TransBalkans: Visual and Spatial Trans Cultures in Southeast Europe

Deadline: Jun 30, 2026

Andrija Filipovic

Trans embodiments have been lived and conceptualized in multiple ways throughout the long and complex history of Southeast Europe. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, state institutions – through legal and medical frameworks grounded in early sexology – largely criminalized and pathologized transness. These classifications often entailed invasive and frequently involuntary legal and medical interventions, and were accompanied by profound social marginalization. At the same time, the reception and dissemination of sexological and juridical knowledge across Southeast Europe remained uneven, shaped by the divergent historical trajectories of the region's post-imperial formations.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, multiple nation states emerged, each developing its own normative frameworks for regulating gender, sexuality, and other categories central to nation-building. A further seismic shift occurred after the Second World War: several states entered the Eastern Bloc, socialist Yugoslavia pursued a distinctive path through the Non-Aligned Movement, and others aligned with capitalist systems. These geopolitical configurations reverberated across disciplinary and social domains, significantly shaping how gendered lives were organized, experienced, and understood within and in relation to different socialist modernities. The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era marked by the (neo)liberalization of market economies, the institutionalization of parliamentary democracy, and process of European integration, alongside the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia and its enduring socioeconomic consequences. Together, these developments have shaped the temporal and spatial structuring of the region as a semi-periphery, a condition also reflected in the lived experience and embodiment of transness. In the early twenty-first century, the region is broadly characterized by postsocialist condition, including uneven development, authoritarian tendencies, repatriarchalization, and retraditionalization – yet also by the emergence and consolidation of trans communities.

This edited volume seeks to uncover the histories of visual and spatial trans cultures in Southeast Europe from the late nineteenth century to the present. It explores how trans individuals, groups, and communities have produced visual cultures both in relation to dominant cis-heteronormative regimes and beyond them, always in dialogue with the region's shifting socioeconomic and political landscapes and timescapes. How have trans individuals subjectivized themselves through visual media across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? In what ways have they represented themselves, and how might these representations be understood within material-semiotic frameworks of semi-peripheral European embodiment? How do such visual practices engage with cis-heteronormative structures, and what forms of politics do they articulate?

Alongside visual cultures, the volume foregrounds spatial practices as central to trans world-making. Trans spatial cultures have taken diverse forms across time, from ephemeral gatherings to more enduring infrastructures. Today, these include NGO-based safe spaces, clubs and bars, as well as informal meetings in public settings such as parks. How have such spaces been historically produced, and what do they reveal about the lived temporalities of trans embodiment? What is their relationship to visual culture, and how do these dimensions intersect? In what ways do trans spaces generate specific affective and temporal structures? How do they relate to built environments and more-than-human worlds? Finally, how have these spaces - whether transient or institutionalized - negotiated, contested, or reconfigured dominant cis-heteronormative infrastructural intimacy?

While these questions provide a conceptual framework, we welcome proposals that extend beyond them. Please submit an abstract (300–400 words) and a short bio (150 words) in a single Word document to andrija.filipovic@fmk.edu.rs and aleksa.milanovic@fmk.edu.rs by June 30, 2026. We require that at least one contributor hold a PhD at the time of proposal submission. Please note that the editor of Bloomsbury's Trans Studies series has encouraged submission of the completed volume proposal.

Andrija Filipović is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Art & Media Theory at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade, Serbia. They are the author of Laruelle and Critical Theory (Brill, forthcoming), and in Serbian Ars Ahumana: Anthropocene Ontographies in 21st Century Art and Culture (Karpos, 2022) and Conditio Ahumana: Immanence and the Ahuman in the Anthropocene (Karpos, 2019). Their articles appeared in Sexualities, European Journal of Cultural Studies, Journal of Homosexuality, Southeastern Europe, The Global Sixties, and a number of edited volumes such as Plastics, Environment, Culture and the Politics of Waste (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), Sound Affects: A User's Guide (Bloomsbury, 2023), and The Routledge Companion to Gender and Affect (Routledge, 2022). Their research interests include environmental humanities, queer studies and contemporary philosophy.

Aleksa Milanović is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade and the author of Representation of Transgender Identities in Visual Arts (2015) and Media Construction of Other Body (2019). He holds a PhD in Transdisciplinary Studies of Contemporary Arts and Media from the Singidunum University in Belgrade and an MA degree in Theory of Arts and Media from the University of Arts in Belgrade. He is engaged in scientific research work in domains of body studies and transgender studies. He has been involved in trans activism since 2008, when he volunteered for numerous activist organizations and informal activist groups working to promote LGBTIQ+ rights. He participated in the founding of regional trans-feminist collective Trans Network Balkan in 2014, as well as local trans organization Kolektiv Talas TIRV (Collective Wave TIGV) in 2020.

Reference:

CFP: TransBalkans: Visual and Spatial Trans Cultures in Southeast Europe. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 20, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52034>.