

FEMALE ART
AND AGENCY
IN YUGOSLAVIA,
1971-2001

Anja Foerschner

B L O O M S B U R Y

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To Andi and Silas

CONTENTS

List of Figures ix

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 1

1 Curatorial Innovations 15

Women of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade 15

Mapping the Way: *Drangularijum* and *In Another Moment* 20

The *April Meetings* 27

Oktobar and Grupa 143 36

The 1978 Conference *Drug-ca Žena: Žensko Pitanje: Novi Pristup?* 41

2 Performance Art 49

Bitef and the Emergence of Performance Art 49

Katalin Ladik and Interdisciplinary Performance Work 54

Milica Mrđa and the Reclaiming of the Female Body 63

PPF, Linije Sile, and the Commodified Female Body 70

Vlasta Delimar and the Liberation of Female Sexuality 74

3 Video Art 85

Bogdanka Poznanović and the Emergence of Video and
New Media Art 85

Meje Kontrole št. 4 and Video as a Political Tool 99

4 Social Activism and Political Art 111

Women's Activism 113

Alma Suljević and Artistic Resistance 117

Žaneta Vangeli and the Search for National Identity 120

Ema Kugler and Metaphors of Violence	125
Jelica Radovanović and Woman as Symbol	131
Cultural Initiatives and Subversions: Dah Teatar and the Center for Cultural Decontamination	135
Coda: Where Are We Now?	141
<i>Notes</i>	153
<i>Index</i>	180

FIGURES

1.1	Group photo of Student Cultural Center Belgrade staff and artists	18
1.2	Evgenija Demnievska, <i>Drangularijum</i> exhibition, Student Cultural Center Belgrade	22
1.3	<i>At the Moment</i> , view of the exhibition at Frankopanska Street in Zagreb	24
1.4	Grupo Pekarna: Potohodec, Student Cultural Center Belgrade	29
1.5	Gina Pane, <i>Život-Smrt-San</i> , performance, Student Cultural Center Belgrade	30
1.6	Conference <i>Drug-ca Žena: Žensko pitanje: novi pristup?</i> , Student Cultural Center Belgrade	42
2.1	Mira Trailović and Jovan Čirilov	50
2.2	Sanja Iveković, <i>Prvi Beogradski Performans</i> , performance, Festival Student Cultural Center Belgrade	53
2.3	Katalin Ladik, <i>UFO Party</i> , performance, Tribina mladih, Novi Sad	59
2.4a	Katalin Ladik, <i>Ego-Alter Ego—Peter Below (Androgin and Zeus)</i> , photograph	62
2.4b	Katalin Ladik, <i>Ego-Alter Ego—Peter Below (Die Androgyne Existenz im Schatten seines Alter Ego)</i> , photograph	62
2.5	Milica Mrđa, <i>Instalacija sa crvenim trakama</i> , performance, Novi Sad	64
2.6	Milica Mrđa, <i>Obredi tela i zemlje</i> , performance, Fruška Gora	68
2.7	Milica Mrđa, <i>Obredi tela i zemlje</i> , performance, Fruška Gora	69
2.8	Linije Sile, performance, ŠKUC Ljubljana	72

2.9	Vlasta Delimar, Željko Jerma, <i>Desimbolizacija</i> , performance, Student Cultural Center Belgrade	75
2.10	Vlasta Delimar, <i>Kurac Volim</i> , photo collage	76
3.1	Bogdanka Poznanović, <i>Reke-Rivers</i> , performance, Novi Sad	88
3.2	Katalin Ladik and Bogdanka Poznanović, <i>Poemim</i> , video performance	89
3.3	Bogdanka Poznanović, <i>Pulseimpulse</i> , videostill	91
3.4	Bogdanka Poznanović, <i>Computer Tape & Body</i> , multimedia installation	93
3.5	Bogdanka Poznanović, <i>Heart</i> , performance, Novi Sad	95
3.6	Meje kontrole št. 4, <i>Ikone glamurja, odmevi smrti</i> , videostill	104
4.1	Alma Suljević, <i>Kentaumahia</i> , installation	118
4.2	Žaneta Vangeli, <i>The Inner Circle</i> , part of <i>Social Plastic of Macedonia</i> , installation	121
4.3	Ema Kugler, <i>Mankurt</i> , performance	127
4.4	Ema Kugler, <i>Hydra</i> , short film	128
4.5	Ema Kugler, <i>Tajga</i> , short film	129
4.6	Jelica Radovanović, <i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead</i> , photograph	131
4.7	Dah Teatar, <i>The Legend About the End of the World</i> , theater performance, Belgrade	135
5.1	Marta Jovanović, <i>Ljubav</i> , performance, Belgrade	143
5.2	Adela Jušić, <i>When I Die, You Can Do What You Want</i> , video performance	150

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Introduction

In October of 2015 I met Marta Jovanović, a young Serbian performance artist, in Rome for the first time. We had been introduced virtually by a fellow art historian with whom I had spoken about my interest in the contemporary art scene of the regions of former Yugoslavia. Having studied and worked in very traditional Western academic environments in Germany and the United States, this interest of mine surely seems odd, and I cannot really explain myself where this fascination with Yugoslavia and its successor states initially came from. I can only assume that growing up in Germany during the years of the Yugoslav wars played a role. The wars are not only my first recollection of armed conflict; I also vividly remember the sudden fall of an invisible curtain when the wars broke out and the entire region's image changing from desirable vacation spot for Germans to becoming off-limits. It felt like living next to a blind spot and, as children or teenagers are prone to, this sparked my curiosity, and it peaked throughout my career when the opportunities to learn about or work with artists from the region remained scarce. The few encounters I had, however, had strong impact on me, and I was grateful to learn more in exchange with Marta. Becoming acquainted with her work, I was struck by its innovation and timeliness and the courage and directness behind it. In her performances, photographs, and installations, she explores notions of identity—gender identity, but also national identities—and while she has studied and worked all over the globe, she draws connections to the cultural and political fabric of her home country in several works. Marta and I spoke for a long time on that October afternoon, and I left our meeting deeply impressed not only with her artistic work but also with her commitment to reviving the art scene of her hometown Belgrade, about which I will go into greater detail in the book's coda. Through numerous visits to Belgrade, and later other parts of former Yugoslavia, I felt myself exposed to one of the richest and most vibrant contemporary art scenes, which distinguishes itself through its authenticity and rawness. While the absence of a larger art market and infrastructure might seem unfortunate, it allows for a community of artists and cultural workers to create work for the work's sake, without any constraints imposed by market value, trends, or reputation. Going deeper into the history of the region, I noticed that Marta's and her peers' work is rooted in a long legacy of female agency—the work of women curators, artists, scholars, and activists—that shaped the cultural sphere, in particular the alternative art

scene, over the past decades. But their contributions have, like in all other histories, largely been neglected in favor of those of their male peers in a discipline that continues to be written mostly by men. Over the last two decades, this overall imbalance in art history has increasingly come to our attention yet its remedy is progressing only slowly. The majority of art history conducted remains focused on the regions that have been on the art historical radar for the longest, meaning those that dispose of a fairly good infrastructure, in which resources are readily available and language barriers are fairly easy to overcome: the Western world. Female figures in the arts and cultures of other regions therefore suffer from a double disadvantage as not only do they remain in the shadow of their male peers but they are also part of art histories that yet have to be fully written. To uncover them means to transgress boundaries and overcome barriers—infrastructural, linguistic, cultural—an endeavor that is without a doubt daunting. The room for errors is great—greater than in fields where a value system, no matter how accurate, current, or actually useful, has already been established and where contextual knowledge and resources are easy to come by. Shedding light on female figures from understudied regions such as former Yugoslavia means tackling the canon, with its limitations, from two sides. This book takes a step in this direction by lending visibility to the work of female artists, curators, scholars, and activists in Yugoslavia and its successor states between 1971 and 2001 and showing how their agency has shaped the artistic and cultural fabric of the region. The figures represented in this book have, through their artworks, their projects, their writings, and their activism, impacted the development of alternative artistic practices, pioneered and furthered curatorial concepts, and novel forms of expression such as performance art and video art, and placed Yugoslavia firmly on the map of the international post-avant-garde. Female cultural workers have courageously used their work to further the discourse on gender, sexuality, and the female body and, at a moment when devastating wars fought in the name of masochist ideals threatened their very basic rights, have fought relentlessly against rising nationalism and misogyny. The impact of these women can be felt until the present day—both in the way the art scene presents itself as well as in the great number of female artists and female initiatives that can be found all over the former Yugoslav countries. However, much of their work has not yet received the visibility it deserves. What is known has, except for a few canonical figures, rarely transgressed the borders of former Yugoslavia and, therefore, remains unknown in the rest of the world. This book is a celebration of their work.

A Brief (Art) History of Yugoslavia 1945–71

Contrary to other Eastern European states under the rule of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia's leader Josip Broz Tito cultivated a fairly liberal art

scene. Having broken ties with the Soviet Union in 1948, he had articulated Yugoslavia's own path to socialism, which was characterized by a much more muted political doctrine and a pronounced openness toward the West. The Yugoslav government abandoned the Stalinist model of the "total state," and instead transformed the country into a decentralized state of self-management socialism, meaning that especially economic and, to a certain degree, also political and cultural decision-making was officially relegated to the lowest level possible, the republics or, in the realm of labor, the workers.¹ Tito's Yugoslavia was built on the idea of "brotherhood and unity" of all South Slav people, which he sought to achieve through the creation of a multi-national federation of equal and putative sovereign republics, which were linked together through a one-party system: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia, and Albania, as well as the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were granted autonomy.

Culture became a central force in Yugoslavia's model of socialism with the Yugoslav government praising creativity and cultural progress, claiming that only creative and widely educated personalities can function as "protagonists and creator of social relations" and therefore the "ultimate end and measure of all social processes."² As much as diversity and plurality of interests were fostered theoretically, in practice, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), renamed in 1952 into the "The League of Communists of Yugoslavia" (LCY), remained the sole political body, ensuring ideological correctness of the system and bringing forth all essential strategic decisions for the state.

In terms of artistic production, Yugoslavia took a middle seat between developing along (and in dialogue with) the currents of the Western world, yet at the same time carrying the specific marks of a cultural, political, and social fabric shaped by socialist ideology. With the doctrine of socialist realism having been abandoned already in 1949, the Yugoslav government began to cultivate an exchange between local and foreign contemporary tendencies, emphasizing the international character of its art scene through the creation of international festivals, paid study trips for artists to Western Europe and the United States, and exhibitions of the international avant-gardes in Yugoslav museums. Creating a highly modern and international art scene was to function as a symbol for Tito's Yugoslavia as a country.

These developments, however, easily obscure the fact that the Yugoslav government's attitude toward Western art and postwar avant-gardist developments was ambivalent at best. The cultural establishment remained quite critical of the "import" of Western tendencies into Yugoslavia, which still struggled with defining its identity as an independent yet ideologically constrained country.³ A 1963 speech by Tito testifies to this paradox situation for artists, which invited contemporary currents and international dialogue on the one hand yet restricted it strategically on the other:

in art generally, there are a lot of foreign elements, irreconcilable with our socialist ethics, something that is attempting to divert the course

of our development from the one determined by our revolution. These are various decadent phenomena, brought in from abroad. We must fight against them; however, we must do it not always by resorting to administrative measures but through political action. [. . .] I am not against creative searching for the new [. . .] but I am against spending our community's funds on some so-called modernist works that have nothing whatsoever in common with artistic creation.⁴

Despite Yugoslavia pursuing a considerably less doctrinal form of socialism in the political and cultural realms, traditional attitudes remained prevalent in its cultural institutes and programs.

The artistic production that was officially supported was of rather moderate progressiveness—peeking at the international postwar avant-gardes yet still remaining tied to Yugoslavia's socialist culture and aestheticism—and has therefore been described as “socialist aestheticism” or “socialist modernism.”⁵ This ideal of socialist modernist art renounced politicization as one of the main tenets of socialist realism, which initially resulted in art that avoided political content entirely but rather remained neutral and passive not only toward politics but toward its surrounding reality at large. As Miško Šuvaković describes:

Socialist statism, focused on the laws of form and pictorial problems, was modern enough to encourage a general openness toward artworks, yet both traditional enough [. . .] to satisfy new tastes arising from social conformism, and inert enough to fit into the myth of a happy, unified community. In other words, [socialist modernism] had all it needed to blend in with the projected image of a partly liberalized socialist society.⁶

Even though there was no official doctrine declaring socialist modernism as the primary form of art in Yugoslavia, indirect governmental influence on artists, art education, and art institutions nevertheless made it into a mainstream phenomenon and transformed the official Yugoslav art scene into a rather homogeneous entity. At the same time, however, this dominance also started to spur alternative voices, which reacted against socialist modernism and the stagnation of the art scene that its ascendancy had created. Already during the 1950s, with an increase in the 1960s, several artists and especially artists' groups emerged all over Yugoslavia, who experimented with radical ideas and forms of expression. Among them were Belgrade Informel, Mediala, Gorgona, EXAT 51, and the New Tendencies movement.

At the core of many of these heterogeneous phenomena was a shift away from the ideal of the finished work of art toward the creative process and in fact the dematerialization of the art object. In addition, what many of the neo-avant-gardist groups and individuals shared was an interest in expanding art into everyday life and releasing it from the passive state it had been assigned to in socialist modernism. They strove to promote socially engaged art and saw their task in stimulating artistic creation, which they perceived as being stifled by the dogmatism of socialist modernism.⁷

In order to create a platform on which these ideas could be developed, discussed, and their results shared, several artists established independent venues, among them Sanja Iveković's and Dalibor Martinis's Podroom, Gallery Nova in Zagreb or Bogdanka and Dejan Poznanović's Atelje DT20. The government did not actively suppress alternative artistic practice but also did not exactly further it through widespread financial or institutional support. It did tolerate its existence, however, in semi-autonomous venues such as Novi Sad's Tribina mladih, Zagreb's Student Center and its Gallery, and later Belgrade's and Ljubljana's Student Cultural Centers (the SKC and ŠKUC, respectively), where the neo- and post-avant-gardes found a space that was not granted to them in other communist countries, where they were forced to operate mostly underground.

Alternative art practice in Yugoslavia continued to flourish toward the end of the 1960s and especially the early 1970s, eventually spurring a variety of radical and experimental forays into performance art, body art, new media art, video art, happenings, conceptual art, or actionism, which have been summarized under the umbrella term "New Art Practice." The New Art Practice developed through

the critique of petty bourgeois conformity, the art market, welfare state institutions, institutional bureaucracy and hierarchy. At the same time, those practices were oriented against bourgeois values of art in the sense of "a beautiful image in the rich interior", but also in the sense of modernist formalism, self-contemplation and the concept of the autonomy of art, conceived through self-sufficiency, disciplinary isolation, division of labour etc. Consequently, these practices questioned not only the status of art object (its material form, its status as a commodity and the ways of its distribution) but also the art institutions themselves and their ideological and representational function.⁸

With a radicality greatly indebted to its neo-avant-garde forebears, the New Art Practice and the wide variety of artistic phenomena it entailed used analytical, critical, and subversive inquiries into the nature, language, and function of art, the notion of the art's object, and the figure of the artist, therewith offering a stark counterpoint to the aesthetics and values of social modernism. What is more, the New Art Practice critically interrogated the very institutions and systems of the art world, breaking away from the constraints of a museum, gallery, or other official institutional policy and their predetermined modes of representation and institute-artist-audience relations. Its experimentality and diversity owe to the various backgrounds of its representatives, who were not merely artists but came from fields as varied as literature, language studies, art history, and even engineering. Traditional barriers between disciplines were easily crossed and the mutual exchange and influences between the arts, sciences, and other fields have contributed greatly to the diversity and radicality of the new art tendencies.

The formation of groups remained characteristic also for the New Art Practice, with the major ones being the Slovene Conceptual art group OHO, Novi Sad's KÔD, Bosch+Bosch from Subotica, the Group of Six Artists in Zagreb, or Grupa 143 in Belgrade.⁹

In these developments, female cultural workers played a crucial role. This book aims to show how through their agency in the realm of artistic creation and curation, as well as through activism and mutual empowerment, women—indirect governmental opposition and the general public's skepticism notwithstanding—established Yugoslavia at the forefront of the alternative art scene well beyond its borders. They did so not only during the nascent years of the New Art Practice (and of course have done so prior to its rise) but continued their work in the following decades under an increasingly difficult political landscape. After Tito's passing in 1981, a rise in nationalism, misogyny, and xenophobia made the circumstances for women in general and female cultural workers in particular increasingly difficult. In addition, the arts and culture suffered from the political tensions and did not receive the amount of interest and support that they had under Tito. All this was amplified once the wars broke out in 1991. A series of conflicts and battles ravaged Yugoslavia, breaking the country apart and stifling the alternative art scene. To this day, the successor states of Yugoslavia and in particular Serbia, where nationalism under Slobodan Milošević had become very pronounced, continue to suffer from this development. Yet, the activism and agency of women in the arts never stopped. Throughout the 1980s, the 1990s, and into the present women have continued to produce their work, have founded and fostered, fought and pushed for artistic autonomy under often harsh and unforgiving political conditions and against an overwhelming patriarchal system.

Women in the Arts and Culture of Former Yugoslavia

While this book is not a book on feminist art, it is of course vital to understand what feminist activism in Yugoslavia looked like in the time frame of this book and how it has developed over the decades. Thankfully, Barbara Jancar-Webster, Bojana Pejić, Zsófia Lóránd, and Chiara Bonfiglioli have done tremendous work in this area over the past years and delivered studies that give us a nuanced understanding of the faces of feminism under Yugoslav socialism and during post-socialist times. The agency of feminists such as Žarana Papić, Rada Iveković, Vesna Pusić, Slavenka Drakulić, Nada Ler-Šofronić, Silva Mežnarić, Anđelka Milić, or Gordana Cerjan-Letica may not have directly influenced the work of the artists and curators in this book but it is important to understand that feminist thought developed with considerable force during the time this book covers, which changed

the situation for women in general and the conditions for those I focus on. Therefore, some key aspects of feminism should be pointed out in order for the reader to understand the theoretical framework of feminism as well as the local situation for women. While Yugoslav independent feminist thought developed in context with Western feminism during the 1970s, the local situation was undeniably different since the socialist government had made gender equality a key premise of its constitution and instituted progressive laws for women covering for example access to education and the workforce, planned parenthood, equal rights in case of divorce, or management of heritage.¹⁰ The “women’s question” (*ženske pitanje*) was perceived as an integral part of the class issue which was treated as solved after the socialist revolution. Thus, socialist authorities could state with ease that “the woman is today formally and actually equal with men in our society.”¹¹ Independent feminist thought was rejected as being harmful to the socialist ideal and branded a bourgeois import from the West. This not only made it difficult to justify independent feminist thought but also led to a refusal of many local women and artists such as Marina Abramović or Vlasta Delimar, to identify as feminist, a stance that I seek to honor.¹²

The new feminists of the 1970s argued not only for the necessity of the women’s question being unhinged from party ideology but also for their right to articulate emancipation as they saw fit. As the Croatian sociologist Lydia Sklevicky pointed out: “the total integration of the emancipatory process into the ‘ideological apparatus of the state’ meant that emancipation became something ‘practiced’ on women, as inarticulate objects of the social-political process, instead of making them its legitimate subject.”¹³ Similarly did the Serbian social anthropologist Žarana Papić warn about the idea that the women’s question was solved but called attention to the abstract nature of legal equality in contrast to the lived reality of women. She observed rightfully that accepting the idea that the women’s question was not at stake in Yugoslavia meant that a broader critique of women’s oppression in society would remain generally absent. Overall, Papić explicitly questioned the local framing of the “women’s question”: “Women’s issues here are always confined to a narrow space, limited by borders that should not be crossed. On rare occasions we overcome these frameworks and get deeper into the issue of existing inequality in broader social relations; otherwise, we remain at the level of simple observation. Even educated people tread lightly over these issues.”¹⁴

With their work being rooted in a long legacy of women’s organizations, most notably the Narodni ženski savez Srba, Hvrata, and Slovenaca (National Women’s Alliance of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), Ženski Pokret (both active during the early 1900s), and the Antifascist Front of Women (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ), active during the Second World War, the new feminists also started to question gendered cultural narratives, social relations, the public-private division, or the male-dominated historiography, which has routinely excluded or marginalized Yugoslavia’s female

agents. Yugoslav feminists pointed out the systematic nature of women's oppression and in particular the fact that, as the Yugoslav regime was built on patriarchy, it remained virtually impossible for women to obtain true equality, no matter the legal situation presented by Tito's policy. Yugoslav feminists argued that the women's question by no means could be subsumed under (or considered solved by) the class question but in fact preceded it and needed to be considered as a pressing issue by itself.

What set Yugoslav feminism apart from its Western counterpart was certainly its willingness to enter a dialogue with the government and its "official feminism" in order to solve the issues feminists perceived. Lóránd describes Yugoslav feminism of the 1970s as "something between cooperation and dissidence," naming the new Yugoslav feminism as a "case par excellence of the productive encounter of discourses. Engaging in a dialogue with the state, building on its promise of gender equality, the new Yugoslav feminists do not directly oppose the Yugoslav state, but see the place of women there as constant opposition."¹⁵ In her article "Feministički pokret—organizacija, oblici i sadržaj borbe" (The Feminist Movement—Organization, Forms, and the Content of the Struggle), Gordana Cerjan-Letica, for example, described the agenda of the new Yugoslav feminists as demanding "to change social relations in a way which does not question the legitimacy and class basis of existing society." She concedes, however, that there are limits to full emancipation within the current social and political system. She points out that, contrary to feminism within other political systems, in socialist Yugoslavia feminism cannot develop as political organization, but rather must be elaborated on the basis of knowledge of the inadequacies and existing conceptions of both socialism and feminism.¹⁶

It is telling that many Western feminists who came in touch with their Yugoslav peers during the 1978 conference *Drug-ca Žena* (see also Chapter 1) complained about the locals not being "radical enough" and even getting angry at them for inviting men into the meeting. They initially simply did not understand that much of what they fought for was entirely obsolete in Yugoslavia. However, as the French feminist Christine Delphy, who attended the conference, observed: "The reasonings on the tone 'self-management as a response for all,' they sounded to us as biased, then dishonest. In fact, not only are the Yugoslavs sincere [. . .] but in a way they do not have a choice. It is not a political line, it is a political fact. We did not take seriously enough the problem of a society where one cannot do the revolution, one cannot even talk about it, because it has already been done." And further: "How to struggle against a system when women's liberation is part of its principles?"¹⁷

One of the observations Yugoslav feminists shared with their international peers, however, was that, despite the supposed gender equality under socialism, female figures and their contributions to history remain absent from public perception with the sole exception in Yugoslavia being the role of females in the partisan movement. Otherwise, as Lydia Sklevicky

observed, their struggle and accomplishments have widely “been simply wiped out of [. . .] historical consciousness.”¹⁸ This is especially true when looking at the cultural and artistic scene of Yugoslavia: despite socialist politics allowing many more women to actively participate and shape the cultural and artistic life of Yugoslavia, they remain invisible behind their male peers.

Even though some progress has been made locally and internationally in lending female figures some visibility, much more needs to be done to upend the gendered hierarchy of (former) Yugoslavia’s art history. When considering art history, the low number of female artists, theorists, curators, or scholars known and publicized remains striking. Of the twelve artists featured in the exhibition *Razprte Podobe* (Disclosed Images), which highlighted young Slovene art from the 1970s and 1980s, only two (Dubravka Duba Ana Sambolec and Marjetica Potrč) were women. A 1990 group exhibition of Yugoslav artists, *Fra Yu Kult* (A Fraction of Yugoslav Culture), organized by artists at a Franciscan monastery and among the last group exhibitions in Yugoslavia, featured fifteen artists and only one of them, Vlasta Delimar, was a woman. *On Normality: Art in Serbia 1989–2001*, which was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade in 2005, showed seventy-one artists and artists’ groups, of which eighteen were female. Harald Szeemann’s 2003 exhibition *Blood and Honey: The Future Is in the Balkans* counted seventy-three artists and artists’ groups, with just eighteen being female. Even Piotr Piotrowski’s excellent study on *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* focuses largely on male artists and, with Marina Abramović or Milica Tomić, chooses well-known female case studies.

The aim of this book is not to find concordances between feminism and characteristics of local practice but to shed light on women’s creativity and agency and its political and cultural implication. *Female Art and Agency in Yugoslavia 1971–2001* introduces the reader to artists, theorists, and curators who strove to diversify the local cultural and political standard and challenge immanent principles, ideas, and operations. It considers a variety of practices and methods developed and/or employed by females in the art world that allowed them to pursue their own agendas, which in many cases create a counterweight to canonical value systems, definitions, and hierarchies. Frustrated with the notorious underrepresentation and lack of recognition, female artists early on discovered the field of the postwar-, and neo-avant-gardes and in particular the New Art Practice as an uncharted territory in which they could express themselves fairly freely and experiment with forms of expression untainted by tradition. Contrary to the West, women’s emancipation—while certainly playing a role in many instances—was not the sole concern of female artists and agents of culture. They rather sought liberation from the constraints of cultural policy and social expectations toward art, aiming at establishing the forms of artistic expression *they* thought valuable as equally valid as any other.

One can of course argue for an emancipatory element here as well, and this might in fact be the first step in acknowledging regional and cultural differences while keeping in mind core aspects of feminist thought.¹⁹

Chapter Summary

The book follows a thematic approach with a chronological “undertone,” with the time frame covered being determined by 1971, the year when the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade opened and the New Art Practice took root, to 2001, the year indicating what is officially considered the end of the civil wars, keeping in mind that the preliminary end of violence does not set a clear mark in social, cultural, or political developments. The chapters are structured around cultural-artistic practices that female agents impacted with their work which is contextualized within the respective political and cultural circumstances. Given the significant changes in political ideology from the 1970s to the 1990s, which impacted not only the status of women but also the arts and culture, this is of the highest importance in order to understand the conditions that the female agents presented in this book worked under. Geographically, the book’s first chapters focus heavily on Serbia and Slovenia, while Chapter 4 and the Coda are able to cast a geographically more inclusive net with examples from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia as well. The reason for the geographic focus of the first chapters is due to the fact that halfway through the research for this book, the Covid-19 pandemic greatly hampered further research and travel that I had planned and therewith did not allow me to cover the regions of former Yugoslavia more inclusively.

Chapter 1 uncovers the curatorial innovations conceived by the women active in Belgrade’s Student Cultural Center (SKC) during the 1970s. Through the study of early exhibitions and initiatives such as *Drangularijum*, *In Another Moment*, and the *April Meetings*, it shows how the women of the SKC, most notably Dunja Blažević and Biljana Tomić, established exhibition concepts that transgressed traditional boundaries and corresponded with the radical ideas of the New Art Practice, therewith facilitating its growth and impact. What’s more, they connected local with international practitioners, which ultimately established Yugoslavia as a major center for alternative artistic practice.

Chapter 2 details the impact that female creatives had on the development of performance art in the region during the 1970s and 1980s. While *Bitef*, Belgrade’s international theater festival founded by Mira Trailović, provided a key foundation for the emergence of the discipline, artists such as Katalin Ladik, Milica Mrđa, PPF, Linije Sile, and Vlasta Delimar devoted themselves to performance art at a time when the discipline was just in its fledgling

stages and, through their respective approach and choices of topic, imbued it with the vibrancy and force it carries today.

Chapter 3 is devoted to female agency in the realm of video and new media art, forms of artistic expression that also just started to gain momentum during the 1970s. The chapter highlights early examples of female video artists such as Bogdanka Poznanović, who was among the first artists to discover video not only for its documentational but also artistic properties and a pioneer of new media art. Using the work of Meje Kontrole št. 4 and their introduction of non-heteronormativity and queerness, the chapter also shows the discovery of video as a carrier of political message and critique at a time when socialist Yugoslavia started to crumble and a return to nationalist, ultra-traditional systems of power was imminent.

The outbreak of the wars in 1991 had severe consequences for the arts, with culture being instrumentalized by nationalist propaganda. The possibilities for female artists and thinkers, especially with radical ideas or political motivations, were further diminished, forcing many of them to abandon their work, move underground, or leave the country. Chapter 4 illustrates the resistance that women formed as a result—both in terms of activist initiatives as well as artistic and cultural subversions such as the founding of the Dah Teatar group or the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade. It also traces how the wars and its impact became manifest in artistic media and topics addressed by artists such as Ema Kugler, Žaneta Vangeli, Jelica Radovanović, and Alma Suljević.

Ultimately, instead of a conclusion, a coda explores the current state of female agency in the regions of former Yugoslavia, introducing the reader to some of the artists and innovators active in the present and their ongoing commitment to diversifying the art scenes of their home countries and (re)connecting it with the international community.

State of Research

The wars of the 1990s have done enormous damage to the arts of Yugoslavia and its successor states. Not only do some of them, most notably Serbia, suffer dramatically from isolation from the rest of the world. What's more, reports of horrible violence, mass rapes, and genocides committed under nationalist fervor lastingly changed the image and perception of the region.

Scholarship, therefore, remains insufficient. A lack of interest, infrastructure, and funding opportunities have for long obstructed Western art historical scholarship on the region, with sources being difficult to locate and access and language barriers seemingly too hard to cross. And while a lot of tremendous work is being done locally by often younger scholars such as Ana Ereš, Stevan Vuković, or Milica Pekić, a lack of funding and international relations prevent much of it from reaching beyond the region's borders.

An uptick in scholarly interest can be noted since the early 2000s with several publications and exhibitions focusing on Yugoslavia and, by extension, the Balkan area: *In Search of Balkania* (Neue Galerie Graz, 2002), *In the Gorges of the Balkan* (Fridericianum Kassel, 2003), *Blood and Honey: The Future Is in the Balkans* (Sammlung Essl, 2003), and *After the Wall* (Moderna Museet Stockholm, 2004), as well as *On Normality: Art in Serbia, 1989–2001* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 2005) are examples of exhibitions, while publications such as Laura Hoptman's and Tomáš Pospisyl's *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2002), or IRWIN's *East Art Map* (London: Afterall Books 2005) started more focused theoretical explorations.²⁰ The research of Anthony Gardner, Klara Kemp-Welch, Amy Bryzgel, and Piotr Piotrowski is concerned with the wider field of Eastern Europe but is relevant for an understanding of the situation in Yugoslavia as well.²¹

While some might argue that these studies and exhibitions rectify the previous omission of Eastern and Central European from art historical scholarship, I remain convinced that, while they signify tremendous progress, much more work needs to be done. Especially scholarship devoted to the regions of former Yugoslavia and its contemporary scene remains too little. Outstanding work has been done in that realm by Dubravka Đurić and Miško Šuvaković with their *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2003), as well as Branislav Jakovljević's *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Former Yugoslavia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2016), Marko Ilić's *A Slow burning Fire: The Rise of the New Art Practice in Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2021), and Jasmina Tumbas's *I Am Jugoslovenka: Feminist Performance Politics during and after Yugoslav Socialism* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press 2022). My book is greatly indebted to the work done by these scholars and further builds on their contributions by introducing its reader to female figures who have not yet received the attention they deserve. Of the female artists from former Yugoslavia, only few have gathered international attention and mass appeal and, as is so often the case, they then become stand-ins for all of their peers. One thinks one knows about female artists from former Yugoslavia if one has seen the work of Marina Abramović (who, however, had left Belgrade already in 1976), Sanja Iveković, Milica Tomić, or Tanja Ostojić, yet they—while important—are not representative of all the female artists from the region. For this reason and because scholarship on these doubtlessly important women is fairly extensive, they are not featured in-depth in this book.

In writing this book, I have attempted to consult as many local resources as possible in the time frame given, with the Covid-19 pandemic presenting some very unfortunate obstacles. The archives of the Student Cultural

Center in Belgrade and of ŠKUC in Ljubljana as well as of the Women's Study Center Belgrade were treasure troves of material. In addition to the archival holdings and libraries in Belgrade, Novi Sad, or Ljubljana, it was the writings of scholars such as Dubravka Djurić, Miško Šuvaković, Ješa Denegri, Jelena Vesić, or Barbara Borčić that were crucial in shaping my understanding of the topic at hand. Where possible, interviews with artists were conducted as well in order to get firsthand accounts of their respective experiences. Seraina Renz's pioneering study of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade as well as Ivana Petrović's research on the *April Meetings* also served as a key reference point for my study of the 1970s activities in Belgrade. While it was not possible for me to access the archives of several artists I write about, comprehensive archival studies featuring reproductions of the majority of artworks by Bogdanka Poznanović, Milica Mrđa, and Katalin Ladik conducted by Sanja Kojić Mladenov, Nebojša Milenković, and Emese Kürti, respectively, allowed me to nevertheless study the works in question and draw from the author's expertise at the same time. Understanding the context of feminism in former Yugoslavia alone was a daunting endeavor. Thankfully the topic had started to gather scholarly attention over the past years. Many important projects such as Bojana Pejić's *Gender Check* give a fantastic insight into the issue of gender politics and its negotiation in the regions of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and other Eastern regions such as Bulgaria. Yugoslav feminism has been analyzed specifically in innovative studies conducted by Zsófia Lóránd and Chiara Bonfiglioli. For the 1990s and the issue of gender in the post-socialist environment I drew heavily from the work of Sabrina P. Ramet, Dubravka Žarkov, and Ana Miškovska Kajevska but of course those are only a few examples of the tremendous works that I was able to draw from in writing this book.

One of my desires in writing this book was to not write a book on a non-Western (or, in the case of Yugoslavia one should say "not exclusively Western") region from a purely Western perspective or to provide readings from a Western point of view as this, as Piotr Piotrowski and by now many others have recognized, proves "problematic when it comes to understanding the plurality of meanings of art in Central-East European countries"²² and often prevents acknowledgment of their idiosyncrasies. Especially when writing about female figures it would also mean the appropriation of a reality that is not mine. This, of course, is almost impossible to achieve since I remain an outsider—no matter how much time I spent on site or how many local experts or resources I consulted. But I hope that my pronounced awareness of *my* Otherness and the desire to *learn* instead of *explain* prevents presumptuousness and let the protagonists of this book, the female agents of (former) Yugoslavia's art, speak instead of my interpretations or analyzes. In an attempt to do the richness and brilliance of art from the regions of former Yugoslavia justice, I also deliberately avoided to draw

any comparisons to other Eastern or former socialist countries since the situation in former Yugoslavia (and in fact any and all of the “Eastern” or “Socialist” countries) is unique.

Female Art and Agency in Yugoslavia wishes to continue the early efforts by women such as Lydia Sklevicky, who have advocated for a larger visibility of women in history, in my case art history, and have—through numerous writings and studies—illustrated the crass inequalities that (art) history still suffers from. Even though Sklevicky’s writings date from the 1980s, and much awareness has been generated in the meantime, we are still far from a point where we can rest. Too many are the female cultural workers, too important their work, too engrained male dominance. This book fills some of the gaps that male Western art history has created, with knowledge about understudied or forgotten women, thus hopefully contributing to a more inclusive and accurate form of art history.

1

Curatorial Innovations

Women of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade

The New Art Practice initially developed independently in various centers across Yugoslavia, and first in smaller towns such as Novi Sad and Subotica. These smaller towns lacked a wider artistic infrastructure and novel forms of art could develop more easily in the absence of institutional manifestations of official cultural doctrine. But Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Split soon followed and finally Belgrade, where the traditional canon proved to be stubborn but which eventually became one of the most influential hubs of the New Art Practice in Yugoslavia. A decisive moment for the New Art Practice to gain force came with the opening of the Student Cultural Center (SKC) in Belgrade in 1971. The SKC functioned as a platform that brought the various practitioners of the New Art Practice together and gave them the space—physical and mental—needed to grow in impact and eventually pose a considerable counterweight to the traditional structures and ideology of socialist modernism. Under the guidance of Dunja Blažević, Biljana Tomić, and Jasna Tijardović, among others, the SKC in particular pioneered exhibition concepts and initiatives that matched the radicality of the phenomenon and allowed it to grow in its innovativeness even more. What's more, the women of the SKC developed a decidedly political practice not only in their artistic but also in their overall program which turned the SKC into a space for leftist critical opinions ranging from humanistic Marxism, anti-colonialism to dissident and liberal thought and, in particular, the development of independent feminism.

The Student Cultural Center was founded in the wake of the 1968 student revolts as Tito's concession to the young generation's demand for more autonomy in the cultural sector. Even though the Student Cultural Center and its program supposedly remained independent and autonomous with no official monitoring or censorship, the reality presented itself a little differently. Instead of being administrated by the government directly, the SKC reported to the University of Belgrade, from where it also received

most of its funding, which de-facto tied it back to official cultural policy. Therefore, the SKC often had to fight for its programming autonomy and against political interference.¹ What's more, financial support remained little and the artists that practiced at the SKC still frequently remained snubbed by official exhibitions or collections. In addition, of course, the media also played an important role in positioning the Center within the public opinion and, quite often, through criticism of its programs, pushed it toward the margins.² As Dunja Blažević describes: "we didn't feel that the party or state politics presented an obstacle to what we were doing, but we clashed, in the domain of culture and art, with the dominant tendency of modernism or socialist modernism which was in power."³

Ideologically and with regard to its organization and programs, the SKC developed many different faces, unwilling to be placed in categories of "either/or," official institution or independent organization, equally negating the strict division of cultural space into official art and alternative art. Rejecting traditional structures, Petar Ignjatović, from the University of Belgrade's art history department and SKC's first director, established a non-hierarchical way of working, negating the professional divisions of labor and the stubborn separation between "producers" and "consumers" of culture, the artist, and the audience. In order to reflect the interests and problems of the young and radical generation of artists as accurately as possible, the SKC's Board consisted entirely of young art historians, artists, and students instead of drawing—as was and continues to be the case in the majority of cultural institutes—from known figures and established thoughts.

The young artists and cultural workers associated with the SKC shared a dissatisfaction with the traditionalism of the official art scene and the backward orientation of artistic education as provided in Belgrade, for example, at the Academy of Fine Arts. They critically positioned themselves against the mainstream art scene and its systems of value, taste, and ideology. Contrary to the passive status to which art was relegated by official cultural policy, the SKC staff and the young artists that frequented the Center recognized the social dimension of art and started to articulate new relations between art and society, one in which art does not serve a purely political and ideological purpose or, on the contrary, serves no purpose at all but remains preoccupied with formal issues. Instead, this generation of artists perceived themselves in a more social role and advocated for life and art to become one, inseparable entity. Art was to be understood as a product of its social and cultural determinants instead of existing in passive relation to them. Ultimately, these interests and explorations promoted a shift in understanding art not merely as a production of aesthetic objects but rather for artistic practice to become a social practice.

This understanding of art as a product of social circumstances and its negation of existing art market and infrastructure perimeters was made one of the SKC's core missions through Dunja Blažević, a young art historian and curator who shaped not only the SKC's inaugural years but set its course

for the years to come. During the student protests of 1968, Blažević was in her final student year in the art history department of the University of Belgrade and among the protesters. Merely in her mid-twenties at the time the Student Cultural Center was opened, Blažević was hired by Iginatović to serve as director for its visual arts section and main gallery from 1971 to 1975, after which she became the general director of the SKC in 1976. In her guiding principles for the newly established gallery at the SKC, Blažević was driven by the idea to develop a critical approach to art and to “show what other galleries are not showing.” She cites in particular the operations of the gallery of the Student Cultural Center in Zagreb, which was led by Želimir Košević, as a model. Košević, so Blažević, “took [. . .] artists of our generation to the streets,” pioneering new approaches to exhibition models and artistic practice. Throughout the SKC’s early years, Blažević collaborated closely with Biljana Tomić, who led the artistic program of the Center with Blažević from 1971 to 1972 and then again after Blažević had taken over as a director from 1976 to 1979.⁴ Tomić, who was born in Novo Selo, Serbia, in 1940, had studied art history, aesthetics, and contemporary art at the University of Belgrade and, previous to her work at the SKC, had functioned as the curator of Galerija 212, an alternative art space located in Belgrade, which during the late 1960s already had featured a number of leading artists and curators from the conceptual art and at the time just emerging performance art scene. Tomić was exceptionally well-connected within the Yugoslav art scene and had collaborated, among others, with the Slovene OHO Group, the radical conceptualist groups KÔD and (∃ as well as the Tribina mladih in Novi Sad.⁵ Blažević’s and Tomić’s associate from 1971 to 1976 was Bojana Pejić, the Belgrade-born art historian and curator who produced some of the most important exhibitions and research projects on gender in the arts of Eastern Europe such as *After the Wall—Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (1999), and *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (2009). Pejić had studied art history at the University of Belgrade and in 1977 took over as an associate curator at the SKC until she departed for Berlin in 1991. Pejić, however, was just one of a group of mostly female associates with others including Dragica Vukadinović, Zorica Lojpur, Danijela Purešević, and Jasna Tijardović, who was the director of the SKC’s Srećna Galerija (Happy Gallery) from 1971 to 1974. In addition, the program of the Student Cultural Center featured a number of collaborations with external curators, artists, and scholars such as the young curators Jadranka Vinterhalter and Nena Baljković (later Dimitrijević), Jasminka Petter-Kalinić, as well as art historian Milica Kraus, all of whom were fresh out of the universities and full of new ideas and perspectives for the Center (Figure 1.1).

All together shaped the early program of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade and introduced several innovative facets to it such as internationalism, intra- and interdisciplinary exchange, and of course the mark of women’s agency on the institute’s operations.



FIGURE 1.1 *Group photo of Student Cultural Center Belgrade staff and artists, 1971: Slavko Timotijević, Jadranka Vinterhalter, Milan Josić, Milica Kraus, Jasna Tijardović, Zoran Popović, Marina Abramović, Raša Todosijević, Goranka Matić, Dunja Blažević, Gergelj Urkom, Nikola Vizner, Slobodan Milivojević Era, Neša Paripović, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.*

The majority of the women who shaped the SKC during the 1970s had made use of Tito's open border policy and gathered significant experience with the international art scene—experiences they brought back and utilized to develop the institute's cutting-edge programs. Blažević, for example, spent nine months in New York and Los Angeles, where she met, among others, Willoughby Sharp and gallerist John Weber and was exposed to the many faces of the alternative art scene on the US East and West Coasts.⁶ Coming back to Belgrade and becoming involved in the design of the Student Cultural Center's programs, Blažević also looked to London's Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), which had been created in 1946 to host radical art and culture. Similar to the ICA, the Student Cultural Center was to become a place for young people who "believed in the subversive, revolutionary power and potential of the arts, which could change not only art and society, but also the world."⁷ Tomić had strong ties to the Italian *Arte povera* group as well as the international visual poetry movement, from which she drew additional ideas and concepts for the SKC. Jasna Tijardović, who was married to Zoran Popović, finally established a solid exchange between the Belgrade and the New York art scenes in addition to the couple's numerous trips to England and France during the 1960s. One of their most decisive trips was their 1974 visit to New York, which brought them in contact with conceptual artists around the Art & Language group.⁸ Possibly owing to her substantial international experience and her background in both art theory and practice, Tijardović became one of the most "political" figures in the SKC, who critically kept interrogating not only art, its meaning and possibilities, as well as the political system of the SFR Yugoslavia but also

the operations of the SKC itself, not shying away from criticizing it for what she perceived too little of a focus on visual arts in its programs.

The fact that the SKC boasted a large number of women in its operations, administration, and artistic endeavors might initially not be surprising given that the socialist government promised equality for women in the workforce but the reality presented itself mostly very different, with decision-making positions being kept by men and the artworld certainly favoring male artists. The fact that most of the creative minds behind the SKC were women has therefore to be understood as a political gesture within the sociopolitical context of socialist Yugoslavia. As Jasna Tijardović put it in a 2015 interview: “It was needed to step outside the context where women were always passive consumers of art, they were always either clerks, administrators, or organizers but were never in the position of defining something.”⁹ Tijardović’s statement illustrates the gap between the socialist promise of gender equality and the differing reality, in which women, while actively encouraged to participate in public life and be part of the workforce, remained restricted to subsidiary positions and rarely were allowed to actively exert influence. Therefore, the dominance of female figures in the SKC, related activities, and other programs such as *Bitef*, is even more notable.

Under the leadership and influence of these women, Belgrade’s SKC developed into a hub for experimental arts and exchange of radical ideas. In 1975, art historian Jelena Vesić described the SKC as an “autochthon phenomenon, canonized in the visual arts as an expression of processuality, artistic subjectivity, dematerialization of artwork, and generally expanding the field of visual arts as they were traditionally understood.” Vesić highlights the SKC’s almost performative quality in negating fixed parameters and following established systems. She calls SKC an “institution created in a sort of performative mode as an *institution-in-movement*, or *institution-movement*, since it grew out of the student and workers’ protests of 1968 and continued that movement from the inside as a critical wave supported by the international influence of its artists, intellectuals, and activists.”¹⁰ This performative quality was also reflected by the crossing of borders and boundaries—disciplinary, intellectually, as well as spatially. Conceiving the SKC as an anti-model to traditional exhibition spaces, activities played out all across the building, frequently spilling beyond its walls as well. Era Milivojević, for example, taped all the mirrors in the old officer’s club for his *Mirror Taping Project* (1971), Marina Abramović installed her *The Tree*, speakers with bird sounds, outside the building in 1971, while parts of Zoran Popović’s *Axioms* project took over the spiraled staircase leading up to the second floor. This “taking over” of the entire space marked a sharp contrast to the traditional forms of exhibiting in a “white cube,” or at least within a designated and contained space. It reflected the awakening of art from its passive-depolitical status, which it had acquired in Yugoslavia and the recognition of its social quality instead, which for the women of the

SKC remained a crucial concern. After all, for Blažević, a work of art that has been provoked by some specific social situation or sentiment, “loses its meaning, [. . .] its context, [. . .] its aim why it was created” once assimilated into a traditional exhibition or art market context, which is why the SKC continuously sought to interfere with these models.¹¹

The artists practicing and exhibiting at the SKC entered a very close relationship with the institute, not merely exhibiting there but working there, receiving material for their artistic production, and frequently engaging in long discussions and collaborations with each other. As Jasna Tijardović points out:

The more traditional artists confine themselves to their studios and communicate with the public only through their exhibitions. Thereby the artist and his audience, each in their own right, safeguard the time between two successive exhibitions, the private act, whereas the audience use those hours, days, months and perhaps even years for dealing with extra-artistic activities. Exhibitions, as a means of communication between traditional artists and their audience, become the medium through which their encounter is possible.¹²

The artistic process, however, playing out between the public displays of one’s art, remains private. Artists (and the curators they worked with) at the SKC aimed to change this rhythm and instead truly fuse art and life by engaging with each other throughout the artistic process and critically exploring its relation to and manifestation in their daily mundane activities.

Mapping the Way: *Drangularijum* and *In Another Moment*

One of the earliest examples of the farsightedness of the SKC women was *Drangularijum*, the first exhibition organized by Blažević and Tomić, together with Bojana Pejić and Ješa Denegri, at the SKC in June 1971, shortly after the institute’s opening. *Drangularijum* was no exhibition in the known sense: the curators invited the participating artists not to exhibit works they had created but rather works, objects, texts, and so on that they felt were dear to them and/or influenced their artistic practice. In doing so, the exhibition, much in line with the interests and ideas of the neo-avant-gardist practice emerging during the 1960s and the New Art Practice, shifted the focus away from the art object, toward the figure of the artist themselves and their practice. *Drangularijum* (from the Serbo-Croatian *drangulija*, meaning a small and curious thing) posed a form of “ready-made” exhibition, featuring banal, everyday objects but in a new context and linked to the artists’ lives. As Bojana Pejić described: “The core trait of the objects is not a high material value, rather, the sentimental value to those who presented it. These are the things always present around us, that

we do not notice until they are gone. These are private pieces from far-away harbors we shall never be able to free ourselves from.”¹³

Following this idea, Halil Tikveša, a Bosnian artist working in drawing, painting, assemblages, and sculpture since 1962, exhibited a large basket made from straw, which, as the exhibition photographs in *Drangularijum*’s accompanying catalog show, was displayed as a sculpture on a white pedestal in the gallery. Tikveša named it “To Travel.” Niš-born sculptor, painter, and photographer Milija Nešić’s criteria for bringing an assortment including a stuffed crab, white thorns, his father’s wheat, and his late uncle’s pajamas’ sleeve was their ability to enable him to “go back into my past, nearer or farther, depending on the object I am looking at. They are there to remind me, warn me, greet me, they are there not to let me forget. In them I see the possibility of spiritual meditation which equals the observation of a work of art.” Gergelj Urkom, on the other hand, contributed a simple green blanket as “[t]here is no object exceptionally dear to me. Most objects which surround me and which serve me, when I single them out, acquire a meaning with no connection to my will—a meaning which I did not wish. For this reason I have exhibited my green blanket, which has no meaning against my will.”¹⁴ Artist Evgenija Demnievska brought “The Smell of Mint Tea” as well as her attic door to the exhibition, stating: “The door is a practical object with which I am in contact every day through the door knob. The door allows: opening, closing, entering, passing through, exiting, making of drought, banging, etc. They force me to think about space. I like their appearance. They are functional. Knock—they will open.” Demnievska had her first studio in her attic. In *Drangularijum*, the door was placed in the middle of the gallery and was turning around itself. The visitors could move it pretending they entered or left, raising questions about the lines of separation between “inside and outside” and adding an element of participation for the public. To Demnievska “that line is immaterial, it is the difference itself. But any line you draw is a surface, as it has a thickness. It seems simple and clear, but the line is very mysterious. And the door implicitly represents that mystery”¹⁵ (Figure 1.2).

What also distinguished the exhibition was the collective spirit behind its creation. Its concept, which employed a research-based and experimental exhibition practice, had been created in close dialogue between the curators and the artists, therewith dispensing authorship among several organizers and participants without naming the “one” curator as is usually the case.¹⁶ With this approach, *Drangularijum* constituted a harsh break with canonical exhibition practice in general and the national customs of publicly presenting works of art in particular, which generally followed the modernist canon of the genius artist and the fetish with the work he produces. In her catalog essay, Bojana Pejić highlights the exhibition’s reference to and conflict with traditional local exhibition practice:

The concept of *Drangularijum* is new but not original. Similar exhibitions are held around the world [but] it is [. . .] the first serious attempt of a



FIGURE 1.2 *Evgenija Demnievska, Drangularijum exhibition, 1971, exhibition catalog, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.*

representation that has not yet been visible in our surroundings. [. . .] *Drangularijum* is a challenge. *Drangularijum* is an attempt to stir the static atmosphere of the Belgrade gallery life. In a sea of usual exhibitions, this is a glove slapped into the face of a city used to monotonous presentations of already established individuals. This is not even a presentation of artistic character with the constraints of aesthetics. *Drangularijum* does not want to offer the beautiful, usual, or likeable. *Drangularijum* does not cradle the gaze, it is shock, it is a provocation, and at the same time it is just a game. [. . .] *Drangularijum* is a realistic approach to the dead-end art finds itself in.¹⁷

The majority of the press remained if not negative then at least skeptical about the exhibition with an article in *Novosti* asking, “Is the most important thing to be original?” *Jež* newspaper provided a lengthy and an interesting interpretation of the door, contextualizing it within the larger social and

political system, yet not exactly paying attention to the core ideas guiding the SKC's endeavors. Using the fact that a door (without lock) is moving fluently and is impossible to shut down, the newspaper interpreted its openness for everyone in line with communist ideology of equal access for its citizens.¹⁸ The article failed to understand that the idea behind the door—and the exhibition more widely—was to give a critical commentary on the institutionalized art system that had been established in Yugoslavia, which perpetuated art as a merely decorative entity to be looked at for pleasure without bearing a critical or sociopolitical character. *Borba* newspaper, one of the main organs of the communist Yugoslav party, also offered a review of the exhibition, which remained neutral throughout yet ended up criticizing especially the aesthetic and visual aspects of *Drangularijum* and eventually ridiculing it as “student’s shenanigans.”¹⁹

Many of the novel aspects of *Drangularijum*, both in terms of content, but also production, seem constitutive for the general program and modus operandi of the Student Cultural Center: experimentation, collaboration, democratization, process and the understanding of art as a social practice. In addition, the staff of the SKC from the start recognized the importance of furthering the exchange not only between the artistic centers found throughout Yugoslavia but also abroad. Therefore, the SKC's second exhibition, taking place already in the fall of 1971, not even one year after the opening, made a daring leap across borders: *In Another Moment* (often also called *At Another Moment* or *In the Other Moment*) was the first international exhibition dedicated to Conceptual Art in Yugoslavia. The exhibition featured artists such as the KÔD group, OHO Group, and Goran Trbuljak from Yugoslavia, as well as Giovanni Anselmo, Douglas Huebler, Jannis Kounellis, Stanley Brouwn, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Ian Wilson, and Daniel Buren, among others, from abroad. The curators were Nena Dimitrijević and Braco Dimitrijević. The exhibition had its roots in *At the Moment*, an experimental, temporary exhibition that had been organized by Nena and Braco in the entrance of an apartment house in Zagreb (Figure 1.3). This first installment, which was on view only from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on April 23rd, 1971, came as a result of a 1970 trip the Dimitrijevićs had taken across Europe during which they became acquainted with a number of representatives and initiatives of Conceptual Art. For *At the Moment*, they sent personal invitations to sixteen artists and three artists groups and exhibited whatever was mailed to them in return. “Objects” in the exhibition ranged from a photographic self-portrait (Giovanni Anselmo, *Right Side*, 1970) to conceptual works such as Douglas Huebler's *Location Piece no. 2*, a text describing:

The surface of this page represents a drawing that will be completed
after its percipient has: Looked at it
Breathed towards it
Read these words
Forgotten them



Day before exhibition
Дан прије изложбе



Day of exhibition
Дан изложбе



Day after exhibition
Дан послје изложбе

Photo: ENES MIDŽIĆ
Фотографије

FIGURE 1.3 At the Moment, *view of the exhibition at Frankopanska Street in Zagreb, exhibition catalog In Another Moment, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1971, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.*

Sol LeWitt sent detailed instructions for his wall piece instructing the curators to “draw vertical lines, freehand from top to bottom. The lines should be as continuous as possible, but not touching.” Trjbuljak included a photograph of his *Sound Project* (1971) showing an iron handrail next to stone stairs, accompanied by the artist’s statement: “a stroke on this pipe produces sound quite different from the sound of the neighboring piece.”

The aspects of communication and collaboration were of central importance to the curators as was the choice of location. The impetus to choose the entrance hall of an ordinary apartment house in Zagreb was given by the organizer’s desire to evade any institutional influence or policies altogether but rather place art literally at a direct intersection with the public. As Nena Dimitrijević describes in her text for the accompanying catalog: “The hall-gate in Frankopanska street N° 2a was found accidentally at the time when a need for a new exhibition space without influence of museum and gallery policy appeared.”

The entrance hall also fulfilled the curator’s desire to create an exhibition accessible to as many people as possible. It was their stated interest to provide people with a chance to encounter the new form of artistic expression that constituted conceptual art in a way that was free of elitism, judgment, or even prejudice: “To exhibit in a noninstitutional space, almost in the street, fundamentally follows the idea of this avangard [*sic*] creation and results from the consequently conveyed thesis of the democratisation of art.”²⁰ For Dimitrijević, the ephemerality of *At the Moment*, captured in the exhibition’s title, was a crucial feature behind the exhibition, its works and organization, but also a hallmark of life and, more specifically, the art world in a more general sense: friendship, working relations, ideas, information, even the artistic process, they all are fleeting. In choosing this approach, Dimitrijević’s curatorial practice serves as a translation of many of the key aspects of conceptual art *per se* and can therefore, as Jelena Vesić aptly points out, be understood as a form of conceptual curating or conceptual exhibition practice.²¹

These motivations of course beg the question of how the exhibition could then be transformed into a different format when shown at an official institute, despite one as experimental and “independent” as the SKC. In her text for the catalog of the exhibition, Dimitrijević addresses this question at length and displays great efforts to prove that *In Another Moment* retained its anti-institutional character through, for example, undermining standard organizational procedures but also modes of display: at the SKC, *In Another Moment* was on view for intervals of three five-day intervals, with one day in between. For each interval, the exhibition was rearranged. This disturbance of a previously set order, this “inapprehensible [*sic*] and apparently absurd proceeding, without justification within the organizational difficulties, but too regularly repeated to be accidental, is not motivated by efforts of more effective setting up and neither has its origin in the altered aesthetical motives of the arranger” so Dimitrijević. Instead, each new setting was done by a different member of the gallery

staff, be it curatorial, administrative, or technical, “so that the categories of ‘taste’, ‘professionalism’, ‘knowledge of the works and their authors’, which are of main importance in the arrangements of most exhibitions lose all its priority.” Intra-institutional barriers and hierarchies between departments were therewith broken down. What’s more, however, this kind of display connected with some of the basic principles of conceptual art such as art and its exhibition being freed from all kinds of aesthetic constraints and formal research. By continuously changing the arrangement of artworks, the exhibition denied the visitor any kind of formal-aesthetic access to the works. *In Another Moment* also comments on the self-referentiality of art museums and galleries where certain artists, who are deemed successful, are repeatedly shown, albeit in different exhibitions. As Dimitrijević points out:

From the appearance of the new artistic current up to its affirmation achieved by the gallery support, this institution played more or less a positive role up to the moment when it began to create a shell around the successfully established group of artists. From there on the gallery programme is determined: new arrangements or new works of the same group of artists—members of the same current.

Featuring one artist in different exhibitions or adding an artist of the same current merely conceals the static, obsolete, and non-flexible character of traditional gallery and museum policy. With its idiosyncratic presentation, the Dimitrijević’s exhibition aimed at illustrating a “negative rigidity” of the program of the established galleries and inciting visitors to find their own approach to and explanation for this “organizational aberrance,” providing them with an emancipatory moment from the pedagogical programs of established museums and institutions. *In Another Moment* corresponds with the impetus behind its subject, conceptual art, to move “creative action from the personality of the artist to a receiver” when it transfers the role of the arranger of an exhibition from the theoretician of art to “any other person whose active participation is not limited to accomplishment of the exhibition works, but in creation of the show as a whole.”²² No longer is the “final product,” be it art work or exhibition, the point of interest, but rather the creation process behind it.

As *Drangularijum* before it, *In Another Moment* in a way functioned as a formative moment for the SKC, its scope and mission. It continued *Drangularijum*’s emphasis on experimentation, collaboration, and democratization but added an international scope, which in the years to come became one of SKC’s most significant achievements. Both exhibitions also marked a decisive step in the process of substantiating the so-called New Art Practice in the local context and, by assembling international proponents of similar currents, made a clear statement about its relevance within the local institutional and professional environment.²³

The *April Meetings*

The interest in the radicality of the New Art Practice, interdisciplinarity, exchange of ideas, and international collaboration that was expressed in *Drangularijum* and *In Another Moment* found its highpoint in the *April Meetings* (*Aprilski Susreti*), annual festivals organized by Blažević, Tomić, and their associates at the SKC (and several other venues throughout Belgrade) from April 1972 to 1977. The *April Meetings* were preceded by a range of autonomous festivals, exhibitions, installations, theater plays, concerts, readings, and simply gatherings by young people, which had occurred annually for the commemoration of Student's Day on April 4.²⁴ The SKC's *April Meetings* drew from the variety of events yet concerted them into a more focused scope and setting. Most significantly, it brought together the various forms of artistic expressions, which so far had occurred in separate instances, and therewith started a dialogue between them and their proponents. From its first iteration, the *April Meetings*' desire to transcend disciplinary, artistic, and geographic boundaries was unparalleled in Yugoslavia (and even beyond). The meetings brought together numerous local, national, and international creators and theoreticians of a young, curious, and innovative generation and provided them with a unique setting to exhibit, investigate, discuss, and expand their work. The organizers stated as a goal for the *April Meetings* to fill "the void in research," that is, the presentation of accomplishments of artists that otherwise would remain anonymous for the cultural public of Yugoslavia and especially Belgrade.²⁵

The organization of the meetings was, much like the organization of the entirety of the SKC programs, as democratic and collaborative as possible with various *kolegija* (committees) responsible for the overall concept as well as different segments of the meetings, which usually consisted of an exhibition, a variety of theater and music performances, performance art, actions, and happenings and a theoretical segment with lectures and workshops. The participants of the committees varied from year to year but recurring (and by all means direction-giving) figures were Biljana Tomić, Dunja Blažević, Jasna Tijardović, Goranka Matić, and Branislava Šaper, a contemporary musician, as well as director Petar Ignjatović, Božidar Zečević, and frequently Ješa Denegri.

Most of the iterations of the *April Meetings* were conceived under a thematic umbrella: the first iteration's focus on "Interrogation of New Spaces and Media" set the tone for the following meetings with the second iteration running under the tightened version of "Expanded Media." This term, which referenced the 1970 book *Expanded Cinema* by American film critic Gene Youngblood, ultimately became the key concept of the *April Meetings*, which henceforth were alternately also called *Festival of Expanded Media*. The organizers considered the concept of Expanded Media as a way to foster

inclusivity and overcome disciplinary boundaries in the arts, conceiving of the term as encompassing a “very broad range of creation, research, and thinking within interdisciplinary regions of traditionally compartmentalized arts.”²⁶ In that spirit, Biljana Tomić proposed three possible interpretations of Expanded Media: as an artistic language, as art in the function of art, and “as a hypothesis of total art [that] expands the very definition of the given term and introduces it into new fields of expressive and sensory complementariness among the arts, into new forms of behaviour.” For Tomić, the concept of Expanded Media would be able to show different languages (expressive, visual, sonorous, corporeal) and further contemporary methods of artistic research by stimulating a deeper reflection on the spiritual experience in all current forms of artistic expression.²⁷ What’s more, the concept of Expanded Media also investigates the lines along which art and politics intersect and mutually influence each other. As with the general motivations behind the New Art Practice, which sought to pull artistic creation out of the passive and superficial status that the dominant social modernism had assigned it to, the concept of Expanded Media was also considered as a possibility to re-examine the function of art in its relation to the contemporary political panorama and as a reflection of the sociocultural circumstances producing it. With the concept of Expanded Media, the organizers of the *April Meetings* by no means claimed to have generated a novelty. They were fully aware of the debates about methods of artistic research, intermediality, and interdisciplinarity, as well as ideas about the “function” of art and artistic creation that had occupied the international postwar-avant-gardes for a while. Their goal was firstly to bring these discussions to the local art scene as well as to create an umbrella under which the various preoccupations could be brought together and debated. One of the theoretical emphases of the First *April Meeting* therefore was to stimulate exchange about the concept of Expanded Media, its meaning and challenges for the art world at large, yet especially for the Belgrade scene.²⁸

Following their desire to enlarge the sphere of radical art and the New Art Practice as well as staying as transparent, open, and democratic as possible, the organizers sent out an open call for submissions to artists in Yugoslavia and abroad. In the open call, which asked artists to submit their proposals for works in visual, audio, mimetic, textual, filmic, video, and other media anonymously, they clarified their goal to support “the realization of ideas and research efforts by young artists” and to “facilitate wider theoretical and public discussions on the entirety of contemporary developments.”²⁹ As an investigation into and expression of Expanded Media, works selected should negate traditional categorizations but rather constitute artistic experimentations with the participants who were invited to carry out their actions directly on the spot. They were to create “total” works that drew from the space where the action took place, and the public, the architecture,



FIGURE 1.4 *Grupa Pekarna: Potohodec, 1st April Meeting 1972, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.*

the tone, the surrounding movements and objects, color, light, and so forth, with participation and processuality being critical elements. It was in collaboration with these artists and their creations that the organizers sought to further develop their concept of Expanded Media.³⁰ The selected works were shown annually in an exhibition staged at the SKC.

The first *April Meeting* opened with a ceremony in honor of Student Day on the evening of April 4, 1972, which was followed by the performance *Generalna proba Ž1M* by Slobodan Era Milivojević, which he did in collaboration with Ljubica Mrkalj, and Milan-Cile Marinković, both students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade.³¹ The day ended with a late-night act by the experimental Slovenian theater group Perkarna: Potohodec, which consisted of impromptu dance accompanied by music, played on ancient Slovenian instruments (Figure 1.4).

The following days saw, among others, performances by Raša Todosijević, street events by Grupa Atentat from Novi Sad, exhibitions of visual poetry by Slovenian Franci Zagoričnik, a film by Zoran Popović, plays by Michele Mirabella and Francesca Astolfi from the University Theater Center of Bari, as well as Luciano Giaccari from the University Theater Center of Parma, and a concert by English-born musician Paul Pignon. In addition, KASP group from Zagreb presented a dance performance and a group of students



FIGURE 1.5 Gina Pane, *Život-Smrt-San*, performance 1st April Meeting 1972, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.

from the ALU (Faculty of Contemporary Art) Belgrade staged a collaborative interdisciplinary project titled *Meduakcije* (Interactions).³² In addition to its exhibition on Expanded Media, the first *April Meeting* also had ongoing screenings of video works—a medium that was just slowly emerging in Yugoslavia—by artists such as Allan Kaprow or Dennis Oppenheim. It ended with a discussion on Expanded Media between art historians, artists, curators, and the general audience.

On the third day of the festival, Gina Pane performed *Život-Smrt-San* (Life-Death-Dream). This two-hour-long performance began with Pane writing the Serbian words for life, death, and dream onto a white board over and over. She ended by adding, “Dream is a sociological phenomenon. Death: it is necessary to accept one’s own death in order to overcome it” (Figure 1.5). The written communication with the audience was then expanded to bodily interactions, with Pane starting to gesture with her arms and legs and attempting to grab and hold on to the hands of audience members. Ultimately, Pane performed a series of violent acts on her own body such as triggering bleeding from her nose and mouth by irritating the capillary endings in her own skin or vomiting onto a piece of paper on the floor.³³ The painful manipulation of her own body preceded or succeeded by direct interaction with her audience became recurring themes of Pane’s work, and have to be read as a “social commentary addressing the themes of pain and nourishment.”³⁴ Even though her work at the SKC *April Meeting*

triggered ambivalent reactions, it was a groundbreaking moment for the local art scene. Jasna Tijardović vividly remembers Pane's piece as the first performance work she encountered and Marina Abramović, who ultimately became known for her demanding performances, cited Pane among her early influences as well.³⁵

Život-Smrt-San is among the earliest of Pane's difficult and self-harming body art and performative works for which she would ultimately gain recognition. The original letter of invitation from Biljana Tomić to Pane, the connection to whom had been established by art historian Ida Biard, underlines Tomić's interest in Pane's artistic practice, which it describes as a form of processual communication.³⁶ The fact that the SKC invited Pane, whose work, especially her body-based performances, had found no place yet in the art scene, testifies to the dedication of the Student Cultural Center to highlight young, radical, and sometimes controversial artists and perfectly illustrates its commitment to expanding concepts of artistic production and put them in dialogue.

The second *April Meeting* continued the dynamic and interdisciplinary program of the previous year's iteration but this time the space of the meeting expanded and, in addition to the Student Cultural Center, where all of the activities had taken place in 1972, now encompassed venues and public spaces throughout Belgrade. As with the previous *April Meeting*, artists were asked to create works related to their interpretation of Expanded Media. With the results of the previous discussions about the concept in mind, the responses were even richer and more diversified. Artists such as Marina Abramović, Raša Todosijević, Braco Dimitrijević, and Ana Nuša and Srečo Dragan participated with conceptual, photographic, and installative works, Belgrade's Ekipa A3 staged urban interventions, and theater groups such as Newcastle's experimental RAT Theater, The People Show from London, Grupa Tandem from Sarajevo, and Zagreb's music group ACEZANTEZ performed during the week. In addition, video art was again an important component and included works by Ilija Šoškić, Vladimir Petek, and Luigi Ontani from Rome. The theoretical debates accompanying the meeting reappraised the concept of Expanded Media but, owing to the previous year's discussions, utilized a more concise definition, which also emerged from comparisons to similar terms such as "mixed media," "multimedia," or "intermedia."³⁷

While the majority of the participants of the first and second *April Meetings* were local and national, the geographic scope considerably widened over the next iterations, owing to the increasing reputation of the festival but in particular also to Biljana Tomić's connections within the Yugoslav but also the international art scene, primarily Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. The third edition featured, for example, Jill Etherley, Tim Jones, Peter Godfrey,

Tom Marioni, Ugo La Pietra, Mauricio Kagel, Luigi Ontani, and Joseph Beuys.³⁸ In addition, several renowned theoreticians and critics such as art historian Marlis Gräterich, Barbara Reise, and John McEwen from *Studio International* magazine in London, Giancarlo Politi, founder and director of *Flash Art* magazine Milan, and curator and critic Achille Bonito Oliva were invited and provided stimulus to the round tables and discussions with local figures such as Ješa Denegri, Biljana Tomić, and Dunja Blažević.

By the fourth iteration in 1975, the international scope of the *April Meetings* had been enlarged even more and numerous emerging and renowned figures participated. The meeting continued the previous two iterations' negotiation of the term of Expanded Media, but the program had again been enlarged and, due to the success of the previous years, drew even more participants. For the annual exhibition of Expanded Media, the organizers had chosen in particular artists from smaller towns in order to illustrate "the new way of thinking and the new artistic language are no longer the monopoly only of great cultural centers but reflect the overarching creative motivations of a whole generation."³⁹ In addition there was a showcase of artists that the organizers had selected for being of particular significance to the development of the New Art Practice as well a performance of John Cage, pieces by Music Circus from Kiel, Germany, films by Walter de Maria and Ugo la Pietra, and a lecture by Hervé Fischer, among others. Video art featured again with works by Jack Moore.

The program distinguished itself from previous meetings by the large number of female participants from both Yugoslavia and abroad: obviously Marina Abramović, who remained closely tied to the SKC, took part as did Serbian-Hungarian Katalin Ladik, who participated with her poetry-performance *Phonopoesia*. There were video works by Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis, postcards by Nicole Gravier, photographs by Iole de Freitas, video performances by Ulrike Rosenbach, and the films *Reke-Rivers*, 1972, and *Stone-Water-Light*, 1974, by Novi Sad-based Bogdanka Poznanović. In addition, the Polish artist Natalia LL, who later gained notoriety with her *Consumer* performances and projects, participated with a performance called *Natalia*.

Not only did the fourth *April Meeting* include a large number of female participants, its theoretical discussions equally focused on the topic of "Women in Art." The discussants were several young, brilliant artists and thinkers such as Katharina Sieverding, Iole de Freitas, Gislinde Nabakowski, Ulrike Rosenbach, Natalia LL, Ida Biard, Nena Baljković, Irina Subotić, Jasna Tijardović, Jadranka Vinterhalter, Biljana Tomić, and finally Dunja Blažević. Even though official socialist dogma had declared equality of the sexes, the SKC women recognized the need for a critical investigation of this topic not only for the local situation but also for the international art scene.

The theoretical discussion of the fourth *April Meeting* therefore tackled one of the most current and hotly debated topics of the day. Drawing from their various experiences and backgrounds as female artists and theorists, discussants examined the role and recognition of art created by women and the long-standing disparity between the sexes that has shaped the discipline since its beginning.⁴⁰ At the end of the discussions, participants agreed on the necessity of the assertion of women's rights and the acknowledgment of women's creative and intellectual qualities, owing to which the male dominance of the art world needs to change. As Katharina Sieverding had observed:

In order to resist the opportunism generated within the media it is important to document the art produced by a woman. [...] therefore the woman is not bored and burdened by the concept of traditional aesthetics that always imposes themselves in the foreground, but has the possibility to free her own energy and create completely new contents, emptied of grandeur, strength and sentimentality, but in any case it must suppress the dependence, above all on the conflict from society.⁴¹

The interest of the Student Cultural Center staff in the relation between art/artist and society from which the debate about women in the arts stemmed as well became even more pronounced during the fifth *April Meeting*, which focused on the theme of "Artists-Art-Society," and aimed at raising "the question of the position of art in a contemporary socialist society or in a Western type society, assuming that in both cases the functioning of art and the behavior of artists depend inevitably on a series of social and cultural factors." Blažević and Tomić, again the main protagonists behind the meeting, recognized the "new politicized language of art" and were interested in showcasing artists that directed their critical attitude at "all the conservative forces in culture and society which most often negate meanings and values of new artistic events."⁴²

In addition to several of the recurring artists such as Abramović, Popović, Todosijević, Goran Đorđević, Mladen Stilinović, Katalin Ladik, Katharina Sieverding, and Klaus Mettig, or Newcastle's RAT Theater, first time participants included Hans Haacke, Wolfgang Weber, Nancy Kitchel, Zdzisław Sosnowski, Terry Doxey, John Stezaker, Fulvio Salvadori, Teatar 77 from Łódź, Uwe Laysiepen, or Helena Almeida. Also joining were critics Klaus Honnef and Tommaso Trini. Umberto Eco, Jean-Michel Palmier, Lucy Lippard, and Rosalee Goldberg were also invited but could not attend.

In addition, there was an exhibition of video works, which was realized by Jack Moore and his Videoheads production studio in Amsterdam. For the exhibition, a range of both American and European artists were invited to submit concepts for the use of a specific video system, to be realized during the meeting. In a letter to Jack Moore, Bojana Pejić explains: "If it is properly realized, this could have a tremendous impact on the development of video

in the public eye in Yugoslavia and help in the liberalization of attitudes towards [these] media." Pejić even proposes to Moore the possibility of touring the exhibition through Yugoslavia stating that many "galleries and colleagues in the smaller towns have expressed a strong interest in having such shows." The young curator asks Moore to demonstrate the equipment and possibly conduct a workshop as the "collection of tapes you showed during the meeting last year has stimulated much interest and many questions among the artistic community here and everyone is hoping that there will be more possibility for realizing projects."⁴³ Moore followed Pejić's suggestions by proposing a workshop and discussion on the use and maintenance of video equipment and video concepts.⁴⁴

The theoretical discussions revolving around "Artists-Art-Society" investigated into the fundamental aspects of contemporary art as understood by the SKC and New Art Practice proponents. Drawing heavily from a Marxist perspective, critics, and artists debated, among others, the "existential situation of the artist and art in general," the "problem of the ontological state of art," "art and ideology," "art and psychology," as well as "art and technology."

Besides exposing the local art community to new ideas and practices, one of the *April Meetings*' greatest accomplishments was the creation of a community of like-minded artists aligned with the New Art Practice and generally radical contemporary forms of expression in Yugoslavia. In addition to Belgrade-based artists, the *April Meetings* also featured many figures from other crucial centers such as Zagreb, Novi Sad, Ljubljana, but also smaller ones such as Ruma or Lučani in Serbia. As we have seen before, the new art trends had initially started independently in the various locations and artists often joined together in groups in order to find the sense of community, the exchange, and inspirations crucial for the development of their thoughts and artistic vocabulary. The *April Meetings* gave them a space to do so on a larger scale and therewith magnified the reverberance of the New Art Practice in the contemporary cultural scene.⁴⁵ In expanding their geographic scope even beyond the borders of Yugoslavia, the *April Meetings* offered young Yugoslav artists an opportunity not only to showcase their creative potential but to engage in a dialogue with their international peers and recognized names, who, in turn, were able to familiarize themselves with the local scene. In addition to the United States and Western Europe, the *April Meeting* organizers also specifically included radical artists from other socialist states, opening up intellectual bridges between countries that saw the circulation of ideas and artistic practice and—in some cases—even the freedom of expression severely impacted by government control. Artists such as Januš Haka from Warsaw, the group testar 77 from Lodz, Petr Štembera from Prague, and Endre Tôt from Budapest, all of whom participated in the *April Meetings*, struggled to have their work acknowledged in their home countries in the best case, or had to operate underground, facing possible

prosecution, in the worst.⁴⁶ In explicitly fostering intellectual exchange across borders, the *April Meeting* organizers in fact realized what official Yugoslav cultural policy had always promised on paper, yet largely failed to deliver. Ultimately, the effort to integrate Yugoslav art more substantially into international artistic trends has to be named as one of the festival's greatest achievements. As Biljana Tomić explained:

Our role is to put our own artists on the level of the context of the art of the rest of the world. The same cultural politics are present in other countries. Feeling the need to overcome and to find a suitable language which would correspond to a new art and a new time, a new culture and new social constructs.⁴⁷

With regard to the general reception, the phenomenon of the SKC and its festival, like any of the other radical endeavors in Yugoslavia, were not unanimously received positively. For most parts, the artistic endeavors of the SKC were ignored by the press—especially the more traditional publications—with only the *April Meetings* triggering more opiniated approaches.⁴⁸ Among the headlines describing the first *April Meeting* were “Umorna avangarda” (Tired Avant-garde) (*Borba*, April 9, 1972), “Studentski Aristokratski Centar” (Student Aristocratic Center) (*Duga*, April 15, 1972), and “Da li je to zaista studentska kultura” (Is It Really Student Culture) (*Borba*, April 10, 1972). As these titles show, most of the traditionalist reviewers painted the meetings as a sort of cultural elitism or snobbism, questioning their value for the emancipation of students and the furthering of any kind of culture. *Borba* described the first *April Meeting* as pretending “exclusivity, forced avantgarde, and a tendency to shock with its intellectualized conception,” leaving both spectators and participants “looking forward to the end.”⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, the liberal papers such as *Studentski List* reacted favorably, recognizing the novelty of the events and their potential to trigger new approaches in and to culture.⁵⁰ A year later, in 1973, *Književna Reč* lauded the second *April Meeting* with establishing continuity and becoming one of the most important manifestations of its kind, comparing it to *Bitef* and the *Zagreb Biennial*.⁵¹

The SKC's early exhibitions and the *April Meetings* were cornerstones of the institute's program, and their key premises are reflected in the overall program of the institute throughout the 1970s. From its inception, Blažević and Tomić created an artistically and geographically diverse program. In addition to programs in music, film, and theater, the SKC hosted exhibitions of younger artists from Yugoslavia such as Belgrade-based sculptor Vlasta Filipović and photographer Aleksandar Antić, or Slovenian painter Tone Rački. Of particular importance were, of course, New Art Practice figures and groups such as Ekipa A3, a performance art group that became famous for their public actions and interventions, Bosch+Bosch group, Zoran

Popović, Goran Trbuljak, or Marina Abramović figured prominently. Great emphasis was also given to international artists with exhibitions by David Nez (1972), Daniel Buren and Giuseppe Chiari (1972), Kamil Šukun from Istanbul (1973), Andraž Šalamun and Bruno Munari (1974), and Walter de Maria and the Hungarian conceptual artist Miroslav Klivar (1975). In 1976, Hans Breder and Ana Mendieta presented a film, slide shows, as well as a performance at the SKC, Al Souza exhibited in 1977, and the 1978 program features names such as Muhamed Ikubal and Horst Haberl. In addition, the list includes exhibitions of young Yugoslav architects, posters from Hungary, young caricaturists from Serbia, a seminar on Art & Language, an evening on the New York art scene, or alternative architecture.

The artistic program was supplemented by a strong focus on art history, theory, and criticism as well as with a variety of lectures and workshops by figures such as Lazar Trifunović, one of the leading art critics in Yugoslavia and professor of modern art history at the University of Belgrade, Miodrag B. Protić, an artist and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, Tom Marioni, or Irina Subotić. The latter, a Belgrade-born art historian who was a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade from 1965 to 1978, became a highly influential figure for the New Art Practice. Already in 1968, Subotić, who had studied art history at the University of Belgrade and completed her doctorate at Ljubljana University, published an article on new tendencies in Yugoslav art in Italy's *D'Ars Agency*.⁵² She continued to produce substantial scholarship on the Yugoslav avant-garde, especially, the Zenit group, neo-avant-garde and the New Art Practice. Subotić was greatly invested in the internationalization of the Yugoslav art scene, publishing, for example, on Yugoslav artists active in France between 1900 and 1940 and not only organizing a large number of exhibitions of foreign artists in the SFR Yugoslavia but also introducing Yugoslav artists to museums in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, and France as well as Mexico, India, and Japan. In 1971, for example, she organized an exhibition of Belgrade painters in Rome and in 1977 she curated an exhibition of ten young Yugoslav artists at AIFACS in New Delhi, among others. In addition, Subotić researched many forgotten female figures of Eastern art history such as Russian painter Helen Grunhoff, Croatian avant-garde artist Vjera Biller, and the Serbian-Italian painter and poet Milena Pavlović Barilli. Subotić was frequently involved in the SKC's programming and, with her critical outlook and input, helped shape especially the theoretical discourse on New Art Practice.⁵³

Oktober and Grupa 143

Another critical endeavor conceived of by the SKC women were the *Oktober* (October) events. Each year, an official *October Salon* was held in Belgrade showcasing art that fell into the category of general and political

approval. The art shown was rather traditional in both content and media, much in the sense of *l'art pour l'art*, which was precisely what proponents of the New Art Practice and people associated with the liberal art scene around the SKC vehemently opposed. As naturally artists engaged in a more radical and experimental approach would have never been chosen, the SKC decided to stage its own October exhibitions, which featured art that stood in stark contrast to the *October Salon* selections. The spatial situation gave an interesting twist to the two opposing camps with the official *October Salon* taking place just a few doors away from the SKC on Resavska street.

Marina Abramović, who participated in the alternative *Oktober* events, described the SKC's version as an "addition" to the official salons but emphasized its necessity as she saw the official salon deliberately dismissing the equally important artistic manifestations created by New Art Practice artists. In an interview with *Politika Ekspres* on October 7, 1971, she called it a "protest against the organizers of original salons who have apparently forgotten to follow contemporary art patterns."⁵⁴

The first three iterations of the *Oktober* events at the SKC featured mostly names closely associated with the SKC and the New Art Practice, by extension: Marina Abramović, Branko Bunić, Slobodan Era Milivojević, Neša Paripović, Zoran Popović, Gergelj Urkom, and so forth. In the catalog to the second *Oktober* exhibition in 1972, Dunja Blažević emphasized the SKC's programmatic interest in the creative process and the moment of research in the creation of a work of art. She also reiterated the institute's dedication to transgressing the traditional boundaries between artistic disciplines and instead to foster a "program range in all artistic that is visual mediums." Artists, scholars, and curators of the SKC Belgrade through various modes of work thrive to "critically analyze [*sic*] the existing artistic practice and experience, position, meaning and function of visual culture in a wider social context [*sic*], to formulate a new approach, suggest new 'models' of artistic creation and engagement, behavior and activity in our society." As this text emphasizes, the minds behind the SKC Belgrade were in a constant critical engagement with the visual arts and visual culture per se and its role in and instrumentalization by the political body. Mostly, they attacked the established art sector and, what they perceived, "inherited institutionalized forms," which secure neither the existence of the artist nor the "basic social function of art." As an essential prerequisite to establishing an alternative to these structures, Blažević first and foremost recognized the importance of critical thinking, exchange, and collaboration among the new generation of artists and thinkers, "as well as the wish to achieve a more independent relation with the work, to abandon the traditional modes of work" and, probably most importantly, "the readiness to enter a new unsearched field (not only in the sense of artistic form and manner of expression but in questioning the actual function and fate of that new work

in society).” For Blažević, pursuing these necessary changes should not and cannot be measured against the question of success or “whether it lasts or not” but about the willingness and devotion to “uphold the attempts of seperation [*sic*] from the prevailing systems of thought and valorization as well as the inclination of creating something new.”⁵⁵

For *Oktober* '75, the SKC entirely broke away from traditional forms of exhibition and presented a radical new concept for which artists and theorists presented texts containing their thoughts and statements on art, which were published as a booklet. For the opening night, the gallery of the SKC was left empty except for a small table that held a pile of stapled publications containing the statements. One of the triggers for this specific form of exhibition was Dunja Blažević's impending departure as director of the gallery and the SKC's artistic program. In a 2014 interview, the curator, who had ultimately proposed the unusual format of *Oktober* '75, describes as her motivation a desire to collect a “final” survey of her colleagues' and collaborators' thoughts and opinions. This interest, however, was also spurred by Blažević's wariness at that time of, what she perceived, a certain lull in critical stance on art production and the art market, which had characterized the SKC and the New Art Practice from its inception.⁵⁶ Another influential factor for the creation of *Oktober* '75, however, was also Jasna Tijardović's and Zoran Popović's trip to New York in 1974, which had brought them together with the New York part of the Art & Language group as well as the greater New York conceptual art scene around figures such as Joseph Kosuth, Sarah Charlesworth, and Anthony McCall.⁵⁷ With their impressions (and, as Popović stated, some necessary corrections to what he called naïve political positions and illusions), they returned to Belgrade. Upon their return, they initiated and participated in some of the most politically engaged art projects of the SKC in an attempt to prompt their peers to engage in “direct political speech,” aimed at addressing the situation of the arts in the context of the social and political climate of the mid-1970s with its reforms and regressions.⁵⁸ The *Oktober* '75 booklet ultimately contained contributions by eleven artists and art critics: besides Jasna Tijardović and Zoran Popović also Dunja Blažević, Bojana Pejić, Nena Baljković, Raša Todosijević, Ješa Denegri, Goran Đorđević, Dragica Vukadinović, Slavko Timotijević, and Vladimir Gutac.

The contributors were invited to share their thoughts on the relationship between art and society against the political situation in the context of Yugoslavia's self-management socialism. The statements were, however, not merely a straightforward critique of the state; the issue of self-management rather served a more general discussion of the politicization of cultural activity and the separation of art from social, cultural, and political circumstances. Under scrutiny was in particular again the absence of political thought through abstract form and neutral content “enclosed into the traditional bourgeois structure of the ‘admiration of precious objects’.”⁵⁹ In her contribution, Bojana Pejić observed:

Art finally has its independent place. But art still continues to have [. . .] difficulties. Art is still obsessed with the results of its work (object) and not the thing that is solely important to artistic creation—the process. [. . .] And finally, what is that art that is freed from the constraints of society. It is the same kind of art we are fighting against. It will remain as is, distanced, if we do not stop acting so forgiving and apologetic towards it. [. . .] The ballast of the past is such that we, who have different social circumstances today, and therefore greater possibilities for ANOTHER ART, are incapable of understanding correctly society's need for art. [. . .] Only when we really come to understand that art is a SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ACT, the same as any other social act, shall we be able to say that art has finally been released from its decorative authority.⁶⁰

Dunja Blažević was particularly interested in rethinking the social transformations Yugoslavia experienced and the place and function of art within it. In her text titled “Umetnost kao oblik svojinske svesti” (Art as a Form of Proprietary Consciousness), she reassesses art's place in society, pointing out that a persistent understanding of culture as an autonomous, universal, and humanizing field with special laws in fact hinders art to truly be part of the social practices. She reiterates her conviction about the importance of art's social dimension, its independence from any and all political constraints, as well as the necessity to remain critical about art's place in Yugoslav society. Blažević goes on to analyze various models of cultural policy, declaring Yugoslavia's art market in fact a “caricature of the Wests’.” Following the principles of Yugoslavia's self-management policy yet hinting at its insufficient application, she proposes a completely self-governing model, “on the basis of the free market with the functioning of a self-governing community.” In order for this to be successful, however, she demands: “Art needs to change! If we do not stop making art in studios and transferring it to depots like stillborn children, for the benefit of our cultural offspring [. . .] art will remain a social commodity, something serving no useful purpose, but something it is not decent or cultured to be without.”⁶¹

Jasna Tijardović's statement, or her “Notes” as she titled her contribution, poses a critical reassessment of contemporary artistic practice. She inquires about the legitimacy and timeliness of the dominant artistic model, which she does not see as relevant to the present anymore. Contemporary artistic production to Tijardović is compromised by thoughts and ideas from the past: “How can one talk about contemporaneity when the thoughts used are the ones constructed in the past? This means that we are anachronic in our time, that we are fossils and not beings of our own time.” This retrospective quality of artistic production does not relate, so Tijardović, to Marxist thought. She also critically approaches the conflation between artistic and social practice, which, to her, “creates the vision of art as very professional,” yet “contributes to its isolation and further develops in the public a feeling of incompetence.” Alternative forms of artistic practice

might not even be what is needed as “[t]he most part of it is narrative and surreal character, which means it remains on its own level, confirms itself and isn’t critical.” She warns that, by cultivating unrestrained artistic freedom (or even artists as creators of freedom), radical contemporary art might become self-referential and lack validity. Overall, however, her criticism does not target artistic production per se as risky, but rather the fetishization of art’s independence and its social dimension. Ultimately, she demands: “Creating a new culture/art does not mean individually to come by original discoveries. The same way, it does not mean to critically shout out coming truths.”⁶²

As Branislav Jakovljević aptly observed: “This collection of statements [. . .] is a radical implementation of the conceptual art premise of transforming the artwork from an object to a mental process and a theoretical proposition.” With *Oktober* ’75 taking on their specific cultural and political circumstances, however, this “dematerialization of art was all but ideologically neutral and insensitive to anything specific to the local cultural scene.”⁶³ *Oktober* ’75 was a true counter-exhibition, functioning not only as a radical alternative to traditional exhibitions in line with official cultural politics but also as an attempt to generate different perspectives on art and artistic activity, based on the processes of the democratization of the production and reception of art. As Jelena Vesić proposes: “Oktober 75 [. . .] can be seen as a window for looking at one of SKC’s many ‘characteristic faces’ cohabiting its permeable institutional walls. It shows the ‘face’ of the critique of the Yugoslav socialist state from the leftist, Marxist positions that emerged in the circles of the student protests of 1968 with the slogan (which is tautological at the first glance): fighting socialism with socialism.”⁶⁴

Oktober ’75 was the last event conceived with Dunja Blažević as director of artistic programs and curator of the SKC gallery, after which she took over as general director of the SKC. The artistic program was then taken over by Biljana Tomić, who continued SKC’s promotion of the New Art Practice with, of course, her own personal note, shaped in particular by her interest in the development of an experimental and post-pedagogical agenda. In addition, Tomić greatly drew from her collaborations with other artists and institutes such as OHO Group, Grupo KÔD, and (Ξ, as well as the Tribina mladih in Novi Sad. Shortly after taking over the artistic direction of the SKC, Tomić also founded Grupa 143, an alternative-pedagogical group of young artists, historians, and critics, whose practice and ideology can best be described as post-conceptual and post-avant-garde. From its inception until its dissolution in 1980, the group included besides Tomić Miško Šuvaković, Neša Paripović, Jovan Čekić, Paja Stanković, Maja Savić, Mirko Dilberović, Vladimir Nikolić, Dejan Dizdar, Nada Seferović, Bojana Burić, Stipe Dumić, Momčilo Rajin, Ivan Marošević, and Slobodan Šajin, all of whom were associated with Grupa 143 for various lengths of time. Grupa 143 separated

itself from the politically engaged art created and furthered by Blažević, Popović, Tijardović, and Todosijević, among others, instead advocating for a radical autonomy of the art scene and its independence from all political agendas.⁶⁵ Within Grupa 143, Tomić mostly assumed the roles of “mentor-collaborator, author-curator, and organizer,” writing many of the Group’s texts and manifestos such as “Models of Behaviour.” As Dietmar Unterkofler stated: “[Tomić] may be considered a cultural worker in the broadest sense, a participant in alternative artistic and cultural practices, an artist, critic, and curator who acts both in local and international art institutions—all at once. The mutual borders between these areas were impossible to mark and define clearly.”⁶⁶

The formation of Grupa 143 illustrates certain tensions that emerged in the SKC during the mid-1970s, which stemmed from the differing opinions not only on function, meaning, and tasks of artistic practice but of cultural institutes per se. In particular Jasna Tijardović voiced her concern with the working structure of the SKC such as its unclear logic of paid versus voluntary labor and autonomy versus hierarchy, as well as the unequal distribution of funds between non-visual arts and the visual arts programs, the latter of which she saw in a clear disadvantage. As a result, she followed an invitation of Belgrade’s Museum of Contemporary Art to join their staff and left the SKC.

The 1978 Conference *Drug-ca Žena:* *Žensko Pitanje: Novi Pristup?*

The Student Cultural Center was not only instrumental in the development of alternative artistic practice but also independent critical thought. It became a highly important venue for the new Yugoslav feminism, which initially had only a few places, outside of the academic sphere, where it could develop. The women of the SKC hosted, organized, and promoted initiatives and events for feminists and gave female artists the well-needed space in terms of exhibitions and programs with the fourth *April Meeting*, for example, focusing on the issue of “Women in the Arts”. In 1978 then, the SKC hosted the first international feminist conference, *Drug-ca Žena: Žensko pitanje: novi pristup?* (Comrade Woman: The Women’s Question: A New Approach?).⁶⁷ The key organizers were Nada Ler Sofronić, an assistant professor for sociology at the University of Sarajevo, Žarana Papić, and Dunja Blažević, who was Papić’s sister-in-law, and the meeting brought together about thirty feminists from all over Yugoslavia, Germany, Italy, the UK, and France (Figure 1.6). The idea, according to Ler Sofronić, was to “meet in live, in vivo, and to talk openly [. . .] about our common problem, patriarchy. In spite of big differences between our systems, socialist systems and capitalism, we found that we have many things in common.”⁶⁸



FIGURE 1.6 *Conference Drug-ca Žena: Žensko pitanje: novi pristup?*, Student Cultural Center 1978, photograph by Nebojsa Čanković, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.

The conference was thoroughly planned, especially with regard to the questions put up for discussion. In a preparatory introduction, which is titled, “The need for a new approach to the women question,” the organizers state that the “need to demystify and decodify all (apparently natural) forms of the social determination of the human sexes, their characteristics and functions in the social order is necessarily linked to the demystification of the totality of social life.” Further they observe that the

history of alienation is also the history of the social separation of the sexes—the creation of opposite human male/female identities as the basis of their inequality. The first step toward a revolutionary transformation of the position of women is grasping of the sense and reason of the alienation of the sexes its socio-historical, psychological roots. Human history [...] has had a visible tendency, that of the exploitation of women.” Based on these statements, the organizers hope for the conference to give an answer to a variety of pressing questions such as “what is happening to women and to the relation between sexes in bourgeois society today and what are the origins, social, political, and psychological of her inequality.” They consciously prompt the exploration of contrasts and concordances between their local, socialist, and the Western context, hoping to inquire into “what has changed in the social position of

women after the rise of the women's movement and what have been the achievements [*sic*], problems, and possible blind alleys of the women's movement in the West.⁶⁹

For the capitalist context, the text observes that the feminist movement points to the "untenability of the traditional patriarchal order and the social inequality of the sexes." With regard to their local situation, the authors posit that

even though many things have been achieved, there is a whole series of open questions concerning the position of women, the family, marriage, social relations between the sexes and their still present inequality. The family, women and everything concerning the relation between sexes is still under the pressure of bourgeois morality, patriarchal tradition, religion and various social taboos and (new and old) habits.

And further: "Such a traditional consciousness represents an anachronism and is not in accord with the progressive tendencies of self-managing society."

As has been described in the introduction, the Yugoslav feminists by no means attacked the socialist system per se or negated its efforts to improve the status of women—rather repeatedly acknowledging them. But they attempted to point out the contradictions of the system and show that the women's question needed to be considered entirely separate from class and labor. In the introductory text to *Drug-ca žena*, in particular, the prevalence of traditional values and gender roles is mentioned with the following question asked: "Does the existing emancipation of woman lead to her actual liberation when we know that she still goes on about her traditional family duties and that she is not present there where the decisions have been taken?" The authors criticized the absence of any alternative forms of life other than the traditional concept of family with the female as mother and caretaker, which continues to prevail in the socialist context. Following the introductory text, the conference organizers established a list of themes which were to guide the discussions. Among them were: "Women-capitalism-revolution," which was aimed at an "analysis of the social position of women in capitalism, the various strategies for the transformation of the private/public relationship between the sexes, the family as part of the capitalist production system, the importance of linking private and public, the critique of bourgeois society and the project of a new society, the critique of politics, patriarchy," and ultimately the "origin of male domination." "Today's women's movement" aimed at providing an overview of the forms of organizations and types of activities as well as challenges faced by feminists, while "Psychoanalysis-sexuality-women's identity" critically negotiated the space of psychoanalysis in bourgeois society and addressed not only female sexuality but also the "problem of socially imposed heterosexuality." Lastly, "Women and culture" raised

questions about the origins of the absence of women in science, philosophy, and art as well as the distinctions between “high,” that is, male culture and lower-regarded, “typical female” activities. In addition, negative stereotypes, systems of thought that justify women’s subordination, were put up for discussion as were questions such as “What are the ways for women to enter the domain of culture, what language should she use, should she insist on her own specific ‘women’s sensibility’?” and “Is this sensibility a lasting characteristic or is it the result of historical determination?” Lastly, this topic included the prompt to think about the “politicization of culture and the problem of neglecting the language of modern art (the relation between content and language).”⁷⁰ As Chiara Bonfiglioli has shown, ultimately the first two topics were forfeited and replaced by two separate workshops on “Women-capitalism-revolution” as well as another one of “Woman and culture.”⁷¹

The conference was accompanied by a program of exhibitions and films created by female artists. The exhibitions were both of artistic and of documentary nature, with the latter one aiming to raise awareness for the actual situation of women in Yugoslavia. Among the art exhibitions was a series of photographic portraits of women by Goranka Matić, illustrations by Claire Bratcher, and films and drawings by Nil Yalter. The documentary exhibits presented statistical findings on employment, education, or the palpable sexism, which was illustrated through a series of newspaper cutouts. Films were grouped around four series, addressing “Women as a sexual symbol on the screen, women directors, films whose theme is the position of women” as well as “feminist, political non-commercial films.”⁷²

Žarana Papić also undertook the gargantuan task of preparing a reader for the conference participants, which contained texts both on Western and on socialist feminism. Publications on feminism in the socialist or Marxist context included Alexandra Kollontai, Evelyn Reed, Sheila Rowbotham’s *Women Resistance and Revolution* (1975), Shulamit Firestone’s *Dialectic of Sex* (1971), and Julia Kristeva’s *About Chinese Women* (1974). Also included were theories of sexual difference (Luce Irigaray) and works on the emergence of feminist movements in Italy, whose members were particularly well represented at the conference: Meri Franco Lao’s *Musica Srega: Per la Ricerca di una Dimensione Femminile nella Musica* (1977) and Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni’s *Il taglio femminile: saggio psicanalitico sul narcisismo* (1977), among them. In addition, essays by Yugoslav feminists such as Nada Ler Sofronić, Nadežda Čačinović-Puhovski, Vesna Pusić, Rada Iveković, Lydia Sklevicky, Žarana Papić, and Slavenka Drakulić were included and translated for the international participants. The reader, as Chiara Bonfiglioli observed, “represented a double translation, aimed at introducing Western feminist ideas into the local context, but also aimed at producing local feminist analyses that could travel back and be communicated to Western feminist participants.”⁷³

The negotiation between local and foreign feminist ideas had been a rather delicate endeavor throughout the early years of new Yugoslav feminism and the *Drug-ca Žena* conference presented an opportunity to further develop it in direct dialogue, which, however, was not always easy. For the Yugoslav feminists it was crucial to articulate a version of feminism that would be relevant to the local context and, therewith, gain ideological force. Many women in Yugoslavia remained opposed to identifying as feminist and the reason was, more often than plain indifference or a true feeling of equality in all aspects of life, the incompatibility of Western feminism with the local situation. In her text “The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects”—chosen for the reader for the *Drug-ca Žena* conference—the Croatian philosopher and indologist Rada Iveković outlined the specific problems women face in the socialist context while reiterating the importance of Western feminist ideas for the situation in Yugoslavia as she sees them “[embracing] problems which are in our midst (although we have others in addition), and so it is not alien to us, but in fact valuable.”⁷⁴ She observes that women, while sharing universal interests, do not (yet) show as much solidarity and common consciousness as they would need to: “the problem of the nonexistence of a collective women’s consciousness [. . .] have presented the chief obstacle to the emancipation and liberation of women.” She attributes this lack of a sense of community to the relegation of the “women’s question” to the private realm only and the ensuing dispersion of women, which in turn is the reason for women to experience oppression. However, according to Iveković, the recent elections in Yugoslavia, which affirmed a solid male dominance in the political sector, demonstrate the relevance of the women’s question for the public sphere, and it is imperative for women to join together to facilitate change.

The communication and ideological exchange between local and foreign participants during the conference did not always go smoothly. Not only was the simultaneous translation between the various participants challenging. Expectations, differing attitudes, and misunderstanding at times also complicated the meeting. As the capitalist political and cultural system they fought against differed considerably from the socialist system, it is not surprising that many foreign feminists were rather disappointed with their Yugoslav peers as they found them to be not “radical” enough in their language, practices, and demands.⁷⁵ In her report on the conference, the Italian writer Carla Ravaioli observed that the Yugoslav contributions to the conference were “based on the old emancipationist line: work, laws, services, social integration, political participation, construction of socialism,” and so forth, whereas feminists from other parts of the globe addressed “oppressing machismo, expropriated sexuality, symbolical elaboration, unconscious, daily life, autonomy, materialist theory that has to be constructed starting from the body,” among others.⁷⁶ At the same time, many of the basic rights that the Yugoslav system had already granted women were still the object of the fight of Western feminists, as an anecdote by Rada Iveković illustrates:

"The Italians did not know that abortion was allowed. And we did not know that it was an issue, for us it seemed self-evident. [. . .] And then when the Italians asked of the right to abortion, we did not understand where the question came from."⁷⁷

Chiara Bonfiglioli's thorough examination and translation of the Italian and French accounts on the conference, however, reveal that the majority of the reports on the conference stressed the emergence of a common ground and mutual understanding toward the end of the conference. As Rada Iveković summarized: "we listened to them, many of them came with discourses that did not correspond at all to our experience, and this did a lot of good for us, because it's good to hear other people's experiences, and other people's thought. And maybe it did them good to listen to us."⁷⁸

Needless to say, the reception of the conference was difficult, to say the least with the media attempting to ridicule, trivialize, and downplay it. Reactions like these cannot come as a surprise as the organizer's invitation of Western feminists brought exactly those people and thoughts to Yugoslavia that the government and state feminism had attempted to dismiss as "bourgeois."⁷⁹ As a result, Blažević was even ordered to leave her position at the SKC (which she refused) and Žarana Papić encountered difficulties with keeping her position in social anthropology at Belgrade University.⁸⁰

Drug-ca Žena had an enormous impact on feminism in Yugoslavia in that it made the local feminists aware of the magnitude of the movement all over the globe and allowed them to contextualize and phrase their ideas more clearly. What's more, where before the conference, feminist thought and initiatives had been rather spread out and lacked connection and coordination, the days of meetings and discussions between local and international women transformed Yugoslav feminism into a collective movement. As Rada Iveković stated: "Before the conference we did not exist. We happened during that conference."⁸¹

The SKC continued to operate throughout the 1980s, the war years of the 1990s, and into the present day. Its early initiatives lent great momentum to the development of the New Art Practice in Yugoslavia, which, prior to 1971, had remained geographically scattered and was ideologically still in a developing stage. With programs such as *Drug-ca Žena*, the SKC also helped independent critical thought to expand and gain momentum. Through trailblazing initiatives such as *Drangularijum*, *In Another Moment*, *Oktobar*, and the *April Meetings* the SKC women created exhibition concepts that corresponded to the radicality of the New Art Practice and the alternative art scene in Yugoslavia at large and helped it develop in its own idiosyncrasy instead of having to follow the traditional models that had been established by official cultural policy. While the government did not suppress alternative concepts but remained, as had been detailed in the introduction, strategically open to them, it did neither fully understand nor actively foster them. In 1971, for example, the first exhibition of

Yugoslav Conceptualism had been shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade: *Primeri konceptualne umetnosti u Jugoslaviji* (Examples of Conceptual Art in Yugoslavia). The same year followed *Young Artists and Young Critics* and in 1973 *Documents on Post-Object Phenomena in Yugoslav Art 1968–1973*.⁸² Without doubt testifying to the relative openness toward nontraditional art that Tito's system displayed, the exhibition concepts themselves did not translate key premises of conceptualism such as the focus on the idea and artistic process instead of the finished artwork or the spirit of collaboration that many conceptual artists shared. Neither was the exchange with international counterparts much of a concern with the exhibitions being limited to Yugoslav representatives. This, on the other hand, had been a key factor behind *Drangularijum*, *In Another Moment*, and the *April Meetings*. The curatorial strategies and modes of working themselves followed conceptual premises and the New Art Practice's desire to overcome the corset of the institutionalized art scene. Despite facing skepticism and even criticism, the women of the Student Cultural Center pursued their mission to provide curatorial answers to the questions asked by the New Art Practice.

2

Performance Art

Performance art had occurred sporadically throughout Yugoslavia already during the 1950s and 1960s but it was not until the late 1960s that it started to gain momentum.¹ In the following years, it developed rapidly, characterized by a multitude of approaches and themes ranging from political and critical to poetic, personal, and intimate. Despite Yugoslavia quickly becoming a hotbed for performance art and remaining so until the present day, the discipline could not have been further from the moderateness and muteness of social modernism. As such, it did not find official support and remained relegated to alternative spaces—artist-run spaces, private platforms, or the public space, with semi-autonomous institutes such as the SKC forming an exception. The artists presented in this chapter remained undeterred by these circumstances and instead made use of the “unofficialness” of the discipline, which allowed them to experiment with their individual choice of topics and place. Female performance artists and groups such as Katalin Ladik, Vlasta Delimar, PPF, Linije Sile, and Milica Mrđa, aided by the work of curators and theorists such as Milica Trailović, Dunja Blažević, or Biljana Tomić, discovered the nascent discipline in particular as a field that allowed them to work with what continued to be contained tightly by a sociopolitical corset, decided about and instrumentalized: their own body, its desires, emotions, and its corporeality as perceived and articulated by its owners. Their works therefore carry implicit political weight since performing their body meant not only to reclaim it from external determinants but also to give it the visibility and weight that it had historically been denied. With their work, they shaped the discipline considerably and gave it impetus to establish itself as a significant part of the Yugoslav—and by extension international—art scene.

Bitef and the Emergence of Performance Art

A key moment in the development of performance art in Yugoslavia was the founding of *Bitef*, Belgrade’s annual international theater festival, in 1967. The mastermind behind *Bitef* was Kraljevo-born Mira Trailović, one of the

first female theater directors in Yugoslavia and a pioneer of neo-avant-garde practices. In 1956 Trailović, together with director and screenwriter Radoš Novaković and director Bojan Stupica, founded Atelje 212 in Belgrade, an alternative theater which became known for its avant-garde interpretations of plays by Sartre, Mrožek, Camus, Pinter, and Ionesco, among others.² Atelje 212 served as the main center of *Bitef* for the first twenty years and the experimental spirit and negation of traditional constraints regarding directing, acting, or staging that united the minds behind it left a strong imprint on the festival and its scope (Figure 2.1). *Bitef* initially focused on emerging and experimental theater practice of international scope but ultimately grew to explore related fields of the performing arts such as dance and performance art, as well. Jovan Čirilov, a playwright who collaborated with Trailović on programs and selections, described *Bitef*'s main criteria as innovation, experimentation, and provocation with a strong desire to challenge not only existing traditions of theater and performance but also those of social and cultural values in general.³ *Bitef*, therefore, became the most significant but also the most controversial theater festival in Yugoslavia. It exposed the local audience to neo-avant-gardist theater from all over the world, establishing Yugoslavia, and in particular Belgrade, as a “mecca” for contemporary theater, as curator, critic, and *Springer*-founder Georg Schöllhammer called it.⁴ At the same time, its radical scope elicited critical reactions from an audience used to the socialist modernist



FIGURE 2.1 Mira Trailović and Jovan Čirilov, 1983, Historical Archive Belgrade, image courtesy of the Historical Archive Belgrade.

forms of expression, which led to many controversies. As with the socialist government's general take on the arts, when it came to theater, as much as foreign and novel currents were invited on paper, in fact there remained no place for new and "untested" forms, which "bypass or diverge from national priorities." Much like shortly later the Student Cultural Center, *Bitef* was established as an "independent" organization by the government, tasked with "the basic concept of displaying new tendencies in the field of stage expression and dramatic creativity" and its organizers were granted relative autonomy with regard to decision-making. The idea behind *Bitef*, again, was to illustrate the openness, tolerance, and internationalism of the Titoist leadership and no restraints were put on the director and organizers except that the figure and name of Tito could not be tarnished. The outcome, however, surpassed what the state had envisioned in terms of radicality and internationalism, leading to disputes with and a lack of support by the government. Nude bodies and unpleasant interactions on stage, formal experiments, social criticism, and narratives and formats promoting marginal and subcultural social groups were sometimes more than the audience—and the government—could handle.⁵

Under Trailović's, Novaković's, and Stupica's leadership *Bitef* presented a selection of international neo-avant-garde theater groups and directors such as Teatr Laboratorium from Wrocław, Bread and Puppet Theater, Andrei Serban and the La Mama Repertory Group, Tadeusz Kantor, Pina Bausch, the Glasgow Citizens Theatre, The Nouveau Theatre de Poche from Geneva, the Dramski Theater group from Skopje, Merce Cunningham & Dance Co., Odin teatret from Denmark, as well as Jerzy Grotowski and the Living Theater, and Richard Schechner and The Performance Group from the United States. Plays ranged from classical (Brecht's *Antigone*, Dürrenmatt's *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*, and Shakespeare's *King Lear*) to contemporary (Romain Weingarten's *l'été*, Olwen Wymark's *Triple Picture*, and Robert Wilson's *A Letter for Queen Victoria*). Over the first couple of years, *Bitef* also consistently broadened its geographic scope: among the groups invited for its 1974 iteration were the Kargahe Namayeche Theater from Teheran, Theater Limited from Kampala, Uganda, Duro Ladipo Cultural Theatre International from Nigeria, Teatro Brasileiro from Bahia, Brazil, and Theatre Permanent from Tunisia.⁶ Accompanying the performances was an intense program of lectures, discussions, and workshops, which provided opportunity for exchange and critical discourse not only on the concept of theater and the performing arts but also on social and political issues of Yugoslavia in general.

One of *Bitef*'s most important side programs was *Bitef Fine Arts*, launched in 1968 and led by Biljana Tomić in collaboration with Irina Subotić and Ješa Denegri and, starting in 1971, Dunja Blažević. This program, which was since 1971 realized in collaboration with the SKC, comprised a range of activities ranging from performance to happenings and actions, lectures to exhibitions, all of which were executed in various locations and at quick

pace. Its main objectives, as formulated by Tomić, share several key aspects with the later *April Meetings*:

Since every kind of engagement in the domain of art and culture has a social and cultural function, I would like to posit that engaging in the organisation of BITEFs Fine Arts Programme as a non-festival, non-mercantile, and unofficial event, and on behalf of a new culture, new art, and a new kind of acting in art, whether finding a proper response from the public and official critics or not, does have its cultural and social relevance and justification at this time.⁷

Ana Vujanović, who has researched *Bitef* extensively, also points out the specificities of *Bitef Fine Arts*' programming and curating strategies. She identifies an "activist approach" with the organizers proposing programs in various formats, which create space for "socialisation as a connective tissue, rather than reducing the programmes to a handful of exhibitons." What's more, *Bitef Fine Arts* followed the premises of "acritical criticism," meaning that criticism does not mean the judgment of art works but rather seeking to engage actively with the art scene as a public cultural practice.⁸ Among the programs of *Bitef Fine Arts* were performances by, for example, Zoran Popović, exhibitions of conceptual art and land art by Germano Celant (1970), Želko Košević's *Action TOTAL* (1970), experimental films by Franco Vaccari (1968), video films by Gerry Schum (1972), as well as presentations of visual and concrete poetry.⁹ With its inclusive range and international scope *Bitef* and *Bitef Fine Arts* in a unique way provided radical stimuli not only to Belgrade's (and by extension the Yugoslav) theater scene but to the art scene at large, creating new impulses to contemporary artistic practice and solidifying artistic explorations of performative practice. It contributed to the SKC embracing performance art early on as an important discipline, which became manifest in a range of performances hosted by artists at the SKC—notably Slobodan Era Milivojević's 1971 *Snimanje umetnika* (Taping of the Artist), a performance for which he taped Marina Abramović to a table at the SKC, Zoran Popović's *Axioms* (1973) or Marina Abramović's *Rhythm* series (1973–4) and performance art was featured prominently in the *April Meetings* as well. In 1978 Blažević and Tomić even organized a festival dedicated exclusively to performance art: *The International Performance Meeting*. The festival, which in part followed the *International Performance Festival* in Vienna (April 20–30, 1978) but also included artists not represented in Austria, brought together artists and critics engaged in performance art and related disciplines for a critical and theoretical negotiation of the discipline. As with the *April Meetings*, the performance festival established a dialogue between various artistic disciplines, thus generating a broad and complex concept of performance art and anticipating many of the questions that occupied performance artists and scholars in the succeeding decades such as

disciplinary boundaries, questions of authorship, authenticity, materiality, and so forth.

The seven-day-long program was a mix of live performances such as Raša Todosijević's thought-provoking and funny *Was ist Kunst?* (What Is Art?), Jürgen Klauke's *The Harder They Come*, Giuseppe Chiari's *Gestures on Piano*, or Sanja Iveković's *Prvi Beogradski Performans* (First Belgrade Performance), her first (and only) performance in Belgrade (Figure 2.2). The piece was a comment on the gravity and weight that accompany visits by important political persons, probably even a direct reference to the cult around Yugoslavia's leader Tito. As the artist described: "I wanted my first contact with the Belgrade scene to be such a performance, to have this irony distance both to the place of exposure and to the work itself." During the work, of which little is known or preserved, Iveković entered sternly, wearing a coat, before starting to draw on the floor. She then began to dance in front of (and with, as photos show) the audience following a



FIGURE 2.2 *Sanja Iveković, Prvi Beogradski Performans, performance, Festival Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1978, Archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, image courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.*

strict choreography. Gradually, the “rigorous choreography, which I initially performed, [. . .] changed and eventually disappeared. So my circular movement slowed down; my behavior has become more and more relaxed, that is, as a performer, I slowly get lost in the audience and in the end, I completely disappear as a performer.”¹⁰ Iveković seems to aim at slowly dismantling the rigid choreography that accompanies public appearance of politicians, infusing it instead with the spontaneity of human interaction and the lightness of dance.

Other artists included with live or taped performances were Marina Abramović and Ulay, Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Bryan Kho, Valie Export, Radomir Damnjan Damnjanović, Simone Forti, Terry Fox, Joan Jonas, Jürgen Klauke, Bruce McLean, Hermann Nitsch, Luigi Ontani, Dennis Oppenheim, Charlemagne Palestine, Gina Pane, Vettor Pisani, Yvonne Rainer, Ulrike Rosenbach, Miša Savić, Helmut Schober, Dalibor Martinis, and Theater of Mistake. For critics, the SKC invited Edit de Ak, Ješa Denegri, A. B. Oliva, Francois Pluchart, Giancarlo Politi, Caroline Tisdall, Peter Weibel, Wies Smals, and Heidi Grundmann.¹¹ The *International Performance Art Festival* was unprecedented in Yugoslavia and a clear comment on the validity and importance of the discipline.

Katalin Ladik and Interdisciplinary Performance Work

Not far from Belgrade, in the small but vibrant town of Novi Sad, a young, beautiful actress decided to transgress the constraints of the classical theater stage and explore performing according to her own rules: Katalin Ladik. With her experimental combinations of visual poetry, poetry-performances, and collage-sound-poetry installations, she created an innovative interdisciplinary oeuvre that became unparalleled in the emerging field of performance art. What's more, Ladik used her practice for political commentary as well, investigating into issues of female identity and experience at a time when only few artists aligned themselves with feminist thought. Ladik herself did not see her work in any feminist context either, but given the undeniable politicalness of her work, Miško Šuvaković's characterization of Ladik as a “pioneer of women's actionism” seems fitting.¹²

Ladik was born in a Hungarian family in Novi Sad in the Vojvodina region of Serbia during the chaos of the war in 1942. Her bilingual education and bicultural background, as well as her various experiences with the theater stage, radio, television, and as a singer in many ways, influenced Ladik's artistic practice, which is characterized by a great variety ranging from poetry to visual poetry, conceptual works, collage, sound, to performance art. From 1973 to its dissolution in 1976, Ladik worked with the Bosch+Bosch group from the Yugoslav-Hungarian border town of Subotica.¹³

During the 1960s, the artist had begun writing experimental poetry, often with surreal and erotic components, yet soon began to test and expand the medium's boundaries. Not satisfied with the one-dimensionality of the written word, she began researching into the phonetic and visual possibilities of poetry, experimenting with various sensory dimensions to stretch the concept of poetry. Her first book of poems, *Ballad of the Silver Bicycle*, published in 1969, was accompanied by a gramophone recording of Ladik's phonic interpretation of four of the poems in the book, adding a vocal component to the written word. Already with an eye set on performative practice, Ladik wrote many of her early poems in the form of dialogues, which allowed them to be transformed into an interactive practice. In addition, she greatly emphasized the visual component of her written texts so that content and form would remain equal. Ladik soon expanded her practice to include sound components, bodily activity, and the surrounding space as well, merging visual and sound poetry with performative practice. In works such as *Ólomöntes* (Lead Molding), 1970, which she did for Novi Sad's Television RTV 1, Ladik, for example, recited her poems utilizing both her voice and her body, combining dance-like elements with drawings and text and adding musical instruments such as a bagpipe and drums as well as recordings of her voice.¹⁴ The use of the instruments was for Ladik closely related to her own body, and in fact, she frequently used her own body to produce sound: "I intentionally used movement to express not only emotions, but—just like an actual instrument would, my body was emitting [. . .] sound."¹⁵ This connection between her body and her instruments is concretized also, for example, by Ladik's use of her own hair, on which she played with a bow.

At the fourth *April Meeting* at the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade, Ladik presented *Phonopoetry*, an innovative poetry-recital-sound-environment-visual collage. Together with a recital of her poems, Ladik had chosen a series of images that she found inspirational for her poems and collaged them in the patterns of a *Burda* fashion magazine and the instructions for a half-stitch embroidery technique. Accompanying those visual elements, Ladik had composed highly unusual scores, which were played in the room. The combination of scores with collage elements became a recurring practice of Ladik's with the artist frequently using patterns and craft techniques such as embroidery as visual references resembling a form of visual poetry. What's more, the artist was interested in using them to "decorate" the sound and word component of poetry. Patterns, decorations, and the way they are formed occupied Ladik on a conceptual level as well: "Beauty appears as a result on the surface, on the frontside of the work, but the joy of creation occurs on the back side, on the reverse of the material. Energy, free from restraint, is exposed and prevails. Without obeying the rules, it turns into joy and pain. That cannot be seen on the beautiful, i.e. the front side, only on the 'wrong' side, i.e. the back of the artwork," explains Ladik.¹⁶ Works like *Phonopoetry* and *Ólomöntes* merge experimental and

visual poetry with performance, therein constituting an entirely novel form of artistic expression. Ladik described the works as follows: "Recently I realized these visual actions, while in previous years I only composed texts for interpretation. Accessible texts. Now the understandable words are missing. So far they served only as phonetic basis, but did not have other meanings." She sees the various elements of her poetic-performative practice as potentially autonomous yet acknowledges an increasing complexity when shown or acted out together: "These works can be exhibited as autonomous works, while when I integrate them with the singing or sound, they become a more complex structure. [. . .] Of course also the phonic part can survive without visual part. So these can be considered as two self-sufficient system."¹⁷

Several of Ladik's works testify to the artist's preoccupations with issues of female reality and objectification, gender roles and expectations. Her articulation of sexuality therein often remains ambiguous. In her *Follow Me into the Mythology*, Ladik writes: "I am a two-gendered being: lying. Therefore sincere. I am a fruit of self-torture, that is of self-love." Queerness, bisexuality, or androgyny, which this poem invokes, put into question traditional understandings of gender and sexuality and preempts a development in feminist thought that would not surface more broadly until the 1980s. Her challenge of stereotypical notions of gender is rooted in Ladik's personal background, with the artist recounting a pre-gender, pre-sexual wholeness that she experienced as a child. Her parents did not reinforce any gender-specific traits and behavior and it was therefore not until her adolescence that social expectations and norms made her define herself as a woman and dress and act accordingly:

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 became prohibited. [. . .] It was this 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.¹⁸

It is therefore not surprising that Ladik remained critical of her "role" as a woman and the burden it comes with socially and professionally. In her more performative works from the 1970s forward her body becomes her main tool to challenge representational stereotypes and behavioral norms. According to Ladik, the next logical step after experimental poetry and achieving freedom in language would now be to free her own body and test whether she would be able to achieve the same freedom in social interactions and society as well.¹⁹

Not only from her experience as an actress but also as the sole female member of Bosch+Bosch and generally as a female artist in the patriarchal structure of Novi Sad's (and by extension Yugoslavia's) cultural scene, Ladik

found herself exposed to male-dominated spheres. In her words, Novi Sad was a place where “his majesty the male chauvinist ruled.” As a female artist she had to face many obstacles, in both her personal and professional relationships. She recalls:

I performed my first happening in Budapest in 1968, invited by their avantgarde artists. This encounter was fateful both for my work and my private relationships. My husband posed an ultimatum—either/or, he did not want me to go. I was insulted as a woman. I am not against marriage or living together, but I am against hypocrisy. I chose the avantgarde.

Ladik also felt that she was being reduced to her gender and looks, which came at a high cost for her:

Public, beautiful, and erotic woman becomes a sexual target, object, and idol. I am under constant attacks of love letters and phone calls. This myth, that I both wanted and didn’t want, is a rather heavy weight to carry around. It drives me into solitude I can not socialize normally, all my relationships are viewed through this lens. If I am with men, and I am implicated with anyone I’m seen with in the street, then I become a sex symbol.²⁰

Similarly, she remembers how difficult her job as an actress in the Hungarian Drama Group was, where she—despite having ample working experience—remained one of the lowest-paid members and passed over in raise negotiations. Even worse, she felt success was begrudged to her by her male peers when she acted in a play written specifically for her by Otto Tolnai:

Instead of everyone being happy—the house is full, and I am punished. Again the male chauvinism, frustrated chauvinism . . . I am being accused of privatizing the theatre: the text was written for me, and such a great artist came especially for me to stage it at his own expense. I am the only artist with such a long work experience who doesn’t own an apartment and, even worse, I can’t even think to apply for housing, because I would be refused. So, I live with my eighteen year old son in a 16 m² of a slum.²¹

As an actress and an artist in a supposedly equal socialist environment Ladik experienced many contradictions, which marked her development. Owing to her acting and her physical appearance, Ladik was frequently featured in popular magazines, TV interviews, and newspaper articles, often stylized as an erotic object of desire. However, when Ladik posed nude on her own terms as for the magazine *Start* in 1970 or undressing for one of her performances at Atelje 212, she was expelled from the League of Communist for “violating the acts of the Statute of the League of Communists of Vojvodina addressing the moral image of the members of the League of Communists.”²²

This in a way is emblematic for the socialist government's treatment of the "Women's Question." While the Yugoslav constitution contained progressive laws aimed at guaranteeing gender equality, it at the same time stripped them of the opportunity to articulate emancipation on their own terms. As yet another strategic move, the *Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena* (KDAŽ; Conference for the Social Activity of Women), symbolically carrying the legacy of the AFŽ, was founded as an official women's organization, yet this state-sanctioned feminist organization not only merely reiterated the government's doctrine that the status of women had to be regarded as inseparable from class and labor but was in fact used to render independent feminism obsolete. As Sabrina P. Ramet points out, the question of gender relations and women's rights did not enjoy autonomous status but, basically like any other political and cultural issue, remained tied to the program of the LCY and was debated mostly within the discursive borders of Marxist theory. Therefore, "if the issue lacked any autonomous status, then it could not be considered legitimate to organize autonomous bodies or activities to promote gender equality."²³ Overall, traditional gender roles and expectations in socialist Yugoslavia remained prevalent—"[e]verything we are looking for," wrote Vida Tomšić, a former partiskanka and politician, in 1948, "[is] beauty, joy and diversity. It is necessary to teach women how to dress attractively, how to run their households, and how to do it quickly."²⁴

With this in mind, the radicality of Ladik's work becomes even clearer. Already in 1970, Ladik had introduced her nude body into her performative work, namely in a performance called *UFO Party*, which she initially performed at an event called *UFO* that was organized by Tamás Szentjóbby in Budapest. Later, she performed the work also at Novi Sad's Tribina mladih. In this work, which was a collaboration with Jenő Balaskó, Ladik incorporated ritualistic and shamanistic elements, wearing only a bearskin, lighting candles and performing to the sound of bagpipes (Figure 2.3). This moment marked the first time that a female exposed her own body in an artistic context to an audience in the patriarchal Hungarian society. Not surprisingly, the criticism from the media and general public was harsh (more so in Hungary than the more liberal Vojvodina) and Ladik's work dismissed as "hypocritical vulgar rhetoric."²⁵ The same year, Ladik continued this string of artistic explorations with works such as *Vabljenje* or *Incantation*, works that similarly operated with folkloristic elements and shamanistic aspects and explored transgressions between various layers of sensuality and forms of expression ranging from the ancient past to the present.

Possibly owing to these experiences, Ladik's approach to gender politics became even more explicit during the 1970s. Her best-known work, *Black Shave Poem*, for example, comments on gender-specific roles and expectations. *Black Shave Poem*, initially created in 1978 at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb but performed several times both publicly



FIGURE 2.3 *Katalin Ladik, UFO Party, performance, Tribina mladih, Novi Sad, 1970* © Katalin Ladik, image courtesy acb Gallery and Katalin Ladik.

and in private, starts with the artist showing herself dressed in several layers of clothes, some of which are embellished with lace. She then starts removing her clothes to reveal a black body suit over which she wears white undergarments. After a while of posing, the artist shyly removes the

underwear and proceeds to apply shaving foam to her face and armpits before beginning to “shaving” both her body and face. *Black Shave Poem* is a rather straightforward and almost universally understandable comment on beauty standards and femininity, which is probably also why the work, contrary to other, more idiosyncratic and complex works, has gained comparably widespread recognition—and has frequently been labeled “feminist.” However, more than referencing the expectations women face with regard to their outer appearance and its improvement, the work also asks larger questions about normative gender and sexuality, much in line with Ladik’s interest in the androgynous. The shaving of the “anonymous” body, devoid of signs of sensuality and sexuality under its black cover, as well as the artist’s clearly female face then functions as a gesture toward the abolishment of gender roles and norms altogether with the artist blending identifying elements of male, female, sexualized, and agamic. Emese Kürti also situated the origins of *Black Shave Poem*, which she wittily describes as an “anti-striptease” to the negative press and reactions Ladik had received for her performative work such as *UFO Party* or *Vabljenje*, where her nude body had functioned as a core element:

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. [...] Though the motif of undressing was still present, it turned into parody in Ladik’s critical revision, a parody of expectation and the conventional 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 give, saying, “this one’s for you, and for me.”²⁶

Ladik’s 1979 performance *The Screaming Hole* is another interesting example. For this work, which she produced for the Tribina mladih in Novi Sad, Ladik created a space using paper. Inside, she compiled a chair, a table, a hotplate, pans, and pots and a radio, among others. She then proceeded to prepare food, an activity that the audience could smell and hear, but not see, as the artist remained hidden from their eye behind the paper walls. While doing so, the artist again wore white underwear over a black bodysuit and again “shaved” her face and armpits. Ultimately, visitors started to open the walls, revealing the artist and her mundane and very domestic activities inside. In some instances, as photographs show, Ladik engaged with the people on the other side of the wall by sharing a salty stick, for example. Photographs also show the artist pressing her face against a plate of glass, a strategy that she had used the same year in collaboration with Bogdanka Poznanović in *Poemim* (see page 89) and during a live performance of the work at the Fiatal Művészek Klubja in Budapest. *The Screaming Hole* can be understood as a comment on the alignment of women with the domestic space and the role of the caregiver and nurturer, an alignment that, despite emancipatory measures of the socialist government, prevailed in Yugoslav

culture. The artist constructs a division between public (audience and surrounding space) and private (her paper structure) and positions herself—as a woman—inside the latter. By staging this performance at a cultural institution, this separation can also be transferred to female artistic practice in a cultural climate where women are generally not taken seriously as creative minds and creators but much rather are confined to their role as the object of study, the model, or the muse. The title of the work adds a verbal dimension to Ladik's challenging of these normative understandings, implicating that it makes her want to scream out of frustration or, also, that one must indeed scream in order to be heard.

Also in 1979, Ladik created a series of performative double photographs titled *Ego-Alter Ego—Peter Below*, which combine elements from her earlier para-ritualistic performance works with her investigation of normative sexuality and power relations. One image pair titled *Ego-Alter Ego* shows the shadow of a female human figure (presumably the artist) on a rugged ground of pebbles and cracked stones. It is juxtaposed with an image of the rugged ground only, which emphasizes the notion of physical absence. The double image *Androgin und Zeus* has the almost exact picture to the left except with the figure's arm extended, a scissor on the ground and a tiny inscription "Alter Ego" etched into the stone. The image on the right shows a bearded man with a whitened face. The third one, also a double image titled *Die Androgyne Existenz im Schatten seines Alter Ego* (The Androgynous Existence in the shadow of its Alter Ego), has the bearded man lying naked on his back on the ground with the shadow of the woman, now holding a camera, partly covering his body. The left image features the symbol for female, while the right holds the one for male. This work is open to a myriad of interpretations, yet the distinction of the shadow body as female with the physical presence being male suggests a comment on gender and gender relations. The first image can be interpreted as women being a mere shadow of themselves in society, yet the overlay of the shadow with the ground also roots them firmly within the very essence of the world: nature. Ultimately, it seems that the female presence, as ephemeral and fleeting as it might be, imposes itself on the male, who is lying on the ground in passivity. The caption identifies the male figure as Androgynous Existence, much in contrast to the very male appearance of the man with his chest hair, scruffy beard and exposed penis, while the shadowy female figure becomes the Alter Ego (Figures 2.4a; 2.4b). Here, Šuvaković's observation of Ladik investigating into various intersections and "in-betweens" of gender and sexuality becomes valid again when the artist crisscrosses the categories of male and female, power, and passiveness, physical and psychological existence. And in fact Ladik has often stated her dissatisfaction with gender divisions and her desire to break away from gender roles: "I have been obsessed for a long time with the myth of the androgynous, Greek mythological creatures of two sexes, and many of my poems bear this mark. I have often regretted being born a woman, and

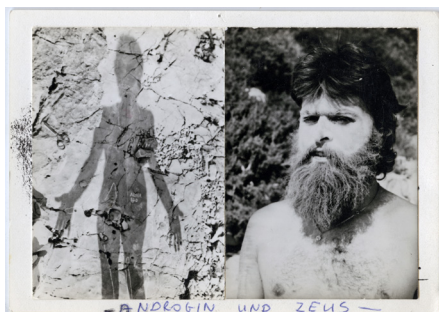


FIGURE 2.4a Katalin Ladik, Ego-Alter Ego—Peter Below (Androgin and Zeus), photograph, 1979 © Katalin Ladik, image courtesy acb Gallery and Katalin Ladik.

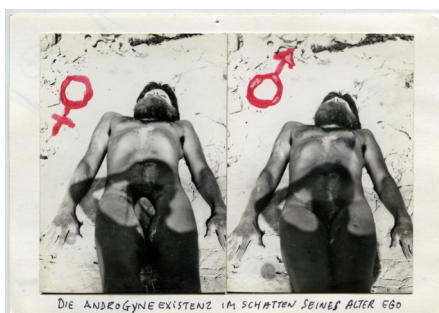


FIGURE 2.4b Katalin Ladik, Ego-Alter Ego—Peter Below (Die Androgyne Existenz im Schatten seines Alter Ego), photograph, 1979 © Katalin Ladik, image courtesy acb Gallery and Katalin Ladik.

not androgynous or male. Perhaps this comes from dissatisfaction with the distasteful and subordinate role of the woman in the society.”²⁷

Katalin Ladik’s works reflect on her personal experiences—with patriarchal structures, with her experience as an actress, where her beauty made her an object of desire for spectators, as well as the art scene, which remained largely male-dominated. Their politicalness, however, coincides with theoretical criticism of these issues that had just started to emerge in Yugoslavia’s academic circles. As such, they have a much larger resonance, and can be interpreted as a reflection on the general situation in Yugoslav society, which, despite the socialist government’s efforts for gender equality in the workforce or education, continued to adhere to patriarchal principles. In that sense, Dubravka Djurić had described Ladik as existing

on the border-line between different cultures [. . .] between art defined as a universal value, but actually marked by male gender, and art she created as an artist who played on the differences (feminine) and sameness (by

inscribing into the dominant discourse of male vanguard formation, thus canceling out the differences). She crosses the borderline assigned to femininity in the socialist culture. The ideological discourses of socialist society proclaimed the equality of women. However, the culture of self-managing socialism was not “her”, but predominantly “his” domain.²⁸

Milica Mrđa and the Reclaiming of the Female Body

Milica Mrđa (Kuzmanov) became active in Serbia slightly after Katalin Ladik, in the 1980s. Despite sharing some aspects with Ladik, as for example the focus on the body as artistic medium and an interest in ritualistic practice, Mrđa’s practice distinguished itself through her choice of ancient places as performance spaces and a reduced performative practice, drawing mainly from her body and her emotional relation to the surrounding space. While many of the performances that had been created in the previous decades had carried clear political commentary and were concerned with radicality and the overcoming of institutional boundaries, Mrđa sought to (re-)establish a connection to the historic core of her native Serbia while reclaiming her own body. Mrđa, who was born in Ruma (Serbia) in 1960 and passed away in 2021, graduated from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad in 1983, where she studied under Bogdanka Poznanović, before pursuing her postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade until 1987. Mrđa initially worked in more traditional artistic media such as painting, sculpture, and drawing but already during her student years started to explore performative installations, performance, and actions as media of expression as well. During the 1980s and 1990s, Mrđa, much like Katalin Ladik, was active in Novi Sad and the Vojvodina region and the two artists, in fact, share a number of interests and concerns. As Nebojša Milenković, curator of the 2016 exhibition *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!* (Art is the expression of nerves!) at the Novi Sad Museum of Contemporary Art, points out: “Both of them, as personalities and artists, were strong women in an extremely traditional [. . .] and unfavorable environment.” Both women met the seriousness of the art scene with unconventional, sometimes ludicrous and certainly highly subversive and experimental artistic practices. And even though they greatly shaped the local art scene with their innovative work, both artists, as Milenković observes, continue to be considered “isolated incidents” with their works being talked about “most often in a whisper.”²⁹ Certainly, this lack of recognition can be attributed to the non-conformity of their practice, which refuses to follow the given parameters of the art and cultural world, as well as them being women in a culture that continued to be dominated by men.



FIGURE 2.5 Milica Mrđa, Instalacija sa crvenim trakama, *performance*, Novi Sad, 1983.

And both of them made their bodies the main medium of their creative work, which, as was shown earlier in this chapter for Ladik, remained a point of contestation not only for the general public but also some of their peers. The two women were up against a patriarchal culture that continued to dictate not only gender roles and social relations but also the representational codes for the female body in particular. Ultimately, both of them left Novi Sad—Ladik for Budapest already in 1992, and Mrđa in 2001 for the Bosnian town of Bosanski Petrovac.

Mrđa's transition from painter-sculptor to performer was gradual. Initially, the artist continued to rely on painting as her starting point while experimenting with expanding the traditional framework of the canvas into space. In 1983, for example, she created *Instalacija sa crvenim trakama* (Installation with red stripes) at the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad. For this work the artist painted paper strips with red, pink, yellow, and blue, creating geometrical patterns. As she created the paper bands she affixed them to the old stone wall of the fortress and the surrounding grass in a zig-zag pattern (Figure 2.5). Photographs of the work show her posing against the bands and fortress wall in a dark blue dress, balancing on one foot with her arms spread out in a wide V. Painting, performance, and installation merge in this work into one, unique form of expression, with which Mrđa tests and negates the boundaries between artistic disciplines and artistic and mundane spaces. It marked the beginning of a series of similar works called *Slike—trake* (Paintings-stripes), which the artist created between 1983 and 1984, which were then followed by *Slike ploče* (Paintings-boards, 1984–5), *Slike zastave* (Paintings-flags, 1986–8), and finally *Slike—kože* (Paintings-skins) in 1994. In her *Slike zastave*, executed in the Serbian city of Sirmium, a former capital of the Roman Empire during the Tetrarchy, the artist, working directly on the ground, creates a surface of white paint with her hands, to which she glues small amulet-shaped objects that she kneads out of clay. These works are acts of introspection, made by an artist for whom art is something deeply personal. She cautiously explores the themes and process of artistic creation, starting from painting and moving on to her body. She does so in a ritualistic way, inserting herself fully into her practice and repeating her gestures until she has exhausted them. The “final” product is secondary.

Mrđa consciously chose places with strong prehistory and strove to operate within the energies of the space that she attempts to synergize with the energies of her own body and her creativity. Utilizing her body as a “shamanistic (artistic) medium [. . .] Milica Mrđa appears as a reader and decipherer of traces, a mediator between the worlds of the conscious and the unconscious, the sensual and the rational.”³⁰

Mrđa cites, in particular, one experience as being crucial for becoming a full performer. In 1988 she attended the art colony in Sićevo, where she met Nina Popov, a fellow artist who had already started doing performance and with whom she had extensive discussions. The participants at some point were asked to paint a nearby gorge, a majestic setting with the Nišava river at its bottom and giant rock formations around, filled with a rich flora and fauna. For Mrđa, capturing all the elements and sensual components of the gorge on a canvas seemed impossible:

It was then that I realized that in fact it was impossible to show that gorge on canvas, regardless of whether we try to do it in a realistic or impressionistic way. Our times require more than a framed canvas, we are slowly overcoming it and it does not satisfy us any longer. I feel limited by the frame, even if I had six kilometers of canvas it would not be enough for me, that's how long that gorge is, to express all the emotions, the strength of the stone, water and gorges, the clash of East and West.

Therefore, Mrđa decided to perform the gorge, placing herself in it and creating an ambience of music and singing which would periodically be broken up through the sounds of the river: "classical painting does not mean anything to me anymore. Classical painting or graphic fail to give us that feeling of fullness, regardless of whether they are technically brought to perfection. Now, at this time, we can no longer admire veristic portraits, but only a complex synthesis of image, sound and movement."³¹

Over the course of the next years, she continued to strip away elements of painting, sculpture, or installation, adopting a clearer performative stance and acquiring a full identification with her body as artistic medium. In 1988, for example, she created *Vatre* (Fire), again choosing the Petrovaradin Fortress as her stage. Dressed in white with her hair down, she glued large sheets of white paper to the ancient stone wall of the fortress. She then took buckets of paint and, utilizing her hands, feet, as well as parts of her upper body, walked along the wall, rubbing, smearing, dotting, and dripping the paint over the white surface, consistently getting faster and more intense in her quest to suspend her conscious and reach a state of subconsciousness. The performance, described by Milenković as "ritual self-manifestation," develops spontaneously with the artist drawing as much from her own energy as from the locality she is in and the audience in attendance. As she states: "I do not have any theoretical writings, as some artists do, in terms of critical depth; to me this need arises spontaneously at moments when I embrace the energy and when I am truly 'burning'."³²

Guiding the artist in those early works were investigations into complex interrelations between artist-art-society, myth-reality, and consciousness-subconsciousness. She sought to overcome the binaries embedded in art

as well as in society and culture at large. Art, then, is no longer a trace of culture, but a means of overcoming it, a kind of stepping beyond the confines of contemporary culture and approaching instead the intuitive, the instinctive, the mythic, and the pre-cultural as well as the personal and collective unconscious. These interests were furthered by the artist's research into ancient cultures, shamanism, and non-Western belief systems and art forms such as Zen Buddhism or haiku poetry. To immerse herself fully into these ancient histories and experience them not only rationally but corporeally, the artist traveled, among others, to Athens and Delphi during the mid-1980s. With her own body and its physical and psychological disposition being at the core of these researches, it was only the logical next step to establish it as the center of her work. Symbolic and mythical elements, folklore, the archetypal, the alchemical, and the shamanic become crucial elements in her art.

In 1989, Mrđa created a performance incorporating video projections: *Telo, pigment, voda* (Body, pigment, water). She initially chose the cave of Beli Majdan near the fifteenth-century Rakovac in the Fruška Gora area of Serbia but restaged the performance shortly later at the Gallery of Zagreb's Student Cultural Center. For the performance, the artist covered her otherwise nude body with animal skins and incorporated a variety of symbols and symbolic elements such as a circle in which the artist performed, signs fending off spells, cosmic ciphers, an altar, a well signifying the source of life, and ritual vessels filled with milk and blood. In addition, she utilized video recordings of previous performances at Sirmium, the Čelarevo tombs, and the Petrovaradin Fortress. The performance unfolded along a ritualistic trajectory emphasizing the exchange of energy in the space and culminating with the artist's symbolic (self-)sacrifice. The work is underlined with erotic nuances with repetitive body movement, ritual songs and screams that drove the artist at times into states of ecstasy. Pushing herself to her mental and physical limits, the artist at one point eats blood-soaked bread. Through the ritualistic elements and by forcing her body into the strongest of tensions, the artist reaches an orgasmic state with the body in ecstasy acting as a reference to (female) sexuality and fertility. At that point, however, her bodily presence is "substituted" by the images of recording lens. As Zoran Đerić, who attended the performance, remembers:

The world of symbolic relations has been established, her action remained consistently ritual, and the place that she selected and made sacred—became a ritual place, a shrine. In mediating between people, nature and the divine, she used singing, dancing and mimicking actions. . . . At the moment when the ritual action stops, when blood and milk are spilled, when bread is made and the artist rests under the stone altar, then body language is replaced by a video projection which comes from four



FIGURE 2.6 Milica Mrđa, *Obredi tela i zemlje*, performance, Beli Majdan cave Fruška Gora, 1990, collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad, image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad.

monitors arranged outside the mystical circle. This is how to step over from the mythical world into the modern world, from symbolic death into eternal life.³³

More performances of a similar nature followed throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s and many of them such as *Put sunčevog semena* (The Path of the Sun Seed), *Granica* (Frontier), or *Obredi tela i zemlje* (The Rituals of the Body and the Earth) equally took place in historical locations such as the Petrovaradin Fortress or the caves at Fruška Gora. Of the latter, beautiful photographs remain which show the artist, covered in fur, bending against the rough stone surface, creating thought-provoking contradictions between her soft body, the structure of her dark hair and the rugged stones of the cave (Figure 2.6). Mrđa also drew inspirations from fields other than ancient histories and cultures: *Granica* was a work inspired by the American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. In this work, the topics of death, eroticism, and sexuality became even more pronounced. Again, the artist's body played the central role, being put under considerable strain by the artist. Yet it is precisely through physical and mental exhaustion, her renunciation and sacrifice of passion through her



FIGURE 2.7 Milica Mrđa, *Obredi tela i zemlje*, performance, Beli Majdan cave Fruška Gora, 1990, collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad, image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad.

performative actions, her pushing herself to face the nothingness of death that life-sustaining sexuality and sensuality became manifest:

It was suffering and battle, a puzzle and a problem regarding, among other things, a female body. The body as such opened up as a wide thematic field; accompanied by strong music, it suggested unreality. Passion exploded openly, confusing and provoking. And no matter to what extent the erotic element was present in this game-metaphor, at the same time this was a clear attempt to resist the “cunning deceit” of a culture that reduces women to silence and anatomy . . . This game which combined poetry, primary sexual impulses and suffering resulting from sacrificing [*sic*], is a kind of definition of freedom, the mood of the body, thirst for reclamation, coping with the end of nothingness and false morality. The remaining impression was the one of rulling [*sic*] and losing, of joy of playing with words. Body that is exhausted, body that shocks itself, suddenly changing the internal state of being, all of this met at an unusual place, in the dark realm of history.³⁴

Mrđa's introspective use of her body in her quest to overcome cultural norms and constraints positions her as a political artist (Figure 2.7). As Nebojša Milenković describes:

The unchanging constant of Milica Mrđa's artistic actions and performances is her body: body as an organism, body as a medium, body in agony, sexual, political, memory, polemical, poetic, sensitive, vulnerable, adaptive, traumatic, ecstatic, public, profane, sacred, mythical, performative, metaphorical, sculptural [. . .], ritual, manipulative, (auto-) biographical [. . .]. The female body as a means of examining borders and mapping (complex) identities of a society in which dealing with culture [. . .] is still considered a male privilege.³⁵

In Mrđa's work, the female body is presented and performed from deep within her own emotional and physical landscape—without intervention by culture, politics, or society. The body in her work refuses to follow any codifications with the artist pursuing a purely personal investigation of its conditions. Her performances are solely aimed at performing an individual identity, her personal state of mind and emotions, beyond what her surroundings dictate, a goal that sets the artist apart from many other alternative artists of the time, who respond precisely to their environment. In doing so, she lent an entirely new facet to the discipline of performance art and certainly remains unique with her oeuvre.

PPF, Linije Sile, and the Commodified Female Body

While Milica Mrđa's and at times also Katalin Ladik's works are characterized by a deeply personal and at times introspective consideration of the artists' bodies, other women explored performance art as a tool to critically negotiate larger social and political topics. Under the impact of rising consumer culture during the 1980s, it was especially beauty ideals and women's representation in the media with its reiteration of basic gender stereotypes that emerged as themes—contextualized against the political situation of the decade. Similarly, the commodification of the female body and female sexuality were disrupted by female performers.

While the mediascape in Yugoslavia had been rather uniform up until the 1970s and utilized by the government for political messages of a unified national community and socialist ideals, the broadcasting landscape broadened and diversified during the 1980s, featuring a number of both regional and foreign programs. Commercial and consumerist content was well on the rise, formulating messages on women's ideals, desires, and fantasies and reinforcing the objectification and sexualization of women.

It was, in particular, the regressive tendencies of re-relegating women to the domestic realm and forcing their appearance and behavior under male-dominated social control that became a point of contestation for many women. Not only newly appearing outlets but even established magazines such as *Svijet*, *Praktična žena*, *Bazar*, or *Nada*, which had focused on politics and women's equality during the previous decades, started to shift their attention to beauty and fashion and framed domestic labor as consumerist space.³⁶ Feminists such as Slovenian sociologist Maca Jogan took aim at these developments when she claimed that these kinds of publications are purely for "enjoying one's pleasure, killing time [and are] in essence conservative and patriarchal, [helping] to maintain women's historical isolation and partial sociability." In her observations, Jogan remained concerned with the effect the images and narratives have on women, in that they are being told to remain occupied with domestic work and the fulfillment of beauty expectations, which ultimately leads to them getting excluded from political and social issues. Equally, Neda Todorović researched into the effects of the women's press, accusing it of being based on patriarchally constructed notions of femininity and emerging from a conservative spirit. She especially criticized the superficiality with which women's issues and politics are treated, which to her showcase the state's refusal to eliminate women's oppression at large. What's more, she saw women as being depicted mostly as passive entities with the media—as an extension of a patriarchal agency—depriving them of a chance to articulate their own desires, needs, and pleasures. She called for a press that instead presented women as active and political subjects that do not confirm but instead challenge the patriarchal concept of femininity.³⁷

In Ljubljana, female-only theater group PPF—Podjetje za proizvodnjo fikcije se predstavlja (The Fiction Production Company)—and punk-art group Linije Sile (Lines of Force) both started to create works that countered gender expectations as they were reiterated in the media and visual culture, while expanding their criticism to the political sphere as well.

PPF was founded in 1983 by Tanja Lesničar-Pučko, Mojca Dreu, and Neva Faninger, with Seta Knop and Monika Skaberne joining slightly later. The group was active until 1989 and operated as part of Ljubljana's Student Cultural Center ŠKUC. Neither of the members came from a professional theater background but they were in fact students of the humanities, which allowed them to approach the field without any preconceived notions. Their approach was truly interdisciplinary, drawing from a variety of resources and media and intertwining elements from cabaret, circus, mime, video, film, and performance art. PPF sought to wrest theater from male dominance and the norms it brought with it, especially with regard to the status and representation of women. Their pieces aimed to interrogate the standardized ideals of women and the relationship between the genders, and they have



FIGURE 2.8 *Linije Sile, performance, ŠKUC Ljubljana, photograph by Barbara Borčič, year unconfirmed, courtesy ŠKUC Gallery Ljubljana.*

described their work as “women’s theatre because our performances radiate woman’s sensibility.” Referencing in particular the socialist landscape, they aimed to “constantly problematize the women’s question and thus provocatively play with the erotic.”³⁸ In their eclectic pieces such as *Podjete za proizvodnja fikcije se predstavlja* (The Fiction Production Company Presents Itself, 1983), *Ana v bazenu* (Ana in the Pool, 1985), or *Nekaj drugega* (Something Else, 1986) humor often served as their method of subversion. PPF mercilessly poked fun at Yugoslavia’s (male) authorities, parodied male and female stereotypes and mocked the commodification of the (sexualized) female body through consumerism. The group frequently took to the streets to stage impromptu pieces and interventions such as their 1985 *V izložbi* (In the shop window), for which the members installed themselves in the shop windows of clothing stores in downtown Ljubljana and performed several roles such as a shop mannequin and so on. Being keen on eliciting reactions from the audience, some of the women directly addressed and interacted with passersby, therewith breaking down the literal and metaphorical barriers shop windows created between reality and ideal, desire, and utopia. Needless to say, PPF productions were not recognized by the media since, for one, the group was not considered a “real” theater group because its members lacked any professional training but also, of course, because their pieces took aim at established political and social tropes.

Linije Sile was formed by Lidija Bernik, Tanja Lakovnik, Lela B. Njatin, and Aina Šmid in 1983. The group located itself at the intersection between performance art and fashion, taking aim at the cultivation of desire by consumer culture (Figure 2.8). Linije Sile was, in particular, interested in the construction of (female) identity through consumerist items such as clothing

and the shift of identity toward the realm of appearance and the visual. Their first performance, which bore the same name as the group, interrogated the function and ideological connotations of clothes in society. Members of the group chose a variety of clothes types such as fetish or military outfits to highlight the expectations and norms they were laden with. Not unlike their fellow Slovenians from the punk band Laibach, Linije Sile's use of 'anti-fashion' items such as uniforms also serves as a commentary on the performed totalitarian spectacle of the socialist government, which, however, at the time already had started to crumble—only to be replaced by ultranationalist politics in the near future. At times, Linije Sile combined these outfits with hyperbolic posing referencing visual cues from socialist realist depictions of mothers and wives, thus creating strong contradictions and confusions. In their 1984 piece *Hollywood*, on the other hand, they deliberately chose clothing not intended for everyday use as well as accessories from organic material to showcase on a runway. With the ironic glorification of fashion as a consumer spectacle, Linije Sile attempted to problematize fashion as a relevant field and critically examine its significance and meaning. Stylizing fashion, as its own independent entity, allowed the group to critically investigate into its meaning, for those wearing it and those perceiving the wearer. Aina Šmid highlighted the assumptions about class and personality that clothing evokes with the fashion industry suggesting a type of personality and background for an individual. Šmid also speaks to the possibility of creating identity through fashion—dressing as a way to adopt a certain (desired) identity.³⁹

Understanding clothing as a “gendered culture,” Linije Sile were especially interested in the role of women in consumer culture and critically observed in how far female identity and ideals of femininity become rearticulated through the endless visuals created by consumerism. With their works they aimed to mirror this society of spectacle while at the same time creating a critical distance. Often, as for example in the case of their 1985 *Gotika* (Gothic), they deliberately created references to their socialist history as well, therewith not only placing consumer culture in dialogue with socialist culture but also matching the various ideals of women in either against each other. In doing so, they emphasized the paradox multitude of expectations and ideals that women are subjected to—no matter what the political or cultural background.⁴⁰ Throughout their work, Linije Sile followed a punk aesthetic both with regard to the outfits chosen and the overall design and choreography of their shows. For the punk movement, which took a hold especially in Ljubljana during the early 1980s (see also Chapter 3), fashion had become an important way of expressing dissent, discordance, and individuality and a mode of resisting social standards, values, and hierarchies. Likewise, Linije Sile's “anti-fashion” complicates (dress) codes and asks larger questions about conformity and meaning. Jasmina Založnik's observation for the punk movement's overall impact on Slovenia at the time also fits the effects of Linije Sile's works: “Everything was wracked with

disturbing, unwanted elements, which were signified by the oppressed body politic, emphasizing the ‘not right and not quiet’ identities, and the existing but unarticulated inequalities (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.), for example: use of leather, ragged clothes, whips, exposing homosexual images, declaring the be ‘political lesbians’, etc.”⁴¹

Vlasta Delimar and the Liberation of Female Sexuality

Croatian artist Vlasta Delimar also made the female body and its codifications the central element of her works of the 1980s and did so in a very radical way. In her performances but also her photographs and collages, the artist foregrounded female sensuality and sexuality in its social and cultural context in a highly provocative manner. Delimar examined, from a very personal angle, the status of women as social and creative beings, that is in their multiple roles as housewives, mothers, artists, mistresses, and so forth. The artist was particularly interested in inquiring into the sensual dimensions of female existence, which introduces sexuality and pleasure as key themes of her art. She calls “sexuality and orgasm [the] strongest human sensations and the right to pleasure and sexual life [granted] as long as we exist [...]”⁴² With her choice of topics and her often provocative articulation in performance, Delimar frequently broke taboos related to the female body and its codification through stereotypical roles and expectations. Despite her works being easily understood as emancipatory statements, Delimar adamantly refrains from identifying as a feminist. She states that she never felt inferior to men in her environment but always equal, respected, and in an open dialogue with her male peers.⁴³

Delimar claims to see art as “universal,” not split into male or female, and pronouncedly states that she sees herself to not belong to any ideology, political way, or religion at all. On her website, she formulates her desire to “support human rights, freedom of individuality, respect of the different and ecology.” Throughout her career, Delimar refused to affiliate herself with any kind of identification through framework, negating being positioned into any structure, organization, or theory. She remains committed to being as autonomous and marginal as possible and not be commodified in any regard, therewith retaining a norm-free space in which she can develop her creativity and a form of artistic expression that is not burdened by any preconceived notion or expectation.

Delimar was born in Zagreb in 1956 but grew up largely in Koprivnica, about 100km northeast of the Croatian capital. Knowing she wanted to become an artist already at age thirteen, she returned to Zagreb after finishing school and graduated the Zagreb School of Applied Arts in

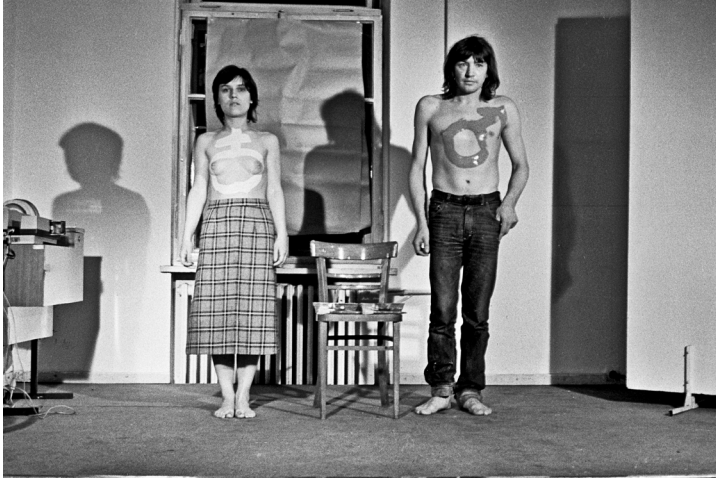


FIGURE 2.9 Vlasta Delimar, Željko Jerman, *Desimbolizacija*, performance, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1980, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, courtesy of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.

1977. However, formal education did not suit the artist, who viewed it as inadequate, conservative, and outdated. Delimar started to frequent Sanja Iveković's and Dalibor Martinis's Podroom space during her student years, where she got exposed to alternative modes of artistic creation and a variety of influences, which shaped her own practice and helped her shift it toward the experimentality and radicality she would become known for. She also met several artists of the Belgrade scene, including Raša Todosijević, Neša Paripović, and Zoran Popović, whose work deeply impressed her. During the late 1970s she became loosely affiliated with the Group of Six Authors (often also called Group of Six Artists), in particular Željko Jerman, with whom she collaborated on several occasions and who was her partner in life until 1985 as well. From her encounter with the Group of Six Authors, Delimar says: "[It] hallmarked my complete introduction into the world of art. Since then, never again have I 'laid my hands on a paintbrush.'" ⁴⁴ It was with Jerman that Delimar produced her first performance in 1979 at Podroom: *An Attempt at Identification*. A hand-written announcement outlined a recent change in plans: "The performance piece we intended to perform at the opening of the 'Youth Salon' will be performed at 'Podrum' [sic], 12 Mesnička Street, on Monday, 19 November 1979, at 8 pm." This announcement might reflect the artists' realization of the lack of widespread understanding of performance as a fairly novel form of art, which they rather relegated to an alternative space instead of the institutionalized context where it probably also had not been welcome. For the performance, Delimar and Jerman appeared nude before the audience with a white chair between them on which a can of paint were placed. They both repeatedly

painted the Serbo-Croatian word for “I”—*Ja*—on their chests before pressing their bodies together in an embrace, smearing the words and rendering them illegible. This procedure was repeated several times over the course of roughly twenty minutes. In 1980, they did a similar performance, *Desimbolizacija* (Desymbolization), which they performed first outdoors on the Croatian Island of Cres, then at the Srećna Galerija Belgrade, the Student Cultural Center Zagreb and lastly at the Gesamthochschule Kassel in 1982 (Figure 2.9). For the work, they painted their nude bodies pink (Delimar) and blue, respectively (Jerman), choosing the “typical” colors associated with female and male gender. They then embraced each other, mixing the two colors and symbolically breaking down the framework of definitions and descriptions attached to gender.

During these early years of her career Delimar started to consider her own body as the central medium of her artistic practice. While this is probably what makes her work most readily identifiable as feminist, the move in fact served the artist’s goal of pronounced “non-alignment” —as her rigid delimitation from any ideology or movement such as feminism. In making her own body the center of her work and negotiating it in a self-centered, at times almost exhibitionist way, she defined her position as an autonomous artist, separating herself from her peers as well as previous currents and



FIGURE 2.10 Vlasta Delimar, *Kurac Volim*, photo collage, 1980 © Vlasta Delimar, image courtesy of the artist.

their representatives. Delimar did her first solo performance in 1980 at the Zagreb Student Center Gallery. The piece, titled *Transformation of Personality (through Clothes, Make-Up and Hairdo)*, affirms her body as the central medium of her artistic practice. In the work, she explores the changes possible to her appearance through changing her clothes or hair or applying makeup. She did so by walking up and down a runway while going through various changes of costumes and altering her appearance. Photographs of the performance show her in dresses, various skirts and shirts, a bathing suit and so on.⁴⁵ Interpreting the “changing of clothes” rather drastically, Delimar eventually undresses completely, showing her nude body as the only true representation of one’s identity as opposed to the normative negation of the naked body as acceptable. As the artist states herself:

The body is the most natural and sincere medium an artist can use. Especially a body without any clothes. A naked body doesn’t lie. I’ve always been interested in what we are when we take our clothes off, because our naked body is our truest image. The reflections of our inner worlds manifest themselves on our bodies. Disquiet, shame, fear, joy—it all shows on a naked body. It’s a pure form, without social norms or connotations.⁴⁶

In her solo works, Delimar early on became interested in exploring the power and meaning of sexual pleasure and desire—in particular her own, as a woman. This led to the creation of works that are very direct and sexual as, for example, her 1981 *Vizuelni orgazam* (Visual Orgasm), a series of photographs depicting the artist’s head with an expression of sexual ecstasy on her face—presumably taken while climaxing. The photographs are black-and-white, yet the artist has accentuated her lips with red color. The same year, Delimar also produced *Fuj Beeee* and *Kurac s mašlicom* (Cock with a ribbon), collages in which the male sexual organ takes center stage. Instead of being depicted fully erect, however, the artist decides to embellish it with a rather cute looking blue lace ribbon or a pink flower, respectively. In 1980 she had created *Kurac Volim* (I love dick), a collage featuring a portrait photo of the artist affixed to paper. The artist looks longingly into the camera; her lips are colored a deep cherry red. Under the photograph we read “Kurac Volim,” a clear proclamation of her (hetero) sexuality. The seam of the paper, which seems to have been glued together haphazardly, therewith creating an uneven outline, is adorned with a patterned banderole. This decorative element, faintly resembling a stencil or embroidery and reminiscent of “typical female” handicraft, creates an interesting contradiction to the bold statement it holds (Figure 2.10). With this work, Delimar expresses—loudly and clearly—her own sensuality and sexuality, and unmistakably articulates her lust and desire regardless of barriers between public and personal, mundane, or artistic.⁴⁷

These works can be used to highlight the problematic contradictions between the socialist government's promise of granting women full equality in the labor market and social and political arenas yet their de-facto relegation to the private realm and the roles of mothers and housewives. As Dubravka Žarkov points out, "the only officially approved and recognized form of female sexuality [is] procreation. Within the family structure, the equation of the female procreative role with female sexuality effectively endorsed existing gender relations." Motherhood was still the main point of identification for women and remained synonymous with womanhood. The official policies endorsing emancipation did little to change this traditional concept:

The fact that socialism opened the public sphere to women and promoted the ideal of the working women did nothing to undermine the social significance of motherhood as the main, if not the only, expression of womanhood. These two socialist ideals—of working women and of the mother—were actually constructed upon a shared presumption of femininity as (re)productive: the female body contributing to the state and society by producing both the offspring and the industrial goods.⁴⁸

Delimar refused to align herself and her body with this dogma and her works, not unlike Ladik's, imbued the field of performance art in Yugoslavia with an undeniable politicalness from a female perspective.

During the early 1980s, Delimar created several works that followed *Kurac Volim* stylistically and thematically, among them her 1981 *Untitled*, which shows the artist laying under a male crotch, longingly looking at the penis. Her 1982 *Jebesh žensko dostojanstvo* (Fuck female dignity) is particularly direct, not only because of its provocative title but also because it shows a close-up of the artist's genitals, embroidered with decorative stitches onto a piece of pink lace. Her vaginal entrance is highlighted by a bright pink split in the paper. *Jebite Me* (Fuck me) shows the artist nude, sitting with her legs apart. Her genitals are covered by a small medallion featuring the depiction of a church and a golden cross is collaged between her breasts. In a crude manner, she has drawn fishnet stockings over her legs and a black pair of sunglasses over her eyes. Her background is sloppily colored with red paint, partly seeping onto her body. The picture is applied to a black piece of paper with a safety pin and the words "Jebite Me" are scribbled underneath. "Jebite me" can be read as an invitation but it also retains a certain ambiguity, with "Fuck Me" also serving as a sarcastic expression of frustration.

In the work, the references to the Catholic church, which are recurring throughout Delimar's early works, are overtly clear, pointing to the ultimate Catholic sin of fornication with all its various layers and references and prohibitions.⁴⁹ Certainly, one is led to the various inhibitions that the

Catholic church traditionally has put onto women and their bodies, maintaining a solid grip on women's lives, experiences, hopes, destinies, and their perception by others. However, we also can detect a specifically political remark in this critical pointer toward the church. Throughout Tito's Yugoslavia, religion had been a fraught issue with people being discouraged or even prohibited from celebrating their national heritage and/or religious affiliation in the president's quest for a unified Yugoslav identity. At the moment when Delimar created *Jebite Me*, this dogma was—like so many other aspects of socialist Yugoslavia—just about to falter when a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the government and disappointment with the socialist vision had triggered a return to religious and ethnic divisions.

The way that Delimar offers herself to the viewer, with her eyes covered and her background reddened, certainly also invokes notion of violence, which in fact is a recurring theme in Delimar's work. For her performance *Draga Vlasta* (Dear Vlasta), shown at the Galerija Dogadanja, Zagreb, in 1985, the artist placed herself in a pile of branchlets, which had been brought into the gallery. Wearing a torn pink dress covered in blood, a fishnet stocking on her left leg and black high heels, the artist lay motionless in the bushes for twenty-five minutes. Similarly, her later performance, *Vezana za drvo* (Tied to a Tree), also evokes physical violence with the artist performing in make-up imitating bruises. The presence of violence, often in relation to her sexuality, can be read as a comment on the too-frequent infractions executed on women attempting to embrace and live out their sexuality with men taking advantage to their own satisfaction. In the larger cultural and political context of Yugoslavia during the 1980s, it can also be understood as anticipating the violence against women that was on the rise and soon would become overwhelming in the ethnic conflicts and finally the wars.⁵⁰ Ultimately, it speaks to us of the difficult relationship between women articulating and living their own desires and how quickly those are taken advantage of (or confused with) those of their male counterparts.

Vlasta Delimar's works are certainly provocative—not only by the standards of 1980s Yugoslavia but also the present as well, and the artist is very well aware: asked in 2020 what the biggest taboo in Croatian society is in her opinion, she responded without hesitation: "The nude body."⁵¹ Delimar uses the female body as her central theme, formulating its desires and right to pleasure in a social climate that might have been progressive when it came to women's rights, but remained as oppressive and controlling as any other where it concerns women taking agency over their own bodies and needs. This, of course, caused her difficulties and does so until the present day. As Jasmina Tumbas points out, Delimar was excluded from many crucial publications and exhibitions on art from the regions of former Yugoslavia and one cannot help but wonder if this is

owing to the fact that the nude and sexualized body as articulated by a woman herself remains a taboo in society.⁵² Delimar herself notes the relative liberalism of the Yugoslav art scene at the time, claiming that censorship only sporadically affected her work. She did observe, however, that the reception of her work remained difficult since “many intellectuals from the Balkans still have patriarchy deeply rooted in them. To them, I was and still am a provocateur.” Interesting to note here is also Delimar’s perception of especially women taking issue with her works. She remembers how female journalists met her works with fury and how her application to the Croatian Association of Artists was only accepted on a second attempt when fewer women were in the council. Her first attempt was rejected by a predominantly female panel on grounds of her work “offending female dignity” but one can certainly also imagine an essentialist discourse around Delimar’s work in its blunt embrace of sexuality.⁵³

Delimar’s works coincide with the emerging discourse on female sexuality and sexual freedom that occurred during the 1980s in Yugoslavia. By the 1980s, women’s sexuality had become an increasingly prominent topic not only in feminist discussions but the public discourse as well. The rise of Western-style capitalism and consumerist culture in Yugoslavia reinforced the framing of women and their bodies by and for the male gaze. Images and narratives circulating in the mass media commodified the female body and its sexuality, rendering it as sites of containment, control, and oppression. At the same time, as Zsófia Lóránd had observed, publications such as *Bazar* and *Svijet* started to articulate a more women-centered discourse on women’s sexuality, which aimed at dismantling the oppressive myths it remained dominated by. Under the title “All You Know and Do Not Know about Sex,” *Bazar* published a variety of studies by local feminists, many drawing from research by American sexologists and feminists. They aimed at liberating women from their mostly reproductive properties toward educating them to become aware and command their own body, pleasure, and desire. Women were encouraged to claim their own sexuality and detach it from external, patriarchal, and consumerist concepts, expectations, and wishes, and instead to articulate their own needs.⁵⁴ On a related note, discussions about pornography emerged among women and in particular feminists. Throughout the 1970s and especially the 1980s, sexualized content—often imported from the West—and pornographic depictions of nude or semi-nude women in magazines had been on the rise. *Start*, for example, featured nude and highly sexualized women on its pages and translated content from *Playboy*, labeling itself the Yugoslav version of the American magazine. This set into a motion a strong debate about pornography within the feminist community. Rada Iveković had already tackled the issue of female sexuality, stating that the sexual revolution, while it might have taken place, still remained a primarily male phenomenon and that the liberation of sexuality therefore took place only from the perspective of men. Accordingly, the

female remains the sexual object displayed for the male gaze and female sexuality is instrumentalized for male (and consumerist) purposes.⁵⁵ Turning specifically toward the issue of pornography, feminists like Vesna Kesić and Slavenka Drakulić, who both worked for *Start*, then equally criticized it as a “male genre” and explored its effects on women. While they saw the need for women to claim the liberalization of their sexuality and the erotic, they found pornography to be mirroring a general tendency to oppress women. What’s more, they placed the roots of pornography within a bourgeois and traditional way of thinking and judgment toward women, therewith not “blaming” pornography itself as a source of oppression to women but rather identifying the sociocultural context it emerges from as doing so. Therefore, Kesić, who authored an article called “Nije li pornografija cinična?” (Isn’t pornography cynical?) for *Start* in 1982, by no means sees value in banishing anything with sexual content but recognizes the display of erotica as an emancipatory opportunity as well. Contrary to other, mostly Western feminists, Yugoslav feminists such as Drakulić or Vesić did not call for a prohibition of pornography, which they considered censorship and impairing the concept of freedom of speech. In her article “Pornografija u novojj prohibiciji” (Pornography in new prohibition), Drakulić in fact compares the discussion about prohibiting pornography to prohibition itself, stating that “all prohibition was able to achieve was more consumption of alcohol. Prohibiting pornography would not only have the same effect, it would also mask the real problems of women’s emancipation.” What’s more, she gives pornography its right to existence since it provides a balancing point to general morality.⁵⁶ Vesić insists that feminists do not put pornography on trial because it shows sex and the human body, but she is critical about its politics of distribution, reception, and especially its audience. Still coming from—and therewith remaining framed by—the West through secretive distribution, pornography remains an exclusive item targeted mostly at wealthy white males.⁵⁷ The women do take offense especially in the media’s approach to pornography. In her 1980 article “Muški su nešto drugo” (Men are something different), Drakulić accuses Yugoslav press policies of hypocrisy in defining and pursuing double standards regarding male and female nudity and sexuality, citing a public scandal that erupted after a male soccer player was photographed nude. After the image had been published by *Polet*, the issue was banned as “pornographic.” She also calls out the press for differentiating between the nakedness of local women, who they want to frame as too moral for showing themselves nude, whereas women from the “rotten” West are frequently shown on magazines such as *Start*. Her criticism is shared by Vesić, who identified the dominant position of men that commanders control over if, when, and how nudity is appropriate and whose body can be sexually objectified.⁵⁸

Delimar’s work acts as a practical manifestation of these theoretical attempts to endow women with more self-confidence about their sexuality

and to define it according to their own terms. In the way in which Delimar conceives her work, her emphasis on the personal, the sensual, the raw and unedited, she articulates her own standards of female desire and sexuality, which refuse to follow the normative visual and behavioral cues established for females but at the same time can coincide with the pornographic.

Delimar at times also used the public space for her performance works since this allowed her to escape the restraints of the official institutional system but also satisfied her wish to experiment with direct audience interaction. On one occasion, during the early 1980s, she appeared in Tkalčićeva street in Zagreb, handing out flyers to the public that read “Evo ti kurac” (Here is your dick) and “Evo ti pička” (Here is your cunt). Both were handed to men. Delimar, who maintains the doubtful opinion that the action was not a provocation, remembers the split reactions by her audience with some unwilling participants finding it funny whereas others were appalled. For the artist, it was an experiment, testing her audience’s responses and possibly her own scope of action. She was fully aware that executing her work publicly, with an unknowing and unprepared audience, differed radically from the setting of a gallery, where spectators or participants chose to enter and witness an artistic action. In doing so, she also carried on her predecessor’s and peer’s desire to transgress the boundaries established between art and life and to see how much the distinction matters to the audience. As she states:

many people in our country still do not dare to enter the gallery. It is a kind of sacralization of space. It is more open on the street [. . .]. The action of handing out the leaflets was a pure reexamination of the audience’s attitude towards me and my work, that is, whether anyone understands it at all, how people understand it at all.⁵⁹

Her 1985 performance *Jebanje je tužno* (Fucking Is Sad) was executed in a gallery space at the Extended Media Gallery in Zagreb. For this work, she painted her body black, highlighting her nipples in bright red and lay on the floor in one section of the gallery. Her head is covered with a black veil that is spread out around her. On her feet are black high heels. Behind her, a large black cross is made from plates reading “Jebanje je tužno.” Across from it, under a white cross, a man sits, wearing black pants and a white shirt with his lips painted black. To the beginning of music playing—Gustaph and His Good—the man gets up, places a white rose on her body, and leaves the space. The performance is an ironic comment on the passivity women’s sexuality is aligned with. In culturally defined gender relations, throughout religious narratives, in the depictions and narratives of the mass media, women are portrayed as passive objects, at the disposal of the male figure with no own sexual agency to speak of. When the deed is done, when the woman has served the male pleasure, he is free to leave her and move on. Delimar’s performance brings these structures up for discussion. She

highlights the distribution of sexual roles through both the activities of the performers and their interaction as well as her chosen colors. The woman lays still, ready to be taken, blackened so as to emphasize her lifelessness and passivity. Only her nipples—serving to arouse her sex partner—shine in bright light. The man gives the woman a token—the rose—but does so in a gesture that almost resembles the placement of flowers on a grave. After he is done, he is free to leave, whereas she remains where she is—in bed, dealing with the effects of the intercourse, and lastly, remaining tied to the social expectations she is forced to carry. Where Delimar's previous works activated her body and embraced her femaleness and sexuality against it being muted by society, *Jebanje je tužno* functions in the other direction. Its interference with social codification and oppression happens through their hyperbolic visual and behavioral affirmation.

Each of the women presented in this chapter have developed a highly idiosyncratic form of performance art and have pursued their respective interest—interdisciplinarity and the political body for Ladik, individual identity and the reclaiming of the body for Mrđa, the commodified body for PPF and Linije Sile and the liberation of sexuality for Delimar—undeterred by social or political circumstances. While Mrđa and at times Ladik's approach to performance is characterized by introspection, emotionality, and intimacy, PPF's, Linije Sile's and Vlasta Delimar's work take on a more critical-political tone. All of them seamlessly transgress disciplinary boundaries, infusing the discipline of performance art with elements from fashion, photographic, site-specific, or installative work, among others, and rendering it the complex and unruly artform it became. Their work was furthered by peers such as the women of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade, or Mira Trailović's early farsightedness with regard to the possibilities of the performing arts. Their agency has established performance art as one of the most important artistic disciplines of former Yugoslavia and has imbued it with a versatility and authenticity that characterizes performance art from the regions of former Yugoslavia until the present day.

3

Video Art

Bogdanka Poznanović and the Emergence of Video and New Media Art

Founded in 1954, the Tribina mladih in Novi Sad had become one of the core sites in Yugoslavia where novel forms of art crossed with social engagement and, in many ways, served as an important precursor to the work of the later Student Cultural Centers. During the late 1950s and into the early 1970s, it was a lively zone of collaboration between writers and artists from the entire territory of Yugoslavia as well as their international peers, with student-run editorial boards. At this time, the clustering of cultural phenomena that the Tribina initialized in the city was unparalleled in the rest of Yugoslavia—not only in the field of visual arts but also in literature and film production. Pioneering experimentality and disciplinary exchange, the Tribina very much stood in contrast to the dominant art scene, where, as Mirko Radojčić, member of Novi Sad's KÔD group, recalls:

the painter, the poet, the theatre, film—all had their definite role; it was clear what was meant by painting, poetry, music and exhibitions; the field of art was strictly defined. Anything that did not fit into this representation of art, whether it sprang up locally or came from other cultural centres, was viewed with mistrust and suspicion, denounced either as false avantgarde, dilettantism, or considered as something imported, lacking characteristics of the local environment.¹

Hungarian writer Judita Šalgo, who was the editor-in-chief at the Tribina from 1967 to 1971, recognized the new generation's unwillingness to follow and fit within the traditional systems—of classifications, of art making, of the institutionalized art world. “Artists,” she remembered, “wanted to make such art, such works that cannot be owned and sold; which, therefore, brought about a question of material value, and even the materiality of art

itself. To be saved from that terrible trade hunger, art had to be just an idea.” Firmly believing in these new concepts, Šalgo supported artists working from these motivations and attempted to legitimize and lend visibility to the alternative art scene: “We wanted our gallery to be [. . .] anti-traditionalist, anti-gallerist—if you can say so—we promoted alternative art events, we were for marginalist movements, but also for new media art.”² The Tribina mladih eventually posed a strong counterweight to the mainstream socialist art scene.³

Active already during the early years of the Tribina was the Serbian artist Bogdanka Poznanović, whose work embodies the experimentality and radicality of the Tribina’s program. She interfered with the traditional canon and established hierarchies in the art world through her pioneering work, especially in the realm of video and new media art as well as through her novel approach to artistic education. Together with her husband, Dejan, Bogdanka Poznanović was closely involved with the Tribina mladih from its inception. They were on the founding board of the institute in 1954 and continued to stay heavily involved into the 1970s. Among others, Bogdanka was an associate at the first editorial board from 1954 to 1955 and editor-in-chief of the institute’s magazine *Polja* (Fields) since its second issue. Also, she was the director of its exhibition program from 1956 to 1957. The Tribina’s early and formative years therefore bear clear marks of Poznanović’s vision and ideas. In turn, the creative climate at the Tribina also had a decisive influence on Poznanović’s own artistic practice: at the Tribina, the artist became friends with, among others, the KÔD and OHO groups, whom she cites as major influences on her work.⁴ Her collaboration and friendship with Judita Šalgo in particular also allowed Poznanović to reach beyond the canon and experiment with novel concepts, media, and ideas. As Sanja Kojić Mladenov rightfully observes: “This fruitful activity, staged by ‘Tribina,’ especially focusing on expanding the boundaries of traditional media, could also be viewed from a different perspective: as a result of effort and cooperation between two women, Bogdanka Poznanović and Judita Šalgo, whose work deserves to be better researched and made more prominent.”⁵

Concomitantly, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the artist started to significantly expand her own artistic practice. Trained as a painter, she first opened her work to experimental painting in the line of Informel but soon also embraced mail-art, artists’ books, installations, performance art, happenings, video, and new media—ultimately merging all of them into a truly interdisciplinary approach. For her first solo exhibition at the Tribina mladih, Poznanović showed paintings, but installed them in a nontraditional way to create an environment. This was the artist’s first attempt to negate the “traditional” spaces of art, and she soon turned to public spaces to create participatory performances and action art, highlighting aspects of processuality and communication in her work. She became deeply invested

in expanding the possibilities of classic disciplines and de-elitizing art as well as in introducing those ideas into the educational system.

One of the media that became especially useful for Poznanović's interests was video. Despite still being in its nascent stages during the early 1970s, video art soon became a useful tool for the New Art Practice's interest in shifting emphasis away from the art object toward the production process as well as for reaching a rapprochement of art and life in the sense of not only understanding art as a product of respective social, cultural, and political circumstances but also embedding it more closely into society. Video held an enticing promise of being a democratizing form of art and also indicated a shift of the hierarchy between creative development and "final" product. As Dejan Sretenović observes:

If video represented the first step in the "structural transformation of art" in the world [. . .] then its emergence in the former Yugoslavia was even more significant, because reproductive technologies changed the forms of production, circulation and reception of a work of art, destabilized the fixed academic hierarchies of artistic disciplines and introduced the industrial spirit of modernism into the [. . .] art scene. [. . .] Video has developed its own mythology and epistemology, its own routes of media transformation and artistic contextualization, and in the process, it has shown a specific ability to promote or negate dominant representational codes, to position itself on distant poles of both critical and conformist reflection, to deconstruct visual clichés, but also to produce them.⁶

Nevertheless, it took the medium a good while to take root in the Yugoslav art scene, with one of the main reasons being the obstacles faced by artists in terms of production and equipment. Video was a costly enterprise that only few artists could afford privately, and galleries and museums did not dispose of the equipment to produce or even show video art either. Needless to say, the expertise on how to develop and produce a piece of video art equally remained the responsibility of the artists themselves and many, in fact, traveled abroad to centers where the medium was slightly more advanced to acquire their skills.⁷

The dissemination of video art initially remained tied to the context of galleries and only few institutions, among them the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade and the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, embraced and promoted the medium. Its reception, accordingly, was mostly limited to those few artists working in video themselves. In this sense, it might seem that video art failed to deliver what it had promised: democratization and communication. As Slovenian art historian Barbara Borčič, who is the eminent scholar on video art in former Yugoslavia and especially in Slovenia, summarized:

the prediction did not materialize that video would become a vehicle for social and political struggle, the most democratic form of transmitting information and exchanging messages. As a creative means, in most cases

owing to the length of tape, the intimacy of artistic statements, and the fact that they were shown only in galleries, video remained hermetic, misunderstood, and unpopular with wider audiences.⁸

Bogdanka Poznanović very early on discovered the mediums' abilities to capture her artistic process and already used a video camera for her performance *Reke-Rivers* (Figure 3.1). The work was initially conceived in 1971, with two more iterations following later the same as well as the next year. For the first iteration of *Rivers* the artist produced seventeen cubes made from Styrofoam with the number corresponding to the number of rivers in Yugoslavia. With the participation of several of her friends, she placed those metaphoric "rivers" into a real river, the Danube, and documented her work on video, which she created with the help of Želimir Žilnik and Dušan Ninkov. The element of communication and participation both in the work's creation as well as content was crucial to Poznanović: "Rivers are very important to me, they connect, they are like a bloodstream."⁹ Her 1972 *Rivers Transmissions*, which she performed in Novi Sad, entailed seventeen frames holding translucent foil, on which the artist wrote the names of the Yugoslav rivers. The frames were then set out on the river Danube to float. She recreated the work almost identically a year later when she was invited to perform in Montreux, Switzerland. For this iteration, called *Rivers/Montreux Espace Situation 72*, she linked the frames with white chains and placed them all on the lake in Montreux. Equally, Poznanović's performances *Stone-Water-Light* and *Ars Acquilis* (both 1974) were recorded with a video camera.

As Barbara Borčić points out, the medium of video was initially not recognized by artists for its subversive potential in relation to the political system and they did not engage in a "critical reflection of ideological and representational codes of other media, especially television, as its closest relation."¹⁰ In her early works, Poznanović also had not started to investigate video for anything else but its documentational purposes but that changed



FIGURE 3.1 Bogdanka Poznanović, *Reke-Rivers*, performance, Novi Sad, 1971
© Bogdanka Poznanović, courtesy B. Poznanović Family Archive.

with her *Poemim* (1979), a collaboration between Poznanović and Katalin Ladik. For *Poemim*, Ladik performed for Poznanović's video camera, holding a glass frame in front of her. In *Poemim*, Poznanović and Ladik investigate—not without humorous undertones—into video's potential beyond being a mere form of documentation but becoming an active component in the creation of a work of art. In this work, the camera plays the role of the audience, focusing closely on Ladik's face and body while the Hungarian artist assumes various positions and facial expressions, at times partly covering her face, holding up her hands, and turning the glass frame in front of her in various angles. Several of the stills show the artist almost coqueting with the frame, smiling and winking, as one would do with a photo frame. One can reference here her experience as an actress, her knowledge of how to produce flirty or seductive images and establishing a connection with her viewers—the moves and expressions actresses are taught in order to make for a good screen or stage presence. Then, however, Ladik moves so close to the glass frame she holds that she establishes physical contact, pressing her face against the glass and distorting her features into grotesque grimaces. Ladik and Poznanović transgress the symbolic and actual boundaries that a screen establishes between viewer and screen “object,” a person. Ladik, who is of striking beauty and was frequently cherished for it as an actress (not so much an artist), also utilizes the illusion machines of beauty itself—the



FIGURE 3.2 Katalin Ladik and Bogdanka Poznanović, *Poemim*, video performance, 1979 © Katalin Ladik, image courtesy of acb Gallery and Katalin Ladik.

lens and screen—to interfere with her own when she smears and presses her cheeks, her mouth, or her forehead against the glass. In line with Ladik's criticism of the patriarchal environment and the pressure and expectations it puts on women, *Poemim* serves as a comment on the norms and standards of appearance and behavior women are supposed to live up to—maybe especially in the realm of acting and the media at large, which portrays them as the objects of desire served up to the male gaze—behind the screen (Figure 3.2). This work not only crosses disciplinary boundaries between performance and video, it also activates the video camera, lifting it out of its “passive” state as a mere recording device and instead imbuing it with its own agency. In doing so, Poznanović not only arrives at striking visual effects but also instills a certain level of politicalness, which ultimately became one of video's most scarring properties in the arts.

Poemin was followed in Poznanović's oeuvre by a number of works such as *Expansion of Light*, *Pulseimpluse-Electronic Environment*, *Onoric ring*, *Obductio coram*, and *Vita Lattea* (1980), which expand on the aesthetic experimentation of *Poemim*. In those works, Poznanović examines video for its experimental and aesthetic properties and merges it with other media such as photography, drawing, or writing, into multi-medial experiments (Figure 3.3). Echoing her interest in a variety of artistic media and the transgression of their boundaries, she plays with overlays, light, and shadow, therewith distorting the images recorded by the lens. In doing so, she moves far away from the authentic and direct representational value of video for documentary purposes such as she had employed during her earlier work with video. To the artist, the recording lens became an “electronic paint brush,” which allowed her to create experimental visuals combining light, text, structure, and color.¹¹

When Bogdanka Poznanović first started to use video in her work, the medium had been virtually unknown in Yugoslavia with a notable exception being the works of Ljubljana-based Ana Nuša and Srečo Dragan, who had created their first video work already in 1969: *Belo Mleko*, *Belih Prsi* (White Milk of White Breasts). The video shows a still image of a female breast with a glistening drop of milk on it. The image is overlaid with a succession of the text “White Milk of White Breasts” as well as graphic elements and editing remarks. Oscillating between an almost static image and the barely detectable changes in the drops' appearance, the work marks the transitional period between photography and the moving image as it can be created through use of film and video. In particular the visualization of signs and mechanisms of editing image and sound seem to predict later widespread manipulation processes employed in video art. In 1972, the Dragans created *Grasses Speaking*, a close-up of leaves, fruits, and hairs that follow one another across the screen in a slow rhythm. Their *Šakti Is Coming* from 1974 consists of a shot of two hands in front of a screen, with one palm being stuck to it while the other one writes on it. This work, in



pulseimpulse, 1977
B. Poznanović



FIGURE 3.3 *Bogdanka Poznanović, Pulseimpulse, videostill, 1977* © Bogdanka Poznanović, image courtesy B. Poznanović Family Archive.

particular, plays with the specificity (and limitations) of video as a medium and can be read as an illustration of the artists' desire to transgress its boundaries into a direct dialogue with the audience. Similarly, the Dragans utilized video as a means to foreground the creative process, as for example in *Video Painting* (1979), where they recorded the steps of mixing pigments to create paint, capturing a fleeting moment of artistic creation on the video monitor. Ješa Denegri has in particular stressed video's abilities in the realm of communication as contributing to the medium's increasing attractiveness for the New Art Practice with "artists [aspiring] to 'speak in the first person,' i.e. have a personal, immediate, or physical impact without the intermediary of an aesthetic object, but rather with the language of participation in the artistic action or with the aid of the new technical media [. . .] becoming increasingly used in artistic practice."¹² After ceasing their collaboration, both artists continued to produce highly experimental video and interdisciplinary works, with Ana Nuša's focus shifting in particular toward the sensual and poetic qualities of video and visual narration and, in doing so, often taking on a decidedly gendered perspective. Soon, however, several artists besides the Dragans and Bogdanka Poznanović discovered video for themselves, most notably probably Sanja Iveković, who started working with it in 1976 (*Make Up Make Down*) and then produced a significant number of video art pieces in the following years. Other examples include the FAVIT

Group, founded in 1972 by Jasminka Petter-Kalinić, a young artist from Slovenia, experimental filmmaker Vladimir Petek, as well as artists Mladen Stilinović, Dara Dupelj, and Alexander Srnec.¹³ Further examples are Miha Vipotnik, Marina Abramović, Raša Todosijević, Radomir Damjanović, Miša Savić, Zemira Alajbegović, Miodrag Lazarov Pahsu, and Meje Kontrole št. 4, whose work will be analyzed on the following pages.

Bogdanka Poznanović's impact on the development of video art was ultimately recognized with an award named after her, which is given out at *VideoMedeja*. An annual video festival, *VideoMedeja* was founded during the war years, in 1996, by art historian and curator Vera Kopicl in Novi Sad with the goal to lend visibility to works created by women from the regions of Eastern Europe and foster international exchange. Even though video had gained quite some popularity in the arts by the 1990s, the organizers did see a need to broaden knowledge about the medium, exchange, as well as the possibility to investigate into new forms of creativity utilizing video. What's more, they recognized the number of female artists working with video who, however, mostly remained in the shadow of their male peers. Artists like Sanja Iveković, Milica Mrđa, Dragana Žarevac (Jovanović), Ema Kugler, Ana Nuša Dragan, Zemira Alajbegović, Nataša Teofilović, Lidija Srebotnjak, Vesna Tokin, Marina Abramović, Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid, Ksenija Kovačić, Želka Jović, Apolonija Šušteršič, Marija Mojca Pungerčar, Nataša Prosenc, and of course Bogdanka Poznanović had been creating cutting-edge works over the last decade and greatly furthered the discipline, yet only few found a platform for their art. This is what *VideoMedeja* aimed to remedy. While the first festival in 1996, focused on artists from Eastern Europe, was a collaboration with the Association of Independent Initiatives Apostrophe, the third iteration in 1998 operated independently and focused on a more international roster of participants. In addition to Vera Kopicl, other organizers included Biljana Tomić, Lidija Srebotnjak, Balint Szombathy, Kathy Rae Huffman, Nina Czegledy, and Dragana Žarevac. Screenings of videos were accompanied by roundtable discussions, workshops, and panels, discussing, among other topics, recent developments in video art, access to technology, politicized art, or the perceived gap between the "East" and the "West." Operating until the present, the *VideoMedeja* association has significantly broadened their scope of action, organizing exhibitions, multimedia events, performances, panel discussion, seminars, workshops, study trips, and building an archive of video art from the region. The focus remains on works that emphasize a women's perspective.¹⁴

Already during the early 1970s, Bogdanka Poznanović had also started to experiment with new media art, a discipline that had initially emerged on the Yugoslav art scene with the New Tendencies exhibitions at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb a decade earlier. In 1973, she created *Computer Tape & Body* at the Tribina mladih, for which she projected used computer tapes framed into dioramas and marked with

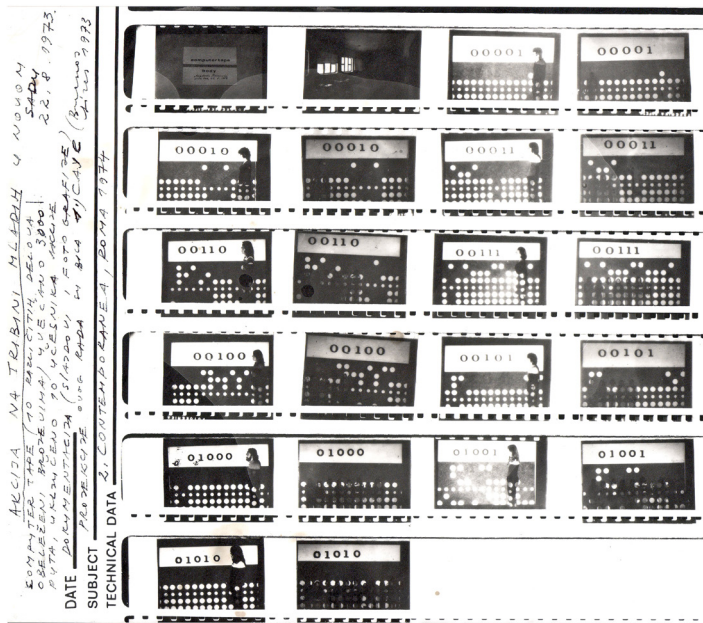


FIGURE 3.4 Bogdanka Poznanović, *Computer Tape & Body*, multimedia installation, 1973 © Bogdanka Poznanović, image courtesy Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad.

numbers (Figure 3.4). She then projected these electronic pictures on the participating audience, photographing each instance. With this work, she investigated into the dehumanization of the human body in contemporary society and the changing concepts of identity in the technological age. But the work also bears a very specific sociopolitical reference: “Bogdanka criticizes constriction of personal and social freedoms as well as numerical marking of citizens, which was a current topic at the time (‘JMBG’—social security number was just introduced), as one of the ways for [the] state to control the individual.”¹⁵ For *Conceptus respiratio* (1975), Poznanović expanded her practice to include sound as well. She recorded the breathing of different people in equal intervals of two minutes and forty-five seconds, creating a specific bio-trace of each individual person and detaching our observation of “living” and “life” from the purely visual realm. At the same time, the work continues *Computer Tape & Body*’s investigation into personal freedoms and can be read as a criticism of socialism’s equalizing and anonymizing capabilities. While the New Tendencies movement was primarily concerned with formulating a new vision for the art of the future through establishing art as a form of visual research and bridging the gap between art, science, and technology, Poznanović specifically incorporated the political dimension of new technologies into her work. She created her works at a time when computers had just begun to appear on a larger scale in Yugoslavia, with their numbers rapidly increasing and their technologies

transforming the public, but soon also the private sphere. The artist's works serve as a critical reflection on the impact technologies such as computers have in and on the life of the Yugoslav population, anticipating both the possibilities but also its dangers such as monitoring of individual activity, anonymization or the computerization of human activity and interaction. With regard to the latter, *Conceptus respiratio* seems particularly pertinent since it foregrounds an essential biological-human activity—breathing—but juxtaposes it with its transformation into a data-based format.¹⁶

One of the guiding principles in Poznanović's entire oeuvre was the element of participation and collaboration. During the 1970s, she created several performances building on these principles such as *Heart* (1970). For this work, the artist built a huge heart out of Styrofoam, wrapped in red cloth, that friends carried through the streets of Novi Sad in a procession during a busy afternoon, enticing the general public to join the walk. The procession ended at the Tribina mladih gallery, where the heart was set down on the floor and covered in a white sheet. Next to it, the artist had installed a square board covered with plates, knives, forks, spoons, and glasses, all empty and painted white. Poznanović then unhooked a metronome she had placed inside the heart and calibrated to the rhythm of the human pulse, which then became audible in the gallery space, so that everyone was subjected to this elemental and archaic sound (Figure 3.5).

Heart combines a number of juxtapositions, starting with the clash of colors between the red of the heart and the pristine white of the gallery space with its table setting. The very core of biological-human existence is not only veiled—hidden behind a white cloth—but in this transmuted form is placed in dialogue with a sterile interpretation of mundane activities such as food intake or preparation, which in turn is set inside a space for artistic creation. What's more, Poznanović contrasts two different environments: the public space of the open street and the intimate one of the gallery. Poznanović has described her performance-action as a work of "visual communication," at the core of which was her attempt to bring the general public to participate in the piece. Much like her peers in Zagreb, Belgrade, and many other cities in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s, the artist attempts to transgress the boundaries that have been established between art and life—the elitist realm of the institutionalized cultural scene and the everyday business of living—as it had been reiterated by the apathy of socialist modernism. By covering the heart with a veil, the artist seems to comment on the art world's tendency to deprive art of its life and liveliness and the loss of art's vitality and energy once it is assimilated by the art market. Her gesture of placing the heart into the gallery—albeit an alternative one—and making it beat, however, signifies a moment of reconciliation, a first attempt at re-infusing the static and sanitized exhibition space with unmediated creative energy.¹⁷



FIGURE 3.5 Bogdanka Poznanović, *Heart*, performance, Tribina mladih, Novi Sad, 1970 © Bogdanka Poznanović, courtesy B. Poznanović Family Archive.

Heart was not met with unequivocal praise. The artist remembers how Novi Sad's daily newspaper *Dnevnik* published a very critical response in which it warned that *Heart* had "started the epidemic," presumably referring to the growing New Art Practice with its unconventional ideas and works. At the time of *Heart*, Poznanović worked at the department of Fine Arts at Novi Sad's College of Education. Her colleagues organized a meeting in which they discussed her artistic practice and how to deal with it with the

head of the department, Jovan Soldatović, accusing her of “breaking down the known laws of art.” The resistance and open antagonism with which her work was met continued to mark Poznanović’s career from there on out. But she had set an important precedent and especially young artists reacted positively, impressed by how poignantly she had set herself apart from the conventional. Photographs of the action were published in magazines across Yugoslavia and even beyond and Slavko Matković from Bosch+Bosch published a poem on *Heart*. While Poznanović’s work remained contested within her home country, invitations to exhibit internationally rose after this early break with Yugoslavia’s official cultural dogma. A similar debate also surrounded her other projects such as *Reke-Rivers*. The artist recalls: “I was called names and threatened.” For Poznanović, the negative reaction to her work was symptomatic of the artistic climate in Novi Sad, and we can certainly include Yugoslavia at large, where the radical new ideas of the neo-avant-garde and, in particular, the New Art Practice, were met with strong ideological resistance from the established cultural sector. Her experience shows how difficult it was for the New Art Practice during its nascent years to gain recognition or even being allowed to exist without constraints or even concrete repercussions. Nevertheless, a deep conviction for the relevance of this new form of creativity with all its social and political implications continued to drive Poznanović: “I truly believed in that kind of creative work, and [have] received so many acknowledgments from other, both local and global art centers. This keeps me going.”¹⁸

The backlash and criticism that Poznanović faced for her work was indicative of the turbulences that characterized the Novi Sad art scene during the early 1970s. The neo-avant-garde trends and the emergence of the New Art Practice were monitored closely by the government and local authorities and illustrate the lack of artistic autonomy truly granted by the party. Many artists involved with the *Tribina mladih* similarly faced problems and often suffered even much harsher consequences. For his interrogation of the ideological state apparatus in his text *Pesma underground tribina mladih novi sad* (The Poem of the Underground Youth Tribune Novi Sad), artist Slavko Bogdanović, for example, was sentenced to eight months in prison in 1972. Similarly, Otto Tolnai, the editor of the literary and art magazine *Ūj Symposion*, which was run by Novi Sad’s *Tribina mladih*, was removed from his position in 1971 after the magazine had published a text by poet and performance artist Miroslav Mandić, in which he wrote critically about the personality cult surrounding president Tito.¹⁹ Having invited some artists that the government deemed “anarcholiberals” to perform at the *Tribina*, Judita Šalgo was dismissed in 1971 as well and had to turn to freelance work since hiring her had become a risk.²⁰ The dismissal of Šalgo marked the culmination of a series of scandals and problems—both with the state as well as within the *Tribina*—as a result of which the institute lost almost all of its autonomous status. On October 17, 1971, a local

paper announced that “Novi Sad [is] Waiting for a Director”—“faced with the extreme activities of the Tribune, the Youth League of Vojvodina was forced to interrupt, a new programme and new council will be constructed.” This was the government’s attempt to put an end to certain activities of the Tribina, which they thought had started to interfere too harshly with official cultural policy.²¹ The governmental intervention led to a series of restrictions that were put on the institute and an increasing bureaucratization of the space. From 1971 on, it was regularly monitored and interfered with when exhibitions were taken down or art or writings confiscated if they were deemed too critical of party ideology. Therefore, the space unfortunately lost much of its radicality and had to continue on a much more muted tone.

Poznanović, on the other hand, refused to adhere to any official “suggestions” or guidelines. Instead, she decided to apply her interest in collaboration, communication, and participation to her teaching at the Novi Sad Academy of Fine Arts, where she was ultimately employed as a professor. The artist valued the work with her students just as much as her own and was determined to revolutionize the standard norms of pedagogy. Her approach to teaching and mentoring shares many aspects with her main choice of artistic medium, video. The artist took the ideological promises of video art and applied the concepts of social solidarity, de-hierarchization of values and anti-monopolistic distribution of knowledge and information to her work as a teacher. Against many odds, she advocated for video being introduced into the curriculum and actually succeeded when AKAI cameras came to be accepted for use by students in the late 1970s, making her the first teacher in Yugoslavia to use the video camera in her teaching. This greatly helped the spread of the medium in the area and allowed students, who might not have been able to afford video equipment themselves, to handle a camera and create work with it and Poznanović in many cases happily acted as producer. Her most outstanding accomplishment, however, was the establishment of the Visual Studio for Intermedia Research at the Novi Sad Academy of Fine Arts in 1979, the first studio of its kind in former Yugoslavia. In founding the Studio, Poznanović followed her conviction that “it is necessary to overcome traditional techniques.”²² The Studio was organized as a space for intensive research and creative work for students in the then novel discipline of video art and multimedia art practice. It provided unprecedented study conditions in Yugoslavia and, for many students, it was the first time they were able to utilize and learn about the possibilities of new media for their artistic practice. The nature of the works created was, due to the novelty of the media for many, often collaborative and, in fact, *Poemim* was created at the Studio as well. The early exposure to new media and the research-oriented and highly experimental approach Poznanović fostered, influenced the artistic direction of the Studio’s students, many of whom went on to create significant works in the realm of new media: Lina Busov’s *Venus* (1983), which explored female sensuality and gender

equality, Bojan Budimac's *Witness* (1980), Lidija Srebotnjak-Prišić's *Ekran* (1984), Zora Popović's *Face to Face* (1984), Živana Stapnov and Vlada Stepančević's *Honey and Milk* (1984), Milica Popović's *Video Performance* (1987), Đuro Radišić's *Neo-Geo* (1989), Dragan Živančević's *Brass Band Competition* (1990), and Zoran Ilić's *Horror Vacui* (1991/2) are just a few examples. Many of her student's work were presented at Tribina mladih, but also the SKC in Belgrade and ŠKUC in Ljubljana. Jadranka Vinterhalter eventually even approached Poznanović with an invitation to her students to participate in the XII Biennale of Young Artists in Paris. Most of the work had to happen, however, behind closed doors as, as Poznanović recalled, not all of the staff of the Novi Sad Academy of Fine Arts viewed it positively: "Even though the Studio was a success, some of my colleagues were constantly suspicious of me, so I had to defend myself by saying 'Please try to understand that the video-camera is actually an electronic brush'."²³ In addition, when moving outside of the confines of the Studio, the artist and her students frequently encountered resistance from the authorities as well, who did not recognize the new media art forms as valuable creative products. With her open and innovative approaches to artistic creation and education, Poznanović certainly differed from her colleagues at the Academy, who mainly—as was the case with most official art institutes—followed a traditional and government-backed agenda but the artist remained undeterred. As Sanja Kojić Mladenov states: "Bogdanka Poznanović did not wish to be an unquestionable authority who educates via traditional methods and forces her unchanging perspectives and attitudes on students. Founding the Studio as a unit separate from the Academy was supposed to help create conditions and a creative environment in which students would feel comfortable experimenting and exploring."²⁴ Even though it took until 2002, Poznanović ultimately succeeded with her wish for the Academy to offer master's programs in the realm of video and new media art in addition to classical disciplines such as painting or sculpture.

For Miško Šuvaković, Poznanović's investment in teaching, especially in relation to new media art, follows principles of post-pedagogy as it has been elaborated by Gregory Ulmer, among others. In Ulmer's theory, one of the main characteristics of post-pedagogy is to veer away from conventional and outdated notions of transferring and receiving knowledge and, in particular, the relation between teacher and student. For Poznanović, so Šuvaković, this meant instilling in her students certain experimental, emancipatory, and interdisciplinary practices in the research of new media, and especially video art but also to break away from traditional hierarchical structures in education. As Šuvaković points out: "Post-pedagogy, like acritical criticism, gravitated towards changes in inter-personal relationships and power relationships in an inherited pyramidal structure—in this case, between students and professors."²⁵ Post-pedagogy for the teacher does not mean to be an authority and sole decision-maker but someone who is in charge

of making a creative research-oriented situation open for the students. Teaching is made into practical research at eye-level. Bogdanka said:

In this kind of work students have the possibility to expand their sensibility and media consciousness and have the chance to realize their works in a vast way of media, from manual to the speed of light. This way students have much more to research the world around them and themselves, and usually when there are great demands there is also resistance. It would be very beneficial that apart from the usual art departments, another, one for intermedia communication. A previously organized aesthetics does not exist, nor should it. We, above all, cultivate the personal expressions of each individual in a strive to go as further as possible in our processes. From the grammar of the audio-visual language to very complex projections of ambient, interventions in urban spaces, performances, multivision etc.²⁶

Poznanović had a significant impact on the local art scene, successfully pioneering new media in artistic production and anchoring them in the institutional context. Choosing media and forms of artistic production that formed part of a wider front of anti-institutional cultural opposition, she continued to pursue her visions against the many backlashes and the criticism she faced. As Sanja Kojić Mladenov writes: “Bogdanka Poznanović’s activism was not rude and penetrating, but gentle, emancipatory, and friendly. It came from socializing, friendship, and the exchange of human values in the modern world, from the fusion of art and life. It is the practice of self-organizing artists in order to create open and free space for work and communication.”²⁷

Meje Kontrole št. 4 and Video as a Political Tool

The 1980s meant a radical step for the utilization of video in artistic practice with the medium being discovered more pronouncedly for its political properties. This happened, in particular, in Ljubljana and its vibrant subculture of the decade, which developed as a reaction to the increasingly stifling cultural policy and turbulent political situation that marked Yugoslavia after Tito had passed away in 1980. Following the leader’s death, the fragile situation in Yugoslavia, which suffered from severe economic deterioration, a substantial foreign debt, which had been amassed in the hopes of resuscitating the ailing economy during the 1970s, ineffective everyday official politics, and national issues, became apparent vehemently and started to push the republics apart. The voices of those reviving mythologic and nostalgic narratives glorifying the pre-1918 state of things increased. It was accompanied by the proclamation of the need for resurrecting ethnic communities and distinct cultural identities. Slowly,

these calls turned into pronounced nationalistic discourses, which echoed loudly in the void that Tito's death had created. Pre-Yugoslav animosities, such as the historical tension between Serbian and Croatian nationalisms, or Croatia's and Slovenia's fear of Serbia's goal to create a "Greater Serbia," resurfaced. Serbia resumed its chevy against the Muslim population in Kosovo, attacking the autonomy the region had been granted by Tito. Minorities across the Yugoslav territory—Serbs living in the Croatian republic, Albanians living in Serbia, and so forth—felt the danger rise. While Yugoslav identity under Tito had been inextricably linked to multiethnicity, the goal for its republics after 1981 became ethnic purity and separation.

Throughout the Yugoslav period, Slovenia had managed to retain a semi-autonomous culture. This allowed for artistic and political expression to exist that had already become unthinkable in Serbia, Croatia, or Montenegro, for example. The local Student Cultural Center ŠKUC, together with the Student Cultural Association Forum (ŠKD Forum) as well as a number of alternative venues and clubs such as Disko Študent, or Disko FV, respectively, Radio Študent, and the newly established Čankarjev dom, formed a far-reaching network for subcultural movements, with student periodicals such as *Tribuna* and *Mladina* or ŠKUC Forum's newsletter *Viks* functioning as outlets for critical thought.²⁸ Countless nightclubs, impromptu discos, and clubs provided an ever-changing landscape spurring projects, ideas, and initiatives by young creatives, and, of course, bringing them together to let go and celebrate.

While the alternative art of the previous decades had existed maybe not within official cultural policy but at least at its the margins, the 1980s separated "official" from "alternative" much sharper. Now, "[b]eing alternative presupposed the taking of an active position in the context of an accelerating social split."²⁹ Locating oneself outside of official policy during the 1980s meant uncompromisingly opposing all official state institutions and their ideologies representing the socialist state, which by now was increasingly being perceived as repressive. Instead of arrangements with the government, which during the previous decades still had been possible, alternative cultural workers of the 1980s strove to counter the state and its imposed cultural and aesthetic models by not only ignoring them but building a parallel system of production, distribution, and communication. Punk as a youth-subculture became an important and uncompromising critical energy in cities around Yugoslavia and in particular in Ljubljana, where the local "Lacan school" formed an essential theoretical context for the alternative scene. Founded in the late 1970s around a young group of Marxist students at the University in Ljubljana, the school, today mostly known through the works of Slavoj Žižek, provided a radical reexamination of the present political and cultural landscape through a combination of Marxism, German idealism, and psychoanalytical discourse. Seeping into other forms of art as well—

visual arts, fashion, theater—as well as manifesting itself greatly in people's appearance, punk became a pervading force:

The highly visible adoption of the punk and new wave image by urban youth and their ubiquitous presence on the late-night streets of Ljubljana in the early 1980s made the city appear to be host to a colony of invaders from the sartorial underground, [...] much to the consternation of police authorities. [...] The impulse to freely combine incongruous symbols and styles, to create previously unimaginable costumes and getups, and to use one's own body as a billboard to engage social and artistic space went deeper than tattoos, body piercings, or makeup. This organic language of signs and signification might have started as slogans or cosmetic statements, but it quickly evolved into a powerful visual slang—a generational argot of political and aesthetic expression with clearly demarcated lines of exclusion and belonging.³⁰

Video soon became a prime medium for subcultural movements and was often used by its members to document their activities—especially since technological progress had made non-professional VHS equipment easy to obtain and operate. What's more, video art could remain outside of the reach of governmental control and censorship since VHS technology allowed videos to be edited privately. Video therefore became an artistic tool of criticism and subversion, often used to investigate the political landscape through its visual representation. As Ljubljana-born artist Zemira Alajbegović, who was a member of the Ljubljana-based artists' group FV 112/15, FV Disko and punk band-turned-performance-art group Borghesia, describes:

the boundaries between official and unofficial culture were still firm, and the media image of socialism featured by national television was even more uniform and dull than reality. It was a great pleasure to cut, shorten, accelerate, and repeat the television image, to connect otherwise non-connectable images, to invest them with new meanings. [...] In the smoke and dust of FV Disco, viewers took pleasure in the manipulation of political icons, while these videos, of course, were never shown in the programmes of RTV Ljubljana, or at Slovene festivals. The play on different meanings, irony, historical references, subcultural actions—all this was ideologically unsuitable, in conflict with self-management.³¹

One of the groups who politicized video as an artistic medium was the Slovenian activist group Meje Kontrole št. 4 (The Borders of Control no. 4). In their works of the 1980s and 1990s, they drew heavily from punk aesthetics and ideology in their attack on conservative politics and especially their articulation of a then fairly new concept of non-normative sexual identity. At the group's founding, members included Marina Gržinić, Barbara Borčić, Dušan Mandić,

and Aina Šmid but ultimately only Gržinić and Šmid continued to collaborate under the name Meje Kontrole. All of the initial members were involved in various subcultural groups and well-connected in the punk movement. What's more, Borčić, Gržinić, and Mandič were active at ŠKUC and took over its lead from art historian Taja Vidmar-Brejc in 1978. Like its sister institutes in Belgrade and Zagreb, ŠKUC, which had been founded in 1972, was comprised of several sections such as visual art, theater, music, publishing, and dance with a gallery for exhibitions. Together, Borčić, Gržinić, and Mandič organized innovative exhibitions in a variety of media, ranging from paintings, objects, and photographs to graffiti, performances, fashion, multimedia projects, and film. The medium of video in particular came into the focus of the young ŠKUC group and gained considerable impetus in Slovenia and Yugoslavia at large. ŠKUC also organized roundtables, screenings, discussions, and concerts and started to host projects from the emerging LGBTQ+ communities of the area. One of ŠKUC's guiding principles, which characterized subcultural movements and groups such as Borghesia, FV 112/15, or Neue Slovenische Kunst (NSK) at large, was the radical dissolution of any and all boundaries between artistic disciplines. Music, fine arts, new media, fashion, design, and theater merged with cultural activism into one experimental movement.³²

Operating in a similar vein, Meje Kontrole's practice was radical and interdisciplinary. Among others, the group staged performances critically commenting on the current state of politics and male domination of culture and history as well as female and queer sexuality. They also experimented with music, which often was part of their performance work, but it was especially video which became their prime medium. In their works of the 1980s, Meje Kontrole explored relations between individuals and institutions of power, the visual pleasure derived from eroticism, or social trauma. They frequently told stories of marginalized groups and individuals, often using pornographic images to attack official art and cultural doctrines of the Yugoslav government. In particular, they performed lesbian positions in an attempt to break open traditional, heteronormative definitions of sexuality and gender, therewith lending visibility to an issue that had just started to come to the surface from previously tabooed existence. In Gržinić's opinion,

sexuality is the most important code in society and the only way to destroy communism is to make politics. This could be done only through the body, which could not be a heteronormative body. The only way to make this happen was by reference to aberrant sexual practices and their politics. This is what we knew from the theory; we knew that the state is presented and represented in its full totalitarian scope precisely through its suppression in the gay scene.³³

One of Meje Kontrole's early key works is the 1982 *Ikone glamourja, odmevi smrti* (Icons of Glamour, Echoes of Death) a fifteen-minute single

channel video work for which Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid took the lead. Aesthetically, the work draws from German and American avant-garde traditions from the 1960s and 1970s, referencing Andy Warhol, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Rosa Von Praunheim. Loosely divided into three parts and featuring the song “The Model” from German electro band Kraftwerk, the video negotiates politics of (stereotypical) sexuality and gender attributes and explores the relationship between language and gender. It depicts the phantasmatic world of a woman portrayed as a model and her friend, using the model’s confrontation with her photographs as a way of narration. The model is clad in a black dress with her breast exposed, while her friend is wearing a white, knee-length negligee. The viewer participates in the women’s highly intimate discussions about childhood memories involving sexual experiences as well as harassment, their school years, and their first masturbation experiences, and learns that the two are in fact a couple. The narrative and imagery, however, get disrupted at times through the use of über-masculine and pornographic language as well as a linguistic switch between genders, with the artists addressing themselves and each other alternately as she and he. This complicates the notion of formulaic femininity associated with women (and especially models) and suggests a shift toward an intersex or transgender reality. What’s more, the model’s friend ultimately exposes a penis. As the artists themselves made clear, they decisively aimed their work at the machoism with which sexuality, especially female sexuality, is coded. They claim: “The work is to be seen as one of the first if not the first in the field of video art in the world that opens and dramatize the institution of masculinity through drag practices in socialism (Figure 3.6).”³⁴

The video was first shown publicly during a video festival in Ljubljana in 1983 and, needless to say, caused a scandal. Even though the festival’s attendees were mainly young, independent people working in or drawn to the alternative scene, they reacted with indignation. As in many other societies, the public display of sexuality, let alone of homosexuality or intersex conditions, was—with the exception of sexualized images and narratives in the mass media, which, however, continued to follow a heteronormative canon—just not something that happened. To top it off, the two artists outed themselves as not even being homosexual and had structured the work clearly as staged in order to emphasize their attack on the norms and regulations regarding sexuality and gender. A portrait of the conservative politician Milka Planinc, the first female premier minister in Yugoslavia from 1982 to 1986 who also became known as an “iron lady,” which the artists inserted into the video, separated “do” from “don’t” even more. As they stated:

From 1982 on, we openly performed a string of non-heterosexual roles for the camera and assumed unmistakably lesbian and (as we would say today) queer positions—every form of non-heterosexual positioning we understood, exclusively and entirely, as a political stance. This queerness



FIGURE 3.6 *Meje kontrole št. 4, Ikone glamurja, odmevi smrti, videostill, 1982, performers Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid © Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid, image courtesy of the artists.*

[. . .] demands, of us and of the viewer, a rethinking of the conditions of life, work, and possibilities of resistance. [. . .] In the early 1980s, the enactment of lesbian positions in front of a video camera, “queer linguistics”, and the use of pornography (as an attack on the socialist high-art formalist modernism that enjoyed the approval of the authorities) constituted a specifically political positioning.³⁵

Meje Kontrole’s works illustrate several concerns that shaped female reality and therefore also feminism during the 1980s such as questions of female identity and sexuality, the rising influence of consumer culture and its influence on representations of the female body, or the reiteration of basic gender stereotypes that came with the representation of women in the mass media. The most radical aspect was probably the growing awareness of a distinction between sex and gender and the latter as a social category, which allowed for a more inclusive discussion of gender identities and sexual orientation. The latter provided a decisive step for Yugoslavia’s feminism to become more inclusive of LGBTQ+ issues, which at the same time had also started to surface in the popular discourse. A visible gay culture began to form, emerging initially in particular in Ljubljana, where the local Student Cultural Center ŠKUC served as a central hub. In 1984 Magnus was founded by Aldo Ivančić and Bogdan Lešnik as the gay branch of ŠKUC and,

the same year, with K4 one of the first gay clubs opened in the city. Within Ljubljana's women's organization Lilit, the first lesbian group was formed in 1985, Lilit LL. In 1984 ŠKUC's newsletter *Viks* published Marina Gržinić's "Homosexuality in Culture" and in 1988, the first lesbian magazine started to appear, *Lesbomagazine*.³⁶

Feminist publications on the topic were on the rise throughout the 1980s, with some of the most notable ones being Rada Iveković's "Talijanski komunisti i ženski pokret" (The Italian Communists and the Women's Movement), in which she draws a connection between homophobia and patriarchy, Gordana Cerjan-Letica's 1985 "Feministički pokret—organizacija, oblici i sadržaj borbe, in which she calls for a differentiation between sex and gender, or Milan Polić's "Emancipacijske mogućnosti transseksualnosti" (Emancipation possibilities of transsexuality), which argues for the use of transsexuality for emancipation of gender.³⁷ Especially Žarana Papić remained committed to investigations into the sex-gender divisions. Her 1984 text "Pol i Rod—Kategorije socijalne Organizacije Polnosti" (Sex and Gender: Categories of the Social Organization of Sexuality) continued her critical outlook onto the discipline of anthropology, which had been at the heart of *Antropologija žene*, the first feminist anthology to be published in Yugoslavia, which Papić edited with Lydia Sklevicky in 1983.³⁸ For too long, so the author, have the sciences rested on their uncritical perpetuation of both sex and gender as biological categories and determinants of a person's ability and nature. Not only did that entail a continuous repression of women but also a supposed superiority of the West over other, "primitive" societies. She quotes several key authors such as Vera St. Ehrlich, Daisy Bates, Phyllis McKaberry, and Margaret Mead and their efforts to prove that social conditions, not human biology, must be considered determinants of gender roles. She states:

Distinguishing between sex and gender is a necessary moment of this relativization of "natural" laws and critiques of biologism in anthropology, and is the initial element of analyzing the roots of sexual asymmetry in almost all known societies. [. . .] The distinction between sex and gender and the construction of sexuality is therefore an eminent act of culture: social organization and semantization of human biological poles whose end result is that there are completely different realities for men and women.³⁹

The situation in the political and general public realm, of course, presented itself slightly differently. Up until the late 1970s, homosexuality had been considered a criminal offense in Yugoslavia, and while the legal and social sphere of Yugoslavia had started to liberalize toward gay rights during the 1970s with President Tito dictating to all republics to decriminalize homosexuality, the government did not exactly support the gay movement, and large parts of the public remained wary of it as well. At the time of Meje Kontrole's early works, a gay or LGBTQ+ scene had not yet come into

existence, and even after it had started to emerge, stigmatization and fear of repercussions prevailed. As queer poet Brane Mozetič recalled from the parties organized by Magnus: “I remember that the people that I met in the club were not the same outside. Outside the club no-one wanted to know me, or even say hello. You have to understand that Ljubljana is a small city.”⁴⁰

Meje Kontrole’s utilization of the recording lens to introduce queer sexuality as well as their play with mass media-derived stereotypes and imagery also embodies the activist turn of 1980s feminism. Not satisfied any longer with being relegated to the academic and private realm, feminists started to conquer the public sphere and even mass culture: “radical feminism was no longer simply theoretical but rather became the way in which the group organized itself.”⁴¹ What’s more, feminism, which during the 1970s had been almost exclusively relegated to the academic realm, started to broaden its reach, reaching popular culture and even mass media. Local feminist writings and translated feminist content from other countries appeared in newspapers and magazines such as *Start* and *Bazar*, which had several women and notable feminists, such as Neda Todorović and Sofija Trivunac, in their editorial positions. TV and radio programs started to report on feminist events in Yugoslavia and abroad and even featured documentary series focusing on feminist programs as for example TV Beograd’s *Ona* (1980–1). Feminists were invited to speak in public programs and participate in radio discussions.⁴² This activist turn has to be understood in close relation to the political climate: “[It] shared elements of the emergence of a new civil society in the region, as the political landscape in Yugoslavia and the entire region of Eastern Europe was changing. The languages of human rights and democracy were slowly entering the Yugoslav discourse, and the feminists had their own conceptual input to this.” Feminist thought was influenced by works in criminology, psychology, and sociology, which offered a discursive foundation for the new and growing activism. Feminist conferences and an organized publishing systems were among the practical results of this turn as well, reflecting the institutionalization and organization of feminist discourse across Yugoslavia. Already during the late 1980s with a pronounced increase during the 1990s, women’s studies courses and study programs were created at the universities with scholars such as Žarana Papić, Lydia Sklevicky, Rada Iveković, Anđelka Milić, and Nada Ler-Sofronić teaching feminist histories in their classes. Overall, the growing variety of influences and its interconnection with popular culture led to an internal diversification of Yugoslav feminism during the 1980s and injected it with new energies.

Meje Kontrole continued to push the boundaries, for example, with their 1984 *Grožnja prihodnosti* (The Threat of the Future). The video shows two women (Gržinić and Šmid), one dressed glamorously in a black dress,

adorned with long earrings and with her hair done up, the other one topless with a black string wrapped around her breasts and neck. The women converse about their sexual lives and gay preferences. At the same time, however, we see them perform in a night show on a TV screen that is shown behind them. In it, they dance to songs by Yello and the punk band Racija v kliniki Mercator (the first female punk band in Yugoslavia of which Gržinić and Šmid were the singers). Underneath them, provocative sentences such as “Take me, I’m yours” and “D’ya think I’m sexy?” are displayed. During the last part, the video displays a text on capital punishment in full screen after which the two women are shown in a bathroom where they exchange thoughts on a constructed police case in Ljubljana and the highly debated imprisonment of several punks who were labeled “nazi punks” by the socialist government. The viewer is put in a voyeuristic position, which is amplified by the double performance taking place in the video: the women conversing “privately,” about difficult and intimate topics, while at the same time being shown entertaining a (male) audience in the show behind them. Much like *Ikone glamourja, odmevi smrti*, *Grožnja prihodnosti* functions as an attempt to destabilize binary systems of power and unmask the increasing sexualization of the visual space of mass culture, which follows codification according to male principles. As the artists describe:

The public is in relation to the dance as in a peep show; that is implying a pornographic public eye, but as well a constant pornographic perpetuation of our lives by law and mass media. Instead of the Foucauldian society of discipline, contemporary societies with media commercials and spectacles, as was announced by Guy Debord, will control us, devouring our lives, shaping our needs, teasing our desires.

What’s more, with their works, the artists attempt to create spaces that deconstruct hegemonic rules and instead allow for contestations. With an eye specifically on the situation under socialism, they want to introduce alternatives—bathrooms, bedrooms, the private sphere—for creating agencies: “If socialism effectively prevented people from claiming public spaces which were in effect owned by the party elite, then it was necessary to re-construct other public spaces. It was also possible to do this by reclaiming history and sexuality, which in turn generated spaces of resistance against the ideological and political, patriarchal and institutions of power.”⁴³

In 1984 Gržinić collaborated with Dušan Mandić on a video work with the unwieldy title *Cindy Sherman ali histerija produkcija predstavlja rekonstrukcijo fotografij Cindy Sherman* (Cindy Sherman or Hysteria Productions Presents a Reconstruction of Cindy Sherman’s photographs). In many ways, the work, which was part of a broader IRWIN project called *Back to the USA*, draws references on consumer culture and the mass media. Like *Grožnja prihodnosti*, and *Ikone glamourja, odmevi smrti*, *Cindy*

Sherman interrogates the sexualized visual sphere of the mass media, yet this time via an intermediary, another artist's work. Its title riffs on the opening credits of movies, where one frequently encounters a large production company "presenting" a piece to the audience. For *Cindy Sherman*, Gržinić and Mandić reconstruct Sherman's seminal *Untitled Film Stills*, which the American artist had started in 1977. As in *Ikone glamourja, odmevi smrti*, the artists bring in music as a central component of the work, this time featuring *Borghesia*. Over the course of three minutes, Gržinić reconstructs a selection of Sherman's stills—maintaining a careful balance between emulating the notion of a non-moving photographic capture—the still—versus the capture of motion on the video camera. It becomes immediately clear that the "stillness" of the photographs is enacted for the video camera. Whereas Sherman's stills are carefully designed static moments supposed to evoke a larger narrative, Gržinić's operate the other way around, forcing movement into uncomfortable immobility. For her work, Sherman had deliberately chosen certain stereotypical images of women—as *femme fatale*, as housewife, nurse, fashion victim, society lady, and the lies—appropriating them in order to expose their construction through the media. Gržinić reappropriates them, but imbues them with small disruptions of the perfection one gets from a film still. In doing so, she seems to upend the passivity with which women are captured in the media, with which they are used as commodities in consumer culture. Gržinić's personas defy the immobilization women have received as one of their major characteristics in the visual realm—be it advertising, art history, but also the moving image, where the immobilization is achieved ideologically.

Contrary to Poznanović, who never considered her work as feminist, Meje Kontrole addressed feminist topics pronouncedly in their work and Marina Gržinić in fact authored a number of texts on the topic. What has to be noted for all of the works in this chapter, in any case, is their emancipatory value—the refusal to stay within the boundaries of established values and systems of power of official cultural policy. Poznanović adopted video and new media art at a time when it was virtually unknown in Yugoslavia and, undeterred by criticism or censorship, developed her practice and her ideology. Meje Kontrole took the just nascent and highly controversial topic of non-normative sexuality as focus point of their video work, not only lending it visibility by doing so but also using it as a harsh criticism of the sociopolitical situation at a time when the crumbling socialist government gave way to regressive trends in terms of gender roles and equality. In doing so, they furthered the development of video as artistic medium, which Poznanović had begun a decade earlier. With few exceptions, among them Sanja Iveković's and Dalibor Martinis's early works, several of Ana Nuša and Srečo Dragan's pieces, as well as Miha Vipotnik's art, video had been mainly investigated for its documentary purposes and with regard to its aesthetic and technical properties during the 1970s. The 1980s saw a

shift toward its semantic, structural, and political meaning as well as its social significance with notable agents besides Meje Kontrole, including Marko Kovačić, Andrej Lupinc, Marijan Osole-Max, and the FV 112/15 conglomerate. These artists discovered video as a carrier of meaning and messages, transmitting narratives and visuals.

The women in this chapter helped the medium video, which had been barely known in the early 1970s, to grow in popularity and, as a result, the number of programs, exhibitions, and festivals dedicated to video grew throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s. The Student Cultural Center in Belgrade and the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art started organizing exhibitions of video art such as the SKC's *Video Encounters*. These exhibitions often happened in collaboration with the Ursula Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck, Austria, the Cavalino Gallery in Venice, or the Art/Tape Studio in Florence. As detailed in Chapter 1, the fifth *April Meeting* at the SKC in 1978 already had featured a segment devoted exclusively to video art, and in 1979, Blazevic and Tomić even organized a four-day festival dedicated exclusively to video art and video performance. It comprised several aspects of video art and related practices such as video performance, video installation, and sound performance, and among the artists featured were Joseph Beuys, Klaus von Bruch, Radomir Damnjan, Ana Nuša and Srečo Dragan, Sanja Iveković, Friederike Pezold, Ulrike Rosenbach, Dragana Žarevac, Jasmina Tešanović, and Raša Todosijević.⁴⁴ *Video CD*, the first video art Biennial in Ljubljana, was founded in 1983 and ran until 1987 under the direction of Miha Vipotnik, and the Academic Film Center in Belgrade started to organize the annual *Yugoslav Alternative Film and Video Festival* in 1982. Ljubljana's ŠKUC Gallery initiated a Saturday Video Box Bar, open to audience request, and the FV 112/15 group added FV Video, shooting a weekly video wallpaper for their Disco FV program. They also established the Sunday Video Club at Kersnik Street and ultimately co-founded the video section at ŠKD. Already in 1982, a special video section was established at Ljubljana's ŠKUC by Radmila Pavlović and Irma Mežnarić. Writing about video art appeared in ŠKUC Forum's newsletter *Viks*, the student newspaper *Tribuna*, and *Ekran* magazine, among others. In 1986 appeared the first publication entirely dedicated to video art, *Videosfera: video/društvo/umetnost* (Videosphere: Video/Society/Art), edited by video maker Mihailo Ristić.⁴⁵ Notable is also Dunja Blažević's *TV Galerija*, which ran from 1981 to 1991 on Yugoslav Network and effectively brought video art to the mass media. For the program, Blažević invited various artists and offered them TV equipment to produce works which were then shown within the regular TV program. The outcomes varied greatly, ranging from artistic creations to music videos to fictional narratives. *TV Galerija* is an important document of interdisciplinary, socially engaged artistic and curator practice, and even today, it remains an unsurpassed model of conceptual public television and of the place of art within it.⁴⁶

4

Social Activism and Political Art

By the late 1980s, the Yugoslav idea had become unpopular to the extent that even the memory of Tito, previously upheld with all honor, was tarnished: “Nobody wanted to be Yugoslav anymore. People wanted to be Serbian or Croatian or Slovenian. Yugoslavia doesn’t mean anything anymore.”¹ Over the second half of the 1980s, the Yugoslav republics had become more and more isolated from each other, and demarcated their territorial, cultural, and ethnic boundaries with increasing force. All the regions had adopted diverging political ideologies and systems strongly based on notions of nationalism and ethnic purity, which became most prominent in Serbia and Croatia. The prospect of autonomous nation-states grew in popularity and elections held in 1990 swept into power nationalist parties and their leaders. Slovenia’s and Croatia’s declaration to leave the Yugoslav federation on June 25, 1991, marked the beginning of a series of violent conflicts in the region which would eventually lead to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the formation of old or new nation-states, in which the realm of arts and culture became a tool for political propaganda.

The outbreak of the wars heavily impacted the art scene of the decade. Not only did opportunities for artists diminish significantly, but the entire nature of the formerly well-connected Yugoslav art scene changed when cultural and intellectual ties were broken.

In 1989, still, an exhibition called *Yugoslav Documents* had been held in Sarajevo. The exhibition, curated by artists Jusuf Hadžifejzović and Rade Tadić, was supposed to confirm a common Yugoslav artistic space and comprised both young artists and older generations. As Muhamed Karamehmedović states in the exhibition catalog foreword, the *Yugoslav Documents* exhibition “should be viewed as both turning to our own tradition and a common all-Yugoslav programme or plan which should bring our creators and our country as a whole into the modern world.”² Only two years later, the cultural sector had been thoroughly segmented, and the arts were deprived of many of its abilities. Many previously liberal

artists and intellectuals turned against their colleagues, not able to put the value of tolerance and dialogue over nationalist political interests.

Artistic voices critical of the nationalist agendas were undesirable, and experimentation and radicality were nothing the new governments endorsed. Censorship became a frequently used instrument to ensure compliance with official doctrine and, where this would not suffice, forced oustings and threats were applied.³ Exchange between like-minded people opposing the new political directions was difficult across borders and boundaries. Therefore, those who sought to preserve art's autonomy or utilized it as a critique of the present situation often faced difficulties and were left with a feeling of isolation, fatalism, and resignation in the face of the strong resistance to any emancipatory, antiwar, and antinationalist positions. As art historian Stevan Vuković describes:

Unions of artists, critics, curators and theoreticians abandoned the institutional territories and moved out into their parallel worlds, remaining, through a greater part of the last decade of the twentieth century, in a state of permanent internal exile, in a unique triple hoop of the lack of communicability, caused by their own refusal to participate in the reality forced upon them, then on the institutional blockade of art courses that were considered to be inadequate for the paradigm of the new establishment's representation, as well as of the blockade of state borders that referred to all forms of international cooperation, including that in the domain of art and culture.⁴

Several artists, among them Katalin Ladik, Vesna Perunović, Dragan Klaić, Leila Mulabegović, or Nada Kokotović, a feminist theater director and member of the political KPGT theater group, left to continue their practice in exile. Many, however, stayed and continued their work against the rising difficulties. Since the official cultural scene had become a politically charged arena, artists shifted their focus to the space outside of the art world's institutions and programs to realize their projects, organizing themselves independently as much as possible and often operating in the underground.

The nationalist zeal that emerged in Yugoslavia during the 1980s was also accompanied by a stark regression in women's rights, which amplified when the Yugoslav wars broke out in 1991. The formation of the nation-states and their violent struggle to ensure domination were accompanied by re-patriarchalization and a re-traditionalization of gender roles, resulting in misogyny, discrimination, exploitation, and violence against women. The new state leaderships promoted a particularly traditional image of women aimed at eliminating them from active involvement in any political and even public discourse and reinstating them as passive entities by confining them to the private realm of the household and interrelating them inextricably with the ideal of mother and caretaker. Through the strategic withdrawal of support such as daycare, household assistance, or flexible work times,

the new governments deprived women of the opportunity to work without having to state that goal clearly in any constitution. Laws were reinstated to place the decision over abortion and in some cases even contraception into the hands of the state, leaving women's groups in fear of antiabortion laws.⁵ For Žarana Papić, who was among the feminists to remain particularly active and vocal during the war years, "the patriarchal recolonization of women's bodies was central to post-communist processes of 'democratic' transformations."⁶

Female agency of this period, therefore, is inextricably linked to the political situation, becoming manifest especially in social activism aimed against the oppressive situation for women but also against the warmongering of the warring states and the instrumentalization of the cultural sphere for political ideals. At the same time, female artists started to use their art to articulate their individual responses and their resistance to the developments and negotiating issues such as the searches for national identity, the instrumentalization of women for political purposes, and the violence that surrounded them.

Women's Activism

Feminism and, more generally, women's activism during the 1990s bear the clear mark of the political situation—the regression of women's rights through new constitutions as well as the effects of the armed conflicts. While feminist criticism of the new political regimes remained difficult, outspoken feminists such as Žarana Papić, Slavenka Drakulić, Daša Duhaček, Anđelka Milić, and Svetlana Slapsak continued to rally against the new nationalism and its drastic effects on women in numerous writings.⁷ While a lot of the critical feminist writings had to be published outside the Yugoslav regions, local feminist publishing continued as well, even while the wars were raging: In 1994, the journals *Feminističke sveske* (The Feminist Notebooks), *Ženske studije* (Women's Studies), and *Profemina* were published and in Belgrade the feminist publishing house '94 was founded.

A larger women's movement concerned with women's rights and societal change developed as a reaction against the political turmoil. What it was able to achieve in particular was a significant pacifist movement and the generation of a large number of humanitarian aid initiatives such as SOS hotlines or shelters. Already in early November 1990, just before the national elections in Serbia, a group of women in Belgrade formed ZEST (Ženska stranka), the Women's Party. Among the initiating members were Marina Blagojević, Vesna Goković, Maja Korać, Anđelka Milić, Žarana Papić, and Lina Vusković. Their primary aim was not to win elections but to lend impetus to the emergence of a grassroots women's movement and to provide an umbrella for various smaller, independent initiatives. However, the goals of the party were formulated in such a way as to go beyond women's rights

to encompass more extensive societal change under a clear antinationalist agenda. ZEST positioned itself “1. For democracy and against all forms and aspects of discrimination and authoritarian power and authority in society. 2. For peace, tolerance and co-operation among nations and peoples. 3. For quality of live [*sic*] as a crucial aim of development.” The party’s founders recognized the danger of the new regimes for all of society, without limiting their agency to gender exclusively, therewith taking a stance against nationalism at large.⁸

When the war broke out, thousands of women took to the streets to hand out antiwar petitions and organized silent protests. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian, Croat, and Muslim women stormed the parliament in Sarajevo, interrupting the session in progress, to demonstrate against the bloodshed. By organizing their disruption across ethnic and nationalistic boundaries, women at the same time took a stance against the ethnocentrism and racism engrained in the new political regimes. In the following years, a great number of initiatives aimed at protesting the war and providing shelter and support for women were founded across Yugoslavia and especially in Serbia and Croatia. In Zagreb, the Centre for Women War Victims was founded in 1992 to “provide assistance to women regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation.” Other feminist organizations in Croatia included the Independent Union of Women, Kareta, Nona (The Multimedia Women’s Centre), The Women’s Lobby Zagreb, and Women’s Help Now, which later split into the Antiwar Campaign Croatia and Autonomous Women’s House Zagreb.⁹ In Belgrade, women from various feminist organizations, the Women’s Party and other alternative groups founded the Center for Anti-War Action. At its helm stood Jelena Šantić, a soloist of the National Theater in Belgrade and a ballet historian, who, in 1995, also founded Group 484, a social and economic support program for displaced families, which provided legal protection for refugees as well as psychological assistance. A year earlier, in 1991, Women in Black was founded in Belgrade, a network of women across the Balkans, which dedicated itself to peacebuilding activities. Active until the present day, Women in Black equally recognizes the need to transcend geographical, ethnic, and cultural boundaries and has grown into an international phenomenon. On their website, the organization states: “Women in Black is a world-wide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence. As women, experiencing these things in different ways in different regions of the world, we support each other’s movements.”¹⁰ Women in Black’s negation of national, ethnic, or religious differentiations is exemplary for the ability of the women’s movement of the 1990s to overcome ethnic and nationalist separations. The women behind the initiatives were able to come together to make a stand not only against the regressive gender politics but also against the nationalism it was engrained in. The relationships built by women’s groups in the previous decade thus

were able to endure longer than the Yugoslav federation itself. What's more, women's solidarity above and beyond national identity made the women's movement of the decade unique as most other movements had become nationalized to various degrees.

While the ultranationalist governments in Serbia and Croatia, for example, were not able to actively ban these endeavors, they did seek to disempower women's organizations and initiatives by refusing them coverage, presenting them in a negative light, branding them as "selfish," ridiculing them, or by retracting funding, where available. Women participating were labeled as "traitors," "cowards," "unpatriotic," and as harmful to the quest of national unity that the regimes sought. But this could not stop women's political engagement. As initiatives like ZEST or Women in Black show, during the 1990s, women in Yugoslavia realized even more urgently the commonality of oppression and marginalization they faced across regions, states, and political systems and the dire need for mutual support and empowerment.

In addition to their antiwar activities and organizations, feminists also documented the widespread abuse of women during the wars and amassed evidence for its persecution as war crime. They also remained committed to furthering educational programs that focused on and were geared toward women and gender studies at large. Since negotiations with official educational bodies were difficult, feminists Žarana Papić, Anđelka Milić, and Marina Blagojević started to think about possibilities outside the university that would allow them to bring together knowledge and action. Together, they founded the Centar za ženske studije (Women's Study Center) in Belgrade, which became one of the most important institutes for women's and gender studies in former Yugoslavia. The women designed their own curriculum, chose their own lecturers, and pursued their own publications. The first academic year was organized by Sonja Drljević and Daša Duhaček. Their idea was to empower women activists from all backgrounds, ages, professions, and levels of education and to help the women's movement by means of theory and learning. The women of the Women's Study Center recognized the importance of theoretical knowledge for the growth of the movement and vice versa. With the foundation of the Center they also responded to the needs of a growing number of women activists, women scholars, and women in academia who sought to explore the field on their own terms and without pressure from the official side. The Women's Study Center furthered the recognition of women's and gender studies as an important academic field, as a result of which it could grow throughout the 1990s and ultimately become a part of the curriculum of a variety of universities and teaching institutes. A Center for Women's Studies was also founded in Zagreb in 1995 by a group of feminists, theorists, scholars, and peace activists. The Center, operating to the present day, offers an interdisciplinary program and expert knowledge on women's issues and

functions as a meeting point for academic discourse, artistic practice, and activist engagement. In addition to seminars, lectures, workshops, as well as a library and research activities, the Center also disposes of a publishing program, which focuses, in particular, on feminist research and theory from Croatia.

As has been stated before, initially, the women's and feminist initiatives that emerged after the fall of socialism in Yugoslavia or were carried over from the socialist period were characterized by a sense of unity and solidarity, which was generated mostly by the women's unequivocal rejection of nationalism with its ultra-masculinist and violent connotations. What's more, they viewed ethnicity as incompatible with women's agency: "It is impossible to merge nation and gender—they are different understandings of human nature and human essence. It is therefore impossible to be equally of one's nation and of one's gender."¹¹ However, this feeling of working against a common factor was not able to outlast the war years unscathed. As Jill Benderly, Dubravka Žarkov, and Ana Miškovska Kajevska point out, for some more "nationalist" feminists, it became difficult to maintain friendly connections with their peers from other regions but also within their own and the feminists who opposed nationalism and disagreed with politics.¹² Despite continuing to share a common goal—end the war and violence against women—feminists from different regions started to perceive the situation differently and set different foci of action once their own country was being invaded or their population threatened. Therefore, the unity that characterized feminism at the beginning of the 1990s wavered as the decade drew on. Meanings of ethnicity, of nationality and nationalism, and of victimhood started to differ for feminists depending on their respective context, ultimately being linked to the definition of the war and the question of whether it is liberating, occupying, civil, or ethnic. The larger feminist movement of the 1990s became separated into "nationalist" feminists on the one side, antinationalist on the other, and many in-between. Several women's organizations such as Zagreb's Women's Help Now, for example, split into "antinationalist" and more "nationalist" camps and new "nationalist" feminist groups formed, most prominently in Croatia, whose enmity with Serbia galvanized during the war. While the more "nationalist" groups and advocates obviously were actively supported by the media and press, antinationalist feminists, such as Slavenka Drakulić, were subjected to harassment and stigmatized as "witches." Several attempts were made to reignite dialogue among the feminists with two national conferences being held in 1992 (Zagreb) and 1995 (Medulin, Istria), but the differences were increasingly hard to bridge. Therewith, the conflicts ultimately managed to shake the overarching antinationalist urgency, which had been one of the foundations that Yugoslav feminism of the previous two decades had been built on.¹³

Alma Suljević and Artistic Resistance

The drastic political, social, and cultural changes, the regressive gender politics, and the horrors of the war years lastingly shaped the work of female artists. Not only can one recognize the negotiation of larger sociopolitical but also very subjective and personal topics that were influenced by the circumstances of living as a woman in the oppressive environments of the former Yugoslav countries at war. Several projects also grew out of a concern with artistic freedom as well as from a desire to undermine political doctrine. In some cases, as for example Sanja Iveković's, artistic practice took on a different direction, becoming more activist or collaborative (e.g., *GEN XX*, 1997–2001, or *Women's House*, 1998–).¹⁴ Often, however, it was also through their use of media that artists adapted and/or responded to the circumstances. The latter was the case for Bosnian artist Alma Suljević, who had worked as a de-miner during the Bosnian war and lived in Sarajevo, a city that had suffered tremendously during the war. On January 9, 1992, the Serb nationalist party had declared the Republika Srpska in the north-eastern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the population was largely Serbian. In reaction, Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence on March 6, which immediately started fighting all over the region. The results were terrible. The Bosnian-Serbian quest to “cleanse” Bosnia of non-Serbs led to shootings of civilians, massacres, burnings, lootings of homes, mosques, and churches, and the forced expulsion of thousands of people. Sarajevo came under siege and turned into a de-facto divided city in which Bosniaks and Bosnian-Serbs mercilessly clashed. It became even worse when Croatian forces became involved as well. Initially supposedly forming an alliance with Bosnia, it soon became clear that Croatia desired nothing else but an independent Croatian Republic on Bosnian territory as well, leading to Bosnia having to fight on two fronts. The war in Bosnia, which lasted until 1995, when a NATO intervention managed to target the Army of the Republika Sprska, was among the darkest chapters of the Yugoslav wars. To this day, the genocide that occurred in Srebrenica, at the hands of the Republika Sprska, is being denied by ultra-national Serbs.

Throughout the 1990s, Suljević produced a number of works negotiating the impact of the war not only on her personally but also on the population at large. Born in a small mining town in Central Bosnia—Kakanj—in 1963, Suljević studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, obtaining an MA in sculpture. The professor she studied with was killed by fire from the Serbian forces during the siege of Sarajevo in June 1992. Deprived of regular artistic material, in 1992 the artist created a sculpture titled *Kentauromahia* from the remnants of a tram, which had been shelled during the siege and had remained in the center of the city (Figure 4.1). The work is an impressive, large-scale rendering of a horse and centaur in the middle of a fight, with the horse reared on its hindlegs and towering over the kneeling centaur. The figures are made



FIGURE 4.1 *Alma Suljević, Kentauiromahia, installation, 1992, photo by Dženat Dreковиć © Alma Suljević, image courtesy of the artist.*

of grate or mesh wire and sit atop the tram's undercarriage. The original intention was for the sculpture to actually move about the city, but it was targeted by snipers and had to remain in place. The work references a Greek myth in which the ancient race of the centaurs is defeated by the Lapith, a group of people from Thessaly, who were in fact the cousins of the centaurs. The Centauiromachy was a battle between the Lapiths and the centarus which was triggered by the attempted kidnapping of Hippodamia and the other Lapith women by the centaurs. The attempt was thwarted by the intervention of Theseus, who came to the aid of the Lapith, and ended with the centaurs being expelled from Thessaly. With the centaurs being portrayed as savages unable to control their instinct, the myth has been sometimes interpreted as a battle between barbarism and civilization. In the contemporary context of the sculpture's creation, it signifies the resilience of the people of Sarajevo, who had to endure years of fear, violence, and intrusion, yet were unwilling to give up. The artist conceived of the sculpture from her own emotional response to the siege, stating: "I tried to capture my inner kentauiromachy, so that each of us, who recognise [*sic*] this struggle, sees in it their own struggle and that at night, when shells are falling next to their head or their bed, remembers their first thought: should I remain in Sarajevo?"¹⁵

At the same time, however, it also embodies the undying creativity characterizing Sarajevo, which even the most brutal chapter of the war was not able to subdue. Suljević's approach when creating *Kentauiromahia* is indicative of the larger situation faced by artists in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war, and in particular, besieged Sarajevo. Sarajevo and Bosnia at large suffered greatly from excessive shelling by the Serbian and Croatian armies, and important cultural heritage was mercilessly destroyed. The famous arched bridge in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, hundreds of years old, which for many symbolized the country's Islamic heritage, was blown up by

Croat forces on November 9, 1993. The National Library and the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo were reduced to rubble and with them thousands of irreplaceable manuscripts and books. National museums, churches, mosques, schools, archives, and even graveyards were bombed, testifying to the ruthless attack on culture in the warring nations' attempt to erase the opponent's cultural pillars and rewrite history to one's own advantage. As Sabrina P. Ramet describes: "Culture has most transparently figured in this war as an arena in which political ambitions have been projected."¹⁶

For artists, this act of destruction meant a complete lack of materials to create art with, not to speak of exhibition opportunities. This, of course, affected the nature of the art created during the war greatly—as a result of the material shortage, artists such as Suljević improvised with everyday material found on the street. Another local artist, Edo Numankadić, used waste humanitarian aid packaging, Affan Ramić scavenged ruins and destroyed buildings for wallpaper or posters to create his collages, and the sculptors Mustafa Skopljak and Ante Jurić collected and used broken glass and half-burned timber for their work. Radically new artistic styles, grounded in the everyday life experiences, emerged from these experiments, which make the Bosnian "war art" a truly unique phenomenon. The contrast with the pre-war style, which had been rather traditional and provincial since Bosnia did not dispose of the educational and exhibition opportunities found in Zagreb or Belgrade, is scarring.¹⁷

This widespread destruction also necessitated the dispersion of the arts into new and improvised spaces. With official institutes destroyed or closed, artists moved to alternative venues such as the ruins of the Sutjeska Cinema, the abandoned St. Vincent church, as well as private apartments or the streets to showcase their work. These exhibitions entailed a much greater (voluntary or involuntary) involvement of the general public as well as a close collaboration between artists, who became organizers and curators of their own work. As Asja Mandić points out, this resulted in an increased sense of community as well as socially oriented formats with "the phenomenon of exhibition openings as situations producing processes of gathering and socialisation where visitors became historical witnesses as well as co-producers and protagonists of critical space."¹⁸ Azra Begić, the curator of *Witnesses of Existence*, an exhibition held at the Sutjeska Cinema in 1993, describes the spirit dominating the Sarajevo art scene of the time: "The most interesting and the most vital part of the Sarajevo art stage throughout this war is the art firmly anchored in our infernal everyday existence obtaining from it not only inspiration for its ideas and creative flights but also the material for their realization."¹⁹ Stripped down to bare necessities, both in terms of everyday life as well as artistic creation, many artists in Sarajevo started to understand their work as a form of active cultural resistance against the military oppression and the constant threat

of the destruction of both physical landscape and cultural heritage and identity—a struggle that *Kentauromahia* implicitly illustrates.

Suljević continued to devote her artistic practice to not only exposing the blights of the conflict but actively remedying it—as far as possible for her. Her focus became the landmines that proved lethal to countless people during the war and harm Bosnia's citizens even decades after the conflict has ended. In her earlier works, she treated the mines almost sculpturally, exhibiting them on pedestals in galleries and exhibition spaces. In doing so, she confronted the viewer head on with one of the cruelest—because invisible—killing devices. She later added minefield maps to the display, which she placed on the floor and marked with her own traumatic memories of the war. In other iterations, the artist gave the mines female names and packed them in hat boxes, a gesture to the large number of females killed by mines, which were placed by the almost exclusively male warmongers of the Yugoslav conflicts and as an allusion to the male connotation of warfare per se, which shows no regard for female suffering but heedlessly instrumentalizes women for their purpose. After the war had ended, Suljević continued her work with landmines, employing an activist approach, which at times involved the actual deactivation of mines (*4 Entity*, 1997, and *Annulling the Truth*, 1999). In order to finance her work, she started to sell small bags, handcrafted by the artist, containing soil from the land where the mines were found.²⁰

Žaneta Vangeli and the Search for National Identity

The issue of finding and defining a new national identity after the disintegration of Yugoslavia has been at the core of Macedonian artist Žaneta Vangeli's works of the 1990s. Throughout the Yugoslav period, Macedonia itself did not dispose of significant opportunities for artists in terms of education or visibility with the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje retaining monopoly status but remaining firmly tied to the ideas of socialist modernism and less open to experimental alternatives. Therefore, artists often traveled to Belgrade or Zagreb to attend study programs. These opportunities became even less after the war had broken out, yet a number of local artists, among them Aneta Sveglieta, Violeta Blaževska, Blagoja Manevski, Bogdan Grabuloski, Bedi Ibrahim, or Žaneta Vangeli, left their mark on the local scene, positioning themselves against old and current doctrines.

Already in 1992, Vangeli created *The Small War, The Big War*, an installation juxtaposing four small icons painted on wood with objects from the war: bullets, military belts, floppy disks, and so on. This work seems to

pose a very simple but harrowing question: Is war our new religion? With her *Social Plastic of Macedonia* (1996), Vangeli then reflects on the effects that post-socialism has on her home country. The work was exhibited as part of the group project *Liquor Amnii* at Čifte Amam, a fifteenth-century Turkish bath in Skopje. It consisted of three installations in different rooms. Referencing the three media used in the rooms—photography in the first, objects in the second, and video in the third—the artist described them “photo space, object space, and video space.”²¹ The first part was called *The Inner Circle* and consisted of six black-and-white photographs, which were life-sized depictions of the North Macedonian minister of foreign affairs Ljubomir Danailov Frčkoski, the archbishop of the Macedonian Orthodox Church Gospodin Gospodin Mihail, and Baškim Ademi, a well-known underground figure (Figure 4.2). While three images, who were grouped on one side of the room, were sharp, their opposing copies showing the same figures were blurred. Arranged in reference to the Holy Trinity, the choice of figures represents the “power of the church, thus the renaissance of religion and faith in the new post-socialist, now capitalist system, the power of the official state apparatus itself and the power of the unknown, disintegrated underground energies that are not fully under control of the system.” In doing so, the work provides an attempt to visually expose the layout of power of the Macedonian state in transition. Placing Ademi in the middle suggests a recent weakening of the religious and political spheres with neither the government nor the church being recognized in the wider international context. With North Macedonia experiencing a rise in drug trafficking after its independence, this can also be understood as a comment on drugs—or more generally illegal businesses—becoming a form of new religion in the states. The blurring of the opposing pictures acts as a metaphor for the fact that some of the most important defining points of a nation had to be



FIGURE 4.2 Žaneta Vangeli, *The Inner Circle*, part of *Social Plastic of Macedonia*, installation, 1996 © Žaneta Vangeli, image courtesy of the artist.

renegotiated in Yugoslavia's successor states after the disintegration of the country. For Vangeli, the juxtaposition has an ambivalent function, predicting the individual's (or the spheres they present) approach, while also hinting at their introspective state of mind, a form of "visual departure."²² The second part of the installation was called *Spiritual Macedonia or Anything Goes* and included ten Macedonian flags that faced two diptychs made of objects: two plates made from lead and golden wood and framed objects with poppies, which form the base of the production of opium and alkaloids. They were chosen by the artist as a symbol for the anesthetized human mind which became a rather common occurrence in her country at the time. The lead and golden wood installation, on the other hand, directly references the alchemic procedure of turning lead into gold and stands for the potential of spiritual evolution, both on an individual and a collective level. The entire installation with its objects framing the flags speaks of how the society of the new state is "marked" as Macedonian. The third part was a two-channel video installation titled *Anamnesis of how Al Hansen Explains the Ultimate Plastic to Baškim Ademi*. It shows Ademi, in an anamnestic state of mind, watching Fluxus artist Al Hansen recite one of his poems. Hansen is also reflected in the title with the notion of "ultimate plastic" being inspired by the "Ultimate Akademie" in Cologne, which was established by Hansen with Lisa Cieslik in 1987. The juxtaposition of Ademi's physical presence yet the obvious absence of his clear mind and rational thinking again references the chaotic state in Vangeli's home country.

In 1996, the artist created *Postcommunist Plastic*, a work consisting of ball-point pen handwriting on four transparent paper sheets. Vangeli chose texts from two sources, with one being the Bible (the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians, the Philippians, and the Thessalonians) and the other being from the daily newspaper *Nova Makedonija*, June 19, 1996, the newspaper that Vangeli, who at the time lived between Macedonia and Germany, took with her on a plane. The newspaper text is written on the first sheet of paper with the following three layers containing the biblical texts. The texts, however, are so faint that they are impossible to read and, according to the artist, they are not meant to be read. To Vangeli, the work is as much a personal reflection as it is an outlook on the current state of her home country where reference points and different spheres of influences (political, religious, cultural) oscillate, making it difficult to find clear markers of orientation and stability. She describes it as a "product of that past euphoric ambiance in Macedonia in the nineties, when the new independent state with a brand-new system had a bright and enthusiastic vision for its further existence and development on all levels, cultural, political, economic, spiritual."²³ The reference to the Bible can be understood as a comment on the renewed importance of the church in North Macedonia, which came to be largely neglected during the socialist period. The texts chosen negotiate the displacement of values ("Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will") which then inserts into the *Postcommunist*

Plastic the question of how far the church's values are valid in the present context or mere pseudo-values. This interpretation is sharpened by the juxtaposition with the newspaper, which on the contrary to the biblical text deals with very real issues faced by a population under war. The delicate paper of the *Postcommunist Plastic* hints at the fragility of the new identities of the former Yugoslav regions. With the Yugoslav socialist corset missing, and a decade of violence adding chaos and complexity, all of the new nation-states struggled with building their identity, not only internally but also in the global context. North Macedonia faced not only difficulties in setting up a legitimate government, the rising drug use and traffic caused a very difficult situation not only within the country but also in its acceptance by other countries as well. The nation even had to face a long struggle over its name and flag, both of which were disputed by Greece so that the country initially had to settle for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (abbreviated FYROM), which was changed to Republic of North Macedonia in 2019. The fact that the paper of Vangeli's *Postcommunist Plastic* is transparent not only asks questions about the stability of the Macedonian—but also the former Yugoslav—identity but also seems to allude to its authenticity and weight: what constitutes a national identity? Is it a flag, a currency, a political direction? Or are these things merely imposed on a population and their country but in fact a threadbare construction that can change quickly?

Throughout her work, Vangeli, who works in a variety of media, has been interested in the entanglements and mutual interferences of the sacred and the profane and historical and mystical notions of time and space. She frequently investigates into Byzantine theology or its modern interpretations and interlaces it with pressing political and social issues of her home country, as for example in the *Social Plastic of Macedonia*, but also later works such as *Culturalism* or *About the Ontological Failure of Tragedy* (1999):

the artist tries to grasp the full complexity of contemporary Macedonian society: issues surrounding the acceptance of the country's official state insignia (as is well known, objections from Greek authorities led Macedonia to change its official name, coat of arms and flag), its unrecognised church, and governmental involvement in drug trafficking, on the one hand, and on the other, globalisation offered as a preserver of life.²⁴

Culturalism, which the artist showed as part of the group exhibition *Always Already Apocalypse* in Skopje and Istanbul, consists of seven parts and reflects on the artist's perception of the Apocalypse, which, as the title suggests, to her is not a tragedy but instead a crucial and inevitable part of the process of transformation of all creations.²⁵ For one of the work's parts called *Posthistorical Tourism*, Vangeli created a large-scale print of a photograph of the interior of the Hagia Sofia with frescoes and Islamic writings inscribed as ornaments over them. In addition, the inverted image was projected on a slide below the images, creating the illusion of a reflection

in water and an interesting contrast between “real” and “imaginary.” With the Hagia Sofia, Vangeli chooses an example of a religious structure that underwent a tragic shift of purposes, first when it was brutally converted to another religion’s temple, then its secularization and conceptual deprivation of Christian liturgies, and finally when it became more of a tourist attraction than a temple for prayer.

Other parts of the work include glass cases showcasing Macedonian bank notes (denars), which feature a reproduction of the fourteenth-century icon of Madonna Episkepsis with infant Jesus (*ready-made icon*), and a reproduction of a poppy flower (*Amarxistic Anaesthetic or Opium is Opium for the People*), four neckties arranged in the shape of a cross (*Designism*), portraits of Augusto Pinochet and Saddam Hussein (*Godchild*) as well as a photograph of the model of a church that was developed for purposes of testing seismological resistance and had been found in the venue where Vangeli’s work was initially shown, The Institute for Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology in Skopje (*Ceci n’est pas une église*). Vangeli puts into a dialogue a variety of references—religious, cultural, political, social—therewith diffusing their dogmatic clarity.

Culturalism suggests a loss of tradition and asks questions about the importance of religion and religious beliefs, which are substituted with other, contemporary dogmata. The work not only references cultural misunderstandings and confusions, as for example through the history of the Hagia Sofia itself, but also political power and indoctrination with the portraits and the denar notes, whose imprint with religious figures amounts to blasphemy from a religious point of view. The government, of course, chose the money design carefully in an attempt to illustrate the new post-communist re-orientation toward religion, but in doing so, it suggests an equation of divine presence with capital, with the money perversely gaining the significance of a sacral object. The reverse of the 500 denar note features a poppy flower, which was originally intended to reference the country’s natural resources but has since rather illuminated its role in drug manufacturing and trafficking. The title of this part, *Amarxistic Anaesthetic or Opium is Opium for the People*, cleverly implies the newly established antithesis of Marxist ideology—“Religion is opium for the people”—which “suddenly morphed into a condition of collective anesthesia.”²⁶ The work creates a tense dialogue between the sacred and the profane, and its clashes of meaning emphasize the chaotic social, cultural, and political life in Macedonia at the time. Suzana Milevska further suggests:

According to Vangeli, the only way to find meaning is through the mystical belief in redemption that does not depend on ephemeral or profane concepts of tragedy. While criticizing the social and cultural conflicts [. . .], Vangeli negates the relevance of tragedy even when caused by postcolonial cultural domination. In this context, Vangeli’s artistic concepts are influenced by Orthodox Christian theology. Tragedy

and suffering in earthly life are not recognized as relevant due to the sacral concepts of redemption and salvation obtained only through the Apocalypse.²⁷

Ema Kugler and Metaphors of Violence

Visual capture of the wars dominated the media landscape of the 1990s in every republic and was frequently used in such a way as to enforce nationalist narratives and political ideology. In any case, the representation of the destruction of the country and the violence against its population was traumatizing to many, be it those at home or those who witnessed it from exile. Many artists, such as Dragana Žarevac, Milica Tomić, or Meje Kontrole, worked through their experiences with the wars by drawing direct references and utilizing media captions of the horrors in their work. In Slovenian artist Ema Kugler's work, on the other hand, one can discern more metaphorical connections to the events. After having graduated from the Faculty of Economics at Ljubljana University (1981), Kugler was the head of the marketing department of Radio Študent for three years, a time during which she became acquainted with the punk scene and alternative art scene in the region. She remembers the (independent) arts of the period as being well-connected, multicultural, and free but had to witness firsthand the devastating impact that the nationalist surge and ensuing wars had on them. During the 1980s, Kugler, whose work later encompassed a variety of disciplines ranging from performance to video, film, screenwriting, choreography, to sculpture, started experimenting with fashion design. Her creations were strongly influenced by punk aesthetics, with the artist frequently employing leather and playing with rips or unexpected cuts, shapes, and outlines. Kugler had no interest to create for the mainstream fashion industry since to her "it uniforms people, makes them buyers because fashion has just changed for this season and you 'badly need' a new appearance, and this fashion industry is one of the biggest polluters of nature, I don't even mention how badly people who work in this industry are paid. So . . . one big NO to fashion."²⁸ Since her designs were too radical to find their way into stores and the artist had no interest in them doing so anyway, she decided to use them for performance events such as her first performance *Nostalgčni izrez* (Nostalgic cut, 1985)—a collaboration with Nada Vodušek and Jane Štravs, which took place at Čankarjev dom. Vodušek was asked by Kugler to also make some "unfashionable clothes" and provide a soundtrack of experimental music from the Radio Študent archives to which she had access as an employee. Štravs took photographs of the designs which were exhibited in front of the hall where the exhibition took place. Kugler deliberately chose Čankarjev dom for her event, which was a cultural center but not linked to the fashion industry and also to collaborate exclusively with members of the independent art scene.

Kugler's early works such as *Nostalgicni izrez* or *Party* (1987) were very much "against fashion, although the 'main characters' were clothes." A clear statement against the fashion industry was also made by Kugler when she was invited in 1987 by the newly founded *Ars Vivendi* to design a series of coats that would be featured in the magazine and were also supposed to be shown in an accompanying exhibition. The artist acquired mannequin dolls for her work, but instead of using them to display her creations, she incorporated them into her work, making a harsh anti-fashion statement by blindfolding them and hanging them from the ceiling. Needless to say, the exhibition was canceled.²⁹ Much of Kugler's early work remained undocumented since she refused to make money or notoriety any of her guiding principles. To her, it was more important to "be free, to do what we wanted to do and to irritate the governing politics and state that supported an art scene which served to those in power or to those who had money."³⁰

Kugler's creations of the 1990s transgress the boundaries of fashion even further. Her designs became full-body constructions featuring asynchronous angles, sharp elements and often whole or partial facial coverings, with their wearers acquiring an almost alienesque or biomechanical quality (Figure 4.3). Much like PPF and Linije Sile, with whom Kugler collaborated on one occasion, the artist started to use her designs to explore (and undermine) the meaning of fashion as an indicator of wealth and class, a marker of identity, and a reiterator of gender roles. Her designs, which often seem to be powered by imaginary worlds of the subconscious, stretched the boundaries of what fashion is and could be, asking what we perceive as "normal" or "abnormal" and transgressing delimitations between human-animal-fantastic-surreal. As Diana Koloini described in her review of Kugler's performance *Mankurt* (1990):

Her creations are not only clothes, but costumes that create creatures from the imagination that push the human body into another form of being. Almost sculptures, but in urgent need of a human body: not a body-mannequin that could give them volume, but a body in motion, a body as a live organism, whose form the clothes shape while also giving it movement. They push it into life.³¹

Kugler's designs also indicate the artist's strong interest in mythological worlds, which reappears in her performances and film works of the decade such as *Hydra* (1993), *Tajga* (1996), or *Menhir* (1999).³² For these works, Kugler designed the costumes, which she embedded in complex narrations utilizing mythological stories, metaphors of spiritual histories, and depictions of everyday rituals to comment on the contemporary social and political situation. For settings, she started to seek out places such as abandoned buildings or construction sites, places that had no connection to culture and art at all, since she remained critical of the mainstream art world as well.



FIGURE 4.3 Ema Kugler, *Mankurt*, performance, 1991, photograph by Jane Štraus © Ema Kugler, image courtesy of the artist.

Her 1993 short film *Hydra* draws from the mythological story of the same name, the serpent with multiple heads. The many heads (or faces) are echoed in the video's various scenes and elements. It opens with a foggy landscape through which a horse gallops. Following the horse, the viewer witnesses a figure clad in a bottom-length black cowl on the front of which a large



FIGURE 4.4 *Ema Kugler, Hydra, short film, 1993, photograph by Jane Štravs*
 © Ema Kugler, image courtesy of the artist.

mirror is attached (Figure 4.4). The video features several disturbing elements such as baby dolls affixed to grass and a revolving female figure—her head covered in a black hood—throwing skulls into the air, all underlined with slow electronic music. Later scenes cut to an industrial setting reminiscent of an old factory with several men and women appearing in Kugler’s fantastical designs. Dogs on chains are being thrown pieces of bloody meat. The next scene introduces a desert and features a heavily bleeding bull together with a Spanish flamenco dancer before, in the final scene, a figure wearing a red leather dress with its face covered is running through a dark tunnel. The video’s atmosphere is dark and ominous and allows for several layers of interpretation. One possible reading is humanity’s separation from nature. For one, this can be found symbolized by the artist’s costume designs, which give their bearers a mechanized and de-humanized appearance and visibly and physically demarcate them from their surroundings. The animals in the video, except the horse, are violated and suffering, and the scenes degrade from fertile meadows to desolate, barren surroundings. The last remnant of a connection between the human and natural world seems to be the relationship between a man and a bull that *Hydra* visualizes. The video exposes the endless violence men exert against nature, as well as their desire to exert control over the “other”—that which they are but which they want to separate themselves from desperately. It brings to mind the savage



FIGURE 4.5 *Ema Kugler, Tajga, short film, 1995, photograph by Miha Fras*
© Ema Kugler, image courtesy of the artist.

nature of humans, who, given the right circumstances and a threat to their existence, quickly can override humaneness.

The short film *Tajga* succeeded a performance of the same name that had been shown at the *City of Women International Festival of Contemporary Arts* in Ljubljana in 1995 (Figure 4.5). The viewer enters a very dark atmosphere dictated by dramatic electronic music and an almost black scenery, from which figures wearing Kugler's fantastic designs as well as wax figures of white dogs emerge. Initially, the camera zooms along the dog figures before a figure—its face partly covered by a mask—emerges and starts walking almost as if on a catwalk. The figure wears a black leather design with large shoulders and one of its sleeves is turned into a giant blade. At one moment, the figure wields the blade and the scene cuts to a woman drowning in a lake. Shortly after, two men disappear and start wrestling each other before the video cuts to a white statue whose hands equally are substituted by blades. Flames from above slowly make her disappear. Finally, several figures appear that are holding white shrouds in front of them, behind which they ultimately seem to disappear. All of these scenes are illuminated by strong spotlights, heightening the uncanniness and visual violence of the work. As in *Hydra*, in *Tajga*, Kugler's costumes strongly impact the appearance and impression of the figure and deprive it of its human qualities. The costume again determines the physical movements of its bearer, which assumes an almost mechanical, automated and surely very uncanny quality. The fact that the face of the figure inside the costume is largely hidden, emphasizes the surreal and machine-like quality. For Koloini, Kugler's fashion designs simply cannot exist in a magazine or on a catwalk since "despite all the horror, they are created as living beings who do not belong anywhere, but come to life only in their own world"—an observation that rings very true in the case of *Tajga*.³³ Read against the political situation during the decade *Tajga*

was created, the work becomes a political statement as well. Numerous references can be drawn to the violent conflicts ravaging Yugoslavia with the automatized, de-humanized figures becoming symbols of the effects that political indoctrination and ultimately armed conflict can have on people. The costumes become corsets people are being forced into and reminders of the dehumanization of humans that war entails. People lose their human(e) features when in military uniform: they are stripped of their individuality and are being turned into automated killing machines. The moments of conflict, destruction, and annihilation abound in *Tajga* when the statue and also the wax dog figures suddenly start to melt, with the shots of the two wrestlers fighting each other, and ultimately the drowning woman in the lake.

Her 1998 *Menhir* becomes even darker. With this work, the artist poses uncomfortable questions about the forces dominating contemporary life—and responsible for the turbulent last decade in former Yugoslavia: religion, politics, and the military. The video's violent tone is already set in the opening credits with its title, *Menhir*, appearing on a knife that protrudes from a sea of blood. The work then commences with an overlay of iconographic imagery of Jesus with the crown of thorns, the ultimate symbol of human suffering and martyrdom. Initially culled from various paintings, the images finally morph into a living being, who is bleeding heavily from the wounds caused by the thorns. Close-ups also reveal its eyes spilling blood. Set against dark, electronic music, the figure finally seems to transform into a horned mummy, which dissolves into the ether. Adam and Eve are referenced as well and emerge from two figures wearing an identical set of a costume designed by Kugler: a silver coat with one arm missing and the other extending into a long, flipper-like shape. In addition, the figures wear helmets that bear a gruesome red incision on top. The religious imagery again is drenched in blood. From Cranach's iconic Adam and Eve painting, two living figures emerge and start kissing with blood flowing heavily from their mouths and genitals. Blood continues to dominate the video which later features disturbing scenes of a nude man appearing before the contemporary tribunal of power, represented by the pope, an army general, and a politician. Without hesitation, the three men, who emerge from a menhir, shoot the defenseless man in the chest and watch him die with motionless expressions.

Upon the repetition of the scene a bit later in the video, however, the bullets prove effectless: the naked man transforms into a trident and the "holy trinity" suffocates on their silver bullets. Created in 1998, at the end of a violent decade that also marks the end of a country, the work reminds the viewer of the brutality that has characterized the past years and the often shameless utilization of power exercised by political, religious, and military leaders aiming to implement their respective agendas regardless of the cost

the regular people have to pay. For Kugler, her works are “one big NO to oppression generated by politics, the army, and religion. The slavery is not over yet, it just looks differently.” This, in her view, can be applied not only to the moment when armed conflict is taking place, but is incorporated into our everyday life where empathy and humaneness often are easily forgotten for the sake of one’s own comfort.³⁴

Jelica Radovanović and Woman as Symbol

For many artists, it was especially the deteriorating situation for women that shifted into the focus of their practice. Jelica Radovanović, who was born in Dubrovnik in 1957, explored the instrumentalization of women in her 1992 photograph *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which is among her most political works (Figure 4.6). Linguistic references are overlaid with female allegories and symbols posing a critical investigation into gender politics as an aspect of the wars in former Yugoslavia. The artist, who had moved to Belgrade already before the wars, created a



FIGURE 4.6 Jelica Radovanović, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, photograph, 1992 © Jelica Radovanović, image courtesy of the artist.

self-portrait as a mother with child, imbuing it with several references to female allegories and nation symbols, but disrupting them at the same time. She is seated on a chair or stool, looking outside the frame toward the left, without establishing eye contact with the viewer. She is wearing a black strappy dress with a low cut that reveals much of her chest, across which is written in Serbian the famous quote “L’Etat, c’est moi.” Behind her, much like in classical portrait tradition, is a drapery, but it seems to have broken off its mount in the upper-right corner, thus adding an element of chaos and unfinished-ness to the scene. In her left arm, she cradles the baby, in her right she holds a remote control. What’s more, the artist has drawn a beard and mustache on both her and the baby’s left face side while her right remains distinctly feminine with long hair falling down on her shoulders. The work allows for a number of interpretations, all of which are critical of the present political situation. Through several iconographic elements such as the quote, the pose and the distinctly female elements, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* references the strong symbolism with which women were imbued in the process of the creation of new nation-states as well as their re-relegation to motherhood, which entailed the exclusion from other aspects of political or cultural life. In the respective struggle for dominance and ethnic purity within the nationalist state concepts, women were burdened with a crucial task while acquiring strong symbolic value: in the nationalist discourse, women were stylized as embodiments of the nation, as bearers of its honor and love. Concepts such as “Mother homeland,” “Mother nurturer,” “Mother earth,” “Croatia, a proud woman,” and similar terms that equated woman with her biological, procreative function and with a mythical territoriality, imbued the language of the nation-states. But the instrumentalization of woman-as-mother went much further than the linguistic and metaphoric realm: by confining women to the task of bearing children, regimes sought to ensure their nation’s biological regeneration. As Anđelka Milić has observed:

There is no question that woman’s biological role of motherhood has been of crucial importance for carrying out the state national project, whatever national group it represents. Its logic of totalizing the nation with a view to leveling out internal social differentiation and suppressing internal social antagonisms always targeting women first—specifically, their biological function of reproduction. This boils down to an attempt to have this function, and hence women themselves, serve the state, instrumentalizing reproduction and women’s bodies to numerically increase the nation.

Physical violence against women during the war also rose to new heights: “The hatred and violence are crystallised in rape, it becomes the instrument

of war, the weapon of the conqueror over the conquered. Women are the gift of the warrior and his trophy, the proof of victory over enemy males (i.e. the enemy group represented by males)."³⁵ Systematic rape of the enemy's women not only served to intimidate the opponent but to perversely "spoil" an opponent's ethnic purity. Coverage of rape of one's "own" women was used to signal not only an extreme threat to a nation but also a call for retaliation against an enemy that breached the borders of national and ethnic territory. Often, and in keeping with equating the image of woman with that of nation or ethnicity, the expression of the "rape" of a country could be found in the reporting about hostilities, thus sexualizing the war in a perfidious way.

Dubravka Žarkov observes: "The destruction and violence through which former Yugoslavia disintegrated targeted the bodies of the women in the most brute, physical manner" a statement that echoes Papić's observation that "ethnic nationalism is based on a politics of specific gender identity/difference in which women are simultaneously mythologized as the Nation's deepest 'essence' *and* instrumentalized as its *producer*." "[T]he nationalist abuse of women," so Papić, "sheds light on the phenomenon of totalitarian ethnic nationhood as a naturalized fraternal order, in which women are doubly subjugated: as insiders they are colonized and instrumentalized in their 'natural' function as 'birth-machines'; and as outsiders they are reified into the targets of destruction as mediated instruments of violence against other men's nations and cultural identity."³⁶

Radovanović disrupts these notions in her work through the elements of disorder and the masculine component of the beard. As Jasmina Čubrilo excellently describes:

In doing so, she has created a very clear and symmetrical bipolarity, which refers to the ambivalent nature of representations of abstract ideas such as the state, the homeland, patriotism, a solution which can be contemplated in light of the long tradition of the transformation of the ideas of power, the monarchy, the state as a ruler's political body, on the one hand, and the idealized female figure, on the other.³⁷

Another unexpected and meaningful component is the remote control in the artist's hand, which seems to indicate a certain form of control and choice in the realm of information. A remote control gives one at least the illusion of power over the consumption of information, which remains, of course, subjugated to the de-facto power that television and the media at large possess over the production and distribution of information and knowledge. Through a remote control, the audience is under the impression of being able to choose, as marginal as that choice might be, or to escape the influx of information for a moment. The work therefore also bears reference

to the Serbian mediascape under Slobodan Milošević, which was not much more than a political instrument. The Milošević regime utilized the media to reinforce cultural separation and its nationalist agenda and solidify Serbian cultural superiority, therewith strengthening Serbia's ethnocentrism even more. The press was used to reinforce narratives feeding Serbia's war strategy and continually suggest a danger to its nationhood through opposing forces. Nationalist, fascist, xenophobic, and even openly racist positions were articulated in various aspects of public discourse, and opposition or dissent was muzzled.³⁸ The cultural separation that the Serbian official press sought to strengthen was actively pursued in its cultural sphere. In music, theater, and the fine arts, the new political lines aimed at eliminating all "opposing" traces, banning representatives of other nations strictly from their respective artistic scenes.³⁹ This was ensured by placing proponents of nationalistic ideology into positions of power, therewith ensuring the promotion of cultural models and forms of visual representation that bolstered the regime. In 1993, for example, Zoran Gavrić, who had curated a number of exhibitions with young experimental Yugoslav and foreign artists in Belgrade and had organized the first retrospective exhibitions of Serbian artists abroad, was forcibly removed from office as director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. His post was taken over by painter Radislav Trkulja, a representative of nationalist-populist ideas. His program was aimed mostly at presenting traditional artists whose works echoed the mythologization and stylization of a nationalistic Serbian history and culture while erasing its references to the international art scene. The Museum's new programmatic focus was reinforced by its newly elected board with members such as Dragoš Kalajić, a key figure of anti-modernism and as devoted to Serbian nationalism as Trkulja. Populist figures such as Trkulja and Kalajić sought to instrumentalize art and art history for their political line. Interpreting key figures and movements from the past, such as the Mediala group or Leonid Šejka, for this purpose, Kalajić, for example, articulated a "Belgrade world-view" as the "fulcrum of European renewal" and as a means to establish "alternative values to the powers of nihilism."⁴⁰ Among others, Kalajić, who cultivated a strong media presence, organized *Balkan Sources* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, an exhibition set to create a historical perspective of Serbian art in the twentieth century. The works shown—mostly figurative paintings—echoed the topics and values that were touted by the Milošević regime: Orthodox Christianity, national myths, and ethnic symbolism, among others. It was one of the most important manifestations of the new cultural program of the Serbian nationalists.⁴¹

The remote control in Radovanović's work exposes the manipulation of the cultural sphere and the media in a subtle way while seeming to encourage its viewers that they still have the choice to retain independent and critical opinions. And in fact, even though the Serbian government was able to get much of the media under its control, several independent outlets,

such as the opposition magazine *Republika* or Radio B92 continued their work, albeit under very difficult circumstances. They offered people an alternative to the propaganda and hate messages broadcast by the official media, and instead a small but certainly important notion of critical thought and independence. Interesting to note is that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was initially made for *Republika* but ended up being shown in several exhibitions as well.

Cultural Initiatives and Subversions: Dah Teatar and the Center for Cultural Decontamination

Several cultural initiatives formed by women during the 1990s sought to actively subvert dominant political doctrines and state-sanctioned and propagandistic monocultures, which were particularly strong in Serbia and Croatia. Especially the realm of the performing arts became a fertile ground for political agency. Among the projects emerging was Dah Teatar in Belgrade, founded by Jadranka Anđelić and Dijana Milošević in 1991 out of a concern with the government's instrumentalization of theater for propagandistic purposes and the ensuing homogeneity of the cultural



FIGURE 4.7 *Dah Teatar, The Legend About the End of the World*, performers Sanja Krsmanović-Tasić, Valentina Milivojević, and Maja Mitić, 1995, photograph by Željko Jovanović © Željko Jovanović, DAH Theatre archive, image courtesy of Sanja Krsmanović-Tasić.

sector. In Serbia and Croatia in particular, theater had become a productive field for the perpetuation of political ideas, with plays glorifying founding myths, national literary heritage, and national heritage at large, as well as exalted renderings of narratives focusing on battle and war. Dah Teatar, which Anđelić and Milošević had intended to be a “laboratory, a theater research group,” emerged outside the institutionalized context, literally and metaphorically speaking. The confines of performing in a regular space and the obligations that came with it had led the women to take their productions out into the street with the political situation becoming a central concern not only in their choice of topic but also means of production. In 1992 they produced a performance of Bertold Brecht’s antiwar text *This Babylonian Confusion* in the streets of Belgrade and in 1995 they staged *The Legend About the End of the World* on the square outside the Yugoslav National Theater. The latter told the story of three contemporary women through female archetypes found in literary and religious texts such as Isabel Allende’s *House of Spirits*, the Bible, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. A 1996 review of the piece by Linda Almar Caldwell describes the piece vividly:

In this performance, the audience surrounds an illuminated space, a bounded territory. Overhead an expanse of fabric is filled near to bursting with water, which drips onto the performance area. The drips create an endless rhythm and melody as they hit various cast-off articles from anonymous homes: well-worn family photos, coffee cups, jars, and lids. The program notes tell us we are in the “ruins of the Temple. It could be the church of any religion, library, home, or inner space.” Three women (Sanja Krsmanović-Tasić, Valentina Milivojević, and Maja Mitić) silently enter this lighted arena from an offstage darkness. They approach the objects and gently share with one another their shape, texture, and isolated beauty. Their delicacy turns into a delirious and wrenching fury as the women are taken over by what seems to be their own memories. Their physical gestures contort into a torturous depiction of rape, momentarily transmuting into a painfully joyous birthing. A throaty rhythmic keening from one woman draws the others into a percussive ritual dance, a transformation from lament into celebration. A miniature city is built by the actors, with walls protecting the photo relics. One woman pours streams of salt around this fragile city as a spoken text describes the grandeur of encircling white snowy mountains. Mysterious hieroglyphs are formed as the salt rivers grow and mingle with the dripping water. The women continue their journey offstage, leaving the audience with their newly formed oasis and its echoing measure of time.⁴²

Interpreted within the current situation in former Yugoslavia, *The Legend About the End of the World* allows for associations to the ongoing destruction of the country, its cities, and people’s homes, the search for a sanctuary, and

the importance of memories, or non-material aspects of being, amidst the overall decay (4.7). For the creators, the piece was fundamentally generated from the consideration of “What can [we] take with us forever? What is more important than material life that can be rebuilt? Things that are in the soul, in the spirit, in the mind, in the knowledge, and how to save that knowledge.”⁴³

After the performance had finished, the women from Dah, together with their artistic associate Dubravka Knežević, invited the audience to discuss the present situation of theater in Serbia. They stressed the importance of independent ad-hoc or street theater as a way to create a counterweight to the propagandistic and aggressive official theater. Contrasting the concept of a uniform, state-sanctioned theater, Knežević instead proposed that “healing [. . .] can only begin when the complexities of human life are explored and celebrated.” Dah Teatar therefore advocated a continually developing and working theater as a counter concept to the static official performing arts productions and valued in particular audience participation with the sharing of individual insights providing a rich repository for future performances. In her review, Caldwell points out the importance of this discussion for foreign (American) audiences since the media’s presentation of the war in Yugoslavia paints the country in such a way that one becomes easily numb and distanced from a seemingly incomprehensible situation: “These Serbian women, however, present a theatre that rekindles the exquisite beauty of the individual’s struggle and communicate their passion for life in the midst of confusion. They spin a delicate but necessary thread to our understanding of the real life drama in any war.”⁴⁴ This observation echoes a key issue that artists (and the population) of the former Yugoslavia encountered as a result of the war: not only did the reception of their country change dramatically in the foreign world with reports on nationalist zeal and ethnic violence dominating and pushing the countries into the margins. UN sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia in 1992 also severely impacted international relationships—economic, scientific, cultural, and artistic. Where travel to and from Yugoslavia to other parts of the world had been easy during Tito’s time and cultural exchange with other countries had flourished, a punitive embargo imposed on the Yugoslav regions made travel with a Yugoslavian passport almost impossible. Artists found themselves disconnected from the international scene they were previously a part of. As Jadranka Anđelić remembers:

a very big problem were the sanctions that separated us from some other societies in the sense of communication and information. Maybe because of the situation in our country, the need for getting in touch with other artists in Europe and to develop in this context was stronger. My biggest fear was of closing the borders, this fear was of the possibility not to communicate with colleagues of other countries. I think we missed a lot of support from outside. The sanctions put this barrier for some people abroad not to see that there is, let’s say, some healthy seed here.⁴⁵

What's more, the coverage of the nationalism and violence in Yugoslavia in foreign countries strongly impacted the country's and its population's reception:

Ex-Yugoslavia was a multi-national country so we are very mixed. You cannot declare yourself as a member of a nationality. You can say you are living in this country, yes. So, it was very strange meeting with some people that look at you like an "evil Serb" and maybe you're not even Serb at all. This was the paradox, but this is the division of ex-Yugoslavia, that made all these parts too simple—all people that come from Croatia, Croatian; Bosnia, Bosnian; Serbia, Serbs, etc. [...] Artistically speaking we had some kind of moral and ethic [*sic*] responsibility to express ourselves in these circumstances. For example in Edinburgh Festival in Britain we looked like representatives from Serbia instead of as free artists or humans.⁴⁶

For Jadranka Anđelić, founding the theater group during a politically highly charged time, right at the outbreak of the war, was a very difficult endeavor, yet also an opportunity to think through her and cofounder Milošević's motivations and goals more clearly. The following quote by Anđelić emphasizes this tension while also making clear the strains that the political climate had put on the arts: "Total lack of everything, isolation, political pressure, nationalism etc., so that was the beginning. It was difficult but in some way, thinking about the art helped us be really clear with ourselves—why we were doing theater, it was kind of a test. Did we have enough strength to continue to survive as artists?" She recalls the tense political climate and the outbreak of the war as triggering a big, psychological shock: "It was almost every day questioning should we work or not? Is there any sense while people are dying to make a theater?" She and her fellow Dah women, however, also saw a chance to remind people around them of the artists' possibilities to "create some sense in this senseless and destructive society."⁴⁷ In 1993, Dah Teatar expanded into the Theatre Research Center, a group exploring a variety of both European and Asian contemporary acting techniques. Dah also became closely connected with the Magdalena Project, an international network of women working in contemporary theater.

Among the most important initiatives countering Slobodan Milošević's nationalism and prescribed propaganda culture in Serbia was the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade.⁴⁸ The Center was founded in 1994 by dramaturge and activist Borka Pavićević, who had been the artistic director of the Belgrade Drama Theatre until 1993, when she was forced to resign due to her political views. The Center was founded with the mission to challenge Milošević's politics and its promotion through the media and "revive the liberal spirit of the arts and public discourse under the impossible conditions of war, economy, politics, and the heavily

suppressed human spirit of the last decade in Yugoslavia.” The concept of “decontamination” for Pavićević remains closely tied not only to the questioning of political indoctrination but also especially to the breaking up of monocultural tendencies: “The final contamination is when the nation becomes a state and culture becomes a national culture. What does that mean for us? My answer is another question, namely: Which culture can say that it does not stem from many cultures? Is there such a culture as a single culture?”⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, considering Pavićević’s background, the Center’s programmatic focus laid heavily on theater and performance, but its activities comprised also activist initiatives, exhibitions, lectures, screenings, and meetings, with which the Center sought to raise awareness for the rise of nationalism, xenophobia, misogyny, and the superficiality of mass culture the new government effected. The program was often at odds with the regime and organizers had to walk a thin line between voicing their criticism yet avoiding closure or other repercussions. Among the riskier endeavors of the Center was an exhibition of drawings by Bogoljub Arsenijević, who had been jailed for organizing protests against Milošević and had managed to escape. The Center aimed at providing a platform for art and activism that was otherwise banned from official institutes such as Ana Miljanić’s *About Germany*, a theater performance based on the writings of Bertold Brecht, Hermann Broch, Volkmar Von Zuelsdorf, and Hannah Arendt or Sonja Vukićević’s *Macbeth/It*.⁵⁰ *Macbeth/It* reinterpreted the classical Shakespearean story with contemporary means such as music from the electro-techno band The Prodigy. It was mostly a choreographic performance focusing closely on Vukićević’s movements, which were rather challenging to execute. The play was performed several times between 1996 and 1998. The most notorious iteration happened in 1997 during a massive demonstration against the Milošević regime. Vukićević, a Belgrade-based choreographer, theater director, and ballerina, staged her play right in front of a police cordon attempting to stop the demonstrators from moving through the city. She herself played Lady Macbeth and based the figure on Milošević’s wife Mira Marković, while Macbeth himself bore references to her husband. Throughout the play, the actors communicated a range of characteristics they attributed to the Milošević couple, such as their lust for power, their greed, as well as madness and tyranny. Gradually, their interaction transformed into a grotesque dance of power, madness, and death with the actors covering themselves in mud and red paint, symbolizing the bloodshed tearing the region around them apart. Ultimately, the actors entered a cage, therewith both commenting on the population’s feeling of being imprisoned by the fascist thoughts spreading throughout their country but possibly also articulating their wish to see their leader incarcerated for his failures. Over the next years, Vukićević staged three more significant projects for the Center of Cultural Decontamination, for which she continued to draw from

classical texts in order to articulate her criticism: *The Trial* (1998), which was based on Kafka's text of the same title, *Alzheimer's Sonata* (1998), and a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, called *Mrak Letnje Noći—Midsummer Night's Darkness*. For *The Trial*, Kafka's text provided the basis for a set of allusions to the oppressive justice system of the time in Serbia: arrests without evidence, crime, and corruption. Converting the madness of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into the madness of the times, *Midsummer Night's Darkness* was performed in 1999, right before the NATO bombing of Belgrade. For the play, Vukićević selected a number of intense passages from Shakespeare and framed them in a way so they alluded to the atmosphere of chaos and insanity and the politics of blindness that she saw in the Milošević government. Acting herself, Vukićević stated at one point: "The eye can see itself only when it has a mirror on the other side; Murder is the password now; Sin is when the mind follows the sin of the eye; the more I hate him, the more he is haunting me."⁵¹ Set in a mental hospital ward, images of air raids were projected on the wall and a military voice continuously repeats, "We are setting our demands." Little did Vukićević know that just shortly after her play, the air raids would become a terrifying reality when the NATO started to attack the city.⁵²

The Center for Cultural Decontamination is in operation until the present day and remains an important, continuously critical force in the Serbian art scene. The wars of the 1990s upended the situation for (female) artists and cultural workers in the regions of former Yugoslavia and in many cases not only made their work much harder but also rendered it invisible behind the grander narratives of war and politics. Yet, as this chapter has shown, women's continuous creative and activist responses not only ensured the persistence of a rich and important artistic landscape. Their works also provide an essential criticism of and counterweight to cultural dogmatism and cultural separation.

Coda: Where Are We Now?

Choosing an end date for this book presented its own challenge since an end date usually suggests a termination or fulfillment of something, which definitely is not the case with creative female agency in the regions of former Yugoslavia. The year 2001 ultimately seemed to make the most sense since this is the date that denotes the end of the civil wars (even though others cite 1999 and the “end” of the Kosovo war) and therewith a key moment in the transition to post-socialism. However, it is important to note that even though end dates to the conflict do exist on papers, unrest continues with further turmoil such as the insurgencies in the Preševo Valley or in North Macedonia and the relation between Serbia and the Kosovo remains tense to the present day. What is more, of course, sociopolitical development in general never stands still and the Yugoslav successor states remain in the process of (re-)defining themselves. The aftermath of the wars continues to be felt, not only with regard to the stagnant (or even regressing) economic situation of many successor states but also the emotional scars that the wars have left. While Slovenia and Croatia successfully have entered the European Union and are on a path to recovery, other countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, and the Kosovo, remain struggling. The entire region’s image has suffered heavily from the wars, with the world wondering how a seemingly stable and flourishing country could have collapsed into such a brutal war and has emerged so drastically changed on its other end.

But of course, it would also be misleading to choose the date of a particular work of art or cultural event as an end date for the book. Art is always in flux; artists and curators continue to create and their practice changes over the years. I consider the chosen end date therefore as a marker in flux, which by no means indicates an end or a beginning but merely a point in transition.

The present situation in the Yugoslav successor states remains very complex in terms of both politics as well as the arts and culture and it cannot adequately be analyzed within the scope of this final paragraph. Too much do the respective contexts in terms of political, cultural, and social situations differ from country to country and within them. Too numerous are the talented artists, the initiatives, and projects. This must be the topic of another book which I do hope to write in the future.¹

I still would like to use the remaining pages, however, to give a small outlook on the current situation which will, I hope, start an awareness for the work that is being created by females as this book is being written. As I already detailed in the introduction, for me it was in fact the exchange with Marta Jovanović that set into motion this entire book. After meeting with her in Rome, she asked me to curate an upcoming performance of hers, in which she wanted to reflect on the binaries of love and hate, war and peace, and the violence and conflict resulting from one's convictions. *Ljubav* (Love, 2016) grew out of a difficult episode in Jovanović's private life and the painful divorce of her husband but took the 25-year commemoration of the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars as trigger, combining a highly personal with a larger historic-political event. I will remain forever grateful to Marta for giving me the opportunity to work with her on this performance, and it has provided me with a unique opportunity to learn about the contemporary art scene in Serbia, but also the country's history and current challenges. *Ljubav* took place in the garden of the residency of the Swiss ambassador in Belgrade. This garden was designed by Benoit Junod, who was the ambassador to Belgrade during the 1990s, and is a thought-provoking reflection on the conflict and its larger implications. The garden features, for example, a space enclosed by four columns which are inscribed with the words "peace" and "war" on diagonally opposite columns, in Cyrillic. An orange bignonia was planted as a climber, symbolizing the trumpets of war. On the center of the floor, a windrose was placed, with rays marking the main towns and places concerned by the conflict (including Mecca). A separate "garden of memory" contained numerous plants with symbolic significance such as tree peonies, an aster, forget-me-nots, yellow Japanese irises, which reminded Junod of his father, who was the first European doctor to arrive in Hiroshima after the atomic bomb, as well as Kosovo peonies, which are said to be red like the blood of the Serbs who died at the battle of Kosovo Polje, on June 15, 1389.²

Choosing the dawn hours of June 21st, the longest day of the year, for the performance, Jovanović placed herself on a more than 1.50m tall pedestal in the garden, folding her hands in front of her and casting her eyes down to the floor. Clad in a long white dress that covered the entire pedestal, the motionless figure of the artist assumed a surreal presence, in which ethereal pureness contrasted with towering height. The performance featured the sound of helicopters, which Junod remembered well from the war-days when medical helicopters transported wounded soldiers from the front to the hospitals. Buckets with bloody pig hearts had been placed around the pedestal and audience was invited to throw them at the artist. After a fairly long time, in which the audience remained stunned and confused, the first heart suddenly flew, missing Jovanović only by inches. Another one followed only moments later and soon many hands went into the buckets, with their owners overcoming their initial repulsion in the face of blood and organs but, what is even more important, also their internalized reluctance at throwing objects at another human being. What was interesting but also heartbreaking to see was the slow rise of a mob mentality, in which

playfulness suddenly turned to aggression and a collective spirit erased all sociocultural boundaries. This was the moment for me that spoke most clearly of the wars—not only the Yugoslav wars but conflict in general. Conviction, propaganda, chevy can fill unknown voids in people and draw even those who never thought they would be capable into battle.

Jovanović did not move throughout the entire performance, which lasted until the last heart was thrown. By that time, it had turned completely dark, and the figure of the artist, surrounded by hearts, was only illuminated through artificial light, which showed the red blood staining her dress. An audience member had patiently stood before the artist with a flower in her hand and in her final motion, before finally sitting down, Jovanović took it (Figure 5.1).

One can almost say that Marta retains a love/hate relationship with Belgrade as well, being, on the one hand, frustrated with the lack of artistic infrastructure, of opportunities, and the unwillingness of the government to fund alternative cultural endeavors yet remaining, and, on the other, appreciative of the immense quality of the works defining the scene and the freedom artists can enjoy in the absence of a market. Marta was born in Belgrade in 1978 but, when the wars broke out, relocated to Tel Aviv



FIGURE 5.1 Marta Jovanović, *Ljubav (Love)*, performance, 2016, photograph by Victor Sekularac © Marta Jovanović, image courtesy of the artist.

before she went on to study in Italy and the United States. An internationally successful artist, Marta decided to return to her home country with the goal to not only revive its performance art scene but get it out of the isolation that it has suffered from ever since Milošević had seized power. The aftermath of the wars echoes loudly in all Yugoslav successor states, yet it is Milošević's legacy, and the crimes committed under his rule, that have branded Serbia lastingly as the culprit of the conflicts.³ Some names, among them Marina Abramović, who, however, has not lived in Serbia since 1976, Tanja Ostojić, and Milica Tomić, have kept the country alive in the awareness of the international art community. But these are isolated cases, and what distinguishes Jovanović's work is that she is committed to fostering the emerging generation of artist on site, in Belgrade, and especially to reignite the dialogue between the local and international art community. Her work is rooted in the long legacy of female agency in former Yugoslavia as it—or parts of it—has been detailed in this book and shares with it many of its objectives. Much like her forebearers, among them the women of Belgrade's Student Cultural Center, Jovanović has made it her mission to bring artists together—locally, but also internationally, and she refuses to judge anyone's work against canonical standards, popularity, or success. She has instead taken it upon herself to create a platform for a new generation of artists who, unrestrained by ideological supervision and economic incentives, are re-finding the liberty to create radical and political art, which explores a range of topics from gender politics to sexual identity, consumerism, and beauty ideals, to national identity, militarism, and patriotism.

Among the initiatives Jovanović is involved in is G12HUB, a gallery/program focused on intermedia and performance art, which Milica Pekić, an art historian and specialist in Yugoslav postwar arts, founded in 2013. Over the years, G12HUB developed an ambitious program of exhibitions, live performances, workshops, and lectures and established several international collaborations. Its goal is to provide a safe space for experimentation, exchange of ideas, learning and the production of art and, even more urgently, to bring artists together, since one of the main things the local art scene lacks, according to Jovanović, is unity.⁴ Even though it had to close its physical location in Belgrade, the initiative remains active online and in various locations. Jovanović and Pekić also started an educational program for young performance artists, PerformanceHUB, which ran from 2015 to 2018 as a branch of G12HUB. PerformanceHUB was conceived as a platform that provides students with an innovative approach to performance art “education” (if that term can be used in that discipline) through encounters with an international community of performance artists, scholars, and curators. Through workshops, discussions, screenings, public interventions, and collaborative work the program encouraged experimentation and artistic growth but also aimed at fostering a dialogue about challenges, dilemmas, techniques, and the position of performance art

in the contemporary art world. The program brought artists and scholars such as Alejandro Chellet, the artists duo VestAndPage, Miao Jiaxin, Pan Daijing, Franko B, and myself to Belgrade for workshops and lectures. Every workshop followed a different topic for participants to explore, ranging from public intervention to overcoming one's fear of conflict, interaction with audience, and endurance work. Theoretical segments introduced students to the history of performance art in the region or the confluences between feminism and performance art. PerformanceHUB participated at the Venice International Performance Art Week in 2016 with an exhibition on the *Serbian Performance Art Scene*, which consisted of three sections: "Video Conversations about the New Art Practice of the 1970s" showed taped interviews between Milica Pekić and key figures of the time such as Dunja Blažević, Raša Todosijević, Era Milivojević, and Jasna Tijardović. The second part was comprised of a series of taped performances by Serbian artists Marina Marković, Branko Milisković, Marta Jovanović, and Sanja Copić, while the third part featured live performances by PerformanceHUB students Sara Kostić and Ivana Ranisavljević. The exhibition was a milestone in that it was the first ever to focus exclusively on Serbian performance art.⁵

The PerformanceHUB initiatives helped local artists such as Sara Kostić, Marina Marković, or Ivana Ranisavljević to carry on the strong legacy of innovative performance art from former Yugoslavia. The educational programs of PerformanceHUB exposed them not only to historical precedents but also to their international peers while equally guiding them to develop their very own approach and explore their subjective themes. Even though PerformanceHUB as such stopped its operations, its vast online archive remains accessible to visitors, and it surely has transformed the local performance art scene for good.

What Jovanović and Pekić did with PerformanceHUB is not unlike Bogdanka Poznanović's work with the Visual Studio for Intermedia Research. All three women chose a medium that remained underrecognized in their environment—the video camera for Poznanović, performance art for Jovanović and Pekić—and made it the focus of their work and teaching. For all of them, the suspension of traditional hierarchies in teaching was and is a central concern, with their focus instead being on developing new, timely, and discipline-appropriate ways of stimulating artistic growth. They are pursuing their vision undeterred by value systems and resistance of those who rather follow the current canon. In doing so, they not only help establish their medium of choice and anchor it more firmly in the art scene. They also provide a new generation of artists who seek to work in new forms of expression with the tools and guidance to do so. For all women, the aspect of creating a community was a crucial factor as was the (re-)establishment of relations with the international scene.

Initiatives like PerformanceHUB do not necessarily follow mainstream ideas of art and official cultural policy in Serbia remains fairly skeptical toward

still-alternative practices like performance art. As a result, Jovanović in many cases had to seek alternative means of financing and realizing her visions. She states that in many cases foreign cultural institutes like the Austrian Cultural Forum or the Italian Cultural Institute provided her with the means and support needed when funding from the official side was refused.⁶ In some instances, seemingly unusual solutions needed to be found, and in 2016, Jovanović approached Belgradian Hotel RadissonBlu Old Mill in 2016 to partner with PerformanceHUB on an Artist-in-Residency program. The aim of the residency was to support PerformanceHUB's activities by hosting the visiting artists and scholars. What's more, the hotel also served as a space for performance art activities, as, for example, a performance-dinner conceived by Jovanović and her student Milan Jovanović, or a series of works conceived of in "The Room," a suite at Radisson serving as a project-based performance art space.

What struck me most when I first became acquainted with the local art scene in Belgrade and the work of PerformanceHUB was the authenticity, immediacy, and rawness of the works created, especially in the realm of performance art. This quality has, in my opinion, marked the alternative art scene in Yugoslavia at large, throughout the country's history. It is a certain courage that has guided and still guides the alternative art scene in the region, and it reflects the innovation and bravery with which female artists, curators, activists, and scholars have claimed their space against the dominant canon. Female artists and agents never strove to align their work with any mainstream trends but instead remained focused on their subjective goals and interests, which, I would argue, is probably why they often also fell into oblivion. It took and takes the courage of someone like Dunja Blažević, Biljana Tomić, or Marta Jovanović in the present to recognize these particular qualities and, instead of trying to make this art succeed in commercial terms, recognize it for its idiosyncratic qualities and seek alternative paths to foster it. This is what has kept Yugoslavia's alternative art unique for the past decades and ensures its absolute innovation until the present day.⁷

Female agency continues to impact the arts and cultures all over the countries of former Yugoslavia. In Skopje, artists Ankica Mitrovks and Kenneth Moore founded the Brashnar Creative Project (2015), a residency program that offers international artists the opportunity to further their work while engaging with the local art scene. With a focus on interdisciplinary art and ecological development, the program is strongly oriented toward introducing visiting artists and scholars to Macedonian culture. The residency space is deliberately placed in a residential neighborhood, physically and ideologically outside the institutionalized art world, in the hopes of bringing the visiting participants closer to the local community and developing projects in dialogue.⁸ Similarly, Press to Exit, an artist initiative for research

and production in the visual arts and curatorial practice, was founded in Skopje by Hristina Ivanoska and Yane Calovski. The project has a strong international focus and aims at both connecting local artists and curators with their international peers as well as educating international creatives about the contemporary art scene in North Macedonia. The strategic development is focused on the development of alternative models of artistic creation, exhibition, as well as models of education and on fostering the engagement of cultural workers as well as the general audience.⁹

In Kosovo, *FemArt*, an annual feminist festival that started in 2013 and the first feminist festival in the region, brings together artists and activists for a program of performances, theater, dance, presentations, and exhibitions celebrating the courage of women artists and their commitment to equality and justice. Each year, the festival, which runs under the direction of Zana Hoxha Krasniqi, focuses on several topics ranging from human rights, reproductive health, sexual violence, transitional justice to LGBTQ+ rights, which remains a taboo topic in the country. Participants come from the region, but also the festival attracts participants from all over the Balkan area, Europe, to the Middle East and beyond.

In Ljubljana, ŠKUC, which has been under the artistic direction of Tia Čiček since 2020, continues an ambitious program that combines a focus on regional and local developments with an involvement in the international cultural industry. ŠKUC has established a close cooperation with institutions and individuals working in the region but also in other countries, including art centers in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, and Italy, which provides a wider theoretical framework for their curatorial work.

In Croatia, Vlasta Delimar's initiative *My land, Štaglinec* equally aimed at resuscitating the cultural landscape that suffered so heavily from the conflicts and providing a space for artistic creation that remains independent from the established art world. Upon inheriting a piece of land in Štaglinec, Delimar spontaneously decided in 2005 to convert it into a meeting space for artists mostly working in performance, and to organize annual three-day-long festivals devoted to performance art and ecology/sustainability. As one of the first performative acts, Delimar demolished the house that was located on the land, which used to be the house and workshop of Delimar's father, a ropemaker. After demolition, the artist buried the construction material as if it were a body. While this might seem aggressive upon initial consideration, for the artist it signified a political statement of much larger magnitude: "such act of destruction in the context of contemporary political and economic movements can be interpreted as a radicalized statement of resignation performed in circumstances of complete collapse of social, ideological, economic, cultural, and existential structures."¹⁰ Prior to the demolition, Delimar had emptied the house of its furniture, its objects, windows, and doors, documenting the process in a series of photographs. This, again, is a metaphorical act for her since the house can be seen as a metaphor for a body—a human body, which slowly decays—but also a

social body that slowly disintegrates. In doing so, Delimar reflected on the aftermath of the wars and what they had done not only to its country but especially to its population.

What's more, the demolition of the house marks the moment the space is turned from private (her father's home) to public and is inaugurated as a meeting and gathering place for creatives. The Štaglinec space and concept are rooted in the idea of

basic freedom that the performance act not be defined categorically and dogmatically, but rather for it to interfere with other performative forms and techniques, or not to present exhibitions, video-projections, ambiances or other forms of artistic action within their limited borders. The festival's best instances can be described with the already acclaimed atmosphere of openness and mutuality that prevails.¹¹

While the first iterations of the festival featured mostly Croatian artists, international participants soon followed. Participants included, besides Delimar herself, Tomislav Gotovac, Milan Božić, Saša Živković, Sunčanica Tuk, Boris Cvjetanović, Vesna Pokas, Richard Wilson, Anne Bean, Katalin Ladik, Lee Wen, and Akiko Sato.

For Delimar, the festival was about complete freedom and the dissolution of boundaries between audience and participants, individuals and community. It was about sociability and gathering, disregarding any geographical, ethnic, or national boundaries that the wars had inscribed.

The land had been inhabited and cultivated until 1999, when the wars put an abrupt end to it, causing the residents to flee and leave the estate to neglect. Delimar sought to revive a space that the violent conflict had muted and, in addition, create a room for independent artistic creation in a lethargic cultural sphere that still reels from heavy instrumentalization. Over a hundred performances, exhibitions, video projections, installations, and so forth took place at Štaglinec at Delimar's initiative, rendering the space a highly important venue for alternative artistic practice in the wake of the wars. In 2015, the artist decided to stop the festival with another symbolic act: she took all the objects that had remained at the land over the past ten years which carry with themselves "the memory of touch and performing." and buried them underground.¹²

In Sarajevo, the new generation of artists emerging in the postwar space is according to Dunja Blažević, who has been the director of the Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Art since 1996, predominantly female. The works of artists who grew up during the war, such as Adela Jušić, Leila Čmajčanin, Lala Raščić, Lana Čmajčanin, Nela Hasanbegović, or Sandra Dukič, reflect on the current state of a country heavily marked by war and still suffering from ethnic conflict, but they also more generally investigate into the reality they live in, its ideas of identity and gender, and how it impacts them as

(female) creatives. In many cases, as has already been described in Chapter 4, the fall of socialism and the return to nation-states came with a sharp regression in women's rights, and to this day female activists struggle to make women be heard while female artists continue to fight against a male-dominated official cultural policy.

In the work of Adela Jušić, one frequently encounters interrogations of the impact of armed conflict on women and the status of women's resistance in former Yugoslavia.

The artist is especially critical of the romanticized concept of the partizanka that the party had created in order to evoke admiration and incite patriotic feelings. Her *If needed, we are all soldiers* (2016), a series of visual interventions taken from the photographic monograph *Sutjeska 1943–73*, addresses the position of women during the First and Second World War and especially in the AFŽ. Equally, her *I'm a Communist and That's All I'll Ever Tell You*, a site-specific installation displayed at Gallery Brodac in Sarajevo in 2016, takes the figure of Radojka Lakić, an AFŽ member who was imprisoned during the war in the very building that houses Gallery Brodac, to reflect on the violence women endured during the Second World War. Fascist occupiers murdered Lakić in September 1941, after a period of severe torture. The installation featured, among other things, a book installed on the wall, a wooden comb, a chain, printed fabric, as well as a replica of a handkerchief belonging to the partisan Rada Nikolić from Bijeljina. On this handkerchief, Nikolić embroidered the surnames and initials of her friends and comrades who were executed in the Banjica concentration camp. Jušić's 2015 *Illegal* (in collaboration with Andreja Dugandžić) negotiates women in resistance and underground movements, whose activities are quintessential in all political struggles. The work consists of embroidered fabric with illustrations and text snippets reading, for example "We hid well everything that matters," "The presence of water in the gas tank reduces engine power and causes damage," or "In the event of an enemy raid, the landlady pretends to be terminally ill and others pretend to have come to visit her." According to the artist,

throughout the history, the private sphere, a "woman's place" is a place of subversive power—[a] place where important political messages are being created, told, memorized, written, coded, hidden, then transmitted in bread, hay, hair, clothes, embroidery, from one place to another, from one mouth to another. Women use all available strategies to keep, watch, to warn, to camouflage, protect the pivotal information, to help fellow dissidents. While performing such life threatening tasks, they oppose patriarchal customs and traditions, and challenge gender roles. *Illegal* reimagines and recreates histories of women's resistance.¹³

While themes of war, women, and resistance feature prominently in Jušić's work, Jon Blackwood suggests a more inclusive interpretation of the artist's



FIGURE 5.2 *Adela Jušić, When I Die, You Can Do What You Want, video performance, 2011* © Adela Jušić, image courtesy of the artist.

oeuvre: “Four key strands underpin the work [of] Adela Jušić. [. . .] these are personal biography; conflict and the politics of conflict, a steely commitment to feminism and institutional critique, and a practice based on collectivism and solidarity.”¹⁴ This rings especially true for one of Jušić’s emotionally most touching works: *When I Die, You Can Do What You Want* (2011), a video performance showing the artist, her head cropped out of the frame, dyeing her grandmother’s hair (Figure 5.2). The video is accompanied by a text and the artist’s voice recounting in a whisper the stories her grandmother told her about her childhood, her relationships, her children, and her experiences during the wars. As Blackwood observes:

We are left with the impression of a fiercely determined and intelligent woman whose life was marked firstly by the National Liberation War in Yugoslavia (1941–5); broader memories offset by humdrum recollections, half-forgotten arguments, the joys and disappointments of children and grandchildren, the revelation of long-nurtured opinions on people and family property; the memories of two wartimes and a long, quiet struggle in a patriarchal peace. It is nothing less than a portrait from all angles.¹⁵

Jušić was trained in printmaking at the rather traditional Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Sarajevo but transitioned first into performance and later video and mixed media works. When being asked why she chose video performance as one of her main artistic media, the artist states: “It is hard enough to earn money as an artist, even harder as a Bosnian artist and even more so as a Bosnian video artist, the hardest being a Bosnian female video artist.”¹⁶ Jušić describes her choice of video performance as “feminist” since, to her, it is the medium that can directly challenge dominant representations of the body and power and, since it remains fairly affordable, deconstruct art value in a capitalist system. The sense of exclusion that characterizes Bosnia and Serbia politically is not unknown to Jušić either. An anecdote given by the artist in a 2014 interview with Dunja Kukovec illustrates the obstacles that artists working in the former Yugoslav countries that have not been allowed to join the European Union face: “Recently I had to transport some expensive photo prints to Bosnia from some exhibition in Poland. I learned that if I live outside the EUR, I have to pay taxes, and it’s not cheap.

It's free for art works to travel within the EUR, but for me, as a Bosnian, it was a huge problem."¹⁷ Her 2010 *Artist's Statement*, a two-channel video installation that was displayed at Manifesta 8, reflects on the inside(r)-outside(r) relationship as it presents itself for the former Yugoslav region and their perception by the rest of Europe. The screens show synchronized life-sized versions of the artist, facing herself, reciting her artist's statement. According to Jušić, she wanted the "viewer to feel as if the figures were there in the space in the dark room, 'attacking' from both sides." Her voice comes from one side first, then the other, creating a form of dialogue between two persons that is one. The work problematizes notions of inclusion/exclusion, which can be read geopolitically, but for the artist also concerns the art world reality where a dominant canon is being formed that is based on the voices of a few who decide who is "in" or who is "out."¹⁸

With activist projects and associations such as the Association for Culture and Art Cvrena (2010), of which Adela Jušić, Danijela Dugandžić, Leila Čmajčanin, and Lana Čmajčanin are founding members, the new generation of female artists create platforms for their concerns and actively shape the city's contemporary scene. As is the case in Belgrade, these initiatives run entirely independently since they remain incompatible with the government's ideas of cultural agency. While this makes for a strenuous financial situation, it does allow the women to implement their ideas according to their own agendas without the need to adhere to dominant market parameters. Cvrena understands art and activism as aesthetic, social, and political tools with a large potential for social transformation. Its mission is to "create energy and impulses which then dynamize other spheres and everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina."¹⁹ Born out of discussions and collaborations between female artists of the region, Cvrena was established with a feminist focus and has spurred numerous activities and related initiatives. Through exhibitions, workshops, screenings, lectures, and engaged research, Cvrena cultivates emancipated and liberated thought. Among the projects that grew out of Cvrena is the feminist curatorial collective Red Min(e)d (Katja Kobolt, Dunja Kukovec, Jelena Petrović, and Danijela Dugandžić Živanović), which has organized "exhibitions" and events both locally as well as across Europe. With innovative formats and ideas, Red Min(e)d challenges the (art) world, questioning the multiple relations between feminism, art, and curating.²⁰ Notable are the collective's LA (Live Archive) editions, temporal interactive platforms, and research sites investigating topics such as "political relation and feminist reality within contemporary art in the (post)Yugoslav space," "feminist strategies of creating new educational models and processing an archive," or the "representational and actual "cultural difference(s)" politics impose by binary opposition." The LA editions bring together artists and the public to take part in and to co-create, and co-develop the respective contents. Together with Cvrena-member Andreja Dugandžić, Jušić also founded the Online Archive of the Antifascist struggle of Women of Bosnia

and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia.²¹ The archive contains documents, books, photographs, newspapers, and notes related to the AFŽ and its feminist heritage as well as interviews with surviving members. In addition, it comprises essays and art works that critically examine the AFŽ. In 2016 the book *The Lost Revolution: Yugoslav Women's Antifascist Front between Myth and Forgetting* was published from the archive, containing essays as well as illustrations by five female Bosnian artists.²² Jušić herself frequently draws from the archive for her work as, for example, her *Illegal*, whose texts were culled from the archive. The Online Archive was created with the goal to raise awareness for what is one of the most important women's organizations in former Yugoslavia, whose history had been greatly interfered with for political purposes.

The examples given on the previous pages are just a few of the many activities by women that are currently developed or underway in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and only a very few of the many female artists of the current generation. But they illustrate the brilliance and innovation of the present generation of female artists as well as the ongoing dedication of female cultural workers to infuse their cultural environment with ideas, to spark and maintain creative engagement and to incite national and international dialogue with the latter desperately needed after the wars. Much like the activists of the 1990s, the women active in the present disregard delimitations and work incessantly to overcome ethnic, cultural, and social separation. For them it is not about chauvinist ideas of (political or artistic) superiority. It is about a commitment to art and to each other in a sociopolitical environment that continues to be characterized by gender biases and inequalities.

I hope in the future to be able to continue my work on and with the present generation of female agents and to give them the visibility and exposure they deserve. We should not again make the mistake of letting the women that shape the arts and culture of Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo in our present day fall into oblivion. Their agency must be acknowledged and written into history.

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 The Yugoslav model of self-management remained rather contradictory. While autonomy and independence of the various republics was a central tenet of the Yugoslav constitution, in reality the state continued to exert considerable influence on the decision-making process of the republics, thus in many cases retaining central political and economic power. Equally contradictory are the various definitions of “self-management” as they are presented, for example, in Branislav Jakovljević’s, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 5–7. See also Prelom kolektiv, “Two Times of One Wall: The Case of the Student Cultural Center in the 1970s,” in: *Political Practices of (post-)Yugoslav Art: RETROSPEKTIVE 01*, ed. Jelena Vesić, Zorana Dojić and Prelom kolektiv, exh. catalog Museum 25th of May (Belgrade: Prelom kolektiv, 2010), 124–153.
- 2 Stevan Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia* (Unesco, Paris: Imprimerie Blanchard, 1972), 26.
- 3 Ješa Denegri, “Art in the Past Decade,” in *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966-1978*, ed. Marijan Susovski, Documents 3–6, Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art 1978), 5–12, 9.
- 4 Josip Brosz Tito, quoted in Lidjia Merenik, “Before the Art of New Media,” *Mute*, October 3, 2007, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/art-new-media>.
- 5 Merenik, “Before the Art of New Media.”
- 6 See Miško Šuvaković, “Impossible Histories,” in *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, ed. Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 2–35, 11–12.
- 7 An excellent resource on these developments is Djurić and Šuvaković, *Impossible Histories*.
- 8 Prelom kolektiv, “Two Times of One Wall,” 136. Marko Ilić’s *A Slow Burning Fire: The Rise of the New Art Practice in Yugoslavia*, is an invaluable resource on the development of the New Art Practice over the years (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021).

- 9 For more on these groups see Djurić and Šuvaković, *Impossible Histories*, Susovski, *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966-1978*; Ješa Denegri, "Primjeri konceptualne umjetnosti u Jugoslaviji," *Život umjetnosti*, 15-16 (1971): 147-52, also available online at https://www.ipu.hr/content/zivot-umjetnosti/ZU_15-16-1971_147-152_Denegri.pdf.
- 10 On the dialogue between Western and Yugoslav feminism see Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Gender & History*, 30, no. 1 (March 2018): 240-54; Barbara Jancar-Webster, "Neofeminism in Yugoslavia," *Women & Politics*, 8, no. 1 (1988): 1-30.
- 11 Vjekoslav Koprivnjak, "Uvodnik u temat," *Žena*, 4-5 (1980): 6-15, 10.
- 12 The government did not directly censor new feminism but subtly controlled it through influence of public opinion or by installing party-conform editors in decision-making positions in the publishing sector or academia.
- 13 Lydia Sklevicky, "Emancipated Integration or Integrated Emancipation: The Case of Postrevolutionary Yugoslavia," in *Current Issues in Women's History*, ed. Arina Angermann et al. (London: Routledge, 1989), 93-108, 105.
- 14 Žarana Papić, "Društveni položaj žene—specifičnosti i teškoće utemeljenja problema" (1977), in *Žarana Papić: Tekstovi 1977-2002*, ed. Adriana Zaharijević, Zorica Ivanović, and Daša Duhaček (Belgrade: Center for Women Studies, 2012), 31-50, 45. Translation by Stefan Ralević.
- 15 Zsófia Lóránd, "Socialist-Era New Yugoslav Feminism between 'Mainstreaming' and 'Disengagement'," *The Hungarian Historical Review*, special edition *1956 and Resistance in East Central Europe*, ed. Péter Apro and Sándor Horváth, 5, no. 4 (2016): 854-81, 861, 864.
- 16 Gordana Cerjan-Letica, "Feministički pokret—organizacija, oblici i sadržaj borbe" (The Feminist Movement—Organization, Forms, and the Content of the Struggle), *Revija za sociologiju*, 15, nos. 3-4 (1985): 167-82, 169-70.
- 17 Christine Delphy as quoted in Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?' / 'Comrade Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?' Thirty years After" (dissertation Utrecht University, Faculty of Arts, 2007/2008), 66-7.
- 18 Lydia Sklevicky, "More Horses than Women: Women's History in Yugoslavia," *Gender & History*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 68-75, 68.
- 19 Jasmina Tumbas's recent *I Am Jugoslovenka: Feminist Performance Politics during and after Yugoslav Socialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), analyzes female performance (art) under a feminist lens and has provided an update on the interpretation of feminism in the region.
- 20 Louisa Avgita provides an enlighteningly critical reading of these exhibitions in her "The Balkans Does Not Exist," *Third Text* 21, no. 2 (March 2007): 215-21.

- 21 For example Piotrowski's *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Anthony Gardner, *Politically Unbecoming: Postsocialist Art against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015).
- 22 Piotr Piotrowski, "How to Write a History of Central-East European Art?" *Third Text* 23, no. 1 (January 2009): 5–14, 5.

Chapter 1

- 1 See Dunja Blažević, interview with Milica Pekić, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 2014, <https://vimeo.com/149264527>, where she recalls official government visits to the SKC and attempts to "clean" the institute of unwanted radical programs.
- 2 See Seraina Renz, "'Art and Revolution'—The Student Cultural Center in Belgrade as a Place between Affirmation and Critique," *kunsttexte.de*, 03/2014, www.kunst-texte.de/ostblick as well as Renz's dissertation "Kunst als Entscheidung: Performance- und Konzeptkunst der 1970er Jahre" (Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net-ART-Books, 2021). For more on the SKC see also Ilić, *A Slow Burning Fire*, 115–66.
- 3 Prelom kolektiv, "SKC and New Cultural Practices: Prelom kolektiv in Conversation with Dunja Blažević," in *The Case of SKC in the 1970s – Exhibition Notebook*, ed. Prelom kolektiv (Prelom kolektiv and ŠKUC, 2008) 84.
- 4 Tomić took the function on again in 1999 as well as from 2000 to 2003.
- 5 See Dietmar Unterkofler, *Grupa 143. Kritisches Denken an der Grenze der konzeptuellen Kunst, 1975-1980* (Belgrade: JP Službeni glasnik, 2012), 188–95.
- 6 Blažević, interview with Milica Pekić.
- 7 Dunja Blažević, "Who Is That Singing over There? Art in Yugoslavia and after 1949–1989," in *Aspects/Positions. 50 Years of Art on Central Europe, 1949 1999*, ed. Lorand Hegyi, exh. catalog Museum Moderner Kunst Vienna (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst/Stiftung Ludwig, 1999), <http://web.archive.org/web/20090420002210/http://artsmw.org/heartlandproject/aspects/essays/blazevic.html>.
- 8 On Tijardović's and Popović's New York visit see also Ilić, *A Slow Burning Fire*, 146–50 as well as Branislav Jakovljević, "The Howling Wilderness of the Maladaptive Struggle in Belgrade in New York," *ArtMargins*, 7, no. 2 (June 2018): 17–41.
- 9 Jasna Tijardović, interview with Milica Pekić, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/150237343>.
- 10 Jelena Vesić, "SKC kao mjesto performativne (samo) proizvodnje Oktobar 75—Institucija, samoorganizacija, govor u prvom licu, kolektivizacija (SKC (Student Cultural Centre)) as a site of performative (self-)production, October

- 75-Institution, self-organization, first-person speech, collectivization),” *Život umjetnosti: časopis o modernoj i suvremenoj umjetnosti i arhitekturi*, 91, no. 2 (2012): 30–53.
- 11 Blažević, interview with Milica Pekić.
 - 12 Jasna Tijardović, text for *Oktobar '72* catalog, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1972, archives of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
 - 13 Bojana Pejić in the exhibition catalog to *Drangularijum*, published by the Student Cultural Center in 1971, archives of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade as well as partly digitized online at *Parallel Chronologies: An Archive of East European Exhibitions*, <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/drangularijum-sk-gALLERY-belgrade/>. Translation by Stefan Ralević.
 - 14 See *Drangularijum* exhibition catalog, archives of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, as well as partly digitized online at *Parallel Chronologies*.
 - 15 Email from the artist to the author, November 23, 2022. On Demnievska see also Ana Fragovska and Anguéliki Garidis, *Evgenija Demnievska: metamorfozi na linijata* (Skopje: NU Nacionalna galerija vo Makedonija, 2017). An English version of the text has been generously made available to the author by the artist.
 - 16 Denegri, Pejić, and Tomić, however, by providing the catalog essays accompanying the show, in a way suggested how the exhibition could be read and are therefore the names most closely associated with *Drangularijum*. Among the exhibiting artists were Marina Abramović, Josif Alebić, Bojan Bem, Radomir Damjanović Damnjan, Bora Iljovski, Stevan Knežević, Stojan Kovačević-Grande, Slobodan Milivojević-Era, Milija Nešić, Dušan Otašević, Neša Paripović, Zoran Popović, Radomir Reljić, Halil Tikveša, Raša Todosijević, Evgenia Demnievska, and Gergelj Urkom.
 - 17 Bojana Pejić in the exhibition catalog to *Drangularijum*, published by the Student Cultural Center in 1971, archives of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade as well as partly digitized online at *Parallel Chronologies*.
 - 18 *Novosti*, June 26, 1971; Slobodan Novaković, “Drage Drangularije” (Dear Drangularies), *Jež*, July 2, 1971. The press clippings about the Student Cultural Center’s activities and exhibitions are held in the archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
 - 19 V. Arsenijević, “Drangularijum—An Unusual Exhibition,” *Borba*, July 3, 1971.
 - 20 Nena Dimitrijević, *At the Moment*, catalog text for *In Another Moment*, Student Cultural Center, 1971, archives of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
 - 21 See Jelena Vesić, “At Another Moment—The First International Exhibition of Conceptual Art in SKC-Belgrade,” *Parallel Chronologies: An Archive of East European Exhibitions*, <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/category/yugoslavia/>.
 - 22 Dimitrijević, *At the Moment*.
 - 23 See Vesić, “At Another Moment—The First International Exhibition of Conceptual Art in SKC-Belgrade.”

- 24 Student's Day was a commemoration of the murder of Zarko Marinovic by police forces in the course of student protests against the fascist tendencies of the government of Milan Stojadinovic in 1936.
- 25 *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 1*, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1972, 1, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. Bilten was a magazine/catalog accompanying the *April Meetings* and containing not only the complete program of the festival but also capturing its reviews and reception, as well as artists' notes or annotations of the discussions held. Ivana Petrović has fittingly described Bilten as the festival's "diary" (37). Ivana Petrović's Master Thesis (Corso die Laurea Magistrale), "Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977" (University of Trent, 2012/2013), is an excellent investigation into the *April Meetings* but has, unfortunately, to this date not been published. The manuscript (in Italian) can be accessed at the archive of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade.
- 26 *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 1*.
- 27 Biljana Tomić, "Predpostavka totalne umetnosti," in catalog *Ill Aprilski susret, 16-22 april 1974*, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 28 See Petrović, *Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977*, 40.
- 29 *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 1*, 5.
- 30 See Zrinka Jurčić, "Predlog za rezime" (Proposition for a summary), in Milan Antić and Zivadin K. Mitrović (eds.), *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 8*, 1972, 4–5, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. Jurčić, however, voiced skepticism about the success of the works invited to the first Expanded Media exhibition as she saw too many of the artists purely negating the dominant art canon instead of actively searching for and creating a dialogue through which the idea of Expanded Media could be concretized. See also Biljana Tomić, in Antić and Mitrović (eds.), *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 8*, 1972, 4–5.
- 31 For a description of the performance see Petrović, "Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977," 42–3.
- 32 The Student Cultural Center is in the process of digitizing the visual material related to the *April Meetings*. See: <https://www.arhivaskc.org.rs/hronografije-programa/velike-manifestacije/aprilski-susreti.html>. The website also features a list of all participants and the programs: <https://www.arhivaskc.org.rs/hronografije-programa/velike-manifestacije/aprilski-susreti.html>
- 33 For a discussion of Pane's piece and its ambivalent reception as well as an excerpt from the artist's statement, see also Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 150–62 as well as Petrović, "Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977," 42–7.
- 34 Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 2016, 153.
- 35 Tijardović, interview with Milica Pekić.
- 36 Biljana Tomić letter to Gina Pane, documentation on the first *April Meeting*, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.

- 37 For a description of selected works featured in the second *April Meeting* see Petrović, “Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977,” 65–8.
- 38 On Beuys’ highly debated visit to see Petrović, “Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977,” 72–4; Milanka Lečić, “Treci Aprilski Susreti: Lutanja umesto susreta” (Wonderings instead of meetings), *Student*, May 9, 1974; Davor Lončarić, “Josef Beuys—Magla u Filcanom Šeširu,” *Oko*, May 5, 1974.
- 39 Nena Baljković, *Umetnost kao kritika*, documentation of the fourth *April Meeting*, 1975, 2, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 40 See the program of the fourth *April Meeting*, <https://www.arhivaskc.org.rs/hronografije-programa/velike-manifestacije/aprilski-susreti/5836-iv-aprilski-susret.html>.
- 41 Katharina Sieverding quoted in Petrović, “Aprilski Susreti—Festival Expanded Media di Belgrado: 1972-1977,” 100.
- 42 Documentation of the fifth *April Meeting*, typed page, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 43 Bojana Pejić letter to Jack Moore, documentation material of the fifth *April Meeting*, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 44 Jim Gasparini letter to Bojana Pejić, documentation material of the fifth *April Meeting*, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 45 See Jurčić, “Predlog za rezime” (Proposition for a summary), in *I Aprilski Susret, Bilten 1*, 1972, 1.
- 46 On Endre Tôt’s struggle with the government see Jasmina Tumbas, “Tôt and the Tôtal Joy of Nothing,” *Sztuka i Dokumentacija* no. 10 (2014): 31–7.
- 47 Biljana Tomić, in “Conversations on Expanded Media or the New Art,” *III Aprilski susret*, April 16–22, 1974, n.p., archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 48 See “Aprilski susret—izazov, provokacija, ili nova orientacija” (April Meetings—challenge, provocation, or new orientation), *Student*, May 16, 1972.
- 49 *Borba*, April 9, 1972.
- 50 Zrinka Jurčić, “I. Aprilski Susret Proširenih Medijah” (1. April Meeting of Expanded Media), *Studentski List*, April 24, 1972.
- 51 “Ka broširenom mediju i post-umetnosti” (Towards Expanded Media and post-Art), *Književna Reč*, April 13, 1973.
- 52 Irina Subotić, “Jugoslavia. Nuove tendenze artistiche e la nuova generazione,” *D’Ars Agency*, 43/44 (1968): 68–82.
- 53 See http://www.arte.rs/sr/umetnici/teoreticari/irina_subotic-3972/biografija/, which also includes a list of projects and exhibitions organized by Subotić. For a list of Subotić’s publications see <https://uartsinbelgrade.academia.edu/IrinaSubotic>.
- 54 Jovan Dulović, “An Exhibit instead of a Protest,” *Politika Ekspres*, October 7, 1971.

- 55 Dunja Blažević, introduction to *Oktobar '72* catalog.
- 56 Blažević, interview with Milica Pekić.
- 57 Jasna Tijardović and Zoran Popović, "A Note on Art in Yugoslavia," *The Fox*, 1, no. 1 (1975): 50.
- 58 See Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 213–14. On Popović and Tijardović's visit to New York and the ensuing exchange see Jakovljević, "The Howling Wilderness of the Maladaptive Struggle in Belgrade in New York," 17–41.
- 59 Jelena Vesić, "Oktobar 75—An Example of Counter-Exhibition (Statements on Artistic Autonomy, Self-management and Self-Critique)," *Parallel Chronologies: An Archive of East European Exhibitions*, <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/oktobar-1975/>.
- 60 Bojana Pejić, "Umetnost kao dekorativni autoriteti" (Art as decorative authority), *Oktobar '75*, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1975, 24–6. Archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. Translation by Stefan Ralević.
- 61 Dunja Blažević, "Umetnost kao oblik svojinske svesti" (Art as a Form of Proprietary Consciousness), *Oktobar '75*, 1–2.
- 62 Jasna Tijardović, "Beleške" (Notes), *Oktobar '75*, 8–10.
- 63 Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 220. Jakovljević analyzes *Oktobar '75* primarily with regard to the Conceptual Art practice, see 217–24. He states that *Oktobar '75* was largely ignored by mainstream art criticism, Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 321, fn 22.
- 64 Vesić, "Oktobar 75—An Example of Counter-Exhibition."
- 65 See Unterkofler, *Grupa 143. Kritisches Denken an der Grenze der konzeptuellen Kunst, 1975-1980*, 72–3.
- 66 Unterkofler, *Grupa 143. Kritisches Denken an der Grenze der konzeptuellen Kunst, 1975-1980*, 190.
- 67 Bonfiglioli's dissertation "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'" is the most extensive analysis of the conference, drawing from the archival material held at the SKC but also in-depth interviews with the organizers and participants. Video footage of the meeting can also be found on Jasmina Tešanović's website, <https://jasminatesanovic.wordpress.com/2019/05/24/drug-ca-zena-skc-belgrade-1978/>.
- 68 Nada Ler Sofronić in Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 52.
- 69 Printed participant's list and program of the *Drug-ca Žena* conference, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 70 Printed participant's list and program of the *Drug-ca Žena* conference, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 71 Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 54, fn 87.
- 72 Printed participant's list and program of the *Drug-ca Žena* conference, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. On the art program see also <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/the-conference-comrade-woman-art-program/>.

- 73 Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context," 246.
- 74 Rada Iveković, "The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects," *Drug-ca Žena—Women's Question: New Approach*, reader, selected by Žarana Papić, translated into English by Joan and David Rouge, edited by the Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1978, 34–49, Archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. A copy of the reader has been made available graciously by Dr. Chiara Bonfiglioli.
- 75 Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context," 247.
- 76 Carla Ravaioli as quoted in Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 60.
- 77 Rada Iveković as quoted in Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 84.
- 78 Rada Iveković as quoted in Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 83.
- 79 See Celia Hawkesworth, *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 225.
- 80 Dunja Blažević interview with Milica Pekić, Student Cultural Center, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/149264527>; Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 105.
- 81 Rada Iveković as quoted in Bonfiglioli, "Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Zena. Zensko Pitanje—Novi Pristup?'," 86. After the conference, feminist initiatives developed on much greater scale with numerous discussion groups and debates, the foundation of the *Žena i Društvo* groups, an uptick in publishing activities, and ultimately more feminist conferences in 1987, 1988, 1989, and 1990. See also Jancar-Webster, "Neofeminism in Yugoslavia," 1–30.
- 82 See Jelena Vesić, "The Three Exhibitions—Simultaneity of Promotion and Historization of New Art Practices (From Alternative Spaces to the Museum and Back)," *Parallel Chronologies: An Archive of East European Exhibitions*, <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/tag/jasna-tijardovic/>.

Chapter 2

- 1 Already in 1954, Tomislav Gotovac performed *Pidžama+ četkica za zub*, with a series of works following in the 1960s (*Pokazivanje časopisa Elle*, 1962, *Kufer*, 1964, *Poziranje*, 1964). Other early examples are Vladan Radosavljević's multimedia performances and Olija Ivanjicki, a painter and member of the Mediala group, expanded her painterly practice in 1965 to include performative elements and created actions involving body painting with her fellow Mediala member Leonid Šejka. During the 1960s it was especially the OHO and KÔD groups that experimented with performance.
- 2 On Atelje 212 see <https://kultivisise.rs/atelje-212/>. On the precedents to the development of performance and body art in the regions of former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe see, for example, Zdenka Badovinac's exhibition *Body*

and the East: From the 1960s to the Present (Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 1998) and the accompanying catalog of the same title, ed. Zdenka Badovinac.

- 3 See Ana Vujanović, "Curating Performance Art in Belgrade during the Cold War: Bitef's Fine Arts Programme," *Institute of the Present*, https://institutulprezentului.ro/en/2018/11/07/curating-performance-in-belgrade-during-the-cold-war/#_ftn5. For more on *Bitef*, see also Ana Vujanović, "Nove pozorišne tendencije—BITEF Festival" (New Theatre Tendencies—The Bitef Festival), in *Umetnost u Srbiji u XX veku, tom 1*, ed. Miško Šuvaković (Belgrade: Orion Art, 2010), 375–84; Jacqueline Nießer, Thomas Skowronek, Friederike Kin-Kovács, and Ulf Brunnbauer, "'Non-aligned Culture.' The Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF)," in *The Handbook of COURAGE: Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe*, ed. Bálažs Apor, Péter Apor, and Sándor Horváth (Budapest: Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 551–9; Natalija Vagapova, *Bitef: pozorište, festival, život* (Bitef: Theater, festival, life) (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2010); Muharem Pervić, *Volja za promenom—BITEF 1967–80* (Belgrade: Museum of Theatrical Arts, 2006); on Atelje 212 in particular and its programs and exhibitions see Biljana Tomić, "Dvadeset pet dana u Galeriji 212," *Umetnost*, no. 20 (1969): 108–9; Tomaž Brejc, Ješa Denegri, Željko Košćević, Irina Subotić, Tomaž Šalamun, and Biljana Tomić (eds.), *Atelje 212* (Belgrade, 1968).
- 4 Georg Schöllhammer as quoted in Vujanović, "Nove pozorišne tendencije—BITEF Festival," 375–84, 377.
- 5 Vujanović, "Nove pozorišne tendencije—BITEF Festival," 375–84, 375–7. On the criticism by the audience see Nießer, Skowronek, Kin-Kovács, and Brunnbauer, "'Non-aligned Culture.' The Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF)," 551–9, 557.
- 6 See Vujanović, "Nove pozorišne tendencije—BITEF Festival," 375–84, 380–2.
- 7 Biljana Tomić, "G212," in *VII Bitef*—catalog (Belgrade: Bitef, 1973), 13, quoted in Vujanović, "Curating Performance Art in Belgrade during the Cold War."
- 8 See Vujanović, "Curating Performance Art in Belgrade during the Cold War."
- 9 See Biljana Tomić, "Medijski događadi I manifestacije/Media Events and Manifestations," in *Video Umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia*, II, ed. Dejan Sretenović (Belgrade: Centar za savremenu umetnost 1999), 41.
- 10 Nataša Govedić and Suzana Marjanić, interview with Sanja Iveković, in *zarež*, no. 101, March 27, 2003, http://www.womenngo.org.rs/sajt/sajt/saopštenja/razgovori/sanja_ivekovic.htm, translation by the author.
- 11 Lists of participants, invitation letters, photographs, and ephemera of the event are held at the archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade.
- 12 Miško Šuvaković, *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik* (The Power of a Woman: Katalin Ladik), exh. catalog, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad (Novi Sad: Stojkov, 2010), 123. On Ladik see also Emese Kürti, *Screaming Hole: Poetry, Sound and Action as Intermedia Practice in the Work of Katalin Ladik*, acb Research Lab (Budapest: acb Gallery, 2017); Emese Kürti,

- Transregional Discourses: The Bosch+Bosch Group in the Yugoslav and the Hungarian Avant-garde*, (Budapest: acb Research Lab, 2016); “Katalin Ladik: Kreativne Tranzicije Katalin Ladik,” in *Teorijski Diskursi Savremene Ženske Kulture*, ed. Silvia Dražić and Vera Kopić, Pokrajinski zavod za ravnopravnost polova Novi Sad (Novi Sad: Sajnos, 2019), 11–17; Radmila Lazić, “Mesto žudenje: Katalin Ladik,” *Profemina*, 5–6 (1996): 136–9; Svetlana Slapšak, “Katalin Ladik: Osvanjanje opscenosti,” *Profemina*, 5–6 (1996): 140–3. Vera Balind’s Master Thesis, “Tracing the Subversive Femininities in the Socialist Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Katalin Ladik’s Poetry and Performances of the 1970s” (Central European University Budapest, Department of Gender Studies, 2010), in particular reads Ladik’s practice under a feminist lens.
- 13 See Kürti, *Transregional Discourses*, 6.
 - 14 See Balind, “Tracing the Subversive Femininities in the Socialist Yugoslavia,” 26. For further examples of Ladik’s poetry see Balind, “Tracing the Subversive Femininities in the Socialist Yugoslavia,” 35–41.
 - 15 Kürti, *Screaming Hole*, 53–4.
 - 16 See Katalin Ladik in *IV Aprilski Susret, Bilten 2*, Student Cultural Center Belgrade, 1975, 19, archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. Quote from “Katalin Ladik: Kreativne Tranzicije Katalin Ladik,” 11–17, 15.
 - 17 Katalin Ladik in *IV Aprilski Susret, Bilten 2*.
 - 18 Kürti, *Screaming Hole*, 177. See also Slapšak, “Katalin Ladik: Osvanjanje opscenosti,” 140–3.
 - 19 Miško Šuvaković interview with Katalin Ladik, in *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik*, 69.
 - 20 Ladik as quoted in Šuvaković, *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik*, 33.
 - 21 Katalin Ladik’s interview with Dragiša Drašković, reprinted in Šuvaković, *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik*, 57–9.
 - 22 See Šuvaković, *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik*, 85.
 - 23 Sabrina P. Ramet, “In Tito’s Time,” in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 89–106, 92. See also Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995) and especially Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia*.
 - 24 Vida Tomšić as quoted in Sklevicky, “Emancipated Integration or Integrated Emancipation,” 93–108, 102.
 - 25 Kürti, *Transregional Discourses*, 20.
 - 26 Kürti, *Screaming Hole*, 60–1.
 - 27 Šuvaković, *Moć Žene: Katalin Ladik*, 197.
 - 28 Dubravka Djurić, “The Construction of Heterosexual and Lesbian Identities in Katalin Ladik, Radmila Lazić and Aida Bagić’s Poetry,” in *Gender and Identity: Theories from and/or on Southeastern Europe*, ed. Jelisaвета Blagojević, Katerina Jolozova, and Svetlana Slapsak, Athena and regional

network for gender/women's studies in Southeastern Europe (Belgrade: Women's Studies and Gender Research Center, 2006), 175–89.

- 29 Nebojša Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, exh. catalog (Novi Sad: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 2016), 5. The two women actually also met on several occasions and Mrđa even made a short film about Ladik in 1999. To this day, publications on Mrđa are scarce and, outside of her native Serbia, close to nonexistent. The catalog accompanying her 2016 exhibition in Novi Sad is the most important resource on the artist. In 1988, the artist's work was also shown at the Cultural Center in Novi Sad: *Milica Mrđa Kuzmanov: Slike, srteži, objekti*, which was accompanied by a small catalog with an excellent introduction by Ješa Denegri. In 1992 followed *Milica Mrđa Kuzmanov: Video radovi, instalacije, performansi, gestualna poezija (1988–1992)* at the Galerija savremene likovne umetnosti in Novi Sad. In addition see also Ješa Denegri, "Milica Mrđa Kuzmanov," in *Devedesete: teme srpske umetnosti (1990–1999)* (Novi Sad: Svetovi, 1999), 204–6; Branka Srdić-Živanović, "Autorstvo samoće," *Projekat*, no. 1 (1993): 52–3; Miško Šuvaković, "Ženski performansi: mapiranje identiteta (Poznanović/Ladik/Mrđa)," in *Centralnoevropski aspekti vojvođanskih avangardi 1920–2000, Granični fenomeni, fenomeni granica*, ed. Dragomir Ugren (Novi Sad: Muzej savremene likovne umetnosti, 2002), 144–51. For a contextualization of Mrđa's practice within a larger artistic scene of the Vojvodina see also Miško Šuvaković and Dragomir Ugren, *European Contexts of the 20th Century Art in Vojvodina*, exh. catalog, Muzej savremene umetnosti Novi Sad (Novi Sad: Muzej savremene umetnosti 2008).
- 30 Nebojša Milenković, in *Incidentan slučaj Milice Mrđe*, November 20, 2016, <http://www.seecult.org/vest/incidentan-slucaj-milice-mrde>.
- 31 Milica Mrđa as quoted in Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, 15.
- 32 Milica Mrđa as quoted in Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, 55.
- 33 Zoran Đerić, as quoted in Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, 57.
- 34 Branka Srdić Živanović, as quoted in Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, 58.
- 35 Milenković, *Milica Mrđa: Umetnost je ono što je izraz nervi!*, 19.
- 36 See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia*, 143.
- 37 Maca Jogan, "Konzervativne vrijednosti kao 'mučne' istine" (Conservative values as the 'Disturbing' Truth), *Žena* 40, no. 2–3 (1982): 53–6; Neda Todorović, *Ženska štampa I kultura žensvenosti* (Women's Press and the Culture of Femininity) (Belgrade: Naučna knjiga, 1987), esp. 59–74, 75–6. See also Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia*, 143–4.
- 38 These women-only performing arts group are barely known to a larger audience. Barbara Orel has done tremendous work in conducting archival research with which she was able to reconstruct some of the missing pieces: Barbara Orel, "Women's Perspective: The Contribution of the Ljubljana

- Alternative Arts Scene in the 1980s,” in *Performative Gestures—Political Moves*, ed. Katja Kobolt and Lana Zdravković (Ljubljana: City of Women-Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture/Red Athena University Press, 2014), 79–96.
- 39 Tia Čiček, “Women Curators: Examining Women’s Roles at the ŠKUC Gallery in the 1980s,” *Miejsce*, no. 7 (2021): 1–14, 9, <http://miejsce.asp.waw.pl/en/women-curators-examining-womens-roles-at-the-skuc-gallery-in-the-1980s/>.
 - 40 See Orel, “Women’s Perspective,” 79–96, 86–8. Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić, *Ljubljana, Ljubljana* (Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga, 1991) contains a number of photographs from Linije Sile’s performances (147–9).
 - 41 Jasmina Založnik, “Punk as a Strategy for Body Politization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s,” *AM Journal*, no. 14 (2017): 145–56, 151.
 - 42 Vlasta Delimar, “Pripremanje za starost,” in *Teorijski Diskursi Savremene Ženske Kulture*, ed. Dražić and Kopić, 140–5, 143. Publications on Delimar are comparably scarce especially outside the former Yugoslav space. Notable is *Vlasta Delimar: monografija performans*, ed. Miško Šuvaković (Zagreb: Areagrafika, 2003), which contains a number of essays on the artist in addition to reproductions of the majority of her performances; The Museum of Contemporary Art in her native Zagreb devoted two major exhibitions to Delimar, one in 1993 (*Vlasta Delimar*), and another retrospective covering works from 1979–2014 in 2014: *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*. Both were accompanied by catalogs with substantial contributions on the artist by Marian Mazzone, Marijan Susovski, and Marina Gržinić, among others. See *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*, ed. Martina Munivrana, exh. catalog, Muzej savremene umjetnosti Zagreb (Zagreb: Muzej savremene umjetnosti 2014). In addition see also *Vlasta Delimar: Conversation with the Warrior or Woman has Disappeared* (Zagreb: Galerija Karas, 2001); Janka Vukmor, “Vlasta Delimar -I’m Seeking for a Woman,” in *Vlasta Delimar, Vlado Martinek* (London: Brick Lane Gallery, 1995), n.p.; *Vlasta Delimar: Put your Faith in Women* (Vienna: Galerie Michaela Stock 2016). A reproduction of the catalog accompanying this exhibition, which was written by Marko Stamenković, is available on the gallery’s website, http://www.galerie-stock.net/images/ausstellungen/bilder/2017/Vlasta_katalog/2017_Katalog_VlastaDelimar_komplett_web.pdf. In 2020, a large exhibition of Delimar’s work will travel through cities of former Yugoslavia: *Forty Years of Vlasta Delimar’s Artistic Love*. Most recently, her work was also analyzed by Jasmina Tumbas in *I Am Jugoslovenka: Feminist Performance Politics during and after Yugoslav Socialism*, 72–7, 87–90. Tumbas focuses mostly on Delimar’s work in its relation to socialism.
 - 43 Vlasta Delimar’s interview with Mirjana Dugandžija, in *Jutarnji*, January 12, 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/art/vlasta-delimar-misli-se-da-sam-imala-gomile-ljubavnika-a-imala-sam-tri-muskarca-u-zivotu-9844045>.
 - 44 Vlasta Delimar, “I, Vlasta Delimar, the Rope-Maker’s Daughter,” in *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*, ed. Munivrana, 7–38. Her 1982 marriage to Jerman was conceived as a public performance by the artists. On the work of the Group of Six Authors see also Miško Šuvaković, “You can’t find a Woman, Can You? An Essay on Performers’ Theme-Questioning of Politics, Body and

- Sex in Vlasta Delimar's Deed," in *Vlasta Delimar: monografija performans*, ed. Šuvaković, 67–76, 67.
- 45 Photographs are reproduced in *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*, ed. Munivrana, 52–3.
- 46 Vlasta Delimar, interviewed by Barbara Matejčić, in *Sisters of Europe*, <https://sistersofeurope.eu/category/croatia/>. The performance was preceded by a series of collages that the artist started in 1978. For the collages titled *Intervencije u časopisima* (Interventions in Magazines), she utilized her own photograph as well as cutouts from fashion magazines to examine different possibilities of visual changes by dis- and reassembling the photographs and inserting her own portrait into a variety of bodies, hairstyles, clothes and so on. Similar is also her 1979 untitled *Kolaž* (Collage: Nema naziva), where she adapted various hairstyles to her face. See Martina Munovrana, "Reflect on Yourself Daily," in *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*, ed. Munivrana, 39–44, 41. Images are reproduced on page 191–3.
- 47 In a 2016 interview, Delimar recounts several instances of (attempted) censorship of her works, most of which happened after Yugoslavia had fallen apart and the nation-states were reinstated: Vlasta Delimar, interview with Matija Mrakovčić, "U bivšoj državi bilo je važno raditi, a ne graditi karijeru," *Kulturpunkt.hr*, December 7, 2016, <https://www.kulturpunkt.hr/content/u-bivsoj-drzavi-bilo-je-vazno-raditi-ne-graditi-karijeru>. On the other hand, of course, there remained a group of people that welcomed the kind of radicality that Delimar's work bore. In a 1985 announcement of an exhibition of Delimar's *Jebite Me* at the Space of Expanded Media in Zagreb, artist and critic Antun Maračić laments the fact that art in Yugoslavia had all of a sudden become "a thing of taste and good manners. The daily commandment would be: become callow, become numb, turn off the critical relation to reality in favor of sophisticated bullshitting, and liberty at every cost [. . .]. And what's with one of the fundamental principles, here is out *genius loci*? For a proper transavantgarde we need it. [. . .] Are only well-to-do artists good artists?" Turning specifically to Delimar, he observes that "it turns out that precisely these fucked off and censored artists have understood the message the best. And another thing characterizes the spirit of our place: emancipated women! So why do we dread a woman who says she loves cock?" Antun Maračić, "U izložbu Vlaste Delimar u Prostoru Proširenih Medija," *Polet*, 2, no. 250 (1984): 19. Translation Stefan Ralević.
- 48 Dubravka Žarkov, "From 'Media War' to 'Ethnic War'—The Female Body and the Production of Ethnicity in Former Yugoslavia (1986–1994)" (dissertation Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1999), 5, 8. Unpublished manuscript held at Atria Kennisinstituut voor Emancipatie en Vrouwengeschiedenis, Amsterdam.
- 49 Not only religious symbols such as crosses frequently appear in Delimar's work, she often also visually references icon painting or classic religious poses for example in a 1993 untitled collage that shows her holding her left breast, or surrounding her head with a cloth and placing it into a gold frame. Similarly, she also employs iconoclastic strategies by scratching out her object's eyes, or covering them with black paint.

- 50 See Jasmina Tumbas, "Decision as Art: Performance in the Balkans," in *Performance Art in the Second Public Sphere*, ed. Katalin Cseh-Varga and Adam Czirak (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 184–201, 193–4.
- 51 Delimar, interview with Mirjana Dugandžija.
- 52 See Tumbas, "Decision as Art: Performance in the Balkans," 184–201, 192.
- 53 <https://sistersofeurope.eu/category/croatia/>. See also Delimar, "I, Vlasta Delimar, the Rope-Maker's Daughter," 7–38, 15. Of course this is the artist's personal recollection of the reason for her rejection yet her repeated impression of posing a difficulty for fellow women is noteworthy.
- 54 See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia*, 158–62. Quote from Zsófia Lóránd, "'A Politically Non-dangerous Revolution is not a Revolution': Critical Readings of the Concept of Sexual Revolution by Yugoslav Feminists in the 1970s," *European Review of History: Revue européenne*, 22, no. 1 (2015): 130.
- 55 Iveković, "The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects," 34–49. Archive of the Student Cultural Center Belgrade. A copy of the reader has been made available graciously by Dr. Chiara Bonfiglioli.
- 56 Slavenka Drakulić, "Pornografija u novoj prohibiciji," *Start*, 9, no. 419 (February 1985): 68–70; Slavenka Drakulić, "Pornografija I represijka," *Pitanja*, no. 5/6 (1978): 16–21; Vesna Kesić, "Nije li pornografija cinična?" *Start*, no. 355 (August 28, 1982): 74–5. Kesić and Drakulić published various articles dealing with the topic, as for example "Kako svući pornografija" (How to undress pornography), *Start*, no. 294 (April 30, 1980): 18–19 (Vesić), or "Dugi rat nage Venere" (The long War of the Naked Venus), *Start*, no. 303 (September 3, 1980): 18–20 (Drakulić). See also Drakulić's "Muški su nešto drugo" (Men are something different), *Start*, no. 293 (April 16, 1980): 66–7.
- 57 Kesić, "Nije li pornografija cinična?" 74–5.
- 58 Drakulić, "Muški su nešto drugo," 66–7; Vesna Kesić, "Simpoziji o seksu," *Start*, no. 375 (June 4, 1983): 7. See also Lóránd, "'A Politically Non-dangerous Revolution is not a Revolution'," esp. 130–3.
- 59 Vlasta Delimar, interview with Mrakovčić; "U bivšoj državi bilo je važno raditi, a ne graditi karijeru."

Chapter 3

- 1 Mirko Radojičić, "Activity of the Group KOD," in *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, ed. Susovski, 38–47, 38.
- 2 *Judita Šalgo: hronika*, ed. Zoran Mirković (Novi Sad: Studenski kulturni centar, 2007), 105, 107, 109. Of the few publications that do exist on Šalgo in Serbo-Croatian (she remains absent from Western scholarship), the majority deals with her work as a writer and her involvement in the literary scene of the Vojvodina. *Judita Šalgo: hronika*, ed. Mirković casts a slightly wider net, also including interviews and writings by her husband, as well as transcripts from her work diaries. See also Silvia Dražić, *Stvarni i imaginarni svetovi Judite Šalgo* (Novi Sad: Futura Publikacije, 2013).

- 3 There is only scarce scholarship on the Tribina mladih. Gordana Đilas and Nedeljko Mamula, *Tribina Mladih: 1954-1977* (Novi Sad: Novi Sad Cultural Center, 2004) chronicles the institute's activities. See also Marko Ilić, "A Taster of Political Insult," *Third Text*, 32, no. 4 (2018): 530–45. A reworked version appeared in his *A Slow Burning Fire*, 69–114. See also Dietmar Unterkofler, "Connection with the World: Internationalism and New Art Practice in Yugoslavia," in *Performance Art in the Second Public Sphere*, ed. Katalin Cseh-Varga and Adam Czirak (New York: Routledge, 2018), 45–60, 49; Václav Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 43.
- 4 Sanja Kojić Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović: Contact Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (Novi Sad: Muzej Savremene Umetnost, 2016), 34. Bogdanka Poznanović, like many of her female peers, remains grossly understudied and there are only few publications and unfortunately no exhibitions on the artist. The majority of her works are poorly documented and therefore difficult to reconstruct. Sanja Kojić Mladenov's publication is the most comprehensive study of the artist and also contains detailed biographical information. *Vojvođanke 1917–1931: životne price*, ed. Svenka Savić (Novi Sad: Futura publikacije, 2001), 299–312 contains an interview with the artist. In 2012 Miško Šuvaković published a monograph of the artist and her husband Dejan Poznanović, *Bogdanka I Dejan Poznanović* (Zagreb: Institut za istraživanje avangarde, Vojvodina Museum of Contemporary Art Novi Sad and Orion Art, 2012). See also Ješa Denegri, *Jozsef Acs, Petrik Pal, Bogdanka Poznanović: enformel u Vojvodini* (Beograd: Kulturni centar Beograda, 2011) and Miško Šuvaković, "Performans: Bogdanka Poznanović, Katalin Ladik i Milica Mrđa-Kuzmanov," in *Konceptualna umetnost* (Novi Sad: Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, 2007), 255–8.
- 5 Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 94.
- 6 Dejan Sretenović, "Video umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia," in Sretenović, *Video Umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia*, 7–22, 11–12.
- 7 See Branislav Dimitrijević, "Povremena istorija-kratak pregled video umetnosti u Srbiji/Intermittent History—A Brief Survey of Video Art in Serbia," in Sretenović, *Video Umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia*, 23–54, 23. For a concise history of video art and its pioneers in Yugoslavia see Barbara Borčić, "Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism," in *Impossible Histories*, ed. Đurić and Šuvaković, 490–520 and the edited volume by Sretenović, "Video umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia," esp. 7–22; See also Ješa Denegri, "Video umetnost u Jugoslaviji 1969-1984," in *Videosfera*, ed. M. Ristić (Belgrade: SIC, 1986), 124–31.
- 8 Borčić, "Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism," 500.
- 9 Bogdanka Poznanović in Savić, *Vojvođanke 1917–1931*, 299–312.
- 10 Sretenović, "Video umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia," 7–22, 13. See also Borčić, "Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism," 500. One exception here certainly is Sanja Iveković, who, in collaboration with Dalibor Martinis, but also independently, produced a variety of video works targeting especially the power of televised imagery in forming desires, reinforcing stereotypes, or shaping political, social, and cultural narratives.

- 11 Unfortunately not a lot of material is available on these works besides the descriptions provided by Sanja Kojić Mladenov, in *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 84.
- 12 Ješa Denegri, "Srećo Dragan from the Perspective of Another Place and Time," in *Srećo Dragan. Space is Out of Joint*, ed. Zdenka Badovinac, exh. cat., Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2017), 26–9, 26–7.
- 13 The name FAVIT stands for the group's wide interests: Film, Audiovisual Investigations, Television. See <https://monoskop.org/FAVIT> and <http://www.matica.hr/vijenac/249/velikan-eksperimentalizma-11956/>.
- 14 Nina Czegledy, "VideoMedeja4: 'Video is a Form of Survival'," <https://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9912/msg00172.html>. On *VideoMedeja* see also Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 84–6.
- 15 Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 74.
- 16 "Computers and Peripheral Equipment Yugoslavia," Country Market Survey, U.S. Department of Commerce, May 1984.
- 17 See Bogdanka Poznanović in Savić, *Vojvodanke 1917–1931*, 299–312. This gesture, without doubt, would have acquired even stronger meaning when executed in an official gallery space and not one embracing alternative art such as the Tribina, yet it remains doubtful if Poznanović would have found a collaborator among the larger museums or galleries. The artist explored similar concepts of participation and exchange in *La consumazione dei complementari*, executed in the December of 1971 again at the Tribina mladih. For the thirty-minute-long performance, the artist served fruit to the audience at the gallery and invited them to eat it.
- 18 Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 44. It might also be for the reason of governmental control that the artist refused to align herself openly with any political statements such as feminism. She states that "I avoided ideology and political associations in my work, and still, politicians and local art scene kept finding 'suspicious elements' in them, because they did not understand the new sensibility and the poetics. I had quite a few troubles, Dejan as well, but, then again, we never expected acknowledgements." See Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 138.
- 19 See Unterkofler, "Connection with the World," 45–60, 49. See also Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless*, 43; Ilić, "'A Taster of Political Insult,'" 530–45, 540–5. On the state's interference with the Tribina's exhibitions see also *Judita Šalgo: hronika*, ed. Mirković, 111.
- 20 Šalgo reflects on the circumstances in *Judita Šalgo: hronika*, ed. Mirković, 111–12.
- 21 See Ilić, "'A Taster of Political Insult,'" 530–45. The interference by the government had a strong impact not only on the Tribina and its program, but the affiliated artists as well. While some of the activities were moved underground (e.g., the publication of a journal called *L.H.O.O.Q.*), artists such as Slobodan Tišma and Cedomir Drča withdrew from public art practice, resorting to time-based actions instead.
- 22 Poznanović as quoted in Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 110. On the Visual Studio for Intermedia Research see also Lidija Srebotnjak Prišić, "Vizuelni

- studio, Akademija umetnosti, Novi Sad,” in Sretenović, *Video Umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia*, II, 150–2.
- 23 Poznanović as quoted in Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 110.
 - 24 Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 114.
 - 25 Suvaković, quoted in Mladenov, *Bogdanka Poznanović*, 2016, 114.
 - 26 See Šuvaković, *Bogdanka i Dejan Poznanović*, 108–17. In 1991, the Studio became part of a course taught at the Academy, which is called “Intermedia Research.”
 - 27 Sanja Kojić Mladenov, “Bogdanka Poznanović: Intermedijska komunikacija,” in *Teorijski Diskursi Savremene Ženske Kulture*, ed. Dražić and Kopicl, 34–55, 52.
 - 28 See Marina Gržinić, “Total Recall—Total Closure,” in *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. IRWIN (London: Afterall, 2006), 321–31; On the activities of ŠKUC and Ljubljana’s alternative art scene see Marina Gržinić, “Galerija ŠKUC Ljubljana 1978–1987,” in *75’85. Do roba in naprej: slovenska umetnost 1975–1987*, ed. Igor Španjol and Igor Zabel (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2003), 164–83; Barbara Borčič, “The ŠKUC Gallery, Alternative Culture, and Neue Slowenische Kunst in the 1980s,” in *NSK from Kapital to Capital: Neue Slowenische Kunst—The Event of the Final Decade of Yugoslavia*, ed. Zdenka Badovinac, Eda Čufer, and Anthony Gardner (Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 299–318; Ilić, *A Slow Burning Fire*, 207–50; Čiček, “Women Curators,” 1–14, 9; and Erjavec and Gržinić, *Ljubljana, Ljubljana*, which provides an excellent analysis of the alternative scene set against Ljubljana’s political and urban context and contains a large number of archival images. For a list of institutes and events shaping the Slovenian alternative art scene during the 1980s. See also Martina Malešič and Asta Svrečko, “New Spaces, New Images. The Eighties through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions, and Discourses,” *Zbornik—The Journal of the Modern Art History Department*, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, no. 15 (2019): 117–42. Neven Korda’s “Alternative Dawns,” in *FV Alternativa osemdesetih/Alternative Dawns of the Eighties*, ed. Breda Škrjanec (Ljubljana: Mednarodni grafični likovni center, 2008), 281–343 is an in-depth study of the activities of ŠKUC and the ŠKD, based on extensive archival research. Particularly interesting is his description of the relation between the two associations.
 - 29 Eda Čufer, “New Theater in Slovenia, 1980–1990,” in *Impossible Histories*, ed. Djurić and Šuvaković, 376–403, 385.
 - 30 Čufer, “New Theater in Slovenia, 1980–1990,” 376–403, 386. See also Založnik, “Punk as a Strategy for Body Politization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s,” 145–56.
 - 31 Zemira Alajbegović, “The Frozen Time—The Eighties, ŠKUC Forum, FV Video and Others,” in *Videodokument: Video Art in Slovenia 1969–1998*, ed. Barbara Borčič (Ljubljana: Open Society Institute-, 1999), 37–59, 43. On video as a medium of subculture see also Marina Gržinić, “VHS as a medium of subculture,” in *Doing Performance Art History*, ed. Sandra Frimmel, Tomáš Glanc, Sabine Hänsen, Katalin Krasznahorkai, Nastasia Louveau, Dorota

- Sajewska, and Sylvia Sasse (Open Book I, 2020), published online through *Apparatus—Film, Media and Digital Culture in Central and Eastern Europe*, <https://www.apparatusjournal.net/index.php/apparatus/article/view/193/469>.
- 32 FV 112/15 was a group of artists, performers, musicians, and club-organizers that became affiliated with the Student Cultural Association Forum ŠKD and, through a range of activities, helped establish the Ljubljana alternative scene. FV became closely involved with Slovene video art, punk, and alternative music as produced by groups such as Borghesia, Toži-Babe, Videosex, or Laibach. The most comprehensive study about FV 112/15 can be found in the exhibition catalog *FV Alternativa osemdesetih/Alternative Dawns of the Eighties*, ed. Škrjanec. The catalog 75'85. *Do roba in naprej: slovenska umetnost 1975-1987*, ed. Španjol and Zabel, also features an interview with Zemira Alajbegović and Neven Korda, who were part of FV at times (92–7).
 - 33 Tatjana Greif, "Obscenost krščanskega diskurza je monstrozna—Intervju z Marino Gržinič," *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 37, no. 237 (2009): 145–55, 146. See also Borčič, "Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism," 490–520, 512–13.
 - 34 <http://grzinic-smid.si/?p=170>. See also Marina Gržinič and Aneta Stojnić, "From Feminism to Transfeminism: From Sexually Queer to Politically Queer," in *Sexing the Border: Gender, Art and New Media in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Katarzyna Kosmala (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 231–51, esp. 238–42. On Gržinič's and Šmid's collaboration see also Marina Gržinič and Tanja Velagič (eds.), *Trenutki odločitve—performativno, politično in tehnološko" umetniški video, filmska in interaktivna večmedijska dela Marine Gržinič in Aine Šmid 1982–2005* (Ljubljana: Društvo ZAK, Društvo za proučevanje zgodovine, antropologije in književostni, 2006).
 - 35 See Seraina Renz, "Körper-Grenzen-Materialität. Die Politik der (post-) jugoslawischen Kunst von Marina Gržinič/Aina Šmid und Milica Tomić/ Grupa Spomenik," *Figurationen: Gender, Literatur, Kultur*, no. 2 (2011): 43–60. Quote on page 22. See also Marina Gržinič, "Female Consequences: Sex and Rock'n'Roll," in *dig me out: Discourses of Popular Music, Gender, and Ethnicity*, ed. Maria José Belbel and Rosa Reitsamer (Spain/Austria: Art Centre Arteleku, 2009), n.p., http://www.digmeout.org/texte/Grzinic_eng_ges.pdf.
 - 36 On the emergence of lesbian, gay, and queer culture see Bojan Bilić and Marija Radoman (eds.), *Lesbian Activism in the (Post-) Yugoslav Space: Sisterhood and Unity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Bojan Bilić, *Trauma, Violence, and Lesbian Agency in Croatia and Serbia: Building Better Times* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). See also Luke Stamps, "How One Underground Party Night Changed Ljubljana—and Yugoslavia—Forever," *The Calvert Journal*, December 31, 2021, <https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/13324/underground-yugoslavia-ljubljanas-1984-queer-movement-lasting-legacy>. See also Tumbas, *I Am Jugoslovenka: Feminist Performance Politics during and after Yugoslav Socialism*, 150–95.
 - 37 Rada Iveković, "Talijanski komunisti i ženski pokret," *Dometi*, 13, no. 2 (1980): 31–44; Milan Polić, "Emancipacijske mogućnosti transseksualnosti,"

- Žena*, 46, no. 1–2 (1988): 96–115; Cerjan-Letica, “Feministički pokret—organizacija, oblici i sadržaj borbe,” 167–82.
- 38 Žarana Papić, “Pol i Rod—Kategorije socijalne Organizacije Polnosti,” *Revista za sociologiju*, XIV, no. 3–4 (1984): 327–31.
 - 39 Papić, “Pol i Rod—Kategorije socijalne Organizacije Polnosti,” 327–31, 329.
 - 40 “How one underground party night changed Ljubljana—and Yugoslavia—forever,” *New East Digital Archive*, <https://www.new-east-archive.org/articles/show/13324/underground-yugoslavia-ljubljanas-1984-queer-movement-lasting-legacy>.
 - 41 Celia Donert, Szabina Kerényi, Orysia Kulick, and Zsófia Lóránd, “Unlocking New Histories of Human Rights in State Socialist Europe,” in *The Handbook of COURAGE*, ed. Apor, Apor, and Horváth, 493–522, 502.
 - 42 On feminism and its relation to the mass media during the 1980s see especially Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State of Yugoslavia*, 137–69.
 - 43 Gržinić, “Female Consequences: Sex and Rock’n’Roll.”
 - 44 See Tomić, “Media Events and Manifestations”; Jasna Tijardović, “Fragmenti o Filmi i Videu/Fragments on Film and Video,” in Sretenović, *Video Umetnost u Srbiji/Video Art in Serbia*, 55–76, 57–8.
 - 45 Barbara Borčić points out, however, that throughout the 70s, 80s, and well into the 1990s, it was mostly the video artists themselves who wrote about video art while art historical scholarship continued to neglect the medium, causing a lack of theoretical and critical reflection. See Borčić, “Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism,” 490–520, 505–9.
 - 46 Dimitrijević, “Povremena istorija-kratak pregled video umetnosti u Srbiji/Intermittent History,” 23–53, 33–7.

Chapter 4

- 1 See Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 25–38, 38; On the disintegration of Yugoslavia see also Sabrina P. Ramet, *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics, and Culture in a Shattered Community* (Milton: Routledge, 2019); Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books/BBC Books, 1995); Robert M. Hayden (ed.), *From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans: Studies of a European Disunion, 1991–2011* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013); Alastair Finlan, *The Collapse of Yugoslavia: 1991–1999* (Oxford: Osprey Publications, 2004); Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and its Aftermath* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004); *Nation-states and Xenophobias: In the Ruins of Former Yugoslavia*, ed. Mojca Pajnik and Tonči Kuzmanić (Ljubljana: Peace Institute/Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, 2005); See also Mirjana Morokvasić, “The Logic of Exclusion: Nationalism, Sexism and the Yugoslav War,” in *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*, ed. Nickie

- Charles and Helen Hintjens (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 65–89. On the demolishing of the image and memory of Tito and Titoism see especially Tone Bringa, “The Death of Tito and the End of Yugoslavia,” in *Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority*, ed. John Bornemann (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 148–200, 183–9. See also: Dusko Sekulic, et al., “Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia,” *American Sociological Review*, 59, no. 1 (1994): 83–97.
- 2 Muhamed Karamehmedović quoted in Branislava Anđelković and Branislav Dimitrijević, “The Final Decade: Art, Society, Trauma and Normality,” in *On Normality: Art in Serbia 1989–2001*, ed. Branislava Anđelković and Branislav Dimitrijević, exh. cat. (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, 2005), 9–130, 9. In 2017, the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana devoted an exhibition to the *Yugoslav Documents* show and its implications. Its catalog provides important contextualization: *Dediščina 1989: študijski primer: druga razstava “Jugoslovanski dokumenti”* (The heritage of 1989: The second “Yugoslav Documents” exhibition) (Ljubljana: exh. cat. Moderna Galerija, 2017).
 - 3 See for example Borka Pavičević’s recollections in *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. Jana Dolečki, Senad Halilbašić, and Stefan Hulfeld (Cham and London: Springer Nature Switzerland AG and Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 37–44. In 1999, the independent radio station Radio B92, was forcefully taken over by a new management issued by the government, which immediately proceeded to evict the majority of employees of the station and its departments as well as affiliated programs such as Cinema REX. In the years prior, Cinema REX had organized more than 300 different, independent programs in their own space and about twenty in bigger towns all over Serbia. The employees, however, continued their work under the name of Cyberrex, first in the virtual realm and later in a physical space after Milošević’s regime had fallen. See also Eric D. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia. Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
 - 4 Stevan Vuković, “Politics, Art, and Problems with Reality,” *Balkan Umbrella*, no. 1 (October 2001): 14–19, 15. See also Jadranka Anđelić, interview with Eloise de Leon, *InMotion Magazine*, September 1996, <https://inmotionmagazine.com/dah.html>.
 - 5 See Slavenka Drakulić, “Women and New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia,” in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism. Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 123–30; Vesna Kesić, “From Reverence to Rape: An Anthropology of Ethnic and Genderized Violence,” in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, ed. Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 25–39; *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, ed. Ramet, 153–69; Danijela Majstorović, “(Un)doing Feminism in (post)-Yugoslav Media Spaces,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 16, no. 6 (2016): 1–16; A nuanced study of the status of women in the Yugoslav successor states can also be found in Christina M. Hassenstab and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

- 6 Žarana Papić, "Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War, and Nationalist Mutations," in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, ed. Ramet, 153–69, 154.
- 7 See, for example, Žarana Papić, "From State Socialism to State Nationalism," in *What Can We Do for Ourselves: East European Feminist Conference*, Belgrade, 1994, proceedings published by the Center for Women's Studies, Research and Communication, 1995, 53–63; Drakulić, "Women and New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia," 123–30; Slavenka Drakulić, "The Use of Women," *Danas*, October 27, 1987, 13–14. Translation in *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 73–4.
- 8 On ZEST see Cynthia Cockburn, "A Women's Political Party for Yugoslavia: Introduction to the Serbian Feminist Manifesto," *Feminist Review*, no. 39, (1991): 155–60. Accessed April 2, 2021. doi:10.2307/1395452.
- 9 For a detailed description of feminist groups in Zagreb and Belgrade see Ana Miškovska Kajevska, *Feminist Activism at War: Belgrade and Zagreb Feminists in the 1990s* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), esp. 27–60.
- 10 See <http://www.czzzr.hr/eng/> and <http://womeninblack.org/>. On Women in Black and other female peace activism see Daša Duhaček, "Gender Perspectives on Political Ideologies in Yugoslavia," in *Gender and Identity*, ed. Blagojević, Kolozova, and Slapsak, 297–319; Athena Athanasiou, *Antagonistic Mourning: Political Dissidence and the Women in Black* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017). On the women's movement in Serbia specifically see Marina Blagojević, "Feminist Knowledge and the Women's Movement in Serbia: A Strategic Alliance," *Aspasia*, 4 (March 2010): 155–205 and Lepa Mladjenović and Donna M. Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," in *Frontline Feminisms*, ed. Waller and Rycenga, 241–70.
- 11 H. Cullen quoted in Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 214.
- 12 Ana Miškovska Kajevska rightfully points out that the term "nationalist" with regard to feminism should be used with caution since its meaning significantly differs from populist nationalism and its chauvinist and patriarchal undertones (173–5). On the rift within feminism see Jill Benderly, "Rape, Feminism and Nationalism in the War in Yugoslav Successor States," in *Feminist Nationalism*, ed. Lois A. West (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 59–74, 70; Dubravka Žarkov, "Feminism and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia: On the Politics of Gender and Ethnicity," *Social Development Issues*, 24, no. 3 (January 2003): 1–19, <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/23361>; Žarkov, *The Body of War*, esp. 77–9. Ana Miškovska Kajevska has compiled a detailed study of the discourses occurring in the feminist movements of former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. With its in-depth research and interviews, her *Feminist Activism at War* is an essential resource for understanding feminism in the regions of former Yugoslavia and its impact by the war.
- 13 See Žarkov, "Feminism and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia," 1–19, 3–5. Most certainly, feminism and nationalism differ greatly from region to region in former Yugoslavia and generalizing statements cannot and should not be made. Especially Žarkov's and Miškovska Kajevska's texts provide nuanced readings and counter generalized statements and assumptions.

- 14 Says the artist: "By 1989 everything had changed and I felt that new modes of operation should be introduced into my art practice. It was challenging for me to think about art that could be still critical but also participatory. Instead of being limited by traditional ways of merely illustrating the political context, I was searching for the method that would have the strongest possible impact on real life." In: "'Women's House': Sanja Iveković discusses recent project," Interview with Katarzyna Pabijanek, *ArtMargins*, December 20, 2009, <https://artmargins.com/qwomens-houseq-sanja-ivekovic-discusses-recent-projects-interview/>.
- 15 Alma Suljević as quoted in Ewa Anna Kumelowski, "The Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle: An Introduction to the History of the Visual Arts Scene of Besieged Sarajevo," *Third Text*, 34, no. 3 (2020): 350–68, 350.
- 16 See Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 67.
- 17 See Nermina Zildžo, "Burying the Past and Exhuming Mass Graves," in *East Art Map*, ed. IRWIN, 141–52. The art scene of Bosnia-Herzegovina has just recently started to receive more scholarly attention and there are several valuable publications devoted to it, such as Aida Abadžić Hodžić, "Odgovornost Umjetnika i/ili Odgovornost Likovne Kritike" (Responsibility of Artists and/or Responsibility of Art Criticism), *Vizura—Časopis za savremene vizualne umjetnosti, likovnu kritiku i teoriju*, no. 3–4 (2008): 6–15; Kumelowski, "The Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle," 350–68; Larisa Kurtović, "Paradoxes of Wartime 'Freedom': Alternative Culture during the Siege of Sarajevo," in *Oprinaje Zlu: (Post)Jugoslovenski Anti-Ratni Angažman*, ed. Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 2015), 197–224; Ivana Maček, *Sarajevo under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Ivana Maček, "Imitation of Life': Negotiating Normality in Sarajevo under Siege," in *The New Bosnian Mosaic. Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms, and Ger Guijzings (London: Routledge, 2007), 39–40, and especially Asja Mandić, "The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance in Sarajevo," *Third Text*, 25, no. 6 (November 2011): 725–35, as well as Ilić, *A Slow Burning Fire*, 251–94. On *Kentauiromahia* see Nermina Omerbegović, "Sarajevska kentauiromahija" (Sarajevan Centauiromachy), *Oslobodjenje*, August 5, 1994, 7; Muhamed Karamehmedović, "Izazov feniksa" (The challenge of the Phoenix), *Oslobodjenje*, July 31, 1994, 7.
- 18 Mandić, "The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance in Sarajevo," 725–35, 727.
- 19 Azra Begić as quoted in Kumelowski, "The Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle," in 350–68, 354. On the exhibitions and events staged by artists in Sarajevo during the war see also Asja Mandić, "Exhibitions in Damaged and Destroyed Architectural Objects in Besieged Sarajevo: Spaces of Gathering and Socialization," in *Participation in Art and Architecture: Spaces of Interaction and Occupation*, ed. Martino Stierli and Mechthild Widrich (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 107–26. Jay Murphy reviewed the exhibition for *Third Text* in 1995: Jay Murphy, "Witnesses of Existence," *Third Text*, 9, no. 31 (1995): 76–9, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09528829508576548>.

- 20 See Zildžo, "Burying the Past and Exhuming Mass Graves," 141–52, 150. See also the entry on the artist from the website of the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, http://wikipeacewomen.org/wpworg/en/?page_id=1386.
- 21 The work is commonly referred to as *The Social Sculpture of Macedonia*, but "Plastic" was originally and intentionally chosen by the artist since it bears reference to Joseph Beuys's *Social Plastic*. I want to thank the artist for correcting this error and for providing me with a text detailing her thoughts and intentions behind her works. Other sources on the artist include Suzana Milevska, "Macedonia—Skopje," *Flash Art International*, May 1999; Suzana Milevska, "The 'Silkworm Cocoon': Gender Difference and the Impact of Visual Culture on Contemporary Art in the Balkans," in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić, exh. catalog, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (Cologne: Walther König, 2009), 230–5, 233–4; Suzana Milevska, "The Readymade and the Objects of the Fabrication of Objects and Subjects," in *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*, ed. Laura Hoptman and Tomáš Pospiszyl, The Museum of Modern Art New York (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 182–91, 187–90, as well as the catalog *Integralism*, published for the Macedonian Pavilion at the fiftieth Biennial Venice, 2003, with a text by Suzana Milevska (Skopje: Art Gallery, 2003). On the *Social Plastic of Macedonia* see in particular also Mary Jo Palumbo, "Healing Liquor," *The Boston Herald*, June 12, 1997, 44–5.
- 22 Artist's text sent to the author.
- 23 Artist's text sent to the author. On the work see also Nebojsa Vilić, *Texts: Žaneta Vangeli and Stanko Pavleski*, exh. catalog La MaMa La Galleria (New York, 1997), https://arhiva.zaum.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1997_04_08_Texts_1.pdf.
- 24 Suzana Milevska, "Macedonian Art Stories: Žaneta Vangeli's Call for Redemption," in *East Art Map*, ed. IRWIN, 252–9, 257.
- 25 Artist's text sent to the author.
- 26 Artist's text sent to the author.
- 27 Milevska, "The Readymade and the Objects of the Fabrication of Objects and Subjects," 182–91, 189.
- 28 Written interview with the author.
- 29 See Orel, "Women's Perspective," 79–96, 89–92.
- 30 Written interview with the author.
- 31 Diana Koloini, "Ema Kugler: Mankurt," *Maska—Gledališče prvo dvigne zaveso nad prihodnostjo*, 1, no. 1 (1991): 14–15.
- 32 The Digitalni Video Arhiv (DIVA) has started to assemble the artist's works on video from the early years to the present. The database, which is operated by SCCA Ljubljana, features archival, documentary, and research material on video and new media art from Slovenia from the 1960s onward. It is an invaluable resource for the study of this genre in the region, <http://www.e-arhiv.org/diva/index.php?opt=page&cid=1>.
- 33 Koloini, "Ema Kugler: Mankurt," 14–15.

- 34 Written interview with the author.
- 35 Anđelka Milić, "Women and Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*, ed. Funk and Mueller, 109–22, 112, 116. See also Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 85–115.
- 36 Žarkov, "From 'Media War' to 'Ethnic War'—The Female Body and the Production of Ethnicity in Former Yugoslavia (1986–1994)," 34; Papić, "Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War, and Nationalist Mutations," 153–69, 155. See also Žarkov, *The Body of War*; Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov, *From Gender to Nation* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006); Kesić, "From Reverence to Rape: An Anthropology of Ethnic and Genderized Violence," 25–39. Tanya Renne's *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1997), is a highly important resource on understanding women's struggles during the civil wars. A collection of essays by scholars, activists, students, etc. give insight into the de-facto situation during the 1990s.
- 37 Jasmina Čubrilo, "On Reality Checking: A Retrospective Report from Belgrade," in *Ästhetik des Politischen*, ed. Anna Schober, Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften, vol. 15, no. 3 (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2004), 153–9, 156. See also Danica Minić, "Gender-related Art from Serbia," in *Gender Check: A Reader*, ed. Bojana Pejić and ERSTE Foundation (Cologne: Walther König, 2010), 341–9.
- 38 See Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 38–40.
- 39 The Belgrade Drama Theater, for example, banished plays by Croatian author Miroslav Krleža. A vitrine holding photographs of Tito with Krleža in the theater building was demolished. Croatian actors such as Rade Šerbedžija received threatening letters telling them to go back to Croatia and the wife of Bosnian actor Haris Burina, who worked at the theater, was threatened at gunpoint during one of her husband's plays. See Pavičević's recollections in *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. Dolečki, Halilbašić, and Hulfeld, 37–44, 40–1.
- 40 See Anđelković and Dimitrijević, "The Final Decade," 9–130, 20.
- 41 See Anđelković and Dimitrijević, "The Final Decade," 9–130, 18–20. See also Dejan Stretenović, "A Journey through the Pictures and Phantasms of the 1990s," in *On Normality: Art in Serbia 1989–2001*, ed. Anđelković and Dimitrijević, 131–216, 135–6. The following quote by Kalajić illustrates the artist's hardliner approach: I "wholeheartedly recommend pornography to all the opponents of the Serbian liberation and state-establishing struggles," to "peacekeepers and multiculturalists" for "it is better that their semen should end up in their hands than that they should multiply, thus spoiling the average value of the Serbian people." From *Vreme*, August 15, 1994, quoted in Anđelković and Dimitrijević, "The Final Decade," 9–130, 20. On the Serbian art scene during the 1990s see also Jasmina Čubrilo's *Beogradska umetnička scena devedesetih* (Belgrade: Radio B 92, 1998) and Dejan Stretenović, "Art in a Closed Society," in *Art in Yugoslavia 1992–1995*, Center for Contemporary Arts Belgrade (Belgrade: Radio B92, 1996), n.p.
- 42 Linda Almar Caldwell, "The Legend about the End of the World," Review in *Theatre Journal*, 48, no. 4 (Eastern European—Transitions (December 1996)):

496–8, 496–7. On Dah Teatar see also Dennis Barnett, *DAH Theatre: A Sourcebook* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016). On the history of theater and dance in Serbia more broadly see, for example, Ana Vujanović, “Not Quite—Not Right: Eastern/Western Dance (on contemporary dance in Serbia),” in *European Dance since 1989: Communitas and the Other*, ed. Joanna Szymajda (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 55–66. The edited volume *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfed, gives an excellent overview of the numerous dissident and critical initiatives emerging in the regions of former Yugoslavia during the war in opposition to state-funded theater.

- 43 Andelić, interview with Eloise de Leon.
- 44 Caldwell, “The Legend about the End of the World,” 496–8, 497.
- 45 Andelić, interview with Eloise de Leon. See also, for example, Katalin Ladik’s experience recounted in her conversation with Tamás St. Auby and Jon Hendricks, in *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe. A Critical Anthology*, ed. Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci, and Ksenia Nouril (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 23–7.
- 46 Andelić, interview with Eloise de Leon.
- 47 Andelić, interview with Eloise de Leon. Noteworthy are also Dijana Milošević’s 1999 work *Documents of Time*, a site-specific play created during the NATO bombing in 1999 as well as her *Travelers* (1999), which is concerned with exile and loss. As the artist observed: “During the last few years, thousands of people have left our country. The largest number among them were young educated people who were supposed the ‘build our future.’ In this way, the future has been taken from us.”
- 48 Other initiatives that supported the independent art scene in Serbia during the Milosevic regime include the Centre for Contemporary Art Belgrade, Remont Gallery Belgrade, and Radio B92 with its cultural center Cinema REX, which became one of the most queer-friendly cultural centers in Serbia. The Student Cultural Center also continued their work with numerous exhibitions and programs, many of which—such as the exhibition of Zdravko Grebo’s *Maps of Sarajevo* in 1992, or Biljana Tomić’s 1995 *100 days of open international communication*, refused to remain in line with official politics.
- 49 Borka Pavićević interview with Srdjan Jovanović and Vladimir Kulić, in “Nationalism and Catharsis: The Center for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade,” *Cabinet Magazine*, no. 2 (Spring 2001), https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/2/jovanovicweiss_kulic.php.
- 50 On the Center for Cultural Decontamination see Jovanović and Kulić, “Nationalism and Catharsis”; “Testimony Borka Pavićević,” in *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. Dolečki, Halilbašić, and Hulfed, 37–44.
- 51 Sonja Vukićević quoted in Vesna Milanović, “Women in Performance, Resistance and Exile during the Yugoslav War 1991–2000,” *Leonardo*, 46, no. 3 (2013): 241–4, 242.
- 52 See Milanović, “Women in Performance, Resistance and Exile during the Yugoslav War 1991–2000,” 241–4, 242.

Coda

- 1 On the political and cultural developments in the post-Yugoslav space see among others Radmila Jovanović Gorup (ed.), *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*, Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Robert Hudson and Glenn Bowman (eds.), *After Yugoslavia: Identities and Politics within the Successor States* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Daniel Šuber and Slobodan Karamanić (eds.), *Retracing Images: Visual Culture after Yugoslavia*, Balkan Studies Library, v. 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).
- 2 Text from Benoit Junod to Marta Jovanović, April 2016.
- 3 On Serbia's struggle to enter the EU and the public discourse surrounding it see Silvia Nadjivan, "Serbia's In-Betweenness: The Interplay of Balkanism, Europeanness and Disappointed Expectations in Serbia's EU Integration Process," *Medien & Zeit: Kommunikation in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 31, no. 1 (2016): 23–36.
- 4 Written interview with the author, July 15, 2023.
- 5 More information can be found on the Venice International Performance Art Week website: <https://veniceperformanceart.org/g12-hub>.
- 6 Written interview with the author, July 15, 2023.
- 7 Ješa Denegri's "Symptoms of Serbian Art Scene After Year 2000" gives an excellent overview, in *Remont Art Files*, # 1, Remont Gallery Belgrade (Belgrade: Publikum, 2009), 10–13.
- 8 <https://www.brashnarcreativeproject.org/>.
- 9 <https://www.prestoexit.org.mk/index.php?lang=en> Scholar Jon Blackwood is doing tremendous work on the independent art scene of Macedonia at large and his publications include many more noteworthy artists and initiatives. See for example *Critical Art in Contemporary Macedonia* (Mala Galerija Skopje/ Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, 2016); Jon Blackwood, "In the Shadow of Alexander the Great: Censoring contemporary Art in Macedonia," in *Censorship Art: Silencing the Artwork*, ed. Roisin Kennedy and Riann Coulter (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 137–56.
- 10 Andrej Mirčev, "The Collapse of the Symbolic: Performance Between Psychoanalysis and Archaeology," in *Ivan Delimar's Ropemaking Workshop*, ed. Vlasta Delimar (Koprivnica: Aterlieri Koprivnica, 2019), 10–23, 10. The author would like to thank the artist for making the booklet available. Others involved in the founding of the festivals include Milan Božić, Vlatko Vincek, Marijan Špoljar, and S Gallery from Koprivnica, as well as the local council and the women's organization "Spring" of Štaglinec.
- 11 See Marjan Špoljar, "Ten Year Anniversary of My Land: Štaglinec: Vlasta Delimar as Organizer and Curator," in *Vlasta Delimar: To sam ja/This is I*, ed. Munivrana, 131–42, 133.
- 12 Vlasta Delimar (ed.), *Ivan Delimar's Ropemaking Workshop* (Aterlieri Koprivnica: Koprivnica, 2019), 37.

- 13 <https://adelajusic.wordpress.com/illegal/>.
- 14 <https://jonblackwood.net/2016/01/27/30/>.
- 15 <https://jonblackwood.net/2016/01/27/30/>.
- 16 Adela Jušić, interview with Dunja Kukovec, in *Performative Gestures—Political Moves*, ed. Kobolt and Zdravković, 47–56, 50.
- 17 Jušić, interview with Dunja Kukovec, 47–56, 51.
- 18 Jušić, interview with Dunja Kukovec, 47–56.
- 19 <https://crvena.ba/crvena/>.
- 20 See their online portfolio at <http://redmined.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/web-portfolio-red-mined.pdf>.
- 21 <http://www.afzarhiv.org/>.
- 22 <https://viewpointmag.com/2018/10/03/the-lost-revolution/>.

INDEX

- 94 publishing house 113
 ∃ group 17, 40
 XII Biennale of Young Artists,
 Paris 98
- Abramović, Marina 19, 36, 144
 at *April Meetings* 31, 33
 at *Oktobar* exhibitions 37
 performances at SKC 52, 54
 use of video 92
- Alajbegović, Zemira 92, 101
- Anđelić, Jadranka 135–8
- Antić, Aleksandar 35
- Antifašistički front žena (Women's
 Antifascist Front, AFŽ) 58,
 149, 151
- Antiwar Campaign Croatia 114
- April Meetings* 27–36, 46, 47, 52
- Arsenijević, Bogoljub 139
- Art & Language group 18, 36, 38
- Arte Povera 18
- Art/Tape Studio Venice 109
- At the Moment*, exhibition, *see In
 Another Moment*, exhibition
- Atelje 212 50, 57
- Balasko, Jenő 58
- Baljković, Nena, *see* Dimitrijević, Nena
- Balkan Sources*, exhibition 134
- Bazar*, magazine 71, 80, 106
- Begić, Azra 119
- Belgrade, *see also April Meetings*;
 G12HUB; PerformanceHUB;
 SKC
 Academic Film Center 109
 Academy of Fine Arts 29
 art scene 36, 94, 119, 120, 146
 artistic education in 16
 Center for Anti-War Action
 114
 Center for Cultural
 Decontamination 138–40
 Drama Theater 138
 exchange with New York art
 scene 18, 38
 Faculty of Fine Arts 63
 Museum of Contemporary Art 36,
 41, 46, 134
 National Theater 114, 136
 NATO bombing of 140
 New Art Practice in 15
 University of 15–18, 36, 46
 Women's Study Center (Centar za
 ženske studije) 115
- Benderly, Jill 116
- Bernik, Lidija 72
- Beuys, Joseph 32, 109
- Biard, Ida 31, 32
- Bitef* 19, 35, 49–54
- Bitef Fine Arts* 51–2
- Blagojević, Marina 113–15
- Blažević, Dunja 41, 46, 52, 145, 146,
 see also SKC Belgrade
 Bitef Fine Arts 51
 Oktobar exhibitions 38–9
 organization of *April Meetings* 27,
 32, 33
 organization of video art
 festival 109
 on the role of art 37
 at Sarajevo Centre for
 Contemporary Art 148
 at SKC 15–20, 35, 37
 TV Galerija 109
- Blaževska, Violeta 120
- Bogdanović, Slavko 96

- Borčić, Barbara 87, 88, 101, 102, 171
 Borghesia, group 101, 102, 108
 Bosch+Bosch, group 35, 54, 56, 96
 Brashnar Creative Project 146
 Bratcher, Claire 43
 Breder, Hans 36
 Brouwn, Stanley 23
 Budimac, Bojan 98
 Buren, Daniel 23
 Busov, Lina 97

 Calovski, Yane 147
 Čankarjev dom 100, 125
 Cavalino Gallery Venice 109
 Center for Cultural Decontamination
 Belgrade 138–40
 Cerjan-Letica, Gordana 105
 Chiari, Giuseppe 36, 53
 Čiček, Tia 147
 Čirilov, Jovan 50
 Čmajčanin, Lana 148, 151
 Čmajčanin, Leila 148, 151
 Conceptual art 17, 18, 36, 38, 40, 52,
 see also Primeri konceptualne
 umetnosti u Jugoslaviji, In
 Another Moment exhibitions
 Croatian Association of Artists 80
 Cvrena (Association for Culture and
 Art) 151

 Dah Teatar 135–8
 Damjanović-Damnjan, Radomir 54,
 109
 De Freitas, Iole 32
 De Maria, Walter 32, 36
 Delimar, Vlasta 49, 74–83, 147–8
 Demnievska, Evgenija 21
 Denegri, Ješa 20, 38, 54
 April Meetings 27, 32
 with *Bitef Fine Arts* 51
 on video art 91
 Dimitrijević, Braco 23, 31
 Dimitrijević, Nena 17, 23–6
 Disko FV 100
 Disko Študent 100
Documents on Post-Object Phenomena
 in Yugoslav Art 1968–1973,
 exhibition 46

 Dordević, Goran 38
 Dragan, Ana Nuša 31, 90–2, 108,
 109
 Dragan, Srečo 31, 90–2, 108,
 109
 Drakulić, Slavenka 44, 81, 113,
 116
Drangularijum, exhibition 20–3, 26,
 27, 46–7
 Dreu, Mojca 71
 Drljević, Sonja 115
Drug-ca Žena conference 41–7
 Dugandžić, Andreja 149, 151
 Dugandžić, Danijela 151
 Duhaček, Daša 113, 115
 Dukić, Sandra 148
 Dupelj, Dara 92

 Ekipa A3, group 3, 31, 35
Ekran, magazine 109
 Expanded Media, *see April Meetings*

 Faninger, Neva 71
 FAVIT Group 91
FemArt festival 147
 Feminism 15, 58, 112, 151, *see also*
 Drug-ca Žena conference
 activist turn during 1980s 106
 Adela Jušić and 150
 Cvrena 151
 discourse on consumerism 70–1
 discourse on sexual freedom and
 pornography 79–81
 during the war years 113–16
 Katalin Ladik and 54, 60
 Meje Kontrole and 104, 108
 sex and gender distinction 56,
 105
 state feminism 58
 Vlasta Delimar and 74, 76
Feminističke sveske, journal 113
 Filipović, Vlasta 35
 FV 112/15, group 101, 102, 109
 FV Video 109

 G12HUB Belgrade 144–5
 Galerija 212 17
 Galerija Događanja 79
 Gavrić, Zoran 134

- gay culture, *see* queer culture
Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe, exhibition 17
 Gojković, Vesna 113
 Grabuloski, Bogdan 120
 Graham, Martha 68
 Gravier, Nicole 32
 Group 484 114
 Group of Six Artists/Group of Six Authors 6, 75
 Grupa 143 40–1
 Grupa Atentat 29
 Gržinić, Marina 92, 101–5, 106–8, *see also* Meje Kontrole
 Gutac, Vladimir 38

 Haberl, Hans 36
 Hadžifejzović, Jusuf 111
 Hasanbegović, Nela 148
 Huebler, Douglas 23

 Ibrahim, Bedi 120
 Ignjatović, Petar 16, 27
 Ikubal, Muhamed 36
 Ilić, Zoran 98
In Another Moment, exhibition 23–7, 46, 47
 Independent Union of Women, Croatia 114
 Institute for Contemporary Art London 18
The International Performance Meeting 52–4
 Ivančić, Aldo 104
 Ivanoska, Hristina 147
 Iveković, Rada 44–6, 80, 105, 106
 Iveković, Sanja 32, 75, 91, 92, 108, 109
 Gen XX and Women's House 117, 174
 Prvi Beogradski Performans 53–4

 Jerman, Željko 75
 Jogan, Maca 71
 Jovanović, Marta 142–6, *see also* G12HUB; PerformanceHUB
 Jović, Želka 92
 Junod, Benoit 142
 Jušić, Adela 148–51

 K4 club 105
 Kalajić, Dragoš 134, 177
 Karamehmedović, Muhamed 111
 Kareta 114
 KASP, group 29
 Kesić, Vesna 81
 Klaić, Dragan 112
 Klauke, Jürgen 53
 Klivar, Miroslav 36
 Knežević, Dubravka 137
 Knop, Seta 71
 KÖD, group 17, 23, 40, 85, 86
 Kokotović, Nada 112
Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena (Conference for the Social Activity of Women, KDAŽ) 58
 Kopicl, Vera 92
 Korać, Maja 113
 Košević, Želimir 17
 Kosovo 99, 141, 142, 146, 152
 Kostić, Sara 145
 Kounellis, Jannis 23
 Kovačić, Ksenija 92
 Kovačić, Marko 109
 KPGT theater group 112
 Krasniqi, Zana Hoxha 147
 Kraus, Milica 17
 Krsmanović-Tasić, Sanja 136
 Kugler, Ema 125–31

 Lacan School 100
 Ladik, Katalin 50, 54–63, 65, 70, 83, 87
 at fourth *April Meeting* 32, 33
 exile 112
 at *My Land, Štaglinec* 148
 Poemim 89
 Lakovnik, Tanja 72
 Lazarov Pahsu, Miodrag 92
 League of Communists of Vojvodina 57
 League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) 58
 Ler Sofronić, Nada 41, 44, 106
Lesbomagazine, magazine 105
 Lesničar-Pučko, Tanja 71
 Lešnik, Bogdan 104
 LeWitt, Sol 23–5
 LGBTQ+ culture, *see* queer culture
 Lilit, group 105

- Lilit LL, group 105
 Linije sile, group 71–4, 83, 126
 Ljubljana 15, 34, *see also* ŠKUC
 Ljubljana
 *City of Women International
 Festival of Contemporary
 Arts* 129
 queer culture in 104–5
 subculture in 99–107
 University of 36, 100, 125
 video art in 103
 *Video CD Ljubljana/Video art
 Biennial* 109
 Lojpur, Zorica 17
 Lupinc, Andrej 109
- Magnus 104, 106
 Mandić, Ajsa 119
 Mandić, Dušan 101–2, 107, 108
 Mandić, Miroslav 96
 Manevski, Blagoja 120
 Marković, Marina 145
 Martinis, Dalibor 32, 54, 75, 108
 Marxism 124
 Lacan School 100
 at SKC 15, 34, 39, 40
 and women's rights 44, 58
 Matić, Goranka 27, 43
 Mediala group 134
 Meje Kontrole št. 4 92, 99–109, 125
 Mendieta, Ana 36
 Mežnarić, Irma 109
 Milić, Anđelka 106, 113, 115, 132
 Milivojević, Slobodan Era 19, 29,
 37, 52
 Milivojević, Valentina 136
 Milošević, Dijana 135, 138
 Milošević, Slobodan 134, 138, 143,
 144
 Mitić, Maja 136
 Mitrovks, Ankica 146
Mladina, periodical 100
 Moore, Jack 32–4
 Moore, Kenneth 146
 Možetić, Brane 106
 Mrđa, Milica 49, 63–70, 83, 92
 Mulabegović, Leila 112
 Munari, Bruno 36
My land, Štaglinec 147–8
- Natalia LL 32
 Nešić, Milija 21
 Neue Slovenische Kunst (NSK) 102
 New Art Practice 15, 26–36, 40, 46,
 145, *see also* *April Meetings*;
 SKC Belgrade
 artists 35, 37
 core ideas of 20, 28, 37, 38, 47
 governmental criticism of 95–6
 and video art 87, 91
 New Media Art, *see* Bogdanka
 Poznanović
 New Tendencies movement 92–3
 Nez, David 36
 Ninkov, Dušan 88
 Njatin, Lela B 72
 Novaković, Radoš 50, 51
 Novi Sad 54, 65, 88, 94–5, *see also*
 Bogdanka Poznanović; Tribina
 mladih
 Academy of Fine Arts 63, 97, 98
 artistic climate in 56–7, 96
 College of Education 95
 New Art Practice in 15, 34
- OHO, group 17, 23, 40, 86
Oktobar '75, exhibition 36–40
Ona TV program 106
 Online Archive of the Antifascist
 struggle of Women of
 Bosnia and Herzegovina and
 Yugoslavia 151
 Osole-Max, Marijan 109
 Ostojić, Tanja 144
- Pacifist movement 113–15
 Pane, Gina 30–1, 54
 Papić, Žarana 106
 activism during war 113, 132–3
 involvement in *Drug-ca Žena*
 conference 41, 44, 46
 “Pol i Rod,” publication
 Women's Study Center
 Belgrade 115
 Paripović, Neša 37, 40, 75
 Pavićević, Borka 138, *see also* Center
 for Cultural Decontamination
 Belgrade
 Pavlović Barilli, Milena 36

- Pavlović, Radmila 109
 Pejić, Bojana 17, 20, 21, 33, 34, 38
 Pekarna theater group 29
 Pekić, Milica 144–5, *see also*
 G12HUB; PerformanceHUB
 Performance art 17, 27, 35,
 49–83, 86, 143, *see also*
 PerformanceHUB
 PerformanceHUB Belgrade 144–6
 Perunović, Vesna 112
 Petek, Vladimir 92
 Petter-Kalinić, Jasminka 17, 92
 Pezold, Friederike 109
 Planinc, Milka 103
 Podroom 75
Polet, magazine 81
Polja, magazine 86
 Popov, Nina 66
 Popović, Milica 98
 Popović, Zoran 18, 36, 41
 at *April Meetings* 29, 33
 Axioms 19, 52
 with *Bitef Fine Arts* 52
 Oktobar exhibitions 37
 trip to New York 1974 38
 video art work 98
 Post-pedagogy 98–9
 Poznanović, Bogdanka 32, 60, 63,
 85–99, 108, 145
 Poznanović, Dejan 86
 PPF, group 70–2, 83, 126
 Press to Exit 146–147
Primeri konceptualne umetnosti
 u *Jugoslaviji* (Examples of
 Conceptual Art in Yugoslavia),
 exhibition 46
Profemina, journal 113
 Prosenc, Nataša 92
 Pungerčar, Marija Mojca 92
 punk movement, *see* Ljubljana,
 subculture in
 Purešević, Danijela 17

 queer culture 56, 102, 103–106, 147,
 see also Meje Kontrole
 and feminism 104–5
 at ŠKUC Ljubljana 102, 104

 Racija v kliniki Mercator, band 107
 Radio B92 135, 172

 Radio Študent 100, 125
 Radišić, Đuro 98
 RadissonBlu Old Mill artist-
 residency 145–6
 Radojičić, Mirko 85
 Radovanović, Jelica 131–4
 Ranisavljević, Ivana 145
 Raščić, Lala 148
 Red Min(e)d curatorial collective 151
Republika, magazine 135
 Republika Srpska 117
 Ristić, Mihailo 109
 Rosenbach, Ulrike 32, 54, 109

 Šalamun, Andraž 36
 Šalgo, Judita 85–6, 96
 Santič, Jelena 114
 Šaper, Branislava 27
 Sarajevo 114
 Academy of Fine Arts 117, 150
 artistic scene in 118–20, 148–9
 Centre for Contemporary Art 148
 Gallery Brodac 149
 siege of 117–18
 University of 41
 Saturday Video Box Bar Ljubljana 109
 Savić, Miša 54, 92
 Šejka, Leonid 134
 Self-management 38, 39, 63, 101
Serbian Performance Art Scene,
 exhibition 145
 Sharp, Willoughby 18
 Sieverding, Katharina 32, 33
 Skaberne, Monika 71
 ŠKD Forum 100, 109
 Sklevicky, Lydia 44, 105, 106
 Skopje 120–124, 146
 ŠKUC Gallery 109
 ŠKUC Ljubljana 71, 98, 100–2, 104,
 109, 174
 Slapsak, Svetlana 113
 Šmid, Aina 72, 73, 92, 102, *see also*
 Meje Kontrole
 Socialism 38, 40, 45
 artistic criticism of 93, 103, 107
 fall of 116, 141, 148
 media image 101
 women's rights 63, 45, 77–8
 Socialist modernism 15, 16, 50, 94,
 120

- Souza, Al 36
- Srebotnjak-Prišić, Lidija 92, 98
- Srećna Galerija 17, 76
- Srnec, Alexander 92
- Stapnov, Živana 98
- Start*, magazine 57, 80, 81, 106
- Stepančević, Vlada 98
- Stilinović, Mladen 33, 92
- Štravs, Jane 125
- Student Cultural Association
Forum Ljubljana, *see* ŠKD
Forum
- Student Cultural Center (SKC)
Belgrade 15–45, 49, 51, 86,
98, 144, *see also In Another
Moment*, exhibition; *April
Meetings*; *Drangularijum*,
exhibition; *Oktobar '75*,
exhibition
collaboration with *Bitef Fine
Arts* 51
ideology 16–17, 19
organizational structure 15–16
performance art at 52, 54
program/artists exhibiting at 15,
17
video art at 33–4, 109
- Student Cultural Center Belgrade, *see*
SKC
- Student Cultural Center Ljubljana, *see*
ŠKUC Ljubljana
- Student Cultural Center Zagreb, *see*
under Zagreb
- Student revolts of 1968 15
- Stupica, Bojan 50, 51
- Subotić, Irina 32, 36
- Subotica 15, 54
- Šukun, Kamil 36
- Suljević, Alma 117–20
- Sunday Video Club Ljubljana 109
- Šušteršič, Apolonija 92
- Svevieta Aneta 120
- Svijet*, magazine 71, 80
- Szentjóby, Tamás 58
- Tadić, Rade 111
- Tešanović, Jasmina 109
- Tijardović, Jasna 20, 145
at *April Meetings* 27, 32
on Gina Pane 31
- role at SKC 15, 17–18, 41
text for *Oktobar '75*
exhibition 39–40
trip to New York 1974 38
on women in the arts 19
- Tikveša, Halil 21
- Timotijević, Slavko 38
- Tito, Josip Brosz 15, 53, 111,
137
artistic criticism of 96
cultural policy 18, 46, 51
death of 99–100
politics 78, 100, 105
- Todorović, Neda 71, 106
- Todorović-Uzelac, Neda
- Todosijević, Raša 41, 75, 92,
109
at *April Meetings* 29, 31, 33
at *The International Performance
Meeting* 53
at *Oktobar '75* 38
- Tokin, Vesna 92
- Tolnai, Otto 57, 96
- Tomić, Biljana 49, 52, 92, 146
on *Bitef Fine Arts* 51–2
connection with international art
scene 18, 31–2
founding of Grupa 143 36, 40–1
letter to Gina Pane 31
organization of *April
Meetings* 27–8, 32, 33
organization of video art
festival 109
at SKC 15, 17, 20, 35
- Tomić, Milica 125, 144
- Tomšić, Vida 58
- Trailović, Mira 49–51, 83, *see also*
Bitef
- Trbuljak, Goran 23, 36
- Tribina mladih 17, 40
Bodganka Poznanović at 85–6,
92, 94, 98
governmental interference
with 96–7
Katalin Ladik at 60
- Tribuna*, periodical 100, 109
- Trifunović, Lazar 36
- Trivunac, Sofija 106
- Trkulja, Radislav 134
- TV Galerija 109

- Új Symposion*, magazine 96
 Ulmer, Gregory 98
 Urkom, Gergelj 21, 37
 Ursula Krinzinger Gallery
 Innsbruck 109

 Vangeli, Žaneta 120–5
 video art 31–4, 85–109, 150
VideoMedeja festival 92
 Vidmar-Brejc, Taja 102
Viks, newsletter 105
 Vinterhalter, Jadranka 17, 32, 98
 Vipotnik, Miha 92, 108, 109
 Visual Poetry movement 18, 29, 54–6
 Visual Studio for Intermedia Research
 Novi Sad 97–9, 145
 Vodušek, Nada 125
 Vojvodina 54, 58, 63
 Von Bruch, Klaus 109
 Vukadinović, Dragica 17, 38
 Vukićević, Sonja 139–40
 Vuskovic, Lina 113

 Weber, John 18
 Weiner, Lawrence 23
Witnesses of Existence,
 exhibition 119
 Women in Black 114–15
 Women's Antifascist Front, *see*
 Antifašistički front žena
 Women's question 58, 72, *see also*
 women's rights in; Yugoslavia

 Yalter, Nil 43
Young Artists and Young Critics,
 exhibition 46
 Youngblood, Gene 27
 Youth League of Vojvodina 97
Yugoslav Alternative Film and Video
 Festival 109
Yugoslav Documents,
 exhibition 111–12

 Yugoslavia
 artistic exchange in 23, 27, 34–5,
 46–7, 85
 censorship 80
 during the 1980s 79–80, 99–100
 homosexuality in, *see* queer culture
 mediascape 70–1, 106, 109
 religion in 79
 successor states 121, 123, 141–52
 UN sanctions 137
 wars of the 1990s/breakup 111–12,
 115, 120, 130, 136–8
 women's rights in 45, 58, 60, 63,
 81, 112, 140

 Zagreb 15, 23–5, 34, 82, 94, 119,
 120
 Autonomous Women's House
 114
 Center for Women's Studies 115
 Centre for Women War
 Victims 114
 Extended Media Gallery 82
 Gallery of Contemporary Art 58,
 92, 109
 Gallery of the Student Cultural
 Center 76
 Nona (The Multimedia Women's
 Centre) 114
 School of Applied Arts 74
 Student Cultural Center 17, 67,
 75, 101
 Women's Help Now 114, 116
 The Women's Lobby 114
 Zagreb Biennial 35
 Žarevac, Dragana 92, 109, 125
 Zečević, Božidar 27
Ženske studije, journal 113
 ZEST (Ženska strana) 113–15
 Žilnik, Želimir 88
 Živančević, Dragan 98
 Žižek, Slavoj 100