

Feminist Perspectives on Critical Cultural Practices

10-11 november 2011.

Center for Women Studies

Dolac 8 • Zagreb



The seminar deals with the meaning and dynamics of feminist art and theory in various contexts, as determined by cultural geopolitics; it will also analyse the complex relations of feminist art influences on the art world in general. In what way has the feminist movement contributed to the process of institutional hybridisation? Which forms of innovative institutional practices have been directly influenced by feminism? What is the place of feminist art within critical art practices? – these are some of the questions that the seminar aims to consider.

At a time when we need all available resources to grasp the complexity of social processes that surround us, we need to strengthen responsibilities within the cultural field. The re-actualisations of the feminist paradigm can be an important asset to this process, and an indicator of many contradictions and of unexplored political potential. ●

Thursday • 10 November • 19 h

+LECTURE

BOJANA PEJIĆ

***Gender Check - Curator's
Cut***

This talk is based on the author's project *Gender Check - Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, which started in 2008, initiated by the Erste Foundation in Vienna. The project's aim was to find out how images – be they produced by 'official' art/visual culture or by counter-culture – produce femininity and masculinity in East European art from the 1960s to the present. The exhibition and related publications, the catalogue and the *Gender Check Reader*, were based on research carried out in twenty-four post-socialist countries. This was the first time that art produced during state socialism had been examined from a feminist and gender perspective. ●

The working language will be English.

Friday • 11 November • 11–14h

PANEL

The institutionalisation of feminist critique: between theory, practice, and history

KETI CHUKROV • XABIER ARAKISTAIN • BILJANA KAŠIĆ

MODERATOR: **IVANA BAGO**

During the 1960s and 1970s, the structure and methodology of contemporary art was strongly influenced by feminism. Methods based on collaboration, dialogue, continued questioning of aesthetic and social assumptions, a new respect for the audience, a purposeful application of knowledge and skills from other disciplines – all directly helped not only to redefine the concept of art but also to change the structure of institutions and their social action. The panel will discuss how the feminist paradigm is perceived in various geopolitical milieus and in what way it has influenced the fields of art, theory and cultural institutions. How has the cultural capital of feminism, its values and methodologies been assimilated into various micro-institutional and cultural practices, and the mainstream of cultural theory? What are the deeper relations between criticism and institutions, and also between criticism and the processes of the institutionalisation of criticism? What political and historical moments contribute to this relationship? Which methodological and ethical disagreements will we encounter while trying to apply the dominant gender theories to non-Western contexts?

Xabier Arakistain will talk about The Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea based in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The centre actively promotes feminist thought, focusing on the promotion of values such as sexual and gender equality, as well as deconstructing sex and gender stereotypes. The presentation will reflect on the progressive possibilities for experimentation in the field of cultural and institutional production that examines representational systems and their role in the construction and reproduction of symbolic imagery, knowledge and historic memory. The feminist reinterpretation of the history of art as well as today's art practices and their analyses entail, as **Pollock** pointed out (1988), 'recognising the power hierarchies which rule the relationships between the sexes, lending visibility to the mechanisms on which male hegemony is founded, delving into the social construction process of sexual difference and examining the role played by representation in this articulation of difference'. The development of these policies and perspectives means that Montehermoso is the first centre for contemporary art, culture and thought to apply the laws referring to art and culture in the equality legislation in force in the Basque Country. ●

The presentation by **Keti Chukhrov**, *Methodological and ethical contradictions between the Post-soviet and Western gender theory and practice*, dwells on whether West European theories on power and gender can be applied to socialist and post-socialist societies. The main direction of such debate both in theory and practice (whether artistic or social) resides in the premise that Western gender theory - being a universal critical background - can be extended towards the East in cases where a detailed analysis of the post-socialist societies is provided. However, this position fails to question:

1. A negative genealogy of the concept of gender in the West;
2. The applicability of certain notions that are indispensable for the Western history of feminism (e.g. subversion being one of the main notions and practical tools of feminist discourse) in the Soviet and post-soviet space;
3. The economic and social conditions of Soviet society in which power was structured through dispositions different from the Western capitalist libidinal economy, and its interfaces of sexuality, consumer culture, liberation languages, resisting, and subverting it. ●

In her presentation, *Feminist theories in post-Yugoslav context(s): liberating or risking with the very act of self-location?*, **Biljana Kašić** will confront the exposure of the new neoliberal mappings of the transnational 'structural subalternity' (**Spivak's** notion), as well as witnessing the various trends that have embedded anti-feminist signatures, aiming to explore the potentiality of feminism(s) in contemporary post-Yugoslav context(s). She will address both the complexity of the post-Yugoslav feminist situatedness that signifies geopolitical cartography (transition, in-between position, 'post-East/West', multiplicity of post-signifiers, etc.) and the ambiguity of its ideological heritage (Marxist feminism, Left and Leftism, issues of class, socialist order). In this regard two key questions will be the focus of the analysis: first, how to enable the feminist demand for self-critical location beyond 'Left melancholy' (**Brown's** concept) despite the Western 'gendering order' that immobilises critical positioning, and second, around which issues can we create areas of critical responsiveness and epistemological alliances that will *simultaneously allow a transgression of the theory/art/activism divide* and lead to a liberating feminist agency. The key concern is whether, at this historical juncture, the (re)articulation of the politicality of feminism is possible, or are we still satisfied with only feminist interventions from post-socialist comrades? ●

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XABIER ARAKISTAIN is the director of Montehermoso, a pioneering centre in the development and application of feminist policies in the fields of contemporary art and thought. He has realised a range of projects including the exhibition *Trans Sexual Express* (1999), which incorporated the sex quota as a curatorial criterion, and which explored the cultural construction of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality in the production of art in the Basque context of the time. Between 2003 and 2006, he directed debates on art and feminism at the forums of contemporary art experts at ARGO, and he headed the *Manifiesto Arco 2005*, which demanded that public administrations adopt practical measures to implement equality

between the sexes in the field of art. He has also curated retrospective shows devoted to the Guerrilla Girls, the group show *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang, 45 years of Art and Feminism*, and co-curated the exhibitions *The Furious Gaze and Susan Hiller. What I see.* ●

KETI CHUKHROV holds a PhD in comparative literature. She is an associate professor at the Russian State University for Humanities (Department of Art Theory and Cultural Studies), and has been a member of the editorial council and author at the *Moscow Art Magazine* since 2003. She is a regular contributor to a wide range of publications and journals on culture, philosophy and art theory, such as: *Moscow art magazine*, *NLO (New literary review)*, *Chto-delat*, *Brumaria*, *Documenta-magazines*, *Sarai-readers*, *Art-forum*, *Springerin*, *E-Flux*, *Pushkin*, *Afterall*, *Open-space*. From 2008-2010 **Keti Chukhrov** was a researcher for the *Gender Check* project, Mumok Museum, Vienna. Her books include: *Pound & E*, Moscow, Logos publishers, 1999; *To Be - to Perform. 'Theatre' in Philosophic Criticism of Art*, SPb, European Univ. Press, 2011; *War of Quantities*, dramatic poetry, Borey art-center, Spb., 2003; *Just Humans*, dramatic poetry, Translit/Free Marxist Publishers, Moscow, 2010. ●

BILJANA KAŠIĆ has been a feminist theorist and activist for almost three decades, engaging in Yugoslav/post-Yugoslav and international setting(s). She is a founding member of various women's initiatives, groups and centres including Autonomous Women's House, Center for Women War Victims and the Center for Women's Studies, etc. Being one of the leaders of the Center for Women's Studies for many years, she has initiated numerous projects, locally and internationally. Currently she works as associate professor at the University of Zadar (Department of Sociology). She has made numerous contributions to feminist epistemology, post-colonial theory, theories of identities, ethics and culture of resistance. Her most recent publications include: *Teaching Subjectivity: Travelling Selves for Feminist Pedagogy* (2009), *'Feminist intellectual class': Anxiety around integration and the politics of knowledge* (2011), *Radicalising epistemology: (Re)thinking feminist disobedience* (2011). She is a co-editor of the first *Gayatri Ch. Spivak* book published in Croatian, *Nationalism*,

Imagination and Other Essays and is currently writing a book on *Dislocating the Subject: Postcoloniality and Women.* ●

IVANA BAGO is an art historian and curator, working with the Zagreb-based contemporary art space Galerija Miroslav Kraljević and is co-founder of DeLve | Institute for Duration, Location and Variables, dedicated to research and publishing in the field of contemporary art and theory. She is the author – in collaboration with **Antonia Majača**, the Kontejner collective and

individually – of a series of curatorial and research projects (*Removed from the Crowd*, Zagreb, Prague, Ljubljana, Belgrade; *Moving Forwards, Counting Backwards*, MUAC, Mexico City; *The Salon of Revolution*, HDLU, Zagreb, 2008...). She has edited several publications and written numerous texts on contemporary art and the history of artistic and exhibition practices in the 1960s and 1970s. She was one of the researchers on the project *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (2010), curated by **Bojana Pejić.** ●

PANEL

Reading the image

MARYAM JAFRI • MICHELLE DIZON • BOJANA PEJIĆ

MODERATOR: **WHW**

What is the meaning of the phrase 'feminist art', how does it declare itself, and/or why does it avoid doing so? How can we read images from the feminist perspective? What responsibility do we have for the images that surround us? What insights and contradictions do we encounter? Feminist art is a form of cultural hybrid. Historically, it does not originate directly from the art world itself, but from social movement and political attitude. The panel will examine the influence of these origins on the way that visual art content is read and how they are incorporated into an image. Through a conversation about concrete art practices, the participants will thematise a series of questions raised by feminist art, and offer insights into strategies of reading images, and through them, readings of social relations.

The presentation by **Michelle Dizon**, *Transmigration of Memory*, takes the word 'video', which can be traced to its Latin root 'videre' meaning 'to see'. *Video* is the first-person singular present-tense form of *videre* or 'I see'. She will explore the politics of video within global processes, and introduce some of what is at stake in the making of her videos, which often revolve around not seeing, not knowing, around absence, something that has been forgotten or perhaps never known, around something that cannot be seen or is willingly left unseen. This discussion of video, and its lacunae, will focus on two of Michelle Dizon's recent projects: *Civil Society*, a three-channel installation where video comes to form an aperture between psychic, historical, and political spaces of the post-colonial diaspora, and *Perpetual Peace*, which considers how children of the diaspora position their 'return' to a

homeland from which they never left, to reimagine the work of the transnational struggle. Both works have their origins in the gap between political history and subjectivity, and it is through this gap and the forms of negotiation it entails that the presentation aims to situate Dizon's practice as a reworking of feminist methodologies in an era of globalisation. ●

Maryam Jafri will discuss her latest video work, *Avalon* (2011), in the context of her presentation on gender and labour under contemporary global conditions. Viewing the issue of production as essentially a question of geography, she will map out different territories of production, from the factory to the art studio to the unconscious. Feminism will be presented both as a theme and as a counter-hegemonic practice of everyday life - a way of

reading and being in the world. Above all, she will not discuss feminism solely in relational terms, as some sort of appendage onto other modes of analysis, ie Feminism and Marxism, Feminism and Post-Colonialism, but instead posit the production of sexual difference as immanent to contemporary global capital. ●

Bojana Pejić will talk about two works by Croatian artists **Sanja Iveković** and **Tomislav Gotovac**, aka **Antonio G. Lauer**. In reading **Sanja Iveković's** performance *Eve's Game* (2009), **Bojana Pejić** will try to position it within art history, and examine gender aspects of artists - models, the theme of the work, with reference to the presumed anonymity of female models. In a self-ironic twist, the photographic series *Foxy Mister* (2002) by **Tomislav Gotovac** establishes an interface between 'high' (art) and 'low' (pornography), between a desiring body and desired body, stressing the role of visual representation in the construction of sexuality. This work also enables a discourse about the body-in-representation: the male nude, the aged body and self-portraiture. **Bojana Pejić** will also briefly touch upon the growing trend of re-enactment in contemporary performance. ●

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MICHELLE DIZON is an artist, filmmaker, and writer. Her projects focus on questions of post-coloniality, globalisation, migration, social movements, human rights, and historical memory. **Dizon** holds BA degrees in English and History of Art, and an MA in Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley. She also holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Studio from the Department of Art at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a PhD in Rhetoric with designated emphases in Film and Women, Gender, and Sexuality at UC Berkeley. She has presented her work internationally including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manila; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Caixaforum, Barcelona; Passos Manuel, Porto; Galleryloop, Seoul; Kor-i-noor, Copenhagen, Tate Modern, London and the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley. ●

MARYAM JAFRI is an artist working in video, performance and photography. Informed by a research-based, interdisciplinary process, her artworks are often marked by a visual language poised between film and theatre and a series of narrative experiments oscillating between script and document, fragment and whole. She holds a BA in English & American Literature from Brown University, an MA from NYU/Tisch School of The Arts and is a graduate of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. She lives and works in New York and Copenhagen. ●

BOJANA PEJIĆ is an art historian who was born in 1948 in Belgrade. She writes on contemporary art from the early 1970s onwards and from 1977 to 1991 was curator at the Student Cultural Center of Belgrade University. Since 1991, she has lived in Berlin. In May 2005 she gained her Ph.D. *The Communist Body: Politics of Representation and Spatialization of Power in the SFR Yugoslavia (1945-1991)* (in preparation for publishing) at the Carl von Ossietzky University in Germany. She was chief curator of the exhibition *After the Wall - Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, organised by the Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1999), which toured to the Museum of Contemporary Art - Foundation Ludwig, Budapest (2000), and the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2000-2001). In 2008 she curated the exhibition *Artist-Citizen - 49*. October Salon in Belgrade. She was curator of the exhibition *Gender Check - Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, held in Museum of Modern Art - Stiftung Ludwig (MUMOK), Vienna (2009-1010) and in Zacheta Gallery in Warsaw (2010). She also edited *Gender Check: A Reader - Art and Theory in Eastern Europe* (2010). ●

The seminar is a collaboration between **WHW** and the **Center for Woman Studies**, Zagreb

The working language will be English.

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http://at.transit.org/en/sweet_sixties

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