Contested Spheres: Artworlds under Socialism (Budapest, 27-28 May 16)

Kassák Múzeum – Petőfi Literary Museum and Translocal Institute, Budapest, May 27–28, 2016
Deadline: Feb 29, 2016
www.translocal.org

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Contested Spheres: Actually Existing Artworlds under Socialism

This conference aims to provide a platform for fresh research into the art history of Eastern Europe that brings to light the varied solutions that artists and cultural workers found to living and working inside the socialist system in the period of the 1960s and 1970s.

While some took the path of direct confrontation with the authorities, leading to harassment, imprisonment or exile, and refused in principle all collaboration with state-run art institutions, others complied with the demands of the Party and freely placed their talents at the service of communist ideology, either through conviction or in exchange for public commissions, exhibition opportunities and institutional positions. There was also a wide band of artists, curators and art historians who, like the majority of citizens of 'actually existing Socialism', devised their own individual strategies for negotiating a haphazardly repressive system and actively participated in shaping a complex artistic landscape of alternative spaces, transitory gatherings and artist-run galleries, as well as semi-independent institutions, associations and open air symposia, which all functioned according to the unorthodox rules of the socialist art economy. Examining the art worlds of mid- to late Socialism not from the top down perspective symbolised by the notorious 'three T's' of Hungarian cultural policy, which divided artists into the categories of supported, tolerated and forbidden, but rather through a bottom up approach that examines the variety of possible attitudes adopted by cultural producers to the socialist system, ranging from confrontation and withdrawal to conformity and compromise, this conference sets out to foster debate about the conditions of artistic production during the last decades of Socialism and how these affected the individual trajectories, aesthetic choices and post-communist legacies of East European artists.

Proposals for conference papers are sought that examine how artists, curators or art historians, or even entire art scenes, responded to the demands of the socialist system, investigating, for example, prominent cases of refusal and resistance, the self-image and social role of official artists, as well as instances of disingenuousness, ambiguity and doublespeak in the machinations of late Socialist art worlds. Of equal relevance are papers that examine the workings of the artistic economy under socialism, and the different ways in which artists reacted to, suffered under, or turned to their advantage the distinctive material and economic environment established by the socialist state.

Speakers are invited to submit abstracts of 250 words, along with a short biography (approx. 100 words) to fowkes@translocal.org by 29 February 2016.

Papers will be selected by a conference board made up of: Dr. Klara Kemp Welch, Courtauld Institute London, Dr. Tomáš Pospiszyl, Academy of Fine Arts, Prague, Dr. Maja Fowkes and Dr. Reuben Fowkes, Translocal Institute, Budapest and Dr. Emese Kürti, ACB Research Lab, Budapest.

This conference is organised with the framework of the Kassák Museum's long term research project into the art of the 1960s and 70s.

Reference:

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