

FROM THE EDITORS

With the many symposia and exhibitions commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 now behind us, this first issue of 2019 asks how to historicize the art of the moment after. The articles in the current issue displace events that often serve as historical markers, asking instead how to interpret the artistic production of gradual and contradictory processes of economic modernization and political institutionalization. In so doing, they question how to reconstruct artistic tendencies and institutional norms without confirming the inevitability of the present, searching for utopian images, or trying to redeem social experiments that capital has long since assumed as its own. The topics and contexts explored in the articles in this issue serve as more than mere illustrations of failed or passing moments of political or symbolic experimentation. Rather, they function as occasions for questioning prevailing assumptions about the critical-methodological approach supposedly best suited to a given period, socio-political context, or medium.

Marko Ilić's "‘Made in Yugoslavia’: Struggles with Self-Management in the New Art Practice, 1965–71" studies the socio-economic and institutional determinations of Conceptual art in the former Yugoslavia. Ilić offers a reading of "New Art" forms that emerged in major cultural centers of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Belgrade, Ljubljana, Novi Sad, and Zagreb) following major economic reforms. The author discusses the artist groups OHO and

KÓD, as well as the role played by the so-called Student Cultural Centers, emphasizing the extent to which they responded to the complex historical-political conjuncture of market reform and socialist self-management of the mid-1960s. Ilić ultimately asks how to interpret the New Art Practice in relation to socioeconomic modernization and the reform of self-management without reducing its experiments to a form of heroic antitotalitarianism or complicity with US consumerism.

In “Instructive, Dramatic, and Corrective Collectivity: Socialist Realism in the Mirror of Collegial Debates,” Māra Traumane studies the trajectory of the Artists’ Union of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic during the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s. In an effort to identify distinct modes of collective behavior in the processes of socialist art production, Traumane traces the effects of changes in Soviet Union cultural policy as they pertained to the promulgation and reception of Socialist Realism. Her article invites us to locate these effects not at the level of form or representation but rather in the language and logic of the collectivity that they produced. In doing so, it underscores the contingent institutional constraints that shaped this purportedly triumphant moment of Stalinist Socialist Realism.

Lidia Klein’s preface to the translated document “Common Space and Individual Space: Comments on a Group Task from the First Half of 1993” also reflects on the limits of artistic experimentalism in a moment defined by a sense that time is out of joint. “Common Space and Individual Space” compiles the accounts by Polish artists Monika Zielińska, Jane Stoykow, and Artur Żmijewski of a performative group activity entitled *Pierożek drewniany, zimnym mięsem nadziewany* (*The Wooden Dumpling, Filled with Cold Meat*) that took place in 1992–93. First published in the Polish magazine *Czereja*, the text was intended as a living document of the experimental artistic practices and pedagogical methods of Kowalnia, a studio for diploma art students run by Grzegorz Kowalski in the Department of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. As Klein signals in her introduction, “the discussion around *The Wooden Dumpling* provides a valuable account of Kowalnia from the perspective of its own graduates, just prior to their entrance onto the Polish art scene.” In a broader sense, the text also sheds light on the tensions and skepticism among the participants with respect to the activities’ transgressive potential and articulates a sense, in the words of Jane Stoykow, that “everything ended before it really

started and gained speed,” thus foreshadowing, according to Klein, “the failed aspirations of Poland in the 1990s.”

Ivana Bago’s review essay, “Yugoslavia as World History: The Political Economy of Self-Managed Art” addresses two recent critical accounts of art and performance history: Armin Medosch’s *New Tendencies: Art at the Threshold of the Information Revolution (1961–1978)* (2016) and Branislav Jakovljević’s *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945–91* (2016). Bago claims that these two studies do more than tell the story of a particular national art, and that they do so by questioning commonplace ideas about Yugoslavia’s purportedly exceptional cultural and political Cold War status and by situating such concerns among broader attempts to rethink the narrative strategies adequate to globalization. Rather than embrace the particularity of Yugoslavia’s historical development in the second half of the 20th century, Bago considers the potentially universal consequences of the failed or truncated project of worker self-management for theorizing socialism after the so-called end of history.

Labor Power Plant, Romana Schmalisch and Robert Schlicht’s Artist Project, begins where the attempt at worker self-management leaves off, unfolding a dystopian present in which the now commonplace idea of cultivating “human resources” reveals capital’s attempt to quite literally produce labor power. *Labor Power Plant* cannily presents an uncanny world defined by the economic productivity of the self, on the one hand, and the purported autonomy of capital, on the other. However, in the pages of the Artist Project, such contemporary forms of exploitation are not “beyond Marx,” as some contemporary theories of immaterial labor suggest, but rather appear in the opening lines of *Capital*: “The wealth of our society presents itself as an immense accumulation of human resources.”