed to a sense of arbitrariness caused by insufficient editorial intervention. The introductions thus function too independently from the contributions they introduce, they are separate from the content and context of other texts and, protected by their “conceptual role,” deprived of any bearing to the content that follows. In such a structure, the task of introducing the texts cannot be fulfilled by the summary either, because it sticks to summarising the content of individual contributions. Editors’ contribution has been reduced to a list of good wishes, which fail to include the explication of viewpoints and principles that form the basis for selection. Another factor is that the edition does not include biographies, except those of the three editors on the flaps, so anybody who is not an expert in the field is missing the basic coordinates. Instead of biographies, the last eight pages feature a list with maps, which detail the network of interactions of MoMA’s researchers with artists, curators and researchers in particular cities in the region as well as guest researchers in MoMA. Furthermore, because collected contributions come not only from different contexts, but also different registers—from historical and exhibition analyses, through monographic essays and curator’s texts and announcements, all the way to interviews with artists—what is sorely missing is their basic contextualisation, as well as the motivation for their inclusion in the anthology. Finally, but just as importantly, the anthology’s design and layout echo the editorial philosophy: in an uninterrupted flow of dense two-column text, the contributions follow each other without a break (for, let’s say, the much-needed short introduction), thereby suggesting a natural sequence, a chain of equivalences.

Not counting the introductions, the contributions have been previously published, with only one exception. Furthermore, although it professedly covers the period after 1989, most contributions date to the current decade, followed by those from the middle of the first decade, while only four texts were written in the 1990s. This strengthens the opening claim about the proliferation of publishing-research interest in the art of former socialist countries in the last ten years. This research interest is materialised in contributions by curators and artist—practitioners—who are immersed in contemporary practice, but lack a historical perspective. A glance at

tranzicije, ali i radni princip za selekciju u elitne krugove—slijedeći narativ prema kojemu je upravo komunizam bio glavna prepreka modernističkom razvoju i glavni razlog izolacije od svijeta, pa tako i svijeta umjetnosti.

Izbjegavajući kolonijalni balast termina kartografija ili mapiranje, iako su u njezinoj proizvodnoj bazi, *Umjetnost i teorija srednje i istočne Europe nakon 1989.* naziva se kritičkom antologijom. Format antologije pretpostavlja izbor prema čvrstim i unaprijed postavljenim mjerilima koji utvrđuju kolektivnu poetiku tekstova, i to takvih koji su obilježili neki period i koje stoga treba okupiti i sačuvati kao cjelinu. Odrednicom kritička iz naslova želi se istaknuti intencija da se kronotop (post-socijalistička srednja i istočna Europa) ne uzima kao homogena cjelina, već kao „teritorij koji reflektira različite geopolitičke realnosti [...], ipak labavo povezane historijskim iskustvom socijalizma”.<sup>7</sup>

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Janevski, Marcoci, „Introduction”, 12.

Indikativno je da—unatoč tako jasnoj odrednici kao što je 1989. kao godina sloma socijalističkoga bloka i šok-terapije koja je podrazumijevala masovnu privatizaciju, deindustrijalizaciju i slom infrastrukture radi uvođenja kapitalističkih odnosa—nema ni spomena kapitalizma sve do četvrtog poglavlja. U njemu konačno nailazimo na historizaciju umjetnosti postsocijalističke Europe, ali u ovakvoj uredničkoj strukturi to je samo jedno od poglavlja, na istoj ravni s ostalim temama. Okupljanje primarnih dokumenata, analitičkih tekstova i kustosko-umjetničkih *statementa* koji su prožeti snažnom antikomunističkom retorikom u cjelini, u ovakvom projektu koji se poziva na *urgentnost revaloriziranja značaja socijalističkoga nasljeđa u suvremenoj političkoj realnosti*, traži i njihovo kritičko iščitavanje. Jedino tako mogu postati vrijedni povijesni dokumenti za buduće istraživače, a ne dokaz trijumfalizma hladnoratovske retorike.

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the anthology's political geography also yields interesting information: in addition to the relative dominance of the former Yugoslavia, one cannot help but notice the omission of Albania and the GDR.

If we were to sum it up after reading, Central and Eastern Europe remain just a negative reference, and the testimonies of artists and curators, in their effort towards self-historization and the desire for recognition (in the Western cannon), are permeated with anti-communism. Anti-communism is revealed as the main ideology in the cultural and artistic history of transition, but also as the working principle for selection into elite circles—in accordance with the narrative that sees communism as the main obstacle for modernist development and the main cause of the isolation from the world, including the world of art.

Avoiding the colonial ballast of the terms cartography or mapping, even though they feature in its production base, *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe* calls itself a critical anthology. The format of the anthology presupposes a choice made on the basis of strict and predetermined criteria which determine a collective poetics of texts, presumably the kind of texts that marked a certain period and should therefore be collected and preserved as one whole. The determinant *critical* from the title is meant to emphasise the intention that the chronotope (post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe) is not understood as a homogenous whole, but as a “territory [that] reflects different geopolitical realities [...] yet loosely bound by the historical experience of socialism.”<sup>7</sup>

Janevski, Marcoci, “Introduction,” 12.

It is indicative that—despite such a clear determinant as 1989, the year of the collapse of the socialist bloc and the shock-therapy that included mass privatisation, deindustrialisation and the collapse of infrastructure for the purpose of introducing capitalist relations—there is no mention of capitalism until the fourth chapter. In that chapter, we finally find historization of the art of post-socialist Europe, but the editorial structure makes it just one of the chapters, on the same level as other topics. Assembling primary documents, analytical texts and curatorial-artistic statements which are, on the whole, pervaded by a strong anti-communist rhetoric, in a project that emphasises *the urgency of reevaluating the significance of the socialist legacy in political realities of today*, also calls for their critical interpretation. It is the only way that they can become valuable historic documents for future researchers, and not just proof of the triumphalism of Cold War rhetoric.

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