

acb
RESEARCHLAB
2016

+

BOSCH
BOSCH

+

BOSCH
BOSCH

Transregional Discourses: The Bosch+Bosch Group in the Yugoslav and the Hungarian Avant-garde

As a young author of Hungarian literature in Yugoslavia and a member of the *Új Symposion* avant-garde journal's editorial board, Nándor Gion spent half a year in Budapest in the course of 1970–1971. The journal-like memoirs of his experiences were published in a book entitled *Véres patkányirtás idomított görényekkel* [Bloody Rat Extermination with Domesticated Ferrets].¹ There is a reference in the memoirs to the First and the Second Underground Poet (the latter can be identified as Tamás Szentjóbby), with whom the author is engaged in a debate about, among other things, the possibilities of publishing the works of Hungarian authors in *Új Symposion*. The two poets complain about the quality of the typesetting of their works as well as the low proportion of Hungarian authors published in the journal. The background context of the debate was that in the sixties and seventies, the journal served as a metaphor not only of literary progress, but also of the privileged Yugoslav conditions that had no comparable parallel in Hungary at the time. Filling a significant critical gap,

¹ First published: *Új Symposion*. Re-published: Nándor Gion: *Véres patkányirtás idomított görényekkel. Naplók, interjúk és más írások*, Noran Libro Budapest, 2012, pp. 130–134. I wish to thank Péter György for bringing this book into my attention.



Új Symposion accommodated and published the works of Hungarian avant-garde poets, establishing real continuity for avant-garde literature, while also generating a kind of status hierarchy in the region's literary circles.

All of this was, in fact, part of the deal: as Nándor Gion later (in the early eighties) reflected on their situation back then – the Yugoslav political power made an effort to handle and control the social functions of the new poetry. “They said: all right, boys, learn, do it, write, you are better Hungarians than the Hungarians of Hungary. And this wasn't entirely false, as writers of my age in Hungary published books once every five years then, while I wrote something new every year, and there was even money to publish it. But of course there was a twist: you are better Hungarians, and not even fully Hungarians, in fact you are cosmopolitan geniuses, and we give you money to publish the *Új Symposion* journal, in which you can write whatever you like, you may even trash the Russians in Hungarian (which was only allowed to us in the whole Hungarian-speaking region), but in reality you are cosmopolitans, you are Yugoslavs.”² As long as they complied with the rules, the Hungarian writers of Vojvodina could, as internationalist Yugoslav cosmopolitans,

² András Görömbei: „Kimeríthetetlen forrás...” Gion Nándor válaszol Görömbei András kérdéseire. *Forrás*, 1981, 5. sz. Re-published: Nándor Gion, op.cit., 2012, p. 210. Another “twist” in the story is that in the 1990s, it was the same “symposionists”

that the Vojvodinese Hungarian public accused of anti-nationality and turning Yugoslavian. Cf. György Szerbhorváth: *Sajtóprés. Az Új Symposion történetéből*, *Regio*, year 15., no. 1, 2004, p. 35. <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00036/00053/pdf/25-44.pdf> Last accessed: 27 February 2016.

The Triglav pastry shop in Subotica, 1969



engage in the most current tendencies, for which they were sometimes envied by their Hungarian peers, and surveilled by the authorities, but precisely owing to this, they were defined as the most significant group of avant-gardes in the Hungarian-speaking region.

In the present essay – taking Gion’s provocative proposal as a premise – I would like to delve deeper into the subject than the cold war banality of “Everything was better in Yugoslavia than in Hungary” and attempt to elucidate and diversify the discourses based on the differences of progress in Yugoslavia and in Hungary as well as the polarized relation of the ruling power and the avant-garde. The Bosch+Bosch group serves as a suitable model: it was formed in a characteristically multi-ethnic region of Europe as one of the first groups in the Yugoslav visual culture of the seventies, operating as an interregional network. In this case, the *locus* seems definitive, as the region of Vojvodina and the town of Subotica had been a kind of centre of various left-wing artist groups from the first half of the 20 century, in constant dispute with the theoreticians of the movement of Hungary. Traces of this intellectual environment can still be witnessed – as far as the town of Novi Sad. Not only did the natural internationalism of the literary and philosophical tradition they had inherited distinguish them from the isolated socialist Hungary’s monoculture, but it also resulted in the formation of relationship capitals of a completely different level and quality. The singular cultural hybridity of the Bosch+Bosch group can be deduced from the synthesis of all the advantages of a transregional past and a contemporaneous present, as a consequence of which the relationist specificities of the avant-garde art of the two countries become perceivable.

Instead of the slightly conventional metaphor of “bridge”, which appears in art historical reception and describes the group’s function within the region, I shall focus on the notion of mutual inspiration. The collective emergence of Bosch+Bosch in the early seventies in Hungarian underground represented the fresh spirit of the experimentalism of the Yugoslavian New Art Practice [Nova umetnička praksa], which expanded the horizon of those receptive within the apparatus of avant-garde thought by placing emphasis on the theoretical relation of language and art as well as raising theoretical questions pertaining to the possible social functions of art. Regional networking resulted in exhibitions, collaborations and sometime joint works, in the socio-cultural background of which we cannot dismiss the regulating effect of unequal economic conditions, which functioned as relationship filters in a sense. Nevertheless, the role fulfilled by Yugoslav artists in Hungarian underground was more of the metaphorical and concrete function of elder brother, friend or lover rather than the supportive “uncle”.

Privilege or Easeless? Born in Yugoslavia

Its membership always changing throughout the years, the Bosch+Bosch group was founded in 1969 in a typically urban scenario, at the Triglav café and pastry shop, a few years before the contemporary Yugoslav scene saw an expansion in the collective operation of artists.³ In 1978, an exhibition took place in Zagreb, curated by Marijan Susovski, under the title *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*. Its catalogue provided the first topographic summary of contemporary artist groups in addition to individual strategies: the contemporaneous context of collective operation was comprised by groups such as OHO of Ljubljana, of referential quality to the Bosch+Bosch group, as well as the Group of Six Artists [Grupa šestorice autora] of Zagreb, the KÖD of Novi Sad, the Team A³ and the Group 143 of Belgrade. All of them were members of the new generation emerging in the sixties, which was described by Ješa Denegri, the first theoretician of the NAP, as Yugoslavia’s first urban generation “brought up without any nostalgia for patriarchal and local considerations”.⁴ The generational attitude of the Yugoslav equivalents of the beat and later hippie generations functioning in the greater part of the world along similar subcultural lines was based primarily on an opposition to former social and behavioural models and to the socialist establishment in general.

³ Besides Slavko Matković and Bálint Szombathy, other founding members of the group were László Szalma, Zoltán Magyar, Edit Basch, István Krekovity and Slobodan Tomanović, joined by László Kerekes in 1971, Attila Csernik and Katalin Ladik in 1973, and Ante Vukov in 1975. The group broke up in 1976.

⁴ The phrase was first used by the French art critic Catherine Millet in the late sixties and it was adapted by Ješa Denegri to describe the Yugoslavian conditions, cf. J. D.: 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.

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



Katalin Ladik and Bálint Szombathy, middle of 1970s, photo: Anna Lazukics



Just like in the Hungary of the time, where the “youth problem” manifested in the criminalization and police harassment of apolitical subcultures labelled as hooligans and gangs, the massive presence of groups seeking alternatives indicated the crisis of the socialist program in Yugoslavia as well.

The artists of the New Art Practice⁵ substituted the irrelevance of the socialist modernist utopia with the avant-garde intellectual heritage and established a referential relation with the new media of their own contemporary reality. Heterogeneous in terms of its media and its experimentalism alike, the NAP’s essential features principally originated in the terminology of conceptual art, which at once meant that in opposition to the tradition of conservative painting characterizing their own environment, they affiliated themselves with the philosophies of international tendencies that rejected objects. As Piotr Piotrowski pointed out, it was precisely this synchrony with “Western European” art in terms of which the situation of Yugoslav visual art differed from the processes taking place in the art scenes of most other socialist countries (including Hungary), where processual and post-object art practices were practically unknown or entirely marginal.⁶

The emergence of Bosch+Bosch in this re-forming and radical cultural context expressed the endeavour of Vojvodinese artists towards integration and synchrony with international tendencies. When asked about the motivations behind the establishment of the group, Bálint Szombathy mentions a need for collective operation, the generational character of the group and their alienation from the dominant institutional forms of art, to which, with some

empathy, one may add the motif of generational rebellion against small-town provincialism and against conservatism in general.⁷ Although in 1969, at the time when the first formation took shape, most members exhibited a commitment to traditional media (painting, drawing); a year later, however, their activities were dominated by immaterial and experimental tendencies, which had the impact of natural selection on the group’s composition. The circle that hallmarked the most remarkable period in the seven years of the Bosch+Bosch group was formed between 1973 and 1976: in addition to Bálint Szombathy and Slavko Matković, it involved Katalin Ladik, Attila Csernik, László Kerekes, László Szalma and Ante Vukov.

The first years were primarily organized around the artist-friendship – or, to use Nebojša Milenković’s term: “spiritual fraternity” – between Matković and Szombathy, in the sociological dynamic of which, Matković had the role of achieving group cohesion, and Szombathy’s function was that of the theoretician.⁸ For want of Hungarian language criticism, Szombathy initially endeavoured to make up for the lack of reception regarding the new art, and by today, he has become a seminal theoretician of the various avant-garde tendencies, experimental art, concrete and visual poetry and actionism in the entire Hungarian-speaking region; his analyses and summaries are the most important resources about the genre to this day. According to the conceptual matrix he used in the late seventies, in the case of Bosch+Bosch, there was no “common ideological platform” to speak of, into which the individual spiritual intentions could have melded; much rather, we can observe the diversity of linguistic expression despite attempts to unify these experiments within one system. In the period between 1969 and 1976, we can observe the polyphonic emergence of different art media and trends (spatial intervention, Land Art, Arte Povera, Project Art, concrete poetry, conceptual art, visual semiology, new comics, Mail Art) and a distancing from classical 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.”⁹

The flow of information was much freer than in Hungary, which determined the broadness of the operation and sociocultural context of Bosch+Bosch. The first exhibition of the Bosch+Bosch group in Novi Sad (1970)¹⁰ could already be interpreted in a broader cultural field, in which the interests of the progressive members of Vojvodinese Hungarian cultural life would

⁵ Some of the artists that can be associated with the radically new trend of the NAP: Sanja Iveković, Braco Dimitrijević, Tomislav Gotovac, Dalibor Martinis, Goran Trbuljak, Mladen Stilinović, Marina Abramović,

Goran Djordjević, Raša Todosijević and others.

⁶ Piotr Piotrowski: *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, Reaktion Books, London, 2011.

⁷ Nebojša Milenković: A történelmi bőség mint művészeti alapanyag, in: *Szombathy. YU Retorika. Válogatás negyvenöt év munkáiból*, Forum Könyvkiadó, Újvidék, 2014, p. 26.

⁸ Nebojša Milenković: *Szombathy Art. Retrospektívna izložba*, Exhibition

Catalogue, Muzej savremene likovne umetnosti Novi Sad, Novi Sad, 2005, p. 8.

⁹ Bálint Szombathy: Landmarks in the Work of the Group Bosch+Bosch, in: Marijan Susovski, *op.cit.*, Zagreb, 1978, p. 51.





Braco Dimitrijević, Slavko Matković, Bogdanka Poznanović, Bálint Szombathy and László Kerekes in the Student Cultural Centre of the University of Belgrade, in 1974

meet those of the Serbian intelligentsia critical of the regime and committed to the radical internationality of the new art. The restructuring of the community of writers, visual artists, critics and curators organized around journals and youth clubs was, in fact, the result of the series of protests by Yugoslav university students in 1968, as a result of which youth clubs operating on a stable financial basis were established in every bigger city, and in Novi Sad, the Youth Tribune was founded, described by contemporaries as a commune.¹¹ According to Szombathy, in the course of 1970 and 1971, the most important link in terms of Hungarian-Yugoslav relations was Bogdanka Poznanović, working with Biljana Tomić and Zvonko Maković at the Fine Arts editorial board of the Youth Tribune in Novi Sad.¹² With the help of her husband Dejan Poznanović, who was translator and editor of the Serbian journal *Polja*, which disseminated the poetic achievements of historical avant-garde, Bogdanka Poznanović¹³ supported interregional collaborations, including the Bosch+Bosch group, by providing information, connections and joint exhibition and publication opportunities. As a concrete result of this, Bogdanka

¹⁰ Szombathy mentions two exhibitions, one at the Forum Publishing House's club, the other at the Youth Tribune's gallery. Bálint Szombathy: „Bosch+Bosch öt éve 4.”, *Híd*, Újvidék, 1975/1., p. 144.

¹¹ One of the main motifs of the student protests of 1968 in Yugoslavia was the very marginalization of the role of culture and cultural participation in socialist modernism. The students of art universities demanded the acknowledgment of their own role in the process of socialist progress. Cf. Lina Džuverović: In Praise of Unreliable Monuments, in: *Monuments should not be trusted* (curated by Lina Džuverović), Nottingham

Contemporary, Exhibition Catalogue, 2016, pp. 8–29., p. 16.

¹² Cf. Vera Bálint: *A szerb-magyar avantgárd művészek kapcsolata a hetvenes években*, MA thesis, 2010, supervisor: Miško Šuvaković.

¹³ The differences between the Yugoslav and the Hungarian cultural scenes can best be illustrated with an example from education: while in Yugoslavia, the subject “expanded media” was introduced in 1979 at every art university by the initiative of Bogdanka Poznanović, its Hungarian equivalent, the intermedia department in Budapest, was not launched until the regime change, more precisely 1991.

Poznanović was published in the alternative journal *WOW* edited by Bálint Szombathy and Slavko Matković, and participated in the making of Katalin Ladik's experimental film *Poemim* (1980).

After Szombathy moved to Novi Sad in 1971, these relations became more intense.¹⁴ Szombathy joined *Új Symposion* in its best period and became the journal's fine art editor for a year and a half, publishing his theoretical writings one after another, while making room for the region's progressive arts.¹⁵ The critical autonomy of the journal was compromised when the Communist Party – in arts as well as in the entire political scene – began a showdown against the “nationalists” and the “new left”, and dismissed the entire editorial board under the pretext of generational change, not for the last time in the history of *Új Symposion*.¹⁶ In these times, publications criticising Tito's personal cult were punished by several years of imprisonment in Yugoslavia, and it was little consolation that philosophers of the new left who had previously joined the Praxis were also banned from the scientific scene in Hungary in 1973. Also that year they attempted to condemn Tamás Szentjóbý for Miklós Haraszti's critical sociology (*Darabbér*), which turned against itself the ideological rhetorics of the worker's state. According to Liljana Kolečnik's conclusion, it was the show trials and the increasing social isolation that had led to some artists, like Slavko Matković, abandoning the practice of art for good.¹⁷

Semiotical Practices – Turning back to Language

In the background of the linguistic turn of the sixties lies the claim of avant-garde experimentalism for internationalism, which not only eliminates the emotional and narrative contents of the original syntactic meanings, but also does away with the isolation arising from the atomized nature of individual local languages. Concrete and visual poetry, the semiotic capturing of urban space, the problem of the sign-bearing body or phonic poetry – pursued by members of the Bosch+Bosch group, these practices call attention

¹⁴ Szombathy and through him the Bosch+Bosch group was in contact with the following contemporaries in the territory of Yugoslavia: Tomislav Gotovac, OHO group, Braco Dimitrijević, Goran Trbuljak, Franci Zagoričnik, Vladimir Kopić, Slavko Bogdanović, Slobodan Tišma, Mirko Radojičić, Raša Todosijević, Era Milivojević, Želimir Košević, Zvonko Maković, Dejan and Bogdanka Poznanović, Bojana Pejić, Biljana Tomić, Dunja Blažević, Slavko Timotijević, Ješa Denegri and others.

¹⁵ A comprehensive review of the Hungarian avant-garde by Poznanović was published in the April 1972 issue

of *Új Symposion*, featuring short biographies and exhibitions lists of György Jovánovics, László Lakner, László Méhes, József Molnár, Gyula Pauer, Tamás Szentjóbý and Endre Tót. Its sources were Bálint Szombathy and László Beke.

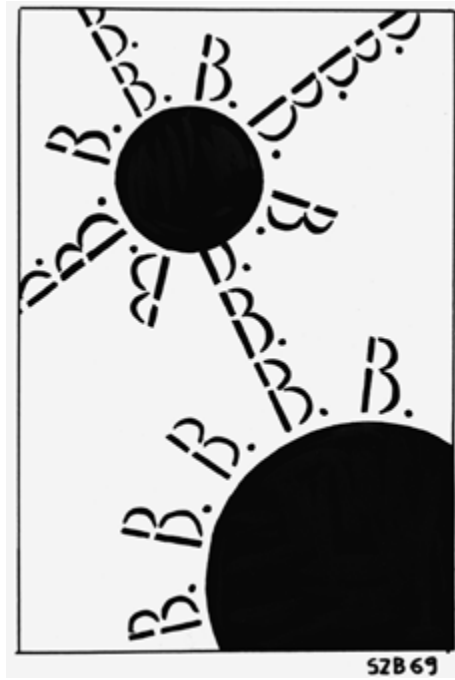
¹⁶ Cf. György Szerbhorváth: *Vajdasági lakoma: az Új Symposion történetéről*, Bratislava, Kalligram, 2005.

¹⁷ Liljana Kolečnik: *Conflicting Visions of Modernity and the Post-War Modern Art*, in: Liljana Kolečnik (ed.): *Socialism and Modernity. Art, Culture, Politics 1950–1974*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2012, pp. 107–180, 178.

László Szalma,
Homage to Dada, 1972



Bálint Szombathy,
Don Quixotic Tilting at the Sun, 1969



Bosch+Bosch Group, *Collective Actions, 1972*, photo: László Dormán



to the collective significance of the linguistic dimension. The majority of Bosch+Bosch members joined the international structuralist practice of the period, principally hallmarked by the name of Ferdinand de Saussure, with a poetic practice and a linguistically oriented intellectual attitude instead of a background in traditional academic painting. The works they conceived from the seventies deconstructed language with various methods; their common characteristics were participation in progressive contemporary discourses on the one hand, and the referentiality of classical – Hungarian language-based – avant-garde on the other hand, which makes the group's functioning unique even within the Yugoslav context.¹⁸

The legacy of classical avant-garde was conveyed to the group by Bálint Szombathy, through his rediscovery of Lajos Kassák, a writer, poet, journal editor, artist, art director and symbolic figure of leftist critical thought, whose cult transcended the borders of Hungary. At first unwittingly, Szombathy joined a discontinued tradition, since not only had the Dadaist movement had representatives in Subotica and Novi Sad in the first half of the 20th century, but the activist journal *Út* was lauded by Kassák himself from his exile in

¹⁸ Miško Šuvaković: *Conceptual Art*, in: Drubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković: *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-*

avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991, The MIT Press, Cambridge-London, 2003, pp. 210–245, 228.

Vienna.¹⁹ The significance of Kassák's poetry and oeuvre as a journal editor was revived by the Vojvodinese Hungarian intellectual circles of the sixties and seventies. In contrast, in socialist Hungary, the cultural marginalization of Kassák, who had been forced into opposition, went so far that after decades of being hushed, the writer was allowed a single, self-financed exhibition in 1967, the year of his death.²⁰ In the mid-sixties, the new progressive generation of artists tried renewing relations with Kassák, but these encounters – as they were unfamiliar with his works – yielded no real intellectual inspiration.²¹

The Bosch+Bosch group's activity, however, exhibits a feature that originates in Kassák's oeuvre which treats ethics and aesthetics as a whole. "I saw a radical behaviour inherent in his activist program, and not a mere

¹⁹ Drubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković: *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, The MIT Press, Cambridge-London, 2003, pp. 294–330, 307.

²⁰ His exhibition at the Denise René gallery in Paris a few years before was a real political scandal, as a result of which Kassák was denied an exit visa to leave Hungary. Cf. Edit Sasvári:

„A mi kultúránk nem lehet más itthon, mint külföldön”. Kassák Lajos 1960-as párizsi kiállítása, *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 59, 2010/1.

²¹ Progressive Hungarian artists could get acquainted with Kassák's works from the writings of Imre Bori about the avant-garde, published in Novi Sad, or from other articles in *Új Symposion*. Issue 46/1969, for instance, was illustrated entirely with Kassák's works.



Ante Vukov, *ART*, 1975



style of speech,” phrased Szombathy²², who signalled the avant-garde roots of the rebirth of experimental poetry in the sixties with his first typography poems that deconstructed Kassák’s lyrical constructivism (*Don Quixotic Tilting at the Sun*, 1969). Slavko Matković, to whom reading in Hungarian was part of cross-cultural practice and multiculturalism, framed the characteristic circular motif of constructivism into a typographical square made up of Kassák’s name in his visual homage-poem from 1972, and his translation of Kassák was the visual reinterpretation of the very mechanism of translation (transfer of meaning). László Szalma also covered a typical, conceptual trend within the group’s collective manifestation with his spatial intervention with the letters of DADA.

²² Bálint Szombathy: *Kassák aktivizmusa és a délvidéki modernisták*, manuscript, 2010.

With each member of the group, although in different ways, the re-consideration of classical avant-garde practices (besides Kassák, the visual poetry of the dimensionist Károly Tamkó Sirató or Stéphane Mallarmé) was manifested in a claim for establishing a new linguistic and communicational system, fundamentally different from the theoretical conception of language endorsed by Art and Language. In the relation of text and visibility or sign and symbol, visual poetry and poetic systems based on the negation of narrativity are defined by mutuality, crossing boundaries and the intrinsic visual value of the sign (letter). “In the last stage of its development,” says Szombathy, “turns into nothingness, turns into a negation of poetry”. His visual poems entitled *Nontextualité* (1972) are visualizations of the negation of text and textuality, in the course of which the linking of the narrative text’s select letters (codes) with a mesh of lines induces cognitive processes based on the visualization of spatiality. Szombathy’s visual-semiotic research is directed at the spatial extension of the poem and explores the correlations of the intervention of linguistic signs that disrupt the physical faculties of urban space (*Bauhaus*, 1972), or takes the loosening of the notion of authorship by appropriating archaic, found or spontaneous signs as its argument (*Semiology of the Urban Environment*, 1976).

Although the group’s collectively realized semiological spatial interventions can be associated with land art’s conception of art, in these visual experiments, space as a physical faculty is merely a context for situational practices with linguistic signs, even if certain actions were directed at the poetic transformation of space, as in the cases of Matković or Kerekes, for instance. The appearance of letters in space, their dissociation from their field of abstraction takes place in two ways: through the material, dimensional tangibility of the signs and through the performative games they are involved in. Evoking the spirit of Fluxus, the execution of an action is not necessarily connected to a specific author; in fact, sometimes the performative functions are transferred to randomly involved participants. In his semiotic actions, László Szalma entrusted none other than a poultry farm with the selection, so that the hens would decide the adequate sequence of numbers, which made it possible for him to join the post-Cageian discourses dissociating the role of chance from the human factor.²³ The peculiar, rural atmosphere and humour of the semiotic games placed in rural environments appears in works that oppose the elitist status and socio-culture of art and question the traditional framework of art and authorship.

In the case of Attila Csernik, the notion of typopoetry, introduced by Biljana Tomić, is reinterpreted by the medium of the body, where the intrinsic typographical value of letters becomes part of a performative-visual system.

²³ Liz Kotz: *Words to Be Looked At. Language in 1960s Art*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2007.



Katalin Ladik performing with László Beke at the Young Artists' Studio Budapest, 1979. Photo: Zoltán Bakos

The traditional and static media (e.g. paper) are replaced by the medium of a living and breathing organism, the body, the sensuality of which enters into a relation of sharp tension with the abstract pattern of the typographic symbol. The dissociation of text fragments, letters and corrupted texts from traditional decoding mechanisms results in a new linguistic-aesthetic system in Csernik's minimalist actions. To the perception, the visuality of these works is composed of the intermedial mutuality of medium and linguistic code (sign and symbol) as well as of action, object and language. Miško Šuvaković links Csernik's art with the Duchampian tradition, as both body and object are used as materials in his artistic interventions, and its communicational layers use photography, film, video and books in the course of constructing a "micro-museum".²⁴

The music score, a characteristically intermedial genre of post-Cageian aesthetics, played an important role in the activities of Matković, Kerekes, and poet and performer Katalin Ladik, the single female member of the group. Tradition and progress, an affinity for archaic layers, the radical dissonance of the avant-garde, the theatricality of actors and the experimentalism of phonic poetry form a peculiar unity in Ladik's art. As David Crowley observed, Ladik's activity can also be interpreted in terms of the dual nature of the Yugoslav context that absorbed the phenomena of Western pop culture: being the first woman artist in the Yugoslav culture of false prudence to use the performative possibilities of her naked body, she suffered political retribution; at the same time, however, she became such an icon of pop culture that was equivalent to leaving behind the marginal zone of the neo-avant-garde.²⁵ Ladik's everyday feminism raised the critical deconstruction of traditional

²⁴ Miško Šuvaković: *Atila Černik, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine*, Novi Sad. Vujičić kolekcija, Beograd. Novi Sad, 2009, p. 108–109.

²⁵ David Crowley: *The Future is between your Legs: Sex, Art and*

Censorship in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in: *Monuments should not be trusted* (curated by Lina Džuverović), Nottingham Contemporary, Exhibition Catalogue, 2016, p. 38–39.

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



female patterns and roles into the avant-garde discourse, in Yugoslavia and in Hungary alike. According to Miško Šuvaković points out, with her collages, scores and multimedia performances, "she challenged the horizons of representation in her colleagues' work."²⁶

Art as Collaboration

A recurrent motif in the academic reception of Bosch+Bosch is the group's connection to and cooperation with Hungarian neo-avant-garde, the basis of which was common language. The earliest example of collaboration is also related to the practice of poetry: Tamás Szentjőby first discovered Katalin Ladik's erotic-surrealistic poems published in *Új Symposion* in 1967, after which he contacted her. Their intense correspondence was followed by the tryst of the UFO happening organized by Szentjőby (St.Auby), timed concurrently with the May 1st parade of 1968.²⁷ Ladik later often emphasized the importance of the event in starting her own actionist practice, an early stage of which was a scandalous evening of poetry reading in Budapest in 1970. At the event, which was held in collaboration with Jenő Balaskó, an avant-garde

²⁶ Miško Šuvaković: *The Power of a Woman: Katalin Ladik*, The Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina in Novi Sad, Novi Sad, 2010, p. 163.

²⁷ Klara Kemp Welch: *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York, p. 114–115.

Miklós Erdély and Katalin Ladik,
Budapest, 1982



poet under active surveillance by the secret service, Ladik staged her erotic shaman-performance. The vocal-visual intensity of the bearskin costume on her nude body together with the drum, the bagpipe and the candle is a vivid experience even through the surviving footages. This was the first occasion when male-centred Hungarian culture, even more puritanical than in Yugoslavia, was confronted with the problem of the performativity of the female body, which was dismissed as hypocritical vulgar rhetoric based on the raucous reverberations in the press. The evening resulted in serious political consequences to all of them, and the director of the culture house was punished for permitting the event.

From the early seventies, Katalin Ladik was actively present in the Hungarian underground and the semi-official art scene, including theatre and film,²⁸ but the period was favourable for interregional group relations as well. The Hungarian avant-garde had begun opening up to partnership, and if their possibilities to travel were more curbed, they endeavoured to invite artists of the Central and Eastern European avant-garde. Organized by art historian László Beke, the handholding action of Czech, Slovak and Hungarian artists in Balatonboglár (1972) showed the potentials of the avant-garde: in micro-communities of autonomy, the intentions and opportunities were present for modelling a possible neutralization of historical conflicts within the region. As an alternative institution and complex ideological field, the chapel of Balatonboglár²⁹ was the most important discursive space for Bosch+Bosch in this respect, in their dialogue with the Hungarian neo-avant-garde.

²⁸ She mentions Miklós Erdély, Tibor Hajas, László Najmányi, Gergely Molnár, Judit Kele, Iván Szendrő, András Halász, Péter Halász and Miklós Jancsó as her acquaintances, among others.

²⁹ The history of Balatonboglár can be interpreted as an ideological space where the relation of the players (already growing independent of the pressure of socialist power) to tradition

and progress could be articulated at a given moment and accentuated in its aftermath. The conflicts that had still not grown tense then were culminated in a distinct polarization after the regime change: the majority of former progressive traditionalists are today the members of the privileged Ultraconservative Artist Association (Hungarian Academy of Arts) endorsed by the state.

The Opening Ceremony of the Group's
Exhibition in the Chapel Studio at
Balatonboglár, 1972



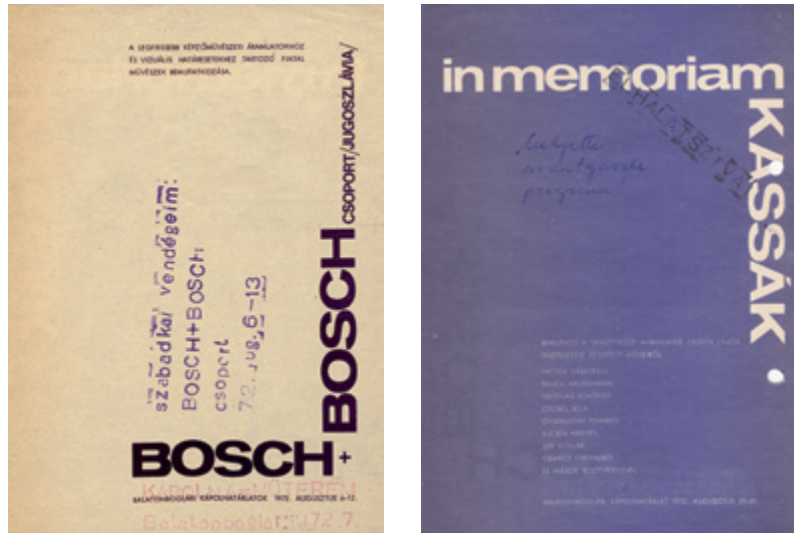
Unknown, Bálint Szombathy,
György Galántai and László Szalma
at the front of The Chapel Studio,
Balatonboglár, 1972

The first group exhibition of 1972 was preceded by a phase of information exchange and orientation among the more prominent organizer personalities of the two scenes. Szombathy's first visit to Budapest was in 1971,³⁰ after having contacted László Beke and Attila Csáji, an artist of Szürenon, an artist group that reinterpreted painting from a progressive approach. Csáji was initially organizing the program of the exhibitions in Balatonboglár together with György Galántai, who thus got acquainted with Szombathy and invited the Vojvodinese group to Balatonboglár. As pointed out by Edit Sasvári, the invitations, attached to special permits in case of foreigners, were considered especially provocative by the state power, and were thus frowned upon, to say the least, in Galántai's case.³¹ Eventually, the exhibition took place between 6 and 13 August 1972, featuring László Kerekes, Slavko Matković, László Szalma, Bálint Szombathy and an artist who was not a member of the group, Predrag Šidjanin. On the flyer, the members of the Yugoslav group defined themselves as "young artists of the freshest art tendencies and visual margins".

³⁰ The goal of the visit was to organize a Kassák exhibition in Novi Sad, which fell through on account of the high insurance fees.

³¹ Edit Sasvári: Törvénytelen avantgárd. Balatonboglári kápolnatárlatok 1970-1973, *Beszélő*, 2000, Year 5, Issue 9-10. <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/torvenytelen-avantgard> Accessed 12 March 2016.

The flyer of the Bosch+Bosch Group's Exhibition
at György Galántai's Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár, 1972



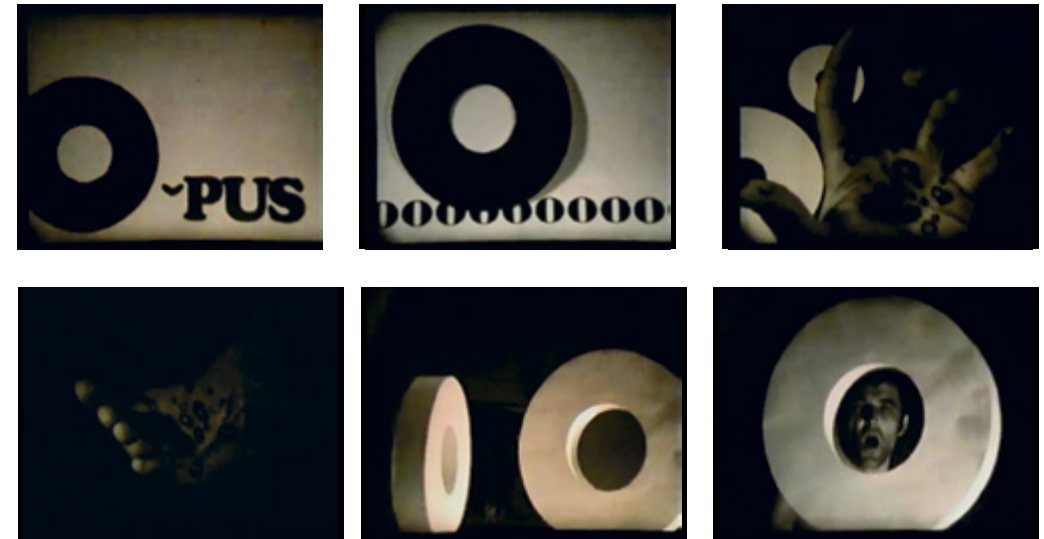
The character of the multimedia exhibition was determined by the group's sense of avant-garde continuity: the entrance of the chapel housing the exhibitions was adorned with the sign DADA, corded by a ribbon of the national colours, like a gigantic brand logo. Ironically, the flyer of Bosch+Bosch was printed on a recycled invitation card to a Kassák exhibition originally planned to open a week later but cancelled (*In memoriam Kassák. Exhibition of the works of the international avant-garde made in homage to Lajos Kassák*). As far as it can be reconstructed from György Galántai's recordings,³² the land art-type and conceptual works on display in the chapel space could be associated with the spirit of the post-painting Iparterv-generation who were open to new media, much rather than that of Szűrenon. Slavko Matković's poetic object with the label "Sándor Petőfi's poem Tisza in a bottle", referring to the canonic author of Hungarian poetry, is related not only to Duchamp and the Fluxus, but also to Tamás Szentjóbby's action objects from the late sixties.³³

One year later, in June 1973, the "Yugoslav colleagues" participated with yet another exhibition in Balatonboglár³⁴, at which two new members of the Bosch+Bosch group, Katalin Ladik and Attila Csernik were also present. The latest, as editor of the Youth Tribune's gallery and the journal *Képes Ifjúság*, he had also been in touch with Hungarian artists for a while, for whom

³² Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.
³³ Cf. Emese Kürti: Esoteric Avant-garde. The Concept/ Conceptual Paradigm. *Exindex. Contemporary Art Magazine*, 4 August 2014, <http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=934>
Accessed 15 March 2016.

³⁴ 29 July – 4 August 1973. "Yugoslav colleagues": exhibition of József Ács, Ferenc Baráth, Attila Csernik, Gábor Ifjú, Katalin Ladik, József Markulik, Slavko Matković, József Smit, Bálint Szombathy.

Attila Csernik, Katalin Ladik, Imre Póth, stills
from the experimental film *O-pus*, 1972



they organized an exhibition in Novi Sad in November 1972, and he had their works and writings published in the journal.³⁵ The participation of Csernik and Ladik in the Balatonboglár exhibition, at least according to Galántai's enthusiastic journal entry, had an exceptionally good reception, especially owing to the interactive approach characteristic of the collaboration of the two artists: "At 1 p.m., in the attic, we screened Csernik and Ladik's film, *The Position of O Letters*. Sound: Ladik. Afterwards, Ladik put on a show for us downstairs. Using tape recordings and natural voice. It was divine. An unintelligible sound performance over relatively little intelligible speech."³⁶

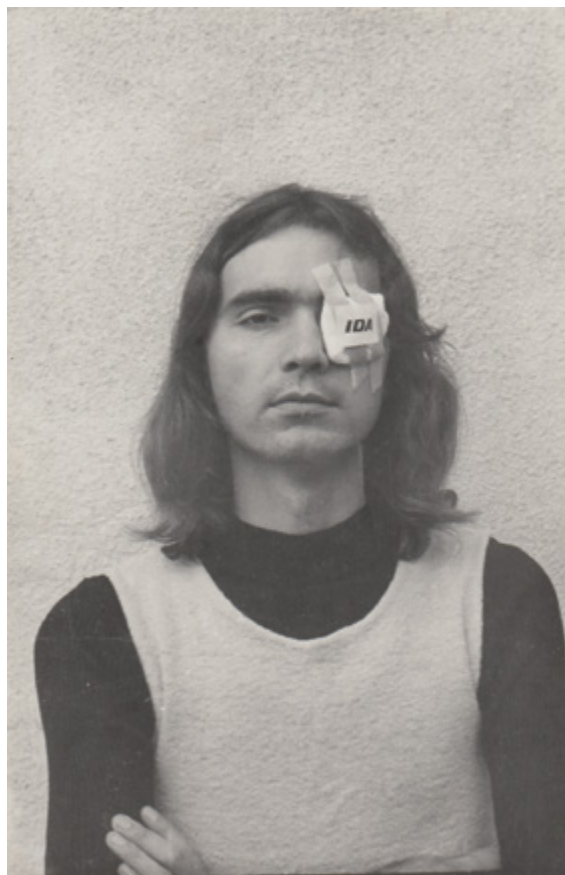
Csernik and Ladik made the experimental film mentioned above (*O-pus*, 1972) in collaboration with a cameraman of the Novi Sad TV, Imre Póth. Csernik printed various forms of the letter "O" onto an A4 sheet of paper. He made a bigger "O" out of cardboard paper, which he placed over the A4 paper in various positions, and also made photographs of different positions of the letter "O" applied onto body parts and placed in the space. Once

³⁵ In the course of the seventies, Csernik was in touch with György Galántai, Péter Prutkay, György Szemadám, Gábor Tóth, Ottó Mezei, István Haraszty, László Paizs, József Molnár V., Dóra Mauer, László Beke, András Orvos and Endre Tót. The mentioned exhibition displayed works by Attila Csáji, György Galántai, László Paizs, Oszkár Papp, István Haraszty és József Molnár V. As he explained in an interview: on the one hand, his extensive international correspondence was noticed by the

police, and he was harassed as a result, and on the other hand, due to the intensity of the relationships and the excessive demands of some Hungarian colleagues, after a while, he had to distance himself from certain artists. Interview of Vera Bálint with Attila Csernik, 29 October 2009.manuscript.

³⁶ György Galántai's journal entry, in: Júlia Klaniczay – Edit Sasvári (eds.): *Törvénytelen avantgárd. Galántai György balatonboglári kápolnaműterme 1970–1973*, Artpool-Balassi, Budapest, 2003, p. 164.

Bálint Szombathy: With Ida Biard in Novi Sad, project, 1975. Photo: László Kerekes



the film was completed, he asked Katalin Ladik to sing what she sees. Ladik's extreme articulation, wide tonality and the great emotional scale of her voice are not a mere illustration of the sequences that recall early avant-garde cinema: in a parallel sphere of autonomy, her voice moves in synchrony with the images, and sometimes it transcends the minimalism of the vision. The film would have been a perfect fit for the experimental program of Balázs Béla Studio, an association created for young filmmakers, where, from the early seventies, Hungarian avant-garde artists collaborated with the composers of the New Music Studio.³⁷ After the screening, in connection with the film, Katalin Ladik sung a vocal interpretation of Csernik's exhibited spatial installation to the Balatonboglár public. The installation comprised a large letter "O" hanging from an arch into the space, with his characteristic letraset-covered "ball" balancing on it.

³⁷ New Music Studio, inspired most of all by John Cage, was founded in 1970 by Péter Eötvös, Zoltán Jeney, Zoltán Kocsis, László Sárosi, Albert Simon and László Vidovszky.



Endre Tót, Zero typing, 1975, Zagreb, photo: Bálint Szombathy

Despite the positive reception, members of the Bosch+Bosch group could sense the vulnerable and insecure situation of the colony of Balatonboglár, with its impending political liquidation,³⁸ which was much more limited financially, politically and in terms of public access compared to their own possibilities. These shortcomings were somewhat mitigated by their collaboration with the Vojvodinese artists, which increased the regional presence of Hungarian artists with occasional invitations and exchange of information in addition to the exhibitions. Members of the Pécs Workshop,³⁹ which also participated in Balatonboglár, visited Novi Sad a number of times, and in 1973 they invited the Bosch+Bosch group to exhibit in Pécs. With the mediation of Bálint Szombathy, Endre Tót was invited in 1975 to the April Meetings

³⁸ "The exhibition of Balatonboglár was memorable. For us, it was absurd. Over here, you could do whatever you wanted, and over there they were afraid, peeping through the chapel's gate to see if the police were coming, and they shaded the windows – we talked in the dark. It was mystical and theretofore unimaginable to us, that environment we were in for two days.

They were afraid of everything." Attila Csernik to Vera Bálint, *op. cit.*, 2009.

³⁹ Founded in 1970, the Pécs Workshop's approach was influenced by the tradition of the Bauhaus school in Pécs, the local achievements in painting and graphic art, and international conceptual art. Its members were Ferenc Ficsek, Károly Halász, Károly Kismányoki and Sándor Pinczehelyi.

Ida Biard and Endre Tót in Zagreb, 1975.
Photo: Bálint Szombathy



(Aprilski susreti) held at the Culture Centre of the University of Belgrade, where Tót held a lecture. From here they travelled to Zagreb together, where they got acquainted with the organizer of the Expanded Cinema festival, Ida Biard, who then included Endre Tót's experimental film (*I'm glad if I can take a step*, 1975) in its program.⁴⁰ Endre Tót realized his mail art action entitled *I am glad if I can type zeros* at the Student Centre's gallery in Zagreb. The artist sent the majority of the pages, typed on site in front of an audience, to members of the international mail art network.

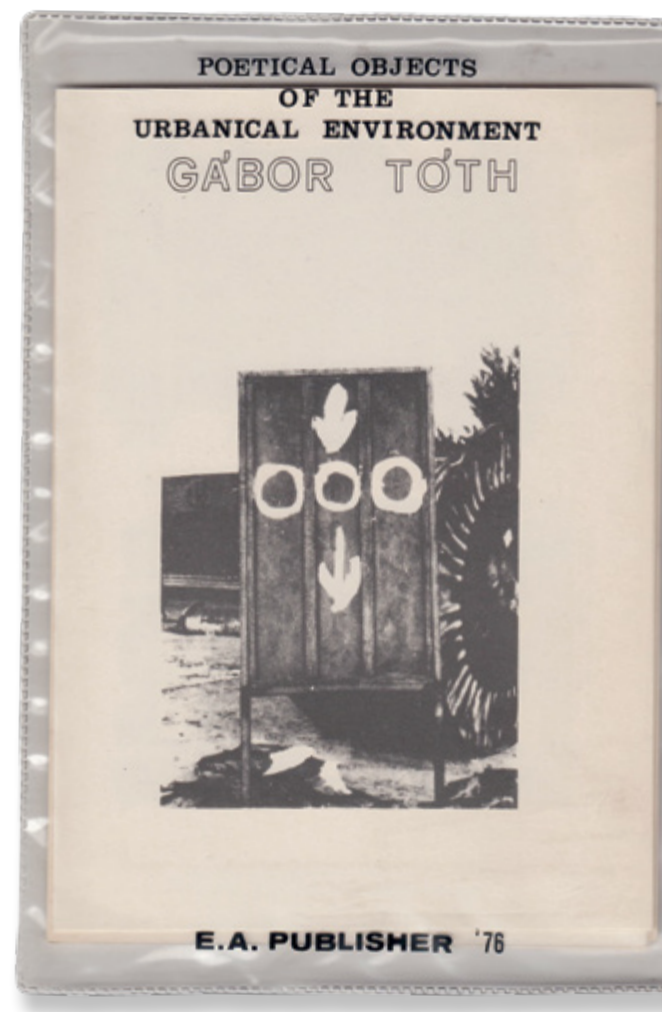
Beyond the press appearances mentioned above, interregional relations were also formalized in publications in semi-legal journals. The Bosch+Bosch group had its own publication, the informative and art-theory magazine *WOW*, published in 30–40 copies and distributed internationally. Its first editors were Bálint Szombathy, Slavko Matković and László Szalma. The first issue was composed of photocopied A4 pages, but owing to Szombathy's editorial efforts, later they had the possibility to have the magazine printed. The third, 1975 issue was edited by Szombathy alone, typing and typesetting the texts, cutting out and gluing the reproductions, the artist's contacts, reports of events and short summaries. The magazine featured a great number of artists, from Endre Tót and Gábor Tóth through Joseph Beuys and Marina Abramović, as a result of extensive international networking owing to Szombathy's significant mail art activity in addition to his personal relations.

Szombathy endeavoured to involve his artist friends in his activity aimed at increasing the visibility of the region's art. His closest and still lasting intellectual friendship was with the then dimensionist Gábor Tóth,⁴¹ with whom he established the *Experimental Art Publisher* in 1973, which was based, instead of a legal institution, on Gábor Tóth's job in Budapest as a printer: he

⁴⁰ Personal communication by Bálint Szombathy.

⁴¹ Gábor Tóth discovered the visual poetry of Károly Tamkó Sirató in the sixties, and it became his most important reference. Tamkó Sirató

had founded the dimensionist branch of the avant-garde in Paris in the thirties. Cf.: Bálint Szombathy: *Art Tot(h)al. Tóth Gábor munkásságának megközelítése 1968–2003*, Aktuális avantgárd 13, Ráció Kiadó, 2004.



Katalin Ladik – Bálint Szombathy –
Gábor Tóth – Franci Zagoričnik,
*The Poetical Objects of the Urbanical
Environment*, Assembling, 1976

could illegally print their publications at his workplace. (Endre Tót's artist books of 1971 could be made owing to a similar personal bargain with a printer.) The propelling force behind this activity was primarily the correctional attempt of avant-garde artists operating on the margins of the institutional system, in order to create their own forums of publicity, for which they had occasional opportunities through the private cracks of socialism, in the manner outlined above. After two publications created together, Tóth and Szombathy made a third one in 1976, this time involving Katalin Ladik and the Slovenian poet Franci Zagoričnik. The assembling entitled *Poetical Objects of the Urbanical Environment* contains a work from each artist with the theme of semiological research into urban space.

As a typical medium of the period's art – often even replacing exhibitions –, the assembling served collective appearances focusing on a given subject, and its suitability for distribution by mail made exchange possible between “East” and “West”. The single issue of the alternative assembling publication *Mixed Up Underground* (1972) was edited by Csernik and Szombathy, and its international contents were also included in the *Kontaktor 973* publication.⁴² The Abbie Hoffman quotation on the header of the call for projects posted in Artpool Budapest was used by Szombathy and his associates to make the not quite communicative and well-informed underground aware of the necessity of making their own publications. Irrespective of their circumstances and level of freedom, the common motivation of Yugoslav and Hungarian artists was an intention to participate in the collective imaginary space of contemporary art, which created a complex system of collaborations within the region. The human factors of personal relationships, the dynamic of particular interests, the generational consciousness, the commitment to the subversive functions of the avant-garde, the complex matrix of the desire for representation and internationality: all of these together contributed to the events that took place around the Bosch+Bosch group.

⁴² Hungarian artists featured in the publication: Gábor Tóth, István Haraszty, Sándor Pinczehelyi, György Galántai, Imre Bak, Tamás Szentjóby, József Molnár V.



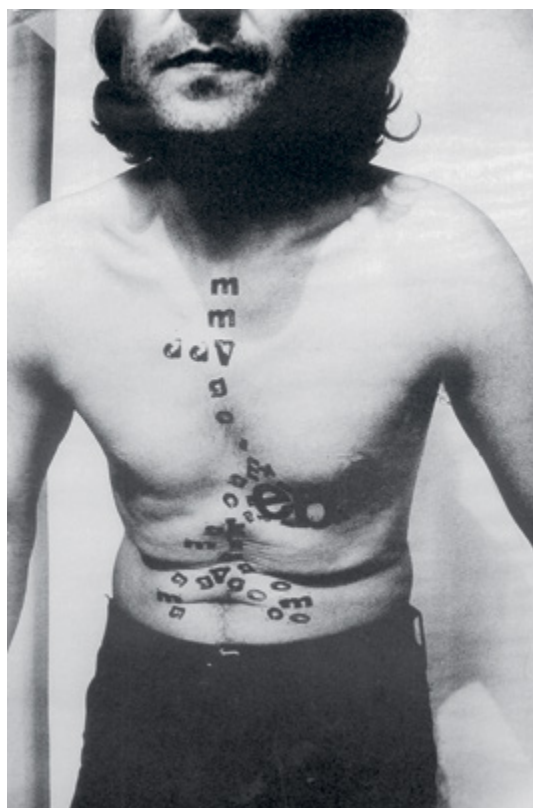
Attila Csernik

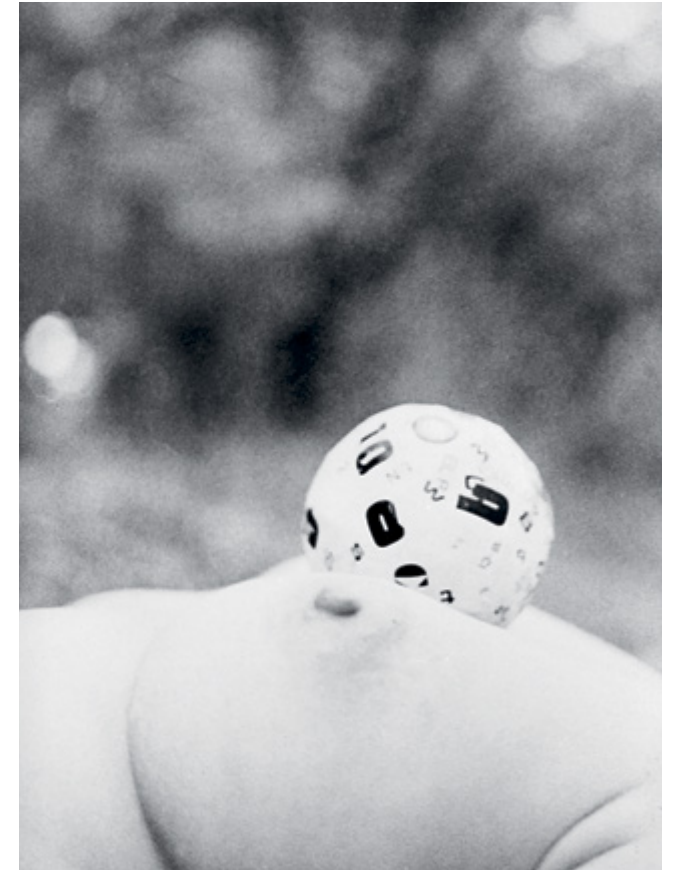
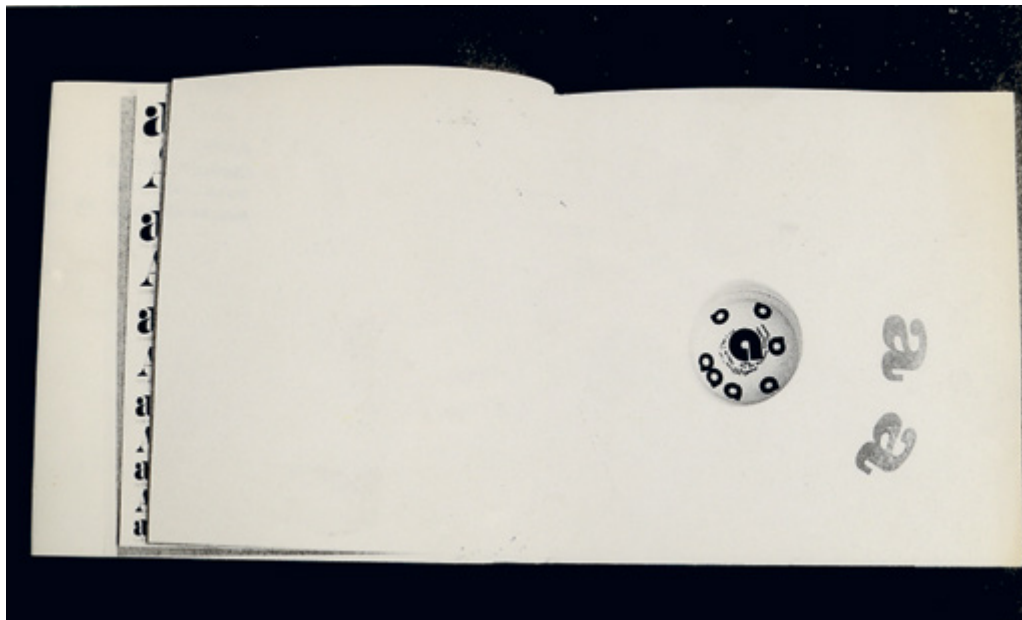
He was born in 1941 in Bačka Topola (Topolya) in the former Yugoslavia, where he presently lives and works.

He is a visual artist, performance artist and poet. His oeuvre is characterized by the use of several media, as the spectrum of his works ranges from concrete and visual poetry through artist's books and objects to performances and actions. All of his works are centred on letter and text, and their relation to the image and the body. He joined the Bosch+Bosch group in 1973 and remained its member until 1976.

Following his education in arts and art history, he worked as graphic designer at the Forum Publishing House in Novi Sad from 1969 until 2002. In 1965 he got acquainted with Pop Art and Neo-Dada during his short stay in New York. Csernik's wife, Erzsébet Juhász worked as art critic, art historian and teacher among other things, owing to which she had great influence on his works. In 1969, he participated in the work of the EK group (Erőt Kölcsönző, 'Power Lender') at the art colony of Zenta. In these years, he was already moving around in progressive artists' and intellectuals' circles in Novi Sad, such as Katalin Ladik, the KÖD group and authors of the journals *Új Symposion* and *Polja*. He got acquainted with the Bosch+Bosch group through Bálint Szombathy, with whom he collaborated on the *Mixed Up Underground* project from 1972. The resulting materials were published in 1973 in the *Kontaktor 972*, a magazine created by Slavko Matković and functioning as an open, alternative platform.

The body as a medium has a special role in Csernik's oeuvre, which is best indicated by the fact that from the early seventies, his works have featured the motif of writing on the body in various forms. He has made a number of such groups of works, the most extensive of which is the *Badtext* series. Its several phases include a series (*Telex*) that can be associated with process art, an experiment that puts his own face in the centre like a portrait; another group of works employs text projections. Throughout the process of *Telex*, Csernik applied letters onto his body with the help of an aid, but at first glance, no semantically coded expression can be deciphered from them. References to the telex system had a special meaning in the countries of the Soviet Bloc: Csernik's work may at once refer to the communicational difficulties of the socialist era and the resulting loopholes, and the reactions of art to this, the practice of "reading between the lines" or the suspension of meaning by creating chaotic conditions. In a slightly different approach, *Experiment with Katalin Ladik* from 1971 focuses on other aspects of stamping on the body, as in this case, Csernik "uses" Ladik's body as a medium, while the actionist nature of the piece is also more emphasized. The collaboration of the two artists resulted in an experimental photo series at the 1973 Balatonboglár show, in the course of which Ladik's naked body engaged in interaction with the letraset "ball of letters" frequently recurring in Csernik's oeuvre. In some cases, these action objects were used in land-art type interventions, while in other cases they can be associated with Csernik's more traditional works.







László Kerekes

He was born in 1954 in the village of Stara Moravica (Bácskossuthfalva), Yugoslavia. He lived and worked in Berlin until his death in 2011.

He was a multimedia and performance artist, the first pioneer of trans-avant-garde painting in Yugoslavia. In 1971 he joined the Bosch+Bosch group and remained a member until 1974. His principal motifs in this period were traces, interventions, imprints related to Land Art. When the Palić (Palics) Lake next to Subotica was drained in 1972, he made a “landscape correction” by drawing stripes, signs defined according to his own coordinate system, into the bottom of the lake. At the same time, his activities included mail art, electrography, experimental film and actions inspired by Fluxus.

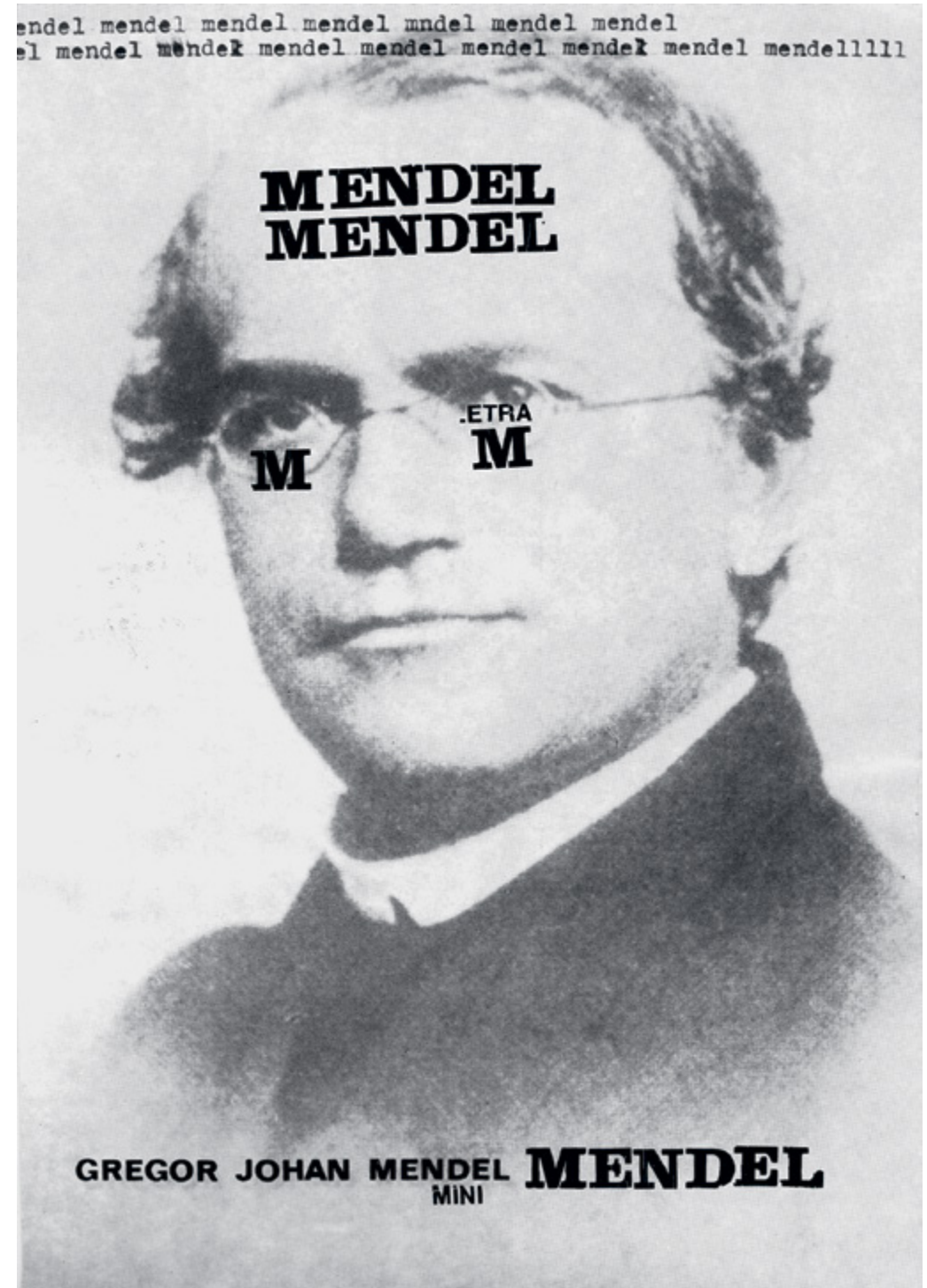
Having quit the Bosch+Bosch group, from 1976 until 1982 he made journeys through Asia, Europe and Africa, and in 1980 he graduated in restoration at the Academy of Arts, Belgrade. In 1984 he became the graphic designer of *Új Symposion*, the avant-garde journal of Vojvodina, which owed its radically novel visual style to Kerekes.

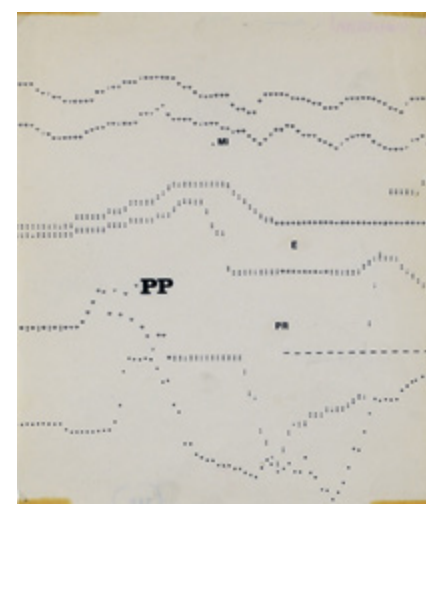
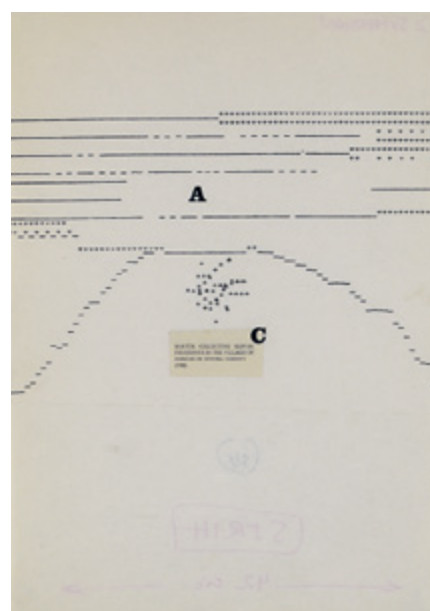
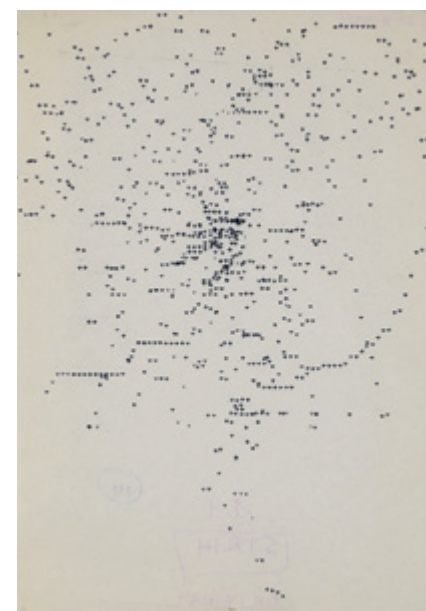
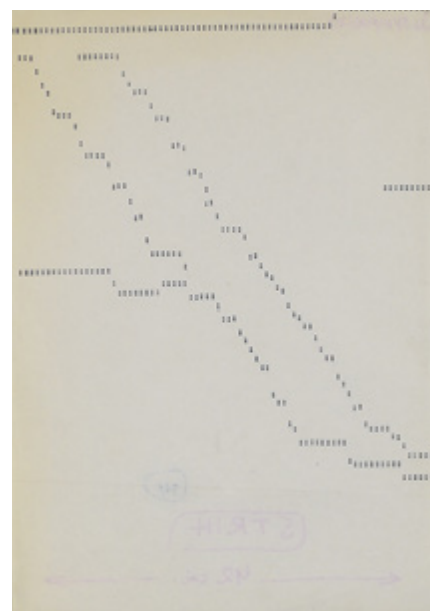
On account of the political changes in Serbia, he moved to West Berlin in 1988. From 1993 he was an active member of the Artists' Museum movement initiated by Emmett Williams. He donated twelve paintings to the Zitzer Spiritual Republic founded in Oromhegyes, Vojvodina, with the condition that they be placed in the Underground Museum of Freedom (in

other words, to be buried underground) after seven days on display. The theme of his art project *False Landscapes*, which took place in various sites around the world between 1994 and 2000, was the quest for identity in geographical and spiritual space. At the international art event *Aggregatzustand – Simple Constructions* (1998) in Berlin, which he conceived and co-organized, he performed his happening *Reading the Newspaper*: while the screen of a special TV-helmet broadcast the local program of a downtown channel, he held a public reading of three newspapers for twenty minutes each.

On his fiftieth birthday in 2004 he symbolically quit appearing in public as an artist. In 2005 he presented a wide angle digital camera obscura suitable for art photography, which he had not only invented but also engineered. The first short motion picture ever recorded without a lens, filmed with his perfected digital camera, was screened at the opening ceremony of the Berlinale *Directors Lounge* experimental film festival (Berlin, 2007). The *Atomiseur* project and the *Satellite-Atomiseur* series (2006-2008) constituted a return to his painting style of the seventies, at once developing it further. Reflecting on his severe heart surgery, the painting/photo series *Herzkolonie / Heart Colony* (2009) was his last work. He had hundreds of performances, solo and group exhibitions all over the world.







Katalin Ladik

She was born in 1942 in Novi Sad (Újvidék), Yugoslavia. She has lived and worked alternately in Novi Sad, Serbia, Budapest, Hungary and Hvar Island, Croatia.

She is a poet, artist, performance artist and actress. Her career in sound poetry and action art unfolded in parallel with her literary activity; her artistic pursuits involve the genres of audio play, experimental music, experimental theatre, visual poetry and mail art. In 1973, she joined the Bosch+Bosch group, of which she was an influential member.

Her literary career began in 1962 with the avant-garde Symposion circle in Vojvodina, comprising the future founders of the journal *Új Symposion*. Her first volume was published in 1969 under the title *Ballad of the Silver Bike*, with a gramophone record supplement that featured recordings of her interpreting her poems. Her poetry merges mythology, folklore symbolism and folk poetry with modern lifestyle, technology and eroticism (*The Small, Red Bulldozers Have Taken Off*, 1971; *Tales of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine*, 1978; *Icarus on the Subway*, 1981; *The Promiscuous Broom*, 1984; *Exile*, 1988; *Engagement*, 1994). Her compositional technique and tone are closely related to Surrealism.

In addition to written poetry, her activity in the field of sound poetry is internationally acclaimed. Her record *Phonopoetica* was published in 1976 in Belgrade, featuring vocal interpretations of visual poems by experimental

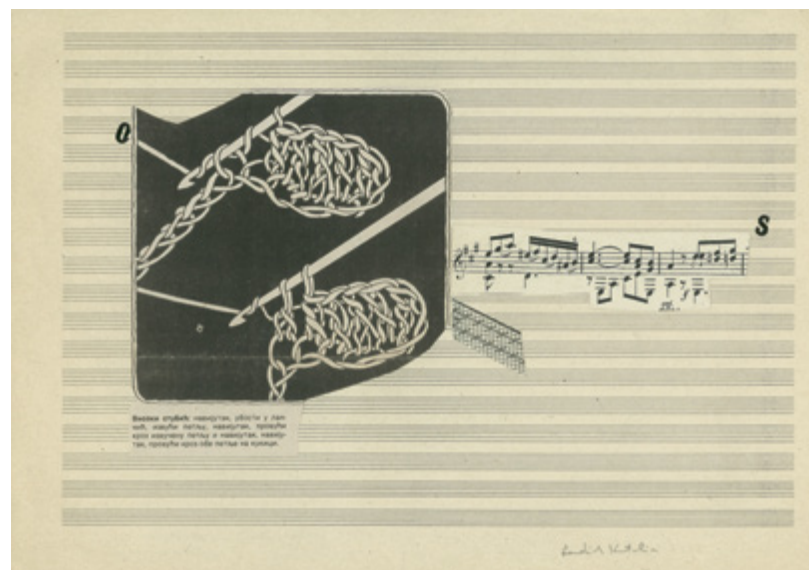
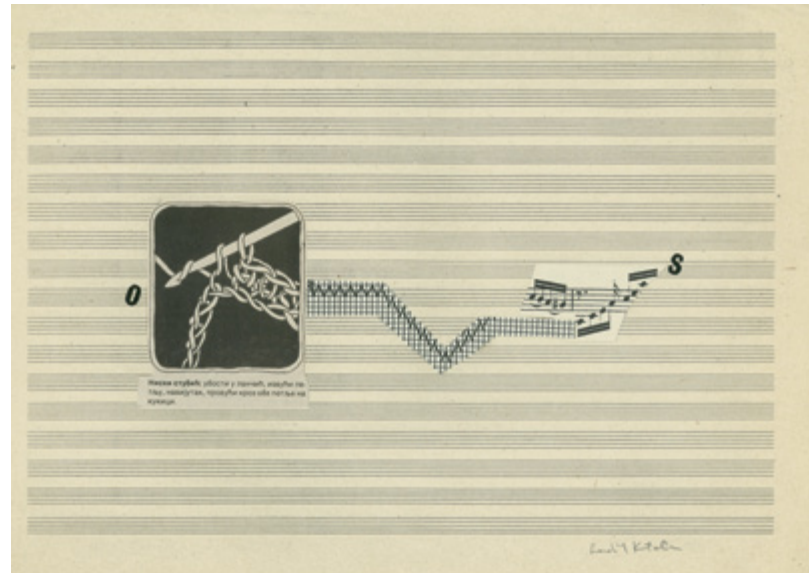
poets including Gábor Tóth, Bálint Szombathy and herself. Ladik's records reveal her singular vocal skills: her scale ranges from overtones to bass. Electro-acoustic effects are secondary to her music, as she works with the perspectives of the human voice, which includes screaming, growling, chirping, intonation and extremely hushed whisper.

As a singer she has collaborated with a number of outstanding representatives of experimental music, such as Ernő Király of Novi Sad, composer of folkloristic music, or the ACEZANTEZ band (Dubravko Detoni, Milko Kelemen) of Zagreb, internationally acclaimed in the field of electroacoustic avant-garde, as well as Dušan Radić of Belgrade and Boris Kovač of Novi Sad.

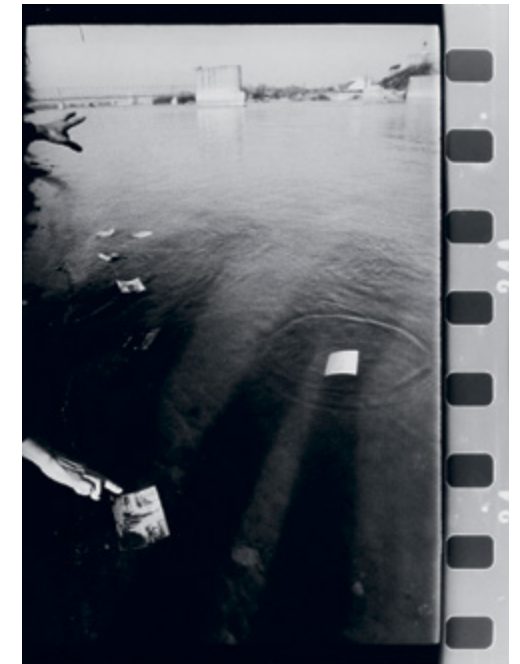
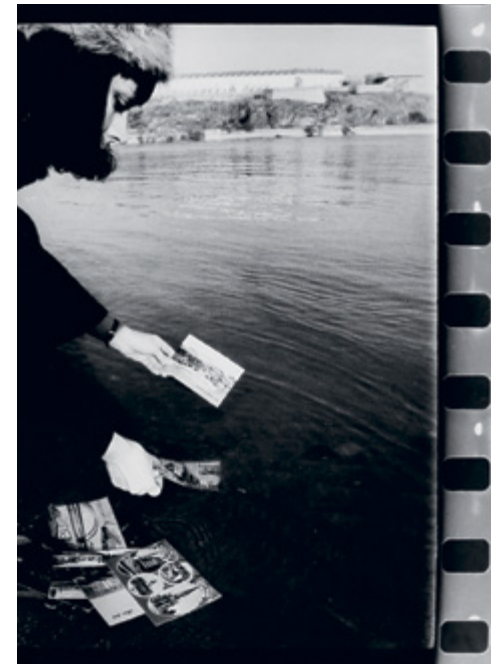
The majority of her performances are in between performance art and theatre. She presents her sound poetry accompanied by body art actions, vocal and gesticular improvisation. She leaves considerable room for chance, new ideas, and she builds on audience involvement; the evocation of rituals and collective myths has an emphasized role in some of her performances. Since 1968, she has had solo performances and ones involving the Bosch+Bosch group or various members of the former avant-garde scene, in Zagreb, Belgrade, Balatonboglár, Amsterdam, Paris and New York.



Katalin Ladik, *Balkan Folk Song nr 3*, 1973
 Katalin Ladik, *Balkan Folk Song nr 5*, 1973



Katalin Ladik, *Descent of the Town of Novi Sad down the River Danube*, 1974





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
- Uncsciously 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.





Slavko Matković

He was born in 1948 in Subotica (Szabadka), Yugoslavia. He lived and worked in Subotica until his death in 1994. His multi-faceted oeuvre includes diverse fields of free and visual poetry, essay literature; artists' books, journals and objects; various forms of graphic art (drawing, montage, collage, xerox, etc.), painting, comic strips, mail art and stamp art; spatial interventions, and conceptual actions.

In 1969 he founded the *Bosch+Bosch* group with Bálint Szombathy in Subotica. As a member of the group he was editor of the *Kontaktor 972* (1972) and *Pesmos* (1972) assemblings as well as of *WOW* (1974), a periodical of the Bosch+Bosch group, which featured relevant articles in the field of art and theory.

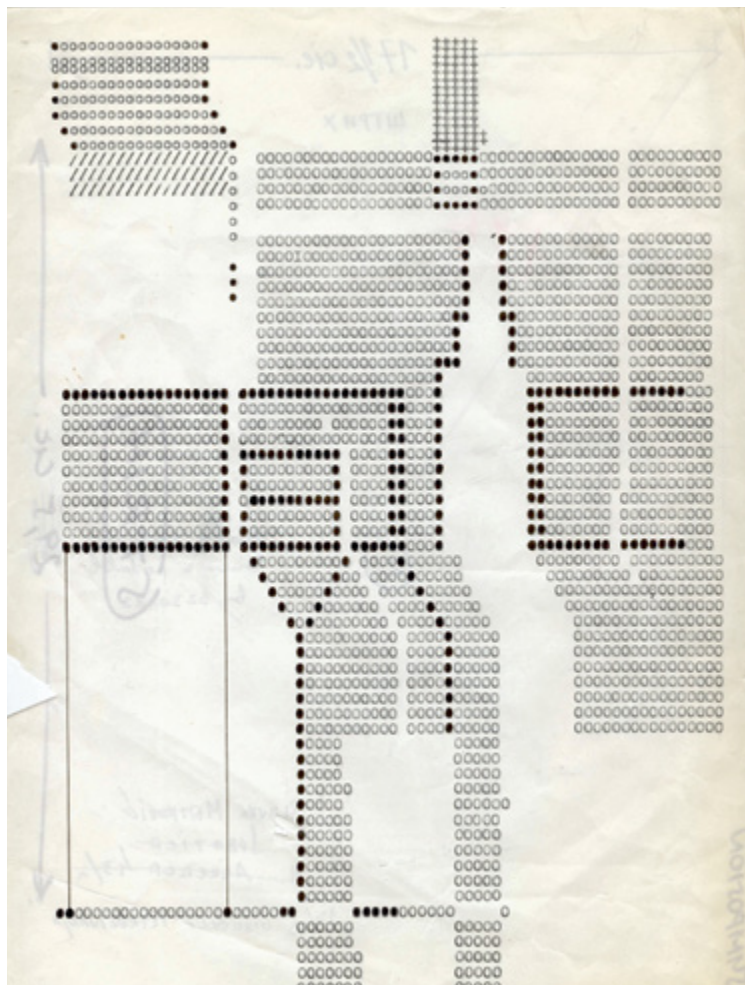
Ideas and the creative process were often more important to him than the documented result. This procedure is clearly manifest in works like his series *Clouds* (1970), in the scope of which he photographed clouds above his home for six months. In his project *Ludas Lake* (1971), he placed a hundred sheets of A4 paper stretched with nylon strings onto the surface of the lake.

In 1971 he began experimenting with comics, disrupting their narrative and emphasizing the autonomy of single words and images. In quest of possible relations between text and image, he worked with diverse forms of graphic art and montage technique (e.g. *Helix* [textual-visual experiments,

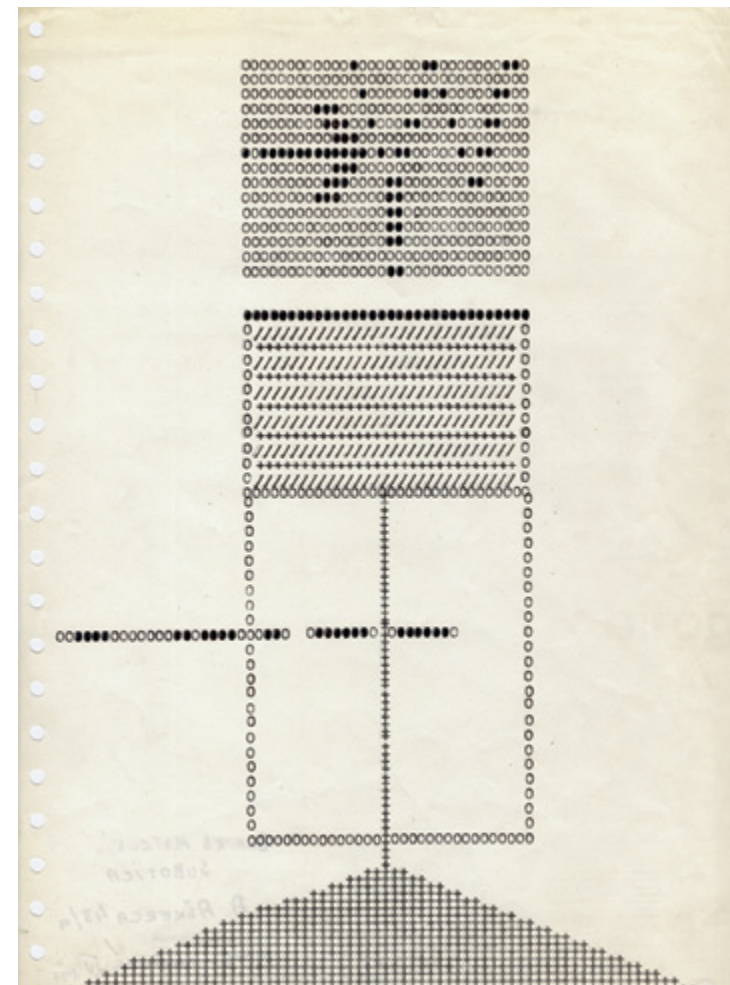
1976], *Salamandra* [textual-visual experiments, 1976], *Brevijarijum* [experimental comic, 1 copy, 1978], *Scotch Tape Texts* [visual experiments 1979]). He had several experimental comic strips published in *Új Symposion* (e.g. *New Signalistic Strip No. 1*. [1971/80], *Piramida faraona Amenofisa* [Pyramid of Amenophis Pharaoh [1984/10]). The comic series *Neckermann* (1979) was born out of these experiments, comprised of randomly assembled cut-out elements from advertisements and magazines, resulting in comics lacking narrative, formulating a humorous criticism of consumer society.

He was a member of the Writers' Association of Vojvodina (1977). He had the following volumes of poetry published: *Cvetovi saznanja* (*Flowers of Acquaintance* [1973], *Mi smo mali šašavi potrošači* (*We Are Silly Little Consumers*) [poems and comic, 1976], *Knjiga* (*Book*) [research in experimental poetry, 1971–1978, 1979], *Antigraf*, [1983], *Fotobiografija* (*Photobiography*) [1985]).

In his last years, he designated everyday actions such as reading or thinking about art as performance. He had more than five hundred solo and group exhibitions in Yugoslavia and abroad.

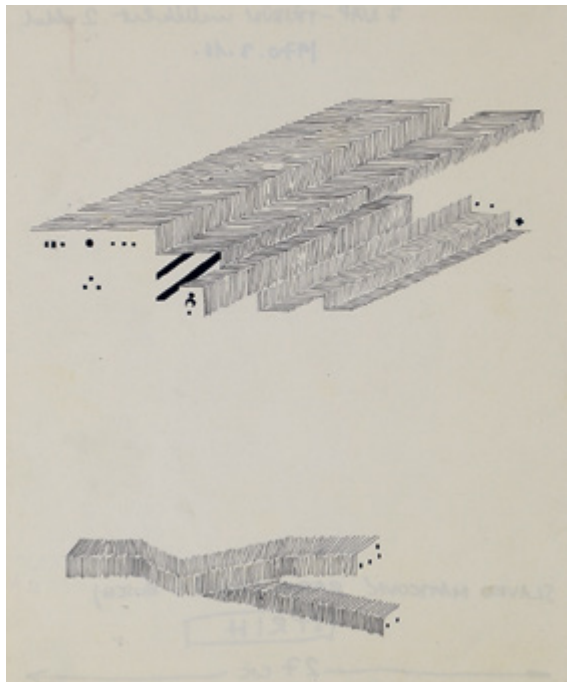
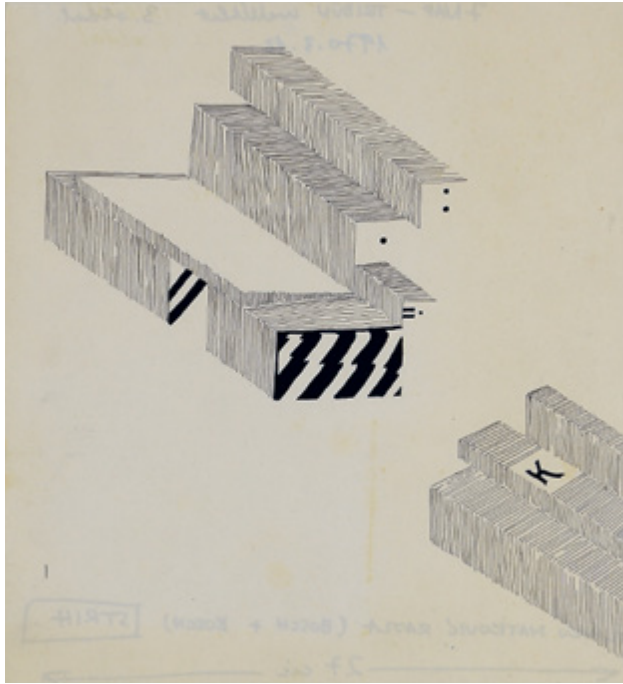


64

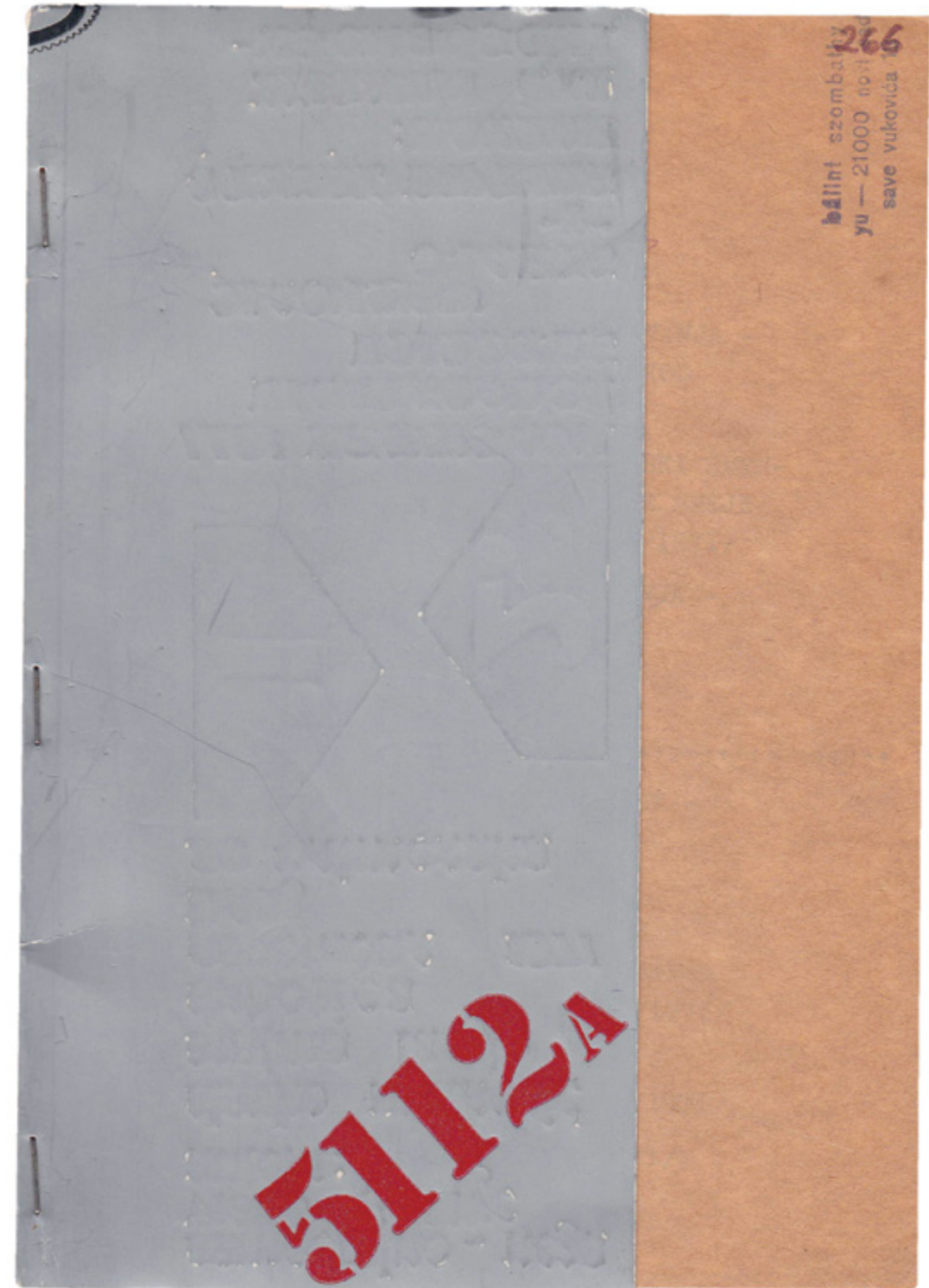


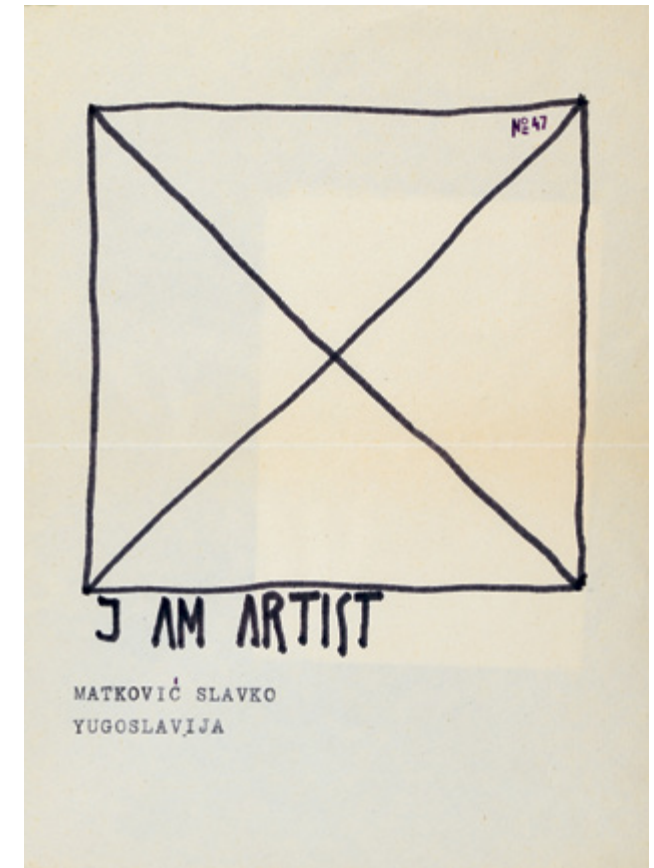
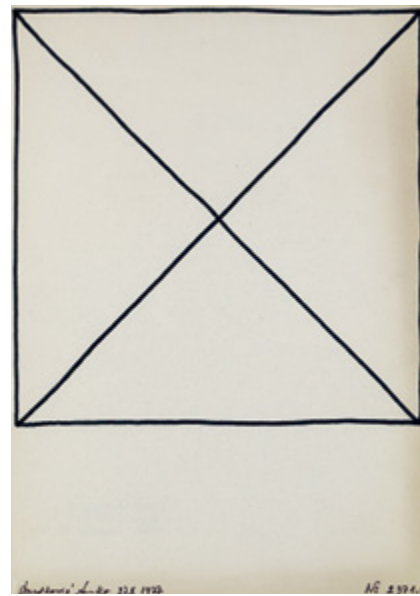
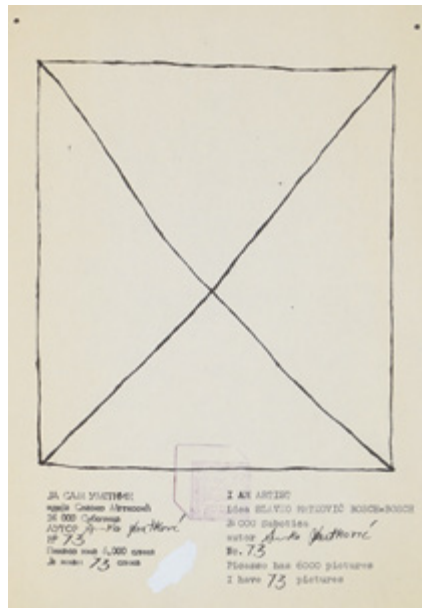
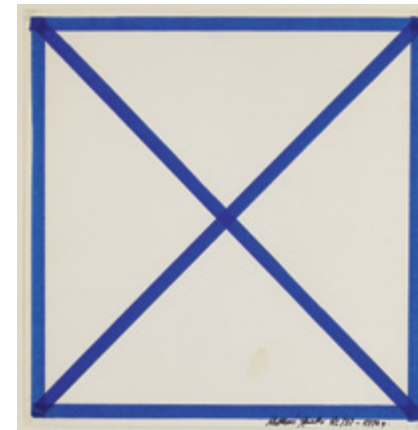
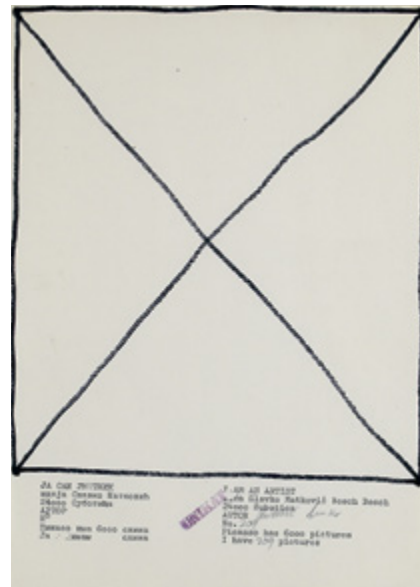
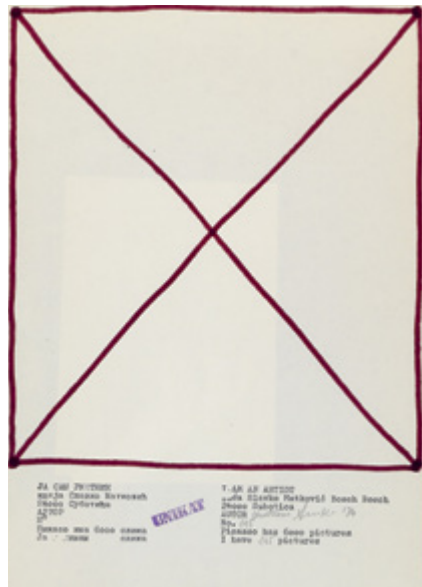
65

Slavko Matković, *Drawing*, 1970



Slavko Matković, László Szalma, Front page
of the Artist's Book 5112/A, Subotica, 1971









László Szalma

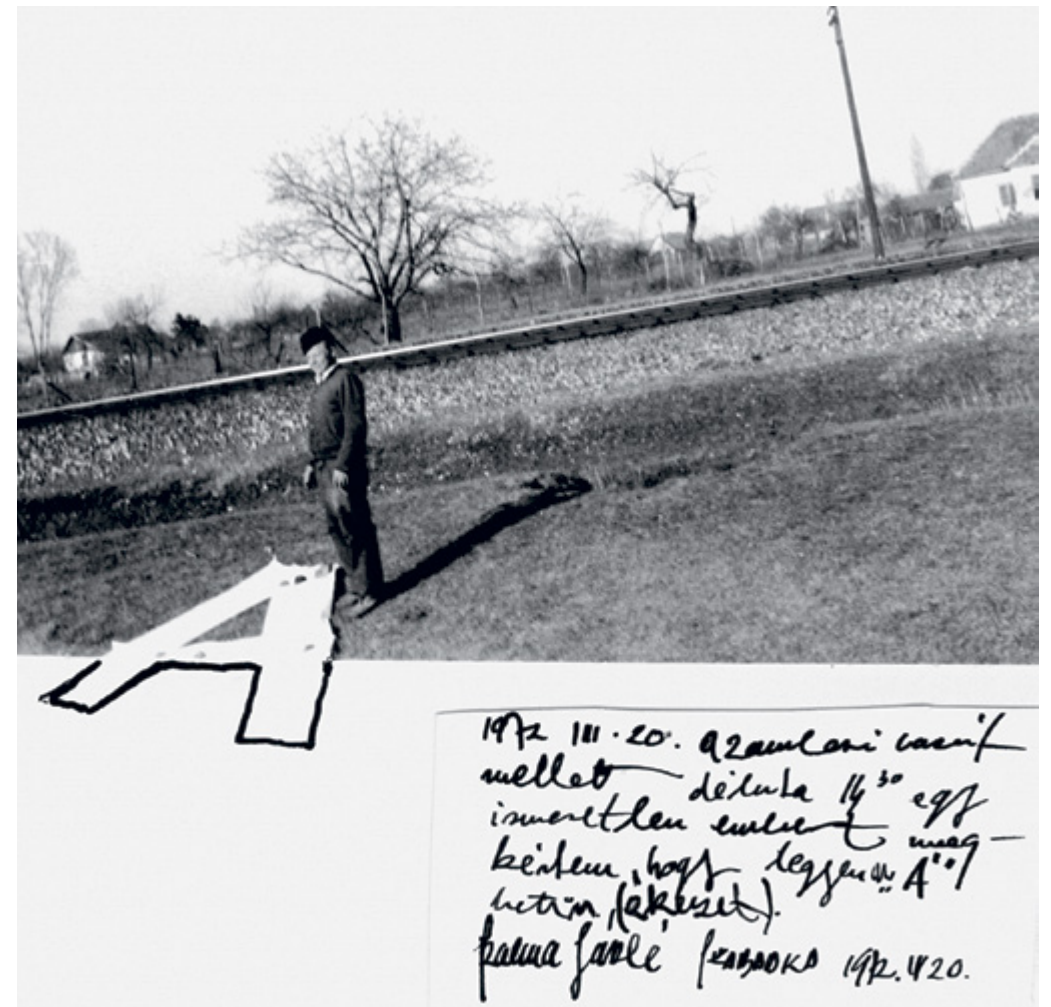
He was born in 1949 in Subotica (Szabadka), Yugoslavia, and passed away in 2005 in his hometown.

He was a visual and graphic artist. He participated in exhibitions from 1963. The conceptual approach was important to him from the beginning. In the first half of the 1970s, his work was dominated by the use of photography, but graphical and typographical elements also played a considerable role. After the disintegration of the Bosch+Bosch group, of which he was a founding member, he turned towards traditional means of expression, distancing himself from the approach of the “New Art Practice”.

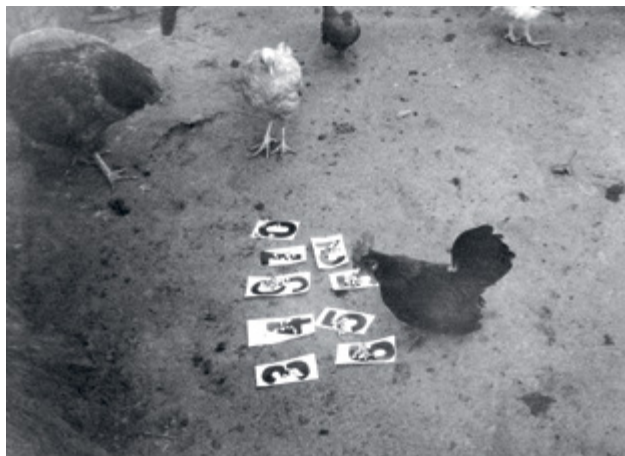
László Szalma graduated in 1967 at the secondary school of graphic printing in Subotica, but had already had a number of solo exhibitions by then. In 1969, he took part in founding the Bosch+Bosch group, from which point more and more of his works were based on intervention and action, while retaining their typographical aspects. In addition to his activity in the group, he worked on the staff of the youth journal *Jelen*, and in 1975 he became the graphic editor of the weekly *7 Nap*. His long years of graphic design work were rewarded by professional acknowledgment: in 1978, he received the first prize of the Yugoslav Journalists' Association for his collage cover designs.

By emphasizing unconventional ideas instead of traditional art practices, Bosch+Bosch strongly inspired Szalma to develop his ideas of spatial intervention. One of his most well-known such actions was the *Dada* series realized in 1972, during which Szalma carried a black piece of cloth bearing the script “DADA” across a number of locations, along abandoned railway tracks.

Besides the obvious associations of mourning and distant intellectual and artistic heritage, one might also think of it as a commemoration of the Dadaist matinees of Vojvodina. Although *Dada* is undoubtedly the most conspicuous work in Szalma's oeuvre, the rest of his works construct a unique universe less loudly but all the more consistently. This universe is made up of subtly conceptual and poetic actions that exhibit the influence of Fluxus as well as Szalma's work as a graphic artist. On one end of the spectrum stands the minimalist land art intervention *Waves*, overlaying the central thesis of randomness characterizing Fluxus with the subtle moments of peaceful rural life. *Intervention with Numbers* is similarly aleatory: in the course of this action, Szalma placed sheets of numbered paper on the ground of a hen yard and entrusted the hens to arrange them. *Body Intervention* partly continues the minimalist approach, while featuring a human figure, although enveloped in anonymity by the canvas bag over his head. With this gesture, the picture becomes a riddle, as the documentation of the action only provides a few points of reference for interpretation. Compared to this, *Accent on the Letter “A”* is a complex set of visual signs, which at once marks the other extreme of Szalma's works: the artist asked a passer-by to use his body, or more precisely, his shadow to be the accent on a letter “A” placed on the ground. This participatory action is documented with a collage that is made up of the photograph and the description as well as a drawing that complements the letter “A”, which extends outside the photograph's frame. This is how Szalma's art researching the visibility of daily life becomes complete, with movement and its traces bearing the same significance as the surrounding tranquility.



László Szalma, *Intervention with Numbers*, 1972



László Szalma, *Intervention in landscape*, 1972
László Szalma, *Hiding*, 1972



Bálint Szombathy

He was born in 1950 in Pačir (Pacsér), Yugoslavia. Presently he lives and works in Budapest.

He is a visual artist, performance artist and theoretician. The main characteristics of his ample and continuously growing oeuvre are intermediality and the combination of genres. Each medium has similar weight in his work, from performative pieces centred on intervention through mail art and visual poetry to the object- and installation-centred works of recent decades. Besides these, his activities as author of texts on the theory of art and poetry as well as editor and graphic designer are also considerable. A significant stage in his latter career was the avant-garde Új *Symposion* journal. As co-founder and catalyst of Bosch+Bosch, he was member of the group until its disintegration in 1976.

One of the fundamental elements of Szombathy's activity is its referentiality to the poetic experimentalism of the classical avant-garde as well as the endorsement of the critical attitude of activism. The significance of activism and ideological criticism in his works was already visible in his two anti-war actions in 1968; however, his works exhibiting systematically subversive

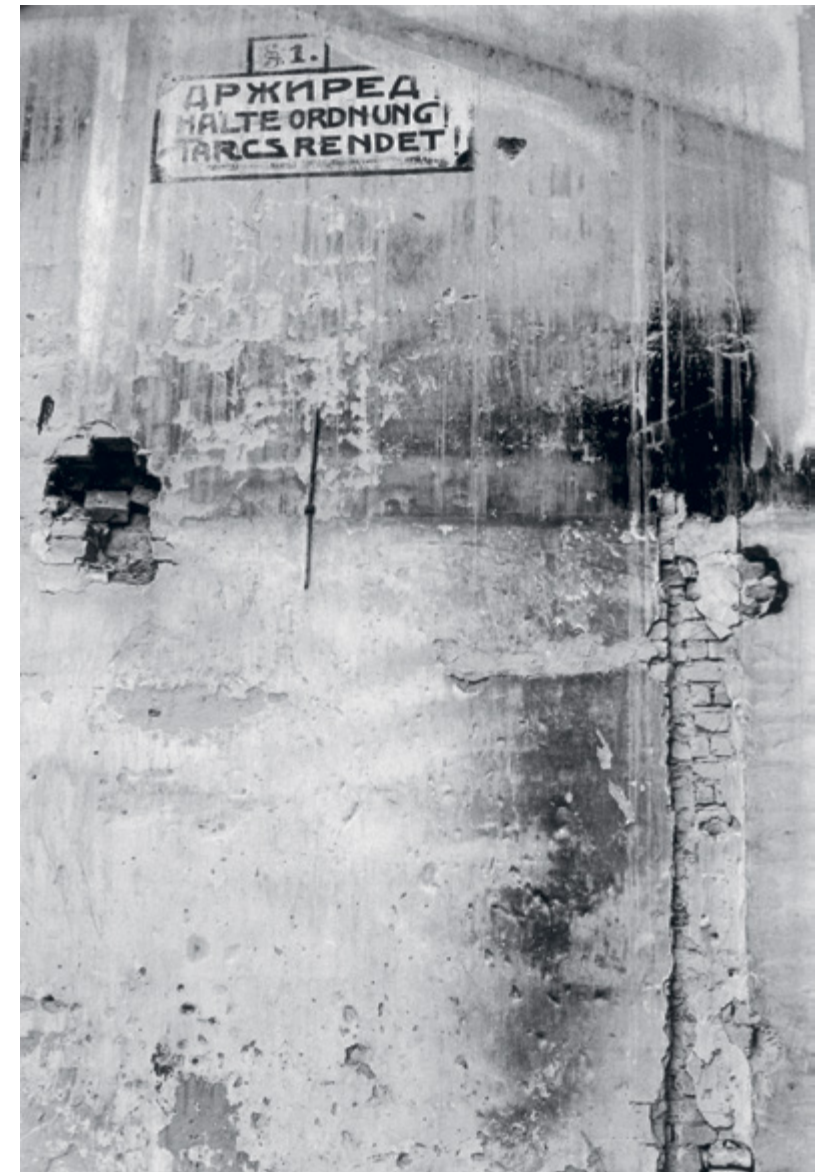
thought only appeared in the early 1970s. The first instance of using ideological symbols and objects was in his piece *Flags* in 1971, which also marked the beginning of the intense involvement of photography in his creative process. His two emblematic series were conceived immediately after *Flags*. His photo performance *Bauhaus* from 1972 symbolically placed one of the pivotal groups of the avant-garde into his personal living space, while this same personal space was politicized by the portrait of the omnipresent Josip Broz Tito. As opposed to this, *Lenin in Budapest* focuses on the Hungarian context, and owing to its public nature, this action raises completely different questions, such as the relation to the 1956 revolution and subsequent Soviet intervention or to the events of 1968.

Szombathy's more radical performances, exploring the limits of his own body, took place in the nineties: *Flags II* or *Chimneys (Gone with the Wind)* overlay immediate references to historical events on ideological layers. The intensity of these actions is made even stronger by the use of multimedia. The 2000s and 2010s are characterized by silent remembrance with works such as *We Were Heroes*, *Remember!* and *Badges*.

Bálint Szombathy, *Trust the Youth!*, 1971



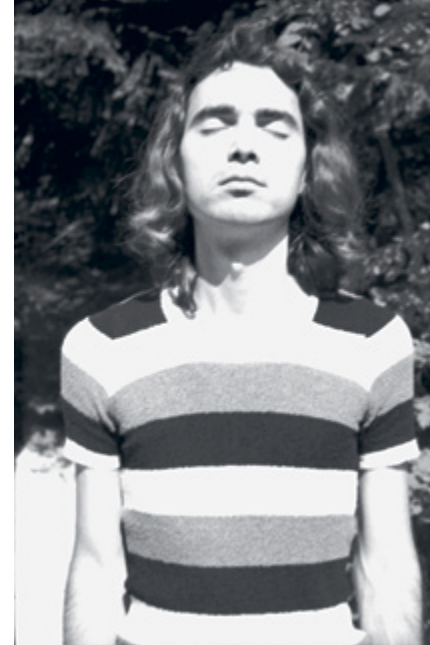
Bálint Szombathy, From the series "*Tarcs rendet*" (*Keep Order*), 1973











List of Works

¹ **Attila Csernik, From the *Badtext* Series, 1971**
gelatine silver print, 52×33 cm
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

² **Attila Csernik: *Visual Research*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 27.5×13 cm
photo: László Dormán
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³ **Attila Csernik, *Experiment with Katalin Ladik*, 1971**
gelatine silver print, 23×13.7 cm
photo: László Dormán
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

⁴ **Attila Csernik, *Experiment with Katalin Ladik*, 1971**
gelatine silver print, contact copy, 23×18 cm
photo: László Dormán
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

⁵ **Attila Csernik, *Experiment*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 29.5×41.8 cm
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

⁶ **Katalin Ladik – Attila Csernik, *TEX(S)T*, 1973**
gelatine silver print, 39.6×29.7 cm
photo: Attila Csernik
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

⁷ **Attila Csernik, *Object*, 1973**
paper, lettraset, diameter 6.5 cm
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

⁸ **Attila Csernik, *Book Object*, 1973**
gelatine silver print, 23×39 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

⁹ **László Kerekes, *Scores I–VI*, 1972**
typing, lettraset, 5 pcs. 29.3×20.5 / each; 24×20.5
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

¹⁰ **László Kerekes, *Installation*, 1971**
gelatine silver print, 18×12 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

¹¹ **László Kerekes, *Mendel*, score, 1972**
typing, lettraset on a bookpage, 23.7×16.4 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

¹² **László Kerekes, *Landscape Intervention*, 1972**
diapositive from the Collection of Bálint Szombathy
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

¹³ **Katalin Ladik: *Performance*, Novi Sad, 1970**
gelatine silver print, 31.3×22.2 cm
photo: Rizzoli
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

¹⁴ **Katalin Ladik: *Folk Song*, performance, 1973**
gelatine silver print, 24×18 cm
photo: Anna Lazukics
Courtesy of the Artist and acb Gallery

¹⁵ **Katalin Ladik: *Balkan Folk Song Nr. 3.*, 1973**
paper, collage, 32×23 cm
Courtesy of the Artist

¹⁶ **Katalin Ladik: *Balkan Folk Song Nr. 5.*, 1973**
paper, collage, 32×23 cm
Courtesy of the Artist

¹⁷ **Katalin Ladik, *Identification*, Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien, 1975**
gelatine silver print, 2 pcs. 18×13 cm / each
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

¹⁸ **Katalin Ladik, *Change Art*, event, 1975**
gelatine silver print, 13 pcs. 18×13cm / each
Courtesy of the Artist and acb Gallery

¹⁹ **Katalin Ladik, *Descent of the Town of Novi Sad down the River Danube*, 1974**
gelatine silver print, 2 pcs. 24.2×18 / each
photo: László Dormán
Courtesy of the Artist and acb Gallery

²⁰ **Katalin Ladik, *Poemim*, 1978**
gelatine silver print, 4 pcs. 18×13 cm / each
photo: Imre Póth
Courtesy of the Artist and acb Gallery

²¹ **Slavko Matković, *Computer Graphic*, 1970**
intervention on computer paper, 2 pcs., 30.2×21 cm / each
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

²² **Slavko Matković, *Drawing*, 1970**
paper, ink, 22.7×18.8 cm, 22.8×20.9 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

²³ **Slavko Matković, *Strip No. 1.*, 1970**
paper, print, 37×25.5 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

²⁴ **Slavko Matković, *Strip No. 2+4.*, 1970**
paper, print, 36.3×25.5 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

²⁵ **Slavko Matković, *Strip No. 5.*, 1970**
paper, print, 36.5×25.5 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

²⁶ **Slavko Matković, *Strip No. 6.*, 1970**
paper, print, 37.7×27 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

²⁷ **Slavko Matković – László Szalma, *Artist's Book 5112/A*, Subotica, 1971**
paper, print, 21×14.8 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

²⁸ **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 47*, 1970'**
paper, felt tip pen, stamp, typing, 28.8×20.9 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

²⁹ **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 73*, 1974**
offset, paper, 31.3×23.6 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

³⁰ **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 145*, 1974**
paper, felt tip pen, stamp, typing, 29.5×21 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

³¹ **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 209*, 1974**
paper, felt tip pen, stencil, 29.5×21 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³² **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 737*, 1974**
paper, felt tip pen, stencil, 30×30 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³³ **Slavko Matković, *Imprinted Surfaces, No. 2371*, 1977**
paper, felt tip pen, 29×21 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³⁴ **Slavko Matković, *Help*, from the cycle *Pop Stars*, 1973**
paper, print, pen, 29.5×41.8 cm
Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection

³⁵ **Slavko Matković, *Untitled 1–5*, 1974**
paper, pen, 29.5×21 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³⁶ **László Szalma, *Landscape Intervention*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 14×9 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³⁷ **László Szalma, *Hiding*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 9×14 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³⁸ **László Szalma, *Accent on the letter A*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 18×13.7 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

³⁹ **László Szalma, *Intervention with Numbers 1–2*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 8.2×11 cm / each
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴⁰ **László Szalma, *Waves*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 8.4×13 cm
Courtesy of Bálint Szombathy

⁴¹ **Bálint Szombathy, *Trust the Youth!* 1971**
gelatine silver print, 18×24 cm
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴² **Bálint Szombathy, *Nontextualité, Text Intervention*, 1971**
felt tip pen, paper, typing, lettraset, dimensions variable, 28.5×14.7 cm, 24×20.5 cm
Courtesy of Artist and the Irokéz Collection

⁴³ **Bálint Szombathy, *Semiology of the Urban Environment*, 1971**
gelatine silver print, 30×40 cm
photo: Zoltán Apró
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴⁴ **Bálint Szombathy, *Bauhaus Series*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 8 pcs. 40×30 cm / each
photo: Zoltán Apró
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴⁵ **Bálint Szombathy, *Lenin in Budapest, Street Action*, 1972**
gelatine silver print, 13 pcs., 30×40 cm / each
photo: László Kerekes
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴⁶ **Bálint Szombathy, *„Tarcis rendet” (Keep Order)*, 1973**
gelatine silver print, 18×24 cm
photo: Anna Lazukics
Courtesy of the Artist

⁴⁷ **Bálint Szombathy, *Resurrection (With Katalin Ladik)*, 1973**
gelatine silver print, 6 pcs., 18×24 cm / each
photo: Franci Zagoričnik
Courtesy of the László Vágó Collection

This book was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Bosch+Bosch Group: Conceptual Practices from the Former Yugoslavia*, organised by acb NA gallery, Budapest, between 10 March – 21 April, 2016.

Edited by: Emese Kürti, Head of acb ResearchLab

Research Assistants: Réka Bálint, Etelka Tar, Barnabás Zemlényi-Kovács

Text: Emese Kürti, Soma Bradák, Barnabás Zemlényi-Kovács

Translation: Dániel Sipos

Graphic Design: Zoltán Szmolka

Photo: Tibor Varga Somogyi

Printed by Pauker Print

Responsible for the Edition: Gábor Pados, acb Gallery

© All rights reserved.

We would like to express our gratitude to Bálint Szombathy and Katalin Ladik for their help during the research.

Special thanks goes to László Vágó.

ISBN 978-963-12-5306-1

Budapest, 2016