The Illusion of the Initiative

An Overview of the Past Twenty Years of Media Art in Central Europe[1]

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When the political transformations began in 1989–90, there were nine countries (including the GDR) in this one geographical region of Europe; today, at the end of 2010, there are twenty-five (and four more, if we count all the successor states of the Soviet Union). This fact alone would require an explanatory footnote longer than this entire article.

What is the significance of this transformation, this transition? For an outline of contemporary (media) art in Eastern and Central Europe (partly also including Northern and Southern Europe and the Balkans) there are at least three processes involved, and probably four—partly in parallel, and partly of mutual influence: the capitalist economic system that arose after the bankruptcy and failure of "existing socialisms"—or to put it another way, the transformation of dictatorships into democracies—together with the global revolution in information technology with all its economic, political, and cultural

ramifications, the entry into the European Union and the demands and opportunities that came along with this, and, finally, globalization as the backdrop, which, beyond its cultural and economic effects, also made possible military control and intervention, as in the case of the Yugoslav wars.

The above situation is further colored by varied, more localized political replacement economies. Beyond the historical Left-Right dichotomy there has been the potential for more authoritarian or presidential systems, sometimes drawing on more symbolism-laden atavistic outbreaks of a more blood-curdling nature.

As for art, the above mentioned circumstances do more than just furnish the backdrop and immediate environment: in many cases they themselves *are* the subject matter, whatever the medium. Here it is crucial to mention that it was the political and economic systems of the region that

changed, rather than predominant tastes. In other words, the new landscape is more favorable toward innovative, contemporary, and bold currents in art to the extent that the threat of outright banning no longer means that survival in the field is impossible.

Modern Art, Contemporary Art, Media Art, and New Media Art

In his book *The Universe of Technical Images,*[2] Vilém Flusser attempts to describe a synthetic, information-based, Utopian society modeled on technical images. For Flusser, the change introduced by photographs as the first technical images has entered a new phase with the general availability of digital devices and communications. "Media Art" generally refers to those visual arts bordered, on the one side, by design and mass communications and, on the other side, by theory and social action. It is a poor term, naturally (as are "video art" and "new media art"), but nonetheless serves as a broad category worldwide because it simplifies discussion. It does not define but, rather, avoids definition; its alternatives are "electronic / digital / computer / bit- / cyber- / information" and other forms of art—but we can easily get a sense of its specific

manifestations by taking a look at any organized overview, such as the Media Art Net site reflecting the ideas of Dieter Daniels and Rudolf Frieling.[3]

Admittedly, each individual artist's career cannot be pigeonholed according to the devices he or she uses, yet there are some artists who choose to work predominantly with one or another of the technical media (and here we are thinking not only of interactive and Net media, but also of experimental film and video). The period of change from 1989 to 1993 was international in scale—and this includes trends in our own region. This time saw the constant opening (and closing) of new media centers, and initiatives that included exhibitions, festivals, lists, and publications—the new was the same (yet different) everywhere, although it took place at locally varying tempos. What we consider particular to this region is rather what happened after 2000. While the main issues in the second half of the 1990s were bandwidth and accessibility (including that of hardware and devices), these are no longer pressing problems now at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The questions of *how* and *with which means* have now been replaced by *what* and *why.* In the early formative days of

media-art network structures, it was more interesting to trace their growth and follow connections as they arose, rather than looking at what was actually going on in each institution. Today there are many lists available on the Net, attempts to assemble this history. Some of these are constantly updated, while others are preserved as the snapshot of a given, brief period. A comparative examination of these self-representations and statements of purpose, of profiles and activities from various years could be its own research topic beyond the art itself. We can access the 1997 *hybrid medialounge,*[4] and its expanded version, the *medialounge* list[5] on the pages of the short-lived ECB (European Cultural Backbone) initiative.[6] There is also a 2003 study[7] offering a global overview of the larger institutions, as well as traces of the *i-can* network,[8] an effort to revive the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) that shut down in 2003.

As for a look at the institutions in our more immediate region after 2000, a university thesis on the subject was also recently published on the Internet[9]; since 2008, there has also been a constantly updated encouraging report available on a Wiki domain summarizing the Burundi Lab's

Monoscope project[10] (active since 2003).[11] This work suggests that the time has come for a more comprehensive documentation and analysis of events—a collective task requiring time and collaboration.

Media Art is just as much a part of the techno-cultural and info-cultural transformations as it is part of contemporary art. The World Wide Web was a communication platform for net.art,[12] an innovation in the art world dating to the mid and late nineties; there followed the database portals that were an innovation of the past decade, as well as extensive forums for publication and documentation that integrated every medium, blogs, photo and video collections, and community pages. This is where the "unwritten" story of "media art" and "Eastern Europe" connects with contemporary art[13] and the discussions of avant-garde movements. The Internet has become the most important source for connections and information.

The Speed of Self-Historicizing: Histories and/or Identity

"History is not given. Please help to construct it." This is the motto—and how right it is—of the East Art Map (media?) art

project.[14] An initiative by the Irwin artists' collective from Slovenia[15] located the recommendations of twenty-four invited guests on a virtual art map, organized by country and period, from 1945 on; these included artists, initiatives, and associated images and documents.

But it is not only the history of (media) art that remains unwritten. There remains much that is unclear: the present tends to get mingled with the banned works and events of earlier periods that never saw the light of day and thus remained unknown. Furthermore, there is the task of rethinking the entirety of (art) history that remained unwritten—or was simply falsified—under Communism. "Our past is all jammed up / And the new world awaits us, too / Like anxious émigrés," writes the Hungarian poet Attila József, though in a somewhat different context.

Even new (or revived) countries have to write their own histories, something of which we have known at least since Dostoyevsky.[16] Even so, the existing histories of neighboring countries in the region often have absolutely no points of contact with one another: each land writes in its own language, completely unknown to the others. There are, in fact, cases where the history of the same region is written in different languages producing results that are anything but congruent. A "critical edition" would be of interest here—not a unified version, but a parallel reading of the extant ones. We have been using the term "region" with the tacit implication that we are speaking of Eastern Europe, but it is worth clarifying that in addition to the usual "northern," "southern," and "central," there are numerous other regional divisions (each with its own associations). Consider "Countries along the Danube," the "Balkans," the "Alps-Adriatic region," the "Quadrilateral Countries,"[17] and the "Visegrád Group,"[18] to name just a few.

Is the search for history also a search for identity?[19] Or does the search for identity necessarily require a history at all? What does all this mean in the age of New Media, new communication technology, and the Internet?

Nam June Paik once wrote that there is no rewind button on the Betamax of life,[20] and that anything important only happens once. But what about computers and the "back" button on every browser? We spend at least as much time now returning to previous

states, not to mention the "history" files automatically generated in almost every computer activity. The implication of this virtual present is that the past is an automatic given, and we can step back and forth within it at any moment.

This seems, on the one hand, to reflect a desire for the simultaneous productive act of creating and the reproductive act of documentation; the *history* of a statement or project is also a part of its final product. Is this what we mean by the acceleration of time? Or is it merely inherent in the medium to create a "history" automatically?

On the other hand, nothing in this setup drives us to write history: historical consciousness is an unnecessary, bothersome error. If we search for a document more than three years old, or use software from that era, all we find is a pitying smile. (With some programs such a search is not even possible, given the stealthy and automatic aggression of the global update.) For young users living in the present of chats, Skype, and other interface(book)s, yesterday is already the distant past; anything that predates the Net is inaccessible and therefore belongs to a nonexistent "historical" period. At the same

time, global communication means that every piece of news reaches us simultaneously, creating a (false) sense of reciprocity with the implication that the "world" can know about the individual as well as vice versa. The result is a heightened demand for presence, for an increased directness. In place of knowledge is the desire for simply being known within our own local personal sphere.

History thus becomes fiction, ready to be rewritten or reconstructed.[21] Special, individual art archives spring up,[22] since there is no time to wait for (art) historians to catch up. Long live the interference between parallel cultures!

Parallel Contexts

"Let me not even hear about you, if you don't take the initiative!" wrote Miklós Erdély.[23]

The past two decades can be described not only as a period of "transitions,"[24] but also as one of initiatives. Instead of change, reshaping, and reorganization, the emphasis is on the new *context*—even perhaps in the historical sense—as is evident in new works and new media. The end of 1995 and

beginning of 1996 saw two shows take place almost simultaneously: *Orbis Fictus— New Media in Contemporary Arts* in Prague[25] and *The Butterfly Effect* in Budapest.[26] Their common element was the presentation of contemporary media art in an international, historical context: works created specifically for these exhibitions were presented within the context of media history.

There have also simultaneously been numerous initiatives, shows, conferences, and much research focused on the art of "interrupted histories."[27] The fact is that even today the "rediscovery" of the first and second "Eastern" avant-garde, as part of the need to rewrite the history of twentieth-century art. To put it in the simplest terms: to the extent that the most representative media of the second half of the twentieth century were not painting, sculpture, and graphic arts, the art of the first half of the century must also be reevaluated.

Presenting the new views and positions in art after the (fall of the Berlin) Wall,[28] re-cataloging the Fluxus networks in the East[29] and invisible exhibitions[30]—these are all initiatives that present the "promises of the past" as discontinuous[31] mosaics of current

import. Looking beyond the region (and quite apart from global conceptualism[32]), there are *subversive practices*[33] exhibitable today that arose peripherally or locally, sometimes under a dictatorship. Although there is currently no consensus about whether the word "globalization," which became fashionable in the twentieth century, or Jeremy Bentham's term "international"[34] from the eighteenth century is the more appropriate term for comparative examinations spanning nations, continents, and political systems, these new undertakings are still imbued with a European sense of "unbound borders."[35]

Video as Example

In the early 1990s, experimental film and video represented the common platform of media art in East Central Europe, probably because these were forms of expression with the most significant tradition. The MM Center and Ivan Ladislav Galeta's Multimedia Center associated with the university—both in Zagreb—Budapest's Balázs Béla Stúdió, and the Workshop of the Film Form in Łódź are perhaps the best known and most important studios of the seventies and eighties.

Although signs of change were in the air even earlier (as with the accelerated pace of the Ars Electronica festival beginning in 1986, the changes in the Osnabruck Experimental Film and Video Festival and its name change to the "European Media Art Festival" in 1988), there was still, save for a few early initiatives, a lack of infrastructure and technology until the true breakthrough of works that exploited digital devices in the second half of the 1990s. The first festivals in the region, like the WRO in Wrocław and Mediawave in Győr, also arose from independent film and video production, and indeed preserved this profile to some extent.

In this same category is *Infermental*, the world's first periodical on video cassette, founded at the Polish Cultural Institute in Budapest in 1980 and produced in Berlin. This was an exceptional network, whose tenth and final edition was edited by Heiko Daxl and Evgenia Simitrieva in Skopje.[36] We might even say that this was symbolically followed up by *Sub voce*, the first comprehensive video art exhibition in Hungary in the same year, and then in 1993 by the large-scale *Ex oriente lux* installation show in Romania and the Ostranenie Festival in the same year under the guidance of Inke Arns and Stephen

Kovats.[37] (This show was held two more times in 1995 and 1997.) In addition to the shows' catalogues, reminiscent of video cassettes and considered valuable sources today, the publication of a multimedia CD-ROM—the fashionable but short-lived, transitional medium of the day—recapitulated events.[38] A CD-ROM was also included as a supplement to the volume of essays edited by Stephen Kovats,[39] whose publisher titled the German version *Ost-West Internet* and its English counterpart *The Media Revolution* (in retrospect a title emblematic of the entire era).[40]

As a result of the work outlined above, our historical understanding of video art is probably in the best shape of the work on all new media. Not only has thorough, comprehensive work been done in individual countries,[41] but the first attempt at an overall international synthesis has also been made.[42] Though we occasionally hear of general histories of media art in a given country (generally published in the local language),[43] if we also consider the criteria of accessibility and preservation,[44] the contrasts among them are striking.[45] A lack of funding and nonexistent infrastructure naturally explain a great deal of the shortcomings. Examining the differences

between centers where new museums of contemporary art have been built (as, for example, in Ljubljana, Warsaw, Tallinn, and Zagreb) and places where this function was left to independent NGOs or private initiatives, would be in itself a viable subject for research. As for the path of sponsorship from the Soros (SCCA) network to that of Erste Bank[46] (such as tranzit.org[47]), we will now take a brief look at the former network, active in the early days.

The SCCA Network through the Lens of Past and Present

The creation of the SCCA Network took place simultaneously with the spread of the information revolution in Eastern Europe—this is obvious now, though at the time it only became clear as the Network was being built. A look at the successor organizations that still exist today reveals that the survivors are largely the ones that went beyond the original goals of documentation and support to undertake independent productions and initiatives.

The history of the Soros foundations began in 1984.[48] The first art-related program was established in Hungary in 1985: the Soros Foundation Fine Arts Documentation Center.

As described by Andrea Szekeres in her brief overview:

> its task was primarily to prepare comprehensive documentation of contemporary Hungarian art, as well as to create an art database. The program also supported artists of the day who were barely tolerated or neglected by official cultural policy, or banned outright, through scholarships and purchases on behalf of museums. The Center expanded its activities under its new name, the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCA). In addition to its documentary function, it has held an exhibition annually.[49]

At this point—in 1991—construction of the international network was also underway in twenty countries.

It is important to note that support for the arts was never among the most important functions of the Soros foundations (in fact, soros.org gives no hits for a search on "SCCA").[50] This is partly demonstrated by the funding allocated for this purpose, which is just a tiny percentage of all Soros support.[51] But even this small fraction was more than pocket change; indeed,

compared to other sources for similar ends in the region, it was considerable. The results it achieved were exceptional, and could even be considered without parallel in the region, many times the initial investment. It is, of course, difficult to measure the "return" on such an investment, since it must be framed in terms of cultural changes, artworks produced, and other results that continue to be felt to this day.[52]

With the suspension of funding in 1999 and 2000, i_can (the International Contemporary Art Network) was created,[53] although this enjoyed only a brief success.[54] When we put the organizations on its final membership list to the Google test, we see that about half of them are still active, albeit in a somewhat altered form.[55]

Unstable Media—Unstable Regions? The "Former East" or the "New Europe"?

Some say that "Eastern Europe" has replaced the expression "behind the Iron Curtain," while others hold that the phrase is senseless, since there is no unity in the region; still others prefer the term "New Europe." Behind these (pseudo-) problems of definition lies, among other things, the issue of cultural markets: How can the

region be "sold?" Is there anything specific to it—and if so, what?

In the special context of art and its reception, it is clearly region-specific that certain works are banned under dictatorship. This category may be explicit or fuzzy, and there may be many degrees of differentiation within it. In many cases prohibition affected innovative works of the avant-garde or alternative and underground currents (these are of course not synonymous terms). But we cannot say with confidence that everything banned was necessarily of artistic quality, or that something was banned for containing a clear politically subversive message. In this sense there was no logic to banning: in fact, a great many banned artists did not directly engage political topics. If we are forced to generalize, we can say that free thinking was banned—but just to complicate matters, we cannot say, on the other hand, that everything receiving state support was necessarily worthless, outdated, and forgettable.

The films coming out of Budapest's Balázs Béla Stúdió, for example, received state funding yet still maintained a degree of autonomy owing to their studio membership,

not to mention technical professionalism. Still, the censors often made such films invisible. That which finds no audience, that which remains inaccessible in its own time, cannot find a place in cultural consciousness and becomes nonexistent in practical terms. When a work does not even surface later, after a change of political regimes, historical reconstruction can be ruled out. We have often seen works that were invisible in their own time become important and interesting much later on, when it had become difficult to assign them a date. This sort of phenomenon does not even require a dictatorship; it happens in every system.

Suppose we accept the fiction that artists who first take up and experiment with new technical media are always on the cutting edge or avant-garde (though it remains a question how long the "new" stays new). It is well known that the new generally irritates public taste and challenges what society is accustomed to, and also that societies today are not particularly interested in supporting art with a poor profit outlook, art that has not yet been adopted into the canon. This is an area for NGOs and civil initiatives. I need not add, perhaps, that no such organizations functioned in the age of dictatorships.

It was an event of import in the history of media when, in December 1989, a live broadcast transmitted a shake in the camera, then a loss of picture during a speech by the dictator in Bucharest. This "error message" was the perfect indication that the regime itself had become unstable. Not long thereafter the televised revolution began: a continuously updating broadcast from the studio over several days.[56] But generally speaking, "unstable" is the appropriate adjective for technical media in general, and for media art. Technology-based works require constant maintenance; that is their quirk. Olia Lialina's 1997 net.art piece *Agatha Appears*[57] required restoration in 2008,[58] but not because it had been badly made. We nonetheless hope that the dictatorships will never be restored.

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I am aware that this overview ignores many important subjects. It is particularly difficult to defend the omission of media art in education, or a brief interpretive comparison of the new media centers.[59] Also disregarded is the role of archives and collections, the changing functions of contemporary museums, and the discourse these have spawned. The most glaring

www.gateways.ee

omission of all is that of the works and artists themselves. The above is only a snapshot.[60]

[1] I thank Sabine Himmelsbach for her invitation to write this essay, without which I certainly would never have attempted even such a brief outline. For prospective readers, I offer the following from Thucydides, on participants in given events: "eye-witnesses of the same occurrences gave different accounts of them, as they remembered or were interested in the actions of one side or the other." (Thucydides, I.22, trans. Jowett)

2 Vilém Flusser, *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder: European Photography* (Göttingen, 1985).

3 http://www.mediaartnet.org/credits/

4 http://www.medialounge.net/lounge/medialounge.html

5 "There are now 355 organisations in the Medialounge, with a total of 2499 people working for these organisations."(2003) http://www.medialounge.net/ and http://www.medialounge.net/index.php

6 http://www.e-c-b.net/

7 Michael Naimark, Truth, Beauty, Freedom, and Money: Technology-Based Art and the Dynamics of Sustainability (May, 2003). http://www.artslab.net/

8 See the i_can members list: http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/insts.html

9 Agnieszka Pokrywka, Sztuka nowych mediów w Europie Środkowo –Wschodniej w latach 2000–2009. (New Media Art in Central and Eastern Europe in the 2000s, 2009.) http://issuu.com/agnespockels/docs/new_media_art_in_central_and_eastern_europe; the author also includes a map: http://www.mindmeister.com/23970260/central-east-europe; her blog is at http://pokrywka.wordpress.com/

10 http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/BURUNDI and http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Monoskop:About

11 Collaborative research on media art and culture in Central and Eastern Europe http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Collaborative_research_on_media_art_and_culture_in_Central_and_Eastern_Europe; Monoskop lab list: http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Category:Media_art_labs; a collection of sources and texts is available at: http://burundi.sk/monoskop/log/

12 Vuk Cosic http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/; see also a map by JODI: http://map.jodi.org/

13 Founded at about the same time in 1999 were ARTMargins (http://www.artmargins.com/), which covers Eastern European contemporary art, and TOL (www.tol.org), an Internet magazine on political, social, cultural, and economic issues in the former communist countries of Europe and Central Asia.

14 The project East Art Map–A (Re)Construction of the History of Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe was initiated in 2001 by the Slovenian artist group Irwin. The East Art Map (EAM) aims at critically (re)constructing the history of art in Eastern Europe between 1945 and the present beyond ex-Socialist official chronicles, national legend formation, and fragmented information present in the West. http://www.eastartmap.org/; in book form: Irwin, eds., *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* (London, 2006).

15 Inke Arns, ed., *Irwin: Retroprincip, 1983–2003*, (Frankfurt am Main, 2003).

16 "Everyone has a history. How did they live until now if they've no history?" Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Second Night of *White Nights* (1848).

17 The Rijeka Biennale, since 2000 http://www.bq3.mmsu.hr/eng/beinnale.html

18 Visegrad Group http://www.visegradgroup.eu/

19 Just a few randomly selected examples: Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art / pro.ba projekt: Bosnia and Herzegovina Searching for Lost Identity, http://www.pro.ba/en/bosna-i-hercegovina-u-potrazi-za-izgubljenim-identitetom-bosnia-and-herzegovina-searching-for-lost-identity/; A thematic number "What Is to Be Done with 'Balkan Art'?" *Platforma SCCA* 4

(September, 2005). Editorial team: Robert Alagjozovski, Barbara Borčić and Urška Jurman, http://www.ljudmila.org/scca/platforma4/; "Do we really think the label East Europe will disappear so soon?" asks Katarina Sevic in her critique "Last East European Show 17.05.-18.06.2003," Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, *exindex* 6 (June, 2003), http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=10 4; Maja and Reuben Fowkes, "Contemporary East European Art in the Era of Globalization: From Identity Politics to Cosmopolitan Solidarity," *ARTMargins* (29 September 2010), http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/598-contemporary-east-european-art-era-globalization-identity-politics-cosmopolitan-solidarity

20 "There is no rewind button on the BETAMAX of life." Nam June Paik, "Art & Satellite," in *Art for 25 Million People: Bon Jour Mr. Orwell: Kunst und Satellite in der Zukunft* (Berlin, 1984), n.p.

21 See the "Fiction Reconstructed" project: Marina Gržinić, ed., "The Last Futurist Show (Zadnja Futuristicna Prestava)," *Maska* (2001), p.8–9. In a broader context see: Marina Gržinić, *Eastern European Art: Fiction Reconstructed— Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avant-Garde* (Vienna, 2000).

22 Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Innovative Forms of Archives, Part One: Exhibitions, Events, Books, Museums, and Lia Perjovschi's Contemporary Art Archive, http://e-flux.com/journal/view/111; Innovative Forms of Archives, Part Two: IRWIN's East Art Map and Tamás St. Auby's Portable Intelligence Increase Museum, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/138

23 *Hungarian Schmuck* (March–April, 1973).

24 Cf. Transitology, as a new discipline in political science; in an art and cultural context, see: Atlas of Transformation (2009) (in Czech) http://cz.tranzit.org/en/publication/0/2009-05-27/mt-atlas-transformace-copy as well as Monument to Transformation 1989–2009, initiated by: Zbyněk Baladrán and Vít Havránek http://www.monumenttotransformation.org/

25 Orbis fictus: http://www.fcca.cz/shared/events/orbisfictus/orbi s4.html and *Orbis fictus—New Media in*

Contemporary Arts, exh. cat., SCCA (Prague, 1996); for the title, cf. Miloš Vojtìchovský és Tjebbe Van Tijen: "Orbis sensualium pictus," an installation based on the work of Comenius. http://www.fcca.cz/shared/events/orbisfictus/ofmil osvojtechovsky4.html

26 The Butterfly Effect (1996), http://www.c3.hu/scca/butterfly/ and *The Butterfly Effect: The Coordinates of the Moment Before Discovery.* CD-ROM (Budapest, 1998).

27 Zdenka Badovinac, "Interrupted Histories," in *Prekinjene zgodovine / Interrupted Histories*, ed. Zdenka Badovinac et al., exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art (Ljubljana, 2006).

28 *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, exh. cat., Moderna Museet (Stockholm, 1999). Curators: David Elliott, Bojana Pejic, et al.; *Aspekte, Positionen—50 Jahre Kunst aus Mitteleuropa 1949–1999*, exh. cat., Museum Moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig (Wien, 1999). Published in English as *Aspects/Positions: 50 Years of Art in Central Europe 1949–1999,* exh. cat., Ludwig Museum (Budapest, 1999). Curator: Lóránd Hegyi.

29 Http://www.fluxus-east.eu/ *Fluxus East: Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*, exh. cat., Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin, 2007); further exhibitions and events are reported here: http://www.fluxus-east.eu/index.php?item=berlin&lang=en

30 *The Invisible History of Exhibitions*, from the 1960s till now. http://www.artalways.org/the-invisible-history-of-exhibitions/parallel-chronologies/; catalogue of the *tranzit* project: *Art Always Has Its Consequences.* What, How, & for Whom/WHW exh. cat., Katarinski trg 2 & Galerija Nova (Zagreb*,* 2010). http://www.artalways.org/art-always-has-its-consequences-final-publication/

31 Christine Macel and Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, eds., *The Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of Art in Former Eastern Europe*, exh. cat., Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2010).

32 *Global Conceptualism: Politics of Origin, 1950s–1980s*, exh. cat., Queens Museum of Art (Queens, New York, 1999).

33 Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, eds.,

Subversive Practices: Art under Conditions of Political Repression 60s–80s / South America / Europe, exh. cat., Württembergischer Kunstverein (Stuttgart, 2010);
http://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/programme/2009/exhibitions/subversive/; http://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/publications/2010/

34 L'Internationale http://internacionala.mg-lj.si/home/historical-background

35 Unbounded Borders 1–2; Richard Krieche, Alpe-Adria and kulturdata projects http://iis.joanneum.ac.at/kulturdata/index.php?idcatside=59; catalogues: Richard Kriesche, ed., *Entgrenzte Grenzen,* exh. cat., Künstlerhaus (Graz, 1987). R. Kriesche and P. Hoffman, eds., *Entgrenzte Grenzen* II, exh. cat., Künstlerhaus (Graz, 1993).

36 Http://www.infermental.de/

37 Ostranenie's web page on archive.org: http://web.archive.org/web/20001216031900/http://www.ostranenie.org/

38 Stephen Kovats, ed., *Ostranenie 93 95 97, International Electronic Media Forum series (1993, 95, 97) at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation*, CD-ROM Dessau, 1999).

39 Stephen Kovats, ed., *Media Revolution*, Edition Bauhaus 6 (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1999), with the *Ostranenie 99* CD-ROM. Published in German as *Ost-West Internet*.

40 There are a number of collected studies on the "heroic age" of media history in the region, in both printed and electronic form. Once again, here are a few randomly selected examples: Inke Arns and Andreas Broeckmann, eds., *Reader of the V2_East / Syndicate Meeting on Documentation and Archives of Media Art in Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe* (Rotterdam 1996); illetve V2_East Meeting on Archives and Documentation (September 20, 1996), http://framework.v2.nl/archive/archive/node/event/default.xslt/nodenr-1993 ; Inke Arns, ed., *Junction Skopje: The 1997-1998 Edition* (Skopje,1998); Dimitrina Sevova and Alain Kessi, eds., Communication Front 2000: Crossing Points East-West (Plovdiv, 2002), Communication Front book:

http://www.cfront.org/cf00book/en/index.html

41 Videodokument: Video Art in Slovenia 1969-1998, SCCA-Ljubljana http://www.videodokument.org/

Insert: A Retrospective of Croatian Video Art, exh. cat., MSU /Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb, 2005).

42 http://transitland.eu/ Edit Andras, ed., *Transitland: Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe 1989-2009,* exh. cat., ACAX | Agency for Contemporary Art Exchange (Budapest, 2009).

43 Ryszard Kluszczyński, *Obrazy na wolności. Studia z historii sztuk medialnych w Polsce*, exh. cat., Wydawnictwo Instytutu Kultury (Warszawa, 1998); Katarína Rusnáková, *História a teória mediálneho umenia na Slovensku. (History and Theory of Media Art in Slovakia)* (Bratislava, 2006).

44 There has been ongoing discussion about the preservation of videos for nearly twenty years, as, for example, http://nimk.nl/eng/preservation/; collections have begun being transferred to the Net, as at http://www.gama-gateway.eu/

45 A mixture of self-criticism and self-irony inspires me to include this vivid example: the C3 Foundation was an active participant in the 2004 project *404 Object Not Found: What Remains of Media Art?* At present its documentation is only partially available.

46 "We are not a foundation owned by a bank. We are a foundation that owns a bank." http://www.erstestiftung.org/about/who-we-are/

47 http://www.tranzit.org/en

48 As per the central homepage of the Soros foundations: "Investor and philanthropist George Soros established the Open Society Foundations, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism." http://www.soros.org/about

49 http://www.c3.hu/scca/index.html

50 The network is mentioned as one of fourteen "arts and culture" programs (most of which are defunct). http://www.soros.org/initiatives/arts/about/history_full

51 The Open Society Foundations are funded by George Soros personally and by philanthropic

www.gateways.ee

trusts established by the Soros family. Total expenditures by the Open Society Foundations currently average between $400 million and $500 million per year. http://www.soros.org/about/faq

52 "The activity of Soros' centres can prove to be a factor having a positive influence on the development of new multimedia culture in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for instance speeding up the process wherever no well-established traditions of media art exist, or where the underdeveloped system of institutional support is incapable of satisfying artistic needs. Obviously, a preliminary condition in this case is the emergence of groups interested in the development of media art." Ryszard W. Kluszczynski, The Past and Present of (Multi)Media Art in Central and Eastern European Countries—An Outline, http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/textcbab.html?id_text=2, originally published in the *SCCA Quarterly* (January 1996), p.2.

53 i_can website: http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/ ; i_can members list, http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/insts.html

54 The eighty-eight studies on the region published online as the i_can reader and still accessible can be regarded as a summary project: http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/texts.html

55 An incomplete list: The International Center for Contemporary Art—ICCA Bucharest: http://www.icca.ro/home_en.htm; Centrul pentru Arta Contemporana -[ksa:k]; Chişinău: http://www.art.md/; C3: Center for Culture & Communication Foundation, Budapest: http://www.c3.hu; SCCA-Ljubljana: http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/; Center For Contemporary Arts, Estonia (CCAE), Tallin: http://www.cca.ee/; Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA), Riga: http://www.lcca.lv/; ICA-SOFIA: http://ica-sofia.org/; Sarajevo center for contemporary art http://www.scca.ba/; Contemporary Art Center—Skopje: http://www.scca.org.mk/; SCCA-Almaty, Kazahstan: http://www.scca.kz/en/scca.html

56 A 1990 conference sponsored by Media Research titled "The Media Are with Us" was held on this subject in Budapest. Some of the talks have been published in Keiko Sei and Peter Weibel, eds., *Von der Bürokratie zur Telekratie: Rumänien im Fernsehen. Ein Symposion aus Budapest* (Berlin, 1990).

57 http://www.c3.hu/collection/agatha/

58 Conservator: Elzbieta Wysocka 2008, http://www.incca.org/resources/106-preservation/390-wysocka-e-agatha-re-appears-net-art-resoration-project; for the complete text of a study on the restoration, see: http://www.incca.org/files/pdf/resources/wysocka_e._agatha_re-appears_net_art_restoration_project.pdf

59 A brief list: RIXC The Center for New Media Culture, Riga: http://rixc.lv; CIANT International Centre for Art and New Technologies (Prague): http://www.ciant.cz/; ljubljana digital media lab == ljudmila: http://www.ljudmila.org/; WRO Art Center Wrocław: http://www.wrocenter.pl/en/o-wro/; new media center_kuda.org: http://www.kuda.org/en; KIBLA Multimedia Center, Maribor: http://www.kibla.org/en/; Kassak Centre for Intermedia Creativity, Nove Zamky: http://www.kassak.eu/public_dialog/; http://runme.org/; http://www.kitchenbudapest.hu/

60 This author confirmed the existence and accuracy of all the Internet links in this essay on December 3, 2010.