

Rethinking the (Post-)Socialist Body (online/Florence, 28–30 Sep 23)

online & Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, Palazzo Grifoni
Budini Gattai, Via dei Servi 51, 50122 Firenze, Italia, Sep 28–30, 2023

Magdalena Nieslony

"Rethinking the (Post-)Socialist Body. Art, Theory & Politics".

Transdisciplinary Workshop organised by Oliver Aas, Hana Gründler and Magdalena Nieslony.

TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE VIA ZOOM:

t1p.de/rethinking-post-socialist-body

Abstract:

The importance of body politics is once again undeniable: the idealization or vilification of bodies on ideological grounds, restrictions on abortion rights, and the continued exploitation of migrant bodies and labor are global phenomena. Even though the body has long stood central to cultural, social and political struggles in Eastern Europe, these current phenomena also shed new light on the political meanings of the body and its representations in the former socialist countries of Europe. This is visible today in the return of the heroic body in the media iconography of the Ukrainian war as well as in women's fight for bodily autonomy across different post-socialist countries. The question of the visibility or the invisibility of bodies – and the many degrees in between, up to what could be called a hyper-visibility – thus was and remains of central aesthetic, ethical and political concern. And it is not surprising that the body has, in great detail, also been a subject of art, philosophy, and literature.

Given how rich and complex the relationship between the body and visual culture in East-Central Europe is, we need to flesh out a novel reflection of body in its temporal, phenomenological, aesthetic, philosophical and political multiplicity. Thus, this workshop aims to revisit the (post-)socialist body in East-Central European art, discuss its relation to and transformation of well-established artistic and theoretical discourses and international networks as well as shed light on reflections and notions of the body in other disciplines – including philosophy, literature, ethnography and others.

Working through case studies that breach geographic and theoretical boundaries, ranging from the Baltics to Yugoslavia, the conference adds to the on-going conversation around the legacy of socialism by expanding the already accepted conceptual frames and theoretical foundations through which we have hitherto rendered the body legible.

Thursday, 28.9

14.30–15.00

Oliver Aas, Hana Gründler and Magdalena Nieslony, Welcome and Introduction

Resistant and Protesting Bodies

15.00–15.45

Anja Förschner, 'Possibilities of Resistance'. Meje Kontrole št. 4 and queer Yugoslavia

15.45–16.30

[ONLINE] Emily Curtin, Bodies Lead the Way. Anti-Authoritarian Protest in Post-Soviet Belarus

BREAK

From Individual to Collective?

17.00–17.45

Karel Císař, The Body, the Thing and the Real. On Phenomenological Interpretations of Body and Corporeality in American and Czechoslovak Art of the 1970s

17.45–18.30

Andres Kurg, Relations without Purpose. Communication and the Body in Late Soviet Architecture

Friday, 29.9

The Collective Body

9.30–10.15

Biljana Purić, Revisiting the Collective Body in Contemporary Art

10.15–11.00

Anna Markowska, Moving Over. Exercises for Recreating a Collective Body

BREAK

Shaping the Socialist Body

11.30–12.15

Johana Lomova, Imprint of Socialist Body. The Role of Czechoslovak Artists in the Process of Humanization of Factory Work

12.15–13.00

Amir Saifullin, The Projectionist Theatre. Body-Images and Bio-Politics after the October Revolution

BREAK

Deviating from the Ideal

14.00–14.45

Tamara Hundorova, Trauma, Body and Motherphobia in Post-Totalitarian Ukrainian Literature. The Postcolonial Aspect

14.45–15.30

Ingrid Ruudi, Spaces for Deviant Bodies in Late and Post-Soviet Estonia

BREAK

From Socialist Beauty to Revolution

16.00–16.45

Stefanie Eisenhuth, Negotiating Socialist Beauty. Body Politics, Gender, and National Identity in East Germany, 1950s-1980s

16.45–17.30

Agata Jakubowska, Women Artist Facing the Socialist Sexual Revolution

Saturday, 30.9

Body Politics in (Public) Space

9.30–10.15

Seraina Renz, Performing Individual and Collective Ethics of Resistance. The Body of the Yugoslav Monument

10.15–11.00

Máté Csanda, The Družba and Its Afterlife – Bratislava's Freedom Square / Námetie Slobody (formerly Gottwald Square) as Stage and Litmus Paper of (Post)Socialist Body Politics

BREAK

11.30–12.15

Yaraslava Ananka, From Vandalism to Voodoo, from Bust to Body. Iconoclasm and Maleficium in Contemporary Ukrainian War Culture

12.30–13.00

Closing Remarks

CONTACTS:

Oliver Aas: oliver.aas@khi.fi.it

Aleksandra Dimitrova: aleksandra.dimitrova@khi.fi.it

Reference:

CONF: Rethinking the (Post-)Socialist Body (online/Florence, 28-30 Sep 23). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 19, 2023 (accessed Aug 30, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/40130>>.