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Martin Škabraha
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1 Translated by Phil Jones.

The compilation of the 36th *Notebook for Art, Theory and Related Zones* took place around the time of the twentieth anniversary of the accession of the Czech Republic and several other post-socialist countries to the European Union, an internally diverse community in which differences in the historical experiences of individual states and nations – including the experience of so-called state socialism and the subsequent social transformations – are still evident today. The studies and texts in this issue are largely concerned with the situatedness of perspectives and experiences within local contexts, whose mutual differences do not preclude sharing across borders.

A significant part of the social changes after 1989 was the adoption of Western theoretical concepts, including those already wrought years earlier by second-wave feminism. The first text of this issue of *Notebook*, written by Kristina Láníková, looks at what specific features this reception might have encountered in Czechia. Láníková focuses on the concept of intimacy, primarily within the context of debates surrounding the exhibition *New Intimacy* (1991) curated by Milena Slavická. She reveals that, while Western feminist approaches were driven by the principle that “the personal is political,” in Czech art of the early 1990s intimacy became, on the contrary, a tool for the depoliticization of the personal. The intimate/private sphere embodied a kind of non-ideological core on which an “authentic” artistic expression could be based, one that did not serve the propaganda of the defeated state socialism or the commercial interests of a triumphant capitalism.

The Polish scholar Michalina Sablik also deals with intimacy and personal approaches working with corporeality. She applies the contemporary concept of trans-corporeality to selected performances by Polish artists associated with the Galeria Labirynt in Lublin in the 1970s in order to show how artistic production at that time was already able to address the issue of the hybridization of personal and social space. The human body in these visions cannot be a bastion of non-political identity, because it is connected by various

processes to the nature that surrounds it as modified by political decisions, as well as to the artificial techno environment in which various forms of manipulation take place.

An even more radical relativization of the boundary between one's own (body) and its environment is the phenomenon Lenka Veselá addresses in her “notes from the endocene.” Unlike the technological prostheses of cyborgization, the processes she depicts are invisible to the naked eye because they are played out at the micro level, and are all the more pervasive for it. Veselá uses the term endocene to express a situation in which moods or emotions do not become an exclusive manifestation of the personality, but are influenced by biochemically manipulated hormonal processes that blur the boundary between “ours” and “theirs,” the intimate and the social. The reason for this is that the environment that shapes us in this way is materially and ideologically influenced by a profit-oriented neoliberal economy. Veselá seeks a way to confront these expropriating processes in the sharing of similar experiences. This, however, is primarily the sharing of anxiety and insecurity and does not allow for clear answers.

However, it is not only the products of the medical industry that enter into our bodies, but those of industrial agriculture too. We cannot heal our bodies if we do not heal our landscape. In her essay, Kateřina Žák Konvalinová explores such efforts by comparing her experiences at the Jednorůžec community and organic farm in Central Bohemia where she works, and the Inland project in Asturias, Spain, which is based on the connection between agro-ecological farming and contemporary art practice. In these kinds of community-collective projects, in which procedurality and the long-term perspective are important, Žák Konvalinová points to the necessity of sharing, (co-)working in the community, and non-hierarchical ways of decision-making, while also warning of the difficulties involved in implementing these principles in an ideal form.

In February of this year, the Hungarian art historian Edit András visited AVU. While political themes have been

present somewhat latently in the previous texts of this issue, in the interview we conducted with Edit András, in which she responds to the cultural policy being pursued by Viktor Orbán's regime, art, now face-to-face with a threat to freedom, becomes overtly and explicitly political. In contemporary Hungary, the authoritarian legacy of the state socialist regime is intertwined with new methods of surveillance and power hegemony, including the instrumentalization of commercial interests and incentives for political ends. According to András, these pressures can be countered through solidarity. However, she does not appeal to a pre-defined, pre-existing community (be it national, sectoral or ideological), but to alliances forged across regions in response to common threats and on the basis of shared experiences.

Edit András's visit to AVU was linked to the launch of the book *Kulturní převlékání. Umění na troskách socialismu a na vrcholcích nacionalismu* (Cultural Cross-Dressing: Art on the Ruins of Socialism; Hradec Králové: Galerie moderního umění 2023). The book is reviewed by Tomáš Pospiszyl, who, among other things, argues that it could inspire its Czech readers to write their own history of Czech art after 1989, the historicization of which has up till now been more in the form of permanent exhibitions and research presentations.

The final text in this issue of *Notebook* is another review, in which Vojtěch Márc discusses the book *Mapování pohyblivého obrazu: Média, aktéři a místa v českém prostředí* (Mapping the Moving Image: Media, Actors and Places in Czechia; Prague: National Film Archive 2023), edited by Martin Mazanec and Sylva Poláková. In it, we encounter a reflection upon a certain hybridization, or at the very least indeterminate boundaries, this time in relation to the medium of the moving image. This might be defined as being "between" visual art and cinematography, or from the position of individual authors who are themselves – in part because of the more modest scale of the local scene – the authors, witnesses and actors of the texts as well. Though

the aim of the publication is to legitimize institutional care for the art of the moving image, it is still necessary, as Márc points out, to address the question of what should be cared for and why.

Answers to such questions would be easy if we were clear about what art is and how its varieties or media differ from one another. Then perhaps we could find a form of art that would represent a safe haven from politics and commerce. But an impermeable hideout is just an illusion and art should not lead us to live within a lie.

Let us conclude this editorial, then, with the postulation that genuine art always leads us to the truth. But would that not be just another illusion?

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