

EMESE KÜRTI

**SCREAMING
HOLE**

**POETRY, SOUND
AND ACTION
AS INTERMEDIA
PRACTICE
IN THE
WORK OF
KATALIN LADIK**

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book focuses on the experimental practice of Katalin Ladik, a poet, performer and actress born in the former Yugoslavia. Her career as a poet writing in Hungarian began in the intellectual circles of the neoavantgarde journal *New Symposium* in Novi Sad, but the subversiveness of her feminine practice gave her a distinctive position in the whole Yugoslav neoavantgarde scene as early as the late sixties. At the same time, linearity was also being replaced in Ladik's poetic works by an extended notion of poetry, as she realised her actionism in a complex and mutual intermedial relationship between poetry, sound and visuality. Her performances attracted lively attention not only on account of an interpretation of poetry and sound that was radically new both in Yugoslavia and abroad at the time; her use of the eroticized body also seemed to lack any predecessors in the local avantgarde of the day. In the mid-70s, many representatives of the New Art Practice began to experiment with body language, and some of them – for example, Sanja Iveković in Zagreb or Marina Abramović in Belgrade – considered the female body their primary medium. Ladik's experimentalism differed from these performative practices that would begin a few years later than hers, because her method involved the creative interrelationship and mutual reference of diverse media instead of a monomedial concept. These activities characteristic of the sixties, which can be traced back to the intellectual circle of composer John Cage and the emerging Fluxus practices, resulted in an experimental oeuvre that is uniquely fascinating even on an international scale.

During this time, Katalin Ladik simultaneously held a kind of underground status and functioned as a pop cultural icon in the mass media, and not only in Yugoslavia, but also in socialist Hungary for a variety of cultural and linguistic reasons. It is this dual presence and the resulting dual marginalization that have led to Ladik's recent re-discovery, when there is increased demand for East-European neoavantgarde phenomena. President Tito created a political space in pre-transition Yugoslavia that repressed nationalism – at times with dubious means – in order to homogenize power and avoid ethnic conflicts in the country. Poets writing in Hungarian were inspired by Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian cultural examples, which also generated mutual intellectual collaborations. Katalin Ladik, who synthesized the traditions of Balkan folk music and Hungarian folklore, could work supraethnically, as it were, in this multiethnic Yugoslav context, using the references of multiple cultures, which suited the persistently international spirit of the avantgarde. However, when Yugoslavia fell apart and the Iron Curtain fell, the political transition brought a need for more independent narratives, and subtler shades of belonging began to appear in art historical responses. During this time, a number of pieces written in the former Yugoslavia referred to Katalin Ladik and her neoavantgarde fellow artists, the Bosch+Bosch group, as having ties to Hungary's avantgarde culture; meanwhile, responses in Hungary virtually ignored the activities of the former 'Yugoslav colleagues'. Ladik, who has lived in Hungary since the early nineties, was somehow 'trapped' between the imaginary spaces of the two countries and became relatively marginalized compared her earlier status; this might explain why her name was missing from numerous international survey exhibitions and publications for years until the 2000s.¹

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¹ See, for example: Zdenka Badovinac (ed.), *Body and the East. From the 1960s to the Present*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass, 1999; or: Bojana Pejić & ERSTE Foundation & Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (ed.), *Gender Check: A Reader. Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Wien, 2010.

The events of recent years, including international prizes and invitations to important international exhibitions, confirm the significance of Katalin Ladik's re-discovery and validate this prolonged research project, which was conducted at acb ResearchLab, the research centre of acb Gallery, Budapest, in close collaboration with the artist. We organized and digitized Katalin Ladik's archive and her photo and paper-based works. Interviews and conversations with the artist and reflections on the documents have proved that even though Katalin Ladik's oeuvre was shaped by the conditions behind the Iron Curtain and the cultural heritage of two countries, the universality of her art goes beyond the interests of local culture and has been embedded in an international sphere of art since the late seventies. The exhibition held at acb Gallery (*The Voice of a Woman*, 22 April – 2 June 2016) was a first summary of the results of the research. The selected vintage photo-based works, collages and scores conveyed the artist's ties to the experimental network of the neoavantgarde scene of the era. Continuing that work, the current volume emphasizes and interprets the intermediality of Katalin Ladik in a local and international context that takes into account the artist's multiple minority positions and various aspects of her distinctive version of feminism.

I wish to thank all who have helped me in the course of my research and the preparation of this book. My thanks go, first and foremost, to Katalin Ladik, who generously and tirelessly answered all my questions, and to Gábor Pados, the owner of acb Gallery, who did not merely support this research and the publication of the book from day one, but was open to backing such a transgressive oeuvre right away. I would like to thank my colleagues Réka Bálint, Etelka Tar, Lili Somogyi and Anna Forgách for their help with archiving the documents. I am grateful to colleagues, friends, and artists whose critical remarks, sources, and time helped me create the final version of this text – to József Schreiner, József Mélyi, Orsolya Hegedüs, Soma Bradák, Róna Kopeczky, Hedvig Turai, Marko Ilić, Péter György, Dávid Fehér, László Lakner, Gábor Altorjay, Tamás St.Turba, Bálint Szombathy, Igor and Ivan Buharov and Gábor Veres. Finally, I am dedicating this book to a strong and life-affirming woman, my grandmother, who passed away while this book was being written.

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MINOR LITERATURE AND YUGOSLAV IDENTITY

Rudderless, an experimental film by Igor and Ivan Buharov shown at Manifesta 2010, was inspired by the eponymous poem written by István Domonkos in 1971.² Domonkos was a poet in Vojvodina and an emblematic author of the *Új Symposion* (New Symposion) journal in Novi Sad, one of the most important Hungarian-language neoavantgarde journals of the East-European region. Domonkos's efforts to renew the approach to language and literature have come to represent the critical neoavantgarde practices of an entire generation. *Rudderless*, called a 'comprehensive anti-poem' by literary historian János Samu, is one of the most highly cited works of Hungarian literature in Vojvodina (the former Yugoslavia); it positions the problem of being a stranger in a broken, rule-breaking linguistic structure.³ The representative status of the poem has made it an important part of the complex identity politics of Hungarians in Vojvodina, yet the Buharovs' black-and-white Super-8 film captures the current relevance of the questions of human fate in the poem, which are also retrospectively projected on it by various more recent events of war. The contemporary significance of the film and the poem is intensified by all the global situations that currently involve migration, switching countries and languages, homelessness, the difficulties of integration and the psychological pressure of not being accepted.

At the same time, Domonkos's anti-poem has a specific historical context related to an ethnic group seeking its place and identity in multi-ethnic Yugoslavia after World War II. It is well known that Yugoslavia chose the path of de-Stalinization under President Tito in 1948, which generated an economically and culturally separate way as well as mechanisms of self-management unique in the region, offering those involved in the sphere of culture a far freer flow of information than available in other socialist countries.⁴ As for the minority politics of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, its moderately capitalism-infused leftist regime rhetorically established equality before the law in the country, when it drew Serbs, Croats, Hungarians, Bosnians, Slovenes and other ethnic minorities conceptually under the umbrella term of 'Yugoslav', thereby eliminating the destabilizing effects of nationalism. Reality was more complicated, however, particularly for Hungarians in Yugoslavia who had linguistic-cultural relations with Hungary, the 'motherland'.



Bálint Szombathy, *Nontextualité. Intervention on Newspaper, 1981* © Irokéz Collection

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² It was in 1994 that artists Kornél Szilágyi (1971) and Nándor Hevesi (1974) began to extend their art practice to music and experimental film under the pseudonyms Igor and Ivan Buharov in Budapest.

³ János Samu, *Határpoétikák. Redukció mint intenzív nyelvhasználat Domonkos István és Ladik Katalin költészetében* [Border Poetics: Reduction as Intensive Language Use in the Poetry of István Domonkos and Katalin Ladik], unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs, Faculty of Arts, Pécs, 2014.

⁴ On contradictions of the economic policy model of Yugoslavia's third way and the tension of communist and socialist components on the basis of Louis Althusser's theses, see Gal Kirn, 'Contradictions of Yugoslav Self-Management: Class Struggle After the 1965 Market Reform', in Lina Džuverović (ed.), *Monuments Should Not Be Trusted*, Nottingham Contemporary, 2016, pp. 100–112. On the performance aspects of this topic: Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects. Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945–91*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2016.



Képes Ifjúság Magazine, 1968

Their multi-directional cultural embeddedness and their distinctive attitudes to tradition and modernism created a strikingly progressive literature and art, which was autonomous in its relation to the culture of its ‘non-homeland’ (Ottó Tolnai) within the constraints of minority existence in Yugoslavia. This minority framework shaped the now critical, now identificatory cultural attitudes to state power that characterized the intellectual circle of the *Új Symposion* journal.

A minor literature [literature mineure], as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is not literature in a minority language, but rather literature written by a minority in the language of the majority.⁵ A language used by a minority – as opposed to the language of the majority and the literature it produces – holds a subversive potential, the ‘revolutionary’ character of the traversability, openness, and nomadism of language. ‘The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation. We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.’⁶ In Deleuze-Guattari’s theory, minority language use – being not merely socially constructed, but

a function of relation to other languages – is a kind of crossing over, a set of relationships between images and concepts they deem intensive and previously undetermined. In the course of this ‘intensive usage of language’, signification, the convention of meaning generated by words, is being unmade in order to make words ‘vibrate’ in an unprecedented, asignifying way. They find this tense, intensive language use especially characteristic of minor literatures, where language no longer represents, but is concerned with the questioning and elimination of its own borders.⁷

Based on linguistic qualification, this framework does not posit minor languages spatio-temporally, but it still has a certain topographic quality: ‘vernacular language is *here*; vehicular language is *everywhere*; referential language is *over there*; mythic language is *beyond*.’⁸ The problems of the vehicular language are explored by Croatian artist Mladen Stilinović in his conceptual work *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English is No Artist* in 1992. How can this apply to the historical situation of Hungarian literature in Yugoslavia, where the principle of hybridity and the parallel existence of languages are at work in a more blended or at least intermeshed cultural field? Vojvodina’s Hungarian-language minor literature constructed the force fields of its operation in full awareness of the mutual relationship of local languages and cultures in the first place. The emblematic authors of the *Új Symposion* journal who based their activities on the ‘revolutionary’ use of a minor language, such as the previously mentioned István Domonkos, Ottó Tolnai, and Katalin Ladik, created a body of work that relied not only on their mother tongue, but also on other local languages they commanded, and on putting the latter at least occasionally to literary use.

Understanding the complex socio-cultural background of this generational linguistic condition that was so strikingly different from the monoculture of Hungary is essential for delving into this minor literature and Katalin Ladik’s mythic poetry *beyond language* that grows out of it.

As World War II came to an end, the cultural public sphere of the multi-ethnic Vojvodina province collapsed, and the ethnic composition of its capital, Novi Sad, was transformed quite extensively by 1945: over 60% of the population spoke Hungarian in the early 20th century, but this dropped below 10 percent by the end of the century. As a sizable share of its economic, cultural, and intellectual elite was deported or executed, the weakened Hungarian intelligentsia in Vojvodina was unable to set up its own institutions, notes György Szerbhorváth, one of the experts of the topic. Instead, these were set up by external powers soon after the end of World War II, in the framework of the Forum Publishing House established in 1947.⁹ Hungarians in Vojvodina had a single cultural journal at the time; the ideological character of *Híd* (Bridge) bore the imprint of socialist realism, ‘ideological struggle’, and the wide dissemination of Yugoslav identity. Like any other ethnic group in Yugoslavia that saw the postwar period as a historic opportunity for the left, the intellectual community taking shape around the journal wanted to contribute to the third way of ‘building’ a socialist society. The unified ideological operation of journals was ensured not so much by strict censorship and party control over every phase of the process, but by ‘engagement’ – to quote one of the favourite terms of the period – the desire for political participation. Obeying the rules of the cult of personality, nationalism, and excessive self-management, cultural life actually enjoyed relative autonomy in Tito’s Yugoslavia, but authorities often retaliated against infractions by replacing entire editorial staffs, as was the case in the history of *Új Symposion*.

The first issue of the journal *Új Symposion*, which was so crucial for the emergence of a new use of language, came out in December 1961 as a supplement to the weekly *Ifjúság* (Youth) in Novi Sad and was edited by Ottó Tolnai. Unlike all other outlets and structures at the time, this was a generational journal that was particularly opposed to the tradition represented by *Híd* (Bridge): provinciality, an inner circle favouritism, and the older generation of authors representing these.¹⁰ Its editors grew up in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, in an increasingly liberal atmosphere (especially compared to Hungary), though certainly not immune to reprisals, silence and compromises, as amply attested by the times its entire editorial staff was discharged. After Zagreb and Belgrade, urbanization and an increasingly dynamic literary scene and café culture reached Novi Sad as well, as international trends, New Wave films and modern literature (Camus, Sartre, Kafka, Gide) flowed into the country. Their interests were all the more contemporary, because the new regime partially or fully destroyed the oeuvres of ‘bourgeois’ or ‘fascist’ authors of the previous era, and the intellectual products that had shaped Hungarian literary discourses. In this state of suspended continuity and absent reference points, contemporary Yugoslav (Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian) and world literature and international contemporary art

⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *KAFKA*.

Toward a Minor Literature, trans. by Lana Polan,

University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–

London, 1986, p. 16.

⁶ Op. cit. p. 18.

⁷ Op. cit. p. 19.

⁸ Op. cit. p. 23.

⁹ György Szerbhorváth, *Vajdasági lakoma. Az Új*

Symposion történetéről [Vojvodina Feast. On the

History of the *Új Symposion*], Kalligram, Pozsony,

2005, pp. 29–30. I have relied primarily on his

research in this part of the study.

¹⁰ As Szerbhorváth notes, the literary politics

of the Symposion group primarily targeted authori-

tarianism, conventions, the intimacy of local expres-

sions and the older literary generation’s circles and

self-canonization, even if their later critics thought

they were no less immune to charges of elitist,

self-congratulatory attitudes and celebrating

each other. Op. cit. pp. 64–65.



Katalin Ladik performing in the Radio Novi Sad, 1970

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were the sole source of inspiration for Hungarian intellectuals in Vojvodina.¹¹ Independence from a Hungarian ‘mother culture’ and the process of becoming Yugoslav occurred concurrently, and it not only entailed an increasing distance from everything that took place in culture in Hungary, but also resulted in a completely independent and more ‘contemporary’ culture despite the identical language being used.

The mission statement of the journal appeared in a foreword written by Ervin Sinkó, heir to early 20th-century leftist movements, and lauded the power of the ‘Yugoslav revolutionary spirit’, the power of youthful rebellion against folklore, ‘chatting’, emotionality, in other words, tradition. Ervin Sinkó was the chair of the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature established in 1959, where the young regulars of the journal (Ottó Tolnai, István Domonkos, László Végel) all began their careers. Yet, Sinkó was not the only reason leftist traditions were present in the thought of the Symposium generation: the tradition of 20th-century leftist movements and journals linked to Lajos Kassák (such as the activist journal *ÚT* [Road] published in 1922–1925)¹² and the Marxist philosophy of Georg Lukács, an important intellectual model for the new left, were also crucial. It was through the new left circle of the journal *Praxis* of Zagreb (itself shaped significantly by Lukács) and their Korčula Summer School that the Symposium circle became influenced by contemporary new left philosophers like Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, and Erich Fromm. The neoavantgarde scene of Novi Sad and the generation of *Új Symposium* considered itself a part of Yugoslav and international contemporary culture, which included new left discourses as well as hippy culture, anti-establishment lifestyles, and multimedia art practices. Miško Šuvaković suggests that the cultural and ethnic hybridity of Novi Sad was, in fact, the key advantage of this scene over larger Yugoslav centres: ‘What was important for Novi Sad, and where Novi Sad was before Belgrade, was that Novi Sad was a mixed environment where different cultural models mixed and correlated’.¹³ The Symposium circle made its contribution to this hybridity, even though their local reference points were chosen from contemporary Yugoslav literature rather than Hungarian literature: ‘When we started, we were devoted to Rimbaud’s modernism and the Serbian surrealist essay ... (...) I was also influenced by Oscar Wilde’s essays, for example. Krleža, Andrićot Crnjanski, the poetry of Vasko Popa, Mihalić and their circle, and fiction by Konstantinović, Šoljan, Bulatović and Kiš also need to be mentioned’.¹⁴

11 ‘We were pioneers. We had to start nearly everything from the beginning, as we had brought nothing from our families. We had no tradition.’ László Végel, ‘Szellemi krónika – Hatvannyolc’ [Intellectual Chronicle. Sixty-eight.], in László Végel, *Hontalan esszék* [Homeless Essays], Jelenkor, Pécs, 2003, p. 294.

12 The manifesto of the journal resonates strongly with the future attitudes of *Új Symposium*. The editor-in-chief of *ÚT* announces the universality of culture and overriding of national narratives in the first issue: ‘We live on polyglot soil: here we have a double need to demonstrate our metanationality. We are not offering Hungarian culture, but culture in Hungarian language! Today, art and culture are already moving toward metanationality and

universality.’ Quoted in Marko Šimičić, ‘From Zenit to Mental Space. Avant-garde, Neo-avant-garde, and Post-avant-garde Magazines and Books in Yugoslavia, 1921–1987’, in Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, The MIT Press, Cambridge–London, 2003, p. 307.

13 ‘Omitted History’, Transcript of Debate between Želimir Žilnik, Miško Šuvaković, Latinka Perović, Zvonko Maković, Bálint Szombathy, and Lazar Stojanović, in *Omitted History* (ed. kuda.org), Revolver – Archiv für Aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, p. 58.

14 Beáta Thomka, *Tolnai Ottó*, Kalligram, Pozsony, 1994, p. 17.



**Phonic Performance
in a Factory, Novi
Sad, 1972**

As Sinkó’s program statement shows, being Yugoslav was the core identity of the Symposium group members, but they were at times ambivalent in their experience of this identity. In Szerbhorváth’s stark summary: ‘Symposians were Hungarians, but they were devoted to being Yugoslav. They considered writing in Hungarian a natural given, even if they tried their hands at Serbian. They came to the City from small dusty villages on the Great Plane or agricultural towns, yet they immediately set their eyes on the sea. They objected to the cult of personality, but they never doubted Tito, to say the least. They spoke of freedom, learned from Nietzsche, but they also nodded in approval when quoting the apostles of dogmatic Marxism. (...) They were believers, yet they despised the faith of others, especially religious faith. They fought against tradition, while speaking of a lack of tradition and allegedly discovering new traditions. And so on: the history of *Új Symposium* is ultimately about this split.’¹⁵

The same split was the foundation for their ambivalent critical relation to the motherland and, even more radically, their estrangement from it. Mobility was restricted by the geopolitical framework created by the Iron Curtain and, more practically, by the visa requirement in force until the 1960s, which made it difficult to maintain relationships and to access the intellectual products of Hungary. Moreover, Tito’s regime could easily translate connections to the motherland as nationalist rhetoric, which could even land one in jail. In such a situation, Hungarian intellectuals in Vojvodina were even more ready to accept Yugoslavia as a given. By the sixties, the choice between Yugoslavia and Hungary was not even considered any longer, as Tito’s Yugoslavia had become the accepted cultural home and ‘homeland’ for the majority.¹⁶ This was no complete separation from Hungarian culture, however; a parallel

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15 Szerbhorváth, op. cit. p. 86.

16 Szerbhorváth, op. cit. p. 148.



Gábor Altorjay, *Collage Nr. 29, 1966*

© Ludwig Museum – Museum of

Contemporary Art, Budapest

17 ‘The names of Péter Vasadi and Tamás Szentjóbý must be remembered by anyone hoping to survey the latest and youngest Hungarian poetry. If Béla Horgas and Ottó Orbán mark the first wave of this generation, then Tandori, Vasadi and Szentjóbý are the second – in the sphere of the poetic that is averse to a descriptive notion of poetry and accepts creation as a fundamental poetic principle, searching for more hidden aspects of the world. (...)’, 1377. Imre Bori, ‘A legújabb magyar líráról’ [Contemporary Hungarian Lyric Poetry], *Híd*, 1967/12, pp. 1377–1379.

18 Unofficial culture in Hungary in the sixties had no institutions of its own and relied on private apartments and cafés as well as marginal cultural centres in the outskirts of Budapest.

19 Altorjay Gábor leírása Tolnai Ottó, Néhány megjegyzés Bori Imre A legújabb magyar líráról című írásához c. cikke után [Description by Gábor Altorjay after Ottó Tolnai’s article ‘Some Remarks on “Contemporary Hungarian Lyric Poetry” by Bori Imre’], *Új Symposion*, 34, February 1968.

literary-artistic structure took shape, which occasionally fostered connections between likeminded authors and articulated frank views on the cultural scene in Hungary.

To take a few examples, Imre Bori, the powerful critic of the fairly traditional journal *Híd*, visited Hungary several times in the sixties and published the results of his literary collection tour in the journal.¹⁷ This is how the young neoavantgarde poets forced out of the publications of Hungary’s literary institutions by censorship were published in Yugoslav journals, such as *Híd*, then *Új Symposion*, and this remained the case throughout the seventies. Ottó Tolnai, who found literature in Hungary too traditional, knew the peculiar structure of the subcultural public sphere¹⁸ and looked for the new avantgarde poets in cafés in 1967. He duly found Gábor Altorjay and Tamás Szentjóbý, who had introduced the medium of happening in Budapest a year earlier, and had moved from mystic poetry writing toward visual poems and the verbal-visual actionism of Fluxus. It is no accident that the authentic description of *Lunch. In memoriam Batu Khan*, the first Hungarian happening, was published by Gábor Altorjay (though not under his name) in *Új Symposion*, probably as a result of Tolnai’s visit.¹⁹ Tolnai’s contacts included the most progressive Hungarian authors: Sándor Weöres, who wrote experimental poems in the sixties and Lajos Kassák, the living symbol of classic avantgarde, whom he visited in the company of the newly discovered young fellow poets.²⁰ Although his enthusiasm for the new generational literature is clear, his occasional remarks – ‘I am exhausted by the manners and language of the good people of Pest’ – betray a socio-cultural distance that has left its mark on numerous contemporary writers’ texts and memoirs. The hidden problems, narrowness and elitism of Hun-

20 ‘In the Hungária [a historic café in Budapest, E. K.], I am trying to sniff out young, or even very young, Hungarian poets. Simply and primarily because I am terribly curious about lyricists my age or younger in Hungary. It’s no use searching for them in journals, even though I’ve always felt a kind of poetry I was missing both here and at home had to exist. The more I felt their absence, the surer I was they existed. I have already been in touch with a few of them, probably the least talented ones. I happened to walk up to theirs, of all the tables, when inquiring about them. They are planning to launch a journal called *Kezdet* [Beginning]. Kassák was allegedly willing to serve as the editor. But of course, it hit a snag and things came to a standstill, as they usually do. They are planning to visit Kassák, and I am joining them. I already know where he lives. I knew the visit was free of protocol or I would have stayed away. I find the good manners and language of the people in Pest tiresome.’ Ottó Tolnai, ‘Úti-napló’ [Travel Diary], series, *Híd* 1967/6, p. 532.

garian society were enlarged when seen through the prism of visitors from Yugoslavia, and the image was not necessarily flattering either for the broader cultural milieu or for the smaller underground that existed separately from the official culture.

Nándor Gion wrote a longer volume of essays entitled *Bloody Rat Extermination with Trained Ferrets* (*Véres patkányirtás idomított görényekkel*) on the experiences of an extended stay in Budapest. Although the author tends to leave them unexamined, a number of problems surface in the text, including those of everyday latent anti-Semitism or doublespeak. There was no antisemitism in socialist Hungary according to the official rhetoric, and very few artists reflected on their own Jewishness, but memoirs do suggest that it actually infused everyday discourse.²¹ Insofar as allusiveness, reading between the lines, and avoiding discourses of power and open confrontation were among the most prominent metaphoric techniques of the Soviet period, Gion’s observations about doublespeak touched on one of the distinctive communication mechanisms of public life in Hungary.²² A fear of police surveillance and the general fear pervading society as a whole, which seemed to shape the everyday in Hungary, were striking phenomena for observers from Yugoslavia.²³ All this would not be complete, of course, without mutual criticism: ‘Western’ style Yugoslavs, who were not forced to conform to ideological expectations and were incomparably better off than those in the motherland condescended to the latter, who considered them, in turn, chauvinistic Yugoslavs while envying their contacts and institutions.²⁴

Truly enough, the authors of *Új Symposion* were well paid by Hungary’s standards and did not have to deliver literary results in exchange for socialist patronage; even ideological expectations applied ‘only’ to journals. The situation of visual arts, often closely connected to literary practice, was similar: ‘When you compare the situation in the two countries, we had it much easier. We could get all kinds of materials. We had an active relationship with the West and were invited to exhibitions. You could order any western newspaper through Forum Publishing, you could



Gábor Altorjay – Tamás Szentjóbý, *The Lunch. In memoriam*

Batu Khan, Happening, 1966 © Archive Altorjay Berlin-Hamburg

21 Unofficial artists like János Major and Miklós Erdély must be mentioned here. On the former, cf. Dániel Véri, *Major János világa* [The World of János Major], doctoral dissertation, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 2016. Miklós Erdély’s (formerly banned) experimental film *Verzió* (Version, 1981) was perhaps the most important work in pre-transition Hungary related to this issue.

22 The Kassák Museum’s complex research program on the 1960s-70s (lead researcher Edit Sasvári) is based on the notion and conceptual elaboration of ‘doublespeak’, cf. http://www.kassak-muzeum.hu/index.php?p=hatvanas_hetvenes

23 Attila Csernik’s observation is related to the

short-lived autonomous experiment of the Hungarian neoavantgarde, the chapel exhibitions of Balatonboglár, where he exhibited with the Bosch+Bosch group for the first time in 1972: ‘The Boglár exhibition was memorable. We found it absurd. You could do whatever you wanted here [i.e. Yugoslavia, K. E.], and they were afraid there, peeping through the chapel door to see if the police were coming, they made a blackout, and we were talking that way. It was mystical, and we had been unable to imagine the environment we were in for two days. They were afraid of everything.’ (Attila Csernik interviewed by Vera Bálint, manuscript, 2009.)

24 Szerbhorváth, op. cit., p. 192.

access anything, and they actually delivered anything as long as you paid for it. This was unfortunately not available to those in Hungary. Officially, they could not have any contact with Westerners', says artist Attila Csernik, editor of the *Képes Ifjúság* magazine in Novi Sad, summarizing the basic difference between the two scenes.²⁵ In terms of its readership in Hungary, *Új Symposion* counted as a niche journal, the journal of the underground, which could be obtained either through ad hoc ordering at the mercy of the postal services or through personal contacts, but which was virtually never reviewed in Hungarian papers.

CONTEXTUAL FEMINISM

The socio-cultural position of minor literature was simultaneously burdened and eased by privileges in Yugoslavia in 1960s-70s, but what was a woman author's position like in this male-dominated context? In the early sixties, when Katalin



Writer's Forum in Radio Novi Sad, Studio M: Katalin Ladik, László Kopeckzy, László Tomán, Ottó Tolnai, Imre Bori, 1970

Ladik began her career, the Yugoslav state officially promoted gender equality, especially in political participation, but women were encouraged to get involved in the state apparatus, various institutions, the economy, industry, and culture.²⁶ Yet, this meant uniformity more than true equality in the democratic sense; meanwhile, classic gender hierarchy remained in effect in daily practices, and no deviation from traditional normative roles was tolerated. A salient example from Katalin Ladik's life is the period when she supported herself and her family by becoming a bank clerk at the age of twenty in order to fit into the regime. This was, in fact, the first deliberate step to tear herself out of the family background of deep poverty and illiteracy she had been born into. While society tolerated and even expected class mobility, her radio broadcasting and acting career proved incompatible with the bureaucratic lifestyle and led to numerous conflicts in everyday life. The lurking prejudice about the

morals of actresses that affected Ladik's whole career was also a cornerstone of the conventional expectations of a standard life, which she ended up defying.

The few women authors forming the first generation of Yugoslav literature and visual art that reflected on feminist concerns in some way, were mostly interested in creating the kind of language French author Hélène Cixous called feminine writing (*écriture féminine*). The objective of this first phase was the critical decon-



Poetry Festival, Struga, Macedonia, 1989

struction of phallographic order by restoring access to the presymbolic layers of culture related to the working of the unconscious and repressed by male dominance.²⁷ This search for a language was not necessarily linked to feminist discourses or theories in the 'Western' sense, even though gender-based approaches became more prominent in Yugoslavia from the mid-1970s on and the first conference on feminism was held in Belgrade in 1978.²⁸ Still, Yugoslav variants of feminism and women's politics of the body were coded differently from mainstream Anglo-American feminism; this was characteristic of women artists of the eastern regions generally as a result of absent theoretical frameworks, organized movements and institutions. In fact, the problem of a typology of 'Eastern' and 'Western' feminism did not emerge until the political transition, when exhibitions and theoretical texts inserted it into the discourses re-evaluating the region's art history from a feminist perspective among others. In her introduction to a reader accompanying the *Gender Check* exhibition in 2010, Martina Pachmanová claims that while plenty of gender issues appear globally, their semantic framing can vary topographically: 'As many thinkers in the East emphasize, there are different semantic and cultural "framings" which produce different gender meanings of sim-



Poetry Festival, Struga, Macedonia, 1989

struction of phallographic order by restoring access to the presymbolic layers of culture related to the working of the unconscious and repressed by male dominance.²⁷ This search for a language was not necessarily linked to feminist discourses or theories in the 'Western' sense, even though gender-based approaches became more prominent in Yugoslavia from the mid-1970s on and the first conference on feminism was held in Belgrade in 1978.²⁸ Still, Yugoslav variants of feminism and women's politics of the body were coded differently from mainstream Anglo-American feminism; this was characteristic of women artists of the eastern regions generally as a result of absent theoretical frameworks, organized movements and institutions. In fact, the problem of a typology of 'Eastern' and 'Western' feminism did not emerge until the political transition, when exhibitions and theoretical texts inserted it into the discourses re-evaluating the region's art history from a feminist perspective among others. In her introduction to a reader accompanying the *Gender Check* exhibition in 2010, Martina Pachmanová claims that while plenty of gender issues appear globally, their semantic framing can vary topographically: 'As many thinkers in the East emphasize, there are different semantic and cultural "framings" which produce different gender meanings of sim-

²⁷ Susan Sellers, *Towards an écriture féminine. Language and Sexual Difference: Feminist Writings in France*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1991, p. 143.

²⁸ The organization of the conference has been considered a landmark in the history of second-wave feminism in Eastern Europe, even though the prominent figures of Western feminist discourses (the Americans Susan Sontag and Lucy Lippard, the French Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, and the British Sheila Rowbotham and

Juliet Mitchell) finally did not attend it. The conference, to which Ladik Katalin was also invited, was attended by artists and theorists from England, Hungary, Poland and West-Germany. Chiara Bonfiglioli, *Belgrade, 1978: Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje – Novi Pristup?' Comrade Woman: The Woman's Question: A New Approach?' Thirty years after*, MA Thesis, University of Utrecht, 2008.

²⁵ Attila Csernik interviewed by Vera Báldi, manuscript, 2009.

²⁶ Sabrina P. Ramet, 'In Tito's Time', in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Gender Politics in the West Balkans*,

Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1990, p. 90.

ilar visual signs and representations. In other words, they have perceived that the collective narratives and languages of signification need to be disrupted on the level of imposed internal/domestic as well as external/international discourses’.²⁹

Katalin Ladik and her contemporaries in Novi Sad – artist and teacher Bogdanka Poznanović, editor of the *Tribina Mladih* (Youth Tribune), who belonged to the older generation and was familiar with the international scene, writer and critic Judita Šalgo, and artist Ana Raković, the female member of the conceptual art group



Katalin Ladik in the early 1970's, photo Ana Lazukić

(E – tended to represent a kind of contextual feminism, its subversiveness mainly sustained by opposition to patriarchy or a repressive milieu. In Katalin Ladik's case this contextual feminism, which aimed at valorising the female subject, was complicated by multiple minority positions, as both the beginning and development of her career was shaped by an awareness of the constraints of linguistic determinism and the different socio-political conditions of several cultures and two countries. As a poet and performer in the Hungarian language, Katalin Ladik consciously expanded the limits of language from the late 1960s onward and developed a multilingual international art practice embedded in Yugoslav cultural space; still, she was unable to eliminate

all the consequences of the biopolitical context. 'Here, like in Yugoslavia I was accepted in a way as exotic – the Yugoslavs felt in me the Hungarian, and Hungarians the Balkan exoticism. (...) I carry a double weight: all the tasks and fate of a patriarchal woman, and a woman who fights alone for her emancipation. This is neurotic, but this neurosis can be creative', she said in an interview in the seventies.³⁰ The pioneering quality of her activities and their distancing from available feminist models must be assessed in the complex emancipatory context of regional minority positions.

In her narrower socio-cultural context – the *Új Symposion* journal, where her poems had been published since 1962 – Ladik counted as a relatively tolerated, supported, yet initially single woman author.³¹ Her status within the broader space of Hungarian literature in Vojvodina is indicated by the fact that she is the only woman author in *Kontrapunkt*, a book-length selection meant to represent the whole period and published as a Symposium book in 1964. A number of her interviews touch on the myths that have affected her appearance on the literary and art scenes from the very beginning, a significant element of which was the (male) reaction to Ladik's



'feminine' appeal.³² Ottó Tolnai and István Domonkos presumptively projected a country teacher behind the poems and were surprised to see a modern young woman enter the editorial offices on their invitation. A similarly extreme, if opposite, version was Tamás Szentjóby's version, who corresponded with Ladik for about a year in 1967-68, having discovered her poems in *Új Symposion*, and decoded the author as a psychedelically influenced feminine marvel who has seen the world.

Actually, Katalin Ladik was an exceptionally active, yet withdrawn and shy young woman, who had worked hard since the age of eleven; she had very limited access to contemporary cultural information and saw herself as more disadvantaged than her contemporaries for various linguistic-cultural reasons.³³ Her first time 'abroad', namely in Hungary, was at twenty-three in 1965, and she did not go on her first real trip abroad to Amsterdam until 1977.

Her lifestyle presaged a 'traditional Balkan female fate' as the future: husband, child, job, in-laws in a one-bedroom flat with no bathroom. In the sixties and early seventies, the socio-cultural background to Ladik's life was determined by the circumstances of her private life, the framework of a classic marriage of intellectuals, and after the dissolution of the latter, the increasing pressure of earlier economic constraints.

The authors of *Új Symposion* seem to have risen above the system of sexism and misogynistic prejudice characteristic of the Balkans (and Eastern Europe more generally); the collective generational collaboration among the authors was decoded in their reception



Katalin Ladik (right) in the middle, in the Radio Novi Sad, 1953

Content of *Új Symposion*, with Poems by Katalin Ladik, 1970

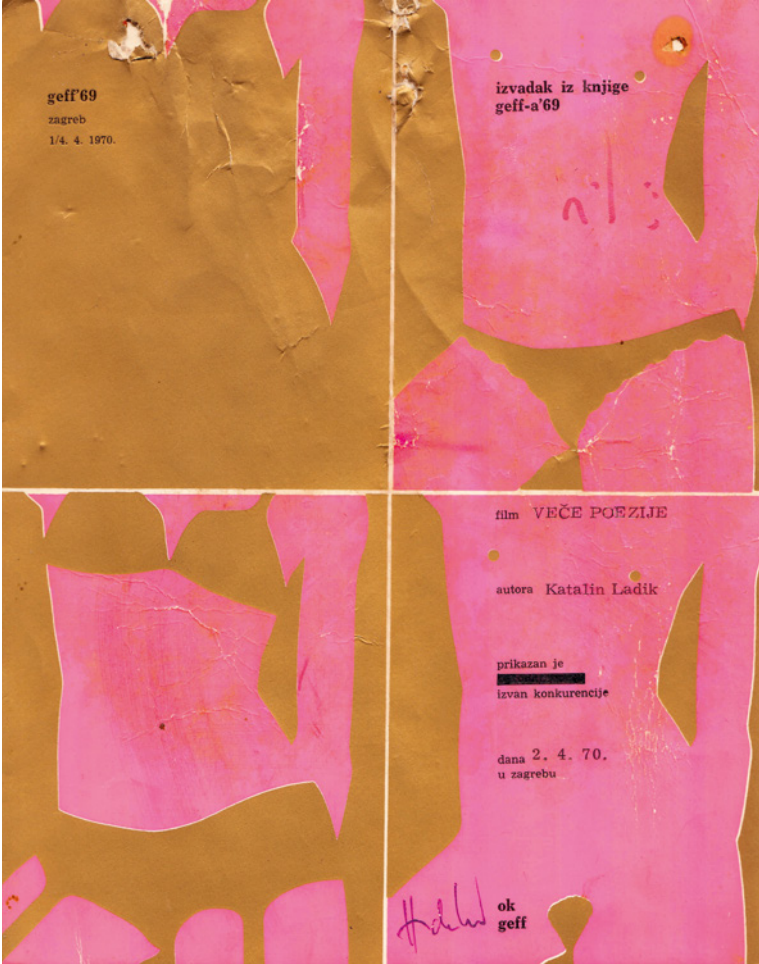
²⁹ Martina Pachmanová, 'In? Out? Between?', in *Gender Check: A Reader. Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić & ERSTE Foundation & Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Wien, 2010, p. 48.

³⁰ Vesna Kesić, Katalin Ladik: JA SAM ŽENA, *Start*, Zagreb, 1981. febr. 28. quoted in Miško Šuvaković, 'The Power of a Woman. Narratives of

Interpretation, of Subjectification, Women and Art Between the Cold War and Transition in Central Europe', in *The Power of a Woman: Katalin Ladik. Retrospective 1962–2010*, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina in Novi Sad, Novi Sad, 2010, p. 33.
³¹ Critic Erzsébet Juhász and literary historian Beáta Thomka began to publish in the journal later on.

³² Jovana Stokic recalls Marina Abramović's comment on how crucial it was to avoid a 'feminine' appearance in 1970s Yugoslavia and to deal with the disadvantages related to a traditionally feminine appearance. She thought it was essential for a woman artist to adopt male attire and behaviour in order to be taken seriously: 'If a woman artist would apply make up, or put on nail polish, she would not have been considered serious enough.' Jovana Stokic, 'Un-Doing Monoculture: Women Artists from the "Blind Spot of Europe" – the Former Yugoslavia', *Artmargins*, March 10, 2006. <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/8-archive/532-un-doing-monoculture-women-artists-from-the-blind-spot-of-europe-the-former-yugoslavia>

³³ 'I had never intended to make a living by writing; firstly, I had an inferiority complex, and with some reason, since I hadn't had a chance to become as familiar with Hungarian literature as fellow writers who had attended a Hungarian high school or university. I read things haphazardly until I had a kind of overview of literature. I began to write completely instinctively without being informed.' Miklós Hornyik, 'Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában. Kérdések Ladik Katalinhoz' [Woe Is Her Who Carries the Woods Inside. Questions to Katalin Ladik], *Képes Ifjúság*, 27 January 1968, p. 18.



Poster for Katalin Ladik's Performance at the Experimental Film Festival (Geff) in Zagreb, 1970

as a group manifestation of avantgarde poetry, while gender stereotypes did not come into play.³⁴ Ladik was inspired by the socially driven joint poetry improvisations organized by Ottó Tolnai, István Domonkos, and László Végel, which ran counter to a traditional lyric aesthetic. At the same time, the themes of her poetry centred on a fragmented female subject and motives of femininity, which – atypically at the time – claimed references to female eroticism and a language previously reserved for men. Her poems breaking with the linguistic-political conventions of poetry would have been categorized as belonging to feminist discourses in a more ‘Western’ biopolitical context, yet paradoxically even the author denied this character of her works.³⁵ The reluctance to identify with feminism at the time was due to stereotypes about ‘female’ poetry. This was assumed to be a ‘dilettante’ version compared to men's normative poetry, and something Ladik certainly did not want to identify with. As I indicated earlier, this situation was quite typical in Eastern Europe at the time due to the lack of feminist discourses and the belated almost imperceptible effect of West-European

theories. The new generation of women opposing traditional male narratives, language and the oppressive mechanisms of everyday life feared nothing as much as being identified with the notion of the female, that is of marginality. As Edit András observed: ‘This fear is not unjustified, given the popular old backlash argument that their success is the result of the passing fad of women’s art rather than the quality of their works’.³⁶ Like other contemporaries – for example Marina Abramović in her joint performances with Ulay – Katalin Ladik found the solution in the concept of androgyny that dissolves gender hierarchy, which often appears in her poems and actions.

In the late sixties, Katalin Ladik's socio-cultural position was radicalized further by her body language experiments provoking masculine dominance and her body art works (to be discussed later). Leaving the protective linguistic-cultural

34 Katalin Ladik says she was treated as an equal by the authors of *Új Symposion*: ‘It wasn’t the typical Balkan thing with them; they encouraged me. There was a community atmosphere, the same creative wavelength, and I was part of it.’ ‘Csak radikálisan lehet. Mikola Gyöngyi és Ladányi István beszélgetése Ladik Katalinnal’ (Katalin Ladik in conversation with Gyöngyi Mikola and István Ladányi), *Ex-Symposion*, 2010/72, p. 1.

35 ‘...I am fighting feminine poetry most of all, though I wouldn’t need to, as I hope my poetry is not women’s poetry in a bad sense. I like to have things relevant to women in my poems, but I refuse to be classified as an author of ‘women’s’ poetry.’ *Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában*, 1968, p. 18.

36 Edit András, ‘Gender Minefield: The Heritage of the Past’, *N.Paradoxa*, online issue no. 11 (October 1999) http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxa-issue11_Edit-Andras_4-9.pdf



sphere of *Új Symposion* for a much broader public sphere, she became a highly visible, heavily criticized, stigmatised, yet respected artist and media personage of the Yugoslav avantgarde scene. Her vulnerability, the ambivalent or even extreme attitudes towards her, and the respect for her radically new and provocative art were all inseparable from the concept of ‘regional socialism’ (Želimir Žilnik) that referred the heterogeneity of Yugoslav cultural policy and its scale of liberal to repressive measures. For example, as will be discussed later on, the reception of Ladik’s works was completely different in communities far from the ‘centre’, particularly in Hungarian-speaking ones, such as Subotica, than in Novi Sad or the more internationally informed Zagreb. Besides the broad spectrum of reception and the deliberate vulnerability of Ladik’s private persona, it is important to take into account the conscious attitude emerging in her interviews time and time again, which is best described as ‘defiance’.³⁷ Katalin Ladik’s proactive resistance and the (political) exposure of the taboo-laden naked body in socialist public space corresponds to the deliberate and conscious conduct of ‘active otherness’, to borrow Zdenka Badovinac’s term.³⁸

The media representation of this active otherness had peculiar dimensions compared to the patterns of prior reception in intellectual circles. As Miško Šuvaković remarked, Katalin Ladik was one of the first representatives of the Yugoslav unofficial art called ‘new art practice’ who could attract enough attention to penetrate the mass and popular media of socialist Yugoslavia.³⁹ To put it differently,



Magazine *Start*, 1970

37 ‘My literary activity is driven primarily by defiance. A defiance of external pressure. If I hadn’t lived in such difficult circumstances and hadn’t had to break out of them, I would have become lazy perhaps and become petty bourgeois like so many other women poets. Do you know the *Telep*? The unimaginable poverty of the *Telep*? The poverty which makes you constantly bow your head – and the more you bow it, the more they trample you? Well, this is what provoked my defiance, which I could not express in any way except through my sensitivity and poetry.’ *Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában*, 1968, p. 18.

The *Telep* (slum or housing estate) mentioned in the text, where Katalin Ladik grew up, is the somewhat ghettoized worker’s housing estate established by the Hungarian government for the Hungarians of Novi Sad in the 1940s, which had its own infrastructure and a cultural centre.

38 Zdenka Badovinac introduced the term in the exhibition *Schengen Women* (2008) she curated. Zdenka Badovinac, ‘Schengen Women’, in *Gender Check*, 2010, p. 46.

39 *The Power of a Woman*, 2010, p. 83.



Magazine *Ekran*, 1970

the Ladik phenomenon was an ideal product of a consumer socialism that allegedly eliminated class society: a pop cultural icon largely constructed by the media, whose social context was shaped not only by the media of high culture and elite literature, but also by the sign system and representation of mass media. David Crowley observed that Katalin Ladik, as a member of the contemporary underground, used sexuality not only as a creative tool, but also as a means of consciously turning herself into a popular icon who could leave the zone of neoavantgarde marginalization.⁴⁰ This process was far from smooth, however. During our interviews, Ladik kept referring to her vulnerability to the media and to not having models for dealing with aggressive media techniques. In fact, such antecedents could not have existed, since the construction of Ladik's public persona was concurrent with the emergence and expansion of Yugoslav mass media.⁴¹ The artist charged with eccentricity and exhibitionism was simultaneously present as an anti-normative, aesthetically unclassifiable rule breaker in

the various elite forums of high literature and theatre and in press publications catering to mass consumer's taste, taking advantage of nakedness in anti-feminist ways. The tabloid media actually turned her methods against her: the naked body she used as a medium of rebellion and subversion was returned to the tabloids' own sphere of interest shaped by patriarchal discourses of power. The Ladik phenomenon was constructed jointly by these two spheres – the deliberately built intellectual oeuvre and the patterns of its external representation – even if the latter did not necessarily show any regard for the critical voice of a highly self-aware female position.

ABOUT THE BOOK AND THE METHOD

This book is preceded by a number of important publications. *The Power of a Woman*, the study Miško Šuvaković published in 2010, has been the most comprehensive account of the various segments of Katalin Ladik's oeuvre.⁴² *Border Poetics*, a doctoral dissertation by János Samu, analyses the poetic reductionism of Ladik's poetry and its embeddedness in the neoavantgarde as a limit experience, whereas Vera Báлинд's thesis (*Tracing the Subversive Feminities in the Socialist Yugoslavia*)

40 David Crowley, 'The Future is Between your Legs: Sex, Art and Censorship in the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', in Lina Džuverović (ed.), *Monuments Should Not Be Trusted*, Nottingham Contemporary, 2016, p. 39.

41 The early fifties saw an expansion of mass

media in Yugoslavia, along with the noticeable tabloidization of magazines, which increasingly allowed the move to a mixed financial model of operating at least partly for profit.

42 Miško Šuvaković, op. cit. 2014

approaches the oeuvre in terms of feminist theories.⁴³ This volume refers to these precursors, while also advancing the thesis that the relevant medium of Katalin Ladik's art is the voice. The intermedial approach to voice, its linking to the medium of the body, linguistic-textual research and the visualization of sound produce the complex mechanisms of Ladik's art, which fit into the new international avantgarde of the sixties. I aim to take the framework of *minorité* outlined above as a given and to present the post-Cagean intermedial character of the work of Katalin Ladik, the first phonic poet of the neoavantgarde in Yugoslavia and Hungary. My analysis contributes to a discourse initiated by scholars of the New York school of poetry and experimental music, such as Liz Kotz and Julia Robinson.⁴⁴ It was after the release of Ladik's record *Phonopoetica* in 1976 that it became evident how well her performative experimental poetry fit in with comparable phenomena of international phonic poetry; the local preconceptions previously applied to her suddenly vanished in the context of parallel activities. The performative transposition of the written text, the overwriting of a traditional musical aesthetics and use of instruments, the involvement of the body-as-instrument in the performative process, and the additional dimension of visible movement were devices in widespread use in contemporary experimentalism. The theoretical and practical framework of post-Fluxus thinking about music is the background for the interpretation of Ladik's intermedial activities, which had consequences beyond the aesthetic sphere of the work and led to the social politics of art.

The demoting of reference-oriented and therefore linguistically-ethnically determined local language and its replacement by the universal aesthetics of phonic poetry assisted the artist in the transition into what we might call supraethnicity. Ladik was the sole Hungarian-speaking poet-performer in contemporary Yugoslavia, who could go beyond the given cultural-ethnic limits and who could express herself in the Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian cultural spaces in a supralinguistic way. The universalism of *Phonopoetica* eased the negative effects of the conditions regulated by the Iron Curtain and gave her access to the contemporary international avantgarde scene. The trips that were the privilege of a select few in the region and the appearances at various phonic poetry festivals and exhibitions in Western Europe and overseas naturally expanded the boundaries of reception, so she would often become the representative of a whole country (Yugoslavia) in the international scene.

These increasingly frequent glimpses outside the East-European region cannot elide the fact that Katalin Ladik, who eventually relocated to Budapest in 1992 as a result of the Balkan wars,⁴⁵ moved in the cultural space between Yugoslavia and Hungary in the years before the political transition. Taking this geopolitical feature of her activities into account, Miško Šuvaković's monograph covered the key lines of force in Ladik's work and positioned her in the Yugoslav context of New Art Practice, marking points of contact with the neoavantgarde in Hungary. Keeping these precursors in mind, it seems more compelling to focus on the emblematic details of her oeuvre and to discuss the intermediality of her works in the context of interregional

INTRODUCTION:
POETIC PRACTICE
AND THE LAYERS
OF MINORITY

43 János Samu, op. cit. 2014 Vera Báлинд, *Tracing the Subversive Feminities in the Socialist Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Katalin Ladik's Poetry and Performances of the 1970s*, MA Thesis, Central European University, Budapest, 2011.
44 Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At. Language in 1960s Art*, The MIT Press Cambridge – London,

2007. Julia Robinson, 'John Cage and Investiture: Unmanning the System', in *The Anarchy of Silence. John Cage and Experimental Art*, cat., Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2009.
45 Since then she has been dividing her time between Budapest and the Island of Hvar in Croatia.

collaborations instead of attempting another monograph. I was primarily engaged with the experimental corpus of collaboration with the neoavantgarde in Yugoslavia and Hungary, so Katalin Ladik's ties to more traditional activities in theatre, radio or film are somewhat incidental, and the temporal focus is the 1960s-70s with some additional discussion of later periods of the oeuvre.

Each chapter is centred on a particular work that is both relevant to the oeuvre as a whole and suited to a comparative reading of its reception and thereby to a discussion of the two socio-cultural spaces reacting to her. After an introduction to poetics, the second chapter focuses on Ladik's emblematic phonic performance *UFO Party* (1969-70), which can be shown to originate in the practice of avantgarde happenings in Hungary. Although the ambivalent partnership and creative relationship with male artists and, more generally, self-definition vis-a-vis a male-dominated environment are essential components of Ladik's contextual feminism, it is important to stress that her whole oeuvre is punctuated by intense collaborations with male artists. The most important figures in this type of activity were no doubt folklorist composer Ernő Király and visual artist and theorist Bálint Szombathy. The record *Phonopoetica* (1976) and the related musical research discussed in the third chapter came into being within this type of partnership at the intersection of post-Cagean music and visual poetry. Numerous results of the research related to the representation of new visual-musical thinking in Yugoslavia appear publicly for the first time in this volume, supporting and interpreting the uniqueness of Ladik's musical performativity in the international scene.

Collaboration with the Bosch+Bosch group from 1973 to 1976 strengthened conceptuality and the anti-hierarchical participatory attitude of Fluxus in Katalin Ladik's work. As discussed in the last chapter, this tendency has been replaced in the 1980s by a more individual eclecticism referentially related to her previous creative periods; despite some modifications and shifts of emphasis, this has largely remained the case to this day. Ladik's entire oeuvre is about the impossibility of reconstructing the platonic harmony between the sexes, the fragmentary character of intellectual-sensuous relations between men and women, and the dynamic crisis of the female subject, which is condensed into diverse forms: now a scream, now an autobiographical novel (*Can I Live on Your Face?* 2007). As Beatrix Visy writes about her in de Manian terms, Ladik's 'work only partly aims at restoring mutability, at filling the "gaps"; her work testifies to the recognition that (self-)understanding and (self-)narration can never become complete and reach a point of rest as a result of "linguistic pressure" (and artistic mediation as such).'⁴⁶ The incessant dynamization of voice, poetry and the body is an experiment in the impossibility of constructing a stable subject, which tested the artists's social self and her 'theatre of cruelty' rooted in Artaud's concept. Or, to quote her own lines:

"In the coal-black canoe / he shivered / across him the mirrored wall
/ one shiny point only / his own face / slowly he left it behind / already arrived /
where he wished to be / among the shards of the mirror / in parallel time / a dizzy-
ing and growing net."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Beatrix Visy, 'A helyettesítés alak(zat)(j)ai Ladik Katalin regényes élettörténetében' [Figures of Substitution in the Novelistic Life Story of Katalin Ladik], *Híd*, 2012/10. http://adattar.vmmi.org/cikkek/19737/hid_2012_10_03_visy.pdf

⁴⁷ Katalin Ladik, *In the Coal-black Canoe*, translated from Hungarian by Emőke B. Rácz. Originally published: 'A koromfekete csónakban, Homo galacticus (1980–85) cycle', in Katalin Ladik, *Kiűzetés* [Expulsion], Forum–Magvető, Novi Sad–Budapest, 1988.

THE POST-CAGEAN CONTEXT IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The crisis of the traditional media and institutions of art, or more broadly the international crisis of modernism, was most closely related to the rise of a new, expanded conception of music from the late fifties on. Besides changes in the aesthetics of music, this new music also brought about new devices, a growing recognition of the audience's role, the introduction of unconventional musical sounds, the expansion of performance venues and, last, but not least, the interrelationist ties to other media. The isolation of traditional monomedia was replaced by the relations of music and dance, music and text, music and visuality, and intermedial operation was based on these mutual – or in Dick Higgins' term inflected by Marxism – dialectical relations.⁴⁸ Despite some differences in emphasis, Dick Higgins and the overseas group of the Fluxus network at John Cage's courses in New York started from the same principles and from a background in experimental music, as they attempted to loosen traditional perceptions, the rules of reception, and the prior domination of the composer-performer. With the increased significance of communication and the audience's role in experimental music, the performer's role became increasingly interchangeable with that of the listener, who could adjust the process of music experience to his or her subjective and free perception. As Cage has remarked, the notion of process was the key principle that determined experimental music and related immaterial spatio-temporal media of the 1960s: 'Music is a creative process in which we can all share, and the closer we can come to each other in this process, abandoning esoteric categories and professional elitism, the closer we can all come to the ancient idea of music as a universal language'.⁴⁹

The key terms of Cage's music aesthetics – chance and indeterminacy – were linked to the socio-philosophical concept of change in the theory of the new, event-based media. The genre of the event originated from music and was recorded in scores. Especially in its early version, the genre was linked to Dadaist techniques of simultaneity and the unfocused presentation of Cagean musical performativity. George Brecht's diffuse, multifocal, chaotic events, the 'extension of collage aesthetics'⁵⁰ shifted towards linguistic-structural simplification in the early sixties under the influence of both Marcel Duchamp's ready-made aesthetics and contemporary composer La Monte Young's language-based short compositions.⁵¹ In contrast to the minimalist textual and performative 'monomorphism' (George Maciunas) of the event, the structure of the happening involved a more complex, 'Baroque' version of the event, despite sharing the same roots. Allan Kaprow identified Cage's role in the genesis of happenings, when he emphasized the principle of extension with respect to the objective surroundings, the environment and happening.⁵² Kaprow revised this later on, and the fixed point of his new criteria for the happening – a now classic reference point for Fluxus – is the fluidity of life and the event, that is the distinction between happening and theatre. This model and some of the orthodoxy of its advocates, which considered the performance practice of the seventies a dilution of the

⁴⁸ Dick Higgins, 'Statement on Intermedia', in Wolf Vostell (ed.), *Dé-collage (décollage)* * 6, Typos Verlag, Frankfurt – Something Else Press, New York, July 1967.

⁴⁹ Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music. Cage and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 130.

⁵⁰ Liz Kotz, 'Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the Event Score', in Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At. Language in 1960s Art*, The MIT Press Cambridge – London, 2007, p. 73.

⁵¹ Op. cit. p. 82.

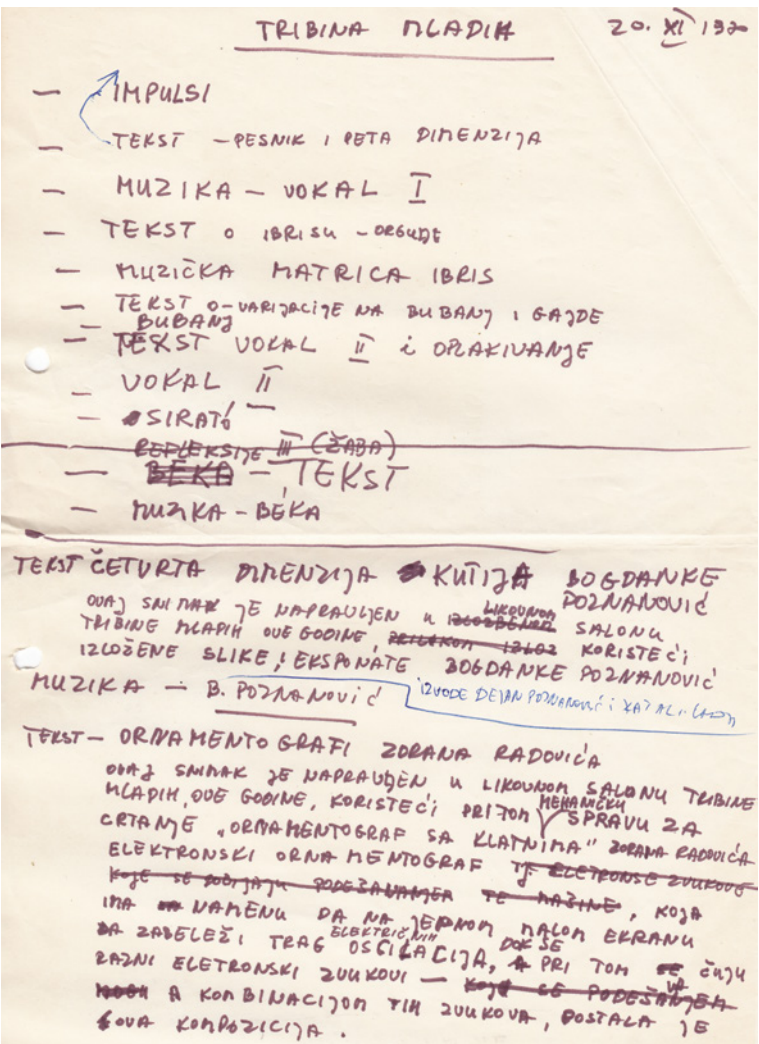
⁵² 'They are the passive and active sides of a single coin, whose principle is *extension*. Thus an Environment is *not less* than a Happening.' Allan Kaprow, 'Assemblage, Environments & Happenings', in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory, 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2003, p. 719.

original principles of the happening, had a major impact on actionism not only overseas, but also in Eastern Europe.⁵³ Besides the New York School, certain music circles in Europe (the synthesizing effect of the Darmstadt music courses) or the avantgarde composers around West German Radio in Cologne had a significant effect on the rise of new musical-performative thought, but research in recent years has confirmed the dominant influence of John Cage and Fluxus in the Eastern bloc.⁵⁴

The first happenings and Fluxus concerts in the Eastern region were held in the mid-sixties in roughly the same period, with some variation in time. The immateriality of the phenomenon was motivated not so much by a critique of institutions and media (in the absence of a market structure), but by the desire for a new paradigm in painting.⁵⁵ In certain countries, such as Hungary with its strong ties to Western paradigms, artists were evidently eager to adopt the new media and the westerns patterns of the neoavantgarde and to develop comparable practices. The most significant influences on the handful of artists who comprised the relatively small neoavantgarde scene in Hungary were Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, Fluxus and Pop Art in the mid-sixties, and Joseph Kosuth's tautological model of conceptual art by the end of the decade. By contrast, the Yugoslav scene not only operated on a different scale, but was also far more heterogeneous due to its decentralization, which resulted in more autonomy and a more critical attitude to Western patterns. On the occasion of the historic survey exhibition in Zagreb in 1978, Ješa Denegri adopted the term New Art Practice to cover the medial diversity (photo, action, concrete and image poetry, music, theatre, comics, film etc.) emerging in the mid-sixties.⁵⁶ His study included in the catalogue argues that the most salient characteristics of the new art had their sociological dimensions and were related to the attitudes and identity of the post-war generation that was gaining its autonomy from earlier traditions. While they were emotionally tied to the historical avantgarde, theirs was the first generation in Yugoslavia that grew up with no nostalgia for patriarchal or local considerations and was open to contemporary urban pop culture.⁵⁷ This art that replaced local tradition with an affinity to international contemporary art had another sociological characteristic: its members came from disciplines like literature, languages, art history and others rather than the traditional system of professional art education. Interdisciplinarity was key to the intellectual background of artist's groups like OHO in Ljubljana, Kôd (Braco Dimitrijević, Slavko Bogdanović and Vladimir Tišma) and ř in Novi Sad, Bosch+Bosch in Subotica, Group 143 in Belgrade and others.⁵⁸

Jesa Denegri claims in this piece that the phenomena of the New Art Practice were too diverse and wide-ranging not only in the practice of single artists but also on the level of specific cultural centres to be grasped in 'pure' linguistic-conceptual examples. 'What we find is a mixture of these and other working principles and individual interpretations, which results in 'syncretic' solutions that should be

regarded as the artist's search for expression', he argued, avoiding the task of typologizing artistic trends that were still very recent.⁵⁹ Miško Šuvaković adopted another strategy in an important volume meant to address international discourses in 2003 by bringing everything previously labelled as 'New Art Practice' in 1970s Yugoslav art under the umbrella term of conceptual art, a solution quite typical in the region.⁶⁰ Taking his cue from Lucy R. Lippard's classic dematerialization theory (Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966–1972), he included all textual or body art works from neo-Dada through Fluxus to arte povera within the notion of conceptual art. Lippard's theory actually ignores all the phenomena related to Fluxus and identified by some authors as proto-conceptual⁶¹, notably John Cage's role in the history of actionism and intermedia. Instead, she laid the foundations of a theoretical hegemony that has dominated art historical discourses including East-European narratives to this day: that of a linguistic-philosophical practice based on the self-reflexivity of art and linked primarily to Joseph Kosuth.⁶² The Kosuthian paradigm assimilated even those phenomena that, like Fluxus, criticized traditional concepts of art and rejected the minimalist forms and linguistic theory upheld by Seth Siegelau, Lippard or Kosuth.⁶³ This homogenizing theory evolved into a methodology that either marginalized or misinterpreted art practices that emerged *before* and *beside* mainstream Kosuthian conceptual art, as a result of a different linguistic-philosophical attitude. As Liz Kotz referred to the never-answered question of the theorist Benjamin Buchloch, the role of John Cage was yet to be solved in the history of proto-conceptual art.⁶⁴



Katalin Ladik's program for the Performance at Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, Manuscript, 1970

53 I mean primarily the Hungarian practices: happening practices by Tamás Szentjóby and Gábor Altorjay, as well as the actionism of Milán Knížák in Czechoslovakia, who was in contact with Allan Kaprow.
54 Katalin Székely (ed.), *The Freedom of Sound. John Cage behind the Iron Curtain*, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, 2013.
55 Petra Stegmann (ed.), *Fluxus East. Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 2007. Petra Stegmann (ed.),

'The Lunatics are on the Loose'. European Fluxus Festivals 1962–1977, catalogue, Down with Art! Potsdam, 2012.
56 The expression originates from French art critic Catherine Millet, which Denegri adopted in reference to the Yugoslav avantgarde: Ješa Denegri, 'Art in the Past Decade', in Marijan Susovski (ed.), *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 1978, p. 8.
57 Denegri, *ibid.*
58 Op. cit. p. 9.

59 *Ibid.*
60 Miško Šuvaković, 'Conceptual Art', in Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, The MIT Press, Cambridge–London, 2003, p. 212.
61 Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon, London, 1998.
62 Besides the Eastern-European desire for adaptation to dominant discourses and the historic integration into the conceptual narrative, the art historians of the region also face the problem of the simultaneity of the art and non-art events

mentioned above, which makes conceptual claritz even more elusive.
63 Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2002, p. 121.
64 This is how Benjamin Buchloch's original question, raised at an October roundtable, was phrased: 'Would it be more historically accurate to say: It is not the Duchampian reception that one has to look at when one wants to study the beginnings of proto- and Conceptual art, but it is the Cage reception one would have concentrate on?' *October* 70, Fall 1994, pp. 138–139. Quoted by Kotz, 2007, p. 284.

This avantgarde and experimental music practice had an extensive institutional system in Yugoslavia in the sixties, where the network of cultural institutions operated as a local and international forum of avantgarde music, poetry, film, theatre and visual arts. The Tribina Mladih of Novi Sad, which housed the editorial offices of *Új Symposion* and was the venue of numerous performances by Katalin Ladik, was a multilingual, open multimedial environment that recognized the value of international contacts.⁶⁵ The Zagreb music biennales, the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF), and the international programs of the museums of contemporary art in Belgrade and Zagreb established the 'Western' position of Yugoslavia in the Eastern bloc for decades to come. (The Warsaw Autumn contemporary music festival in Poland also had a comparable role within the region.) These festivals were attended by the key figures of contemporary music, including John Cage, first introduced to the audience (along with works by European avantgarde composers



International Music
Biennial, Zagreb, 1971

Pierre Boulez, Maurizio Kagel, and Olivier Messiaen) at the first Zagreb biennale in 1961. The Yugoslav cultural sphere was extremely receptive to the new musical sounds compared to scenes like Vienna with its reputation of conservatism. In Hungary, Cage's music was only mentioned in small music events held in private apartments until 1970, because official music criticism treated the 'American music clown'⁶⁶ as a hostile imperialist phenomenon. By contrast, Cage was popular among Yugoslav composers and returned to Yugoslavia several times: he participated in the Zagreb Biennale a second time with pianist David Tudor in 1963,

and had a number of performances with Tudor and Gordon Mumma at BITEF in 1972. American and avantgarde music also left its mark on the museums of the former Yugoslavia: electronic music recordings were regularly on display at the Belgrade museum of contemporary art, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company performed at the avantgarde theatre Atelje 212. As Ivana Miladonović Prica summarizes, 'By cancelling the central focus, Cage opened the work for audience's active participation and multiple experience, which fully confirmed his principles of social cohesion and non-political unity'.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ This is how Želimir Žilnik describes the milieu of the Tribina Mladih at the time: 'The atmosphere at 'Tribina Mladih' was stimulated well, in a way, by multiplying national experiences. We had a board, where, next to me as the editor-in-chief, sat László Végel as my assistant and he was the editor-in-chief of the Hungarian board where there were Tolnai, Bosnyák and a mass of other young Hungarians. The first intellectual "violins" in the country at that time were Krleža, Ivo Andrić, Marko Ristić. Those were the people who had, not only had the intellectual experience of universities in Paris, Vienna, London, or experience in diplomacy, or, for example, people who lived dangerous lives

during the anti-fascist war, they were also people who could communicate with their colleagues all over the world.' *Omitted History*, 2006, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Emese Kürti, 'Generations in Experiment. The Cage Effect in the Early Sixties of Hungary', in Katalin Székely (ed.), *The Freedom of Sound. John Cage behind the Iron Curtain*, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, 2013.

⁶⁷ Ivana Miladonović Prica, 'Yugo-Cage. Cage's reception and the *Different New Music* in Serbia and former Yugoslavia', in *The Freedom of Sound*, 2013, p. 15.

The growing significance of contemporary music in this intense environment inspired a number of artists to engage in the visual exploration of sound and chance; the Yugoslav composers of the sixties [Vladan Radovanović (1932), Dubravko Detoni (1937), Milko Kelemen (1924), Ernő Király (1919-2007), and Vinko Globokar (1934)] took on an increasing share of the composition techniques and methodologies of new music, such as serialism, aleatoricism, chance, and indeterminacy. 'For these composers, Cage's work was a sign of music's emancipation and opening up, as a canonical discipline, into the domain of extended media, open work of art, and the introduction of Conceptual Art procedures into the domain of explorations in music.'⁶⁸ Some of them – future music collaborators of Katalin Ladik – were in contact with Cage, and supported the spirit of new music in Yugoslavia by founding their own orchestras or managing new music studios. Dubravko Detoni of Zagreb studied with Hungarian émigré György Ligeti and with Karlheinz Stockhausen at the Darmstadt music courses in 1970, then assisted John Cage before founding his own avantgarde music ensemble (called Zagreb Ensemble of the Centre for New Tendencies). Vladan Radovanović was one of the first composers and multimedia artists locally to work with avantgarde/experimental music, electronics and multimedia; he and with British-born Paul Pignon jointly founded Radio Belgrade Electronic Studio, the first Yugoslav electronic music studio in 1972.⁶⁹ Such new electronic music studios began to mushroom in Eastern Europe in the sixties, often as subsidiaries to existing radio stations; in David Crowley's words, they were 'semi-autonomous zones' within the culture of the Eastern bloc and thereby became the most important sites of music experiments.⁷⁰

The most consequential influence on Katalin Ladik's thinking about music was the transmission role and activities of Ernő Király, also known as 'the John Cage of Vojvodina'. Ladik lived together with Király, her personal and intellectual partner, from 1964 on, and they have continued their collaboration even after their divorce in 1968. Király was a folklorist, musicologist and composer, and also music editor of Radio Novi Sad, who created a distinctively local contemporary synthesis

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⁶⁸ Miško Šuvaković, 'Beyond Borders. John Cage, Cold War Politics, and Artistic Experimentation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', in *The Freedom of Sound*, 2013, p. 31.

⁶⁹ Miladonović Prica, op. cit. p. 15. Other sources include the date 1968.



The 5th Experimental Art Festival in Vojvodina, 1973

⁷⁰ David Crowley and Daniel Muzyczuk, *Sounding the Body Electric. Experiments in Art and Music in Eastern Europe 1957-1984*, Museum Sztuki Łódź, Łódź, 2012, p. 15.



The Acezantez ensemble at the Music Biennial, Zagreb, 1972

created soon afterwards hint at a literary background: one is entitled Morning Poem [*Hajnali költemény*, 1960], and another vocal and electronic composition, The Sky [*Az ég*] is based on a poem by Serbian author Stefan Raičković.⁷²

Ernő Király was also at the right place at the right time to gain further hands-on knowledge of current tendencies in contemporary music. His report *The Force of Destiny and Music in Paris* (*A végzet hatalma és zene Párizsban*) in 1961 reveals that he heard Schönberg, Webern and avantgarde music in Paris, orchestral and concrete music pieces that were performed with film illustration to his great surprise. Maurizio Kagel's provocative composition, then P. Jansen and N. Schaffer's piece *Concerto audio visuel*, which reminded him of talking movies in colour were perhaps his first experiences that opened the possibility of multimedial approach to music for him.⁷³ He considered the photo taken of him and Maurizio Kagel on this occasion important enough to include in his later book. According to Zsolt Sörös, Király also met Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage at the same time; although there is no trace of this in his autobiographical writings, Király's activities and terminology were generally governed by the reflexion (to use his favoured term) and local reinterpretation of the international practice of avantgarde music – from modified instruments to improvisation techniques, from aleatoricism to multiinstrumentalism. All of this is eminently clear in his statement: 'The language of new music requires new acoustic-musical manifestations. Creative artists intending to form their own unique language may adopt one of the following strategies: they use new techniques

of tradition and modernity, enriching avantgarde music with its unique Balkan character. When interpreting Ernő Király's role in the emergence of East-European avantgarde music, István Kovács Tickmayer adopts the classic modernist tone of the myth of genius, fostering the myth of a decontextualized avantgarde and submitting to the classic centre-periphery dichotomy. He writes: 'Far from all centres, in the absence of information and important publications (scores or recordings) he was a pioneer of the New Sound, who gradually constructed an exceptionally original vision of the New Music for himself ...'⁷⁰ In fact, Ernő Király encountered new electroacoustic techniques in Radio Novi Sad as early as the late fifties, and this was also the first time when, as mentioned by the author himself, he heard *Poème Électronique* by Edgar Varése, a piece that had a great impact on him. It is important to note in relation to his collaboration with Katalin Ladik that Király's first electronic compositions

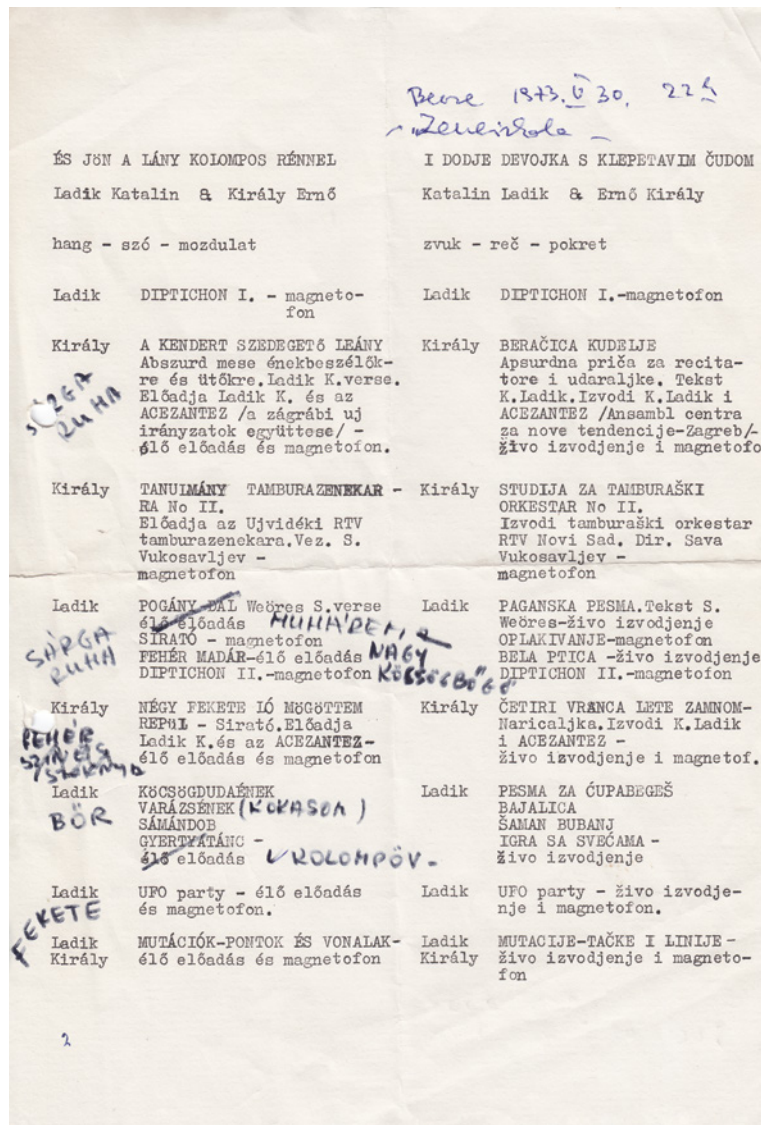
on traditional classical instruments; they form their works out of those possibilities of human vocal production that had not been used consciously, that is musically unexploited elements of speech sounds and inarticulate sound elements. They may use the infinite possibilities of electronic music, tape recorder and noise music, or possibly use new instruments constructed to suit modern musical expression, or they may give folk instruments a major or minor role in classical music.⁷⁴

In Ernő Király's avantgarde music practice – just as in Katalin Ladik's own phonic performances – it was tradition, namely folk music and the musical-linguistic subversion found in folk music, that became the material of contemporary musical compositions. This use of sources, though uncharacteristic of international avantgarde music, is not unprecedented in Hungarian music or visual arts, for that matter. Ernő Király continued Béla Bartók's musical methodology, the contemporary adaptation of musical rituals and archetypal forms and the avantgarde's principle of synthesis, when he relied on the post-Cagean understanding of music and created a both universal and site-specific version rooted in the regional traditions of Eastern Europe. This context functioning for Katalin Ladik, which she supplemented with her own poetic-performative repertoire of tools and instinctive avantgardism, undoubtedly entailed a profound learning process, some grounding in music theory, which enabled the launch of her own vocal music career in 1969. The basis of their joint music activities was Katalin Ladik's poetry, performing abilities and unique vocal range, which sounded and brought to life Ernő Király's scores. The medial diversity of her work far exceeded the constraints of interpreting the musical composition and should not be envisioned within a strict author-performer hierarchy or a relationship conforming to prefeminist discourses. Katalin Ladik made her own interpretation of the musical models she became familiar with and she remade them through the reflected approach of her contextual feminism and the intermediality of poetry, music, and the body.

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⁷⁴ *Reflexiók*, 1998, p. 15.



Katalin Ladik – Ernő Király, *És jön a lány kolompos rénnel*, Program for the Event in Becelj, Manuscript, 1973

⁷¹ István Kovács Tickmayer, 'Király Ernő' (excerpts), in Király Ernő, *Reflexiók*, Forum, Novi Sad, 1998, p. 47.

⁷² Op. cit. p. 48.

⁷³ *Reflexiók*, 1998, p. 26.

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From this vantage point it makes more sense to locate the musical and performative sources of Katalin Ladik's intermedial activities closer to a post-Cagean understanding of music and farther from a notion of conceptual art in the vein of Lucy L. Lippard's theory. This positioning certainly does not exclude from her oeuvre the works that correspond more closely to the notion of the 'conceptual', particularly those produced in the period of her collaboration (1973–1976) with the Bosch+Bosch

group. Yet, the attitude, the simultaneity of the different mediums, the idea of poetry as expanded and interchangeable with other media, the liberation of sound and sound-based visual practices recall the ideas of the New York School and local variant related to it. The multisensoriness of Ladik's works is based on the sensory experience of a mutual, non-hierarchical relationship between sound, text and visuality, which she realized as an avantgarde provocation in an archaic-folkloristic register. Her performative productions, best described as phonic actions, which she staged from the late sixties on, broke with the prior conventions of poetry and transformed the norms of monomedial art with the subversive experimentalism of orality.⁷⁵



Katalin Ladik with her drum, 1970
photo Ana Lazukić

⁷⁵ I'm using the terms 'action' and 'performance' according to Kristine Stiles, who defines the performance as an 'art of actions' in which both performer and viewer are acting subjects who exchange and negotiate meaning 'in the real social condition of

everyday life'. See Kristine Stiles, 'Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions', in Paul Schimmel (ed.), *Out of Actions: Between Performance and The Object 1949–1979*, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1998, pp. 228–9.

THE LIMITS OF WRITTEN POETRY

Katalin Ladik's first volume of poetry, *Ballad of the Silver Bicycle*, was published in 1969. It included a disc supplement with a phonic interpretation of four of the poems (*Lead Pouring*, *Shaman Drum*, *Assassination of Master Stargazer Ibris*, *Folksong*).⁷⁶ She performed one of the texts with her own synthetic music composed on a Hammond organ, an increasingly popular electric instrument in 1960s pop music. Having been published for over ten years by the time, the author marked her break with the conventions of written poetry not only with a language bewildering the literary public, but also the performative presentation. This desire was a somewhat logical consequence of Ladik's work in radio and theatre, which made the 'transcription' of written texts into acting and sounds self-evident for her since her childhood, yet it still seemed an unusual form.⁷⁷ The desire for performing her poetry and for replacing the written text with an oral one was linked to that search for a place that characterized women authors in the late sixties. As János Samu explains, 'despite all its critique and subversion, the Yugoslav neoavantgarde of the 1960s-1970s was unprepared for a behaviour aimed at constructing and displaying the female subject, speaking in the register of that subject in the first place no matter what the consequences may be'.⁷⁸ The birth of the female subject and its claiming of space in the public sphere with all the conflicts that entails were occurring in tandem with the medial expansion of poetry and the loosening of its constraints.

It was a clear sign of the symbolic claiming of space when the authors' community of the *Új Symposion* journal admitted Katalin Ladik's works and one of its earliest issues in 1963 included her prose poem *Androgynous* (*Androgün*) between poems by Ottó Tolnai and István Domonkos. Joining the Symposion circle initially meant that Ladik became part of a neoavantgarde literary phenomenon still in formation, which shared some common traits. The more progressive segment of her reception identified the anti-poems (or 'ugly' poems) created in group poetry improvisations a generational challenge to cultural provincialism following the Baudelairian tradition. On the other hand, one of the most serious attacks on the Symposion generation came from socialist realist literary criticism, which felt it was losing control over the new poetry. The critic claimed 'the poems of István Domonkos, Ottó Tolnai, Katalin Ladik, Kálmán Fehér, and István Brasnyó were extreme manifestations of an arrogantly artificial isolation and futility, which lacked both the definitive and more incidental elements of realism – the foundation and starting point of all other styles – so they include nothing more than an uninhibited and even uncontrolled flow of associations by writers who have distanced themselves from the human battle with reality'.⁷⁹



Katalin Ladik,
Front Cover for the
*Ballad of the Silver
Bicycle*, 1969

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⁷⁶ Katalin Ladik, *Ballada az ezüstbicikliről*, Novi Sad, Forum, 1969. 'The record supplement to the volume includes four poems accompanied by music and a good selection of sound effects performed by the author with an undeniable talent for acting', noted a critic at the time. Imre Szűcs, 'Harisnya csordultig felhőkkel' [Stockings Chock Full of Clouds], *Magyar Szó*, 22 March 1970.

⁷⁷ Katalin Ladik was discovered in 1953 at the age

of eleven in a radio talent show. Later she joined the permanent staff of Radio Novi Sad.

⁷⁸ János Samu, *Határpoétikák. Redukció mint intenzív nyelvhasználat Domonkos István és Ladik Katalin költészetében*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs, Faculty of Arts, Pécs, 2014, p. 81.

⁷⁹ Ferenc Tóth, 'Avantgardizmus vagy valami más?', *7 nap*, 17 January 1964.

The poetry technique of free association that characterized the entire generation did not necessarily assume the functioning of a female subject, just as Katalin Ladik’s poems written around 1965 could be incorporated into an existing literary tradition: her work was associated with George Eliot’s and Ezra Pound’s poetry at the time, though the author suggested that these connections were merely the critic’s associations. The mixed reception of the first volume vividly shows the confusion caused by Katalin Ladik’s increasingly hard-edged associations and the verballity of the increasingly strong female self-reflection behind them. Before Ladik’s utterance, literature in the Hungarian language had never had lines like the following by women authors:

BOTH NIGHTS

both nights
in my full bladder
I distinctly felt the horse’s head

or in the poem alluding to Miklós Erdély, an emblematic artist-figure of the Hungarian neo-avantgarde of the time:

YOU ARE THE FAT GUY

who walks in cherry clothes and scares the windows
washes his feet under the bright sky and breaks the birds
breaks his legs and washes off the birds
cherry pit in his cock you are the fat guy⁸⁰

Due to the implicit eroticism of the poems and the liberation of bodily taboos, Ladik was often charged with gratuitousness for lines such as

If my darling joe gives me a kicking
I give him a grrr and a badada
Come see the cow across the sky riding
I am sad as sad as a flag
The cows go dancing in the skies
sparrow-shit onto a red copy-book flies
come with me joe come with me joe
come with me under the wheels⁸¹

Actually, her deployment of linguistic brutality and taboos in a poetic text, her humour and her use of a vocabulary defying the norms of feminine language had been the privilege of male poets. The originality and boldness of Ladik’s poems and their impressive freedom of association were therefore described by the

critics as a ‘masculine poetry’, a logic that identified the boldness and innovativeness of utterance as a male characteristic: ‘This is a poetry filled with strong emotions, vibrations of feeling and thought, visions and anxieties, a kind of ‘masculine poetry’. What this means is that the poet, having tired of the magic gifts of faith, hope and promises, leaps into a world where survival takes masculine grit and defiance instead of a sensitive female soul’. This courage only applied within a modernist paradigm of poetry, for that matter; its avantgarde deconstruction was not nearly as positive a poetic gesture in the eyes of the critic: ‘Unfortunately, Ladik’s disillusionment and searching led her towards formal experiments, the modernist airs of épater le bourgeois, and challenge for its own sake, even though she must know full well that she also brings on a desire for obscurity, nonsense, and imitation’.⁸²

Katalin Ladik’s poetry and the whole Ladik phenomenon generated a wave of parodies in the Hungarian language reception in the sixties and seventies. Technically, the parodies were based on what János Bányai, a literary critic of *Új Symposion* called ‘surrealist image making’. Bányai suggested that Ladik’s poetry could be best understood by accepting the inverted, the illogical, and gibberish as natural. This poetic method was spontaneous and naive at first, but it became increasingly intentional and conscious, as she developed the montages of incongruous things, unusual pairings of nouns and modifiers. Although he never used the term intermediality, Bányai made an important comment on Ladik’s relation to language that applies to her activities as a whole. ‘Katalin Ladik uses language in a peculiar way. What she is interested in is not the meaning, but the view of the word, the representing visual material of the word. She turns language into image, slipperflower, cherrydress, goldenegg, silverbicycle. She turns language inside out. Language turns topsy-turvy in her poem, and this is why her poem can stand so steadily, being inside out. Yet this topsy-turvy state of her language give her poems a hidden, but all the more dominant quality of humour and irony. This is why her method can be called a witty surrealism’.⁸³

As for the source of this allegedly surrealist free association technique, it will not be found in the tradition of high literature, for Katalin Ladik’s references at the time did not extend to Lajos Kassák’s Dada and Surrealist poems and other classics of avantgarde poetry. She actually names her source in an interview she gave in 1968, where she analyzes her ties to folk poetry in various stages of her career: ‘I felt I was a ‘writer’ the most until 1964, while I was dominated by a host of moods and images. This was followed by a folk influence, which taught me discipline. My husband



Parody Illustration
for the Literary
Magazine *Híd*, 1968

⁸⁰ Both poems are from the volume *Ballad of a Silver Bicycle*. First published: *Híd*, 1968/6., 701–702. Translation by József Aradi and Anna Juhász-Barják. Katalin Ladik was unaware at the time of writing the poem that the ‘fat guy’ Tamás Szentjóby would refer to as Fatso in his letters was Miklós Erdély. Szentjóby’s non-narrative frottaged fluxus letters to

Ladik seemed to imply a fictive rather than actual living person. So the motif of the ‘fat guy’ works as a poetic reference, which follows another, no less poetic textual corpus. Katalin Ladik eventually met Miklós Erdély in May 1968. ⁸¹ Translated from Serbian by Marianne Revah.

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⁸² Imre Szűcs, ‘Harisnya csordultig felhőkkel’, *Magyar Szó*, 22 March 1970.
⁸³ János Bányai, ‘Könyv és kritika’, Forum, 1973, republished: *Képes Ifjúság*, 15 September 1976, p. 25.

Ernő Király performing
on Zitherphone,
mid 1970's



being a composer and ethnomusicologist attracted me to this folk tradition. I came to really like true folk art in music, literature and folklore alike.⁸⁴ It was in 1964, precisely at the time of shift mentioned above, that Katalin Ladik married Ernő Király, who found the model for his own practice in the methods and legacy of the two great twentieth-century ethnomusicologists Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Király had come across Bartók and Kodály's publication of *Twenty Hungarian Folksongs* (*Húsz magyar népdal*) in the 1940s; he was so fascinated by the sound, turns of melody, and the vertical sound of the accompaniment that he began to collect folk music in a number of villages in Vojvodina.⁸⁵ Since Vojvodina is a multiethnic region, he involved Serbo-Croatian, Slovakian, Rusin and Romanian researchers of folk music and used the institutional background of Radio Novi Sad and the Vojvodina Museum to collect approximately 3000 melodies over 35 years. Like his predecessors, his included not only Hungarian, but also Serbian, Croatian and Roma folk music in his tape and film recordings. He recorded various still living folk customs, such as weddings, carnival festivities, nativity plays, and wakes, and he collected folk instruments. His sizeable collection included lots of zithers, tamburas, and pipes. Katalin Ladik occasionally accompanied him on these collection tours and also made notations of the melodies heard. The two artists, who were in direct contact with the already aging Zoltán Kodály, visited the composer together to present the songs documented in their fieldwork. Their recollections reveal that Kodály was quite interested in Hungarian folk music in Yugoslavia, the role and use of the tambura and tambura orchestras in folk music,⁸⁶ and Kodály's encouragement meant a lot to them. 'I met Kodály twice and he gave me advice on how to make notations of texts. I was self-taught, and he was happy with my notes, and I was interested in folk music', says Katalin Ladik.⁸⁷

The music experiences in folklore and the close collaboration with Ernő Király resulted in new archaic and ritualistic poetic layers in Katalin Ladik's poetry. The linguistically concise, metaphoric and conceptually raw folksongs and the prefeminist reading of female roles that go back to centuries were already used by her as a consciously reflected cultural capital. The specific Balkan aspects of the folkloristic sources rearranged Ladik's prior, more individual poetic system both in linguistic-musical and socio-cultural terms and challenged her avantgarde critical attitude. She made a programmatic statement about her attitude to tradition in 1968: 'I now stand by the folk tradition consciously and no longer instinctively. I want to process the Balkan folk tradition and mentality, though not on the same scale as the Hungarian one. I will try to sneak some of that elemental, rough and untamed Balkan

style into Hungarian literature. Starting with the cruellest female tales, Old Slavonic psalms... .. My goal is to approach the depths of the Southern Slavic, especially the Macedonian and Kosovan world in a series of poems.'⁸⁸

Infusing avantgarde practice with tradition was far from self-explanatory in a literary generation like that of *Új Symposion*, which kept a demonstrative distance from tradition. This interest of Ladik's was met with some bewilderment among fellow authors and critics; her fairytale poems and prose poems were felt to lack any origin or parallel. Though the often ominously enigmatic logic of these works could be traced back to children's games, songs, nursery rhymes and wake songs, it radically disrupted the linear narrative of the original texts.⁸⁹ This resistance to tradition diminished when her readers began to realize that Ladik's method did not aim to conserve the folkloristic origins, but rather to renew and extend traditional poetic forms. 'István Domonkos, the author of *Rátka*, was fervently objecting to my "folk" poems until he once heard me read or hum them. For I had composed my poem *Folksong* to a lurking melody and *Shaman Drum* to a strong folk rhythm; as soon as I voiced this clearly, he suddenly grasped better what I was trying to achieve.'⁹⁰ The steps towards sound poetry and the new approaches focusing on the performative processual character of the written poem, which meant the 'end' of poetry, actually multiplied traditional linguistic possibilities. As noted by Giorgio Agamben, 'The body of poetry thus appears to be traversed by a double tension, a tension that has its apex in the corn: one tension that seeks at every opportunity to split sound from sense, and another that, inversely, aims to make sound and sense coincide; one that attempts to distinguish the two wombs with precision, and another that wants to render the two absolutely indistinct'.⁹¹ The poetic tools and folkloristic methods of Ladik's poetry gradually deconstructed the traditional semantic layers of written poetry to create a radically new contemporary performative form through the language of body art and the processual incorporation of musical elements.

⁸⁸ Miklós Hornyik, 'Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában. Kérdések Ladik Katalinhoz', *Képes Ifjúság*, 27 January 1968, p. 19.

⁸⁹ The breakthrough in the reception of Ladik's poetry, the insightful critique of a synthetization of tradition and avantgarde, came from outside literary reception. In his text 'Folk Music in Hungarian Avantgarde Poetry' ('A népzene a magyar avantgarde költészetben') written for the folklore journal *Fabula* in Göttingen, ethnographer Béla Gunda links Ladik's prose poetry, her fairytale poems, to Marc Chagall's associative painting. 'Within this process of exploration, the poems of a Yugoslav woman poet, Katalin Ladik, attest to the ability of avantgarde poetry to integrate experiences from folk poetry and folk art at a high temperature. This is not done through evocation of village spinning circles and the repetition of old rhymes forms, similes and themes, nor through some neofolklorist tricks, but through bold associations of new fact, meanings, and moods often crystallized in the depths of the unconscious. Such bold associations characterize folk poetry – only needs to recall the world of folk tales. Katalin

Ladik and some of her fellow poets do not imitate this world, walking along its paths, but rather discover new worlds by expanding creative perspectives through their experiences.' The text, which was published both in *Új Symposion* and the 1970/10 issue of the *Alföld* journal in Hungary, softened even the previously cautious or disapproving literary critics. Imre Bori writes in his 'A Reader's Notes' (Az olvasó jegyzetei, *Magyar Szó*, 29 April 1972) that even 'serious scholars' appreciate Ladik's avantgarde achievements now, which distinguish folksy [népies] from folk [népi]. 'The point is not changed, of course, by the fact that Katalin Ladik's tales are not only fairytale poems, are also tale condensations or one might say tale kernels, with a sizable detail of a 'true' folktale lurking in them at every point.' Finally, he compared Ladik's poetic role in Hungarian literature to the greatest living modernist poet, Sándor Weöres.

⁹⁰ *Jaj annak, ki erdőt hord magában*, p. 19.

⁹¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The end of the Poem. Studies in Poetics*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1999, p. 23.

⁸⁴ Miklós Hornyik, 'Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában. Kérdések Ladik Katalinhoz', *Képes Ifjúság*, 27 January 1968, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Ernő Király, 'Népzene kutatói munkálkodásom' (1988), in Király Ernő, *Reflexiók*, Forum, Novi Sad, 1998, p. 12.

⁸⁶ Op. cit. 1998, p. 15.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Katalin Ladik, 2016.

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**Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről (Tales of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine),
Symposium Books, Novi Sad, 1978**

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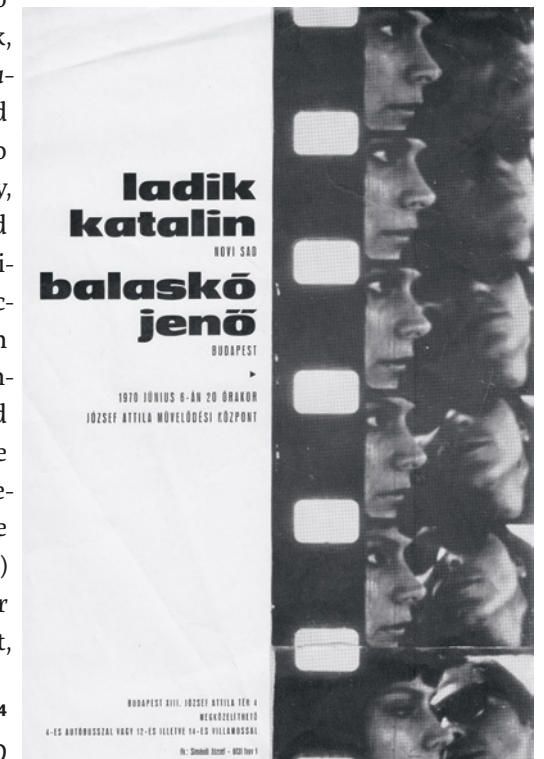
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LANGUAGE THROUGH YOUR BODY

On 16 June 1970 László Lakner, an important figure of Hungarian progressive painting, wrote an ecstatic letter about Katalin Ladik's first performance in Budapest co-organized with Jenő Balaskó, one of the rebels of neoavantgarde poetry.⁹²

'The only thing worth mentioning since Jutta left is a poetry evening in a cultural centre, which you would have liked perhaps too. The guy's poems have only been published in *Symposion* yet, and that's how he knew the other performer of the evening, whom I decided to call the Yoko Ono of the Balkans. She is from Novi Sad. I am head over heels in love with this woman, at first sight, which was only intensified by the fact that she recited – sang, zithered – her final poem naked! Despite her actress airs, subtly mannered diction, accelerations and decelerations, staccatos, artificial crying and laughter (have I listed enough faults yet?) – she can still be found wonderful, she is called KATALIN LADIK, because she is also mother wolf and siren, and she knows what makes people tick, and she came up with being a shaman, with a fur gown *ka-cagány* in a part of the world where no one ever sees a naked woman except in the movies. And this Katalin is beautiful to boot, she is like Walt Disney's Snow White, as black as ebony, hard, and slim, and her myopic grey eyes mesmerize you. And she rattles and yells and gurgles and fusses so gently and terribly subtly, when necessary – that's the problem. Her voice is accompanied by electronic music from a tape recorder, her own voice in a completely different position, the rhythmic rumbling of a sheet of aluminium with a rope tied around it, and the sounds of a shaman drum, and a real goatskin bagpipe hanging from her shoulder. At times she would recite something while leaving the room and when she is already gone, the speakers still carry her voice – and how I enjoyed that voice! (...) Katalin is truly a drug, and it looks like she's always ready for more – she wrapped 500 people around her finger that night, and they were all furiously criticizing her the next day!'⁹³

At that point, the 'Yoko Ono of the Balkans'⁹⁴ was already well-known in Yugoslavia for her production *UFO Party* described above, which destabilized the Budapest underground community, pushing them out of their macho comfort zone by offering the unfamiliar experience of a female position. Neoavantgarde in Hungary was a predominantly masculine cultural space, in which female artists like Dóra Maurer or Ilona Keserü avoided and refused feminist approaches, while strengthening a universalist, gender-neutral approach to art with their abstract geometric painting.⁹⁵ Beside the male characters dominating the neo-avantgarde scene (e.g.: Miklós Erdély, Tamás Szentjóby, or the poet-performer Tibor



Poetry reading by Katalin Ladik and
Jenő Balaskó, Poster, Budapest, 1970

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⁹² Poetry reading of Jenő Balaskó and Katalin Ladik, József Attila Művelődési Otthon, Budapest, 6 June 1970.

⁹³ Letter from László Lakner to Gábor Altorjay, 16 June 1970.

⁹⁴ What makes the name coined by Lakner especially poignant is the fact that Katalin Ladik would receive the Lennon Ono Grand for Peace Award 2016, her most prestigious award after the political transition, from Fluxus artist and activist Yoko Ono.

⁹⁵ Although Maurer claims her interest in feminism

was no more than general intellectual curiosity, the latest research shows that she was not only familiar with the tools of feminist critique in the seventies, but was also the driving force behind certain events exploring female roles. Beata Hock, 'Women Artist's Trajectories and Networks', in Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski (eds.), *Art Beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945–1989)*, CEU Press, Budapest–New York, 2016, p. 117.

Hajas), there was no room for women to articulate their different positions. Those who tried to adopt a feminist critical matrix either left the country for Western Europe or had their memory erased from a male-dominated art historical consciousness before the political transition.⁹⁶ Orsolya Drozdik, whose career began in the mid-seventies, returned from New York and became the first visual artist to openly

and programmatically represent feminist theory in Hungary. Her activities filled a gap in terms of publications and feminist theory and were meant to supply a corrective to art historical discourses and redress the lack of her own artistic reception. Drozdik's substantial assessment of the neoavantgarde scene of the period highlighted the noteworthy fact that the patriarchal rules of the underground milieu were virtually identical with the patriarchal patterns of official culture.⁹⁷

This experience was underscored by Katalin Ladik's appearance in Budapest, which clearly counted as a provocation. She was not unknown to the intellectual circles of as a poet, thanks to reviews in *Új Symposion* and a few mainstream literary journals, but her action in 1970 interrogated certain taboos of the politics of the female body in a direct unmediated way through her personal presence. Although the recuperation of the erotic and the female body was not the sole aim of Ladik's action, which also aspired to a performative extension of poetry, it was this aspect of her action that broke the rules of both the neoavantgarde and the official sphere the most. It was actually her prior encounter with Hungarian actionism that prepared her for taking this on and for constructing the female version of the performative subject. On 1 May 1968, she participated in the happening entitled *UFO*, conceptualized and organized by Tamás Szentjóby, which was the framework of their first meeting after prolonged correspondence. Ladik had

to follow a series of instructions stipulated in the script, starting with when she could occupy her hotel room until having to ride in an unknown car, which transported her to an unknown location. A feminist reading of this action found little room for Ladik's views or free will, as in the course of the entire happening she had to obey the will of a man, whom she had never met, and who determined the occurrences through other men involved, who were equally unknown to Ladik. Once she arrived at the location, Ladik's task in the happening was to free an unidentified human body (Szentjóby) wrapped in silver foil on the Danube bank, which concluded the event.⁹⁸

While Szentjóby used the UFO motif – boosted by the Soviet-American space race – as a metaphor for the avantgarde and the future in those years, Ladik turned the metaphor of the object with unknown origins in reference to herself. She



Tamás Szentjóby, *Hasis, For Katalin Ladik*, Object Poem, 1969 © Grażyna Kulczyk Collection, Warsaw

⁹⁸ Katalin Ladik's recollections on the event: Ladik Katalin, 'A szépség mint UFO' [Beauty like UFO], *Parnasszus* 17/3 (2011. Autumn), 51–54. Her participation in the event served as a reason for their divorce with Ernő Király, as she had to resolve between private and professional life. Katalin Ladik to the author, 2016.

⁹⁶ It was not until 2009, when the exhibition *Agents & Provocateurs* was held in Dunaújváros, that Judit Kele's performance *I am a work of art* (1979), which deconstructed the concepts of the institutions and the artwork, and the related documents were rediscovered.

⁹⁷ Beata Hock, op. cit. p. 115.



Tamás St. Auby – Miklós Erdély: *UFO (tryst)*. Happening / without invited public / - 1st of May 1968, Szentendre, Hungary. Participants: Katalin Ladik, Tamás Szentjóby, Miklós Erdély, Györgyi Szalay, István Dárday, Antal Dúl, Miklós Urbán, Roger Bentichou, topical doormen, ad hoc car mechanics, Joyce (the dog).

emphasized several times that her own performance activities were instigated by her participation in Szentjóby's happening, though the germs of performativity had been present in her poetic practice before. Her early actionism and the reference of the title *UFO Party* acknowledged inspiration by the Hungarian neoavantgarde, while also reflecting on her minority position and the ambivalence to her activities in contemporary Yugoslavia.⁹⁹

Compared to its precursor, *UFO Party* moved towards multimediality, while following the spatio-temporal structure of the happening. The phonic action, which Katalin Ladik retroactively classified as a performance, consisted of performative interpretations of textual and auditive components, driven by a dissatisfaction with the restrictive dimensions of the written text. The action, which was constructed as a critique of two-dimensional poetry, deconstructed the distinction between words and acts as defined by Austin and substituted acts for the meaning of words restricted to classic statements.¹⁰⁰ The type of sentence J. L. Austin's speech act theory calls a performative sentence implies that a speech act involves carrying out an act, in the course of which the relationship between action and text becomes balanced. When Peggy Phelan discussed the concept of the performative act in relation to feminist critique and feminist performance, she suggested that the idea of performativity opened up new possibilities in the interpretation of language and action: 'art can be understood as a specific kind of action and feminism a specific form of language. The promise of feminist art is the performative creation of new realities'.¹⁰¹ In this sense, Katalin Ladik's phonic actions realized the subversive intermediality of

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⁹⁹ 'This title suited me just fine, because I was considered an eccentric, a weirdo, in Yugoslavia at the time; even if they accepted me, I was a peculiar phenomenon. The causes of my eccentricity were unrecognized somehow in Yugoslavia, and I was Hungarian, and on top of that a woman; I thought at the time that UFO captured this multiple deficit and marginality.' Katalin Ladik interviewed by the author, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, (eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962.

¹⁰¹ Peggy Phelan, 'Survey', in Helena Reckitt (ed.), *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon, New York, 2001, p. 20.

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UFO Party, Poster, 1970

poetry, music, and visuality in a feminine rendering of speech act theory. The action was based on the principle of intensification and moved from the speech act of poems that were originally written texts and could be semantically decoded to the abstraction of pure sound poetry that denied meaning, thereby uniting the performativity of the text with the language of body art and the media of archaic and contemporary music.

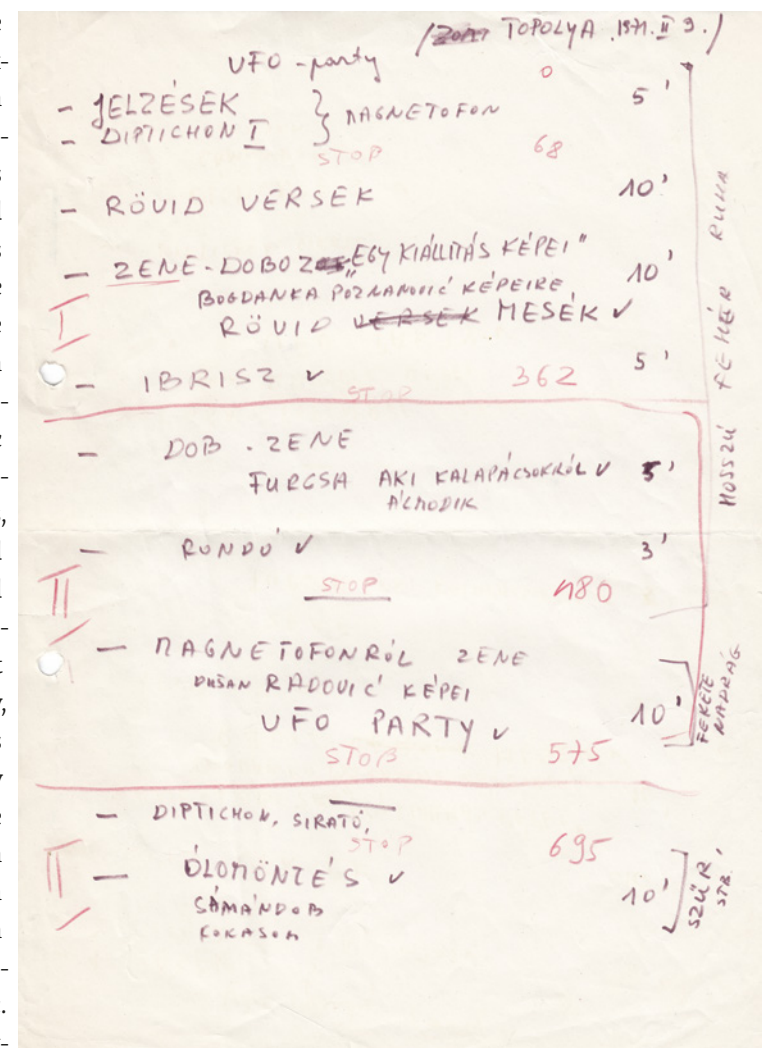
By performing titled and untitled variations of her phonic action several times in the seventies, Katalin Ladik introduced a new medium into the contemporary Yugoslav avantgarde: 'So I decided, since I was also limited as an actress, as I didn't have a scene I could belong to, neither – either Serbian nor Hungarian, so – I realized that I should make my own theater, my own scene with one actor, one performer. So, I used my own texts. This was not exclusively poetry. I also wrote texts which I meant to perform, and I also practiced, trained my voice. What I did was a kind of phonic poetry, and an expressive interpretation of a situation. There was also stage expression achieved through acting, and movement, – especially the movement.'¹⁰²

The action was first shown in Belgrade in March 1970 at the international avantgarde theatre festival (BITEF) held at Atelje 212, then at the experimental film festival in Zagreb (GEFF), and became instantly famous. It opened with a traditional recitation of originally written poems (in Serbian), then made a dual shift to recitative and Hungarian. Regardless of the language of the location, the switch to phonic poetry was always made in the strange, exotic language most suited to abstraction, that is in Hungarian, because Ladik found it the most capable of transmitting the mystical found in musicality and folk sounds. She composed a number of poems around archaic layers, such shaman mythology or conjuring rituals, relying on folk sources; she performed these in the manner of a ritual with improvisations, using original folk instruments like drums, animal skin bagpipes and jugpipes.¹⁰³

Interpreting her own use of instruments, Katalin Ladik has explained that the jugpipe was a rhythm instrument in folk music that was actually a substitute for the bass, so it was also called the jug bass, and the method of playing it had certain erotic aspects which she consciously exploited in the course of the action.¹⁰⁴ The gusle, one of the archaic instruments of Balkan folk music, was originally used by Montenegro Serbs to accompany heroic epic poetry instrumentally. This primitive instrument, which had one or three strings, basically served to provide some kind of musicality without dominating and overpowering the message of the historical texts. The emphasis was on the text of the epic poems and not on musicality, and the attention of the musician was only claimed by the rhythm, particularly the closures of lines and stanzas.¹⁰⁵ The relation of text and music is analogous in Katalin Ladik's performance style, with an emphasis on texts and visuality when she used this ancient instrument to accompany her poems instead of the epic. Ladik's voice and utterances are frequently derived not so much from a unique subjectivity, but rather from fragments

of collective experience in the archaic register, from the memory fragments of female subjects of a folkloristic past, and from solidarity with that community.

The break with traditional instrumentalism occurred in the musical process when Ladik abandoned the sound box of the instrument and only kept the bow, with which she played her own hair, thereby employing a contemporary performative. This once again eroticized detail evokes ancient Hindu musical techniques, which involved fiddling on long hair as musical accompaniment similarly to the tradition of Balkan Serbs. Using a rosin-coated bow, the artist created squeaky, unconventional musical sounds playing on her freshly washed hair, using the calculable impact of the related visual effects. The body involved in the musical performance was also a musical instrument in Ladik's toolbox: 'I intentionally used movement to express not only emotions, but – just like an actual instrument would, my body was



Program for the UFO Party, Manuscript, Bačka Topola, 1971

¹⁰² Sasa Asentić and Ana Vujanović, *Tiger's Leap into the Past. An Interview with Katalin Ladik*, manuscript, 2006.

¹⁰³ Katalin Ladik's attraction to rituals and shamanism parallels the interest of her Cuban contemporary Ana Mendieta in myths, magic and spirituality fostered by her separation from her Latin-American roots. Mendieta, who emigrated into the US, realized this

interest in performances and films in nature. Mendieta's work *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)*, 1972/1997) actually resonates well with Katalin Ladik's photo performance *Poemim*, and both can be found in the Viennese Feminist Avantgarde Collection of the Sammlung Verbund. Gabriele Schor (ed.), *Feminist Avant-garde. Art of the 1970's, The Sammlung Verbund Collection*, Vienna, Prestel, Munich–London–New York, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ 'So this one gives the rhythm. Now this is really erotic, because you have to keep licking and moistening your finger. It's a jug tightly covered with leather, and a reed is stuck and tied firmly in the middle. And in order to get that cracking sound, you need to moistening it and pulling it up and down. Moistening it all the time. I discovered an erotic aspect to this and exploited it.' Katalin Ladik to

the author, 2016. She realized her own instrument after learning the making method from Ernő Király. ¹⁰⁵ 'The old man sits down and recites the epic poem in a kind of recitative in keeping with the prosody. Then he makes a creaking sound or two. Is't not quite music, but it is still an accompaniment with a monotonous creaking.' Katalin Ladik interviewed by the author, 2016.

emitting – to emit sound. I used my body in a way which enabled it to produce sound. (...) Anyhow, the message I was trying to convey is that my body is an instrument. That is to say, my movements expressed what my poetry, and my voice weren't able to.¹⁰⁶ Her frequently used non-traditional instrument previously mentioned in Lakner's letter was a sheet of aluminium with a rope tied around it. She made use of the deep metallic silver sound of the sheet, which she held in front of her body or shook it and strummed it, creating a broad spectrum of sound. Ladik elevated a number of instruments into her phonic actions that had been relegated to folk or primitive music before (e.g. the tube zither besides the ones already mentioned), which was always coupled with a spontaneous objet trouvé aesthetics appealing to openness and incompleteness.

Giving a sense of the archaic and aimed at expanding the field of language, this use of instruments recalls elements of the collage aesthetics of contemporary experimental art. In Liz Kotz's words, 'some of the most innovative poetic experiments turned to experimental music as a model, seeking to redefine poetry as an expanded field of language analogous to composer John Cage's redefinition of music as an expanded field of sound'.¹⁰⁷ Cage composed works which combined instrumental musical sounds and concrete musical sounds made with found objects as early as the 1930s-1940s. Disturbing the traditional musical syntax, raising the value of silence and pauses, and including non-musical sounds began the deconstruction of classic 'western' compositional techniques.¹⁰⁸ The dynamic interrelationship of music and poetry in Katalin Ladik's actions fit into this trend and abolished the prior monomedial isolation of words and sounds in the spirit of Cage's words: 'It is not poetry by virtue of its content or ambiguity, but by reason of allowing musical elements (time, sound) to be introduced into world of words'.¹⁰⁹ The interference of poetry and sound was complemented with contemporary musical effects such as tape recorded and played concrete musical sound collection, including instrumental sounds (Hammond organ), mechanical noises (e.g. rumbling of a tractor) and sinus tones recorded from the radio. The use of this variety of instruments previously classified as primitive music and of non-musical sounds associated Katalin Ladik's phonic performances with the experiments phenomena of the contemporary avantgarde.

The contemporary response to the actions paid little attention to the experimental aspects of the works or their function in avantgarde music; the Ladik phenomenon was approached in terms of poetic personas and morality. The central issue in the reception of Katalin Ladik's work was her use of the body, which entailed more than mere objections to nudity in the Yugoslavia of the time, where nude cover photos on tabloids (which were selling increasingly well) were actually rather well tolerated by the authorities. Katalin Ladik's performances conducted half-naked in bear fur violated conventions and prohibitions that were normative primarily for poets rather than models or actresses. 'It was then that my femininity and this extreme expression hurt my position as a poet in the Hungarian-speaking area. I was vilified and they considered the way that I, as a poet, showed my body, to be a negative thing. I was proclaimed to be something of a witch on some faculties at universities in Hungary and Vojvodina. They thought that for a female poet, who should be almost untouchable, to show her body, – her breasts – was a horrible thing to do for poet-

ry and literature. And besides, there was never a female poet who was an actress at the same time. So, I could show my naked body as an actress at that time, it was already allowed, but not as a poet, which happened in Yugoslavia. Since I declared myself a poet, everyone was shocked when I turned it into naked poet. If I had been a naked actress, it wouldn't have caused a shock, but being a poet, it did. Of course, I wanted to shock, but out of revolt, because they had humiliated me as a woman earlier. So, even without taking my clothes off, I was humiliated.'¹¹⁰

Voices criticizing and trying to regulate women poets' clothing and poetic methods were not entirely absent from the circles of *Új Symposion*, even though they were more democratic than society at large; still, as Jayne Wark has observed, it was such generally more tolerant communities that facilitated the artistic manifestations of women's frustrations. She remarks that responses to two classics of Fluxus history, the actions *Cut piece* (1964) by Yoko Ono and *Vagina Painting* (1965) by Shigeko Kubota, were critical, and fellow Fluxus artists considered them 'too animalistic' and simply hated them. Yet, 'it would seem that, on the one hand, the egalitarian ethos of the Judson and Fluxus communities offered unprecedented opportunities for the participation of women artists, and this in turn led some women to express their frustration with the sexual hierarchies and prejudices still deeply entrenched in the art world', writes Wayne.¹¹¹ It was basically the norm itself that provoked Ladik to deconstruct the mandatory social roles and concepts of the 'comrade' ('drugarica') or 'working woman', acknowledging the existence of female sexuality.¹¹² She considered the eroticised body a medium of communication, which not only took the operation of conventions of 'male gaze' into account, but actually exploited these conventions and reacted to them. When discussing what she called the 'latent feminism' of Jana Želibská – Ladik's contemporary in Czecho-



Magazine Magyar Képes Újság, 1974

¹⁰⁶ *Tiger's Leap into the Past*, 2006.

¹⁰⁷ Liz Kotz, 'The Poetics of Chance and Collage', in Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At. Language in 1960s Art*, The MIT Press Cambridge – London, 2007, p. 99.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ John Cage, 'Preface to *Indeterminacy*' (1959), in Richard Kostelanetz (ed.), *John Cage: Writer*, Limelights Editions, New York, 1993, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ *Tiger's Leap into the Past*, 2006.

¹¹¹ Jayne Wark, *Radical Gestures. Feminism and Performance Art in North America*, McGill – Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kinston – London – Ithaca, 2006, p. 48.

¹¹² This is how she described her position in the *Új Symposion* circle: 'Even though I belonged to the group, some still said that a woman should write in a way that fits a woman, instead of screaming and showing her naked body. Erzs Juhász was very

beautiful, and we both felt we had to cover ourselves and spoil our beauty with clothes, glasses, hair and other things. After a while I gave up this disguise and made my own reading in 1970.' 'Csak radikálisan lehet. Mikola Gyöngyi és Ladányi István beszélgetése Ladik Katalinnal' [Being radical is the only way. Gyöngyi Mikola and István Ladányi in conversation with Katalin Ladik], *Ex-Symposion*, 2010/72, p. 7.

slovakia – Lucia Gregorová Stach has called attention to the fact that when Želibska reflected on the stereotypical visualisation of femininity since the mid-1960s, she was ‘criticizing not only the male dominance but also the female passivity’.¹¹³ Despite any similarity in critical direction, Katalin Ladik’s use of the body was more radical, since her medium was not a representation of the body (a painting), but her own naked body, present in the given time and space, which she placed in public space. This was a first in the history of concepts of the body in Yugoslavia.

One might say, after Michel Foucault, that the return to sexuality and the autonomous control over the female body appeared as a means of individuation. Foucault argues that ‘at base the West is not really denying sexuality (it does not exclude it); but the West introduces to sexuality, it develops, starting with sexuality, an entire complex mechanism in which it is a question of the constitution of individual-

ity, of subjectivity; in brief, of the manner in which we behave and in which we become conscious of ourselves.’¹¹⁴ Sexuality is not simply an unavoidable constitutive component of the individual, but the definitive bond that partakes in the construction of identity. In conformity with the Soviet model, Eastern European society in the sixties, however, denied sexuality and the erotic and relegated them to the invisibility of the private sphere, and collectivism and the masses came to substitute for the individual. Although the Ladik phenomenon and the body art practices that began in the mid-seventies were symptoms of a crisis in the official

Left, the socialist regime rhetorically in-

sisted on the idea of collectivism and a denial of individualization. In the words of Croatian critic Sead Begović, Katalin Ladik’s ‘erotic provocation’ violated the fiction of a homogenous society, in which invisible individuals were subservient to the normative demands of the masses; otherwise, a seemingly aggressive corporeality would cause inevitable social rifts.¹¹⁵

Socialist media interpretations of the Ladik phenomenon relied on the topos of the ‘naked poetess’, a topos that was both narrow and negative in its undertones and problematic because stigmatization over several decades has severely



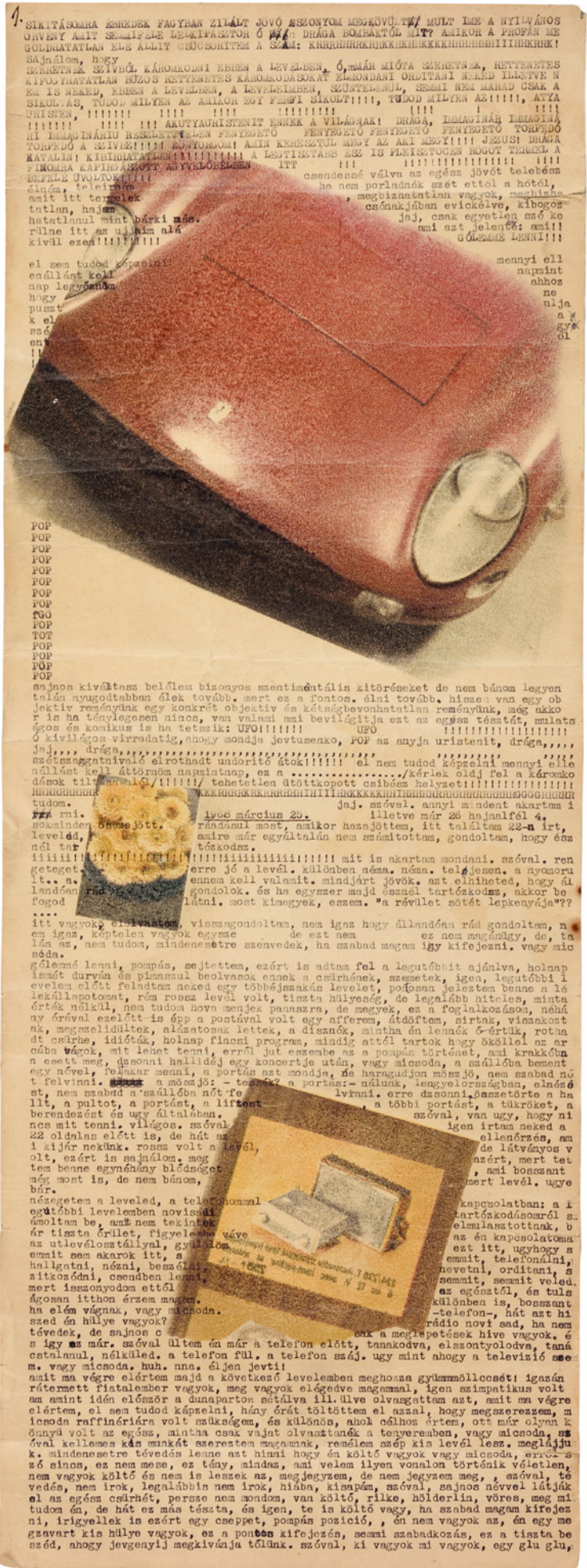
Katalin Ladik and Jenő Balaskó, 1970

¹¹³ Lucia Gregorová Stach, ‘Possibility of Discovery: Jana Želibská in the Art of Sixties’, in Edit András and Hedvig Turai (eds.), *The Long Sixties, Acta Historiae Artium*, Tomus 56, 2015, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, p. 292.

¹¹⁴ Michel Foucault and Jeremy R. Carrette, *Religion and Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1999, p. 129.

¹¹⁵ The author compared Katalin Ladik’s allegedly ‘more aggressive’ and ‘bolder’ method with the Croatian poet and film director Stanka Gjurić. Stanka Gjurić illustrated her poems with the images of her naked body published in the Croatian press. Sead

Begović notes that these techniques, in fact, made the reception of the works more difficult and distorted: ‘Such erotic provocations – which emerged with the well – and widely accepted *body art* in the world – neither helped the literary-critical reception of their poetic efforts particularly nor did they reinforce the readership’s awareness of their work. What this provocation did was considerably quake traditional conceptions exactly by this carnivalisation of the business of writing.’ Sead Begović, ‘Sudden Awareness and Conflict Within Incorporeality’, *Magazin Bridge*, <http://stankagjuric.wixsite.com/gjuricstanka/bridge>, <http://stankagjuric.wixsite.com/gjuricstanka/bridge>



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Tamás Szentjóbý,
Letter to Katalin
Ladik, 1968

damaged the artist’s social status.¹¹⁶ Yet, this topos is most objectionable, because the response to the erotic and the use of the body pushed the discussion of Katalin Ladik’s performances towards an extremely biased discourse, at times bordering on violations of privacy. Meanwhile, subtler interpretations examining Katalin Ladik’s art as a phenomenon of contemporary experimentalism were marginalized. In a conversation in 2006, Zvonko Maković, the former manager of the Tribina Mladih of Novi Sad, noted how different the responses to Ladik were in Hungarian and Croatian speaking territories: ‘Her importance and all of her potentials were more recognised where I come from, in Zagreb. I am thinking of Katalin Ladik, who was a great performance artist, whose vocal capacities were unusual and unique. The yellow press that was rising at the time, presented her work in a wrong way, because they spoke of her performance as of an example of exhibitionism and excess. The vocal capacities of that woman were something that the Zagreb audience, which had been raised on the tradition of the Music Biennale and experimental music, easily recognised and accepted Katalin Ladik as a part of an established system. The shows she had with the experimental music groups in Zagreb show how opening and connectedness is necessary for each serious step forward, especially the one that deals with experimenting and conquering new strategies.’¹¹⁷

The Serbo-Croatian audience and press were far more open to Ladik’s experimentalism than their Hungarian counterparts, no matter which side of the border the latter were on. Media conservatism, however, was not the only significant difference in the reception of the same events in Yugoslavia and Hungary. The performance so vividly described by László Lakner offers a case study for a close reading of reactions by the Sovietized cultural policy bureaucracy of Hungary, in which participants hypocritically attempted to meet ideological expectations with distortions. The scandal broke with an article in June 1970, which first declared to the general public that happening was a banned genre.¹¹⁸ Happening had, in fact, been criminalized in Hungary since 1966, and secret service methods and police harassment had been employed to prevent its spread. Consequently, the title *Happening* meant more than a genre in this article: it signalled the criminalizing and manipulative tone

used by the regime and its representatives afraid of gatherings of dissident groups. The author of the article used a disparaging, repulsively misogynistic language capable of inciting and manipulating the readers, to slander Katalin Ladik and degraded her performance to undressing for money.¹¹⁹ Most of the readers understood the allusion to striptease and in turn voiced their objections; the Ministry of Culture began an inquiry, which resulted in a reprimand issued to the director of the cultural centre and the program organizer. The surviving documentation of the event includes a detail that borders on the comic: the director tried to conform to the regime’s cultural preferences with the fiction of Ladik’s ‘poem about nuclear war’, infusing the event with a non-existent relevance to current affairs. He proceeded to make the prudish defence that the artist who wore bearskin cut on both sides was not completely naked, as she was ‘wearing a T-shirt’ and ‘since she was lit from above, her look was acceptable, if a bit risqué’.¹²⁰ However dodgily, the director actually defended Balaskó and Ladik, justifying his decision with the remarkably great interest, attendance by respected intellectuals honoured with state prizes, and the innovative content and form of the evening indicated in advances.¹²¹

Since Katalin Ladik was a foreign national, she suffered no consequences, and her fellow poet, Jenő Balaskó, who had been imprisoned for several years for his participation in the 1956 revolution, was already under surveillance anyway. In October 1970 Balaskó compiled and commented on the documents related to the event, including the article ‘Once again, happening’ with which the scandal erupted and after which ‘the case was closed in a panic’. Balaskó states that the press coverage of Katalin Ladik was ‘defamatory, de jure’, yet no other views were allowed to be published in the paper besides the slanderous ones.¹²² The exception was a cautious piece by poet László Nagy, who was both accepted by the regime and was friends with Balaskó and Ladik, that appeared in *Élet és Irodalom*, the top literary publication of official cultural life.¹²³ Yet,



UFO Party, Poster, Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, 1969

116 The negative campaign in the press began with the photos published in the Serbian magazine *Start* on 28 January 1970. The Hungarian language press in Novi Sad reacted with annoyance and picked up the topos of the ‘naked poetess’. Someone ironically commented in the daily *Magyar Szó* that the poet got what she wanted: people were paying attention to her, and Hungarian poetry in Yugoslavia finally broke into the national poetry market. In the 13 February 1970 issue of *Magyar Szó*, a male poet anonymously wrote about bare metric feet in a similar tone, and the piece was reprinted in the national daily *Magyar Nemzet* in Hungary (‘Meztelen verslábak’, 2 April 1970.). The writer of the article in *Magyar Szó*, who admittedly had not attended the performance in person, intensified the hostility of tone on 15 March 1970. His account claimed that the Belgrade press denounced the Novi Sad audience for its scandalous behaviour, expecting Katalin Ladik to undress, and suggesting the poet

was expecting an offer of a higher fee for nudity. The paper published an opinion piece entitled ‘Paródia helyett. Nudo-party költőéknél’ (In place of parody. Nudo-party at the poets’) three days later, on 18 March 1970. This piece mocked not only the nudity but especially the tone and phonic elements of Ladik’s poems. The cliché of the ‘naked poetess’ would continue to spread with various connotations in the regional (Italian, Czechoslovakian) papers, which published articles on and interviews with Katalin Ladik. **117** ‘Omitted History’, Transcript of Debate between Želimir Žilnik, Miško Šuvaković, Latinka Perović, Zvonko Maković, Bálint Szombathy, and Lazar Stojanović, in *kuda.org* (ed.), *Omitted History*, Revolver – Archiv für Aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, p. 66. **118** G. Szabó László, ‘Happening’, *Magyar Hírlap*, 11 June 1970.

119 ‘She sits down and dozes silently for minutes, while a tape recorder fills the room with the sounds of a prehistoric female beast’s lovemaking (or birthing?). (...) Her only “kit”: *an animal skin of some kind hanging on her shoulder*, which ends in a Scottish bagpipe near her belly. Eve in her birthday suit — and set to music? And the costume covers nothing to say the least. It couldn’t, in fact, because a lengthy poem follows, accompanied by ritual movements and writhing, and the accessory is flapping back and forth. What one can make out of this peculiarly complex scene is that someone is in labour, about to give birth. She also shows how she is going to give birth. And we are reassured the whole time that breastfeeding won’t be a problem....’. Ibid.

120 A XIII. kerületi Tanács Népművelési Osztályának feljegyzése az MSZMP XIII. kerületi Bizottsága számára [Memorandum from the Department of Public Education in the 13th District Council to the 13th District Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party], 1970. június 14. **121** Simándi József, a József Attila Művelődési ház igazgatója Molnár János miniszterhelyettesnek [József Simándi, Director of the Attila József Cultural Centre to Deputy Minister János Molnár], 11 June 1970. **122** Copies of the documents compiled by Balaskó can be found in Katalin Ladik’s archive. **123** Nagy László, ‘Happening’, *Élet és Irodalom*, 20 June 1970, XIV/25.

the statement of the representative of the neoavantgarde, which could have moved the discussion towards more substantive issues, could not be published on this occasion either. A reader's letter by László Lakner, in which he tried to support Ladik and Balaskó's experimental poetry with contemporary legitimation, remained unpublished: 'we had to acknowledge that some poets were now using the methods customary in recent innovations in theatre and film, which can provoke a visceral, direct effect in the audience. And they were doing that with the responsibility of artists, which is the point', he wrote, and went on to cite classic and contemporary examples for the motif of female nudity in visual culture: '... the naked body has been used to serve art for thousands of years, from drawings on Greek vases to Yoko Ono, and art is entitled to use this motif in the way demanded by its sovereign message'.¹²⁴ In his reader's letter *Unidentifiable Flying Smile*, Miklós Erdély writes of 'journalistic scheming', 'deception', and a pejorative use of the concept of happening, and harshly disproved false claims about Ladik's performance.¹²⁵ The four-page text was not published by the paper, however, and Tamás Szentjóbby's reader's letter shared the same fate. The title of the latter (*Excuse Comment*) indicated that the author primarily aimed at a theoretical clarification of the concept of happening, which would have been a first in the history of the Hungarian press.¹²⁶

The press scandal of 1970 was the foundation for decades of negative response to Katalin Ladik's activity in Hungary, and some recent recollections still refer to media manipulations that can be traced back to this case.¹²⁷ The cliché of 'the naked poetess' did not merely spread, but also emerged as an audience expectation, which favoured the visual element and pressured the artist. This was when Katalin Ladik ended the corporeal practice of the *UFO Party* type phonic actions and introduced – as a reflection on her reception and a paraphrase of her prior activities – her critical performance *Blackshave Poem* (1978). Katalin Ladik namely performed an anti-striptease of sorts in this performance, which occasionally began with sequences of the photo performance *Poemim* (1978), that consist of distortions of the artist's face by a glass pane. She first appeared in the action wearing a traditional long dress or black pants and top, and when she took off the dress, she was wearing lace lingerie over her black attire. Though the motif of undressing was still present, it turned into parody in Ladik's critical revision, a parody of expectations and the conventional

¹²⁴ Letter of László Lakner to the editors of the daily *Magyar Hírlap*, 16 June 1970.

¹²⁵ 'László G. Szabó's atrocious remark that "Katalin Ladik recites her poetry naked for the right fee" is too disgusting even to refute. It must be stated that Katalin Ladik undressed despite the (evidently) not unfounded worries of the managers of the Attila József cultural centre, and not for a fee, but solely for her own poems, and not in the closed rooms of omnipotent editors, but in public, making herself vulnerable to the maliciousness of critical prudishness, which is as old as art criticism.' Miklós Erdély, *Azonosíthatatlan repülő mosoly* [Unidentifiable Flying Smile], manuscript, July 1970.

¹²⁶ 'Happening must be thought of as a ceaselessly renewed activity aimed at the pure creation of the story of life and the experimental development of the primordial human being. Happening is a model, an example

gesturing towards the real, original form of life worthy of human beings. Its subject is the active person, its means are the active person, and its goal is the active person in the community. It is about acts and not poems and imitations. So one cannot even entertain the thought that the Balaskó-Ladik evening might have been a happening.' Tamás Szentjóbby, *Ürügy glossza* [Excuse Comment], manuscript, July 1970.

¹²⁷ 'I chose Kati after seeing her in Vitray's programme, in a programme that was not her milieu, and she performed a piece there. The audience was laughing at her, and it came across as some crude spectacle, but it really affected me, I don't know why.' Gyöngyi Mikola, in 'Csak radikálisan lehet', 2010/72, p. 7. In Katalin Ladik's recollection of the evening, the television reporter consciously manipulated the audience to mock her and phonic poetry. Ibid.



Screaming Hole
Performance in
Magazine Studio,
1979

operation of the male gaze. She commented that whereas undressing had been an erotic motif in the earlier period, the grotesque and humor became more emphatic in the anti-striptease of *Blackshave Poem*, a gibe, saying 'this one's for you, and for me'.¹²⁸ The performance amplified the aspiration to the grotesque through the motif of shaving, in which the artist referred to an abolishment of gender roles by shaving her foam-covered face and arms. Androgyny was crucial for Ladik as a metaphor of an ungendered ideal state and appeared as a projection of her contextual feminism in several works in the 1970s-80s.

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¹²⁸ Katalin Ladik interviewed by the author, 2016.

Blackshave Poem was performed several times before an audience and occasionally as a private performance without an audience. When Ladik shaves her face with an exceedingly provocative look in one of these private versions realised in Novi Sad, her presence raises the question of ‘radical narcissism’ as defined by Amelia Jones.¹²⁹ Jones uses the term in reference to Hannah Wilke, a likeminded contemporary of Ladik’s, who was fully aware of her physical beauty and practised posing – ‘the rhetoric of the pose’ – as a reflection on voyeuristic looking. ‘...Wilke unveils her body/self among her works to instantiate herself as both their ‘subject’ and a parodic imitation of woman as conventional ‘object’ of artistic practice (the female nude). In doing so, she collapses the incompatibility between the functions male/artist/subject and female/object.’¹³⁰ This is what happens in Hannah Wilke’s performance *Hannah Wilke Super T-Art* in 1974, in which the artist poses in the dual roles of Christ and Venus, intimating that her status accords her the roles of both victim and pleasurer. Jayne Wark calls attention to the feminist worry (by many, including Lucy R. Lippard) ‘whether viewers were able to make the distinction in her work between, in Lacan’s terms, images and symbols for the woman and images and symbols of the woman’.¹³¹ This problem applies no less to Katalin Ladik, as is evident in the response to her works and the frequently ambivalent reactions described above. Besides the sexism and prefeminism of her environment, this ambivalence is also due to the hybridity of Ladik’s attitude; it is rooted in what has been described, in reference to Lippard Wilke, as ‘her own confusion of her roles as beautiful woman and artist, as flirt and feminist’.¹³²

Katalin Ladik radicalized the constellation of motifs in *Blackshave Poem* by amplifying voyeurism in her performance *Screaming Hole* in 1979. The site of the performance presented at the Tribina Mladih of Novi Sad was a wooden structure covered with posters; within this environment, the artist surrounded herself with various objects typically identified with ‘feminine’ activities. This is where she presented the anti-striptease and shaving familiar from *Blackshave Poem*, which viewers could follow by peeping through holes in the torn paper. This performance, which arguably concludes this period in Ladik’s performative practice, is genealogically related to traumas the artist suffered in connection with political changes in Yugoslavia. 1977 was the year of a political turn, the ‘re-hardening’ and political purges in Yugoslavia, when the regime retroactively punished earlier subversive activities. The reprisals suffered by Katalin Ladik were related to the earlier banning of the journal *Új Symposion* and the removal of its editor, Ottó Tolnai in 1971, which was triggered by the publication of a piece criticizing Tito’s cult of personality. The text written by the Serbian poet and performance artist Miroslav Mandić was translated into Hungarian by Katalin Ladik; as a consequence, she was charged with subversive activities and indecency (the latter in connection with her performance UFO Party shown at Atelje 212) in Yugoslavia in 1977. ‘It was these trivial personal matters, the group of fifteen-twenty people around me, that provoked these screams in me’, Katalin Ladik commented.¹³³ *Screaming Hole* articulated the psychic duality of isolation and self-revelation as a reaction by a female subject disempowered by the given historical situation, while reflecting on the politicization of private life.

129 Amelia Jones, ‘The Rhetoric of the Pose: Hannah Wilke’, in Amelia Jones, *Body Art. Performing the Subject*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London, 1998, pp. 151–196.

130 Op. cit. p. 155.

131 Jayne Wark, op. cit. p. 185.

132 Lucy R. Lippard, ‘The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth. European and American Women’s Body Art’, in Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art*, Dutton, New York, 1976, p. 126.

133 *Csak radikálisán lehet*, 2010/72, p. 5.



Performance during the poetry reading of Katalin Ladik and Jenő Balaskó, Budapest, 1970

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Performance, Zagreb, 1970

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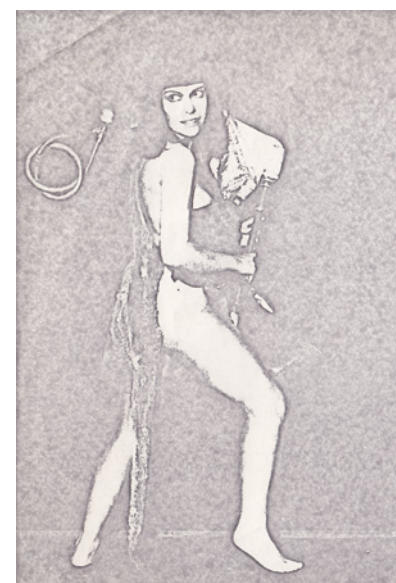
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UFO Party, Novi Sad, 1970
UFO Party, 1970

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 YOUR BODY**

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PÉCSI MŰHELY H-7621 PÉCS
János Pannónius u. 11.
Alagator
HUNGARY



LADIK KATALIN
BOSCH+BOSCH

Situations, 1970

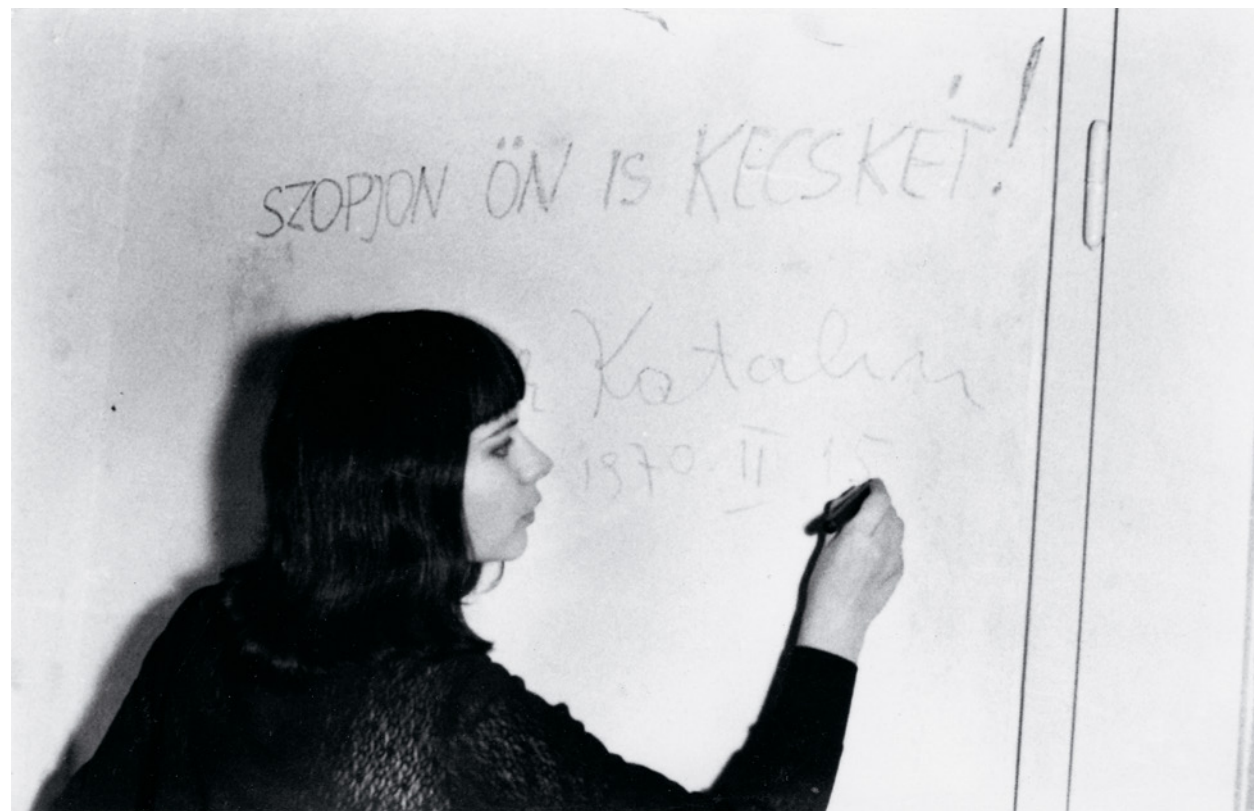
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Performance, Temerin, 1970

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Performance, 1972

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Folksong, Stari Bečej, 1973

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Blackshave Poem, Novi Sad, 1978



Poemim, 1978/2016

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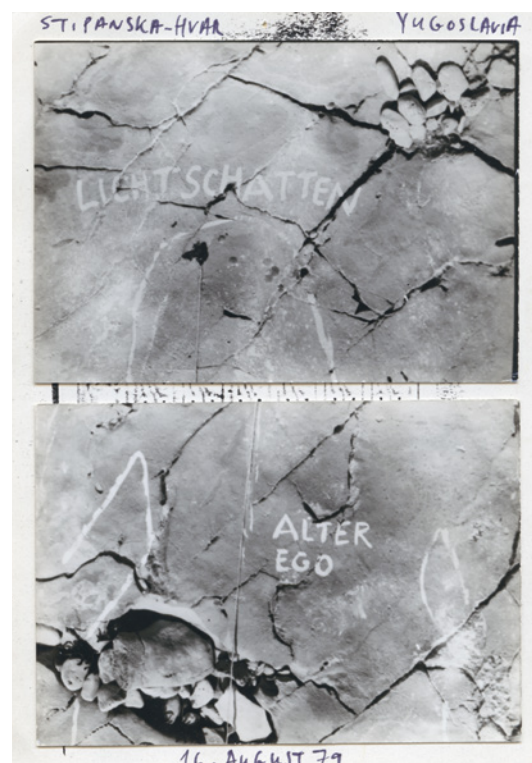


Blackshave Poem,
Young Artist's Club, Budapest, 1979

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EGO – ALTER EGO 4., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979



Pseudosculptura, 1982
Tour de merde, Budapest, 1979



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Screaming Hole, Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, 1979



SOUND AND VISUAL EXPERIMENTS

Bálint Szombathy, visual artist and one of the theorists of the contemporary avantgarde, noted in 1973 that 'previously ignored intermedial phenomena', following trends of the international scene, were now present in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia as well.¹³⁴ The observation was based on Katalin Ladik and Ernő Király's musical-performative collaboration, in which Ladik had acted as a vocalist, phonic poet, and performer since the late sixties. Ladik's musical activities were governed by the principle of hybridity in auditive and visual methods, creating a balance between visual works, collages, and image poems treated as musical scores. Thanks to their autonomous graphic value, the scores resulting from a non-traditional notation of compositions take on visual functions in addition to conveying the instructions of the author of the phonic works. The works presented at various exhibitions were musically interpreted by Katalin Ladik in situ, with a microphone in her hand. It was the improvisation techniques that linked the auditive and visual spheres in her performance practice; these extended to exploring the limits of both language and body language. Such a voco-visual musical improvisation was made possible by the broad spectrum of Ladik's voice technique, the rich repertoire of glides and held notes, guttural sounds and screams, animal sounds and mechanical noise effects.

Yugoslav avantgarde music may have discovered Katalin Ladik at the 1969 Music Tribune in Opatija, an important forum of contemporary music, where she sang Ernő Király's experimental piece *Reflections* as a mezzosoprano. The composer accompanied her on the guitar and tambourine. The novelty of the piece was the musical process Ernő Király defined as musical reflection, which heightened the importance of both performer and listener: 'This consists of scraps and fragments of speech, song and instrumental music, which the sound of some speech, song or instrumental music inspires in the performer during the performance of the work and in the listener while listening to the piece.'¹³⁵ The focus on perception in the experimental work determined the later phases of the collaboration between Ladik and Király, in which her poems were the basis of musical adaptations and were presented to the audience in her performative interpretation. When considering Ladik's performative activities, Bálint Szombathy emphasized the significance and institutional shift of the technical and aesthetic expansion of musical devices in 1975, implying a more open musicality appealing more to the listeners' side and opening new public spaces: 'As the visual work left the galleries and dark museums, so did Ladik's independent musical-poetic events and those made in collaboration with composer Ernő Király leave the concert halls,' he wrote.¹³⁶ The creation of phonic works called for new topics and techniques, in which new devices were crucial, as 'the new methods of sound recording, radio, television,



Katalin Ladik, Live Performance of *Phonopoetica*, Belgrade, 1975

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¹³⁴ Bálint Szombathy, 'Muzslya 73', *Magyar Szó*, 20 July 1973.

¹³⁵ Ernő Király, 'Reflexió', 1978, in *Reflexiók*, 1998, p. 41.

¹³⁶ Bálint Szombathy, 'A Bosch+Bosch öt éve' [Five Years of Bosch+Bosch], *Híd*, 1975/1., p. 144.

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Ernő Király, *Dots and Lines*, score, 1972. With remarks by Katalin Ladik.

ating a thunderous sound by shaking and banging on a sheet of metal. The musical components familiar from Ladik's earlier phonic performances were now put in a broader orchestral context, as she now performed with Acezantez, the avantgarde music ensemble of Zagreb renowned both in Yugoslavia and abroad. From the foundation of the orchestra in 1970, the co-authored compositions of Ernő Király and Katalin Ladik were an important part of their repertoire, and Ladik's performance techniques strengthened the multimedial profile of the ensemble.

Composer and pianist Dubravko Detoni, the artistic director of Acezantez, defined the group as a musical and religious community, which 'is at the same time a group of visual mobiles, a music-and-drama theater and pantomime, a light spectacle, and much more, not simply music alone.'¹³⁸ Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman considers the Cagean roots especially crucial for the first seven years of the ensemble, when the members' approach to musical communication was informed by 'the Cag-

and synthesizing multipl[ie]d the opportunities for research and experimentation.' This is how 'musical effects, sounds, facial expressions' became components of the creative process and 'the countless pieces of concrete, visual and phonic poetry with their verbo-voco-visual properties turned into a textual formula of the phonic material.'¹³⁷

Ernő Király's experimental musical compositions combined the influences of folk music and its use of instruments with John Cage's technique of prepared instruments and a contemporary music aesthetic. The text score of his work *Dots and Lines* (1972) includes detailed instructions for the performer Katalin Ladik, which reveal an increasing distance from traditional folk instrumentalism. The performer rubbed the strings lengthwise with a pick or a coin, set the instrument across her knees and slapped the thinner strings with a metal rod, ripped sheets of newspaper into pieces, was squeaking with a cornstalk fiddle usually known as a toy, sounded a Hungarian peasant zither and Turkish bells, and emitted muffled sounds while covering her mouth with her palm. Further instructions in the score include snapping a big pair of scissors, whistling with or without a whistle to create panic, using a rattle, and gener-

ean universality of sound: the step, the object, the grimace are sound.'¹³⁹ Katalin Ladik integrated the mediums of her intermedial practice, the elements of body language, pantomime movement, facial expressions and sound into her collaborations with Acezantez. According to the instructions of Detoni's multimedia stage fantasy *La voix du silence* (1972), pauses and silence separated the phases of Ladik's increasingly extreme movements:

- Darkness.** In the center of the stage Katalin lies buried, hidden from the eyes of the audience... In a faint glimmer, the ensemble slowly approaches the piano from all sides. They begin to play with the instrument and around it. The play becomes more and more frenzied, faster, but not a single sound is produced. At the climax of playing, at a signal from a hand everything begins to slow down. ... At the end, a long silence. Listening to one's own thoughts. Listening to one's own nervous system by means of electronics.
- Monos III.*** in an extremely slow tempo. Extremely long pauses. Unusual sounds, very much like eletronically filtered sounds. Almost nothing is played. A gesture or voice can be used instead of a musical phrase. Like music under water.
- At the signal of a hammer Katalin awakes. She gets up slowly, in an impressive way. Her appearance and movements should produce a small shock. A pantomime starts, but it is much more varied in contrasts.... It becomes a monologue of gestures (a story). ... Katalin becomes more and more nervous, her hysterical gestures become mechanical. ... At the climax (physical and psychological), noises from a tape are heard. ... The sounds stimulate the ensemble and it reacts to each of them. Graphics IV. has thus already started."

Katalin Ladik has shaped the history of Acezantez both as a performer and an author. Ernő Király set a number of Ladik's prose poems to music, which she performed with the ensemble. The absurd tale of one of these works, *The Hemp Harvesting Girl* (1971), includes folkloristic elements about a girl who promised to bake a certain amount of bread for the king, but could not fulfil her promise. So the

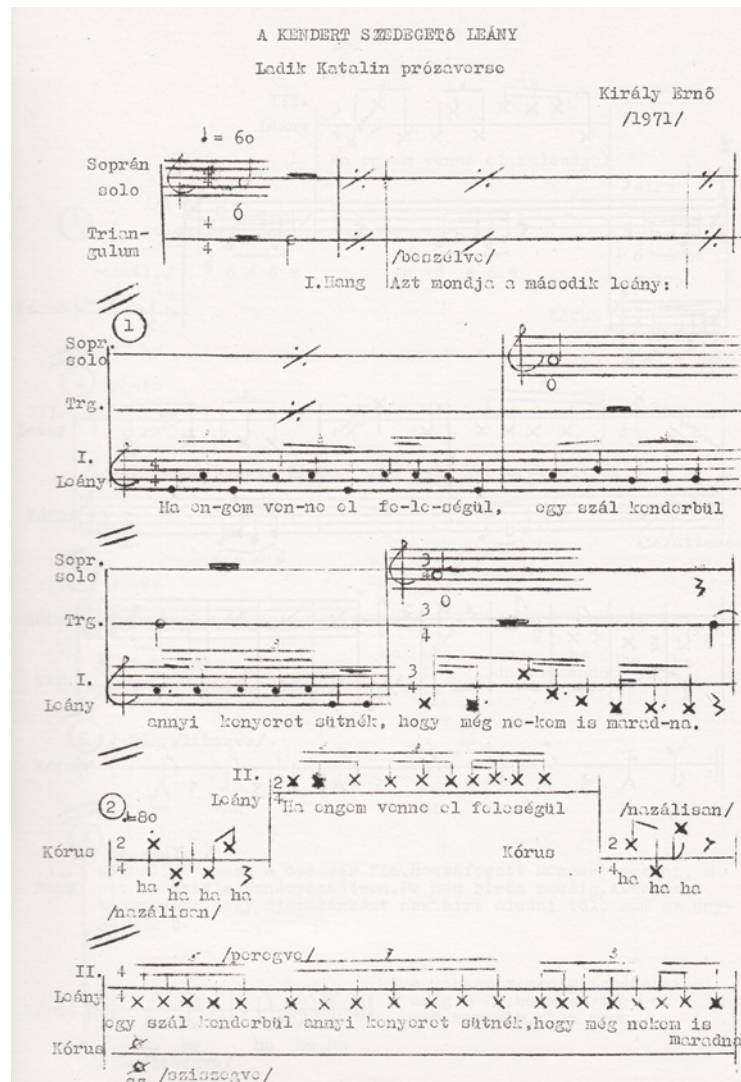
Concert Program of the Acezantez, with the participation of Katalin Ladik, Zagreb, 1972

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Quoted by Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, 'Problems and Paradoxes of Yugoslav Avant-garde Music (Outlines for a Reinterpretation)', in *Impossible His-*

tories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991, The MIT Press, Cambridge–London, 2003, p. 415.

SOUND AND VISUAL EXPERIMENTS



Ernő Király, Score for Katalin Ladik's Poem *The Hemp Harvesting Girl*, 1971

king had her and her mother chopped to pieces and tied to a horse's tail. In the performance only a few scattered horrifying words alluded to the plot of the original more narrative text,¹⁴⁰ but Katalin Ladik attempted to evoke the absurd mood of the tale by reciting only the consonants. The score gave her a lot of latitude, because she could intone the sounds at any pitch desired, and she could modify both melodies and rhythm. She was not meant to present the text and melody unchanged, but rather to convey to the audience a subjective expression matched to the word fragments and the chosen letters and sounds. For Ladik (and other performers potentially appearing in the play), the openness of free improvisation extended to the use of instruments and various modes of making sounds (folk instruments, sticks, and tearing paper).

Ernő Király's composition *Four Black Horses Are Flying Behind Me* for vocal and chamber orchestra, which was also based on a prose poem by Katalin Ladik, was commissioned by the Acezantez ensemble in 1972. Representing a primordial poetic form, the lament within rituals of grief, the work is based on a formally flexible linear structure and loosely follows the message of the original poem.

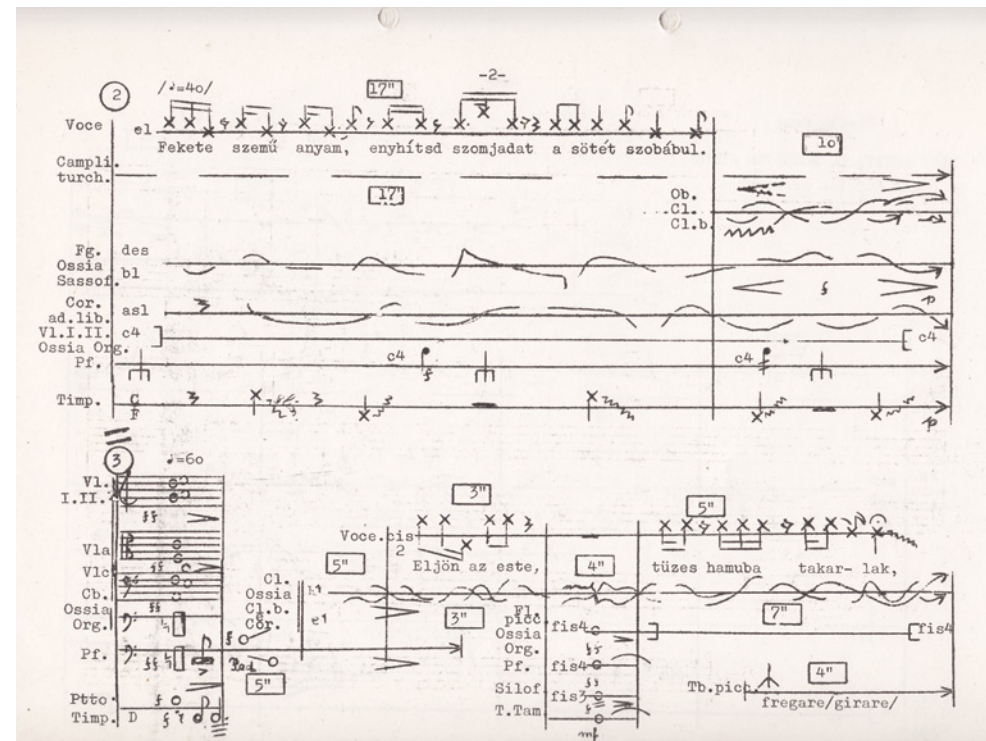
FOUR BLACK HORSES ARE FLYING BEHIND ME

My black-eyed mother, allay your thirst from the dark room. Night will come, I will wrap you up in burning ash, mure up your window, seat you in a dummy window. A white dove flies, there is no door and no window on it. I count my fingers seven times, clap my wings. A warm wind blows my back, look backwards, my mother, what can you see? 'Four black horses, they are so thin that I am cold of them.' Mother, cut your arms, put them into my mouth, I want to fly to you. Eyes, mouth, nose, ears, where are you all? Here we are in the hot ash. A white dove flies, it takes away the door, window for ever.

This is what I sang in a dark room at the death of my mother.¹⁴¹

140 Katalin Ladik, *Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről* [Tales of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine], Symposion Books 53, Novi Sad, 1978, p. 91. The version of the poem aimed at a fragmentary character goes like this: *Hemp Harvesting Girl* "Only don't betray me, say you saw it in a dream!" ... / both of them would break away piece by piece. ... / This was their punishment. / "Well, this is a lovely

story. / Reminds me of the Twelve Thieves, / only twice told." Translated from Hungarian by Emőke B. Rácz. **141** Original publication: Katalin Ladik, *Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről*, Symposion Books 53, Novi Sad, 1978, p. 49. Translated from Hungarian by Lóránt Bencze.



Ernő Király, Score for the *Four Black Horses are Flying behind Me*, 1972

Király describes the piece as being woven out of modal, dodecaphonic and untempered sequences, supplemented by folklore elements and folk instruments. The performers, especially the vocal soloist, have every opportunity for subjective music making, but they also have specific tasks.¹⁴² The symbol of the mirror in the play represents folk superstitions related to the soul of the dead and to mirrors. The work was very well received by the audience and the critics alike, as were concerts by Acezantez in general, which covered all contemporary music festivals in Yugoslavia. They also had numerous performances abroad in the 1970s, including the concert series of contemporary music at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. The Hungarian language press also covered the midnight concert at the 9th Music Tribune at Opatija as a huge success: 'This ensemble with no tuxedos and liberated from the conductor's baton, working amidst microphones, tape recorders and instruments, created an unusually novel musical atmosphere. Their individual contributions yielded a collective realization of the compositions on the programme. Electronic sound complexes, concrete sounds, noises, singing, speech, light and shadow, and some latent elements of folklore amalgamated in a particular form. This concert inspired a lively dialogue both in professional circles and in the audience.'¹⁴³

The phases of different linguistic-musical components cannot be distinguished in Katalin Ladik's practice, and the same goes for a traditional separation of specific media, as the abandonment of paper and the traditional musical score became complete in phonic poetry. 'Ladik's creative use of vocality goes so far that it frequently makes the textual-linguistic bases of her vocal works (...) disappear, or at least bring them to the very borderline of perception. Hence, it is difficult to say up to which point her sound poetry may be considered to be poetry, and when it

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142 Ernő Király, *Négy fekete ló mögöttem repül* [Four Black Horses Are Flying Behind Me], score, in Concerts at the 9th Yugoslav Music Tribune], *Magyar Szó*, 22 November 1972. manuscript, 1972. **143** 'Vajdasági művészek a IX. jugoszláv zenei tribün hangversenyein Opatijában' [Vojvodina Artists



Phonopoetica,
record, 1976

crosses the line toward the realm of music', comments poet and literary historian Endre Székárosi.¹⁴⁴ The vinyl record *Phonopoetica* that appeared in 1976 and brought Katalin Ladik's international breakthrough, was something like a summary of her prior work in phonic poetry. The record includes musical interpretations of poems by experimental poets of her own generation (Gábor Tóth, Bálint Szombathy and Franci Zagoričnik). She interpreted the original visual poems by treating the phonemes and graphic elements of the poems as a notation for her musical intonation of the selected consonants. Chance played a crucial role not only in articulation but also in creating the musical background. Ladik recorded the material of *Phonopoetica* during the breaks of a recording session in a jazz studio in Belgrade, where she used the material on discarded tapes as a background for her vocal performance. In the course of the vocal process, a new semantic layer was added to the prior structure of the image poems, which eliminated the tradi-

tional perceptions evoked by the words and generated relatively small auditive units of communication. Sound occasionally broke forth in an affective scream. Bálint Szombathy suggests in his study evaluating the record in 1976 that the elementary character of the scream ties Ladik's work to prehistoric elements and the universality of nature: 'When a scream, an "ó" or "é" dominates, there is less room for text and continuous speech. Intensive sound destroys harmony and structures linguistic elements into global forms; the prolongation of creating rhythm patterns evokes the eternal, ceaseless rhythm patterns of nature.'¹⁴⁵

Phonopoetica was an outstanding achievement of contemporary phonic poetry, and its international context can be traced back to the early 20th century, the experimental poetry of Dada and Surrealism. Dick Higgins actually traces the precursors as far back as the lyrical folk music of Navajos and Mongolians and also discovers the tradition of phonic poetry in African-American work songs.¹⁴⁶ Higgins's taxonomy of phonic poetry includes three models: a. folk music, b. onomatopoeic and c. mimetic and nonsense. The mimetic model refers to the semantically enigmatic texts of written poetry, which nevertheless still allow an overlap between texts of sense and nonsense. The third category includes the completely senseless, nonsense

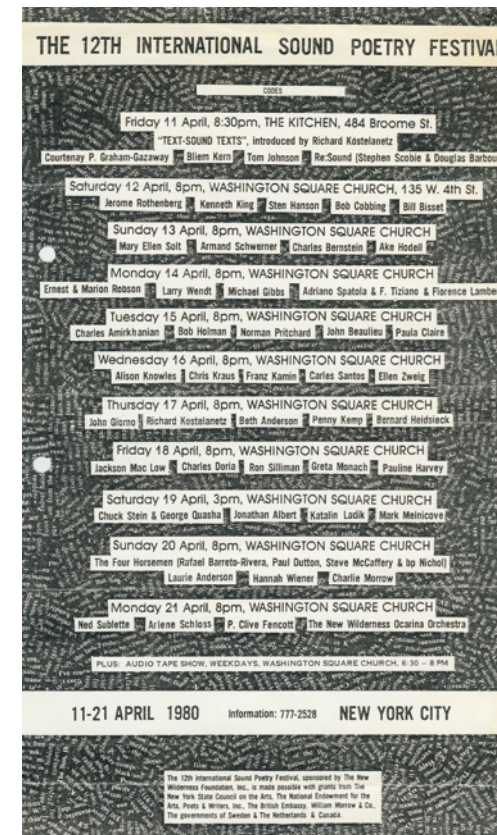
texts of western literature, which occasionally replace semantically meaningful lines for parodic effect. His historical examples underscore the fact that phonic poetry was not a medial innovation of the sixties, although it begins to expand significantly in the fifties.¹⁴⁷ Therefore these categories are more or less repeated in the typology of modern phonic poetry, and the phatic poem linked to Antonin Artaud corresponds to the previously mentioned nonsense literary works. A 'phatic poem' is a poem in which 'semantic meaning, if any, is subordinate to expression of intonation, thus yielding a new emotional meaning which is relatively remote from any semiotic significance on the part of words which happen to be included.' Artaud's phonic poem *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*, recorded in 1940, contains simple, conventional words, but 'Artaud's emphasis is on high sighing, breathing, wheezing, chanting, exclaiming, exploding, howling, whispering, and avoiding'.¹⁴⁸ Higgins also discusses the category of poems without a written text, but allowing some general statement of rules or graphic notation, though used less dominantly than in the case of written poetry.



Bob Cobbing, Katalin Ladik and Sten Hanson in Le Havre, 1980

In this category he highlights the French Henri Chopin's research with a microphone and a tape recorder, the phonic poetry of François Dufrêne, and some Swedish poets such as Bengt Emil Johnson and Sten Hanson.¹⁴⁹

Katalin Ladik's phonic poetry has overlaps with the above categories, especially Antonin Artaud's phatic poems, which have become increasingly important reference points over the decades. Her evolution from written poetry to pure phonic poetry has parallels with the authors mentioned by Higgins, all the more so because Ladik belonged to the international network of phonic poetry from the second half of the seventies. She participated in a number of important international events from the Netherlands through France to the United States in the company of such representatives of contemporary avantgarde poetry and Fluxus as Allen Ginsberg, Jean Jacques Lebel, or



The 12th International Sound Poetry Festival, Poster, New York, 1980

¹⁴⁴ Endre Székárosi, 'The Spatial Expansion of Language in Sound Poetry of Western and Eastern Europe', in Yael Kaduri (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Western Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, pp. 426–454.

¹⁴⁵ Bálint Szombathy, 'Az emberi hang lehetőségei Ladik Katalin Phonopoetica című lemeze kapcsán'

[The Possibilities of the Human Voice on the Occasion of Katalin Ladik's Record Phonopoetica], *Híd*, 1976/10, p. 1235.

¹⁴⁶ Dick Higgins, 'Horizons', in Richard Kostelanetz (ed.), *Aural Literature Criticism, Precisely*, No. 10-11-12, R. K. Editions, New York - Edmonton, Alberta, 1981.

¹⁴⁷ Op. cit. pp. 43–44.

¹⁴⁸ Op. cit. p. 48.

¹⁴⁹ Op. cit. p. 49.



Bob Cobbing,
Pro Sexual, Score
and Visual Poem for
Katalin Ladik, 1984

Carolee Schneemann. This intensive presence, which was atypical for the cold war years, often meant that Katalin Ladik was the sole representative of not only Yugoslavia, but all of East-Central Europe at such global events. Bob Cobbing, a key figure of British avantgarde poetry, played an important role in her international discovery; having heard the *Phonopoetica* record, he invited her to a number of events he organized, and she was also included in an anthology of concrete, phonic and visual poetry he edited in 1978.¹⁵⁰ In his statement about concrete and phonic poetry in 1969, Cobbing emphasized that all interlinked branches of experimental poetry were multisensual and multidimensional communication methods with possibilities that go beyond the aesthetics of poetry and offer an alternative to the contemporary realities of politics and religion.¹⁵¹ Cobbing realized a several pages long concrete and visual poem for Katalin Ladik, which he also dedicated to her; *Pro Sexual* (1984) reflects his

¹⁵⁰ Bob Cobbing – Peter Mayer, *Concerning Concrete Poetry*, Writers Forum, London, 1978.

views on the auratic and visual, physical and auditive, multisensory aspects of the poem.

When Katalin Ladik performed at the prestigious international phonic poetry festival *Text in Sound* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1977, she appeared alongside over twenty European and American phonic poets, including François Dufrêne, Henri Chopin, Gerhard Rühm, Bob Cobbing, Franz Mon and Bernard Heidsieck. Henri Chopin identified the international breakthrough of the previously unknown Yugoslav artist with this appearance in his *Poesie sonore internationale* (1979), one of the important publications of phonic poetry: 'Acoustically speaking, it is as if Ladik directed a verbophonic orchestra: her voice is now crisp and then dark, she uses unexpected variations, plays with tones, introduces rare modulations. This vocal functioning, however spontaneous and natural it may seem, is actually very much controlled, and its colours are highlighted and intensified by the microphone. Amplification produces such an intensive vocal presence that one is actually surprised to see how such an output may come out of such a fragile, slender body ... Sheer vocal magic in space.'¹⁵²

Her typewritten setlist shows that she performed the material of the *Phonopoetica* record at the festival, and presented tape-recorded joint compositions with Ernő Király. These works employed two new instruments constructed in the mid-seventies, named the zitherphone and tablophone, to accompany Ladik's phonic performance. Both instruments were constructed by Ernő Király, drawing on the contemporary possibilities offered by the zither, a traditional folk string instrument that was extremely common in Vojvodina. The zitherphone, which represented the cutting edge technology of the day (1974), combined bow and string instruments into a prepared zither built from different size bodies, which included additional pick-ups

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Henri Chopin's Postcard for Katalin Ladik

¹⁵¹ Op. cit. p. 43. This socio-critical interpretation of phonic poetry in the spirit of 1968 also appears elsewhere in contemporary writings. Henri Chopin links the language of older poetry to dictatorial political structures, and argued for the changed role of the poet: 'It was necessary to leave old language behind, to free ourselves from its laws – within those, Vichy, the Nazis and the Stalinists had existed. It was necessary to place ourselves outside of these systems, the systems of literature included,

where there were leading lights just as there were within Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism. After all my experiences, it was impossible to assume the role of the poet as an omnipotent conduit.' Henri Chopin, *A sort of Autobiography inevitably incomplete*, LemonMelon in association with Richard Saltoun Gallery, 2015. n.p.

¹⁵² Henri Chopin, *Poesie sonore internationale*, Jean-Michel Place Editions, Paris, 1979, p. 254; translated from French by Endre Székárosi.

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Sketch for the Zitherphone by Ernő Király, 1974

to a wooden stand. He affixed drawing paper to one side of the tablophone, and sound making devices to the other, which he amplified with a pickup. By plucking and striking the soundmaking devices, one could produce tempered and untempered sounds, harmonies and noises, while the drawing was produced on watercolour paper placed on the other side of the metal sheet. Király's notion was that two people could play the tablophone simultaneously; while one was drawing, the other could be inspired by the lines and accompany it with the soundmaking devices, which could result in an improvisational multimedial composition.¹⁵⁵ Katalin Ladik performed improvisational compositions on the tablophone numerous times both in recordings and in live performances.

The multimedial conceptions that brought the tablophone to life can be traced back to the voco-visual practices favoured by contemporary Yugoslav composers. Dubravko Detoni created musical graphic works that could function as autonomous visual works, as did Vladan Radovanović or Ernő Király himself, whose *Flora* series created correspondences between colors, forms and musical sounds based on the principle of synesthesia. Katalin Ladik was no doubt inspired by this musical-vi-

Ernő Király
performing on
the Zitherphone.
Still from the Film
by Nándor Hevesi
and Kornél Szilágyi,
Promenade, 2008.



and pedals. The changing sizes of bodies and the adjusted levels of strings allowed for simultaneous play, including the performance of polyphonic music. The instrument, which had fifty-eight strings, was played with a variety of devices, including picks, percussions, bows, fingers, various small sticks and metal boxes.¹⁵³

The other instrument was the tablophone (1976), a smaller hand-held multimedial instrument. Its goal, as Ernő Király conceived it, was to make the lines of drawing and writing not only visible but also audible, the work expressing both visual-auditive mediums.¹⁵⁴ He bent a thin metal sheet, 50 x 70 cm in size, and attached it

visual context, in which she participated with collages and scores that offered an individual feminine interpretation of the genre. The visual background material of the collages consisted of musical score fragments affixed to color sheets, printed sewing patterns from fashion magazines (with a reference to a traditionally 'feminine' activity) and written or found texts. Within Ladik's practice, the sewing pat-

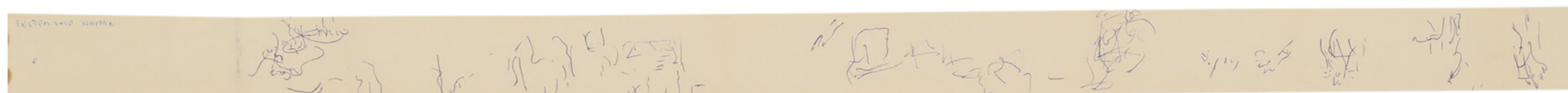
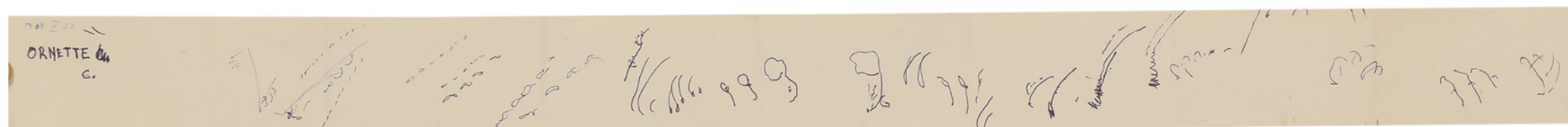
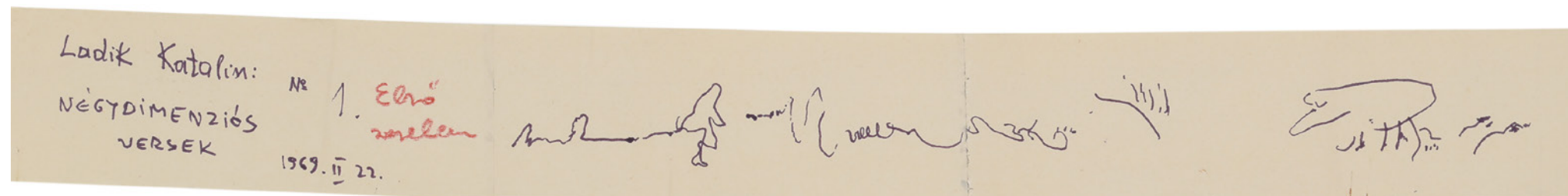
¹⁵³ Nándor Hevesi– Kornél Szilágyi, *Promenade. Portrait Film of Ernő Király*, 2008, 52 min.
¹⁵⁴ Ernő Király, *Reflexiók*, 1998, p. 21.
¹⁵⁵ The construction of the soundboxes of the Czechoslovakian Milan Adamčiak and the acoustic drawings of his contemporary Mylan Grygar in the seventies were based on similar principles. Grygar would use everyday objects: 'combs, springs, cog wheels, spinning tops and wind-up toys would be dipped in ink and then spun or dragged across the surface of the paper. A degree of chance was involved, as the mechanical toys knocked into one another.' David Crowley, in David Crowley and Daniel Muzyczuk, *Sounding the Body Electric. Experiments in Art and Music in Eastern Europe 1957–1984*, Museum Sztuki Łódź, Łódź, 2012, p. 91.



Katalin Ladik
performing on
Tablophone, Stedelijk
Museum, Amsterdam,
1977

tern aesthetic, which the current viewer clearly identifies with the shortage economy behind the Iron Curtain, implied conformity to fashion and social pressure, while its reference to tradition suggests a subversion akin to the boldest collages of the classic avantgarde. These works, like Ladik's poetics as a whole, are valid in a culturally hybrid field, where references to European musical heritage are present along with Hungarian and Balkan sources. The internationalism preferred by Ladik is suggested in the titles of the collages (*Jugoslawishes Tastatur Lied*, 1969; *Polish Folksong*, 1978; *Mondschein Sonate*, 1978; *Balkan Folksong*, 1973; *Spanish Christmas*, 1970) and totalized in her vocal performances. The parallel and open referentiality of visual and musical exploration finds a distinctly female rendering here, which becomes the foundation of Katalin Ladik's essentially intermedial practice.

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Four Dimensional Poems: No 1. My First Love, 1969

Csipi's canned Music no 7., 1969

Ornette, 1969

My Body as Green Soap, 1969

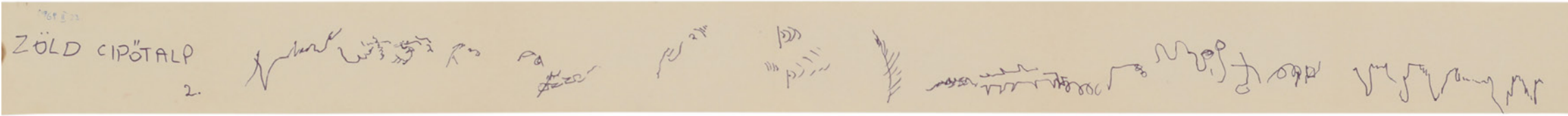
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AND VISUAL

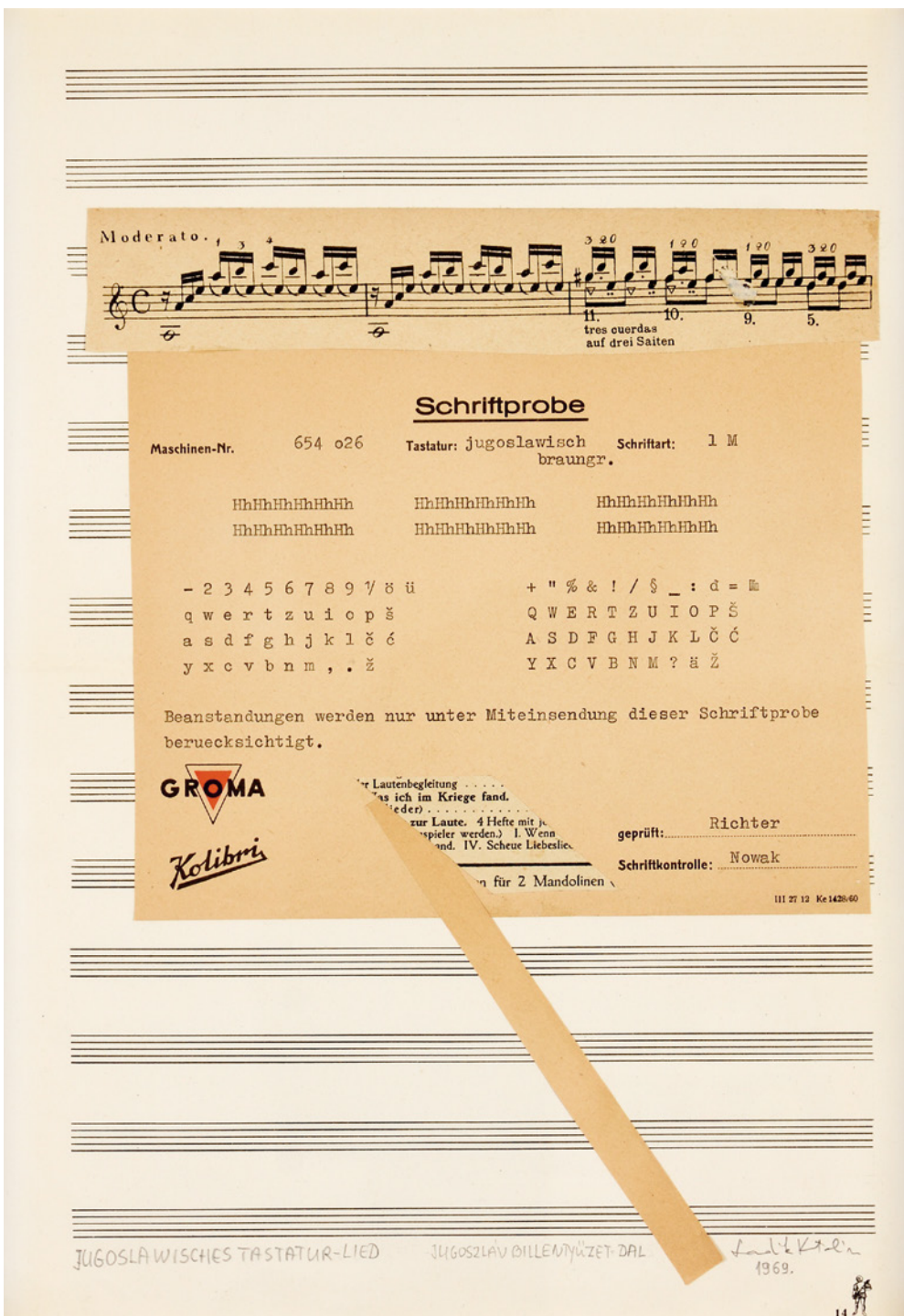
EXPERIMENTS

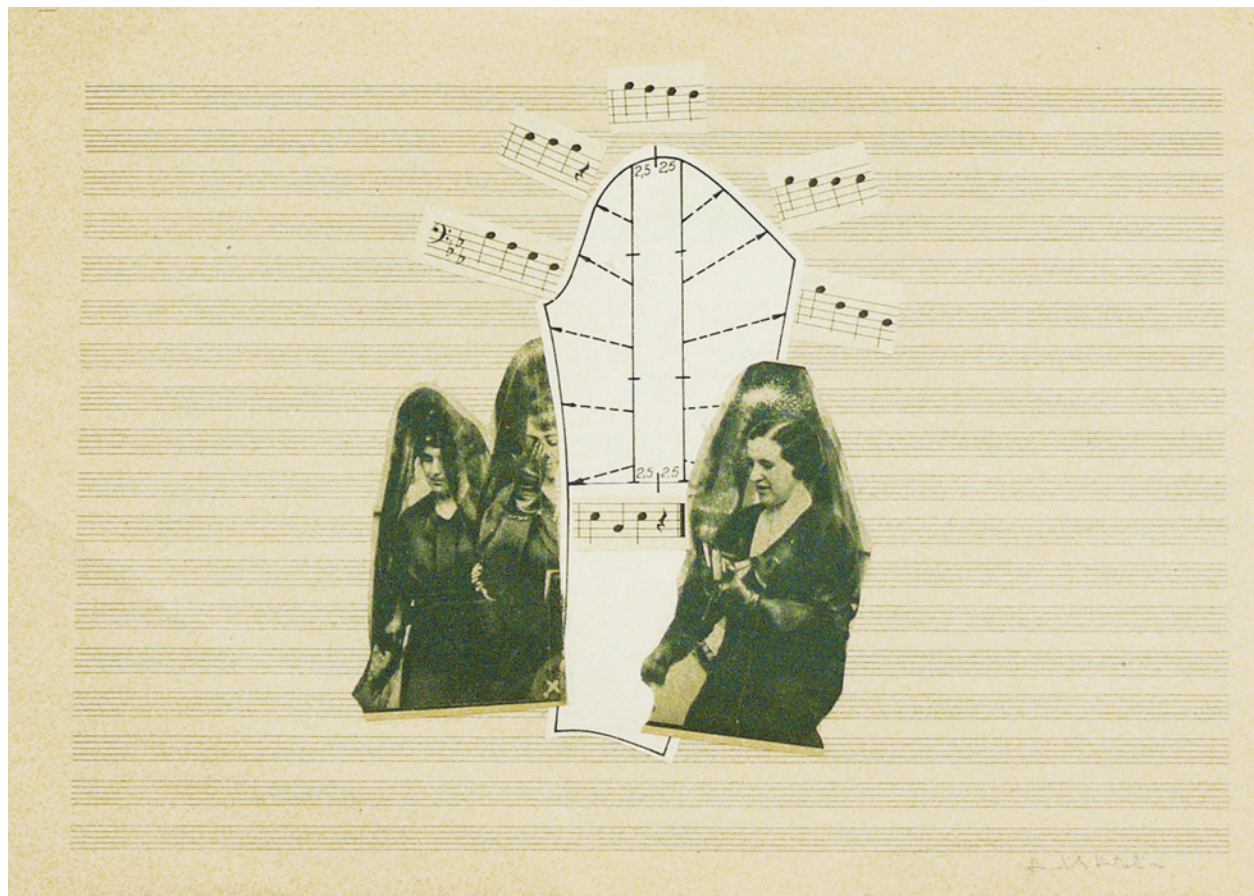
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Green Sole no 2., 1969
Jugoslawisches Tastatur Lied, 1969

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Spanish Christmas, 1973
Katalin Ladik's notes and appendixes to the score „Bellatrix Alleluja“, composed by Branimir Sakač, Zagreb, 1970



SOUND
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[illegible][illegible]

Stefanina sekvenca
(gotijski slovočina,
delovna got 3-4 regana
elementa.)

[illegible][illegible]

Winkel α
 heißt für
 Ausfallwinkel
 = Streuwinkel
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 kein Maximum

adaptivi
 gleitenden
 oder jede
 displazierte
 andere gleitende

ausgewählte Wandfläche
 liegen im Abstand von
 $\lambda/2$ der doppelte
 in einem Ton

von Wand

ausgewählte Wandfläche

ausgewählte Wandfläche

9
 zatonevni svetiljki
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 (Mars)

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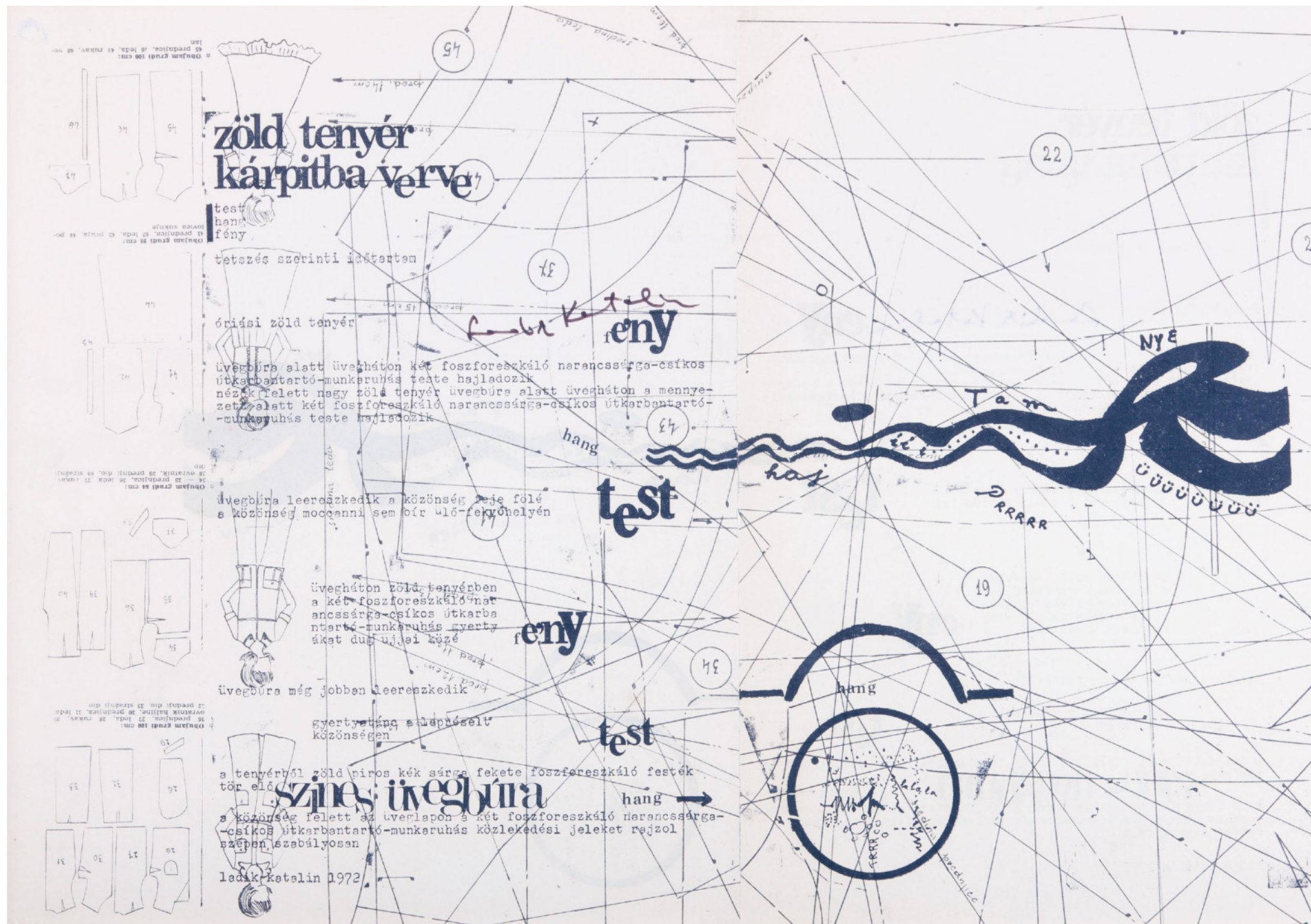
PSEUDO-PRESENCE 3-4, Acezantez, 1972
PSEUDO-PRESENCE 3-4., Acezantez, 1972

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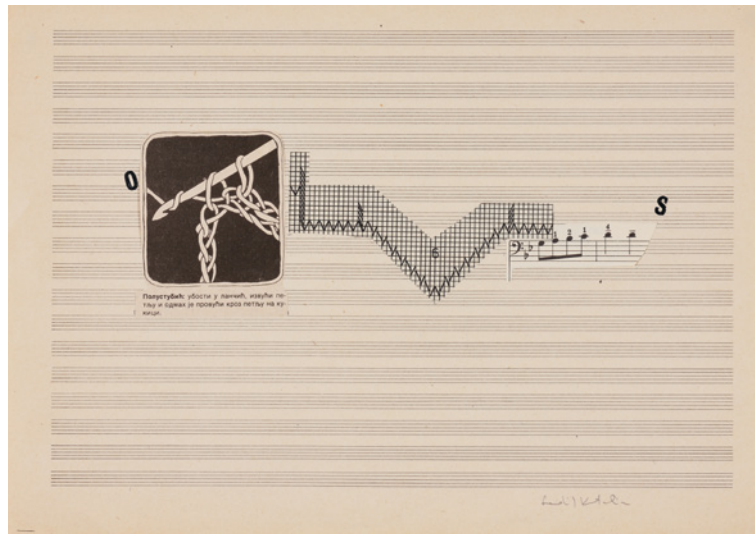


Traces of Green Palm of Hand Upholstery, 1972

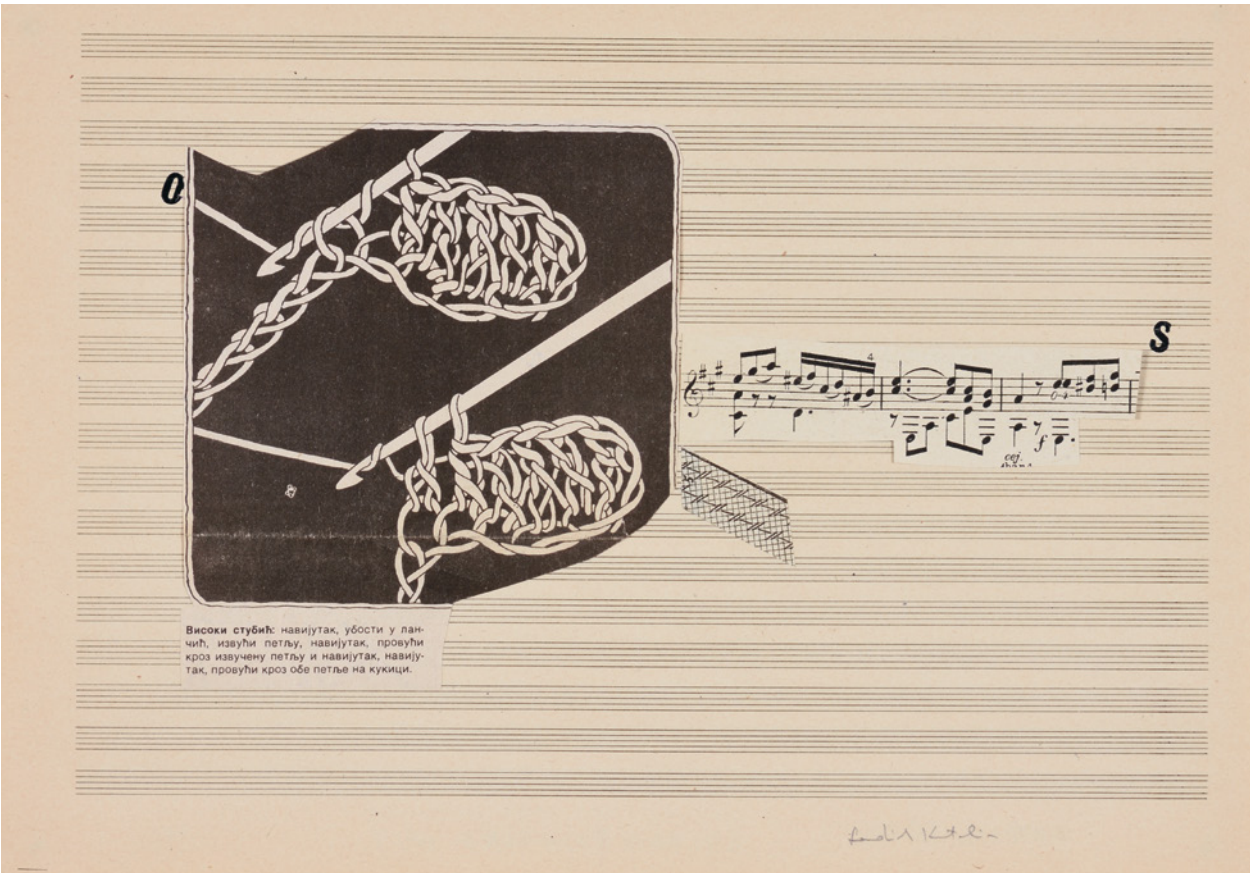
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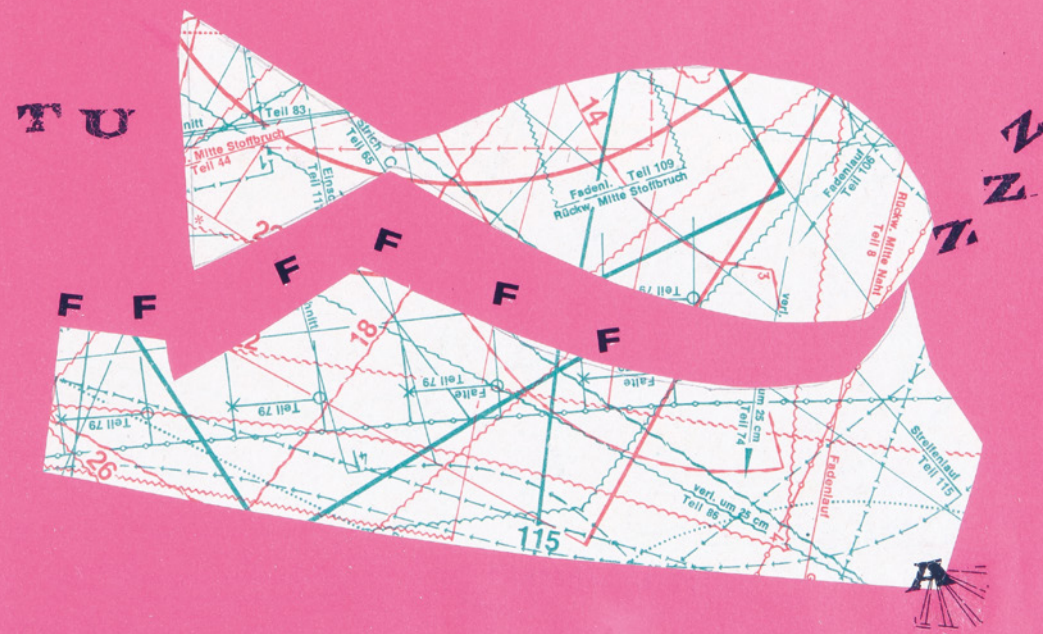


Balkan Folk Song Nr. 3, 4, 5, 1973



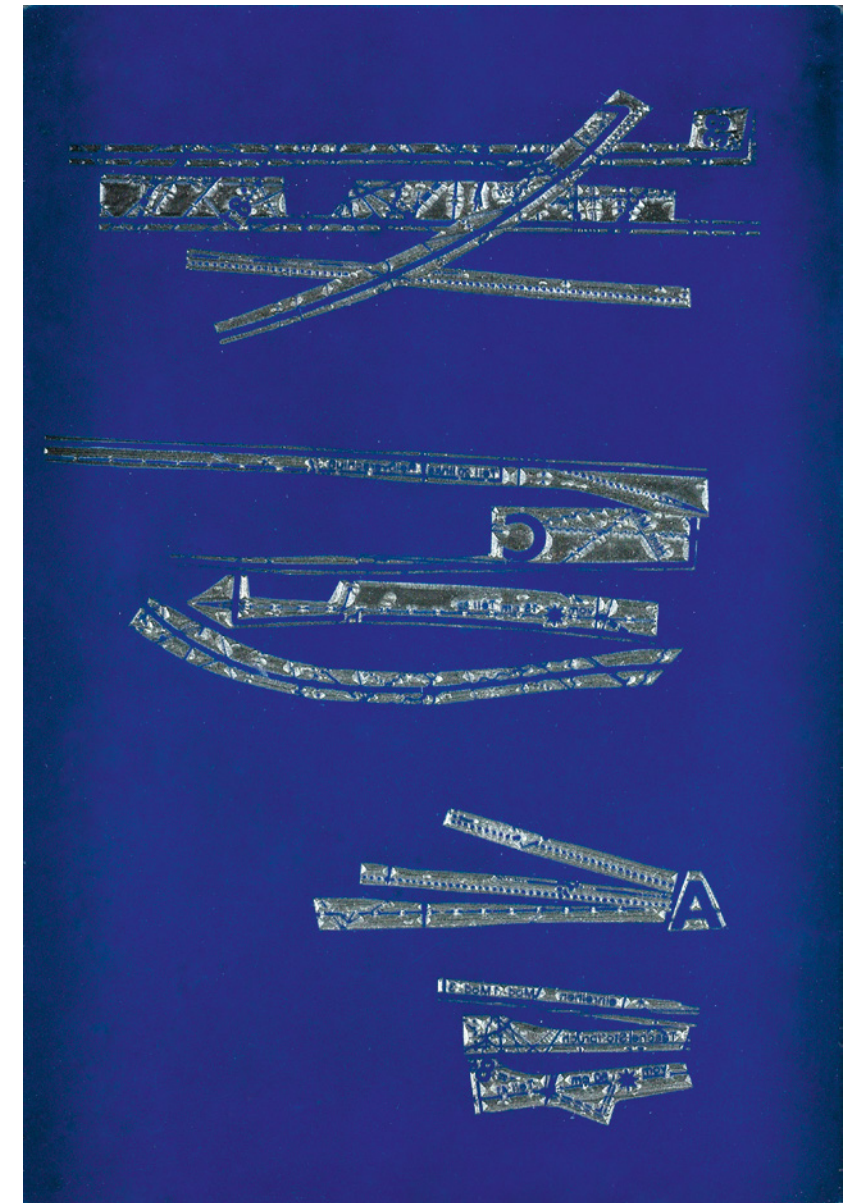
SOUND
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Feinschmecker



Feinschmecker, 1975
Sonnet of the Lead, 1975

120

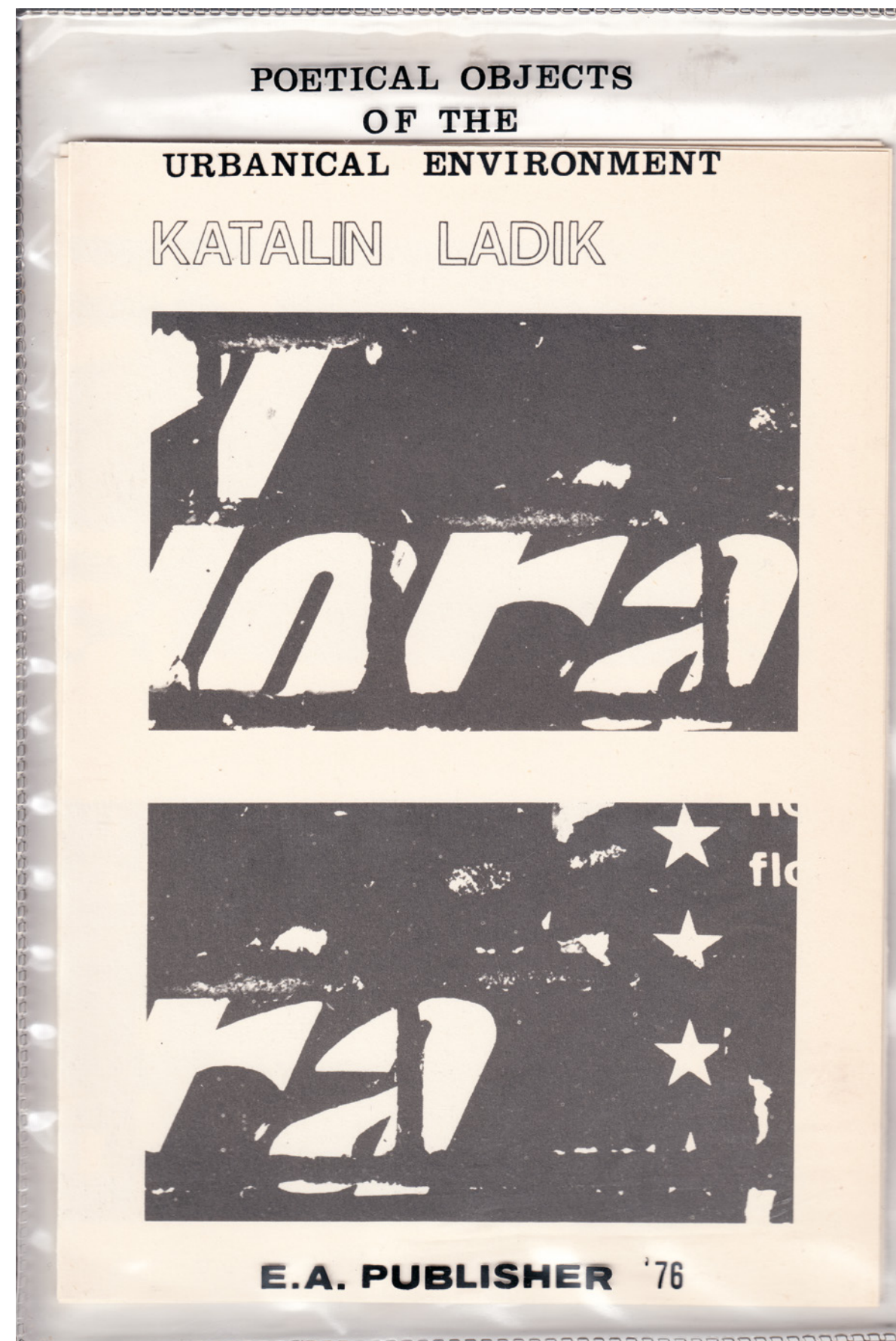


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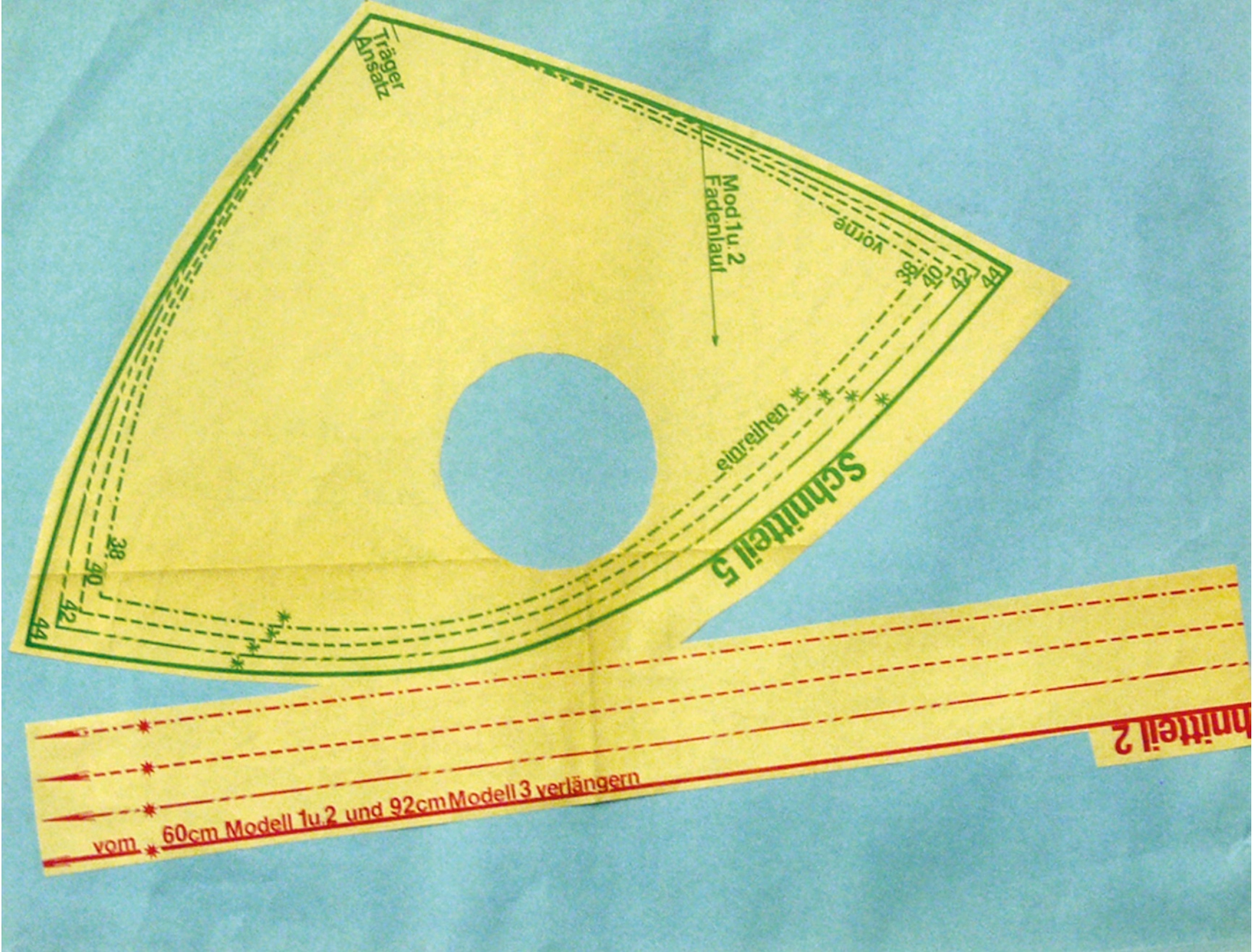
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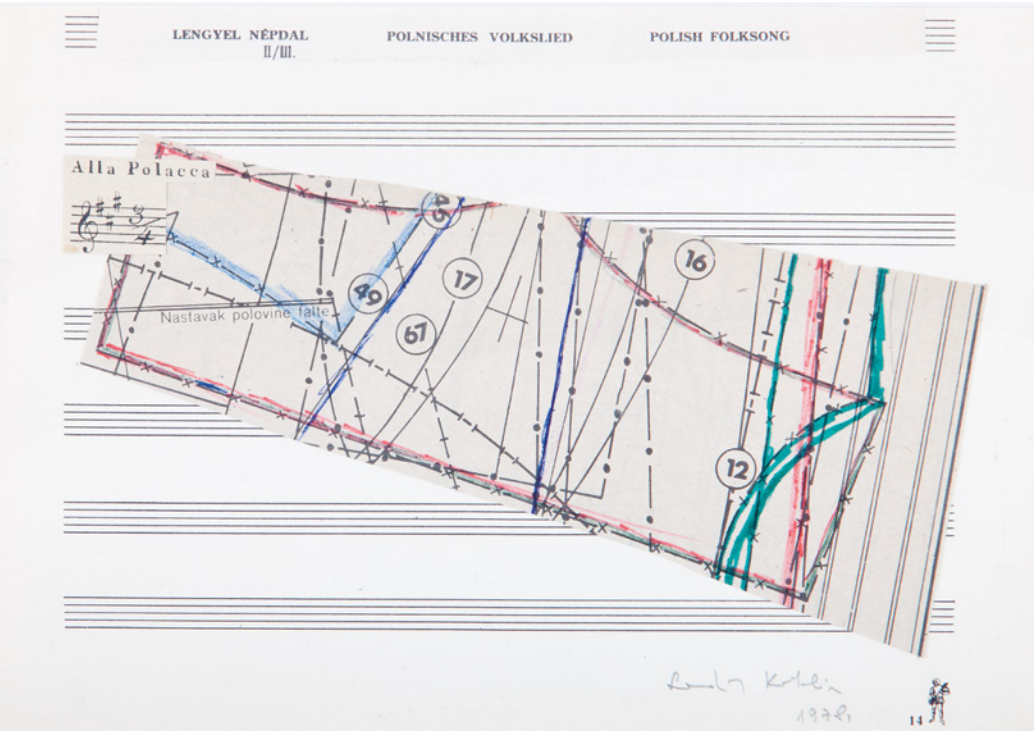
Flora, 1973
Poetical Objects of the Urbanical Environment
 (Katalin Ladik, Gábor Tóth, Bálint Szombathy and Franci Zagoričnik), 1976



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Mondschein Sonate, 1978
Polish Folksong, 1978



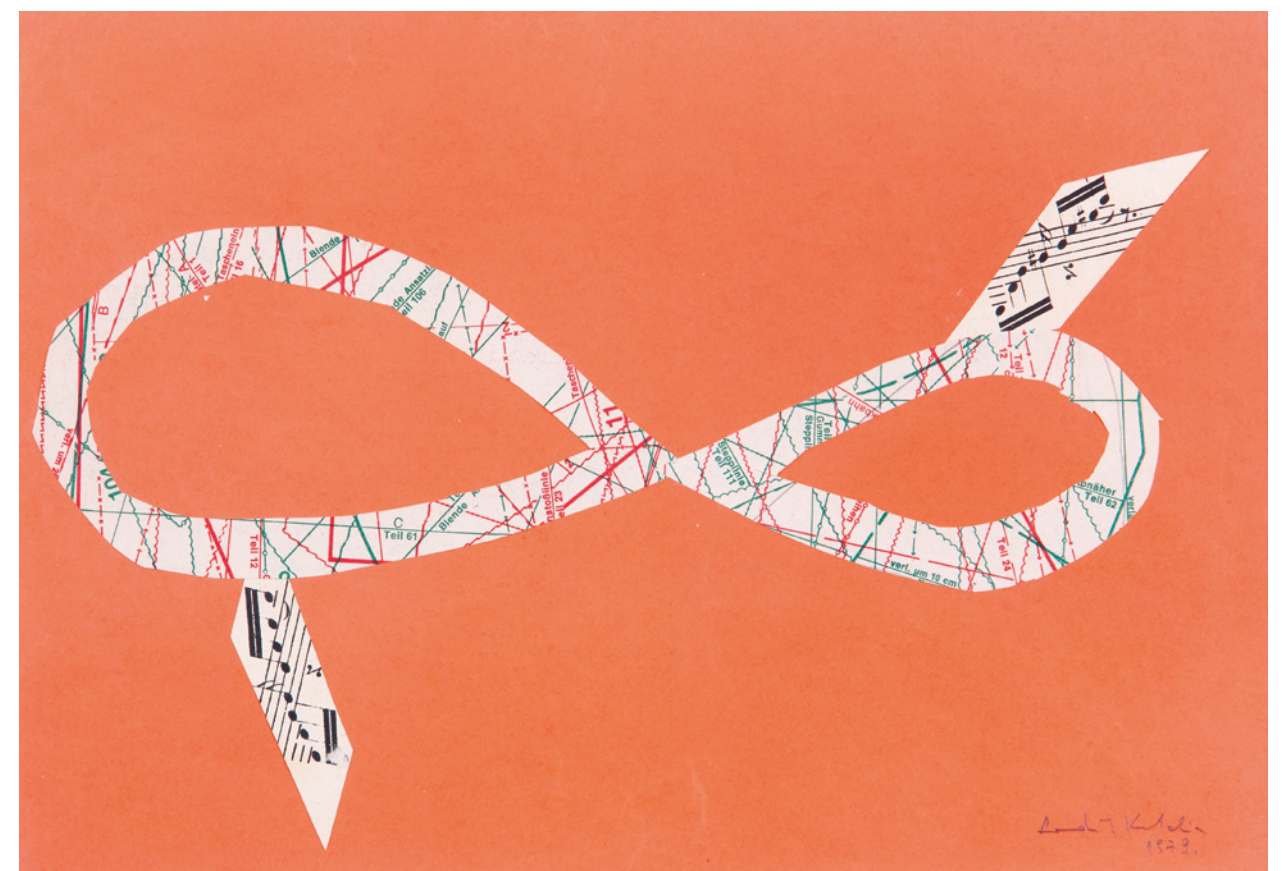
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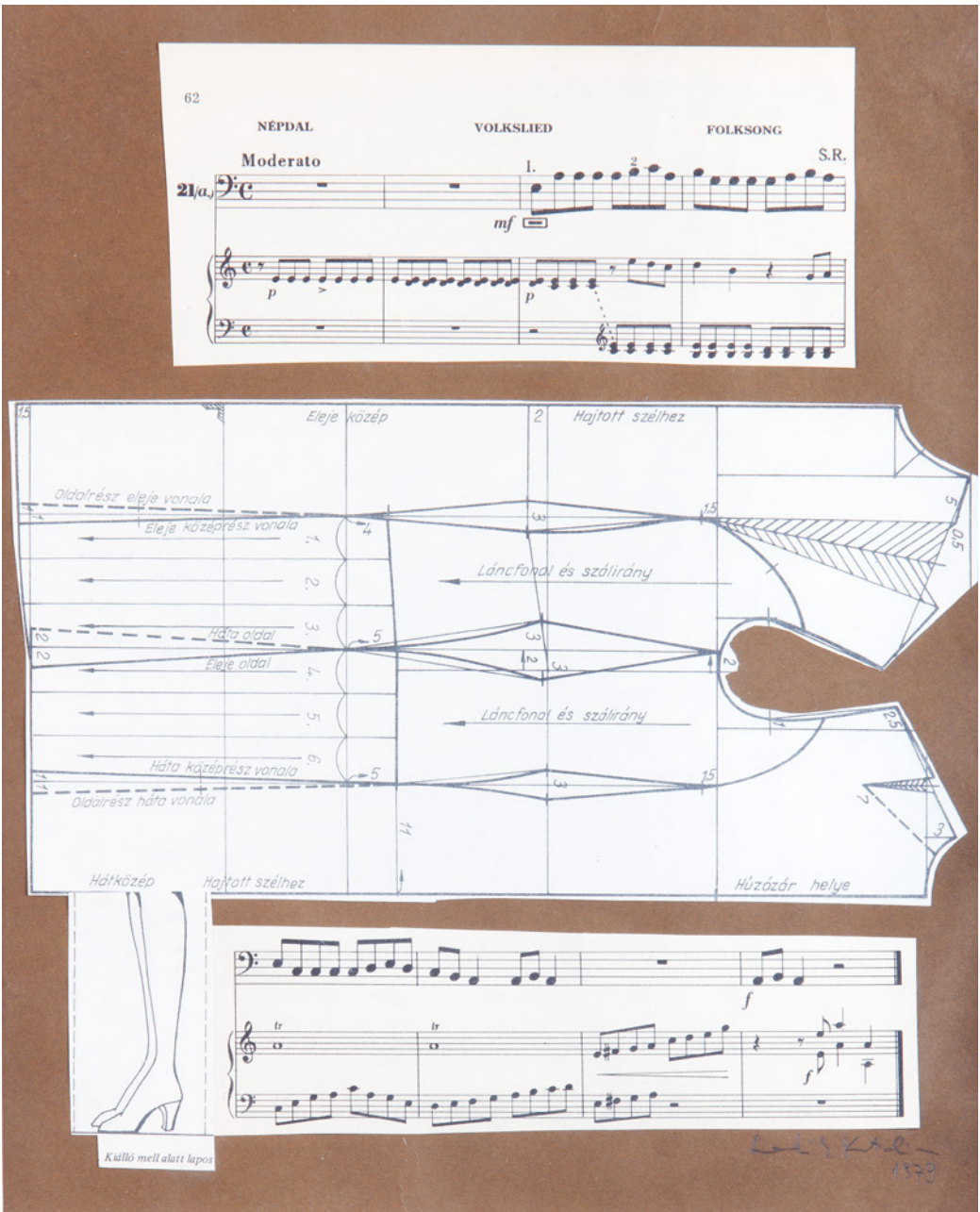
Das Lied von dem goldenen Messer, 1979
Duet, 1979

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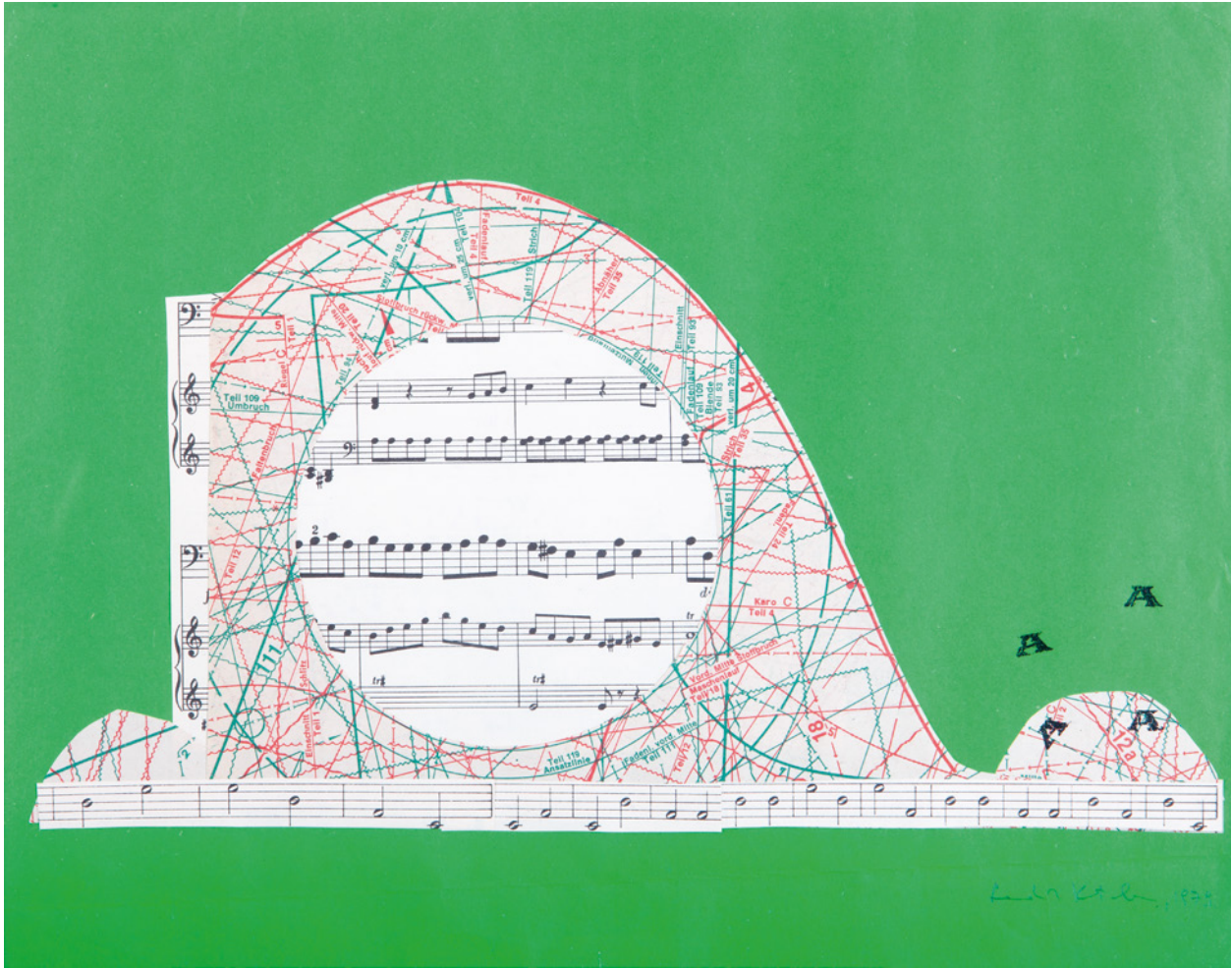
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Singing Legs, 1979
Snail Aria, 1979

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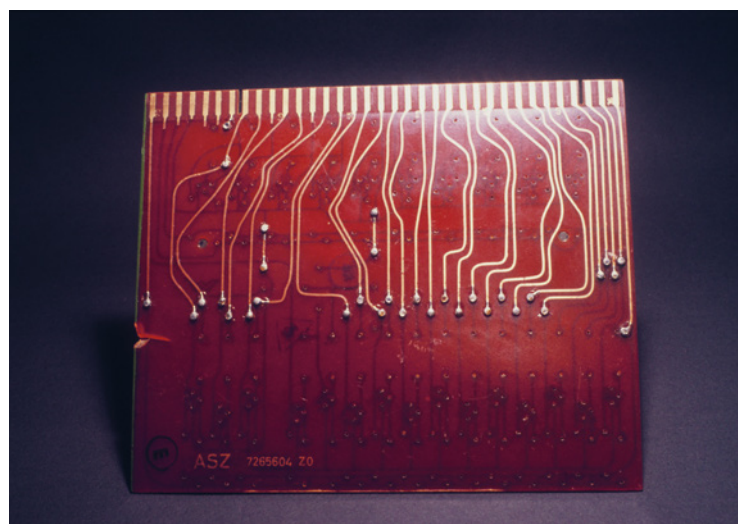
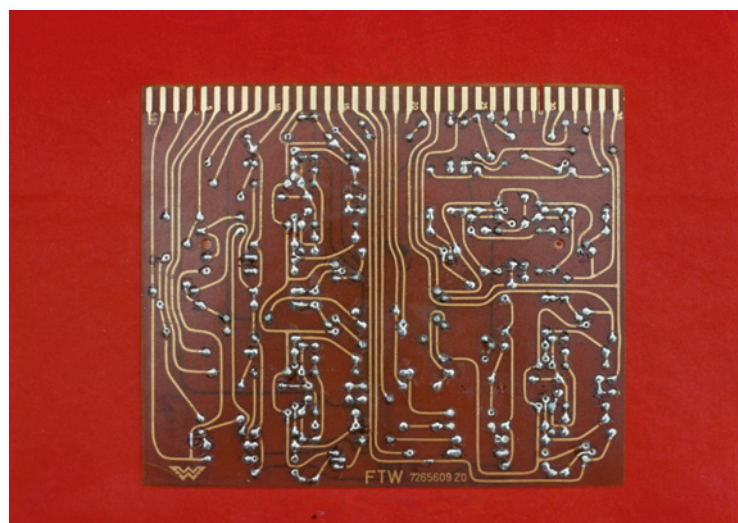
Die Meistersinger, 1980
Katalin Ladik and Peter Below, *UFO*, 1979

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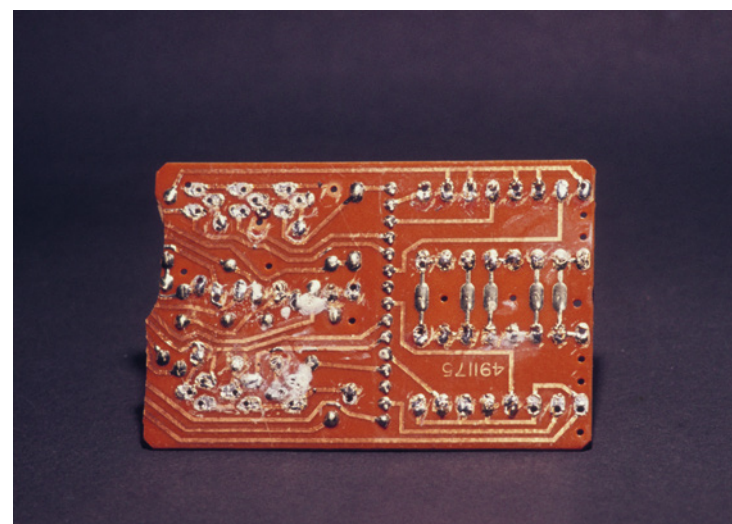
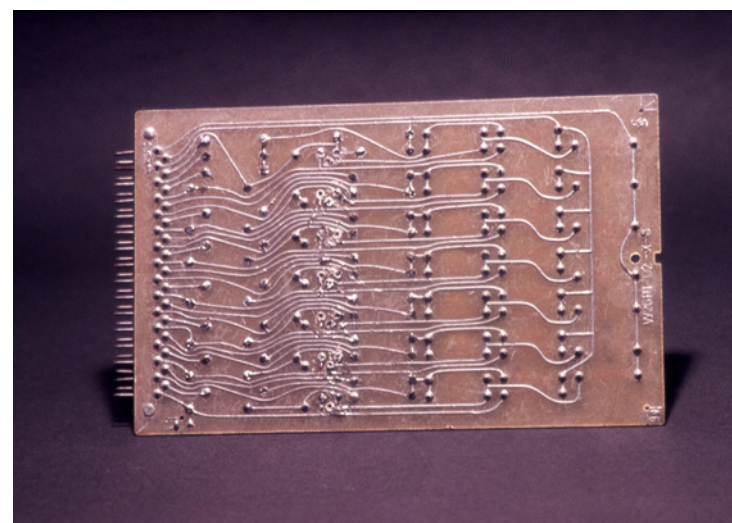
**SOUND
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EXPERIMENTS**

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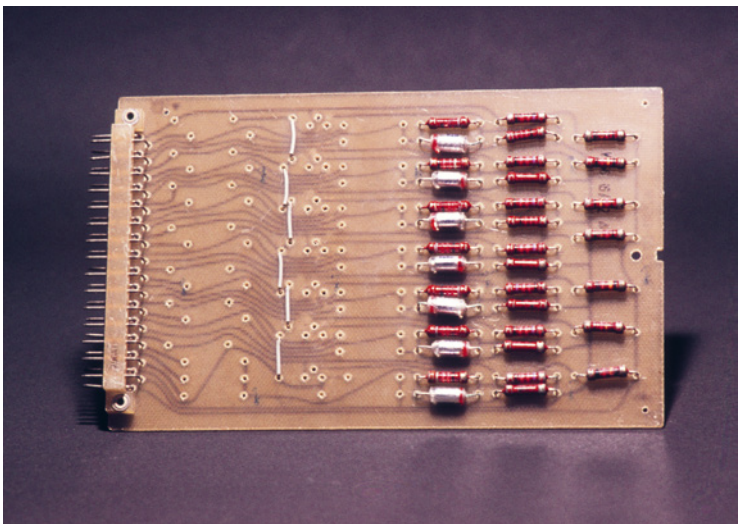
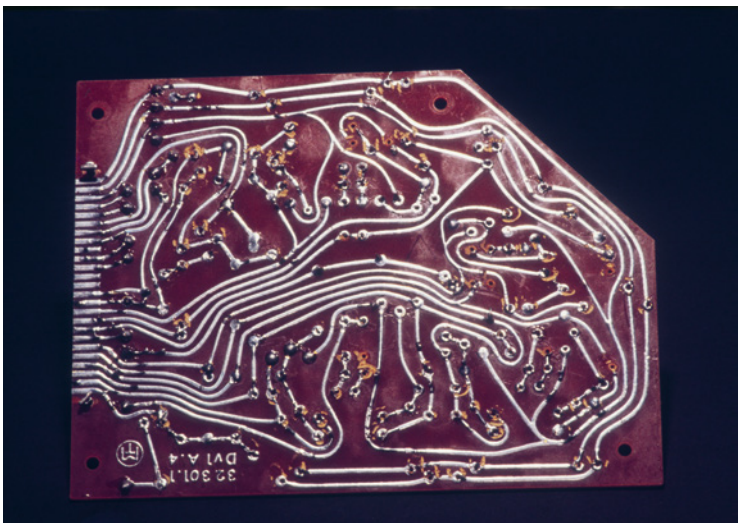
Genesis Series, 1975/2016

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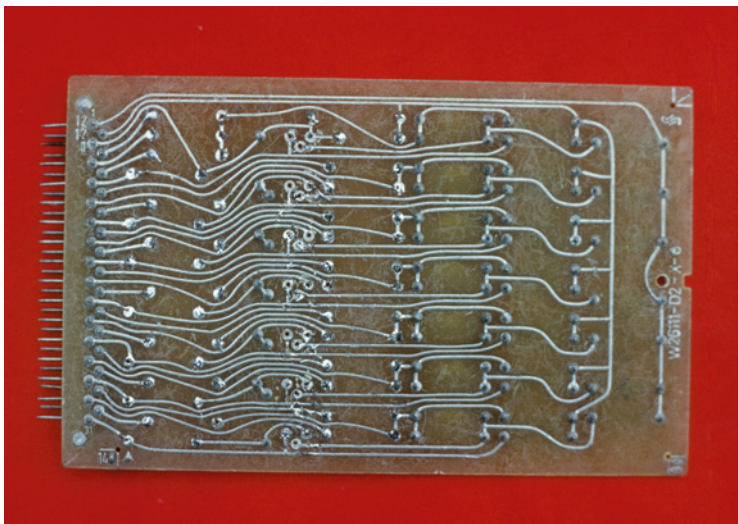
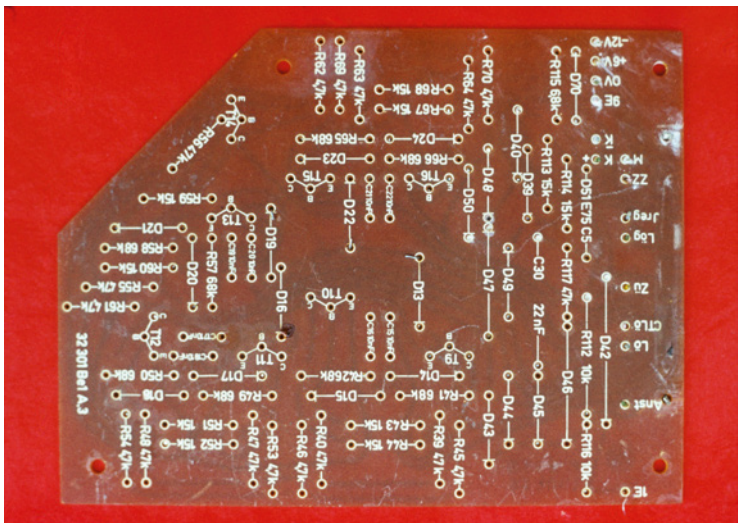


SOUND
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EXPERIMENTS

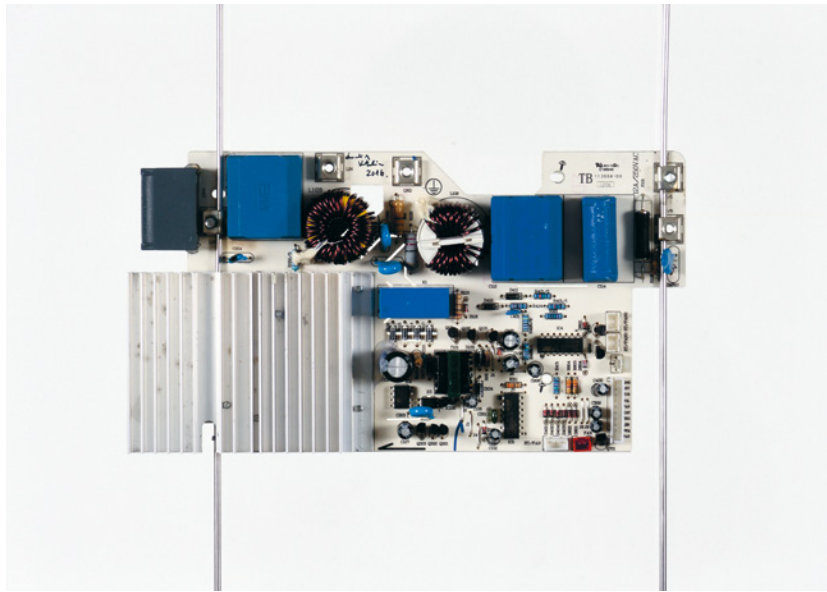
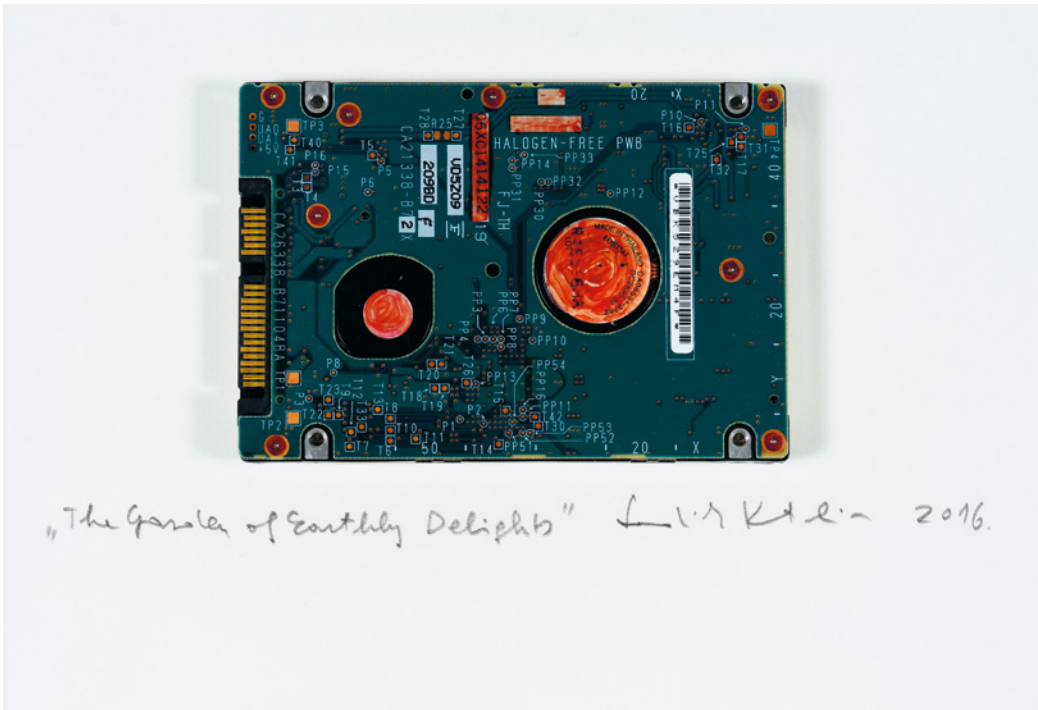
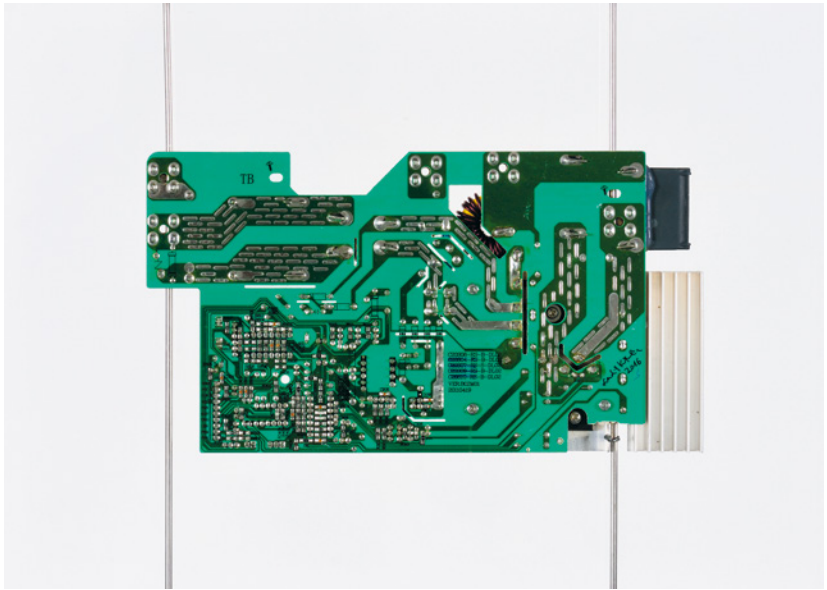
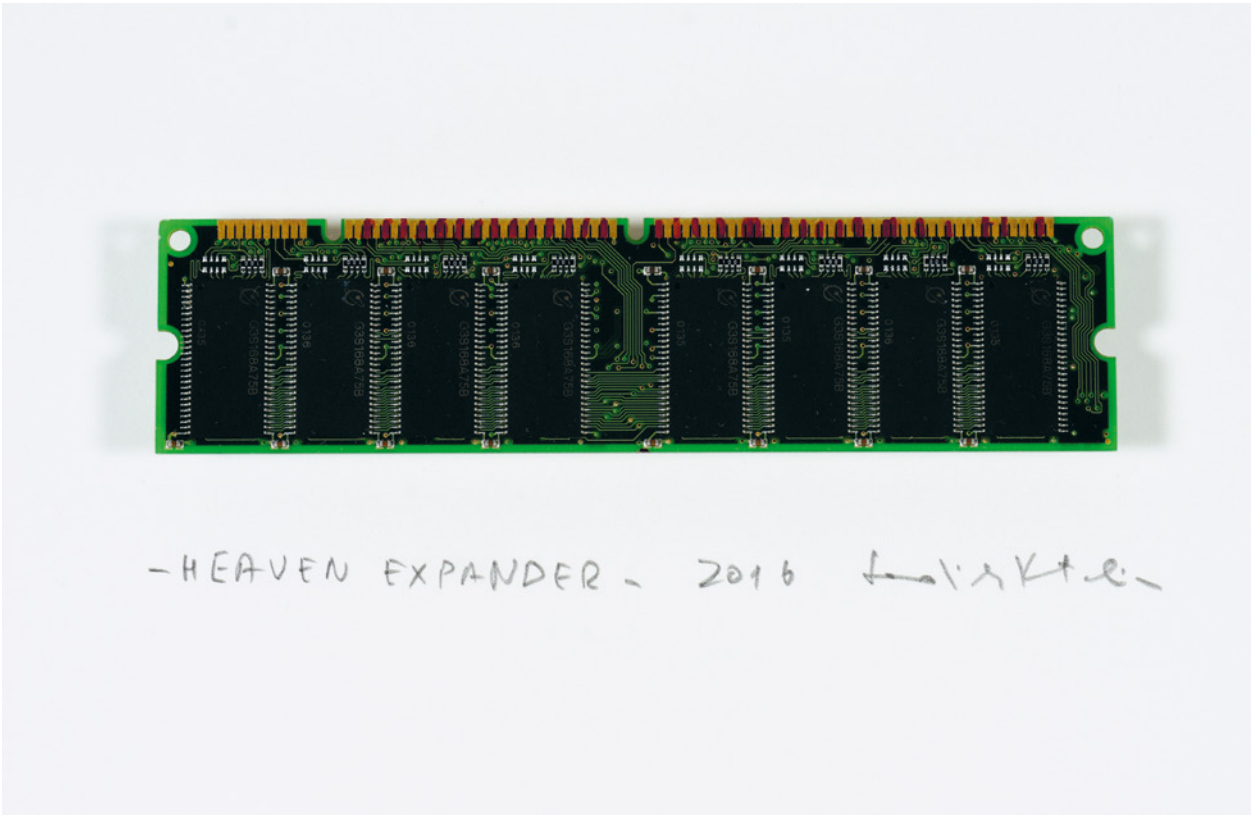
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Genesis Series, 1975/2016



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Heaven Expander, 2016
 The Garden of Earthly Delights, 2016
 Induction Cooker Aria, 2016
 Apocalypse, 2017

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CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION

Katalin Ladik joined one of the conceptually based artist collectives of the New Art Practice of Yugoslavia in 1973. It was the Bosch+Bosch group, representing the poetic traditions of the classic avantgarde in Vojvodina.¹⁵⁶ Conceptuality became more prominent in Ladik's practice during the time of this collaboration, which last until 1976. This may be interpreted as a degree of adaptation to a canon represented predominantly by male artists. A number of women artists were in a position in the early seventies to make a choice between adaptation or finding individual ways to develop their own language. Taking his cue from the example of Polish poet and performance artist Ewa Partum, Grzegorz Działski sums up the two options women had at the time: 'to speak the language of a universal subject or the language of a feminine subject'.¹⁵⁷ In this paradigmatic model of a course of life, Katalin Ladik's joining of the Bosch+Bosch group might have meant the decisive artistic-social step that ensured the stability of basic artistic practice for plenty of women. There are countless examples for classic female subordination reaching its epitome in marriage with a male artist or, in the more progressive milieu of the seventies, in operating within a group. It is perhaps such hierarchical perspectives that govern reception in assuming that Ladik's collaboration with the Bosch+Bosch group had an emancipatory character.¹⁵⁸ It should be kept in mind, however, that Katalin Ladik was already an artist with an international reputation, offering distinctive and fully developed solutions in her practice of linguistic-musical experimentalism and visualization by 1973, who was present in this clearly intensive and productive collaboration with her own characteristic media. The cooperation with the Bosch+Bosch group actually expanded Ladik's autonomous repertoire with works characterized by conceptuality, a need for participation, and an affinity to the political.

A few artists in their early twenties founded the Bosch+Bosch group in Subotica, a small town near the Hungarian border in Yugoslavia, in 1969. This was a few years ahead of the general upsurge of artists' group activities in the contem-



Bálint Szombathy, Katalin Ladik, Attila Csernik and graphic designer Branislav Radošević, middle of 1970s

¹⁵⁶ See Emese Kürti, *Transregional Discourses. The Bosch+Bosch Group in the Yugoslav and the Hungarian Avant-garde*, acb ResearchLab, Budapest, 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Grzegorz Działski, 'Speaking as a Woman. Why have there been so few female artists in conceptual art?' in Aneta Szylak, Berenika Partum, Ewa Małgorzata Tatar (eds.), *Ewa Partum*, Instytut Sztuki Wyspa, 2012/2013, p. 102.

¹⁵⁸ Miško Šuvaković, for example, links the Bosch+Bosch period not only with mail art, body art actions/performances, and the visual documentation of actions and performances, but also with

the appearance of visual scores, visual poetry and visual collages in Katalin Ladik's art practice (*The Power of a Woman*, 2010, pp. 163–169). Following up on Šuvaković, Hendrick Folkerts also claims that Ladik's collaboration with the group 'opened her practice to a new realm of visibility', even though his own piece refers to visual works from before 1973, predating the Bosch period. Hendrick Folkerts, 'Keeping Score, Notation, Embodiment and Liveness', *South as a State of Mind #7*, Spring-Summer 2016, published by documenta and Museum Fridericianum GmbH, Kassel, Germany, 2016.



Unknown, Bálint Szombathy, György Galántai and László Szalma at the entrance of the Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár, Hungary, 1972

tendencies. The circle of artists that represented the most distinctive period of the seven-year history of Bosch+Bosch took shape in 1973–76: participants included not only Bálint Szombathy and Slavko Matković, but also Katalin Ladik, Attila Csernik, László Kerekes, László Szalma and Ante Vukov.

Applying Szombathy's late 1970s conceptual schema to the case of Bosch+Bosch, one cannot identify a 'common ideological platform' in which individual spiritual aspirations could have dissolved, but rather a diversity of linguistic expression despite various attempts to integrate these into a unified system. Between 1969 and 1976, the group's activities were characterized by the polyphonic emergence of different media and art trends (space intervention, Land Art, Arte Povera, Projekt Art, concrete poetry, conceptual art, visual semiology, new strip, Mail Art) and a distance from classic Anglo-American conceptual art. 'Thus, as a result of individual research, the group's work was characterized by a number of different semantic-semiotic propositions, differing in content and form. The term 'Mixed Media' would then be most appropriate in defining this general characteristic.'¹⁶²

However, rethinking the heritage of the historical avantgarde (Lajos Kassák as well as the visual poetry of the dimensionist Károly Tamkó Sirató or Stéphane Mallarmé) drove each group member to seek – in his or her own way – a new linguistic communicative system that was fundamentally different from the theoretical concept of language in the mainstream practice of the philosophy of language, such as the Art & Language group. The poetic systems based on a denial of the linear poem and narrativity were defined by the reciprocal relationship and interpermeability of text and visuality, signifier and signified, and by the independent visual

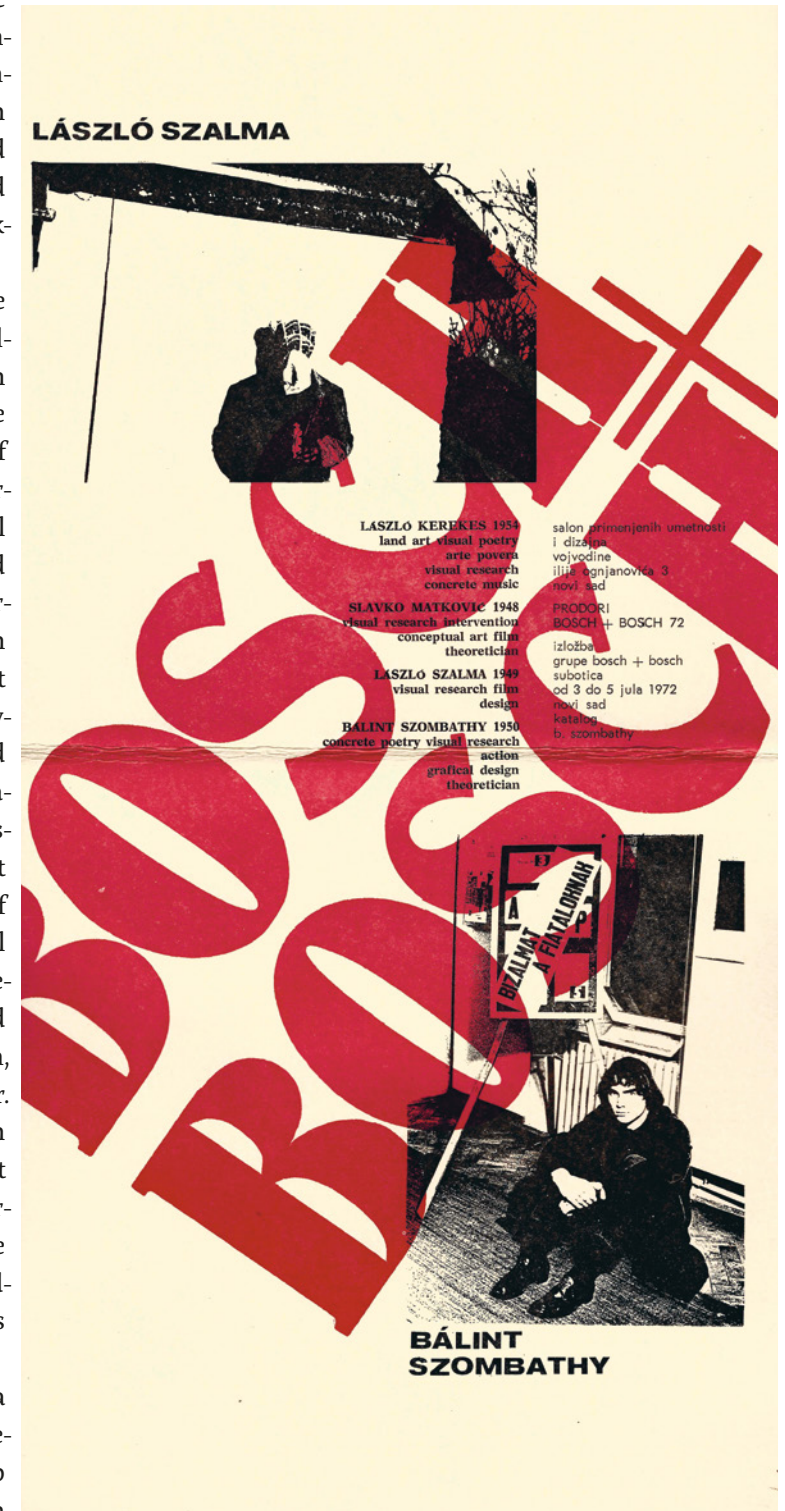
porary art scene of Yugoslavia thanks to developments of the New Art Practice.¹⁵⁹ Their membership changed over the years. Bálint Szombathy,¹⁶⁰ one of the founders and theorists of the group, stressed the desire for collective operation, the generational character of the group, and an aversion to the dominant institutional forms of art as their primary motivations, supplemented by the motif of generational rebellion against conservatism.¹⁶¹ Although attachment to traditional media was prevalent among the members in the first formation of the group in 1969, it took barely a year for their activities to be governed by immaterial and experimental

value of the sign (the letter). 'In the last stage of its development,' writes Szombathy, the new poetic system, 'turns into nothingness, turns into a negation of poetry.' His image poems entitled *Nontextualité* (1972) visualize the rejection of the text, of textuality, in the course of which letters, that is codes, highlighted in the narrative text are connected by a web of lines, instigating cognitive processes based on the representation of spatiality. Szombathy's visual-semiotic explorations aimed at the spatial expansion of the poem, examining the interventions of linguistic signs disturbing urban space (*Bauhaus* series, 1972), or employed the appropriation of archaic, found and spontaneous signs to argue for a weakened concept of the author.

In Attila Csernik's case, the concept of typopoetry introduced by Biljana Tomić was reinterpreted through the medium of the body surface, where the independent typographical values of the letters become integrated into a performative-visual system. Traditional static surfaces (e.g. paper) were replaced by the medium of a living, breathing organism, the body, the sensuality of which was in a lively tension with the abstract patterns of the typographic sign. Removing text fragments, letters, and damaged texts from traditional decoding mechanisms resulted in a new linguistic-aesthetic system in Csernik's minimalist actions. Perceptually, the visuality of these works arises from an intermedial reciprocal relationship between the medium and linguistic codes (signifier and signified) on the one hand and the action, the object, and language on the other. Miško Šuvaković sees the Duchampian tradition as a precursor to Csernik's art utilizing the body and the object in artistic interventions, with communicative layers including photographs, films, videos and books in the construction of his 'micro-museum'.¹⁶³

The collaboration of Attila Csernik and Katalin Ladik, which predates the time they both joined the group in 1973, continued in the Bosch+Bosch

Exhibition Leaflet of the Bosch+Bosch Group, 1972



¹⁵⁹ The contemporary context of collective activities for the Bosch+Bosch group consisted of OHO in Ljubljana – an important reference point for the group – as well as Group of Six Artists in Zagreb, KÖD in Novi Sad, and Team A³ and Group 143 in Belgrade.

¹⁶⁰ Once visual artist Bálint Szombathy became image editor of the *Új Symposion* journal 1971, he made a powerful impact on the visual content of the journal; due to the conservative preferences of the older critics, which resulted in the lack of

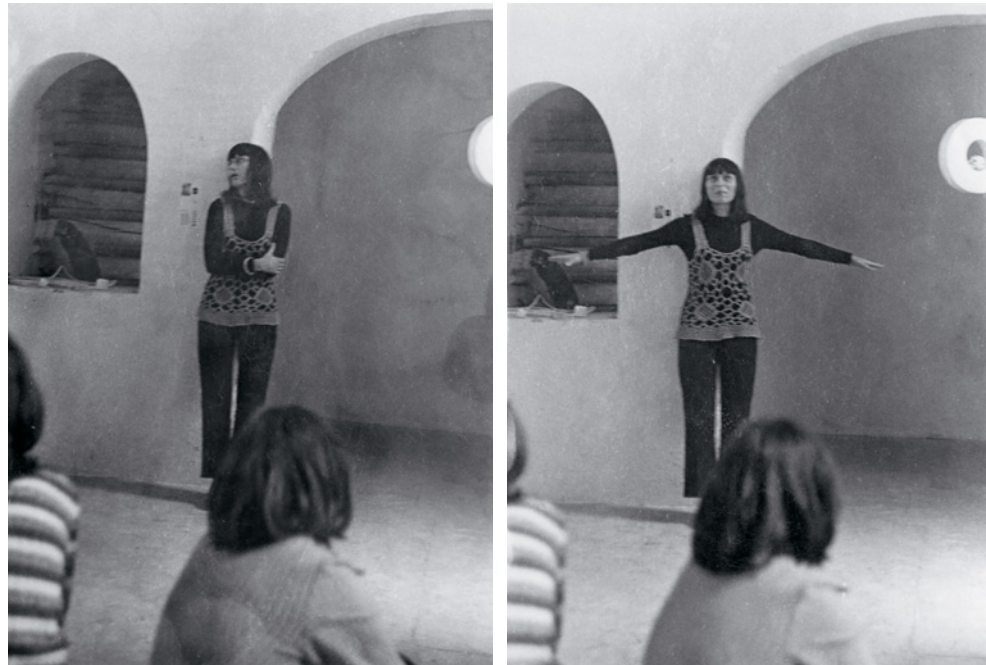
progressive art criticism, he also took on the role of theorist-critic of the neoavantgarde in Vojvodina.

¹⁶¹ Nebojša Milenković, 'A történelmi bőség mint művészeti alapanyag' [Historical Richness as Raw Material for Art], in *Szombathy. YU Retorika. Válogatás negyvenöt év munkáiból* [YU Rhetoric. Selected Works of Forty-Five Years], Forum, Novi Sad, 2014, p. 26.

¹⁶² Bálint Szombathy, 'Landmarks in the Work of the Group Bosch+Bosch', in Marijan Susovski, op. cit. 1978, p. 51.

¹⁶³ Miško Šuvaković, *Attila Černik, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine*, Novi Sad. Vujičić kolekcija, Beograd, Novi Sad, 2009, pp. 108–109.

Live Performance
of *Letter O* by
Attila Csernik,
Balatonboglár, 1972
photo by
György Galántai



era as well. Their experimental film *O-pus* (1972) was shown in in July 1973 in Balatonboglár¹⁶⁴, at the autonomous forum of the Hungarian neoavantgarde which would soon be closed down in a police action. Csernik and Ladik made the film with Imre Póth, a cameraman at Novi Sad television, and later photographer of the *Poemim* photo performances. The moving image version of Attila Csernik's sign explorations was accompanied by Ladik's phonic interpretation based on a score several pages long. Csernik printed various shapes of the letter 'O' on A4 size paper. He made a larger letter 'O' out of thicker paper which he positioned in different ways on the A4 sheet, and he also photographed the different situations of the 'O' applied to body parts and positioned in space. When the film was done, he asked Katalin Ladik to sing what she saw. Ladik's extreme articulation, broad vocal range, and the wide emotional continuum of sounds do not illustrate the pictures, which evoke early avantgarde film, but move along them in a parallel autonomous sphere or, at times, go beyond the minimalism of what is seen. After the projection, the Balatonboglár audience could hear Katalin Ladik complementing the film by singing live to Csernik's space installation on site, a large letter 'O' hung from an arch into the space with his signature 'ball' with Letraset lettering balancing on it.¹⁶⁵

The creation of collective works involving all the members, like the actions of the OHO group, was less typical of the operation of the Bosch+Bosch group, where dual collaborations were more prevalent. Bálint Szombathy and Slavko Matković were connected by a particularly strong artistic friendship and creative coherence, and Szombathy and Ladik being partners in private life intrinsically allowed for a tight collaboration. A poetic moment of their collaboration is the action *Resurrection* in 1973, an 'exercise in meditation' based on Szombathy's conception and in-

¹⁶⁴ Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári (eds.), *Törvénytelen avantgárd. Galántai György balatonboglári kápolnaműterme 1970–1973* [Illegal Avantgarde: The Chapel Studio of György Galántai in Balatonboglár 1970–1973], Artpool-Balassi, 2003.

¹⁶⁵ According to Galántai's diary entry, the reception of the film and the live performance in

Balatonboglár was exceptionally enthusiastic: 'We screened Csernik and Ladik's film at 1 pm, positions of letters O. Sound: Ladik. Then Ladik created an experience for us downstairs. With tape-recorded and natural sound. It was awesome. The incomprehensible sound is built on relatively little comprehensible text.' *Törvénytelen avantgárd*, 2003, p. 164.



Bálint Szombathy's
Postcard for Katalin
Ladik, 1975

terpreted by Miško Šuvaković. The site of the action was a military cemetery, where Ladik and Szombathy were lying with their eyes closed in the pose of the dead under the nameless numbered crosses. Szombathy interpreted the work, saying 'I had the idea of joint death and joint resurrection on my mind. If you observe the positions of the bodies, you can see the peak of a wave, which can be an emotional outburst, the peak of a relationship, or even an orgasm.'¹⁶⁶ The photos taken of the action were made by Slovenian neoavantgarde poet and visual artist Franci Zagoričnik, who was inspired by the location and the action to create a work of his own later on.

Some of the participatory actions of this kind remained at the stage of plans in Katalin Ladik's actionism. The action scripts she wrote in 1974–75 focused on the city of Novi Sad as a motif and were composed in the tone of the direct instructions of Fluxus aimed at simple ordinary actions:

The Statue of Svetozar Miletić

- 1 The statue conceived by the sculptor Ivan Meštrović is placed on the main square of Novi Sad. Make some copies of the statue and exhibit them in four different places in the town.
- 2 Take some photos of the sculpture in natural size from each side, and mount them around the sculpture.
- 3 Fence the sculpture with a transparent glass wall from all sides.
- 4 Make a statue of transparent plastic material. Fill it with water.
- 5 Mount large transparent glass plates on the facades surrounding Miletić's statue.

Float Novi Sad Down the Danube

Throw some postcards of Novi Sad, from Novi Sad into the Danube. Find out later where the river threw them out.

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¹⁶⁶ E-mail from Bálint Szombathy to the author, 10 February 2017.

Danube in Oil

Pour each second a large quantity of oil into the Danube near Novi Sad.
The appearance and sequence of colors is: white, blue, yellow, red, and black.

Water Cleansing

The Snow is melted on each street by pouring blue paint in all street openings of the sewerage system. Make color photos of the major drains in Novi Sad.

Colored Remnants of Snow

Take pictures of the remnants of ice in Novi Sad in different colors.
Take color photos along the river.

Let's meet the inhabitants of Novi Sad

- 1 Publish in the daily newspapers the names and photographs of the living inhabitants of Novi Sad.
- 2 Make a life size portrait of each inhabitant of Novi Sad, and mount them on the street windows of these people's apartments.

Clock-Tower, Petrovaradin Fortress

Wrap a large red ribbon around the clock-tower on Petrovaradin fortress.
Take a photo of the clock tower from Novi Sad across the river.¹⁶⁷

Only two of the Novi Sad actions were realized in the end. *Float Novi Sad down the Danube* (other version: *Descent of the Town of Novi Sad down the River Danube*, 1974), which can be positioned in a land art framework, interprets the shifting relationship of reality and its representation in a processual way, giving great latitude to chance.¹⁶⁸ In the photo action *Pseudopresence* (1974), the collective impact of which is unknown, Ladik placed her previously made life size photograph in the window of her house in Novi Sad, and proceeded to position herself in an identical

pose and in identical clothes in the next window. The work explores the meaning of visual codes in terms of the problem of illusion and reality, the tautological attitude of conceptual art, and in relation to Joseph Kosuth's classic *One and Three Chairs* (1965) piece. Questions probing the concept of art came to the fore in Katalin Ladik's practice in the mid-seventies, as she was expanding individual artistic performativity and collective thinking in a professional milieu towards everyday reality.

This is the tendency highlighted by Bálint Szombathy in his analysis of Ladik's participatory action *Change Art* (1975), tackling the changed



Mail Art by Katalin Ladik, Peter Below and Bálint Szombathy, 1978



Exhibition of Yugoslav Artists in Würzburg, 1978

status of art and artist.¹⁶⁹ Katalin Ladik announced an exchange action of objects and ideas to the general public, which took place at the Tribina Mladih in Novi Sad. Participants brought various objects of use, perhaps feelings or thoughts, which they could offer up for exchange, and the artist who conceptualized the process was only one participant among many. The author dissolved in the democratic texture of participation, where the participatory value inherent in the process was produced by the horizontal activities of participating equals rather than by the uniqueness of the subject. This is how Roland Barthes, who had a profound impact on 1970s discourses, comments on the new status of the author and receiver in a classic passage: 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination; Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.'¹⁷⁰

Other, namely political, aspects of participation were also foregrounded in the context of socialism, however. In the foreword of her book *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop argues that one should not assume that the participatory events of the period – from the Czechoslovakian happenings of the 1960s-70s to conceptual actions in Moscow – correspond to the concept of collectivism in use in the dominant canon. She explains that 'participatory art under state socialism was often deployed as a means to create a privatised sphere of individual expression.'¹⁷¹ In the context of Katalin Ladik's works, this view is confirmed by an unexpected aside in Bálint Szombathy's previously cited article; the comment, which is quite surprising given the circumstances, virtually brackets the current socialist context of *Change Art*: 'Ladik claims that art is something closely connected to our everyday lives, the purest forms of which pre-existed class society. Living artistically – i.e. working by specific ethical and aesthetic standards – this is where one should be searching for the meaning of

¹⁶⁷ Katalin Ladik, *Novi Sad Projects*, 1974–75, manuscript.

¹⁶⁸ One might refer to one of Ewa Partum's early actions (*poem by ewa*, 1971), which leaves the structural arrangement of the components of the

poem to the chance movements of the sea in a similarly organic environment.

¹⁶⁹ Bálint Szombathy, 'A csere folyamata' [The Process of Exchange], *Képes Ifjúság*, 10 December 1975.

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¹⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1968), in Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, London, 1977, p. 148.

¹⁷¹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London-New York, 2012, p. 4.

Bálint Szombathy,
***Flags*, photo-action,**
Tarcal Hill near Novi
Sad, 1972, Photo
by Zoltán Apró



art.¹⁷² Katalin Ladik aimed at a universalist conception of art – something that can be traced back to the logic of her performative practice in the sixties – which could not exclude contact with contemporary political reality, yet espoused the belief in the organic unity of life and art closer to Fluxus attitudes.

This is why the works that make more direct references to contemporary Yugoslav political reality seem more episodic in her oeuvre. The photo performance *Identification* (1975), which employs the motif of political symbols, was made for an exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav visual art in Vienna, Austria, where Ladik appeared with the Bosch+Bosch group. An enormous Yugoslav flag was placed in front of the facade of the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Wien creating a kind of political space outside the socialist bloc. Ladik's intervention applied to the flag itself as a symbol; she appeared now in the foreground, now covering her face, now behind it, alluding to the anonymity resulting from ideological overexpansion. The work examines how much freedom a political regime allows the individual to have and to what extent individual phraseologies are rendered invisible by an ideologically determined space. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek suggests that the language of official ideologies and vernacular speech were, in fact, closely intertwined (to the point of partly merging) in countries of the eastern bloc, as confirmed by a number of relevant works of the era.¹⁷³ Ideological symbols and texts permeating the public space of the city mingle with simple, everyday texts related to individual emotions in the photo work *1 May, 1975* (1975) by Mladen Stilinović. Bálint Szombathy made a photo series documenting a space intervention in 1972 (*Flags*, 1972), which deconstructed the motif of the Yugoslav flag in the wake of 1968, in the years of crisis for the old political elite. He used several hundred defective paper flags, which evoked the crisis of self-managing socialism through their fading or color misprints due to printing errors.¹⁷⁴ As Szombathy's action articulates the critical voice of a new generation growing up in socialism, so does Katalin Ladik's interpretation expose and measure the Yugoslav body in a context outside the geo-political space of socialism, questioning the political reality of a modernist program.

172 Szombathy, *Képes Ifjúság*, 1975.

173 Slavoj Žižek, 'Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology', in Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, Verso, London-New York, 1994, pp. 1–33.

174 Armin Medosch, 'Flags by Bálint Szombathy', *mezosfera.org*, 2 December 2016, <http://mezosfera.org/flags-1972/>



Attila Csernik, *Experiment with Katalin Ladik*, 1971
 Attila Csernik and Ladik Katalin, *Body Poetry*, 1973

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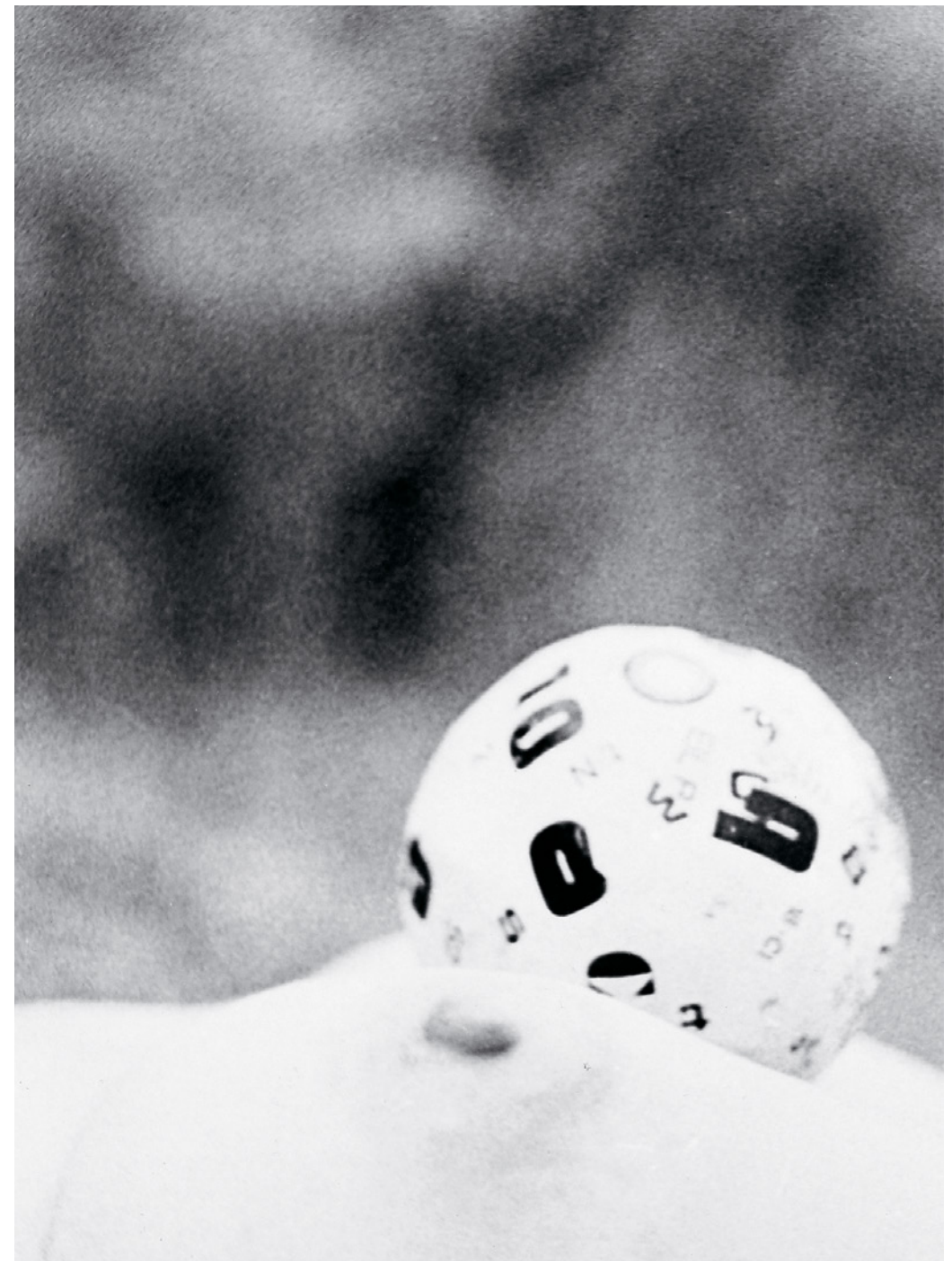


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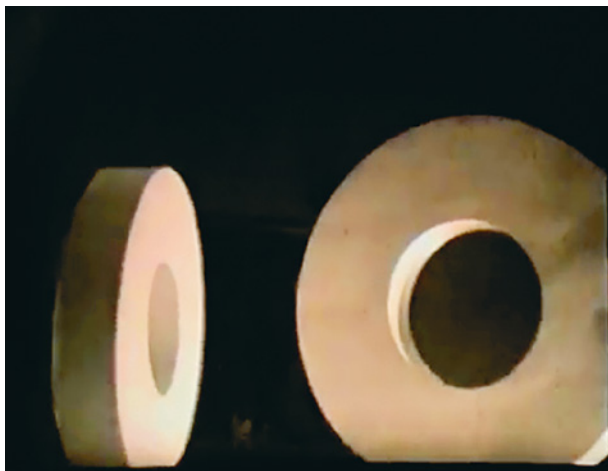
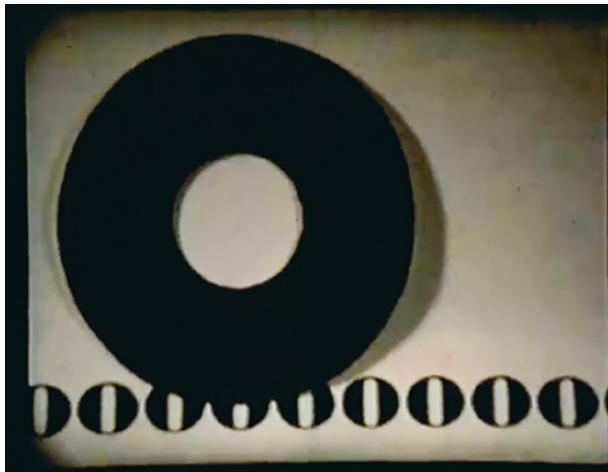
Katalin Ladik and Attila Csernik, *TEX(S)T*, 1973

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Attila Csernik, Katalin Ladik, Imre Póth,
Stills from the Experimental Film *O-pus*, 1972

CONCEPTUALISING
PARTICIPATION

Handwritten musical score for three staves: LEVI, SREDINA, and DESNI. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'Forte' and 'Piano'.

Handwritten musical score for three staves: LEVI, SREDINA, and DESNI. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'Forte' and 'Piano'.

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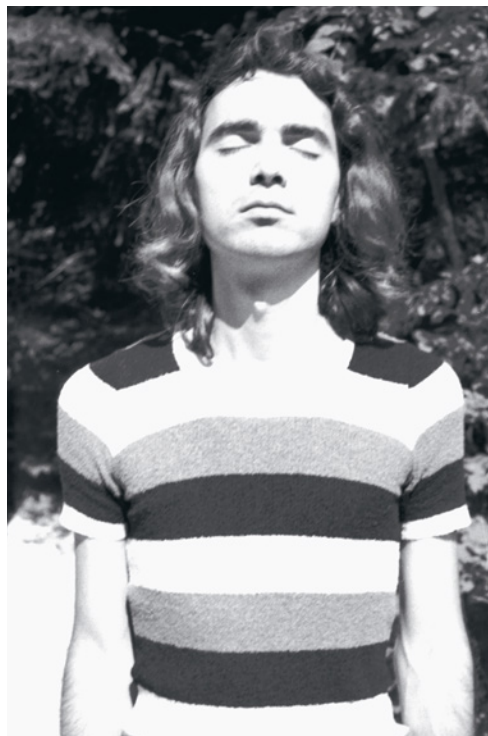
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Katalin Ladik's Score for the Experimental Film O-pus, 1972

CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION



Bálint Szombathy with Katalin Ladik, *Resurrection*, 1973

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75.10.22

specialni broj/special number

PROJECTS I DUNAV AND OTHER INDOOR WORKS

grupe **bosch**
by the **bosch** +

ovaj broj izlazi povodom manifestacije "eksperiment u jugoslavenskoj savremenoj umetnosti" zagreb 1975

this number is published on the occasion of the manifestation called "experiment in jugoslav modern art" zagreb 1975

wow, katalog-novine grupe **bosch+bosch** subotica novi sad, posebno izdanje, izdaje galerija studentskog centra sveucilista u zagrebu/urednik galerije zelimir koscevic /konceptija b szombathy design a csernik/1 3/ b szombathy/245/ 1 sz alma/6/

katalin ladik: PROJEKTI NOVI SAD

miletic's spomenik

1. na glavnom trgu novog sada stoji dio vajara ivana mestrovića. spomenik predstavlja revolucionara svetozara miletića s uzdignutom pesnicom. napraviti četiri kopije i postaviti ih na razna mesta novog sada.
2. napraviti fotografije originalne veličine četiri strane miletićevog spomenika i njima obložiti spomenik.
3. zidom od ogledala obložiti spomenik sa svih strana.
4. od prozirne plastike načiniti miletićev spomenik. napuniti vodom.
5. sve zgrade oko miletićevog spomenika obložiti ogromnim ogledalima.

spuštanje novog sada kroz dunav
razglednice novog sada bacati u dunav kod novog sada. satim objaviti gde je dunav izbacio novi sad.

dunav u ulju
svakih dva minuta veliku količinu ulja ne boje sipati u dunav kod novog sada. redosled i boje su sledeće: bela, plava, žuta, crvena, crna.

šišanje vode
kad se sneg topi u svaki ulični kanalizacioni otvor sipati plavu boju. snimati u koloru glavno kanalizaciono ušće kod novog sada.

obojene sante leda
raznim bojama obojiti sante leda kod novog sada, načiniti kolor snimke o santama leda duž reke.

upoznajmo se sa stanovnicima novog sada

1. u dnevnim listovima objaviti imena i fotografije živih stanovnika novog sada.
2. načiniti portret svakog stanovnika novog sada originalne veličine i zalepiti ga na ulični prozor snimljene osobe.

toranj petrovaradinske tvrđave
vezati veliku crvenu masnu tornju petrovaradinske tvrđave. sa novosadskih strana dunava snimiti toranj sa satom.

katalin ladik: NOVI SAD (PROJECTS)

the miletich statue

1. on the main square of novi sad stands the lifted feasted statue of miletich the revolutioner made by mestrovich. make four copies of the statue and place them on four different parts of novi sad.
2. make four photographs of every side of the statue in original size, and place them round it.
3. plank the statue with looking-glass walls from all sides.
4. make a statue from transparent plastic material. fill it with water.
5. put huge looking-glass boards on the buildings around the miletich statue.

letting down novi sad by the danube
throw novi sad picture postcards into the danube at novi sad. later announce where has the danube thrown them out.

the danube in oil

every second minute pour great quantities of oil into the danube at novi sad. the succession of colours is: white, blue, yellow, red and black.

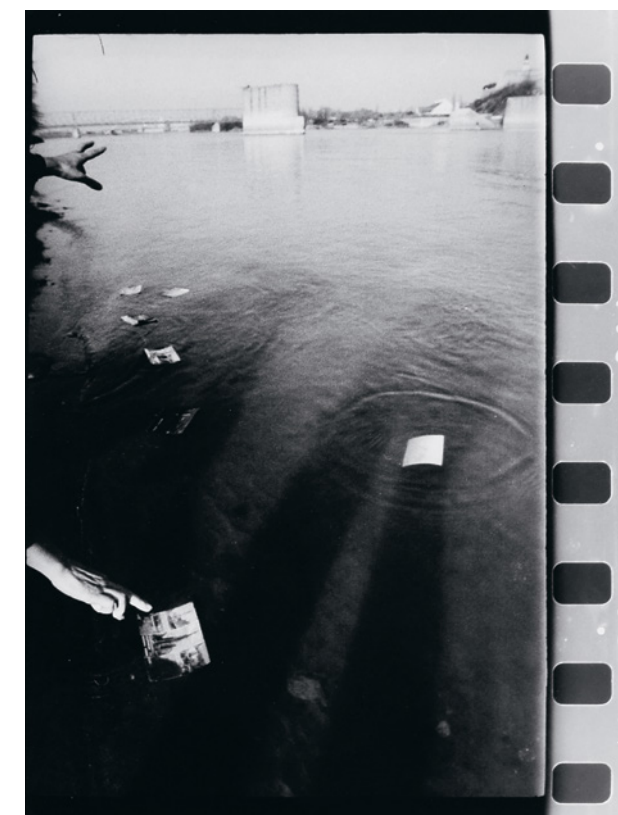
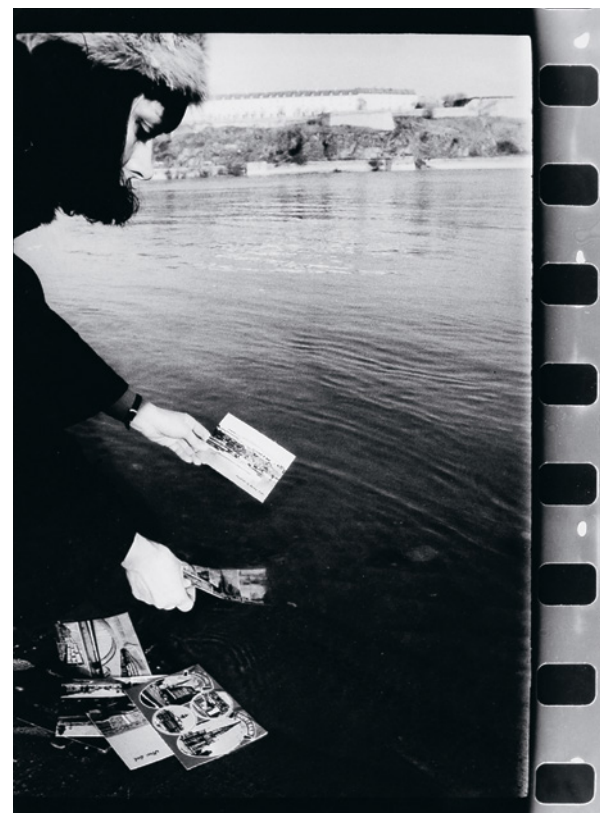
water cleaning

when the snow melts pour blue paints into every street-opening of the sewage-system. make colour photographs of the main sewage-mouth by novi sad.

colour floating ice

paint the floating ice by novi sad with different colours. make colour photographs of it along the river.

Stampa „Forum“, Novi Sad, 27. 10. 1975.





Pseudo Prisutnost, action, 1974

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Change Art, Belgrade, 1975

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PARTICIPATION**

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katalin ladik:

CHANGE ART - umetnost razmene, izmene i promene
(projekat)

- change art nema za cilj da postane nova umetnost
- umetnost razmene je najstariji izum čoveka
- sa umetnošću razmene susrećete se na svakom koraku
- sa umetnošću razmene postajete bogatiji
- sa umetnošću razmene postajete siromašniji
- u umetnosti razmene učestvujete u svakodnevnom životu nesvesno a često i protiv svoje volje
- u svakodnevnom životu ne odabirate vi lice s kim vršite razmenu
- ovo je prilika da svesno odaberete predmet i lice s kim razmenjujete
- ovo je prilika da odbijete (razbijete) predmet razmene
- ovo je prilika da iznesete svoje mišljenje
- ovo je prilika da promenite svoje mišljenje
- ovo je prilika da usvojite nečije mišljenje
- ovo je prilika da iskoristite nečije mišljenje
- ovo je prilika da se pravite kao da imate mišljenje
- ovo je prilika da ostanete bez mišljenja
- ovo je prilika da ostavite predmet ili lice koje ne volite
- ovo je prilika da nadjete predmet ili osobu koja vam se dopada
- ovo je prilika da učestvujete u najdirektnijoj komunikaciji
- ovo je prilika da bar jednom ne učestvujete ni u čemu
- ovo je prilika da bar jednom ne naškodite umetnosti
- ovo je prilika da naškodite umetnosti
- ovo je prilika da ostanete ravnodušni prema umetnosti

projekat realizovan 1975. u novom sadu i 1976. u beogradu

Katalin Ladik:

CHANGE ART – The art of change, exchange and alteration (event)

- It isn't the aim of Change Art to become a New Art
- The Art of change is man's oldest invention
- You'll come across the art of change at every step you make
- You become richer with the art of change
- You become poorer with the art of change
- Uncossciously and often against your will you take part in the art of change in everyday life
- In everyday life you don't choose the person you make the exchange with
- This is your chance now to consciously choose the object and person you make exchange with
- This is your chance to refuse (break) the object of change
- This is your chance to give your opinion
- This is your chance to alter your opinion
- This is your chance to adopt someone else's opinion
- This is your chance to take advantage of someone else's opinion
- This is your chance to pretend you have an opinion
- This is your chance to remain without an opinion
- This is your chance to leave an object or person you don't like
- This is your chance to take part in the most direct type of communication
- This is your chance not to take part in anything at all for once
- This is your chance not to damage Art for once
- This is your chance to damage Art
- This is your chance to remain indifferent to Art

Event performed in Novi Sad in 1975 and in Belgrade in 1976, and at the exhibition Living art – on the Edge of Europe, in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo in 2006.

Score for the Event *Change Art*, Belgrade, 1975

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CONCEPTUALISING
PARTICIPATION

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Identification, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, 1975

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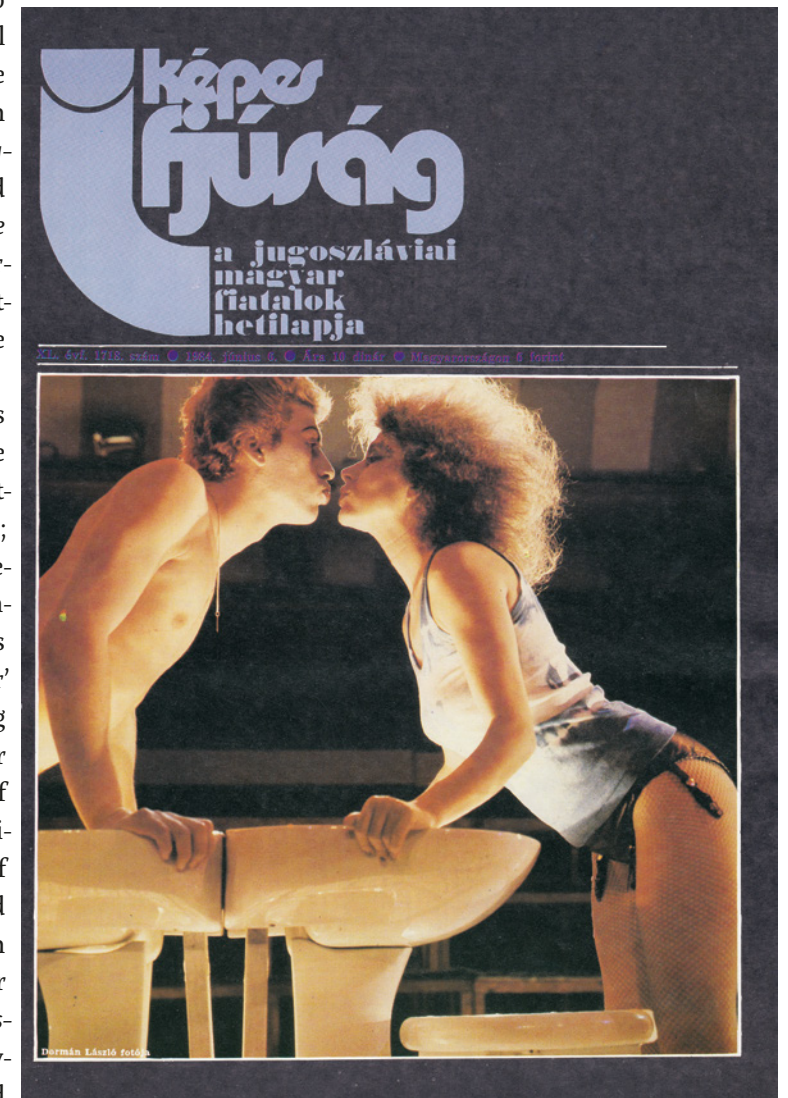
**CONCEPTUALISING
PARTICIPATION**

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THE BODY ON STAGE

In the performance *'L'agneau de Dieu et le double'* (1996) presented in the mid-1990s in Marseille, Ladik Katalin meshed the self-referential use of some earlier motifs of her oeuvre with certain scenic innovations in her repertoire of devices. The performance brought the audience into bodily proximity in a divided staged space split into two by a long transparent plastic curtain, which merely invoked the spatial structuring device of traditional theatre with its illusionism. Rolling the curtain around her body, stuffing it into her mouth and twisting it around herself, Ladik emphasized her interactive, dialogic relation to objects and the reassessed, animating functions of her own position. Although some familiar details of Ladik's performativity were included, such as the glass sheet sequences of *Poemim*, their role was now limited to the referentiality of extended animality. The emphasis shifted to objects of ritual – wine, blood, and a skinned sheep's head – and their greater role. The late eighties saw a rising theatricality in Katalin Ladik's work, as she gave more room to her evolving relation with theatre than before. The spirit the performance *'L'agneau de Dieu et le double'* drew on was that of the great twentieth-century theorist of the theatre, Antonin Artaud, who has remained an important theoretical reference point for Ladik to this day. The performance actually takes its title from a fusion of one of Artaud's texts (*L'agneau de Dieu*) and his perhaps most cited volume of theoretical writings (*Le théâtre et son double*, 1938); Ladik's earlier performance *Seraphin Tanz* (1990), deconstructing male-female relationships, can be traced back to the same origin.

The starting point of Artaud's influential theory of the theatre was the crisis of psychologically motivated Western theatre based on texts and emotions; he found the alternative in Eastern theatre and its metaphysics. His passionate texts argue that Western theatre is in crisis, because it abandoned 'danger' and stopped challenging and energizing viewers by pushing them out of their comfort zones and a familiar current of emotions. This type of avantgarde attitude, dissatisfied with Western forms of civilization, discovered the 'active and anarchic language' of the new theatre in archaic primeval forms and cultures far from western patterns. In his *Metaphysics and the Mise en Scène*, Artaud analyses the close relationship of theatre and poetry and argues for an anarchic and

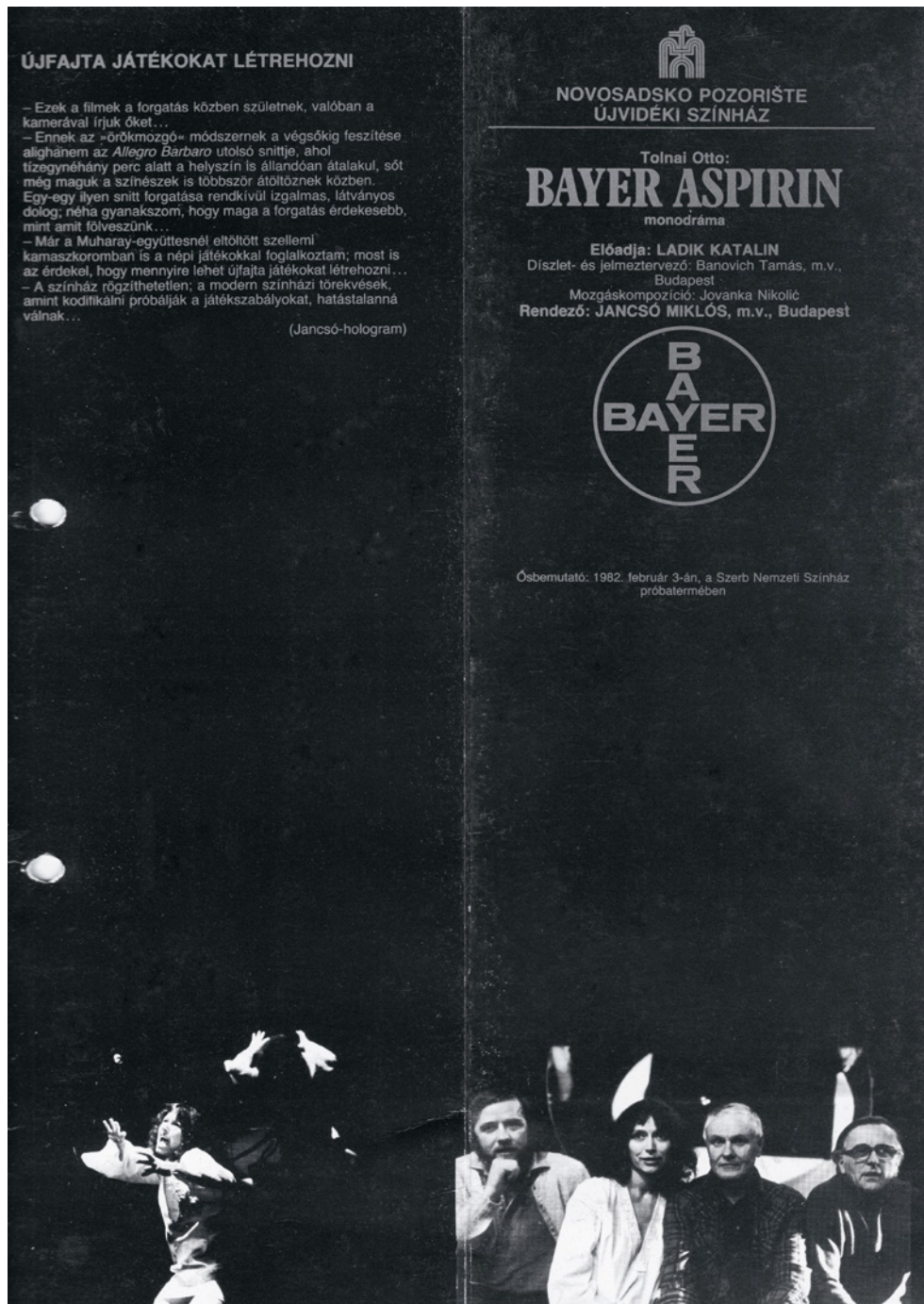


Képes Ifjúság Magazine, 1984

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Leaflet for the theatre play *Bayer Aspirin*, written by Ottó Tolnai, directed by Miklós Jancsó and performed by Katalin Ladik, Novi Sad, 1982

supernatural poetry ‘which can be fully effective only if it is concrete; that is, only if it produces something objectively from the fact of its active presence on the stage;—only if a sound, as in Balinese theater, has its equivalent in a gesture and, instead of serving as a decoration, an accompaniment of a thought, causes its movement, directs it, destroys it, or changes it completely.’¹⁷⁵ The ‘theatre of cruelty’, as defined by Artaud, refers to avantgarde theatre, which is closer to the original functions, those of existential human experience, and which has the dual task of making one more conscious and active: ‘We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads and the theater has been created to teach us, first of all, that,’¹⁷⁶ he writes.

¹⁷⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, Grove Press, 1958, p. 39.

¹⁷⁶ Antonin Artaud, *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, University of California Press, 1988, p. 256.

THE BODY ON STAGE

Artaud’s theatre of cruelty involved the creation of a prelinguistic state on the model of archaic play in Balinese theatre, which used a homogenous aggregate of music, gesture, movements and words. What American experimentalism in the 1950s discovered in Artaud’s texts was not only the political poet (Carl Solomon, Allen Ginsberg and Michael McLure), the reformer of linguistic performativity, but also performatively interpreted music. Douglas Kahn claims that the musical virtuosity of David Tudor was inspired by Artaud’s lines, and the resulting virtuosity was what moved Cagean aesthetics and the course in musical composition at the New School for Social Research.¹⁷⁷ As a performer, Cage connected to the idea of theatre free of text, which resonated with his own notions of the musical reassessment of sound: ‘We got the idea from Artaud that the theatre could take place free of a text, that if text were in it, that it needn’t determine other actions, that sounds, that activities, and so forth, could all be free rather than tied together; so that rather than the dance expressing the music or the music expressed the dance, that the two could go together independently, neither one controlling the other. And this was extended on this occasion not only to music and dance, but to poetry and painting, and so forth, and to the audience. So that the audience was not focused in one particular direction.’¹⁷⁸

After the previously outlined precursors in the 1960s-70s, it was within this post-Cagean context that Katalin Ladik reached her role of ‘Artaud’s daughter’,¹⁷⁹ as defined by Gabriella Bartuc, a critic reviewing Ladik’s work in Vojvodina as well as an eyewitness. Since the 1980s, Artaud’s ‘cruelty’ has tended to evoke a rather self-referential narration that successively reinterpreted the previous periods of her oeuvre that eclectically combined the topoi of the female and the maternal and segments of the performing entity. The prior use of mostly soundmaking devices was replaced by a set of props permitting a more traditional sort of stage transformation, including a range of objects related to women’s clothing and wear. The new scenography of Ladik’s later performances is defined by the characteristically artificial wig, the fleecy umbrella, the mirror, the stockings pulled over the hand or grotesquely over the head, the plastic foil imitating self-exposure/hiding, a sexless bald mannequin, and a Janus face alluding to androgyny. The objects are more than ornamental in the performance, however; their role is rather dialogical, substitutional and humanized. The artist interacts with them and animates them as participants of a grotesque puppetshow.¹⁸⁰ There is also a fluctuation in Ladik’s use of objects, insofar as these motifs nearly vanish from her performances by the 2000s or only reappear as passing references in the service of deconstructing self-mythologization.

The spectrum of definitions of these later scenic performances reflects the increasing hybridity of Katalin Ladik’s works: while Endre Székárosi designates this shifting emphasis in the oeuvre as ‘phonic theatre’, Miško Šuvaković uses the concepts of ‘proto-theatre’ and ‘proto-cabaret’. Gabriella Schuller links Ladik’s activities

¹⁷⁷ Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat. A History of Sound in the Arts*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, p. 328.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 330.

¹⁷⁹ Gabriella Bartuc, ‘A nyelv atlétája’ [The Athlete of Language], *Ex-Symposium*, 2010/72, p. 42.

¹⁸⁰ ‘I admit I loved the world of puppetry, the world of adult puppetry, the possibility of animating objects. And I constantly conducted a dialogue with some object on stage. For example, I used to like the chair very much as a partner. It was a fixture on

the stage for a while. I used the chair in a variety of ways. The chair as a four-legged thing is quite erotic, because we sit on it. But other elements of the built space, such as doors and windows, also play an important role in the poems. They have an enormous part in my poems. Because it’s about making a transition, about getting out.’ Katalin Ladik interviewed by the author, 2016.

to the feminine variants of the performance theatre evolving in the 1980s, where the autobiographic character of works and the themes of women’s subordination and of biological processes related to taboos of the female body (menstruation, giving birth) are recurring motifs. Ladik’s practice narratively reevaluates these characteristically second-generation feminist topoi indirectly present in the texts and opts for a more direct visualization. As Schuller argues, the material of Ladik’s work – the erotic, folk poetry and surrealism – turned into a fragment of scraps of myth, while the modality of poetic language shifted from the erotic to the apocalyptic.¹⁸¹ ‘The new way of presenting the body and its actions on stage resulted in a new concept of the body: it was its malleability, vulnerability and materiality, along with the personal story of the performer’s body that was emphasised.’¹⁸²

This apocalyptic mood is conveyed most by Ladik’s performance *Man-dora 2* (1985), realized in several versions. The title fuses the word ‘man’ with Pandora’s myth in Greek mythology. The performance, based on the text of Ladik’s cycle of poems *Homo Galacticus* (1980-1985) and held in both Serbian and Hungarian, visualized a sexless creature, a space traveler or angel on stage. The provocatively bold associations and eroticized surrealism of the preceding decades had become gentler; Ladik’s cosmology, with a fictive self in its centre, was now filled with the temporal fragility of human existence:

VAGABOND WITH A SPLIT GRENADE-APPLE IN HAND

Vagabond, with a split grenade-apple in hand
Magic written on the face
Tells stories about a tree bearing green birds as fruit
the escaping gas, gently
it pushes out of the body,
recalls and wonders old tastes
searches for dark sails
that already wrinkled.

Mentions an old penalty
a distant, early morning fog
earlier movements of life
the great challenge, the assignment
The white fire sleeps in the throat.

Rivers fall and cover all
comes to, and is about to shout.

WHAT SHRINKING KNOWLEDGE TURNS ITS STRING TO WATER

Seemingly, the fly approaching his face, intent on shooing it away
instead he touches his own life,
to reach the point where he can see his life.
He will grow. The skies become more blinding

His head touches the skyline.
His face ice cold, damp. The button on fire is inside his head
under pent desire a spring quietly hums.

After a long silence, a screaming blond ladder.¹⁸³

The original Hungarian version, where the gender of the subject is unspecified in the poem due to the grammar of the language, is closer to Ladik’s performative ideas than the English translation where the choice of gender is unavoidable. During the performance, the artist (like a kind of space creature) wears protective gear, a stylized spacesuit that conceals all gender-specific details and a helmet covering her face. The recurring motif of androgyny has haunted Ladik since she lost the ungendered, ideal and free state of childhood before she entered puberty and had to confront not only a sense of femininity, but also restrictions and rules. ‘Since I was completely free when I was a child, the more I grew, the more I was beginning to feel what a curse it was to be a woman, because this was when a lot of things I could do as a child came to be prohibited. As a child, I felt perfect, like an androgynous being or an angel: I did not know if I was a girl or a boy. We would go and roam the streets, girls and boys together. We lived in the street, laughed, played, and did everything. We didn’t even have toys; we played in the dirt, in the mud. It was wartime, and our parents were too busy to care for us. It became clear much later, during puberty, that I was a girl. That’s when the world began to change around me, bringing all kinds of expectations for my behaviour. I lost the freedom of my childhood. It was this freedom I wanted to retrieve to become a whole, complete person once again. Not a woman or a man, but the creature I was as a child.’¹⁸⁴

In Ladik’s oeuvre, the state of androgyny marks the desire to break free of gender roles, which she traces back to the Platonic primeval origin. The irreconcilability of male and female desires, the explanation of the erotic and of homosexuality appears in Plato’s *Symposium* in an attractive mythological formula, which posits human beings as originally not just of two sexes, but also their mixture. ‘The primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike’,¹⁸⁵ writes Plato. This ‘androgynous’ state, the mixture of male and female, ceased by Zeus’s will, who split this harmonious primordial creature into two, like a fruit, which is why it has been in crisis and searching for its lost other half ever since. It is as if Ladik’s *Tesla* performance (2006) were visualizing this primeval ideal Platonic state: the body concealed by the grotesquely round white protective clothes looked identical in its frontal and back views. You could only see from a profile view that it was a two-faced creature grown on itself, as it were. She used the motif of androgyny in *Tesla* dialogically, to mean alternately the narrator and the dovelike creature; depending on which side was using the theremin, she switched the two sides of the body. Ladik found Nikola Tesla, the scientist inventor and mystic philosopher, to be a ‘homo galacticus’, who belongs to the universe, so she used the same cycle of poems *Homo galacticus*, already used in *Mandora*, in her vocal and musical performance.

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183 Original titles: *Vándor, kezében felrepedt gránátalma* and *Miféle szűkülő tudat húrja válik vízzé*. Translated from the Hungarian original by Emőke B. Rácz.

184 Katalin Ladik interviewed by Vera Bálint, manuscript, 2011.

185 Plato, *Symposium*, trans by Benjamin Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>.

181 Gabriella Schuller, ‘On Katalin Ladik’s Performances’, in *The Power of a Woman*, 2010, p. 255.

182 Ibid, p. 253.

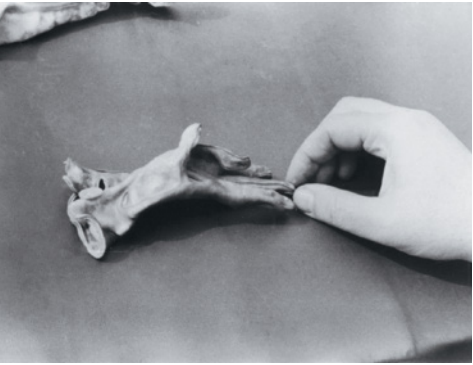
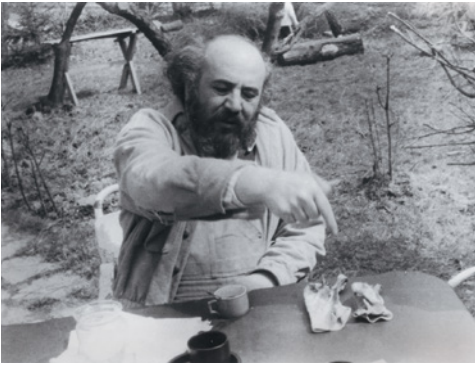
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Premières Recontres
Internationales
de Poésie Contempo-
raine, Cogolin,
France, 1984

BANANA SPLIT	DOCIKS	MANICLE	SKÖRIA	COGOLIN	1/7 JUILLET 1984	APERÔ/PACA	BANANA SPLIT	DOCIKS	MANICLE	SKÖRIA
18 H 30 • MATINÉES • 19 H 30 Au château				22 H • SOIRÉES • 23 H 30 Au Centre Culturel						
EXPOSITION FLUXUSPOESIE • Au château, tous les jours de 15 à 18 h 30 • Vernissage le 1 ^{er} juillet à 16 h				Les invités de "SKÖRIA" • Anne-Marie ALBIACH • Olivier CADOT • Emmanuel HOCQUARD • RAQUEL • Jacqueline RISSET	D	1	"LA POESIE CATALANE" • Antoni MARI • Carles H. MOR • Carles SANTOS			
SEMINAIRE : "FLUXUS" par Dick HIGGINS • Au château, les lundi 2 et mardi 3 juillet 1984, de 10 h 30 à 12 h				Revue invitée par l'Aperô/Paca : "DELTA" • Franc DUCROS • Anne-Marie JEANJEAN • Claude RICHARD	L	2	"LA POESIE ET FLUXUS" • Gianfranco BARUCHELLO • BEN • Esther FERRER et Juan HIDALGO • Dick HIGGINS			
"QU'EST-CE QUI SE PASSE ?" TABLE RONDE avec Denis ROCHE • Au château, les mercredi 4 et jeudi 5 juillet 1984 de 10 h 30 à 12 h.				Les invités de "BANANA SPLIT" • Joseph GUGLIELMI • Bernard NOEL • Anne PORTUGAL • Paul-Louis ROSSI	M	3	"LA POESIE TUNISIENNE" • Mohamed DRISS • Abdelwahab MEDDEB • Abderrazak SAHLI			
				Les invités de "DOCIKS" • Jean-François BORY • Bernard HEIDSTECK • Michèle METAIL	M	4	"POESIE ET MUSIQUE YOUGOSLAVE" • Branko ALEKSIC • Katarin LADIK • Martin DAVORIN-JAGODIC			
				Revue invitée par l'Aperô/Paca : • "DETOURS D'ECRITURE" (P. HUTCHINSON) • "LOQUES" (A. LABELLE-ROJOUX) • "LOTTA POETICA" (SARENCO) • "TAM-TAM" (A. SPATOLA) • "VIUW" (AL PAVL)	J	5	"LA POESIE ITALIENNE" • Mili GRAPPI • Giulia NICCOLAI • Amelia ROSSELLI • Patricia VICINELLI			
				Revue invitée par l'Aperô/Paca : "CHEMIN DE RONDE" • Danielle ROBERT • Christian TARTING • Frédéric VALABREGUE	V	6	"POESIE ET MUSIQUE" • Julien BLAINE avec Christine CROS et Jean-Pierre BEDOYAN • Jean-Jacques LEBEL et Joëlle LEANDRE • Valeria MAGLI • Adriano SPATOLA et Giuliano ZOSI			
				Les invités de "MANICLE" • Franco BELTRAMETTI • Jean-Pierre FAYE • Olivier KAEPELIN • Saul YURKIEVICH	S	7	"SOIREE DE CLÔTURE" • Kathy ACKER • Anthony BARNETT • Haroldo de CAMPOS • "QUATRO MANICLE" (Nanni BALESTRINI, Jill BENNETT, Liliane GIRAUDON et Jean-Jacques VITON			

To return to the *Mandora* variations, themes of femininity appeared in the performance through a reference to motherhood despite the dominant presence of the gender-neutral space creature. In Belgrade and Budapest, where she held the entire cycle of poems several times, she replaced the sun as a life-giving star with a plastic bag of milk in the stage space. She cut the bag open in the course of the performance and bathed in the dripping milk, which referred to motherhood and also became a wellspring of anecdotal events.¹⁸⁶ In the version performed in Vienna or Cogolin, France, the theme of androgyny was realized in a different choreography. The artist was dressed in black, with the area of the breasts cut out of the clothing, and the exposed skin was painted white to highlight the female principle even more symbolically. She would alternate between wearing a wig or not, but she consistently had herself tied up with strings, and she tied white rubber bands around her hands (like bracelets) and waist, the sight of the bands like so many rays leading the gaze to her body. This 'larval imago', as Ladik calls it, would writhe until the external covering ripped open, but the rubber stayed in place on her body, allowing her to move in different directions. The new element in this type of performance was that she not only tried to free herself, unsuccessfully, of the string symbolizing limits and obstacles, but also removed items from her body, her womb, alluding to pregnancy. In Vienna, she pulled a bag of feathers from under her dress and threw them up in the air; at other times, she pulled a long shroud to the open, as if she were removing her femininity in the painful process of giving birth or having an abortion. It was this point of the performance that marked final liberation, if in a contradictory way due to its gendered status: 'And she is free now, slowly cutting the string from herself,

¹⁸⁶ On one occasion in Budapest, the deerskin gloves borrowed from Miklós Erdély shrunk to a quarter of their size in a few weeks due to the exposure to milk. Erdély was delighted with the transformation, which was governed solely by chance and chemistry.



Miklós Erdély
and Katalin Ladik,
Budapest, 1982

she frees herself, but it doesn't make her happy, because she has lost her gender. This is the message of *Mandora*. Granted, she is free now, but it doesn't feel like success. It took a huge sacrifice."¹⁸⁷

A more universal motif, less connected to male and female themes, has recently appeared in Katalin Ladik's oeuvre, for instance, in *Erogen Zoon*, one of her latest performances, which was presented at the FM Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea in 2016 in Milan. The performance, which recycles Ladik's text in her correspondence with Tamás Szentjóby in 1968, deals with the greatest crisis of contemporary societies, the issue of migration, with a sensitivity sustained by the artist's minority position. When *Erogen Zoon* was performed for the first time, the Hungarian government was building a fence on the southern border to keep out refugees fleeing the war in Syria. Humanitarian concerns have weakened since then, and an increasing number of Western-European countries have endorsed the Hungarian model. Ladik, an artist who moved to Hungary as a result of the war in Yugoslavia and is an immigrant herself, presented her performance of solidarity as a caged animal with her backpack and escape pack in front of a fence, and a copy of her passport hanging around her neck. The text is on the border of phonic poetry and narrative text; since it is played from a recording, the artist's silence – a poetic manifestation of a universal demand for humanity – accompanied by slow movements is especially dramatic.

The self-referentiality and reiterative character of Katalin Ladik's later performances, and the subjectivity of her own performative oeuvre can be interpreted as the analytical expression of a continuously reflected artist self. It was only the apparatus of her performances that evolved over the years and shifted towards Artaud's concept of the theatre, but there has been no significant turn ei-

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¹⁸⁷ Katalin Ladik interviewed by the author, 2016.

¹⁸⁸ Despite the rising number of female artists since the political transition, there is hardly any feminist art in the Western sense in the contemporary art scene of Hungary. The same applies to the

lacking reception of the waves of theory since the 1970s. Cf., for example, Ágnes Berecz, 'Between Women. Women Artists and Feminist Discourses in Hungary in the 1990s', in *Gender Check*, 2009, pp. 331–340.

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Mozgó Világ Magazine, Budapest, 1984. On the cover: still from the short film *Castrati*, directed by Domonkos Moldován, 1972

189 This is what László Lakner refers to with the expression 'they were all furiously criticizing her the next day' in 1970 in his previously quoted letter, where 'they' included Tamás Szentjóbby and Miklós Erdély as well. Gábor Altorjay would retrospectively and self-critically clarify the conflict: 'A personal note: I was jealous of the women of happening for a long time, because I thought they were using a device – their charming bodies – that I was not granted, and therefore this possibility was denied us, lousy men: moorman, schneeman, yoko, abramovic and ladik too, so it was unfair, and that's

why I was attracted to marta [Marta Minuhin, E. K.], who never indulged in this.' Gábor Altorjay's e-mail to the author, 28 February 2017.

190 Bálint Szombathy, 'Ahogy én látom. Út a beteljesülés felé' [As I See It. The Path to Fulfillment], *Magyar Szó*, 21 October 1978.

191 Vesna Kesić, 'Katalin Ladik: JA SAM JAVNA ŽENA', *Start*, Zagreb, 28. 2. 1981, pp. 72–73, quoted in Miško Šuvaković, *The Power of a Woman*, 2010, p. 33.

ther in her consciousness or in her status among artists. Katalin Ladik has remained an unclassifiable iconic artist in the cultural life of Yugoslavia and Hungary, and responses to her have remained wide-ranging, from devotion to misunderstanding or rejection by artists of older generations, outside the neoavantgarde in the narrow sense, based on their cherished preconceptions.¹⁸⁸ Even one-time fellow neoavantgarde artists saw her as an unassailable rival, whose distinctive use of auditive-visual mediums and position as a woman resulted in an advantage they could not catch up with.¹⁸⁹

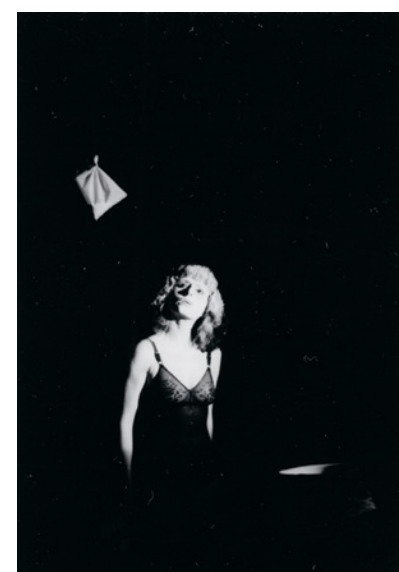
Katalin Ladik's solitude, as an autobiographical fact and as an illustration of the patriarchal character of neoavantgarde culture, appeared in her reception as early as the late seventies. In a debate article on the generational character and heterogeneity of *Új Symposion*, Bálint Szombathy refers to the fact that certain members of the movement were not properly understood and included, naming Katalin Ladik specifically, as someone 'who was not gratuitously called the solitary one of her generation, since her solitude cannot be simply attributed to the nature of her experiments.'¹⁹⁰ Ladik's burden consists in both the uniqueness of her phonic performances

this is about.'¹⁹¹ It was the lens of sexuality that distanced Ladik's reception from the musical-visual intermediality of her works and its sensitive interpretation, and the same lens was what she strove to undermine for decades. Katalin Ladik has forced East-European cultural scenes to confront representations of the other and its disquieting effects, and the reactions of these scenes not only prove the authenticity of her still open oeuvre, but also testify to the need for its existence.



*Performance with the participation of László Beke and
Miklós Erdély, Young Artists Club, Budapest, 1982*

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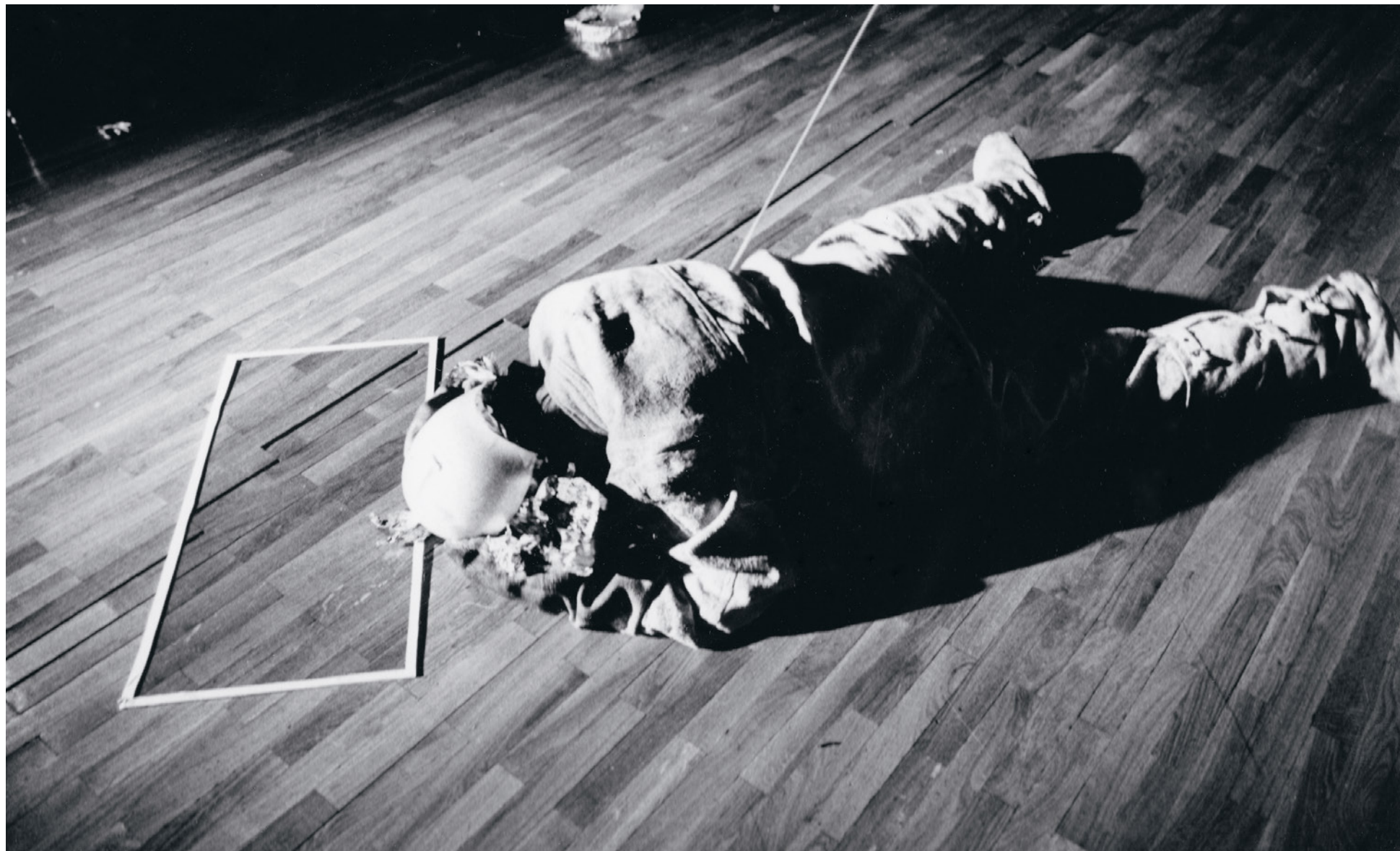
*Mandora, Rencontres Internationales
de Poesie Contemporaine, Cogolin, France, 1984*

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Mandora, Theatre Banja Luka, Sarajevo, 1985

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Poemask, 1982

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Mandora, Theatre Magaza, Belgrade, 1985

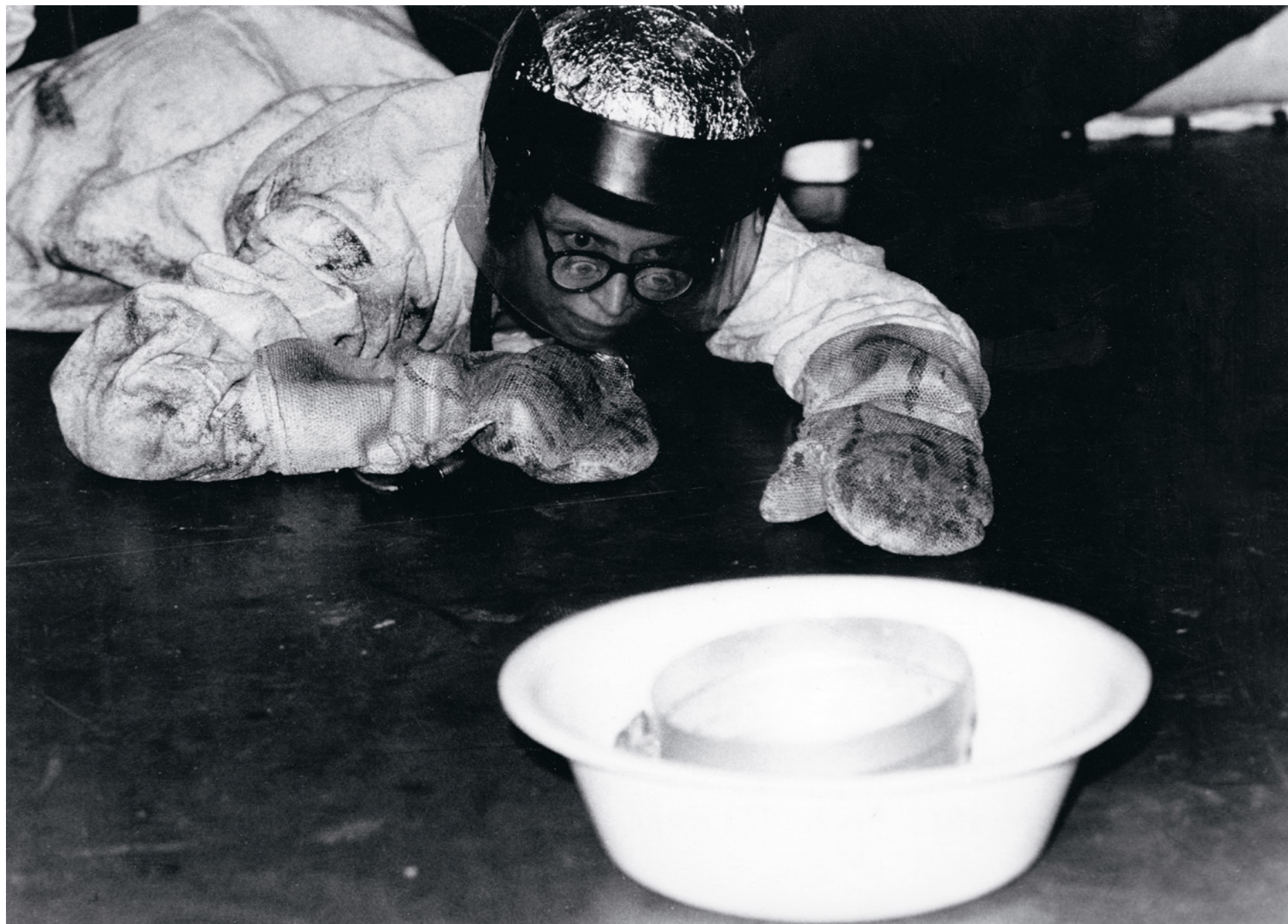
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Katalin Ladik: MANDORA (performance)

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ON STAGE

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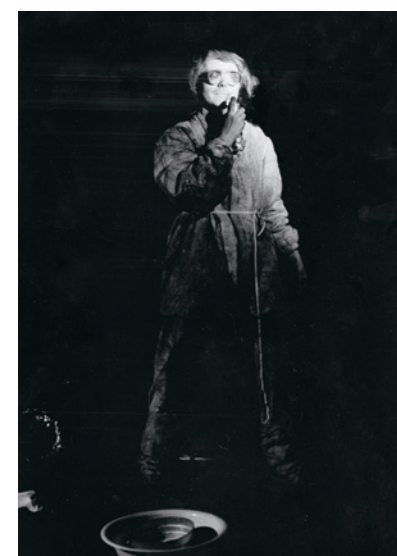


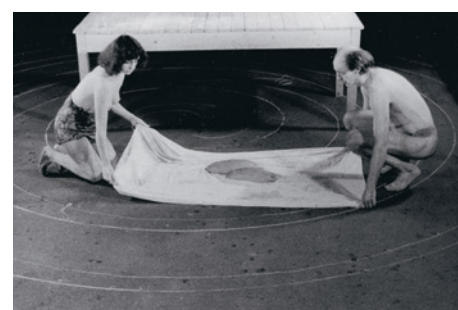
Mandora, Theatre Magaza, Belgrade, 1985

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Magic Bread with Paul Pignon, Belgrade, 1983

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Alice, Budapest, 1987

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**THE BODY
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Through Space and Time, with Petre Nikoloski, Skopje, 1989

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**THE BODY
ON STAGE**

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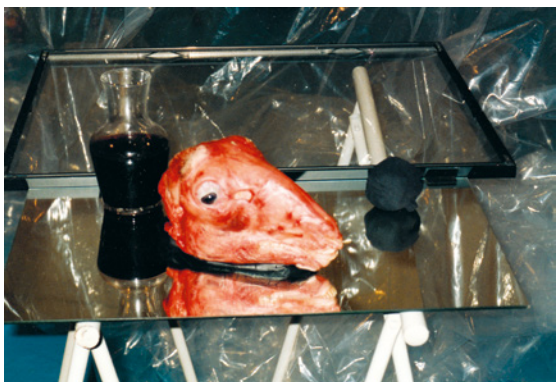


Seraphin Tanz, with Zoltán Pletl, 1990

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The Lamb of God and the Alter-ego, Marseille, 1996

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Trip-ti-chon performance, Szigliget, 2008



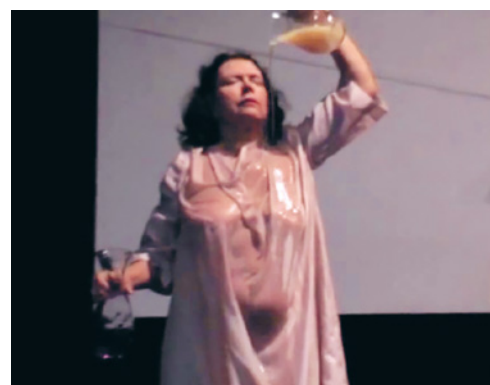
Tesla, Subotica, 2010

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**THE BODY
ON STAGE**

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Le Grand Ménage, Le 8 ème Festival Festival de Poésie et performance
de Marseille, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, 2011

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Transit Zoon, Eger, 2015

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LIST OF WORKS

LANGUAGE THROUGH YOUR BODY

***Ladik Katalin és Balaskó Jenő költői estje / Poetry reading
of Katalin Ladik and Jenő Balaskó, performance, Budapest, 1970***

gelatine silver print, 9×9 cm / each

Irokéz Collection

Performance, Zagreb, 1970

gelatine silver print, 13×18 cm / each

Private Collection

UFO Party, performance, Novi Sad, 1970

gelatine silver print, 13×18 cm

UFO Party, 1970

vintage xerox copy, 19,7×12,2 cm / each

Szituációk / Situations, 1970

gelatine silver print, 13×18 cm / each

László Vágó Collection

Performance, Temerin, 1970

gelatine silver print, 9×14 cm / each

Performance, 1972

gelatine silver print, 11,7×18,5 cm / each

photo by Ana Lazukič

Népdal / Folksong, performance, Stari Bečej, 1973

gelatine silver print, 14×9,5 cm / each, 24×18 cm

photo by Ana Lazukič

R.O.M.E.T, performance with Janez Kocijančič, Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, 1972

score, paper, 29,7×21 cm

R.O.M.E.T, performance with Janez Kocijančič, Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, 1972

gelatine silver print, 10,5×14,8 cm / each

***Blackshave Poem, performance, Fiatal Művészek Klubja
(Young Artist's Club), Budapest, 1979***

gelatine silver print, 15×10 cm / each

photo by György Galántai

Blackshave Poem, performance, Novi Sad, 1978

gelatine silver print, 30×40 cm / each

LIST OF WORKS

Poemim, photo-performance, 1978/2016

gelatine silver print, 30×40 cm / each
photo by Imre Póth

EGO - ALTER EGO 1., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

ink, gelatine silver print, postcard, 14,5×10,2 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 2., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

gelatine silver print, postcard, 10,2×14,5 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 3., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

gelatine silver print, postcard, 10,2×14,5 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 4., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

ink, gelatine silver print, postcard, 10,2×14,5 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 5., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

gelatine silver print, envelope, 17,5×12,5 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 6., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

gelatine silver print, postcard, 14,5×10,2 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 7., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

ink, gelatine silver print, postcard, 10,2×14,5 cm

EGO – ALTER EGO 8., with Peter Below, Hvar, 1979

ink, gelatine silver print, postcard, 10,2×14,5 cm

Pseudosculptura, photo-performance, 1982

gelatine silver print, 24×18,2 cm
photo by Tibor Somogyi Varga

Tour de merde, performance, 1979

gelatine silver print, 15×10,4 cm / each
photo by László Dormán

Rupa Kojā Vrišti / Screaming Hole, performance,

Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, 1979

gelatine silver print, 13×17,8 cm / each
photo by Gábor Ifjú
Collection Emily Austin

SOUND AND VISUAL EXPERIMENTS

Négydimenziós versek: Első szerelem /

Four Dimensional Poems: No 1. My First Love, score, 1969

ink, paper, 6×61 cm

audio recording, 1'31" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Csipi gépzenéje / Electronic music of Csipi no 7., score, 1969

ink, paper, 6×153 cm

audio recording, (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Ornette, score, 1969

ink, paper, 6×83 cm

audio recording, 3'35" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Testem zöld szappan / My Body as Green Soap, 1969

ink, paper, 114,3×6 cm

audio recording

Jugoszláv billentyűzet-dal / Jugoslawisches Tastatur Lied, 1969

typing, collage, 34,5×24,9 cm

audio recording, 2'36" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

László Vágó Collection

Zöld cipőtalp / Green Sole no 2., score, 1969

ink, paper, 6×92 cm

audio recording, 2'16" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Hungarian National Gallery

Katalin Ladik's notes and appendixes to the score

„Bellatrix Alleluja”, composed by Branimir Sakač, Zagreb, 1970

felt-tip pen, paper, 34,9×22,9 cm / each

Spanyol karácsony / Spanish Christmas, 1973

collage, paper, 23×32 cm

audio recording, 1'38" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Katalin Ladik's notes and appendixes to the score Sapho,

composed by Branimir Sakač, Zagreb, 1970

graphite, ink, felt-tip pen, 29,7×21 cm (A4) / each

PSEUDO-PRESENCE 3-4, Acezantez, performance, Zagreb, 1972

gelatine silver print, contact copy, 24×18 cm

PSEUDO-PRESENCE 3-4., Acezantez, performance, Zagreb, 1972

gelatine silver print, 9×12,5 cm
Róbert Alföldi Collection

Tél / Winter, 1972

ink, cardboard, 141×43,5 cm
Hungarian National Gallery

**Zöld tenyér kárpitba verve / Traces of Green Palm
of Hand Upholstery, score, 1972**

ink, letraset, typewriting, ofset, paper, 32×50 cm

Balkan Folk Song Nr. 3, 4, 5, 1973

collage, paper, 32×23 cm / each
audio recording, 1'22" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Feinschmecker, 1975

collage, paper, 34×24 cm

Ólomszonett / Sonnet of the Lead, 1975

painted lead, 15×23 cm

Phonopoetica. Phonetic Interpretation of Visual Poetry, 1976

vinyl record, released by Galerija Studentskog Kulturnog Centra, Belgrade,
33"

Phonopoetica. Phonetic Interpretation of Visual Poetry, Belgrade, 1975

gelatine silver print, 10×15 cm

Flora, 1973

gelatine silver print, 30,3×40 cm / each

**Poetical Objects of the Urbanical Environment (Katalin Ladik,
Gábor Tóth, Bálint Szombathy and Franci Zagoričnik), 1976**

print, paper, 21×15,5 cm

UFO with Peter Below, book object, Hvar, 1979

mixed technique, 15×12,5 cm

Tavaszi zsongás / Spring Buzz, 1977

ofset print, paper, 34×24 cm
audio recording, 0'56" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3
Hungarian National Gallery

Poljsko cvece / Wildflowers, 1978

collage, paper, 89×69 cm
audio recording, 2'14" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3
Hungarian National Gallery

Mondschein Sonate, 1978

collage, paper, 32,5×25,2 cm

Polish Volksong, 1978

collage, paper, 26×17 cm
audio recording, 1'04" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Sunrise, 1978

collage, paper, 23×15 cm

Mars de triomphe, 1978

collage, paper, 32,5×26,5 cm
audio recording, 0'44" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Das Lied von dem goldenen Messer, 1979

collage, paper, 34×24 cm

Duet, 1979

collage, paper, 20×29,5 cm

Singing Legs, 1979

collage, paper, 25,5×32 cm
audio recording, 1'33" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Snail Aria, 1979

collage, paper, 32,5×26,5 cm
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Die Meistersinger, 1980

collage, paper, 20,5×28,5 cm

Heaven Expander, 2016

integrated circuit, object, 3,2×13,2 cm
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

The Garden of Earthly Delights, 2016

integrated circuit, object, 6,7×9,8 cm
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

LIST OF WORKS

Induction Cooker Aria, 2016

integrated circuit, object, 12,5×23,5 cm (two-sided)
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Apocalypse, 2017

integrated circuit, object, 12×20 cm
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

Genesis series, 1975/2016

gelatine silver print, 22×31 cm
audio recording, 0'53" (2015), Master format WAV, plus converted to MP3

CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION

Attila Csernik, Experiment with Katalin Ladik, 1971

gelatine silver print, contact copy, 23×18 cm
photo: Attila Csernik
László Vágó Collection

Testköltészet / Body poetry; Csernik Attila and Ladik Katalin, 1973

gelatine silver print, 23×13,7 cm
László Vágó Collection

TEX(S)T, 1973

gelatine silver print, 39,6×29,7 cm
photo: Attila Csernik
László Vágó Collection

Attila Csernik, Katalin Ladik, Imre Póth, O-pus, 1972

experimental film, 8'14", 10+3 AP

Score for the Experimental Film O-pus, 1972

graphite, ink, paper, 21×29,7 cm / each

Bálint Szombathy with Katalin Ladik, Feltámadás / Resurrection, 1973

gelatine silver print, 18×24 cm / each
photo by Franci Zagoričnik
László Vágó Collection

Újvidék leeresztése a Dunán / Float Novi Sad Down the Danube, 1973

gelatine silver print, 24×18 cm / each
photo by László Dormán
Hungarian National Gallery

Pseudo Prisutnost, 1974

gelatine silver print, 30×40 cm / each

Change Art, action, Belgrade, 1975

gelatine silver print, 18,2×13,1 cm / each

Change Art, script, Belgrade, 1975

paper, typing, 21×29,7 cm

Identifikáció / Identification, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, 1975

gelatine silver print, 17,8×12,9 cm
Irokéz Collection

THE BODY ON STAGE

Performance with the participation of László Beke and Miklós Erdély, Fiatal Művészek Klubja (Young Artists Club), Budapest, 1982

gelatine silver print, 6,7×9,8 cm
photo by Domonkos Moldován

Mandora, Rencontres Internationales de Poesie Contemporaine, Cogolin, France, 1984

gelatine silver print, 18×13 cm / each
photo by Jean-Luc Luyssen

Mandora, Theatre Banja Luka, Sarajevo, 1985

gelatine silver print, 39,8×30 cm / each

Poemask, 1982

gelatine silver print, 12,7×17,5 cm / each
photo by Ana Lazukić
Irokéz Collection

Mandora, Theatre Magaza, Belgrade, 1985

paper, cardboard, 21×15 cm, 39,8×30 cm / each

Magic Bread with Paul Pignon, performance, Belgrade, 1983

gelatine silver print, 11×15 cm / each

Alice, performance, Budapest, 1987

gelatine silver print, 13×18 cm / each, 18×13 cm
photo by László Dallos, András Száraz

LIST OF WORKS

Through Space and Time, with Petre Nikoloski, Skopje, 1989

gelatine silver print, 9 × 13 cm / each
photo by Darko Baseski

Seraphin Tanz, with Zoltán Pletl, performance, 1990

gelatine silver print, 9 × 12,5 cm / each

The Lamb of God and the Alter-ego, Marseille, 1996

gelatine silver print, 9 × 13 cm / each

Trip-ti-chon, performance, Szigliget, Hungary, 2008

digital photo documentation

Tesla, performance, Subotica, Serbia, 2010

digital photo documentation

***Le Grand Ménage, Le 8 ème Festival Festival de Poésie et performance
de Marseille, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, 2011***

stills from the video, 6'19"

Transit Zoon, performance, Eger, Hungary, 2015

digital photo documentation by Lajos Vig

APPENDIX

KATALIN LADIK

(Novi Sad, October 25, 1942) is a poet, performance artist and actress. In the last 20 years she has lived and worked alternately in Novi Sad, Serbia, in Budapest, Hungary and on the island of Hvar, Croatia. Parallel to her written poems she also creates sound poems and visual poems, performance art, writes and performs experimental music and audio plays. She explores language through visual and vocal expressions, as well as movement and gestures. Her work includes collages, photography, records, performances and actions in both urban and natural environments. In addition to a number of books in Hungarian, volumes of her poetry were published in Yugoslavia, France, Italy and the United States. Her visual collages and performance pieces found its place in the collections of prominent private collections and museums in Europe and the United States.

PUBLICATIONS IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

- Ballada az ezüstbicikliről** (Ballad of Silver Bicycle) | poems | Hungarian | with gramophone recording | Forum, Novi Sad, 1969
- Elindultak a kis piros bulldózerek** (The Small, Red Bulldozers Have Taken Off) | poems | Hungarian | Forum, Novi Sad, 1971
- Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről** (Stories of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine) | poems | Hungarian | Forum, Novi Sad, 1978
- Ikarosz a metrón** (Icarus on the Subway) | poems | Hungarian | Forum, Novi Sad, 1981
- A parázna söprű – Bludna metla** (The Promiscuous Broom) | poems | Hungarian-Serbian bilingual | Forum, Novi Sad, 1984
- Kiűzetés** (Exile) | poems | Hungarian | Magvető, Budapest, 1988
- Jegyesség** (Engagement) | poems | Hungarian | Fekete Sas - Orpheusz, Budapest, 1994
- A négydimenziós ablak** (The Four-Dimensional Window) | poems | Hungarian | Fekete Sas, Budapest, 1998
- Fűketrec** (Grass-Cage) | poems | Hungarian | Orpheusz, Budapest, 2004
- Élhetek az arcodon?** (Can I Live on Your Face?) | prose | Hungarian | Nyitott Könyvműhely, Budapest, 2007
- Belső vízözön** (Deluge Inside) | poems | Hungarian | Parnasszus, Budapest, 2011
- Ladik Katalin legszebb versei** (The Most Beautiful Poems of Katalin Ladik) | poems | Hungarian | AB-ART, Bratislava, 2012
- A víz emlékezete** (The Memory of Water) | poems | Hungarian | Kalligram, Budapest, 2016

TRANSLATED VOLUMES

- Poesie Erotiche** (Erotic Poems) | poems | Italian | selected and translated by: Giacomo Scotti | La Sfinge, Naples, 1983
- Erogen Zoon** | poems | Serbian | translated by: Katalin Ladik, Selimir Radulović, Judita Šalgo, Arpad Vicko | Književna Zajednica Novog Sada, Novi Sad, 1987

Stories of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine | poems | English | translated by: Emöke Z. B'Racz | New Native Press, Sylva, 1992

Poèmes (Poems) | poems | French | selected by: Tibor Papp | translated by: Katalin Kluge, Tibor Tardos | CiPM / Spectres Familiers, Marseille, 1999

Ikarova senka (Icarus' Shadow) | poems | Serbian | translated by: Katalin Ladik, Selimir Radulović, Judita Šalgo, Arpad Vicko, Draginja Ramadanski | Orpheus, Novi Sad, 2004

Stories of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine | poems | English | translated by: Emöke Z. B'Racz | Burning Bush Press, Asheville, 2005

Engagement | poems | English | translated by: Emöke Z. B'Racz | Burning Bush Press, Asheville, 2006

Kavez od trave (Grass-Cage) | poems | Croatian | translated by: Kristina Peternai | Matica Hrvatska, Osijek, 2007

E-BOOKS

Fűketrec (Grass-Cage) | poems | Hungarian | Mikes International, The Hague, 2003 | downloadable, pdf format

Fűketrec (Grass-Cage) | poems | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2003 | downloadable, multiple formats

A négydimenziós ablak (The Four-Dimensional Window) | poems | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, multiple formats

Ikarosz biciklijén (On Icarus' Bicycle) | poems | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, multiple formats

Ikarosz biciklijén (On Icarus' Bicycle) | poems | Hungarian | Mikes International, The Hague, 2004 | downloadable, pdf format

Kiűzetés ~ Jegyesség (Exile ~ Engagement) | poems | Hungarian | Mikes International, The Hague, 2004 | downloadable, pdf format

Kiűzetés ~ Jegyesség (Exile ~ Engagement) | poems | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, multiple formats

A négydimenziós ablak (The Four-Dimensional Window) | poems | Hungarian | Mikes International, The Hague, 2004 | downloadable, pdf format

Engagement | poems | English | Firefly Inx, Asheville, 2012 | downloadable, pdf format

Stories of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine | poems | English | Firefly Inx, Asheville, 2012 | downloadable, pdf format

Milyen ízű vagyok? (How Do I Taste?) | poems | Hungarian | A hónap könyve, Szentendre, 2012 | buyable, pdf format

EXHIBITIONS SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1973
Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre Gallery / Galerija Studentskog Kulturnog Centra

1976
Zagreb (Croatia), Photography, Film and Television Centre / Centar za fotografiju, film i televiziju: „Visual Poetry – Music Score” (visual poems, collages)
Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Centre – Art Gallery / Likovni Salon Tribine Mladih

1977
Zrenjanin (Serbia), Cultural Centre / Kulturni centar: „Visual Poetry – Music Score” (visual poems, collages)
Zagreb (Croatia), Cultural and Information Centre / Centar za Kulturu i Informacije: „Visual Poetry – Music Score” (visual poems, collages)

1979
Budapest (Hungary), Young Artists' Club / Fiatal Művészek Klubja: „Visual Poetry - Music Scores” (visual poems, collages)

2007
Budapest (Hungary), Erlin Club Gallery / Erlin Klub Galéria (visual poems, collages)

2010
Novi Sad (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art in Vojvodina / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti Vojvodine (MSUV): Retrospektivna Izložba 1962–2010. Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik (Retrospective Exhibition 1962–2010 The Power of a Woman: Katalin Ladik) (Curated by: Dragomir Ugren)

2011
Székesfehérvár (Hungary), Volksbank Gallery, “Roots and Wings”, Retrospective Exhibition of Katalin Ladik 1962–2010 (Curated by: Helga Rosta)

2015
Budapest (Hungary), Labor Gallery, “Why are you waiting?” (exhibition with Zsófi Szemző) (Curated by: Bea Istvánkó)

2016
Budapest (Hungary), acb Gallery, acb NA Gallery: “The Voice of a Woman”, (Curated by: Emese Kürti)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1974
Pécs (Hungary), University of Technology / Műszaki Egyetem, (Group Bosch+Bosch)

1975
Zagreb (Croatia), Student Centre Gallery / Galerija Studentskog Centra: „Eksperimenti u modernoj jugoslovenskoj umjetnosti” (Experiments in Modern Yugoslav Art)
Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre / Studentski Kulturni Centar: „Festival Expanded Media”
Vienna (Austria), Academy of Fine Arts / Akademie der Bildenden Künste: „Aspekte – Gegenwärtige Kunst aus Jugoslawien” (Aspects – Contemporary Yugoslavian Art) (Group Bosch+Bosch)
Utrecht (Netherlands), 't Hoogt Gallery / Galerie 't Hoogt: „Internationale visuele poëzie” (International Visual Poetry)
Amsterdam (Netherlands), Van Gogh Museum: „Vizuele poëzie” (Visual Poetry)

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1976

Brussels (Belgium), Royal Academy of Art / Rijkscentrum Hoger Kunstonderwijs:

„Internationale Vizuele Poëzie” (International Visual Poetry)

Zagreb (Croatia), Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti,
(Group Bosch+Bosch)

Mildura (Australia), The Mildura Arts Centre: „Mask Show”

Warsaw (Poland), Contemporary Gallery / Galeria Współczesna: „Nowoczesna
Sztuka Jugosławii” (Modern Yugoslavian Art)

Belgrade (Serbia), Salon Museum of Contemporary Art / Salon Muzeja Savremene
Umetnosti, (Group Bosch+Bosch)

1977

Amsterdam (Netherlands), Stedelijk Museum: „Tekst in Geluid” (Text in Sound),

„Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems, collages)

Rotterdam (Netherlands), Academy of Arts/ Academie van Beeldende Kunsten:

„Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems, collages)

Kranj (Slovenia), Prešeren House – Gallery / Galerija v Prešernovi hiši: „westeast”
(visual poems, collages)

1978

Kassel (Germany), Kassel Regional Council / Der Magistrat der Stadt Kassel:

„Subject – Art – Artificial”

Naples (Italy), Experimental Centre of Naples / Centro Experimenta Napoli

Škofja Loka (Slovenia): «westeast»

Venice (Italy), La Biennale di Venezia 1978 (Venice Biennale 1978), „Materializzazione
del linguaggio” (The Materialization of Language): „Visual Poetry - Music
Scores” (visual poems, collages)

Zagreb (Croatia): Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti:
„Nova umjetnička praksa 1966-1978” (New Art Practice 1966-1978)

Florence (Italy), Palazzo Strozzi: „6. Biennale Internationale della Grafica d'Arte”
(6th International Visual Arts Biennale)

Amsterdam (Netherlands), Rubberplatz: „Rubber”

Würzburg (Germany), Hand Press Gallery / Handpresse Galerie:

„Kunstrand-Randkunst” (Art Edge – Edge Art)

Mantua (Italy), Casa del Mantegna: „Mantua Mail”

Kranj (Slovenia): „westeast”

Ljubljana (Slovenia): „westeast”

Zagreb (Croatia): „westeast”

Belgrade (Serbia): „westeast”

1979

Stuttgart (Germany): „Mail Art Exhibition”

Sydney (Australia), Wentworth Building, University of Sydney: „Art Core Meltdown”

Alessandria (Italy), Modern Art Gallery / Galleria D'Arte Nuova: „Trans-P-Art”

Montreal (Canada): „Mail Art”

Recife (Brazil): „Unicap-Mail-Art Exhibition”

Kranj (Slovenia): „westeast”

Ljubljana (Slovenia): „westeast”

Zagreb (Croatia): „westeast”

Belgrade (Serbia): „westeast”

1980

Paris (France), Georges Pompidou National Centre / Centre National Georges

Pompidou: „Rencontres Internationales de poésie sonore” (International
Sound Poetry Festival)

Rennes (France), Cultural Centre / Maison de la Culture: „Rencontres Internationales
de poésie sonore” (International Sound Poetry Festival)

Le Havre (France), Cultural Centre / Maison de la Culture: „Rencontres
Internationales de poésie sonore” (International Sound Poetry Festival)

Utrecht (Netherlands), Gallery 't Hoogt / 't Hoogt Galerie: „Magyar Műhely –
D'Atelier” (cultural and literary magazine „Hungarian Workshop” in Paris)
(visual poems, collages)

Kranj (Slovenia): „westeast”, „Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems, collages)

Ljubljana (Slovenia): „westeast”, „ Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems,
collages)

Zagreb (Croatia): „westeast”, „Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems, collages)

Belgrade (Serbia): „westeast”, „Visual Poetry – Music Scores” (visual poems,
collages)

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Centre Gallery / Galerija Tribine Mladih: „A Képes Ifjúság
jubiláris tárlata” (Képes Ifjúság Magazine's (Youth Magazine with Images)
Jubilee Exhibition) (visual poems, collages)

1982

Belgrade (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti:

„Verbo-voko-vizuelno u Jugoslaviji 1950-1980” (Yugoslavian Verbo-Voco-Visual
Art 1950-1980) (visual poems, collages)

Novoli (Italy), Poetry Laboratory / Laboratorio de Poesia: „Figura partitura”
(Music Score) (visual poems, collages)

Rome (Italy): „Mostra internazionale di arte postale Montecelio” (Montecelio
International Exhibition of Mail Art) (visual poems, collages)

1983

Belgrade (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti:

„Nova umetnost u Srbiji 1970-1980” (New Serbian Art 1970-1980)
(visual poems, collages)

Zagreb (Croatia), Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti:
„Nova umetnost u Srbiji 1970-1980” (New Serbian Art 1970-1980)
(visual poems, collages)

Pristina (Kosovo), Art Gallery / Galerija Umetnosti: „Nova umetnost u Srbiji
1970-1980” (New Serbian Art 1970-1980) (visual poems, collages)

Rome (Italy), (Cultural Association of) Lavatoio Contumaciale: „Figura partitura”
(Music Score) (visual poems, collages)

Brescia (Italy), Community and Cultural Centre of Mompiano / Centro Socio-Culturale
di Mompiano: „Figura partitura” (Music Score) (visual poems, collages)

Mexico: „Yugoslav Movimientos de Vanguardia” (Yugoslav Avantgarde Art Movements)

Belgrade (Serbia): „westeast”, „Visual Poetry – Music Score” (visual poems, collages)

1984

Belgrade (Serbia), Youth Centre Gallery / Galerija Doma Omladine: „Vokovizuelno”
(visual poems, collages)

Subotica (Serbia): Yugoslavia: Likovni susret (Yugoslavian Art Encounters) „Likovno
stvaralaštvo 1944-1984” (Visual Arts 1944-1984) (visual poems, collages)

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1985

Ljubljana (Slovenia), Museum of Modern Art / Moderna galerija: „Međunarodna likovna zbirka Junij” (International Art Collection in June) (visual poems, collages)

1987

Xalapa, Veracruz (Mexico), Gallery 'Ramón Alva de la Canal' / Galeria Ramón Alva de la Canal: Segunda Bienal Internacional de Poesía Visual y Alternativa en México (Second International Biennale of Visual and Alternative Poetry in Mexico)

2005

Stuttgart (Germany), Württemberg Art Association / Württembergischer Kunstverein: „On Difference 1 – Local Contexts - Hybrid Spaces” (Curated by: Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ)

2006

Otterlo (Netherlands), Kröller Müller Museum: Living Art on the Edge of Europe (Group Bosch+Bosch) (Curated by: Nathalie Zonnenberg)

Novi Sad (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art in Vojvodina / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti Vojvodine: „Remek dela savremene srpske umetnosti od 1968 (Masterpieces of Serbian Contemporary Art Since 1968)” (Curated by: Slavko Timotijević)

2007

Belgrade (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti: „Kontakt Beograd” - Works from the Collection of Erste Bank Group, (visual poems, collages) (Curated by: Walter Seidl, Jiří Ševčík, Branka Stipančić)

Szentendre (Hungary), Szentendre Gallery / Szentendrei Képtár: „Kis magyar performance-történet” (A Brief History of Hungarian Performance Art) (photo-documentation of the performances + vinyl disc „Phonopoetica”) (Curated by: István Antal)

2008

Dunaújváros (Hungary), Institute of Contemporary Art / Kortárs Művészeti Intézet: Works from the Collection of Erste Bank Group, (visual poems, collages) (Curated by: Dóra Hegyi, Franciska Zólyom)

Karlsruhe (Germany), Baden Art Association / Badischer Kunstverein: „Why Here Is Always Somewhere Else” (Curated by: Alenka Gregorič, Antonia Majaca, Vit Havranek, the Prelom Kolektiv)

Minneapolis (USA), Midway Contemporary Art: „Mapping of Social and Art History of Novi Sad” (Curated by: Zoran Pantelić and Kristian Lucic)

2009

Barcelona (Spain), Museum of Contemporary Art / MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona: „Temps com a Matèria” (Time as Matter), (visual poems, collages) (Curated by: Bartomeu Mari)

Vienna (Austria), MUMOK – Museum of Modern Art – Ludwig Foundation / MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst – Stiftung Ludwig: „Gender Check – Rollenbilder in der Kunst Osteuropas (Masculinity in Eastern Europe)” (photo: „The Screaming Hole”, 1979) (Curated by: Bojana Pejić)

2010

Warsaw (Poland), Zachęta National Gallery of Art / Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki: „Płeć? Sprawdzam! Kobiecość i męskość w sztuce Europy Wschodniej (Gender Check – Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe)” (photo: „The Screaming Hole”, 1979) (Curated by: Bojana Pejić)

2011

Zagreb (Croatia), Glyptothèque / Gliptoteka HAZU: Branimir Donat i vizualna poezija (Branimir Donat and Visual Poetry) (Organized by: Marinko Sudac Collection)

Rijeka (Croatia), Navy Yacht Galeb (Seagull) / Brod Galeb: Područje zastoja: Aktivistička umjetnost iz Kolekcije Marinko Sudac (Standstill: Activist Art from the Marinko Sudac Collection) (Organized by: Marinko Sudac Collection)

Vancouver (Canada), Audain Gallery, SFU Woodward's: Kontakt: Conceptual Art From Ex-Yugoslavia (visual poems, collages) (Curated by: Walter Seidl and Sabine Bitter)

Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Montehermoso Cultural Centre / Centro Cultural Montehermoso: Re.Act.Feminism – A Performing Archive (Curated by: Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer)

Belgrade (Serbia), „Steamboat” Cultural Institute / UK (Ustanova Kulture) „Parodbrod”: Kolekcija Trajković”: „Konceptualna umetnost u regionu (The Trajković Collection: Conceptual Art of the Region)” (Organized by Fond Kolekcija Trajković (Trajković Collection Fund))

2012

Gdańsk (Poland), Wyspa Institute of Art / Instytut Sztuki Wyspa: Re.Act.Feminism – A Performing Archive (Curated by: Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer)

Belgrade (Serbia), Museum of Yugoslav History / Muzej istorije Jugoslavije: Kolekcija Trajković: Lična svita (Trajković Collection: Personal Suite) (Organized by Fond Kolekcija Trajković (Trajković Collection Fund) and Muzej istorije Jugoslavije (Museum of Yugoslav History))

Budapest (Hungary), Hungarian Writers' Association / Magyar Írószövetség: Ekszpanzió XXIV Festival „Idézet” Szimpozion és Kiállítás („Quotation” Symposion and Exhibition) (photos) (Curated by: Rózsa Köpöczi)

Zagreb (Croatia), Miroslav Kraljević Gallery / Galerija Miroslav Kraljević: Re.Act. Feminism – A Performing Archive (Curated by: Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer)

Łódź (Poland), MS2 – Lodz Museum of Art / MS2 – Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi: Sounding the Body Electric. Experiments in Art and Music in Eastern Europe 1957-1984 (visual and sound poetry) (Curated by: David Crowley, Daniel Muzyczuk)

Roskilde (Denmark), Museum of Contemporary Art / Museet for Samtidskunst: Re.Act.Feminism – A Performing Archive (Curated by: Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer)

Budapest (Hungary), Ludwig Museum / Ludwig Múzeum: A hős, a hősnő és a szerző (The Hero, the Heroine and the Author) (July 6 – October 21) (Curated by: Katalin Timár)

Tallinn (Estonia), Tallinn Art Hall / Tallinna Kunstihoone: Re.Act.Feminism – A Performing Archive (August 29 – September 30) (Curated by: Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer)

2013

Budapest (Hungary), Ludwig Museum, The Freedom of Sound. John Cage behind the Iron Curtain. (Curated by: Katalin Székely)

Novi Sad (Serbia), Studio M, Sterija Festival 2013, Dnevna Soba / Living room (interactive installation) (Curated by: Ivana Vujić)

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London (United Kingdom), Calvert 22 Gallery. "Sounding The Body Electric:
Experiments in Art and Music in Eastern Europe 1957–1984"
(Curated by David Crowley and Daniel Muzyczuk)

2014

Budapest (Hungary), Ludwig Museum, "Anarchy. Utopia. Revolution"
(Curated by: Katalin Timár)

Nottingham (United Kingdom), Nottingham Contemporary, "Monuments Should Not
Be Trusted", (Curated by Lina Džuverović)

2015

Budapest (Hungary), Bookmarks (Former MEO), Off Biennale.

Cologne (Germany), Art Cologne, BOOKMARKS – Hungarian Neo-Avant-garde
and Post-Conceptual Art from the Late 1960s to the Present,

London (United Kingdom), Austin Desmond Fine Arts, Last Year's Snow,

Novi Sad, (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, MoCAV's Acquisitions:
Purchases and Gifts (2012-2015)

2016

Szentendre (Hungary), Vajda Lajos Stúdió Pinceműhelye, 'Hundred Years of Dadaism'

Budapest (Hungary), Mai Manó Gallery, The Freedom of the Past. A selection from
Róbert Alföldi's photographic collection, Neo-avant-garde photography in
Hungary from the 1960s to the present day

Valencia (Spain), Espaivisor Gallery, Poetics and Politics – Artistic Strategies in the
Hungarian Neo-Avantgarde (curated by Emese Kürti and Mira Bernabeu)

Budapest (Hungary), acb NA Gallery, Bosch+Bosch Group: Conceptual Practices
from the Former Yugoslavia (Curated by: Emese Kürti)

London (UK), Photographers' Gallery, Feministische Avantgarde (Verbund Collection),
(Curated by: Gabriele Schor and Anna Dannemann)

Graz (Austria), Künstlerhaus, Autumn Festival Graz 2016, 'Yes, but is it performable?',
(Curated by: Christian Egger)

Łódź (Poland), Muzeum Sztuki, Notes from the Underground. Art and alternative
Music in Eastern Europe, 1968-1994 (curated by David Crowley and Daniel
Muzyczuk)

Budapest (Hungary), acb Gallery, Identification – Field Exercises after Katalin Ladik
(curated by: Róna Kopeckzy)

Athens (Greece), Kassel (Germany), documenta 14 (artistic director: Adam Szymczyk)

PERFORMANCES, HAPPENINGS, ACTIONS

1968

Budapest, Szentendre - Hungary | **UFO** | Tamás Szentjóby, Miklós Erdély,
Katalin Ladik | happening

1970

Belgrade - Serbia | Pozorište Atelje 212, Podrum teatar (Theatre Atelje 212,
Theatre in the Basement) | performance

Zagreb - Croatia | Žanr Festival eksperimentalnog filma (Genre Experimental Film
Festival - GEFF) | performance

Budapest - Hungary | József Attila Művelődési Ház (Cultural Centre József Attila) |
with Jenő Balaskó | literary performance

Belgrade – Serbia | Dom Omladine (Youth Centre) | performance

Temerin – Serbia | performance

1971

Bačka Topola – Serbia | **UFO Party** | performance

Samobor – Croatia | Samoborski Fašnik (Carnival in Samobor) | Eros sa ovogu svijeta
(Eros of This World) | **UFO Party** | performance

Biograd – Croatia | **UFO Party** | performance

Zagreb – Croatia | Studentski Centar (Student Centre) | performance

Belgrade – Serbia | Dom Omladine (Youth Centre) | performance

Zagreb – Croatia | Teatar Poezije Zagreb (Poetry Theatre Zagreb) | **Četvrta
dimenzija kutije** (Fourth Dimension of the Box) | performance

1972

Osijek – Croatia | Annale Komorne Opere i Baleta (Annual Festival of Chamber
Opera and Ballet)

Zagreb – Croatia | Teatar ITD (Theatre ITD)| performance

Novi Sad – Serbia | Tribina Mladih (Youth Tribune) | performance

Belgrade – Serbia | Studentski Kulturni Centar (Student Cultural Centre) |
Festival Expanded Media | performance

Balatonboglár – Hungary | Kápolna Galéria (Kápolna Gallery) | Group Bosch+Bosch
| performance

1974

Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre / Studentski Kulturni Centar, Festival
Expanded Media /performance/

1975

Zagreb (Croatia), Student Centre Gallery / Galerija Studentskog Centra:
„Eksperimenti u jugoslovenskoj umjetnosti” (Experiments of Yugoslav Art)
(Group Bosch+Bosch) /performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre / Studentski Kulturni Centar, Festival
Expanded Media: „Ljubavi, Singer” (Loves, Singer) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Tribune / Tribina mladih: „Change Art” /action/

Novi Sad (Serbia): „Spuštanje Novog Sada niz reku Dunav” (Floating Novi Sad
Downstream the Danube) /action/

1976

Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre / Studentski Kulturni Centar, Festival
Expanded Media: „Change Art” /action/

Zagreb (Croatia), Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti /
performance/

1977

Zrenjanin (Serbia), Cultural Centre / Kulturni Centar: „Poezija, fonična i vizuelna
poezija Katalin Ladik” (Poetry, Phonic and Visual Poetry by Katalin Ladik)

Kraków (Poland): „Phonopoetica” /performance/

Zagreb (Croatia), Information Centre / Informativni Centar: „Phonopoetica” (with
Vujica R. Tucić) /performance/

Amsterdam (Netherlands), Stedelijk Museum: „Tekst in Geluid” (Text in Sound) /
performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Student Cultural Centre / Studentski Kulturni Centar:
„Phonopoetica” /performance/

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1978

Kranj (Slovenia), Prešeren Theatre / Prešernovo Gledališče /performance/

Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Youth Theatre / Pozorište Mladih, Festival Malih i Eksperimentalnih Scena (Festival of Small and Experimental Theatre): „Četvrta dimenzija – krik” (Fourth Dimension – Scream) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Tribune / Tribina mladih: „Pesnički maraton” (Poetry Marathon) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Sonja Marinković Student Club / Studentski Klub ‘Sonja Marinković’: „Čudak je ko čekiće sanja” (Weird Is the One Who Dreams About Hammers) /performance/

Würzburg (Germany), Hand Press Gallery / Handpresse Galerie: „Randkunst-Kunstrand” /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), National Library / Narodna biblioteka: „Umetnost se ne ponavlja, ne ponavlja, ne ponavlja...” (Art Does Not Repeat Itself, Not Repeat Itself, Not Repeat Itself...) /performance/

Zagreb (Croatia), Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti: „Nova umjetnička praksa 1966-1978” (New Art Practice 1966-1978) / performance/

1979

Subotica (Serbia), Youth Centre / Dom Omladine: „Az éneklő varrógép – The Singing Sewing Machine” (with Zsolt Király) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Tribune / Tribina Mladih: „The Screaming Hole – A sikoltozó lyuk” /performance/

Amsterdam (Netherlands): „One World Poetry” /performance/

Utrecht (Netherlands), Gallery ‘T Hoogt / ‘T Hoogt Galerie: „One World Poetry” / performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Tribune / Tribina Mladih: „Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről” (Stories of the Seven-headed Sewing Machine) /performance/

1980

Paris (France), Pompidou Centre / Centre Georges Pompidou: „Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Sonore” (International Sound Poetry Festival) / performance/

Le Havre (France), Cultural Centre of Le Havre / Maison de la Culture du Havre: „Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Sonore” (International Sound Poetry Festival) /performance/

Rennes (France), Cultural Centre of Rennes / Maison de la Culture de Rennes: „Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Sonore” (International Sound Poetry Festival) /performance/

New York City (USA), Washington Square Church, The New Wilderness Foundation: „International Sound Poetry Festival” /performance/

Baltimore (USA), School 33 Art Center, The Merzaum Collective's Desire Productions Present: International Festival of Disappearing Art(s) /performance/

Gyula, (Hungary), Castle Theatre / Várszínház, Knights’ Hall / Lovagterem: „Alice” / performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Salon Museum of Contemporary Art / Salon Muzeja Suvremene Umetnosti, Exhibition of Group Bosch+Bosch: „Orman koji ubrizgava (Injecting Closet)” /performance/

1982

Budapest (Hungary), Cultural Centre Jókai, Studio ‘K’/ Stúdió ‘K’ Jókai Művelődési Központ: „Ladik Katalin újvidéki költő és előadóművész szerzői estje” (An Evening with Novi Sad Poet and Performer, Katalin Ladik) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Cultural Centre Petőfi Sándor / Petőfi Sándor Művelődési Ház: „Telepi esték – Ladik Katalin szerzői estje” (Evenings in Telep – with Poet Katalin Ladik) (with Ottó Tolnai, Zsolt Király) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Young Artists’ Club / Fiatal Művészek Klubja: „Ladik Katalin szerzői estje” (An Evening with Katalin Ladik) (with Miklós Erdély, László Beke and Zsolt Király) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Cultural Centre Jókai, Studio ‘K’ / Stúdió ‘K’ Jókai Művelődési Központ: „Ladik Katalin szerzői és előadói estje” (An Evening with Katalin Ladik) (with Miklós Erdély, László Beke and Zsolt Király) /performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzej Savremene Umetnosti: „Verbo-Voko-Vizuelno” („Phonopoetry” with Judita Šalgo) /performance/

Osijek (Croatia), Students’ Youth Centre / Studentski Centar Mladih, Osiječko ljetno (Summer in Osijek): „Čudak je ko čekiće sanja” (Weird Is the One Who Dreams About Hammers) /performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Youth Centre / Dom Omladine: „Ikar u metrou” (Icarus on the Subway) (with Judita Šalgo, Selimir Radulović) /performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Youth Centre / Dom Omladine, Beogradsko leto (Summer in Belgrade): „Ufo Party” /performance/

Kanjiža (Serbia), Literary Camp / Književna Kolonija: „Konkretna i vizuelna poezija” (Concrete and Visual Poetry) (with Vujica R. Tucić and Bob Cobbing) / performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Address: Istarski kej 37. sp. 8. st. Rade Šević: „Sound Poetry Performance” (with Vujica R. Tucić and Bob Cobbing) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Youth Tribune Gallery / Tribina Mladih Galerija: „Phonopoemim” – Exhibition Launch for Slavica Grkavac: tapiserije „Jokastin kompleks” („Jocasta Complex” Tapestry) /performance/

Paris (France), UNESCO: „Guerre a la guerre” (War Against War) /performance/

Milan (Italy), UNESCO: „Guerra alla guerra” (War Against War) /performance/

Paris (France), UNESCO Pompidou Centre / Centre Georges Pompidou: „Polyphonix 5” /performance/

1983

Vienna (Austria), Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival): „Mandora 1.” /performance/

Zagreb (Croatia), Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti: „Nova umjetnost u Srbiji 1970-1980” (New Art of Serbia 1970-1980)

Belgrade (Serbia), Youth Centre / Dom Omladine: „Oluja-po motivima Šekspira” (Tempest – Based on Shakespeare) – Exhibition Launch for Slavica Grkavac: tapiserije „Jokastin kompleks” („Jocasta Complex” Tapestry) /performance/

Belgrade (Serbia), Youth Centre / Dom Omladine: „Magic Bread” (with Paul Pignon)

1984

Glasgow (UK), Third Eye Centre, Poetsound 1984: „Mandora 1.” /performance/

Milan (Italy), (Cultural Association of) Cooperativa Intrapresa: „Milanopoesia” / performance/

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Szeged (Hungary), József Attila University (Today: University of Szeged) / József Attila Tudományegyetem: „Mandora 1.” /performance/
 Cogolin (France), Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Contemporaine (International Festival of Contemporary Poetry): „Mandora 1.” /performance/
 Belgrade (Serbia), Cultural Centre / Kulturni Centar: „Mandora 1.” /performance/
1985
 Belgrade (Serbia), Magaza Theatre / Pozorište Magaza: „Mandora 2.” /performance/
 Budapest (Hungary), Cultural Cente of Lágymányos / Lágymányosi Művelődési Otthon: „Mandora 2.” /performance/
 Budapest (Hungary), Metropolitan Cultural Centre / Fővárosi Művelődési Ház: „Alice” /performance/
 Zemun (Serbia), Festival Monodrame i Pantomime (Festival of Monodrama and Pantomimes): „Mandora” /performance/
 Novi Sad (Serbia), ‘Sonja Marinković’ Cultural Centre / Kulturni Centar ‘Sonja Marinković’, Youth Tribune / Tribina Mladih: „Mandora” /performance/
 Stari Bečej (Serbia) /performance/
1988
 Szeged (Hungary), JATE Club: „Polyphonix” /performance/
 Pécs (Hungary): „Alice” /performance/
 Budapest (Hungary), Vigadó Chamber Hall / Vigadó Kamaraterem, Hangár Est (‘Wall of Sound’ Evening): „Alice” /performance/
1989
 Spoleto (Italy): „O Fortuna” /performance/
 Nové Zámky (Slovakia): „O Fortuna” /performance/
 Novi Sad (Serbia): „O Fortuna” /performance/
1990
 Novi Sad (Serbia), Sport and Activity Centre of Vojvodina / SPENS Sportski i Poslovni Centar Vojvodina: „Otkrovenje” (Revelation) (with Zoltán Pletl) / performance/
 Vác (Hungary), Greek Chapel / Görög Templom, Ex-panzió 2. Festival: „Angyal/Angel” /performance/
 Novi Sad (Serbia): „Seraphine Tanz” /performance/
1993
 Szentendre (Hungary), Dalmát Cellar / Dalmát pince, UHF Kisújrevue /performance/
 Szeged (Hungary), JATE Club: „Alice” /performance/
 Vác (Hungary), Greek Chapel / Görög Templom, Expanzió 5. Festival /performance/
1994
 Szeged (Hungary): „Performancia” with Lukács Bitskey /performance/
 Zebegény (Hungary): „A helyettesítő asszony (The Substitute)” /performance/
 Pécs (Hungary): „A négydimenziós ablak (The Four-dimensional Window)” with Tamás Szalay /performance/
1995
 Marseille (France), International Poetry Centre / Centre International de Poésie: „Kassák” /performance/
1996
 Marseille (France), Meyer Gallery / Galerie Meyer: „L’ agneau de Dieu et le double” (The Lamb of God and Its Double) /performance/
 Ajaccio – Corsica (France): „L’ agneau de Dieu et le double” (The Lamb of God and Its Double) /performance/

2002

Novi Sad (Serbia), Cultural Centre of Novi Sad / Kulturni Centar Novog Sada, INFANT (International Festival of Alternative and New Theatre): „Fűketrec / Grass-cage”

2003

Novi Sad (Serbia), Chamber Theatre of Music / Kamerno Pozorište Muzike, INTERZONE Festival: „Tesla – Project” /performance/

2004

Monza (Italy) /performance/

Salerno (Italy) /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Chamber Theatre of Music / Kamerno Pozorište Muzike, INTERZONE Festival: „Tesla – Project”

Budapest (Hungary), A38 Ship / A38 hajó: „Lomtalanítás” (Cleaning the House) / performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art / Ludwig Múzeum – Kortárs Művészeti Múzeum: „Torony-Lomtalanítás” (Cleaning the Tower-House) /performance/

2005

Terény (Hungary), Expanzió Festival: „Angel” /performance/

2006

Budapest (Hungary), Serbian Theatre in Hungary / Magyarországi Szerb Színház / Srpsko Pozorište u Mađarskoj: „Tesla”, /audio-visual oratorio/

Otterlo (Netherlands), Kröller-Müller Museum: „Change Art” /action/

Amsterdam (Netherlands): „Tesla” /performance/

Novi Sad (Serbia), Sport and Activity Centre of Vojvodina / SPENS Sportski i Poslovni Centar Vojvodina, Inventors Association of Vojvodina, TeslaFest: „Tesla” /performance/

2007

Nové Zámky (Slovakia), Art Gallery / Galéria Umenia: „Gyakorlatok üres húrokon – Kassák-kód” (Exercises on Empty Strings - Kassák Code) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Erlin Club Gallery / Erlin Klub Galéria: „Fűketrec” (Grass-cage) / performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Mu Theatre / Mu Színház: „Az Eszmélet szövedéke” (The Weave of Consciousness) (with Péter Bajka, Bern Atom Santi, Eszter Bereczky, Zsófia Varga) /performance/

Verőce (Hungary), Ekszpanzió XX Festival: „Tesla, Audio-visual Oratorio” / performance/

Szigliget (Hungary), Artist House of the Hungarian Public Foundation for Creative Art / Magyar Alkotóművészeti Közalapítvány Alkotóháza, József Attila Kör 18. irodalmi tábora (18th Literary Camp of the József Attila Circle): «Az Eszmélet szövedéke» (The Weave of Consciousness) (with Péter Bajka, Bern Atom Santi, Eszter Bereczky, Zsófia Varga) /performance/

2008

Budapest (Hungary), Petőfi Literary Museum / Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, A Szépirok Társasága V. őszi irodalmi fesztiválja – Nők a férfi birodalomban (5th Autumn Literary Festival of the Hungarian Belletrist Association – Women in a Men's World): „Diptichon”, (with Endre Szkárosi) /performance/

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Belgrade (Serbia), ARTGET Gallery – Cultural Centre Belgrade / Galerija ARTGET – Kulturni Centar Beograda, (World Poetry Day): „Tesla – Homo Galacticus” / performance/

Szigliget (Hungary), József Attila Kör 20. irodalmi tábora (20th Literary Camp of the József Attila Circle): „Trip-ti-chon”, (with Veronika Czapáry) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Irodalmi Centrifuga (Literary Centrifuge): „Trip-ti-chon”, (with Veronika Czapáry) /performance/

Bratislava (Slovakia), Ars Poetica Medzinárodný Festival Poézie /The 6th Ars Poetica International Poetry Festival /sound poetry performance/

2009

Visegrád (Hungary), The Roof Terrace of King Matthias Museum / A Mátyás Király Múzeum tetőterasza, Ekspanzió XXI Festival: “Kerub” (Cherub) /performance/

2010

Budapest (Hungary), Gallery A22 / A22 Galéria, Tibor Papp's Exhibition Opening: „Óraköltemény” (Poem-Clock) /performance/

Subotica (Serbia), Kosztolányi Dezső Theatre / Kosztolányi Dezső Színház: „Tesla – Homo Galacticus” /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Millenáris Theatre / Millenáris Teátrum, Book Festival: „Szabadkőműves szex” (Freemason Sex) (with drMáriás) /performance/

Štaglinec (Croatia), „Voda” – „Water” Međunarodni Susret Umjetnika (International Art Festival): „Veliko spremanje” (Spring Cleaning) /performance/

Eger (Hungary), Small Synagogue Gallery of Contemporary Art / Kis Zsinagóga Kortárs Galéria, artAlom élőművészeti fesztivál (artAlom Performing Arts Festival): „Bukott angyalok” (Fallen Angels) /performance/

Szeged (Hungary) – Subotica (Serbia), Railway line, Kultúrcsompész Sinbusz Fesztivál (Culture-smuggler Railbus Festival): Megaphone-assisted readings by Gábor Virág, Slobodan Tišma, Gábor Lanczok, Tamara Šuškić, Vladimir Kopić, Katalin Ladik, Siniša Tucić, Roland Orcsik

2011

Budapest (Hungary), Kunsthalle (Palace/Hall of Art) / Műcsarnok: „Preparababarakabare” /performance/

Marseille (France), Museum of Contemporary Art / Musée d'Art Contemporain, Poésie Marseille 2011, 8ème Festival (8th Marseille Poetry Festival, 2011): „Le Grand Ménage” (Spring Cleaning) /performance/

Târgu Mureș (Romania), National Theatre - Small Hall / Teatrul Național – Sala Mică, Testet öltött szavak rendezvény (Words Embodied – Event series): „Alice” / performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Mu Theatre / Mu Színház, Ismeretlen kutatása improvizációs alkotóműhely (Searching the Unknown – Improvisational Workshop): „Hangmozdulat” (Sound Movement) (with Kati Dombi) /performance/

2012

Budapest (Hungary), Hungarian Writers' Association / Magyar Írószövetség: XXIV. Ekspanzió Festival, „Idézet” Szimpozion és Kiállítás („Quotation” Symposium and Exhibition): „Ásó, kapa, nagyharang” („Till Death” lit.: Spade, Hoe and Bell) /performance/

Komárom (Hungary), Fort Monostor – Film Museum / Monostori Erőd – Filmmúzeum, Mediawave 2012 Festival: „Nagytakarítás” („Spring Cleaning”) /performance/

Łódź (Poland), MS2 – Łódź Museum of Art / MS2 – Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi: „Alicja w krainie kodów” (Alice in Codeland) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Address: 8th district, Pál street 6.: Gödör bújóska – irodalom, zene, film, tánc, színház, beszélgetés (Gödör Club Hide-and-seek – literature, music, film, dance, theatre, discussions) /sound poetry performance/

Ottawa, Canada, City Hall Art Gallery, A B Series Workshop: „Nagytakarítás” („Spring Cleaning”) /performance/

Ottawa, Canada, Arts Court Theatre, A B Series: „Alice Kódországban” („Alice in Codeland”) /performance/

2013

Budapest (Hungary), Óbudai Társaskör, Kassák Museum, Kassák Year: „Alice Kódországban” (Alice in Codeland) /performance

Hvar (Croatia), 17th International Festival of Radio Plays and Documentary Radio Dramas PRIX MARULIĆ, „Tesla. Homo Galacticus” /performance/

Székesfehérvár (Hungary), Vörösmarty Theatre Studio, Contemporary Art Festival: „Alice Kódországban” (Alice in Codeland) /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Fuga, Autonómia Filmklub 5, „I Belong to the Band”: Katalin Ladik's voice on „poets of the absurd on chalk”

2014

Százhalombatta (Hungary), Katalin Ladik - Endre Székárosi, Slam Poetry /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), Mika Tivadar Vigadó, JazzaJ, Katalin Ladik – Jean Michel van Schowburg, Katalin Ladik – Zsolt Sörös, „Sounds to Go” (Hangok elvitelre) / performance/

2015

Eger (Hungary), Templom Gallery, artAlom Live Art Festival 2015: „Transit Zoon” / performance/

Gothenburg, (Sweden), Gothenburg Book Fair „Transit Zoon” /performance/

Vienna (Austria), Campus AAKH Hof 7, Universität Wien, „Singende Schnittmuster – Singing Dress Pattern” /lecture-performance, multimedia slide-show/

2016

Poreč (Croatia), Behind the Scenes with Katalin Ladik! Artists on Vacation: „The Sounds of a sewing machine „*Circe di Parenzo*” /performance/

Budapest (Hungary), MÜSZI, @Transart Communication, Katalin Ladik & Zsolt Sörös „Alchemical Wedding” (Alkimiai nász) /performance/

CONCERTS, MUSICAL PERFORMANCES (SELECTION)

Opatija (Croatia), 1969: Jugoslovenska muzička tribina (Yugoslav Music Tribune) (Ernő Király: Refleksija)

Opatija (Croatia), 1970: Jugoslovenska muzička tribina (Yugoslav Music Tribune) (Ernő Király: Refleksija; Branimir Sakač: Bellatrix - Alleluja)

Novi Sad (Serbia), 1970: Muzika i Laboratorija (Music and Laboratory) (with Ernő Király)

Osijek (Croatia), 1970: Annale komorne opere i baleta (Annual festival of chamber opera and ballet)

Zagreb (Croatia), 1971: Muzički biennale (Music Biennale – International Festival of Contemporary Music) (MBZ Radionica/Workshop II with Ernő Király, et al.; Chamber Music - Branimir Sakač: Bellatrix - Alleluja)

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Dubrovnik (Croatia), 1971: Dubrovačke ljetne igre (Dubrovnik Summer Festival) (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble)

Radenci (Slovenia), 1971: Festival sodobne komorne glazbe (Contemporary Chamber Music Festival)

Munich (Germany), 1972: (Cultural Program of the 1972 Summer Olympics) (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble)

Radenci (Slovenia), 1972: Festival sodobne komorne glazbe (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble) (Contemporary Chamber Music Festival)

Osijek (Croatia), 1972: Annale komorne opere i baleta (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble) (Annual festival of chamber opera and ballet)

Novi Sad (Serbia), 1972, 'Radivoj Ćirpanov' Workers' University / Radnički univerzitet 'Radivoj Ćirpanov' (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble)

Belgrade (Serbia), 1972, Studentski kulturni centar (Student Cultural Centre) – Festival Expanded Media (ACEZANTEZ Ensemble)

Belgrade (Serbia), 1979, Trade Union Hall / Dom Sindikata – BEMUS Belgrade Music Festival: "Oratorio Profano" (composer: Dušan Radić, conductor: Oskar Danon)

Opatija (Croatia), 1980: Jugoslovenska muzička tribina (Yugoslav Music Tribune)

Budapest (Hungary), Spiritus Noister Group, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

Budapest (Hungary), Italian Cultural Institute / Olasz kultúrintézet / Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Avantgárd művészetek a világban: mi lett a sorsuk? Nemzetközi tanácskozás (Avant-garde Arts in the World: What About Them? International conference): „Futurdadama (Futurdada Today)", Spiritus Noister, 2001

Vienna (Austria), Spiritus Noister Group, 2004

Szentendre (Hungary), Spiritus Noister Group, 2009

Szekszárd (Hungary), Spiritus Noister Group, 2012

RADIO PLAYS WRITER AND PERFORMER

Furcsa, aki darazsakról álmodik (Strange Is the One Who Is Dreaming About Wasps), 1982, Magyar Rádió Budapest (Hungarian Radio). Alex Avanesian, Imre József Katona and Katalin Ladik.

Furcsa, aki darazsakról álmodik (Strange Is the One Who Is Dreaming About Wasps), 1985, Radio Novi Sad (Serbia). Tibor Vajda and Katalin Ladik.

Bukott angyalok (Fallen Angels), 1992, Radio Novi Sad (Serbia). Tibor Vajda.

Fűketrec (Grass-Cage), 2002, Radio Novi Sad. Tibor Vajda and Katalin Ladik.

Tesla Project, 2003, Radio Novi Sad (Serbia). Tibor Vajda.

Élhetek az arcodon? (Can I Live on Your Face?), 2012, Hungarian Radio, script by Otília Cseicsner, directed by Kornél Szilágyi

DISCOGRAPHY SOUND POETRY

Ballada az ezüstbicikliről (The Ballad of the Silver Bicycle) | SP | supplement for book with same title | Forum, Novi Sad, 1969

Phonopoetica | SP | Galerija Studentskog kulturnog centra, Belgrade, 1976

Poésie Sonore Internationale (International Sound Poetry) | audio cassette | anthology of sound poetry, Paris, 1979

La Nouvelle Revue d'Art Moderne, Special 2. (The Magazine of Modern Art) | audio cassette | Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Sonore (International Sound Poetry Festival), Paris, 1980

Adriano Spatola: **Baobab Femme** | audio cassette | anthology for sound poetry magazine, Publiart Bazar Reggio Emilia, 1982

Yugoslavian Sound Poetry | audio cassette | anthology of sound poetry, 1987

Hangár / Hangar | audio cassette | anthology of sound poetry, Amsterdam – Budapest, 1987

Aki darazsakról álmodik (Who is Dreaming About Wasps) | LP | recording of the radio play „Furcsa, aki darazsakról álmodik” (Strange Is the One Who Is Dreaming About Wasps) | Radio Novi Sad, 1988

Spiritus Noister: **Nemzeti zajzárványok / National Noise-Inclusions** | audio cassette | Bahia Music, Budapest, 1996

Vajdasági Magyar Zenei Esték / Vojvodina Hungarian Music Evenings 1988 | CD | JMMT, Novi Sad, 1998

Vízisámán / Water Shaman | CD | Budapest, 1999

Spiritus Noister – Kurt Schwitters: **Ursonate** | music CD | Hungaroton, Budapest, 2003

Vodeni anđeo / Water Angel | music CD | Nova Misao, Novi Sad, 2011

MUSIC

Ernő Király | LP | Udruženje Kompozitora Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 1978

Boris Kovač: **Ritual Nova I** | LP | Symposion Records, Overstrand, 1986

Boris Kovač: **Ritual Nova II** | CD | Recommended Records, London, 1989

Ernő Király - Spectrum | CD | Autobus, Paris, 1999

Deže Molnar: **Weird Garden** | CD | vocals on Track 1 (Water Clock) | Studentski Kulturni Centar Novi Sad, 2010

I Belong to the Band **Bakers Of The Lost Future** | CD | vocals on Track 3 (Poets Of The Absurd On Chalk) | Inexhaustible Editions, Budapest, 2016

APPENDIX

POETRY READINGS, SOUND POETRY PERFORMANCES ONLINE AUDIO

Fűketrec (Grass-Cage) | sound poetry | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2003 | downloadable, mp3 format

A négydimenziós ablak (The Four-Dimensional Window) | sound poetry | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, mp3 format

Ikarosz biciklijén (On Icarus' Bicycle) | sound poetry | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, mp3 format

Kíűzetés - Jegyesség (Exile - Engagement) | sound poetry | Hungarian | Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (MEK), 2004 | downloadable, mp3 format

LIVE PERFORMANCES

2011

Négy fekete ló mögöttem repül (Four Black Horses Fly Behind Me); **Jégmadár** (Icebird); excerpts from **Belső vízőzön** (The Deluge Inside) | poetry reading | Dzsudi Remake evening, Merlin Theatre, Budapest | Video on YouTube

DOCUMENTARY

Katalin Ladik - Bogdanka Poznanović, (1980, Serbian-Hungarian, Akademija Umetnosti Novi Sad – Novi Sad Art Academy), (Documentary about Katalin Ladik)

Monodrám születik (A Monodrama is Born), dir. Gyula Radó, (1981, Hungarian, Szegedi TV), (Documentary about Katalin Ladik)

Ez már nem én vagyok (This Isn't Me Anymore), dir. Gyula Radó, (1982, Hungarian, Szegedi TV), (Documentary about Katalin Ladik)

Krleža u videomedijima 5.: TV-usporedbe Adam i Eva (Krleža in Video-Medium 5: TV Comparisons of Adam i Eva), dir. Mario Fanelli, (1984, Croatian, TV Zagreb), (performer, Eva), (documentary series)

Bukott angyal (Fallen Angel), dir. Jenő Hartyándi, (1992, Hungarian - Serbian, Mediawave) (performance-recording)

Valahol Közép-Európában (Somewhere in Central Europe), dir. István Grensó, Jenő Hartyándi (1993, Hungarian – Serbian) (Documentary)

Amarissima: Katalin Ladik i novosadska umetnička scena sedamdesetih (Amarissima: Katalin Ladik and the Novi Sad Artistic Scene in the Seventies), dir. Milica Mrđa-Kuzmanov, (1999, Serbian), (Documentary about Katalin Ladik's art)

A sikoly ars poétikája - Ladik Katalin portréfilm (The Ars Poetica of the Scream – Katalin Ladik's Portrait), dir. Kornél Szilágyi, (2012, Hungarian) (Documentary about Katalin Ladik)

ARTWORKS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Barcelona (Spain): MACBA – Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona / Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Budapest (Hungary): Petőfi Literary Museum / Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum

Belgrade (Serbia): Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade / (MSUB) Muzej Savremene Umetnosti, Beograd

New York (USA): MoMA, The Museum of Modern Art

Budapest (Hungary): Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art / Ludwig Múzeum – Kortárs Művészeti Múzeum

Vienna (Austria): Kontakt Collection – The Art Collection of Erste Group / Kontakt – Die Kunstsammlung der Erste Group

Zagreb (Croatia): Marinko Sudac's Private Collection

Miami (USA): Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry

Belgrade (Serbia): Trajković Collection

Chicago (USA): School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Joan Flasch Artist's Book Collection

Budapest (Hungary): Irokéz Collection

Wien (Austria): Sammlung Verbund Collection

Budapest (Hungary): Hungarian National Gallery

AWARDS

1991 – Lajos Kassák Award, Hungary

2001 – Attila József Award, Hungary

2003 – Mediawave Parallel Culture Award, Hungary

2009 – National Award for Culture of the Republic of Serbia

2012 – Laurel Wreath Award, Hungary

2015 – Klára Herczeg Award, Hungary

2016 – Lennon Ono Grant for Peace

**SCREAMING HOLE.
POETICS, SOUND AND ACTION
AS INTERMEDIA PRACTICE IN
THE WORK OF KATALIN LADIK**

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