

Zdenka Badovinac

Neues Slowenisches Museum: An Essay on Institutional Critique and the Production of Institution

The photograph of the group *Laibach* standing outside the building of Moderna galerija (The Museum of Modern Art) in Ljubljana (fig. 1) was taken in 1984, less than a decade before I became the director of the same institution. Standing with confidence in military poses outside the central national institution dedicated to modern art, the young men looked as if they were standing in front of the entrance to their own house, as if they themselves *were* the institution.

All the artist groups constituting *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (NSK) have from the very beginning focused their interest on institutions, in particular on the state, the army, the ideological system, capital, and the museum.¹ In order to really understand the workings of the state system and be able to critique it, they themselves had to become – at least apparently – what the object of their critique was: a system. The target of the NSK system in the 1980s was the official Yugoslav socialist regime, weakened by Tito's death in 1980 and beginning to fall apart. This made room for civil society, which grew very strong (much stronger than it is today). NSK was one of the numerous cultural, subcultural, theoretical and media groups fighting for fundamental human rights, especially the freedom of speech, and formulating the main issues of the democratic processes and the ideological foundations for the institutional systems that followed the fall of socialism. In the art world of Slovenia, NSK had a long-term impact.

The basic premises of the NSK work can be more easily understandable if they are described with a term then more familiar in the West – institutional critique. While institutional critique concerned itself with capital-endorsed and race-, class-, or gender-exclusivist institutions and was bound to the profit-oriented art market in the West, these were not a part of the Eastern reality. Money was not an issue at the institution outside which *Laibach* had their picture taken in 1984 – only content mattered, whatever shape it took. The state

provided the funds for the program of exhibitions, and curators had life-long jobs. The prevailing mind set among curators was that nothing could be done, in particular not in terms of any more ambitious international connections. The curatorial interest focused on established Slovene modernist painters, who, for the most part, made quite a good living by selling their prints to the relatively prosperous socialist companies. The International Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, established by Moderna galerija in 1955, made the print a “national art medium” as it were. Prints also led to the development of a humble art market in Yugoslavia. In general, modernism ruled supreme in art institutions throughout Yugoslavia, while their doors remained mostly closed for the avant-garde art of the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s. The youth clubs, student centres and other sub-culture venues, on the other hand, were teeming with ideas and energy in the 1980s, providing an alternative to modernism. This alternative scene was especially strong in Ljubljana, drawing foreign visitors who came to see what the buzz was all about. The inert and introverted cultural system failed to recognize the potential, to see that the moment was ripe for international connections. The institutions were so ineffective there was nothing to critique or try to correct – institutions had to be reinvented. And that is exactly what NSK did in those crucial years.

I became the director of Moderna galerija after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, at a time when the old system had already fallen apart, while the new system had not yet fully formed. The only system that functioned really well was the NSK system – roughly at that time, in 1992, NSK even formed its own state, the NSK State in Time. The newly established state of Slovenia was without a full-fledged cultural policy or strategies for international promotion of Slovene art. The groups *Irwin*, *Laibach*, *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre*, and the *New Collectivism*, on the other hand, had developed in the 1980s a parallel art system to

MODERNA GALERIJA



Fig. 1 Laibach, 1984.

operate in, with its own economy, an international network, and brilliant strategies of self-promotion – in short, everything the official institutions lacked. What I as a young director wanted to do together with my colleagues in the early 1990s, was to rearticulate the role of the museum, to make a stand against the war in the Balkans, and to define our international context. *Moderna galerija* found a suitable partner for this in the NSK parallel system rather than in the official national cultural policy. In this, perhaps peculiar way, the institution and its critique ended up on the same side.

The last chapter of the book *Institutional Critique – An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, entitled “Exits Strategies”, includes also the “10 Items of the Covenant” by the group *Laibach* from 1983 (see Annex 1 and 2).² In his introductory essay, Alexander Alberro, one of the two editors of the book, speaks of the two quite distinct trajectories of institutional critique up to the 1990s. The first represents the framework of the institution. This is the path taken by artists who analyse the institution, take issue with it, but see no solution beyond the institution. What such artists really want is to “correct” the institution, demanding through their

work that the institution be less subject to the demands of the art market and more democratic. The other important trajectory of institutional critique targets the totality of capital and politics that control society. Such artists make use of the advanced media and the latest technologies, in particular the internet, and their work no longer relates exclusively to art institutions. Among the examples cited in the book there are various artist collectives who often tried to infiltrate the existing systems like Trojan horses. The editors of the book also included *Laibach* and their “10 Items of the Covenant” in this section. *Laibach's* Covenant and organizational scheme highlight the hierarchical structure inherent in all totalitarian systems. Another point of importance is also the name *Laibach*, which calls attention to the group's position in the geopolitical hierarchy. *Laibach* (and NSK) use a hegemonic language – German rather than English, in view of Slovenia's specific historical context – to point their finger at where the modern institution had formed, that is, the West. In this sense, NSK replaces the critique of the institution with the critique of the geopolitical hierarchy.



Fig. 2 Laibach, *XY – unsolved*, 1983, television interview.

Today, international exhibitions, art journals, and historical overviews all strive to represent artists from various parts of the world more equally. In the anthology *Institutional Critique*, two other cases from Eastern Europe are presented in addition to *Laibach*. Edited and published in the United States, the book understandably provides by far the greatest number of examples dealing with North American artists, followed by Western Europeans, then South Americans, and finally, Eastern Europeans. It classifies artists together according to their strategies, not the geopolitical context. But, it is precisely the geopolitical context that is one of the crucial points of departure for NSK, questioning all along not only who articulates knowledge, but also where from in terms of geopolitical hierarchy.

The names *Laibach* (Ljubljana in German) and *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (New Slovene Art in German) speak of the trauma of subjugated nations. First, there is the trauma of the Slovenes forced to use German as the official language under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the 1980s, when art theory in Slovenia was under a strong influence of the Lacanian school, with Slavoj Žižek as one of its prominent figures, NSK focused their attention on their own traumas, like in psychoanalysis. Two traumas that currently inform the historicizing of Eastern European art stand out: the trauma of the unrealized potential of the idea of communism, which had degenerated into a totalitarian regime, and the trauma of the absence of a developed art system and, as a consequence, the exclusion from the Western canon. NSK's approach to these two trau-

mas was through repetition, and the reason for that was – as Mladen Dolar wrote on the subject of repetition – that “[i]t concerns some piece of the past which troubles us and drives us to act it out (*Agieren*, says Freud), to re-enact it, to perform it.”³

In an interview for Television Ljubljana in 1983, *Laibach* recapitulated the repetition of the name *Laibach* through history (fig. 2).⁴ First mentioned in the 12th century as the name of the “town on the river”, *Laibach* was used as an alternative to the prevalently used Slovene name Ljubljana in the period of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, between 1869 and 1918. It was used again by the German occupiers during World War II, and finally, with the group *Laibach* in 1980. For the group, this name “...encompasses the horror of the merging of totalitarianism with the alienation of industrial production in its slave-labour form.” I would here add the trauma of a small, colonized nation on the margins of Europe, and the trauma of the “first TV generation”, that is to say, a generation that is in reality already shaped by Western culture.

The interview with the *Laibach* group was conceived as an ordinary television interview, or, as *Laibach* would put it: an interview as a total structure. The unsuspecting journalist interviewing them had no idea he was an unwitting participant in a performance. The group undermined the total structure by demanding that the interview be filmed in the ŠKUC Gallery, where the group members, all dressed in their uniforms, rigidly sat in front of their posters. They all silently stared straight ahead, while the one seated in middle read their answers. The interview invaded the media sphere and caused a huge scandal, precisely because it was understood as a TV interview.

A characteristic feature of NSK was repeating the existing totalitarian, media, and industrial aesthetics. Here we must mention Slavoj Žižek's brilliant definition of *Laibach* in terms of over-identification with the ruling ideology. It was this over-identification rather than any kind of irony that made NSK the strongest critic of the totalitarian aspects of Yugoslav politics. The official authorities became figures of ridicule in what is now the legendary New Collectivism poster scandal. In 1987, the NSK design group, called New Collectivism, won the public tender for a poster celebrating President Tito's birthday (fig. 3). Their poster was based on

a painting by a German artist of the Third Reich, Richard Klein, with the Nazi symbols replaced by Yugoslav symbols. The totalitarian aesthetics made the poster proposal an instant favourite with the federal jury. Before long, however, it was discovered what the poster was based on and a nationwide scandal erupted.



Fig. 3 New Collectivism, *Youth Day*, 1987.

The strategy of over-identification did not apply only to totalitarian visual symbols, but also to repeating the form of the system itself. The NSK groups adopted the forms of work subjected to ideology, often representing them in organigrams, charts showing their organization and operation. On top of the chart there was always an idea, a concept. In the first chart of *Laibach Kunst*, this idea was the Immanent Consistent Spirit, which was repeated in the NSK organizational chart in 1984, when *Laibach*, Irwin, and the *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre* together founded the artist collective NSK. The principle of organization of NSK thus says

that everything comes second to ideology, that everything is subordinated to ideology; individualism is ruled out, with collective authorship taking its place; all the groups follow the same aesthetic concepts; in their communication with the public, they do not explain their work but reiterate the ideological paradigm inherent in their aesthetic concept; and their principle of work does not allow for personal freedom. These charts were not ironic takes on the socialist system, but something the NSK members in reality adhered to. This made them an alternative to the socialist system, since they – unlike politicians who only paid lip service to it – promoted true, authentic collectivism and really followed a common goal. In the 1980s, NSK was a total work of art, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Not only their public appearances, their entire lives, their manner of dressing, socializing, communicating, everything was completely committed to the idea. In the 1980s, the NSK members were charismatic, their acts spoke of self-sacrifice, even fanaticism, total commitment. In the *Interview*, *Laibach* said: “Art is an exalted mission, committing one to fanaticism.”⁷⁵ Regardless of the reasons for it, the suicide of one of the first frontmen of *Laibach*, Matjaž Hostnik, in 1982, contributed greatly to the cult of *Laibach* and NSK, which had many followers. NSK did not merely criticize institutions, they really wanted to change them after having first changed themselves.

While *Laibach* could be said to have focused primarily on the trauma of totalitarianism, the other trauma informing the NSK work, that of the absent art system, was at the centre of attention in the work of the artist group Irwin. One of the main subjects in Irwin’s work is historicizing Yugoslav and Eastern European art. It is most ambitiously dealt with in their project *East Art Map* (fig. 4), and possibly most clearly defined in their wall installation the *Retro-Avant-Garde* (fig. 5), whose first variant was made in 1996.⁶ Like a family tree, the *Retro-Avant-Garde* gives the names of artists who share similar traditions, mostly an interest in the Russian avant-garde and eclecticism, typical of small nations. The Zagreb artist Mladen Stilinović combined quotations from Suprematism, Constructivism, and socialist realism, Irwin blended socialist-realist motifs and agitprop slogans with the *Laibach* cross, which itself recalled Malevich’s *Black Cross*, the



Fig. 4 Irwin, *East Art Map*, 2000-2005, installation view at the exhibition *The Present and Presence*, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, 2011.

Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre reconstructed Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* in their monumental performance work *The Baptism under Triglav*, while an artist from Belgrade adopted the name Malevich and presented *The Last Futurist Exhibition*. The *Retro-Avant-Garde* project made visible an artistic tradition that had been excluded from the canonical history as a shared tradition. The members of Irwin found in the language of contemporary art a legitimate tool for constructing a new narrative. They themselves pointed to the fact that their *Retro-Avant-Garde* installation assumed a double role: it positioned itself in history both as an independent artwork and as a pragmatic tool for positioning.

I have coined a term for this principle of work focused on contextualizing one's own work in one's own local tradition: self-historicizing. I have defined self-historicizing as an informal system of historicization practiced by artists who, due to the absence of any suitable collective history, are themselves compelled to search for their own historical/interpretive context. Because the local institutions in the non-Western world that should have systematized neo-avant-garde art either did not exist or took a dismissive attitude towards such art, the artists themselves, in various places, were compelled to archive documents related to

their own art, the art of other artists, and the broader art movements and conditions of production.

Self-historicizing has been present in Irwin's work since the very beginning when the group, as a part of NSK, assumed the role of the chronicler, while *Laibach* worked in the field of ideology and the *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre* in the field of religion. Since the time they first started their artistic production, in the first half of the 1980s, Irwin have been repeating the same motifs in their paintings, icons, and several series entitled *Was ist Kunst?* and *Capital*. Through these works Irwin answer the questions of what art is, how it is generated by and through itself, and what its value is.

For three decades now, the Irwin icons have had recurrent motifs, similarly to the Orthodox icons, which have had the same motifs for centuries. Faith is strengthened by repetition, just as an artistic tradition is formed through countless references to its own icons. Irwin repeats the main icons of Slovene art, such as the motif of the sower in one of the key Slovene impressionist paintings, or the coffee drinker in a familiar 19th-century Slovene realistic painting.⁷ The main icon of Eastern avant-garde art that Irwin refer to is undoubtedly Malevich's *Black Square*. Also Malevich's approach to displaying paintings, which was based on the Russian Orthodox tradition, is one of the key examples followed by Irwin. The tradition of Slovene art, Eastern avant-garde art, and the ideology of socialism – this eclectic mix of motifs and forms represents symbolic capital that needs to be articulated and brought to the table in an international exchange. Since the outset, NSK has had a serious ambition of entering international space. In this, it differed greatly from most other Slovene artists, who lacked the necessary self-confidence and, even more crucially, the systematic support provided by some state strategy of international promotion. Irwin's *Was ist Kunst?* and *Capital* are not merely series of paintings; they are a true strategy for constructing symbolic capital which the group wants to invest in international participation. Irwin – the chroniclers – historicized the work of their fellow artists from the other NSK groups, that is, *Laibach Kunst* and *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre*, as it evolved, and incorporated their motifs into their own paintings. In this way, they performed the role of



Fig. 5 *Retroavantgarde*, 2000; installation view at the exhibition *Irwin Live*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2000.

art historians. In reality, Irwin was never interested in national art *per se*, but in its broader international contextualization. *Neue Slowenische Kunst* is not national art; it is symbolic capital pertaining to a space entering into international exchange. In addition to the Slovene context, also the Yugoslav context was crucial for Irwin, and, over the last 20 years, most of all, the Eastern European context. A turning point in this sense is the NSK Embassy in a private apartment in Moscow in 1992 (fig. 6). This included discussions about a common Eastern European identity, which was never understood in the essentialist sense. The “Moscow Declaration” states that the Eastern European experience has a universal value, because the experience “of oppressive regimes (totalitarian, authoritarian), found in all more or less developed states throughout the universe, is common to more than half of the population. This is universal experience.”⁸

Conclusion

My aim was to write about NSK from the viewpoint of my own work in the principal Slovene modern art institution, and to do so by using the term *institutional critique*. At the same time, I also wanted to point out how universal terms such as institutional critique are problematic from the point of view of the Slovene space. Contextualizing terminology seems particularly important today, when other anthologies of institutional critique are bound to follow the one I mentioned earlier. Probably unavoidably they will include NSK under other universal terms, which makes it all the more necessary to problematize such terms (and by problematize I do not mean eliminate). The same goes for auxiliary labels that only regionally prefix universal terms. In this respect, the term institutional critique seems more appropriate than the label Eastern European institutional critique. As Rastko Močnik would put it, the latter would designate the particularity of something that has already been designated as uni-



Fig. 6 Irwin, *NSK Embassy Moscow*, 1992.

versal. In this sense, the part modified as Eastern automatically sounds subordinate, as

“specific, over-determined, locally defined and local as opposed to what is thus promoted to the status of the general, the canonical, the over-determining – although it is, in fact, only ‘Western’.”⁹

I have not said much about the third founding group of NSK, namely the *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre*, so I would like to wrap up my essay with this group, or rather, its legacy. In 1986 the *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre* staged a monumental performance *Baptism under Triglav* (fig. 7). With all the NSK groups participating in it, the performance was based on the NSK retro-method, that is, on non-hierarchical quoting of images pertaining to various sources. The poem “Baptism under Triglav” by the Slovene Romantic poet France Prešeren, presents the converting of Slovenes to Christian faith as the mythical beginning of the nation’s history. In the performance, however, this represents the initiation point of the national history of art, which becomes equal to other, also greater histories after this event. That same year, with far less pomp, very quietly in fact, another initiation event in the history of our nation happened, which became an obsession for the ideological father of the NSK theatre group, Dragan Živadinov: an obsession with space theatre, with overcoming gravity and fusing art and science. In 1986, Herman Potočnik Noordung’s book *The Problem of Space Travel* was published in Slovene translation. Originally, it had appeared in German in 1929. This is a pioneer work on the problems of gravity and how to overcome it, and includes the first ever illustrated design of rotating space stations.

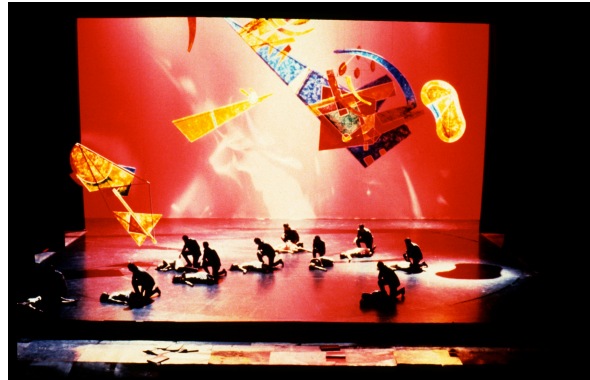


Fig. 7 Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre, *Baptism under Triglav*, 1986.

Working first in the framework of *Cosmokinetic Theatre Red Pilot* (started in 1987 and renamed into the *Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung* in 1990) Živadinov has been staging regular projects related to this space science pioneer. We could even say that Živadinov has managed to construct a new national icon, that of Herman Potočnik Noordung, who would have probably remained on the margins of the Slovene history had it not been for the efforts of this artist. Živadinov took an objectively fairly irrelevant piece of information from Noordung’s biography – his spending a few of his childhood years in his mother’s birthplace, the small town of Vitanje – and put this marginal fact on the map of our cultural space. Working together with Miha Turšič and Dunja Zupančič, Živadinov managed to convince the local figures of power in Vitanje in 2006 to open a Noordung Memorial Room, which is in reality an art installation. Živadinov’s efforts to raise the public awareness of this aspect of national history did not end there. The three artists next managed to persuade the local and national authorities to apply for European funds for building a Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies in Vitanje, resembling in architecture Noordung’s sketch of the rotating space station. The program of the new institution, drawn up by the three artists, follows the concept of “culturalizing space”, bringing culture into space. This concept of culturalizing space criticizes the currently prevalent trends in space science, succumbing to militarization and commercialization. The new institution thus brings together science and the more than a hundred years old tradition of Eastern European artistic and scientific utopias.

The new institution dedicated to culturalizing space does not work under the auspices of NSK, but it is undoubtedly a legacy of NSK. Was ist Kunst? What is art? It is something that generates itself. After the Immanent Consistent Spirit had been placed on top of the pyramid of the *Laibach* organism in 1982, there was no way of controlling it any longer. When *Laibach* went to stand outside the door of *Moderna galerija*, the *Neues Slowenisches Museum* was, in fact, born. Or rather, the mental map of the Museum, which became reality in Vitanje. So, another strategy can be added to those of over-identification and self-historicizing: the production of reality, or, if you will, the production of institution. And the latter is definitely something entirely different from institutional critique. It is an alternative to the hegemonic institutional models, and thus, a critique of the hegemony of that part of the world that has formed them.

Annex 1: Laibach, 10 Items of the Covenant, 1982DESET POSTAVK KONVENTA (zgodovinski dokument)

1. ~~UMETNOST~~ IN TOTALITARIZEM SE NE IZKLJUČUJETA. TOTALITARNI REŽIMI UKINJAJO ILUZIJO REVOLUCIONARNE INDIVIDUALNE UMETNIŠKE SVOBODE. LAIBACH KUNST JE PRINCIP ZAVESTNEGA ODREKANJA OSEBNEMU OKUSU, RAZSOJANJU, PREPRIČANJU (...); SVOBODNO RAZOSEBLJANJE, DOBROVOLJNO PREVZEMANJE VLOGE IDEOLOGIJE, DEMASKIRANJE IN REKAPITULACIJA REŽIMSKEGA ".....IZMA"...

4. LAIBACH dela v timu (kolektivni duh), po vzoru industrijske produkcije in totalitarizma, kar pomeni: ne govori posameznik, govori organizacija. Naše delo je industrijsko, jezik pa političen.
2. LAIBACH analizira odnos med ideologijo in kulturo v poznem obdobju, prezentiran skozi umetnost. Napetosti med njima in obstoječe disharmonije (socialni nemiri, individualne frustracije, ideološka nasprotja) LAIBACH sublimira in s tem eliminira vsakršno direktno ideološko in sistemsko diskurzivnost. Samo ime in znak sta vidna materializacija ideje na nivoju miselnega simbola. Ime LAIBACH je sugeriranje na konkretno danost možnosti za nastanek politizirane (sistemske) ideološke umetnosti zaradi vpliva politike in ideologije.
3. Vsaka umetnost je podvržena politični manipulaciji (posredno - zavest, neposredno), razen tiste, ki govori z jezikom te iste manipulacije. Govoriti s političnim izrazom pomeni odkriti in priznati vsenavzočnost politike. Vloga najbolj humane oblike politike je premoščanje razkoraka med realnostjo in duhom z mobilizacijo množic. Ideologija zavzema mesto avtentične oblike družbene zavesti. V moderni družbi ~~avtor~~ subjekt s priznanjem teh dejstev stopi na mesto politiziranega subjekta. LAIBACH odkriva in izraža spoj politike in ideologije z industrijsko produkcijo in nepremostljive razkorake med tem spojem in duhom.
4. Trijumf anonimnosti in brezobličnosti je skozi tehnološki proces izostren do absoluta. Ukine se vsaka individualna razlika avtorja, briše se vsaka sled individualnosti. Tehnološki proces je metoda programiranja smotrnega funkcioniranja. Ponazarja razvoj, t.j. spreminjanje. Izločiti delec tega procesa, ga statično

DESET POSTAVK KONVENTA (II. list)

formirati, pomeni razkriti človekovo negacijo vsakršne evolucije, ki je tuja in neadekvatna njegovi biološki evoluciji. LAIBACH v svojem delu prevzema organizacijski sistem dela industrijske produkcije in identifikacijo z ideologijo. Temu primerno vsak član osebno zavrača svojo individualnost in s tem izraža odnos oblike produkcijskega sistema in ideologije do individua. Oblika družbene produkcije se kaže tako v načinu proizvodnje same glasbe, kakor tudi v odnosih znotraj struktur v skupini; skupina operativno (projektivno) deluje po principu racionalne transformacije in njena (hierarhična) struktura je koherentna.

5. Notranja zgradba deluje na direktivnem principu in simbolizira odnos ideologije do posameznika. Ideja se koncentrira v eni (isti) osebi, ki ji je onemogočeno vsakršno odstopanje. Po istem ključu deluje četverni princip (EBER - SALIGER - KELLER - DACHAUER), ki - predestiniran - skriva v sebi poljubno ~~število~~ število ~~sub-objektov~~ sub-objektov (odvisno od potreb). Fleksibilnost in anonimnost članstva preprečuje eventualna individualna odstopanja in omogoča permanentno revitalizacijo notranjih življenjskih sokov. Subjekt, ki se lahko identificira z ekstremno pozicijo sodobne industrijske produkcije, avtomatično postane LAIBACH član (in je obenem obsojen za svojo objektivizacijo).
6. Izhodišče LAIBACH dejavnosti je v enotnem konceptu, ki se izrazi v vsakem mediju v skladu z zakonitostmi le-tega (likovno, glasbeno, filmsko...).
- Material LAIBACH manipulacije: taylorizem, bruitizem, nazi kunst, disco, e.t.c....
- Princip dela je docela skonstruiran; pri tem je kompozicijski postopek diktiran "ready made": industrijska produkcija je smiselno razvojna, toda če iz tega procesa izločimo element trenutka in ga povdarimo, mu s tem naznačimo mistično dimenzijo alienacije, ki razkriva magično komponento industrijskega postopka. Represija nad industrijskim ritualom se spremeni v kompozicijski diktat in politizacija zvoka lahko postane absolutna zvočnost.

DESET POSTAVK KONVENTA (III. list)

7. LAIBACH izključuje vsako evolucijo prvotne ideje; prvotni koncept ni evolutiven temveč je entelehičen, predstava pa je zgolj zveza med to statično in spreminjajočo se determinantno enoto. Enako pozicijo zastopamo do neposrednega vpliva razvoja glasbe na LAIBACH koncept; ta vpliv je seveda materialno nujen, je pa sekundarnega pomena in se pojavlja zgolj kot historični glasbeni fundament trenutka, ki je v svoji izbiri neomejen. LAIBACH izraža svojo brezčasnost z artikli sedanjosti in zato je nujno, da se v sečišču političnosti in industrijske produkcije (kulture umetnosti, ideologije, zavesti) sreča z elementi tako ene kot druge, vendar hoče biti oboje. To široko polje omogoča LAIBACHU nihanja, ki so iluzija gibanja (razvoja).
8. LAIBACH prakticira provokacijo na revoltiranost odtujene zavesti (ki si mora nujno iskati nasprotnike) in združuje bojovnike in nasprotnike v izraz krika statičnega totalitarizma. Deluje kot kreativna iluzija stroge institucionalnosti, kot soc-teater popularne kulture in komunicira zgolj z ~~nekomunikacijo~~ nekomunikacijo.
9. ~~10.~~ Poleg LAIBACHA, ki se ukvarja z načinom industrijske produkcije v totalitarizmu, ~~obstajata v konceptu~~ obstajata v konceptu LAIBACH KUNST estetike še dve skupini:
- GERMANIA preučuje čustveno plat bitja, tisto plat, ki se izrisuje v razmerjih do občih načinov čustvenega, erotičnega in družinskega življenja. Opeva temelje državnega funkcioniranja emocij, na stari klasicistični formi novih družbenih ideologij.
- DREIHUNDERT TAUSEND VERSCHIEDENE KRAWALLE pa je retrospektivna futuristična negativna utopija. (Obdobje miru je končano.)
10. LAIBACH je spoznanje univerzalnosti trenutka. Je odkrivanje odsotnosti ravnovesja med spolom in delom, med podanostjo in aktivnostjo. Uporablja vse izraze zgodovine v označevanju tega neravnovesja. To delo je brezmejno; bog ima en obraz, hudič neskončno.

LAIBACH, 1982

Annex 2: Translation of Laibach, 10 Items of the Covenant^o

1.

LAIBACH works as a team (the collective spirit), according to the model of industrial production and totalitarianism, which means that the individual does not speak; the organization does. Our work is industrial, our language political.

2.

LAIBACH analyzes the relation between ideology and culture in a late phase, presented through art. LAIBACH sublimates the tension between them and the existing disharmonies (social unrest, individual frustrations, and ideological oppositions) and thus eliminates direct ideological and systemic discursiveness of all kinds. The name itself and the emblem are visible materializations of the idea on the level of a cognitive symbol. The name LAIBACH is a suggestion of the actual possibility of establishing a politicized ideological (system) art because of the influence of politics and ideology.

3.

All art is subject to political manipulation (indirectly - consciousness; directly), except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation. To speak in political terms means to reveal and acknowledge the omnipresence of politics. The role of the most humane form of politics is the bridging of the gap between reality and the mobilizing spirit. Ideology takes the place of authentic forms of social consciousness. The subject in modern society assumes the role of the politicized subject by acknowledging these facts. LAIBACH reveals and expresses the linkage of politics and ideology with industrial production and the unbridgeable gaps between this link and the spirit.

4.

The triumph of anonymity and facelessness has been intensified to the absolute through a technological process. All individual differences of the authors are annulled, every trace of individuality erased. The technological process is a method of programming function. It represents development; i.e., purposeful change. To isolate a particle of this process and form it statical-

ly, means to reveal man's negation of any kind of evolution which is foreign to and inadequate for his biological evolution. LAIBACH adopts the organizational system of industrial production and the identification with ideology as its work method. In accordance with this, each member personally rejects his individuality, thereby expressing the relationship between the particular form of production system and ideology and the individual. The form of social production appears in the manner of production of LAIBACH music itself and the relations within the group. The group functions operationally according to the principle of rational transformation, and its (hierarchical) structure is coherent.

5.

The internal structure functions on the directive principle and symbolizes the relation of ideology towards the individual. The idea is concentrated in one (and the same) person, who is prevented from any kind of deviation. The quadruple principle acts by the same key (EBER-SALIGER-KELLER-DACHAUER), which - predestined - conceals in itself an arbitrary number of sub-objects (depending on the needs). The flexibility and anonymity of the members prevents possible individual deviations and allows a permanent revitalization of the internal juices of life. A subject who can identify himself with the extreme position of contemporary industrial production automatically becomes a LAIBACH member (and is simultaneously condemned for his objectivism).

6.

The basis of LAIBACH's activity lies in its concept of unity, which expresses itself in each media according to appropriate laws (art, music, film...). The material of LAIBACH manipulation: Taylorism, bruitism, Nazi Kunst, disco... The principle of work is totally constructed and the compositional process is a dictated "ready-made." Industrial production is rationally developmental, but if we extract from this process the element of the moment and emphasize it, we also assign to it the mystical dimension of alienation, which reveals the magical component of the industrial process. Repression over the industrial ritual is transformed into a compositional dictate and the politicization of sound can become absolute sonority.

7.

LAIBACH excludes any evolution of the original idea; the original concept is not evolutionary but entelechical, and the presentation is only a link between this static and the changing determinant unit. We take the same stand towards the direct influence of the development of music on the LAIBACH concept; of course, this influence is a material necessity but it is of secondary importance and appears only as a historical musical foundation of the moment which, in its choice is unlimited. LAIBACH expresses its timelessness with the artefacts of the present and it is thus necessary that at the intersection of politics and industrial production (the culture of art, ideology, and consciousness) it encounters the elements of both, although it wants to be both. This wide range allows LAIBACH to oscillate, creating the illusion of movement (development).

8.

LAIBACH practices provocation on the revolted state of the alienated consciousness (which must necessarily find itself an enemy) and unites warriors and opponents into an expression of a static totalitarian scream. It acts as a creative illusion of strict institutionalism, as a social theatre of popular culture, and communicates only through non-communication.

9.

Besides LAIBACH, which concerns itself with the manner of industrial production in totalitarianism, there also exist two other groups in the concept of LAIBACH KUNST aesthetics: GERMANIA studies the emotional side of existence, which is outlined in relations to the general ways of emotional, erotic and family life, lauding the foundations of the state functioning of emotions on the old classicist form of new social ideologies. DREIHUNDERT TAUSEND VERSCHIEDENE KRAWALLE is a retrospective futuristic negative utopia (the era of peace has ended).

10.

LAIBACH is the knowledge of the universality of the moment. It is the revelation of the absence of balance between sex and work, between servitude and activity. It uses all expressions of history to mark this imbalance. This work is without limit; God has one face, the devil infinitely many. LAIBACH is the return of action on behalf of the idea. Trbovlje, 1982

Endnotes

1. In 1984, three art groups – the multimedia group Laibach (formed in 1980), the visual art group Irwin (1983), and the theatre group the Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre (which lasted from 1983 to 1987) – established the movement *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (NSK) in Ljubljana. At the same time, they created a fourth group, *New Collectivism*. Other groups later joined NSK, of which the most active one is the *Department of Pure and Applied Philosophy*.
2. *Institutional Critique / An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London 2009, p. 424-429.
3. Mladen Dolar, *Automatism of Repetition: Aristotle, Kierkegaard, Lacan*, unpublished manuscript.
4. *Laibach: Prva TV generacija* (Laibach: The First TV Generation); a transcript of the interview from the TV Tednik program, TV Ljubljana, 23 June 1983; Marcel Štefančič Jr., *Teror zgodovine / Kako je Laibach na začetku osemdesetih premaknil nacijo, partijo in filozofijo*, Ljubljana 2012.
5. Ibidem.
6. *East Art Map*, which was launched in 2004, is one of Irwin's most ambitious projects in this regard. Its aim is to present the art of the entire region of Eastern Europe, to take artists out of their national frameworks and present them in a unified scheme.
7. Ivan Grohar, *Sejalec* (The Sower), 1907; Ivana Kobilca, *Kofetari-ca* (Coffee Drinker), 1888.
8. Irwin, *NSK Embassy Moscow / How the East Sees the East*, Part of the Project Apt-Art International in collaboration with Ridzhina Gallery, published by Loža Gallery, Koper 1993, p. 46.
9. Rastko Močnik, *East!*, in: *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Irwin, London 2006, p. 343.
10. First published in *Nova revija*, No. 13/14, 1983 (a Slovene magazine for cultural and political issues).

List of illustrations

Fig. 1: Laibach, 1984; photo: Jane Štravs (© the artist and Jane Štravs)

Fig. 2: Laibach, *XY – unsolved*; 1983; television interview, RTV Ljubljana (© Coutresy Moderna galerija, Ljubljana)

Fig. 3: New Collectivism, *Youth Day*; 1987; poster (© the artist).

Fig. 4: Irwin, *East Art Map*; 2000-2005; exhibition: *The Present and Presence*, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, 2011; photo: Dejan Habicht (© Moderna galerija, Ljubljana).

Fig. 5: *Retroavantgarde*, 2000; exhibition: *Irwin Live*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2000; photo: Lado Mlekuž, Matija Pavlovec (© Moderna galerija, Ljubljana).

Fig. 6: Irwin, *NSK Embassy Moscow*; 1992; photo: Jože Suhadolnik (© the artist).

Fig. 7: Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre, *Baptism under Triglav*; 1986 (© the artist).

Annex : Laibach, *DESET POSTAVK KONVENTA*, slovene original (typescript); 1982 (© the artist).

Summary

In 1984, three art groups – the multimedia group *Laibach* (formed in 1980), the visual art group *Irwin* (1983), and the theatre group the *Sisters of Scipio Nasica Theatre* (which lasted from 1983 to 1987) – established the movement *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (NSK) in Ljubljana. At the same time, they created a fourth group, *New Collectivism*. Other groups later joined NSK, of which the most active one is the *Department of Pure and Applied Philosophy*. All the artist groups

making up the *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (NSK) have been greatly concerned with institutions from the outset, in particular the state, the army, the ideological system, capital, and the museum. In order to really understand the workings of the official system and be able to criticize it, they had to themselves become what the object of their critique was – a system. To make the NSK phenomenon more easily understandable to a Western audience, the familiar term 'institutional critique' is used in this essay. This universal designation, however, is also problematic: unlike Western artists, the NSK were not interested in criticising institutions, but rather wanted to replace them. To this end, they employed the strategies of over-identification, self-historicizing, and the production of reality.

Author

Zdenka Badovinac is a curator and writer, who has served since 1993 as Director of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, comprised since 2011 of two locations: the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. In her work, Badovinac highlights the difficult processes of redefining history alongside different avant-garde traditions within contemporary art. Badovinac's first exhibition to address these issues was *Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present* (1998). She also initiated the first Eastern European art collection, *Arteast 2000+*. Since 2011, this collection has been permanently exhibited in the new Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. Badovinac was Slovenian Commissioner at the Venice Biennale from 1993 to 1997 and in 2005, Austrian Commissioner at the São Paulo Biennial in 2002, and the President of CIMAM 2010–13.

Title

Zdenka Badovinac, *Neues Slowenisches Museum: An Essay on Institutional Critique and the Production of Institution*, in: *Mythmaking Eastern Europe: Art in Response*, ed. by Mateusz Kapustka, *kunsttexte.de/ostblick*, Nr. 4, 2014 (14 pages), www.kunsttexte.de/ostblick.