

Jan Zálešák (1979) is a curator and art critic. His published books include *Umění spolupráce / The Art of Cooperation* (2011), *Minulá budoucnost / Past Future* (2013) and *Apocalypse Me* (2016), which accompanied exhibitions of the name. He teaches the history and theory of contemporary art at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Brno University of Technology (FaVU VUT).

jan.zalesak@post.cz

Originally published as: **Jan ZÁLEŠÁK: “Bod zlomu: Hledání sociálního obratu v českém umění”, *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny*, vol. 5, 2011, No. 11, pp. 40–71.**

Translated from the Czech by Phil Jones.

THE BREAKING POINT: THE SEARCH FOR A SOCIAL TURN IN CZECH ART

JAN ZÁLEŠÁK

The phrase “social turn” made an early appearance in 2006 in the title of an article by Claire Bishop written for *Artforum* magazine.¹ In this article, like many other art critics and theoreticians,² Bishop reflects upon the powerful “recent surge of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with ‘real people’ (i.e. those who are not the artist’s friends or other artists)”.³ In this essay I shall not attempt to find contemporary Czech equivalents of the participatory artistic practice⁴

1

Claire BISHOP, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents”, *Artforum*, 2006, no. 2, pp. 178–183.

2

We find several other texts on this topic in a double issue of *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny* devoted to artistic cooperation, participatory art and socially engaged art practice. There have been many publications over recent years devoted to cooperation in art and socially engaged practice that includes participatory procedures. These include: Johanna BILLING – Maria LIND – Lars NILSSON (eds.), *Taking Matters into Common Hands*, London: Black Dog 2007; René BLOCK – Angelika NOLLERT (eds.), *Collective Creativity / Kollektive Kreativität* (exh. cat.), Frankfurt: Revolver 2005; Claire BISHOP (ed.), *Participation*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press – London: Whitechapel 2006; Rudolf FRIELING (ed.), *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* (exh. cat.), San Francisco: SFOMA – New York: Thames & Hudson 2008; Charles GREEN, *The Third Hand*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2001; Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2004.

3

BISHOP, “The Social Turn”, p. 9.

4

One of the characteristics of participatory art practice that Claire Bishop draws attention to is the “direct involvement of real people” in the realisation of the project. The artist surrenders some of their autonomy and sovereign control over the realisation of the work. This decision is motivated by the endeavour to transform at least some of the potential (passive) viewers into (active) collaborators. This applies both to specific social or political communities and also to dispersed groups in the case of projects conducted via the internet. There can be many different outcomes to such involvement. For instance, new genre public art (NGPA) targeted on specific communities often sets out to increase or reinforce the status of members of the community within society as a whole (emancipation, social inclusion, etc.).

that Claire Bishop examines in her article. The expression “social turn” will serve more as a navigational instrument, using which I shall attempt to understand the events, exhibitions and texts that on the Czech art scene during the latter half of the 1990s were symptomatic of a shift away from art perceived as a neutral, aesthetic and socially autonomous practice undertaken almost exclusively by individuals, and in the direction of socially and politically engaged projects. What we see is a growing interest in collective forms of artistic practice and an attempt to find institutional alternatives, to begin with as “temporary autonomous zones” and increasingly as self-confident initiators in their own right of events on the local art scene. Finally (after 2003), we see the first implementation of participatory projects belonging to the paradigm examined by Claire Bishop.⁵

Identifying a clear turning point in the historical continuum is not easy. Although this text will look mainly at the events of 1998 and 1999, I am well aware that these were preceded by other developments that were no less important. Furthermore, the outcomes of these events in terms of more pronounced (let alone paradigmatic) changes on the Czech art scene were only manifest with a time-lag of several years. And so I will focus on these particular two years because the events organised on the local art scene were accompanied by a vibrant discourse, using which we can interpret subsequent developments.

The text by Pavlína Morganová “Czech Art in the Transformation Period”⁶ is a kind of notional “preface” to this article, in that it is largely concerned with the decade preceding the events outlined here. Morganová examines the problematic status of artistic engagement during the period of societal transformation following the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, and her study sets forth the reasons why a more robust engagement only appeared in Czech art during the years I examine below. Although the overall direction of both texts is similar (in that they both follow the

5 One of the early examples of participatory art that meets the criteria of Bishop’s “social turn” is the project *Nic tam není* (*There’s Nothing There*, 2003) by Kateřina Šedá, of which the projects *My* (*We*, 2002–2003) or *Plán* (*Plan*, 2004) by the Rafani group could be seen as an ironic deconstruction. Participatory art practice only really asserts its presence in the Czech Republic in 2006.

6 Pavlína MORGANOVÁ, “České výtvarné umění v období transformace: Vztahy umění a ‘angažovanosti’”, *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny*, 2010, no. 9, pp. 57–95.

movement from autonomy to engagement), they differ in terms of their depth of field. While Morganová works within a longer time frame and evaluates, inter alia, the work of the Academic Research Centre of the Academy of Fine Arts, the narrower focus of my article allows it to go into greater depth, in respect of both its analysis of individual exhibition projects and the discourse that grew up around them.

Reduced Budget

In spring 1997, the government led by Václav Klaus approved a series of cuts to public spending, what we now think of as austerity measures. One of the spheres hardest hit by these cuts was culture, and by extension fine art. After the short-lived economic upswing of the first half of the 1990s, things took a turn for the worse. In addition to the reduced budgets and grants available to galleries, the still nascent art market was sluggish and problems were beginning to rear their head in connection with the Nadace českého výtvarného umění (Czech Fine Art Foundation).⁷ As a consequence, the art world was afflicted by the same “bad mood”, as Václav Havel dubbed it, that was widespread in society at large.

At the end of 1997, an exhibition entitled *Snížený rozpočet* (*Reduced Budget*) was held at the Mánes Gallery in Prague.⁸ The aim was to display works that represented a conscious reaction to social reality or “intervention in the political establishment”, and the exhibition set out to be “political to the core”. The project unleashed a storm of criticism, which Jiří Ševčík attempted to answer in his curatorial text published in the exhibition catalogue. One of the voices raised was that of Milena Slavická, who took umbrage at the term political art and questioned to what extent an exhibition thus configured could represent such art. Slavická characterised political art as a specific trend that had become more firmly

7

For more details see for instance Lenka LINDAUROVÁ – Jeroným JANÍČEK, “Kulturní tunel”, *Umělec*, 1997, no. 5, p. 7.

8

Snížený rozpočet (*Reduced Budget*), curated by Jana and Jiří Ševčík, Prague: Mánes Gallery, 30 December 1997 – 8 February 1998.

entrenched in the USA during the 1980s in response to the transformation of the institutional character of art attendant upon the entry of corporate capital into museums. This definition of political art is fair enough as far as it goes (one of the key questions *Reduced Budget* set out to answer was to what extent the artist could afford to bite the hand that fed her), though it skates over the complex history of the relationship of modern art to capital, at the centre of which is the whole issue of the autonomy of art.

Milena Slavická really touched a nerve when she proposed a kind of normative topography of political art: “The basis of political art is that it takes place within the political space and not in the aesthetic space, i.e. the gallery. It takes place on the street, square, the metro, at public meetings, in the pages of newspapers, etc.”⁹ It was to this passage that Jiří Ševčík reacted in the catalogue text, and we may deem his polemic a defence of artistic creativity as a distinct type of political practice. Like Slavická, Ševčík focuses on Hans Haacke, specifically on his well known work *Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. This project, which provided the pretext for the censorship or rather the cancellation of Haacke’s exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the dismissal of the curator Edward Fry, was cited by Ševčík as an example of art whose political content resided precisely in the fact that it introduced criticism of social programmes into the “sacred site” of the museum of art that was not aesthetically packaged. Though he does not actually use the term “institutional critique”,¹⁰ Ševčík sketches out its fundamental qualities when he writes:

We are fine with the idea that certain artists and critics are also interested in “external social and political determination”. This does not necessarily mean that the

9

Ibid.

10

Along with Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Asher and Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke is generally regarded as one of the founding fathers of institutional critique. For more on institutional critique see: Miwon KWON, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2002; John C. WELCHMAN (ed.), *Institutional Critique and After*, Zurich: JRP|Ringier 2006; Maria LIND, “Contemporary Art and Its Institutional Dilemmas”, *On Curating*, 2011, no. 8, http://www.on-curating.org/documents/oncurating_issue_0811.pdf (accessed 9 October 2011).

political content of art consists solely of a superficial political theme and a direct relationship to the concrete, specific and personifiable phenomena. *The very fact that we exist within a broader context that includes the artist and her products is political. How and which products of the symbolic art system are made public, what effect they have, how they become part of institutional structures, how their legitimacy is justified, how the artist's competence is interpreted – these issues too are political.* **11**

It was no mere coincidence that Hans Haacke found himself at the centre of the debate. In 1997, *Shapolsky et al* made an appearance at *documenta X* in Kassel, which attracted considerable attention in the Czech Republic.**12** *Documenta X* was an opportunity for Czech visitors to acquire a more comprehensive impression of the status of socially engaged art within the context of Western art history. In addition to Hans Haacke, the curator Catherine David drew attention to the work of other representatives of sixties and seventies art – Marcel Broodthaers, Gordon Matta-Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and the Archigram group. Haacke's work arguably resonated most amongst Czechs.**13** On the one hand, it allowed us to think anew about art in relation to the concept of engagement,**14**

11

Jana ŠEVČÍKOVÁ – Jiří ŠEVČÍK, "Výchova psů v rodině. Psí otázky", in *idem, Snižovaný rozpočet* (exh. cat.), Prague: Kant 1998, not paginated, emphasis mine.

12

As well as the monothematic edition of *Ateliér* (1997, no. 22), see Tim GILMAN-ŠEVČÍK ("DOKUMENTAce", *Umělec*, 1997, no. 5, pp. 16–17) and Marek POKORNÝ ("Trojboj", *Detail*, 1997, no. 3–4, pp. 10–19).

13

As well as the exchange of opinions between Slavická and Ševčík, we find reference to the same work by Haacke in the review by Jiří VALOCH of *documenta X* ("Jaká měla být *documenta X*", *Ateliér*, 1997, no. 22, p. 8), an interview with Hans Haacke at the beginning of 1998 in *Detail* (Peter FRIEDL – Hans HAACKE – Georg SCHÖLLHAMMER, "Efekt Haacke", *Detail*, 1998, no. 1, pp. 10–11), and in 2000 it is cited by Marek POKORNÝ in his review of the exhibition *Malík urvi* by the Pode Bal group in the Václav Špála Gallery ("Odkud se nám to tu mluví", *Detail*, 2000, no. 1, p. 24).

14

In her article, Pavlína Morganová had this to say regarding problems with the concept of engagement in art during the nineties: "It is therefore no surprise that we find this concept [engagement] only rarely in the Czech discourse of the 1990s. Likewise, the concept of engaged art disappeared from the glossary of Czech art historians, and inasmuch as it was used it was as part of a strategy of coming to terms with the past." (MORGANOVÁ, "České výtvarné umění", p. 57.)

something that was still associated in many people's minds with the government ordained and approved engaged art of the "normalisation" period.¹⁵ On the other hand, Haacke and the entire context of Western critical art merely served to draw attention to the restrictions that Czech art was subject to at this time. Most critics agreed that the art on show at the exhibition *Reduced Budget* was basically a reflection of diverse social phenomena and was more about pegging out a certain terrain and a set of core themes. These included the theme of the "other", albeit expressed in the concepts of social, gender or racial difference.¹⁶

At that time, critical art in the Czech Republic was limited in two ways. Firstly, artists were not interested in intervening in the public space. Had they been, then their art might have acquired, if not the political dimension discussed by Milena Slavická, then at least greater appreciation and therefore social relevance. And secondly, artists were limited in respect of their ability to adopt a stance approximating that of institutional critique, i.e. a stance that, as Jiří Ševčík writes in the exhibition catalogue, takes into account the fact that a museum or gallery is decidedly not isolated from power relations and the broader cultural and social problems traversing society. This limit was referred to explicitly by Martina Pachmanová in her review of the exhibition.

However, because the project was designed to chart subtle artistic-social ties and turn from introverted emotional experiences "outward", I regard its most egregious shortcoming to be the lack of interest in reflecting upon the contemporary cultural establishment along with institutional and economic power.¹⁷

15

"It would appear that Catherine David laid special emphasis on the meaning of 'artists' for social reality. As a result her concept includes a combination of many different manifestations and forms of 'art' with a social and even political reality. Anyone who wanted to be reminded what 'engaged' or 'aware' art of the type demanded of artists by the cultural policy of real socialism was at the right place at *documenta X*," wrote Josef VOJVODÍK ("*Kassel – documenta X – 21. 6.–28. 9.*", *Ateliér*, 1997, no. 22, pp. 1, 16).

16

Martina PACHMANOVÁ, "Za svobodu, kritickou skepsi a spravedlnost!", *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 5, p. 16.

17

Ibid.

Inasmuch as we consider institutional critique to be the articulation of critical stances to the operation of the institutional framework of art, then it becomes clear that, at the end of the nineties, the discourse of institutional critique in the Czech Republic was established less by specific art projects than by critical texts, be these curatorial texts appearing in catalogues or exhibition reviews and criticism.

Even bearing in mind that the shift to socially relevant content at the end of 1997 was less a “natural” development in the art community than it was a conscious curatorial strategy or even a condition of the commissioning of an artist, the exhibition *Reduced Budget* was of crucial importance to the Czech art scene. It created a somewhat heterogeneous impression, partly the result of a somewhat vague definition of the subject matter, but also because the Ševčíks sought out not only emerging artists whose work epitomised the chosen theme (e.g. Marek Pražák and his appropriation of the politically correct advertisement for United Colours of Benetton; the Silver group and its translation of social interaction into graphs and algorithms implying themes based around social control; René Rohan and the photographic portraits of his family that made reference to the notorious system of police evidence introduced in the nineteenth century by Alphonse Bertillon and thus to Foucauldian themes of surveillance), but also the circle of artists surrounding them (e.g. Jan Merta, Jiří Kovanda, Petr Nikl, Vladimír Skrepl and Radek Váňa).¹⁸

Michal Koleček hit the nail on the head when he wrote:

If it is possible to find a resonance between the Czech and global art worlds, then it is usually on a general level. Here too are often to be found topics such as violence, sexual orientation, political elites, ecology, racial discrimination, the micro-world of specific (often marginalised) communities, drug addicts, the power of the media, etc. However, if we look closely, we discover that the

¹⁸

These artists (with many of whom the Ševčíks collaborated throughout the nineties, often in connection with the activities of the commercial MXM Gallery) either contributed works based very loosely on the theme of the exhibition (e.g. Merta’s painting of weekend cottages bears traces of a kind of “general sociality”, though it relates to a phenomenon from which society had already distanced itself), or made a somewhat forced attempt to combine their own aesthetic with the political theme (e.g. the installation by Petr Nikl).

articulation of these themes is often highly personalised, as though most of the artists were not reacting to concrete events, to their own quotidian reality, but to the way in which it is reflected in the non-world of news reports.¹⁹

Despite these “shortcomings” (which in truth simply reflected the possibilities of Czech art at that time), the significance of *Reduced Budget* resides in the fact that it generated a discourse that interrogated the social role of art, the relationship between art and politics, and the extent to which an autonomous art practice (linked with the institutionalised world of art) was able to react to genuine social problems or even resolve them. It is with these questions (and the search for answers to them, whether this be in theory or practice) that we can link the beginnings of the social turn in Czech art.

The Artwork in Public Space

Though the emphasis placed by Milena Slavická on the separation of the space of art and politics is problematic, it spotlights the link that exists between the place in which art takes place and its social relevance. When Slavická asserts that the only truly political art in the Czech Republic after 1989 was David Černý's *Pink Tank*, this is perhaps not the damning judgement it appears to be at first sight. After an episode in the latter half of the sixties during which the hegemonic control of public space by the state authorities was subject to short-lived disruption, non-gallery artistic activities during the period of normalisation took place either in (semi)private apartments or courtyards, on the peripheries, or in the countryside. The first half of the nineties was thus characterised by the re-entry of contemporary art into galleries and the theme of public space took a back seat. The first sign of a turn, or at least a renewed interest in the topic of public space, was the project *Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru* (*Artwork in Public Spaces* or *AiPS*) at the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (now the Center for Contemporary

¹⁹ Michal KOLEČEK, “Opožděná polemika”, *Umělec*, 1998, no. 2, p. 24.

Arts Prague).²⁰ The first part comprised an open call for projects, the exhibiting of their documentation at the Veletržní palác site of the National Gallery Prague, the organisation of a two-day conference, and the publication of a catalogue that, in addition to the individual projects, contained around ten texts on the relationship between art and public space. This all took place in 1997. Then in 1998, the selected projects were realised and exhibited in several locations around the country, including Otrokovice, Klenová, Ústí nad Labem and Prague.

Like *Reduced Budget*, as far as the social turn in Czech art is concerned the project *AiPS* is important for the discourse it initiated. In the case of *Reduced Budget* this discourse orbited around questions of social engagement and the politics of art, while *AiPS* examined the broader theme of public space and public art. As in the case of *Reduced Budget*, a basic glossary of terms had first to be compiled, which in the case of *AiPS* was very much part of the curatorial strategy.²¹ I have already mentioned the organisation of a symposium and the publication of a catalogue accompanying *AiPS* at Veletržní palác in autumn 1997. Most of the texts published in the catalogue²² were concerned with the dynamics of the relationship between public and private. There were also more general considerations of a theoretical and philosophical character, as well as texts devoted to the local environment.²³ In the introductory text “Public

20

Art did not disappear completely from the public space. The most notable public activities were linked with performance. This was especially true of the Ostrava festival *Malamut* (which ran every year from 1994 to 1999 and to begin with featured significant input from Jiří Surůvka and Petr Lysáček), while in 1997 and 1998 the performance festival A.K.T. was held in Brno. In 1997, it was organised by František Kowolowski, and the year after it involved collaboration with Tereza Petišková).

21

The fact that this glossary is still being created and that not even the terms “political art”, “public space” and “public art” have yet been clearly defined is borne out by the recent series of lectures and presentations “Re-public Art”, the support act at the Brno House of Art for the same year’s exhibition *Brno Art Open – Sculptures in Streets*. Details of the project and a recording of the lectures given are available at <http://www.ctenimista.cz/> (accessed 8 October 2011).

22

Ludvík HLAVÁČEK (ed.), *Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru* (exh. cat.), Prague: Soros Center for Contemporary Art 1997. The texts are available online at the *Center for Contemporary Arts Prague* website: <http://cca.fcca.cz/en/projects-events/1997/artwork-in-public-spaces/> (accessed 15 July 2011).

23

Worth noting is the text by Michal KOLEČEK entitled “Sociální kontext ve výtvarném umění” (*Labyrinth revue*, 1998, nos. 3–4, pp. 131–133). The introduction outlines the polarity between art enclosed within its own world (Koleček here speaks of a romanticising approach to creativity), and art containing a “certain social dimension”. Koleček thus anticipates the controversy that will arise in connection with the exhibition *Reduced Budget*.

Art”, Ludvík Hlaváček expresses the hope that *AiPS* might become a way of developing a context that was still lacking in the Czech Republic:

[The Czech expression] *veřejné umění* is a literal translation of the English “public art”. A literal translation is a bad translation, since it does not take account of the specific context within which a term functions. But what if the term actually has no linguistic context in the target language and there is no corresponding activity that might be defined by another term? Might not this neologism, foreign and unpleasant to the native ear, actually serve to inspire the creation of a local context and by extension the creation of a more appropriate term in the target language?**24**

A year later, in a text entitled “Pokus o veřejné umění” (“An Attempt at Public Art”),**25** Ludvík Hlaváček**26** emphasised how important the concept “new genre public art” (NGPA) had been during preparations of *AiPS*.**27** One of the key impulses for the formulation of the concept was the project *Culture in Action*, 1993, curated by Mary Jane Jacob in Chicago. This project, which is analysed in detail by Miwon Kwon**28** in her book on

24

Ludvík HLAVÁČEK, “Veřejné umění”, in: *idem, Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru*, pp. 7–9.

25

Ludvík HLAVÁČEK, “Pokus o ‘veřejné umění’”, *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 23, pp. 1–2.

26

Director of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art and curator of the exhibition *AiPS*.

27

This concept was introduced by Suzanne LACY in the anthology *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Seattle: Bay Press 1995. Lacy was one of the first students of the Feminist Art Program (FAP) (founded between 1970 and 1975 by Judy Chicago, firstly at Fresno State College and then at CalArts). She participated in the activities of the *Womanhouse*, an alternative institution offering the module Feminist Studio Workshop. Characteristic of both these programmes was what we might call a collaborative ethics. NGPA can be seen within the context of other concepts, such as Nicolas Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics or Grant Kester’s dialogical art practice.

28

KWON, *One Place after Another*. An independent case study is devoted to the exhibition project *Culture in Action* (chapter 5: “From Site to Community in New Genre Public Art: The Case of ‘Culture in Action’”, pp. 100–137).

site-specific art, exhibits the main features of NGPA, namely an emphasis on work with specific communities and the participatory character of the artistic practice. NGPA represents a consciously formulated counterweight to older concepts of “public art” that focused on the siting of artworks in public space or on a more comprehensive designing or refashioning of public space in collaboration with artists and (landscape) architects. Hlaváček’s definition of NGPA accentuates the relational aspect: “In new genre public art the space between the artist and viewer is filled not with a material object as mediator and carrier of information, but by a vibrant relationship that is the immediate subject of the artist’s creative strategy.”²⁹

According to Hlaváček, unlike “non-public” art, which is aimed at a knowledgeable model viewer and as a consequence tends towards ever increasing exclusivity and a hermetic discourse, “public” art is obliged to look for more communicative forms:

A work of NGPA is not constituted simply by means of the social sensitivity of the artist. Even were the artistic message more socially engaged, it does not fall into the category of public art unless it replaces a hermetic artistic language with a language that the person to whom the message is addressed speaks and a strategy of personal expression with a strategy of personal interactivity.³⁰

According to Hlaváček, the adoption of a new strategy of artistic creation entails setting aside not only an exclusive artistic language, but above all the “avant-garde idea of a confrontational relationship between artist and public”.³¹ He emphasises that the contemporary artist should not compromise any of her demands for her own autonomy (Hlaváček speaks

²⁹

HLAVÁČEK, “Pokus o veřejné umění”, p. 1.

³⁰

Ibid., p. 2. On the basis of specific works it appears that there was most often an effort made to speak the same language as the viewer combined with the appropriation of the visual language of consumer culture.

³¹

Ibid.

of “freedom”). However, the idea that her opponent in this struggle is an anonymous crowd is “a formal cliché that has no basis in reality”. He deploys an interesting metaphor involving two trains, one of which is reserved for artists and the other for “ordinary” people. The artist working in the spirit of NGPA differs from avant-garde artists in that she gets on the “wrong train”: “Not on the train with the artists, but on the train for everyone else. It takes far greater courage and effort to apply freedom, initiative and different ways of being in this strange environment.”³²

Despite this invitation from curators to adopt a dialogical, relational, socially engaged method of work, artworks exhibited in autumn 1998 were still only taking the first steps on the path to this type of practice. As an example of “relational” practice, Hlaváček cites the project *On, ona a krajina* (*He, She and the Landscape*) by Lukáš Gavlovský, which involves the construction of two menhirs or standing stones and a tree-lined avenue. Basically this is a land art project that requires negotiations with the authorities, landowners and possible sponsors. This project is also highlighted in his critical review of AiPS by Olaf Hanel: “Many gestures can be appreciated for simply practical reasons, e.g. the planting out of trees by Lukáš Gavlovský. The main thing is to ensure the same thing doesn’t happen as with Beuys’s trees at Kassel, the planting of which ten years ago has been shown to be completely unnecessary.”³³ While Hlaváček cites Gavlovský’s project in connection with “administrative” practice (negotiating with the local authorities), Hanel is struck by its remarkable similarity with Beuys’s project *7000 Eichen* (*7000 Oaks*, 1982–1987).³⁴ However, he overlooks one crucial aspect in respect of which not only did Beuys’s action not fail, but continues to serve as a prototype.

32
Ibid.

33
Olaf HANEL, “Samá chvála?”, *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 23, p. 12.

34
This late work builds on the period of the previous ten or so years in which Joseph Beuys increasingly devoted himself to socially engaged forms of art. Project implementation was supported by the Dia Foundation and supervised by the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research, founded by Beuys and Heinrich Böll after Beuys was forced to leave the Dusseldorf Academy. *7000 Oaks* combined a somewhat debatable objective to improve the microclimate in Kassel with a more fundamental element involving the creation of active approaches to the environment. This was achieved by inviting local inhabitants and organisations to suggest places where the oaks were to be planted (for more information regarding the project see <http://www.diaart.org/sites/page/51/1295> [accessed 8 October 2011]).

Regardless of whether the avenues have an ecological effect, the way they were created (which included a participatory element) introduced ecological themes into public discourse, and transformed some members of the general public from passive viewers into active participants. With this in mind we might venture to update the criticism of Gavlovský's project. Even though the artist had to deal with the authorities during its pre-production stage, this mainly involved administrative and technical matters, which is an absolute necessity in the case of any such project. In the past Christo and Jean-Claude worked in a similar fashion, albeit on a far larger scale, when implementing projects such as *Running Fence* (1976). The shift to a more discursively based concept of a landscape work (which is not directed on its immediate "physical" realisation but rather on the creation of a situation in which interested parties – the inhabitants of a particular locality, experts in different spheres, civil servants and politicians – begin to communicate and search for a solution to a certain problem) such as we find as far back as the 1970s in the work of Helen and Newton Harrison,³⁵ for instance, has not yet taken place in the Czech Republic.

Inasmuch as the exhibition *Reduced Budget* basically kick-started a debate around the critical relationship of art to gallery institutions (albeit on the level of curatorial texts, as I have already said), the project *AiPS* offered the opportunity for a more nuanced approach. The slightly problematic idea was to link fundraising for an exhibition with the presentation of projects in a museum of art. A year later Martina Pachmanová reacted to this in *Ateliér* magazine:

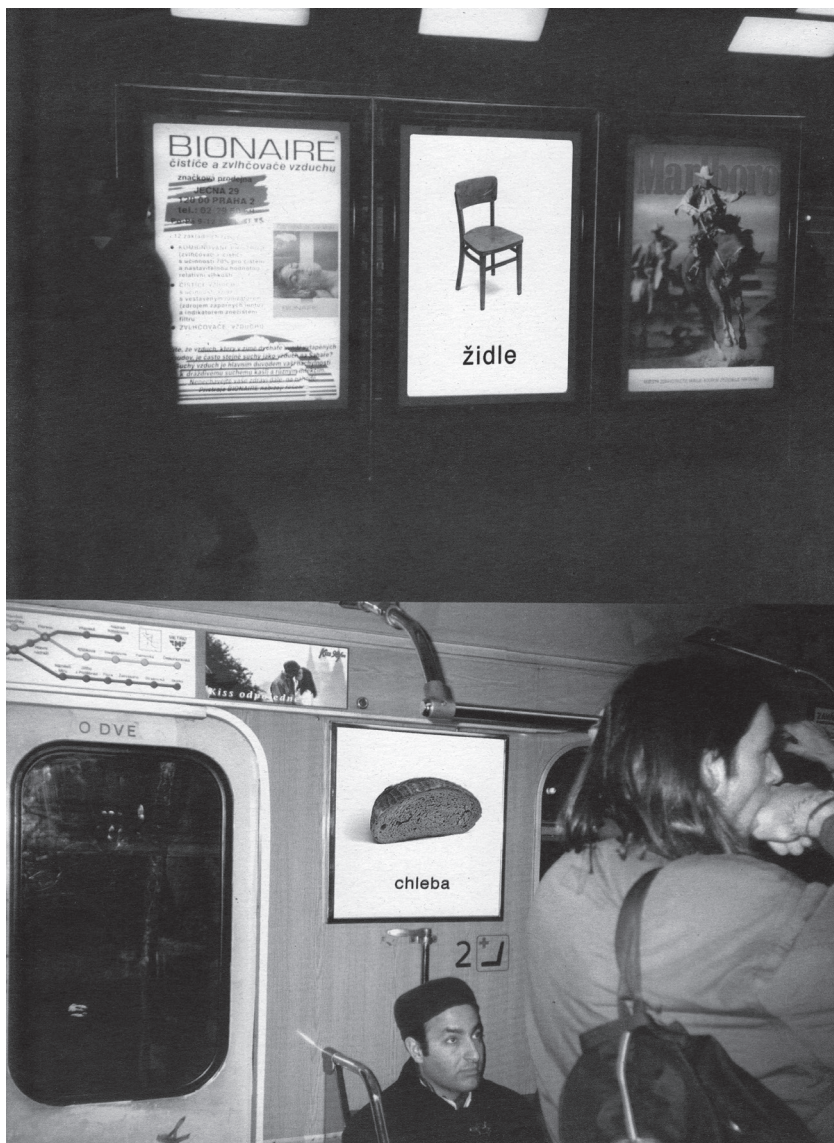
As a project devoted more to creating a concept of public art than a targeted mapping of specific examples thereof, on the one hand it was accompanied by a pleasantly inviting aura of experimental discovery, and on the other ran up against the problem of to what extent an exhibition of projects working for the most part with specific public space but nevertheless located in the aseptic functional environment of an established institution like the National Gallery can

35

For examples of specific projects see *The Harrison Studio*, <http://theharrisonstudio.net/> (accessed 8 October 2011).



Snížený rozpočet (Reduced Budget), curators: Jana and Jiří Ševčík, Prague: Výstavní síň Mánes 1997–1998, exhibition view, photo: Jiří Ševčík archive



Tomáš POLCAR, *Reklama* (Advertising), a project forming part of the exhibition *Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru* (The Artwork in Public Space), curator: Ludvík Hlaváček, Prague: National Gallery in Prague 1997, light cabinets, billboards and advertisements on metro wagons and in other places in Prague, photo: CSU Praha archive



Lenka KLODOVÁ, *Vítězky* (Victors), Prague: Gallery Artwall 2005, a project forming part of the exhibition *Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru*, computer printout (one of eight images), photo: CSU Praha archive



Milan CAIS, *Noční hlídač* (Night Watchman), Prague: Gallery Artwall 2005, a project forming part of the exhibition *Umělecké dílo ve veřejném prostoru*, synchronised projection on two balls with a diameter of 5 m located on the roof of the Goethe Institute in Prague, photo: CSU Praha archive



Slaven TOJL, *Bez názvu* (Untitled), a project forming part of the exhibition *Public District. Umění dialogu s veřejností* (Art in Dialogue with the Public), curator Michal Koleček, Ústí nad Labem 1999, an intervention in the space of a football stadium, photo: Martin Polák, Michal Koleček archive



Roman ONDÁK, *Infocentrum*, a project forming part of the exhibition *Public District. Umění dialogu s veřejností* (Art in Dialogue with the Public), curator Michal Koleček, Ústí nad Labem 1999, installation at the Emil Filla Gallery, photo: Martin Polák, Michal Koleček archive

have a genuinely “public” dimension. [...] Unlike architecture, the realisation of which is unthinkable without demanding technology and an economic and political background, public art amongst white walls puts at stake that which is supposed to be its essence: freedom, independence and a degree of critical thinking. As Martin Zet noted with a hint of irony in his “anti-project”: “if projects are to be presented to a possible sponsor they have to be exhibited”.³⁶

The works themselves, located on the periphery of several Czech towns and cities, might serve as a contribution to the discussion on the relationship between the “aesthetic” space of a gallery and “political” public space. The truth is that, despite the much trumpeted emphasis on the “social context” and “social communication”, most of the projects at best offered a reflection upon certain socially relevant themes linked with interventions in spaces usually reserved for the commercial sphere. This would include billboard frames (Jiří Valoch, Ester and Tomáš Polcar), lightboxes (Alena Kotzmanová, the Polcars), and even the night-time illumination of Prague Castle (Veronika Drahotová).

“Intervention” is a key word when defining the social turn in art. At around the same time as the exterior part of *AiPS* was taking place, a text by Tomáš Lahoda was published in *Umělec* magazine entitled “Interventional tendencies in art (observations)”,³⁷ in which we find several examples of what we might call relational, dialogic and participatory art.³⁸

36

Martina PACHMANOVÁ, “Umění a veřejnost aneb Jak se žije public artu v Čechách”, *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 23, pp. 1–2.

37

Tomáš LAHODA, “Intervenční tendence v umění. Poznámky”, *Umělec*, 1998, nos. 6–7, pp. 12–13.

38

Relational Aesthetics by Nicolas BOURRIAUD was published in the French original in the same year as Lahoda’s text (*Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon: Les presses du réel 1998). The concept of relationship aesthetics is based on the claim that a space has opened up in contemporary art for work that is not so much interested in the creation of works as exclusive artefacts but rather focuses on the sphere of interpersonal relationships, general forms of community, specific forms of the “relational economy”, etc. Bourriaud uses the term “social interstice”, which he sees as a space parallel to social reality, a space in which artists can conduct relational experiments that might directly impact reality in the sense of engaged art practice while retaining the necessary degree of artistic autonomy. Nevertheless, the fact that many examples cited in Lahoda’s text relate easily to relational aesthetics does not point to any great link between Lahoda and Bourriaud but more the fact that the heterogeneous sphere of “social interventions” has aroused great interest on the part of critics and curators and is receiving the necessary institutional support.

Among other things, Lahoda refers to two projects by Aleksandra Mir, *Life is Sweet in Sweden* and *Cinema for the Unemployed*,³⁹ as well as to projects by the Danish artist Jens Haaning⁴⁰ focusing on the theme of migration (the transformation of a gallery into a tourist information office, or a handkerchief workshop in which all the employees came from the local Turkish community), and The Modern Institute, a production platform (a kind of office that “manages” the projects of other artists) established by Toby Webster, Charles Esche and Will Bradley.⁴¹

Around the same time, Miloš Vojtěchovský addressed the same topic in his article “Intervence nebo indolence? (Intervention or Indolence?)”, published in the issue of *Ateliér* devoted to *AiPS*. The article contains a reference to the symposium “Observations on Interventional Tendencies” (held in Copenhagen in 1998). This was probably the same symposium from which Tomáš Lahoda derived the material for the text mentioned above, since we find the same names: Superflex, Aleksandra Mir, Jens Haaning... Names we might retrospectively identify with the global promotion of “relational art”, i.e. with the start of the social turn as outlined in the text by Claire Bishop, find themselves through close contact with the theme of art in public space (“public art”) in a local context. Unlike Lahoda, Vojtěchovský emphasises the influence of the internet on the transformation of artistic practice:

The internet undoubtedly contributed to the formation
of an interdisciplinary, contextual approach, to the
reinforcement of the autonomy of the artist as

39

Lars Bang Larsen selected several projects by Aleksandra Mir, including those referred to here, as examples of his concept of “social aesthetics”, which he formulated in 1999 (Lars Bang LARSEN, “Social Aesthetics”, in: BISHOP, *Participation*, pp. 172–183). A characteristic trait of works in the sphere of “social aesthetics” is their inclusion of a utilitarian or practical aspect that adds a dimension of purpose and direct engagement. Larsen’s social aesthetics is very close to Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics, though does not set itself the task of covering such a large circle of examples of current art practice (as we see in the relative size of both texts).

40

In 1998, Nicolas Bourriaud illustrated his concept of “relational aesthetics” using the work of Jens Haaning.

41

A method of work that involves the production of projects by other people and is located on the boundary of pure production, curatorial and artistic work might well bring to mind the Czech platform PAS (Production of Activities of the Contemporary), created in 2000 by Vít Havránek, Jiří Skála and Tomáš Vaněk.

self-producer, service provider, to the need to cluster individuals into informal associations, brotherhoods and anonymous action units, to reinforce the ethics and aesthetics of the everyday, a return to reality, to an applied “folk” art, to social engagement and putting a distance between oneself and the myth of the mad genius lingering on from previous decades.⁴²

An intervention in public space was undoubtedly at the heart of the project by the *Bezhlavý jezdec* (The Headless Horseman group, BJ).⁴³ The group was important, as later became clear, in respect of future developments on the Czech contemporary art scene and represented perhaps the first clearly formulated gesture of institutional critique in this country. I have in mind the work *Vývěšková skříň* (which is how it was referred to in the list of projects shown at the jubilee exhibition of *AiPS*), better known as the “*vitřínka*” (*display case*), which the group installed in Komunardů Street in Holešovice, Prague, as an alternative exhibition space. With hindsight BJ’s display case comes across as one of the earliest attempts to create a “non-gallery”,⁴⁴ an exhibition space that abolishes the distancing framework of the standard gallery, and establishes strong links to a specific artistic community in a given place. BJ’s display case was a place where many histories converged. One of these was the creation of the group Production of Activities of the Contemporary (PAS),⁴⁵ whose first task was to initiate the production and distribution of similar display cases to the one installed in Holešovice to other places in the Czech Republic.

42

Miloš VOJTĚCHOVSKÝ, “Intervence nebo indolence?”, *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 23, p. 16.

43

The group comprised Josef Bolf, Ján Mančuska, Jan Šerých and Tomáš Vaněk and was active between 1996 and 2002.

44

For more on this topic see Silvie ŠEBOROVÁ, “Negalerie”, *Art+Antiques*, 2010, nos. 7–8, pp. 48–52.

45

See footnote 41.

The manner in which we look back at the project *AiPS* must take into account the first street protests against globalisation. In May 1998, the Global Street Party was held in Prague as part of the “global days of action” called by the organisation People’s Global Action (PGA). It was directed mainly against institutions representing economic globalisation, first and foremost the World Trade Organisation (WTO). At first sight this event has nothing in common with art, certainly not autonomous art. However, from the point of view of engaged or critical art the emergence of an organised anti-globalisation movement was of huge significance. After the lengthy hiatus subsequent to the synergy of civil movements and engaged art at the turn of the 1960s and 70s, it again offered a joint platform for social criticism and critical art practice.

This is well captured in the essay “The Revenge of the Concept” by Brian Holmes, published in the book *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*. Holmes writes:

Among the events of recent history, few have been as surprising, as full of enigmas, as the coordinated world demonstrations known as the Global Days of Action. Immediately upon their appearance, they overflowed the organisation that had called them into being: the People’s Global Action (PGA), founded in Geneva in February of 1998.⁴⁶

Holmes sees a connection between these protests and art: “These kinds of actions are about as far as one could imagine from a museum; yet when you approach them, you can feel something distinctly artistic. They bring together the multiplicity of individual expression and the unity of a collective will.”⁴⁷ Holmes’s attempt to interpret street protests in the light of artistic creation may cause eyebrows to raise. However, he is no lone

46

Brian HOLMES, “The Revenge of the Concept”, in: *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, New York: Autonomia 2008, p. 55.

47

Ibid., p. 56.

wolf. The Prague Global Street Party, “honoured” by the intervention of the police, found itself on the front page of the Czech art magazine *Detail* and was discussed by the editor-in-chief Marek Pokorný.⁴⁸ The shift that had taken place in the perception of similar events over the previous two years is illustrated by the reaction to the protests against the meeting of the IMF in September 2000 published in *Umělec* magazine. After a theoretical text by Scott Macmillan,⁴⁹ which outlined the radical left thinking that formed the backdrop to the struggle against globalisation and neoliberalism, there was an article by Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz⁵⁰ that begins:

On 26 September 2000, several thousand demonstrators realised a truly magnificent work of art in Prague – a demonstration that led to street clashes with the police and a number of broken windows. Long live artistic production!

The entire text is imbued with the spirit of the situationist revolt against the establishment, not only in its economic or political guise, but the establishment as linked with the institutionalised world of art:

We declare right now: The Prague masterpiece meets all the theoretical requirements that we, the authors of this text, impose upon current works of art. First, the event in Prague—as is appropriate for an anarchist action—raised profound dissatisfaction with the governing establishment, Czech state power and the highest ranks of the international liberal-capitalist elite. [...] Second, the Prague disturbances were collective in nature, which is excellent news indeed. Let’s quote Lautréamont at

48

Marek POKORNÝ, “Frustrace, alternativa a potlačení”, *Detail*, 1998, no. 3, p. 1.

49

Scott MACMILLAN, “Savages, barbarians and Civilised Men”, *Umělec*, 2000, no. 5, pp. 27–30.

50

Alexander BRENER – Barbara SCHURZ, “Prague Street Clashes as a Major Work of Art”, *Umělec*, 2000, no. 5, pp. 31–35.

this point who said, “Poetry must be made by everybody and not by individuals.” This is certainly true, and the Prague disturbances proved so. We should not forget that the art of the self-proclaimed “professionals” of today’s multicultural elite is nothing but a laughing representation of the current cynical “Lords of Life,” the neo-liberal big guns. To hell with all “professionals!” Only the collective volcanic activity that focuses on destroying the property of those owners is capable of full-scope expression in culture.⁵¹

The Prague Global Street Party and the follow-up protests against the meeting of the WTO and the World Bank played an important role in that they created the conditions for the formulation of a link between art and political activism on the basis of real-life local experience. This is clear in the text by Keiko Sei “Uniform Future”.⁵² Sei references the demonstrations and street battles of September 2000 when reflecting upon the repeated use of uniforms in engaged Czech art (in 2002). Specifically, this refers to the fake policeman that David Černý used to open the exhibition *Politik-Um. New Engagement*,⁵³ the event by Tamara Moyzes *Na vlastní zodpovědnost (At Your Own Risk)*,⁵⁴ and finally the Rafani group’s *Demonstrace demokracie (Demonstration of Democracy, 2002)* which included the ritual burning of a black-and-white version of the state flag on Wenceslas

⁵¹
Ibid., p. 31.

⁵²
Keiko SEI, “Uniform Future”, *Umělec*, no. 4, pp. 50–55

⁵³
The last jubilee exhibition of the Center for Contemporary Art took place in the Terežian Wing of the Old Royal Palace at Prague Castle from 15 May to 10 June 2002. The exhibition promoted itself as a presentation of political art and was not without its controversies, the most evident of which was the banning of the exterior installation by the Poda Bal group (a large print referencing the post-war expulsion of the Sudeten Germans).

⁵⁴
At the start of the academic year two individuals in police uniforms blocked access to the Academy of Fine Arts, and only allowed students and lecturers in after they had signed a declaration that they were entering the building at their own risk. The event was brought to a close by genuine policemen.

Square (during which the members of Rafani were dressed in very fetching grey uniforms).

Public District

When the Soros Center for Contemporary Art held its jubilee celebration of *AiPS*, many of the events were held in Ústí nad Labem. At the end of the 1990s, Ostrava and Ústí nad Labem were ambitious regional centres that forged an image for themselves based on a close relationship with the generation of artists joining the art scene during the nineties (Jiří Černický, Pavel Kopřiva, Eva Husáková [now Mráziková] and Martin Mrázik, Zdena Kolečková, et al.) and the curator Michal Koleček.⁵⁵ In 1998, Koleček curated the Ústí section of *AiPS*. In a text entitled “Společné umění v privátním prostoru (Collective Art in a Private Space)” he emphasised the differences between the *Five-Day Project* (5 October – 9 October 1998) and the “parent” event of *AiPS*: “the overriding objective was to achieve an unofficial, diverse realisation, often with specific social or ecological content”.⁵⁶ Probably the most important principle and one that most of the participating artists abided by was “showcasing”, i.e. intervening in a drab everyday reality in such a way as to divert people away from their routine experience of the quotidian. One strategy involved interventions in places used for advertising (examples would include the posters by Jiří Valoch, the leaflets by Eva and Martin Mrázik on the public transport system, and the way that Petr Lysáček manipulated the contents of illuminated information boards). Several performances took place in the city (e.g. Tomáš Veselý with his street campaign for the sale of a non-existent product, or Richard Fajnor offering passersby the possibility of watching an original broadcast on a portable television). It was impossible to ignore the fact that the artists participating in the *Five-Day Project* were mainly from other peripheries, namely Brno, Ostrava and Libušín (Martin Zet).

55

It is difficult to overlook the close links between the success enjoyed by members of the Ústí nad Labem circle and Koleček's activities as curator.

56

Michal KOLEČEK, “Společné umění v privátním prostoru”, *Ateliér*, 1998, no. 23, p. 4.

Michal Koleček fully realised the strategy of building a regional centre in collaboration with similar places from the wider region of Central Europe in the project *Public District: Umění v dialogu s veřejností* (*Public District: Art in Dialogue with the Public*).⁵⁷ The event involved the cooperation of curators from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Eighteen artists from seven countries were represented in Ústí. Simplifying matters somewhat one might say that *Public District* was the logical outcome of the possibilities opened up by *AiPS*. Leaving aside the international dimension to *Public District*, the main difference between the two events was the even greater emphasis placed on the local social reality. At the exhibition *Reduced Budget*, the subject of minorities and their cohabitation with majority society was expressed through image (e.g. the photographic series *United Colours of the Czech Republic* by Marek Pražák). However, at Ústí nad Labem the same theme was explored using methods that made it clear it was to be a matter for public debate. *Public District* offered something that had basically never been seen up till then in this country, namely the linking up of public art with a site-specific approach no longer based on the “phenomenological” characteristics of a location, but on its social and cultural traits. Szőke Katalin wrote of *Public District*:

The social, historical and economic problems of the city comprise the elements of everyday life and as such offer themselves as themes, whether this be the “wall”, the relationship of the local community and Czech society in general to the Roma minority, the deportation of the German-speaking population after the Second World War, the economic and political changes of the preceding years, the different role of the region, the question of villages wiped out in the face of the onslaught of the mining industry, the horrendous pollution caused by chemical plants, etc. The organisers accepted any artwork located outside a gallery and did not require of the artist that they

perform some special task. They simply placed them within a certain sociological context.**58**

Katalin suggests classifying individual exhibition projects into those concerned with the individual and those that examine people as part of a group (“the artists were concerned with the stance that people or groups take to each other, the links that exist between communities”). The second group would definitely include the project by Grzegorz Klamman *Art Propaganda Corporation – the Ústí Syndrome* (1999), which took the form of a public information-cum-advertising campaign. Advertisements on billboards and in newspapers asked unpleasant questions, such as “Are you a proper Czech?”, or “Racially pure or multicultural city?”. People were given the opportunity to react to these questions by telephone or at the Emil Filla Gallery. Katalin offers an interesting assessment of the real-world impact of Klamman’s campaign: “During the first week there was a reaction. Around ten local people got involved. The work did not cause a scandal or any offence. In fact, it went almost unnoticed. It found itself behind a wall of indifference or media fatigue.”**59**

While Grzegorz Klamman targeted his “campaign” on the ethnic (Roma) minority, Slaven Tolj focused on the ethnic minorities that surveys had shown represented the largest groups of immigrants, specifically Bosnians and Croatians. He elegantly represented the presence of these groups in the city and the tensions between them by means of an installation (intervention) in the 1st May Stadium. He placed the flags of both countries at half-mast on stands at the stadium entrance and screenshots of a virtual football match (from a computer game) between the respective teams in a display case. The last project worthy of mention is *Info-centre* by Roman Ondák. Just for a change, this focused on the local art scene, a heterogeneous group of local artists mostly linked by their aversion to anything organised by the Emil Filla Gallery. Ondák charted this “unofficial Ústí scene” and prepared an exhibition of its work at the very

58

Szöke Katalin, “Veřejný okrsek / Public District”, *Detail*, 1999, no. 8, pp. 3–6.

59

Ibid., p. 4.

gallery that its members despise so much. The creation of a temporary community that only “materialised” during the opening of the exhibition represents one of the characteristic features of Ondák’s work to date.

As in the case of the *AiPS* exhibition, *Public District* engendered a broad-based debate regarding the social function of art and its significance for the cultivation of public space. The month-long exhibition included a symposium that then migrated to Brno, where Koleček was a post-graduate student, entitled *Art in Dialogue with the Public*, which examined the issue of the socialisation and mediation of art (usually within the context of gallery operations). The emphasis placed on linking the socialisation of art (as a process by which the public can be led to culture) and socialisation by art (the cultivation of society by means of contact with art, a phenomenon we often observe in community art) represents an important aspect distinguishing *Public District* from the older project organised by the Soros Center for Contemporary Art.

Though I have mentioned the work of only foreign artists in connection with *Public District*, I believe the whole project was important for the way it introduced what we might call “participatory art” to the Czech Republic. That this was no mere coincidence but carefully planned by the curator Michal Koleček was shown to be true several years later at a reprise of the project. In 2005 and 2006, a series of projects was realised under the title *Public Dreams*, in which the participatory principle was given extra emphasis. For instance, the group named *Department for Public Appearances* created the project *Easy Vote*, in which people had the chance to vote on the presence of the Spolchemie chemical plant in the city of Ústí nad Labem. People were given the opportunity to walk through turnstiles indicating whether they gave greater priority to regional employment over ecological risks. In the lead-up to the parliamentary elections, Ralf Hoedt and Zora Moitl prepared the intervention *On the Podium (Platform for Artistic and Cultural Diversity)*, which commandeered a space usually used by political parties for their campaigns and used it to promote the wide range of cultural events on offer in the city of Ústí nad Labem (from large institutions to small, independent associations).

As I wrote in the introduction, the aim of this article was to identify the start of the “social turn in Czech art”. Each of the three projects I have concentrated on here was linked with partial shifts (be they on the level of curatorial strategy, artworks on show, or subsequent discussions) that,

taken as a whole, created the framework for developments after 2000. Above all, this entailed the problematisation of the gallery space as the locus of an exclusive, socially autonomous art.⁶⁰ The common denominator of *Reduced Budget* and *Artwork in Public Space* was an attempt to boost the social relevance of art. The first project aimed to interrogate the concept of artistic autonomy and ask wherein the political dimension of art resides and what the possibilities of (socially) critical art are. The second combined this endeavour with the theme of “public art”, which attempts to gain traction in those very places in which everyday “real life” is played out. The third project, *Public District*, is important for the way that, unlike the somewhat salon-like project mounted by the Soros Centre, it made a more determined effort to address local themes and real communities in the very neighbourhoods where such dramas were being played out.

What is crucial is that all the projects under discussion were of a more or less programmatic character. They were linked with the demarcation of specific sources of inspiration and models in the global art world (Hans Haacke), the arrival of new technology (“public art”), and with the promotion of the participatory approach (Grzegorz Kłaman and Roman Ondák in *Public District*).

The local art scene had to learn the lessons of these projects that took place at the end of the 1990s on a bottom-up basis,⁶¹ and their outcomes only really became clear after a few years with the creation of new art groups, independent, community-based galleries, and organisations involved in production and theory. As well as drawing on their historical antecedents, these initiatives could seek inspiration in the global tendencies

60

Social sensitivity with a hint of intimacy, characteristic for example of the members of the Pondělí group and its work during the first half of the 1990s, is not the same as art reacting to “journalistic” (political) themes, which to a greater extent appeared in the exhibition *Reduced Budget*.

61

All three projects enjoyed relatively generous institutional support. However, with the possible exception of Michal Koleček and the Emil Filla Gallery, this did not involve the organic combination of curatorial activities and exhibition institutions that would have allowed for the more stable support in this country of the trends initiated by these projects. The limits of the free alliance between a production-based curatorial institution and an exhibition institution were revealed by the exterior section of the exhibition *Politik-Um* (2002), the final jubilee exhibition of the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art. However, even such a loose connection far exceeded the production possibilities of the community level of art practice in which the social turn in Czech art was realised after 2000.

underway and their newly established contacts (Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Nicolas Bourriaud, Anatoly Osmolovsky, Avdey Ter-Oganyan, and others). Key words such as “public art” or “socialisation of art” that we still find in Vít Havránek’s text from 2001 on the “participations” of Tomáš Vaněk⁶² would be replaced in the years to come by a new glossary featuring such locutions as “post-production”, the “(temporary autonomous) zone” and “non-specularity”. But that is for another chapter...

62

Vít HAVRÁNEK, “Situace, okolnosti a participy,” *Umělec*, 2002, no. 1, pp. 60–65.