In the spirit of the Bauhaus, Ostervagen ’98 was a celebration of the role of the visual arts in the electronic arts in Central and Eastern Europe. This year’s festival brought together hundreds of artists gathered in Delsa last November to view and discuss artwork that critically examines issues about the role of the artist in the political context. It differs from most media festivals in two important ways; first, it viewed the presence of the artists themselves, aiming to create a meeting point for vital conver- sations, a forum to give visibility to the different personal, professional and political positions about and for knowledge about Eastern Europe. It opened with a presentation of video art from Łódź and under-represented areas. This year’s roster included artists from Albania, Malawi, Cambodia and Vietnam, in addition to the familiar faces of the old guard that red tape involved in getting them here.

Due to bureaucratic delays, featured artists Natalya Petrova and Ruslan Umarov arrive too late for their respective artist’s talks. Visits to the video scene of its old and new talents, these programs in post-communist transition, are required for travel into the “West.” Artists must present their work (not a fax or copy) to obtain exit visas from their countries, enter Germany—and then wait. This post-cold war situation was best described as “post-what” by art critic Sonya Pfefer, referring to the expectation and promises that the term “post” implies very little contrast between the lives of the two different groups of artists present.

The forum, organized 5 years ago when codirectors Stephen Kovacs and Ivan Cermak initiated a festival to examine artistic and cultural activities in the former Eastern Bloc. As political boundaries shifted, the focus concentrated on Eastern Europe. Two years later, the West-East focus exists. Common concerns, such as political suppression under Tant or Bosnia, Russia and these new nations, as well as technology and support for independent media.

This year’s forum included installation, performance, video and NET, Lounge or digital salon, and was given a historical context. There was an exhibition of original works by organic Baulsauheh teacher Lui- zlo Molot-Haing; which was the unit of the conference. In 1966, the inventor of the first musical instrument electronic image generator (EIG) by using one’s hand near metal antennae), was honored with a performance by Lynda Benglis. Benglis, her own self-ĐTlance as she grabbed music out of air. Her interaction with her audience was tuneful on the visionary work of Nicola Tosca, the radio transmitter, whose upcoming shows suggest that a film, according to Abramovic, was 120 years ahead of its time. She also discussed remote control, the basis of telecommuni- cations, inspired a performance by Marco Petelli. The performance of the sma- ndecyde Project No. 2,” named after one of Tesla’s un(real)ized projects: a wireless broadcasting tower built on Long Island that was supposed to provide worldwide communications.

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