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Editorial



Thematically, this issue of the journal is oriented towards the concept of *realism* during the Cold War. A comparative perspective on the understanding of *realism*, its relation to modern art and the intertwined histories of the East and the West unifies this collection of articles.

Among the contributors are established names in this broad field of research: Mathilde Arnoux, the head of an international project on conceptions of *realism* in different artistic contexts during the Cold War, here presents how an art historian and an artist from East Berlin in the 1980s recognized true socialist *realism* in the work of Joseph Beuys. Jérôme Bazin, a leading figure of international projects on artistic exchange between the East and the West at the time of Iron Curtain, juxtaposes two examples: a painting from Belgium and a photograph published in a newspaper in Poland. The author reflects on the connections between everyday images and works of *realism* in the 1950s, under different circumstances in the East and the West. Angel V. Angelov, who has researched

comparatively phenomena and critical discourses in literature and visual practices, discusses in this issue the proximity between Hans Zedlmayr's and Dimitar Avramov's concepts of modern art, pointing out the impact that Zedlmayr's statements had on Avramov. Petya Alexandrova, Galina Lardeva and the author of this note, comparatively examine phenomena in cinema, photography and artistic integrations in social environments, exploring the limits of the efficacy of the concept of *realism*. Case studies and intertwined stories beyond boundaries and limitations present also the young authors Antonia Milcheva, Eva - Maria Ivanova and Natasha Noeva. In the Reviews section, Ivan Popov presents a recently published collection of texts from 12 countries - critical responses to US art during the Cold War with brief contemporary commentaries.

Irina Genova

Summaries

IN SEARCH OF TRUE REALISM EUGEN BLUME AND ERHARD MONDEN WITH JOSEPH BEUYS IN THE GDR

Mathilde Arnoux
Translated by Timothy Stroud

In the divided Europe of the Cold War, realism was the subject of fierce debate in the art worlds. The interdependencies between the two rival systems were tight and permeated the views on the art theoretical challenges faced by artists. Thus, many of the discourses on art during the years of the Cold War analysed artistic practices along variously explicit political lines. They outlined the place held by works of art within the characteristic divisions of the period that reflected the system of binary oppositions distinctive of the epistemology of modernity, which were also emblematic of a conception of art as representation. However, there were also other ways to consider art in both East and West that did not follow this mimetic tradition and questioned the relations that existed between artistic practices and reality within the multiplicity by which they are linked, thereby transforming how realism is to be understood. The encounters between Eastern and Western artistic practices in Europe can make this research particularly salient, and it is to one of them that the following pages are devoted. In this debate were involved also the FRG and the GDR, the two German states that emerged from World War II, paradigmatic examples of the division of Europe, and the debates that revolved around socialist realism and the thinking they prompted in favour of a “true realism”. An exploration will be made of how the pursuit of this realism by young artists and critics arose in the 1980’s from a dialogue between Marx’s thinking on art and the expanded concept of art (*erweiterter Kunstbegriff*) of Joseph Beuys (1921–1986). Through this dialogue, Joseph Beuys does not appear to have been an imported model by which young artists and theoreticians, belated imitators, lacking in contact with foreign countries, would have expected to be inspired. Beuys had his place in a set of reflections that stemmed from a particular knowledge of the issues at stake in the debates on realism in the socialist space and the revisions that a return to Marx allowed, reflections that were specific to these young artists and interest in which Beuys shared.

REALISTIC ART AND EVERYDAY IMAGES IN THE EAST AND THE WEST

Jérôme Bazin

In this article, we propose to open a reflection about the relationship between ordinary images and realist art in the 1950s. Art historians are used to analyze the mutual transfers between avant-garde art and ordinary images; but, when it comes about socialist realism, we know very little about such transfers. We present two examples from this decade. The first one is a Belgian painting about a wounded worker – we put it in relationship with a poster about safety at work and with mass media images about accidents in the mines. The second one is a photography representing a conflictual situation on a street in Poland – the image was both a realist piece of art and a press photo, nourishing the discussion on the double nature of photography and on realism. In both cases, this questioning of the relationship to ordinary images makes it possible to explore margins of socialist realism and some crucial issues (for example here, the visualization of social antagonisms). By considering one example from the West and one from the East, the article also questions the opportunity of considering simultaneously works from the two parts of divided Europe.

TOGETHER AGAINST MODERNISM AND MODERNITY HANS SEDLMAYR, MODERN ART REVOLUTION (1955), DIMITAR AVRAMOV, AESTHETICS OF MODERN ART (1969): COMPREHENSION AND RAPPROCHEMENT

Angel V. Angelov

The author establishes rapprochement between the concepts of H. Sedlmayr and D. Avramov about modern art and defines the influence Sedlmayr’s ideas had on Avramov. It also discusses the limitations of Avramov’s understanding that modern art is a development of the ‘theory: art for art’s sake’ and comes to the conclusion that this, as well as other previous publications by the same author from the 1960s and the early 1970s, are part of his attempts to bring to modernity an officially conservative aesthetic concept. In Bulgaria, as well as in the Soviet Union, the topic of realism is important solely as a theme and as a part and parcel of the general critique of modernism. Avramov’s concept about modern art is

conservative and subtly establishes part of the art works from the last decade of the 19th century as art models. Aesthetics of Modern Art meets certain expectations, but it does not create them. Avramov views the affluent art of the 19th century as a barricade collision between artist rebels and the dominant academic tastes of the bourgeoisie. Avramov’s concept contains a personal element of identification with the artists, who, in his personal view, are the most valuable and he describes them as rebels. The author of the current study introduces opinions about Aesthetics of Modern Art by Bulgarian authors between 1970 and 2021.

SYNTHESIS AND / OR REALISM – MURAL ARTS, CRITICAL DISCOURSES AND RECEPTION OF THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE IN BULGARIA AFTER WORLD WAR II

Irina Genova

The practices of mural arts have a reverse influence on the rejection of the illusory spatial representation in paintings in the exhibition halls. In this case, just as in other artistic fields since the 1960s, it has turned out that (socialist) realism is not connected with a specifically defined form but with the “significant social content”, suggested through the figurative imagery. What is important is the unformulated non-artistic requirement for loyalty to the official power. The artistic practices de-validate the doctrine of socialist realism, its postulates and terms. The incompatibility of the notions of synthesis and (socialist) realism in the language of the official art criticism is evidence in support of this statement. The focus on the interest in French visual culture in our country in the 1960s is conditional. The case of the synthesis and / or realism relates to wide cultural territories and, without doubt, to the countries with communist rule. However, the French visual culture, especially in the years of the left rule, is an important reference for the artistic practices East of the Iron Curtain.

THE DOCUMENTAL AND THE REALISTIC IN THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF BORIS MIHAYLOV

Galina Lardeva

The paper studies the artistic work of the photographer Boris Mihaylov sympto-

matically in relation to the problematic of realism in the photographic art. Along with this, the so defined problematic is viewed worth debatable in the medium of photography as 'a message without a code' (Barthes). The study focuses on the problem of amateur photography, both as specifics of media settings and as a peculiar alibi for technical (instead of ideological) inexperience. The expose differentiates the two main periods in the works of Mihaylov, by discerning the play of un-intentionality and detachment until 1990 and his orientation towards social stereotypes, behaviours and codex of view (Sontag) in the years after the crash of the USSR until the present day. It presents how conceptual intentionality of the realistic orientation is able to reach extreme implications of the grotesque. Two contemporary socio-cultural ideas are put into play as a context for the analysis of the photographic series in the text, namely, the view about the resisting collective body to the process of its privatization (M. Riklin) and the rhetorical rhetorics of the 'double after'[after the revolution – the crash of the USSR] (M. Tupitsina).

ITALIAN NEO REALISM THE BULGARIAN WAY: A PARALLEL STUDY OF *LADRI DI BICICLETTE* [BICYCLE THIEVES] BY VITTORIO DE SICA AND *ТОБА СЕ СЛУЧИ НА УЛИЦАТА* [THIS HAPPENED IN THE STREET] BY YANKO YANKOV

Petya Alexandrova

The cinema language has adopted a few simple practices from the aesthetics of the Italian Neo realism, namely, the use of real events, without them being significant; going into the street with a camera against the artificially beautiful; shooting in a natural environment without the use of decors; casting both professional and amateur actors, so that to break the stereotype – they had 'to live', not to act; invisible directing, without bright metaphorical means of expressions, i.e. to resemble voyeurism; and an active protagonist, a member of the lower classes. One of the finest artworks of the movement is Vittorio de Sica's film *Ladri di biciclette*. Comparing it to the Bulgarian film *Тоба се случи на улицата* by Yanko Yankov, in terms of the above mentioned practices, one can claim that all they have been adequately applied in the Bulgarian production too regardless of the different levels of development of the cinema industry and, moreover, despite of the ideological differences in the dominant then socialist realism in Bulgaria. What we see on the screen in both cases is an authentic copy of reality.

LIKA YANKO AND BINKA ZHELYAZKOVA: A CREATIVE COLLABORATION AT THE VERGE OF REALISM

Eva-Maria Ivanova

The paper is dedicated to the unstudied artistic collaboration between the artist Lika Yanko and director Binka Zhelyazkova. The main subject of the research are the murals created by Yanko after the invitation by Zhelyazkova for the shooting of the film titled 'The last word' (1973). The general characteristics of the poetics of the film are studied along with the poetics of the murals of Yanko and their particular place in the film and the oeuvre of the artist. A main point of reference in the text is the problematic of the concept about realism and in particular of the 'realistic' features of the techniques applied to recreate the theme, which had a significant political meaning in the epoch of socialism. Could then the way it was presented be perceived as adequate to the principles of 'socialist realism'? The sought parallel between the director and artist and their artistic idioms in the film is obvious, it could be a sign for a conscious development of different artistic poetics, bouncing back from realism or creating its own form.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE CONDITIONAL WORLD OF THE FILM 'A FACE UNDER A MASK' (1970) BY DIRECTOR RANGEL VALCHANOV

Antonia Milcheva

In the beginning of the paper, I define my understanding of authenticity in cinema, whose realisation I accept as a fundamental task of the director's work. I support the thesis that authenticity does not always depend on the stylistic decision of the film and does not always correspond to the true and realistic representation of reality. In my view, authenticity is connected predominantly with the personal truth of the director. The choice to study the film 'A Face under a Mask' (1970) by Rangel Valchanov is an attempt to prove this statement. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Bulgarian director is given the opportunity to shoot a film after his own script in Prague. The past decade, prior to the Prague Spring in 1968, is a golden period in the Czech cinema, known as the Czech New Wave, or the Czech Miracle. Rangel Valchanov was deeply impressed by the achievements of the Czech cinematographers. He himself had already experimented with the

possibilities of the cinema-truths and neo realism in his first films and was on the lookout for new ways of self-expression. He was more and more interested in the accomplishment of a conditional cinema narrative, which, in the director's point of view, could successfully show the subjective universe of the artist in its entirety. The paper analyses the new approach of directing in the film 'A Face under a Mask' and its outcomes with regards to the topic of authenticity. With this film, Rangel Valchanov enters organically the process of 'the artist's individualisation' in cinema, which defines the spirit of the European cinematographer in the 1960s.

FOREIGN EXHIBITIONS IN THE GALLERY AT 125 RAKOVSKA ST IN THE 1950S SELECTION AND DISCUSSIONS

Natasha Noeva

The research subject of the current paper is the foreign exhibitions held at the Gallery at 125 Rakovska Street in the 1950s. The sources of information used are documents, stored at the Archives State Agency, the Union of Bulgarian artists (UBA), and articles, published in the press. The expose contains facts about the topoi of the artistic life in the capital in the 1950s and the complete details about the scope of the foreign exhibitions. The programme documents from the UBA are studied in order to gain information about the prevalent at the time type of exhibition policy along with the ideological framework. Some of the accents are: an art exhibition from the National Republic of Romania, an art exhibition from Hungary, individual exhibitions of Renato Guttuso, Káthe Kolwitz, Vitold Zaharievich, Kukryniksy and others. Some of the critical reviews about the exhibitions are included, which contain a high dosage of formality in the language expression and the commentaries about the artistic values of the art works are based on the ideological reading and political expediency. The exhibitions trace the manifestations of realism as a trend in art, in an attempt to paint the picture of the artistic life and the activities of the Union of Bulgarian Artists in the 50s of the twentieth century. The question about the differences in the comprehension of realism as an artistic method is raised.

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