

Expansion of museums in Central Europe?

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Abstract

The paper presents reflections on the specificity of collections and museums of contemporary art in Central Europe and considers a possibility of creating a regional alternative for the West. The analysis is conducted in the context of the expansionist policy of contemporary museums – notably the Louvre, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Hermitage – whose numerous new development projects gave rise to a number of dilemmas in the museological world. The author discusses global "museum brands" that invest in Central Europe and addresses the possible profits of the expansion of such "concerns" for culture in the region, as well as emphasises the potential of the region itself, which may be used for its development without the avail of the internationally renowned collectors' names.

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[1] Commercialisation of museums, cultural marketing, museum franchising and branding, trade of national museum treasures, and the misunderstood universalism in the world of culture, coming with what is referred to as the "sales of museums," have been discussed by Jean Clair in his famous essay *Malaise dans les musées*, which since the date of its publication in 2007 (Polish edition in 2009) has become remarkably popular in the museological circles. The French art historian, the former director of the Picasso Museum in Paris, addressed the problem of the transformation of museums into global brands that work as foundations for large concerns governed by the rules of corporations. "In the world of global economy, the museum no longer serves the interests of the viewers and the visible memory of the nation; it serves the «brand», which will benefit the economic development of the «company called France»" – wrote Clair in reference to the Louvre's new investment in the United Arab Emirates.¹ As his central examples of the problem of commercialisations of museums Clair discusses the branch of the Louvre, which is being erected on an artificial island in Abu Dhabi, and the Solomon

¹ J. Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, trans. J. M. Kłoczowski, słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2009 (1st edition in French: 2007), p. 47.

Guggenheim Foundation, whose expansionist policy is to reach its peak in the same location.

[2] The notion of museum concerns denotes museums that have their branches in various, especially foreign cities, and whose management policy is modelled on the one found in large corporations. For them, the policy of expansion has become a part of their philosophy. Central Europe, due to its general economic weakness, as well as the long period of communism during which almost no new museum buildings were being constructed, has not generated after 1989 art corporations that could match the global ones developed in the West. Nor has it built large, world-class collections that would occupy a significant position on the international tourist map. Nevertheless, Central Europe is not, in fact, beyond this mainstream discourse, for even though it does not have its local corporations, it still remains a space to be made use of by the Western ones. It is also a place where, at least theoretically, museums might start opening their branches in other, also foreign cities.

[3] Central Europe is a wide term with extensive literature in the field of politics, economy, culture, philosophy. In this article I narrowed Central Europe to the Visegrad Group member states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – which share common historical experience and have been cooperating under this name since 1991. I also make references to other neighbouring countries – Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia.

[4] The aim of this article is to critically reflect on the possibility of creating "museum concerns" in Central Europe.² My starting point will be to sketch the context of Western museum concerns and to identify the Central European collections of contemporary art. The article consists of three parts. The first one introduces the global context for the museum concerns, as well as discusses the problems they generate. I address the expansion of the Guggenheim Foundation, the Louvre, Centre Pompidou, the Hermitage, and the Tate Gallery. In the second part, I discuss the Ludwig Foundation, which, as the only Western brand developed by a major collector, has emerged in Central Europe, notably, in Hungary. I mention also the attempt to introduce the Guggenheim Foundation in Lithuania. In the third part, I present major museums and collections of contemporary art in Central Europe and I consider the possibilities of creating museum branches in the region.

Global museum concerns

[5] The idea for a museum as a global institution that operates in the model of a global corporation has been developed by the Guggenheim Foundation,³ which in the course of the twenty-year-long management by Thomas Krens has created, not without

² The issue of Central European museums has hardly ever been discussed before publication of my book *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej. Muzea i centra sztuki współczesnej (1989–2014)* [Museum Age in Central Europe. Museums and centres of contemporary art (1989–2014)], Krakow 2014.

controversies, a recognisable and globally desirable museum brand. The Foundation's spatial expansion, its incessant search for new funding, and its implementation of an increasingly populist exhibition programme that has led to the decrease of the institution's prestige, have been aptly summarised in a term coined as an expression of critique: McGuggenheim. This is how Mark Honigsbaum titled his article in a Saturday edition of *The Guardian* in 2001.⁴ Guggenheim is a phrase commonly used in international museological discourse to indicate the process of museum expansion. It would hardly be an overstatement to say that each local debate usually starts from discussing the Guggenheim concern, which is excessively glorified by those investors and city authorities who hope for immediate success in terms of the image and attendance.

[6] The marketing approach used by Krens when he managed the Foundation has met with a lot of criticism and became a topic of numerous articles in popular press and professional literature. This does not change the fact that apart from the investments in new exhibition venues the Foundation has also significantly expanded the Guggenheim collection: in 1989 Krens managed to secure a donation of a collection of Impressionist painting by the widow of Justin K. Thannhauser, in 1991 he purchased the Panza collection created by the Count Giuseppe di Biuno and his wife Giovanna Panza, which includes mainly Minimalist painting and sculpture of the 1960s and 1970s, he has greatly enlarged the Peggy Guggenheim collection, as well as he supervised the realisation of the commissions for new works made by the Guggenheim branches in Europe. The international turn of the Foundation began not so much with the absorption of the Peggy Guggenheim collection and villa in Venice in 1978, but with the decision to start the museum branch in Bilbao, made in 1991. Erected in a decrepit dock district of the capital of the Basque Country, which faced large unemployment and was seen as a capital of terrorism, the new museum⁵ provided exhibition space for the works from the Panza collection and has achieved an incredible attendance success: the number of visitors had initially been estimated at 400,000 a year, while two years after the museum opening the number was around 900,000. 1997 witnessed not only the opening of the astounding Guggenheim Bilbao, but also of a more modest exhibition space in Berlin, bearing the logo of Deutsche Guggenheim (closed in 2013). Next to the new branches abroad, new Foundation venues were also created in the United States. The first one was SoHo

³ The Foundation was established in 1937 by Solomon R. Guggenheim. Two years later, his collection of 700 paintings was publically displayed in the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, while since 1959 it is on display in a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

⁴ M. Honigsbaum, "McGuggenheim?", *The Guardian* 27.01.2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/jan/27/books.guardianreview2> (accessed: 08.06.2015).

⁵ The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao has been widely discussed in professional literature which focused most of all on the building itself, the Foundation policy, and the role of the museum in the process of the revitalisation of the city. See for example *Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim*, A. M. Guasch and J. Zulaika (eds.), *Basque Studies Program*, Reno 2005; *Bilbao, the transformation*, J. L. Arguiñano and G. Reguera (eds.), arketyo, Guggenheim Museum Publications, Bilbao 2006; C. van Bruggen, *Frank O. Gehry Guggenheim Museum Bilbao*, New York 2004.

Guggenheim, opened in 1992. Its opening coincided with the re-opening of the 'main' building in Fifth Avenue, which had been closed for two years for renovation, and with the construction of a new ten-storey block that would offer additional exhibition space. The SoHo location, taking into consideration the fashionable artistic neighbourhood and a large number of tourists, was supposed to attract 250,000 visitors a year. Yet, it turned out that the attendance was on average lower by a hundred thousand. Despite changes of the programme in 1996 and a shift towards multimedia and new technologies, the attendance did not rise, and the branch was finally closed in 2002.⁶

[7] In 2001 the Foundation signed a trilateral agreement with Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and with the Hermitage to collaborate on exhibition organisation and to 'share' collections. As a result, the Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas opened the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum (a small space of 560 square metres designed by Rem Koolhaas) and a much larger one (almost 6000 square metres), designed by Frank Gehry, meant to host only one exhibition – *Art of the Motorcycle*. Moreover, the museum, initially founded to collect and display modern and contemporary art, started organising historical exhibitions. Suffice it to look at the titles of exhibitions organised at the Las Vegas venue – *Art Through the Ages: Masterpieces of Painting from Titian to Picasso*, *The Quest for Immortality: Treasures of Ancient Egypt*, which presented ancient Egyptian art, *Russia! The Majesty of the Tsars: Treasures from the Kremlin Museum*, *Rubens and His Age: Masterpieces from the Hermitage Museum* – to realise that the Guggenheim has become, both in its techniques, as well as in terms of the periods it covers, a versatile, luxurious department store. The prestige of the Foundation dropped significantly after the opening of two populist exhibitions: the already-mentioned *Art of the Motorcycle* (1998), sponsored by the BMW, and *Giorgio Armani* (2000). Both of them made a great profit from ticket sales (being very popular with the public), and came with substantial donations from the owners of the presented brands to the Foundation. "Krens's choice of exhibitions in recent years seems to have been tied to the museum's search for cash" – concluded Deyan Sudjic.⁷

[8] Between late 1980s and the early 21st century the Foundation commissioned feasibility studies testing the possibilities of opening its venues in Salzburg, Vienna, Tokyo, Taichung, Singapore (another collaboration with the Hermitage was planned in the form of Guggenheim Hermitage Museum Singapore), Guadalajara and Rio de Janeiro. These plans resulted in the creation of architecture designs by the most desirable architects in the world, none of which, however, was actually erected. The success of the opening of the museum in Bilbao resulted in a wave of proposals for similar collaborations

⁶ J. Martinez, *Financing a Global Guggenheim Museum*, MA Thesis in the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, The School of Art, May 2006, pp. 21–23.

⁷ D. Sudjic, "Is this the end of the Guggenheim dream?", *The Observer* 23.02.2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2005/jan/23/art.museums> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

from numerous cities around the world. In response to this, the Guggenheim Foundation started working with two architecture studios: Frank O. Gehry & Associates and AMO group run by Rem Koolhaas, to approach further expansion in an organised way. Krens decided that:

Rather than react to this interest in a haphazard fashion, we felt that the best approach would be to pool our resources and expertise [...], establish rigorous and challenging criteria, and work on those few situations that promise an unusual or extraordinary outcome, one that advances our collective vision of artistic responsibility.⁸

[9] From among Krens's projects the largest one was to be realised in the Guggenheim museum located at the bank of East River in New York. Gehry designed a structure in the shape of a curving ribbon, very much like the Guggenheim Bilbao, also covered with a titanium surface. The building was to provide 19,000 square metres of exhibition space and a forty-storey tower with office space, being therefore twice as large as the Spanish predecessor. In 2001 the Foundation was granted permission to use a part of the quay meant for development, yet by the end of that year Guggenheim officially announced that due to financial problems the project would have to be dropped.

[10] Krens's last major project that will be fully implemented is the Guggenheim Museum in Abu Dhabi. It is being realised in the new international cultural district, which hosts great museum brands, as well as major architecture stars. "It will be truly global, representing art from the Middle East, Russia, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, as well as Europe and America. It will change the model of the art museum" – announced Krens.⁹ Gehry's project represents the architect's trademark style, with fantastically curved, interweaving forms. The works on the Foundation's largest museum up to date, reaching 30,000 square metres, commenced in 2007, while the opening is planned for 2017.

[11] According to Sudjic, "Krens has turned a modestly scaled museum [...] into a global art circus, positioned conceptually somewhere between a casino and a department store."¹⁰ He wrote that through the network of museums he was planning to share the costs of exhibitions, yet it turned out that the savings were much lower than initially estimated. Summarising the twenty years of work of the famous director in *The New York Times*, Carol Vogel pointed to the positive sides of this form of management. She noted that

Although some critics argue that Mr. Krens has in effect turned the Guggenheim into a McDonald's-like franchise at the expense of expanding its collections and endowment, he has actually created a model for expansion that is being copied by

⁸ Press release: *Guggenheim Alliance with Gehry and Koolhaas*, no. 912, 27.09.2000, <http://www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/foundation-press/1943-guggenheim-alliance-with-gehry-and-koolhaas> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

⁹ C. Vogel, "Guggenheim's Provocative Director Steps Down", *The New York Times* 28.02.2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/arts/design/28muse.html> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

¹⁰ Sudjic, Is this the end of the Guggenheim dream?

institutions around the world, including the Tate in Britain and the Louvre in France.¹¹

[12] Looking at the projects of Guggenheim museums that were or were supposed to be realised, one cannot but notice that spectacular appearance is their primary characteristic. Each of them became, will become, or had a chance to become an icon of architecture worthy of visiting solely for the quality of architecture itself, regardless of the collection it hosts. For example, Nouvel's unrealised project for Rio de Janeiro involved locating a part of the museum under sea level (eight metres below sea level), where the ceiling of the entrance hall would be submerged in water.

[13] Guggenheim has become a signpost for the new global brands that have come to be approached in the context of the expansion of museum structures. The Tate Gallery has initiated this process with its opening of its branch in Liverpool in 1988. A museum of modern art in the central part of Great Britain had already been planned in 1980, with the aim to present the gallery's collection to a wider public. Four years after the 'Tate of the North' had been opened, the Tate authorities started to look for a site for a construction of its second venue in London that would solve the problem of limited exhibition space for the constantly growing collection. The decision was made that the new building would take over the collection of modern and contemporary art, while the already existing Millbank location would return to its initial function as the gallery of British art. Almost at the same time, there emerged an idea for one more Tate outpost – Tate St. Ives, located in a popular sea resort in Cornwall. Since 1980 the Tate Gallery had been managing the Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden, so when the city council of St. Ives addressed the Tate with a proposal to open its official branch there, the gallery authorities were very interested. The new gallery was constructed on the site of a former gas plant, with a picturesque view over the harbour. The building remains the property of the city, while the Tate covers the costs of running the gallery. Tate St. Ives was opened in 1993, while the Tate Modern in 2000. At that point, the original venue of Tate Gallery changed its name to Tate Britain.

[14] Almost at the same time the Louvre started constructing its branch in Lens in France (opened in 2012), as well as in Abu Dhabi (opening planned for 2015). The museum in Lens is a branch of the Paris Louvre located in the north of France. The degraded, post-industrial town, largely destroyed during the war, was selected from among six other candidates. One of its advantages was its convenient location on the route of the TGV high-speed rail to Paris, between Lille and Arras, close to the motorway from Calais to Reims and from Paris to Lille, as well as its inherent potential of regeneration through culture. The Louvre Lens, designed by the globally renowned SANAA studio, is to work as a catalyst for change (understandably, the press made

¹¹ C. Vogel, "Guggenheim's Provocative Director Steps Down", *The New York Times* 28.02.2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/arts/design/28muse.html> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

comparisons to Bilbao). While the second Louvre venue in France "is part of a strategy to spread art beyond the traditional bastions of culture in Paris to new audiences in the provinces,"¹² Abu Dhabi will host a Louvre franchise – the city finances the construction of the museum according to the project by Jean Nouvel and will pay a fee for the possibility of using the Louvre's name and its collections for thirty years. According to some, the investment in the Emirates will deprive Paris of some of its masterpieces. Jean Clair categorised the construction of the new Louvre on the Saadiyat Island (Happiness Island) as one of these projects that "degrade the museum institution and turn it into a mere warehouse,"¹³ while the Abu Dhabi complex seemed to him as "an exotic entertainment park"¹⁴ and a "gigantic Beach Resort."¹⁵ It is hard to disagree with his comparisons. Equally reasonable is his question whether "it should be allowed to privatise a collection that belong to the Nation?"¹⁶ Yet, one could disagree with Clair's line of argument, for he refers to the notion of universality of French culture – the basic tenet for the decision to create Louvre in the Emirates – at the same time admitting that a large part of the treasures of French museums comes from plundering.¹⁷ Clair quotes the words of Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), who spoke against the policy of plundering and was of the opinion that works of art belong to a particular place and a particular time.¹⁸ The treasures stolen during the French Revolution were divided between fifteen museums in the French provinces. According to the currently made plan, the museum in Abu Dhabi would be supposed to broaden the access to the universal collection, which to a large extent fills the storage rooms. Clair suggests reading Quincy anew and considering his reflections on the detrimental effect that moving monuments of art will have on Europe.¹⁹ The extreme case of the Louvre makes one aware how multidimensional the problem of museum concerns is, for their work can concomitantly serve one group of the public (reaching the Arab viewers and the tourists in the Emirates), while being detrimental to another group (viewers in France are deprived temporarily of some of their treasures, although most of these works are not on display anyway).

[15] Centre Pompidou opened its second venue in France earlier than the Louvre. It is located in Metz, a city close to the border with Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and also connected with Paris through the TGV. The decision to create a Pompidou venue in

¹² A. Donald, "From coal to culture: Louvre Lens site inaugurated", *artdaily.org* 05.12.2009, http://artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=34757&int_mod=1 (accessed: 06.04.2015).

¹³ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 26.

¹⁴ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 36.

¹⁵ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 37.

¹⁶ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 38.

¹⁷ Clair writes: [...] *it is wrong to loan paintings, sculptures, and objects of art we received from their owners – the Church, our kings and princes – or which we confiscated, or plundered, turning them into the Nation's common property behind the citizens' backs.* Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 40.

¹⁸ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 58.

¹⁹ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 60.

Metz was made in 2003, the structure built according to the project by Shigeru Ban was completed in 2009, while the opening took place in 2010, being the first French example of "cultural decentralisation of a national public establishment."²⁰ The aim of Centre Pompidou Metz is predominantly to provide wider access to the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, yet the city authorities explicitly voice also their hopes for a symbolic meaning of the new institution. The architecture itself evokes multiple associations, such as a Chinese hat (which, indeed, inspired the architect), or a Smurf house; *The Independent* called it "Bilbao of the North,"²¹ while the former city mayor, Jean-Marie Rausch, stated: "The opening of the Metz Pompidou will transform the image of Metz, in France and across Europe. We will be able to shrug off our image as a garrison town and enter the magic circle of European cities of culture, just like Bilbao."²² The plan for building a branch of Centre Pompidou in Shanghai in 2007 was not realised.

[16] The Hermitage Museum which cooperated with the Guggenheim Foundation in the above mentioned initiatives also opened its individual branch beyond Russia, namely, the museum called the Hermitage Amsterdam (2009).

Central Europe and concerns from the West

[17] As yet, there are no museum or gallery concerns in Central Europe that would work as regional branches or franchise in the field of art. Of course, large national museums open their new venues to expand their exhibition space and programmes, yet this kind of activity cannot be seen in terms of expansion. Moreover, usually this process involves only one city, as was the case in Łódź – with its opening of ms² to host the permanent collection of Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art) and use the former venue for temporary exhibitions and projects – or in Prague – where a separate exhibition space of the National Gallery at the Veletržní palác hosts the permanent exhibition of modern and contemporary art, as well as temporary exhibitions.

[18] This solution was also employed in Ljubljana, where after many years of arguments and discussions the authorities managed to open in 2011 the second venue of the Moderna Galerija at the adapted building of the barracks (The Modern Gallery – the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova MSUM). Yet, one can find examples of museums' expansion outside one city, as is the case with the Museum of Fine Arts in Prague, which has transferred its collection of modern art to Kutná Hora (finally changed into GASK – Galerie Středočeského kraje, which in 2010 has moved its location to the province and maintains the former one as a branch).

²⁰ *Two ambitions in one project*, <http://www.centrepompidou-metz.fr/en/two-ambitions> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

²¹ J. Lichfield, "Pompidou Centre puts Metz on the map", *The Independent* 11.05.2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pompidou-centre-puts-metz-on-the-map-1970566.html> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

²² Lichfield, Pompidou Centre.



1 Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art) in Łódź – branch ms². Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska



2 National Gallery at the Veletržní palác, Prague. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska



3 GASK – Galerie Středočeského kraje in Kutná Hora (GASK – the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region). Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[19] However, all those are just examples of a "natural" development of museums. Not least because of its lack of local museum concerns, Central Europe has become a target for expansion of one of the biggest 'brands' of European collecting, namely, the family of Ludwig. Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest was created on the basis of works collected by the German collectors Irene and Peter Ludwig, who at the time when Europe was divided had a goal to break the barriers in the field of culture.



4 Former Royal Palace in Budapest, first location of the Ludwig Museum. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[20] In 1982 the Ludwigs founded the "Ludwig Stiftung für Kunst und internationale Verständigung GmbH" (Ludwig Foundation for Art and International Understanding), whose name after the death of Peter Ludwig in 1996 was changed into "Peter und Irene Ludwig Stiftung" (Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation). The Foundation donates works from its collection of art to selected museums, as well as initiates the creation of new museums. The Ludwigs made their fortune on the production of chocolate in their family company called Monheim / Ludwig Schokolade, which, on the other hand, helped them put into practice their artistic interests and their will to collect pieces of art. Initially, they collected medieval art, then Baroque, Rococo, pre-Columbian, African, Chinese and Indian art. Subsequently, in the 1960s, they turned their attention to modern and contemporary pieces, especially American Pop Artists. Apart from painting, the Ludwig collection includes also decorative arts: faience, ceramic tiles, porcelain, Islamic ceramics, and furniture.

[21] From 1957 onwards, the Ludwigs focused on assembling a collection that would play a social role. Their aim was to fill the gaps in museum collections. This is when their 'expansion' began – first in Germany, then in Europe, and finally globally. In total, eleven museums represented the name 'Ludwig' – in Aachen, Bamberg, Basel, Beijing, Budapest, Cologne, Koblenz, Oberhausen, Saarlouis, Saint Petersburg, and Vienna. Moreover, several other institutions in the world have works from the Ludwig collection in the form of long-term deposits.

[22] All non-German cities whose collections were expanded with donations and deposits from the Ludwig Foundation were selected through a carefully developed key that was to ensure the development of international relations in the field of culture. The Ludwigs' efforts to create a museum of contemporary art in Budapest have commenced in 1983 after the success of the exhibition *Universal art since 1969*, presented at Múcsarnok. The exhibition came from Vienna, where the Foundation was started two years before. *Magyar Hírlap* wrote about this event:

When the Ludwigs first came to the Hungarian capital, they loved it so much that they would come here many times afterwards, and after their visits, there took place returned visits of museum directors, art historians, and organisers of exhibitions from Aachen. This is how emerged the idea to start a permanent deposit in our city that would be the 39th on the list of Ludwig Foundation's initiatives in the world.²³

[23] Yet another exhibition took place in 1987 in the Hungarian National Gallery, where the Ludwigs presented 70 works from their collection.

If the viewers of the National Gallery visit rooms with selected works from the Ludwig collection, they will encounter the embodiment of thought that initiates the dialogue. To be more precise, they will see art works, paintings and sculptures, which the Ludwigs have collected in twelve countries of the world in the spirit of dialogue and in the hope of encouraging the dialogue between the works

[24] stated György Vajda, then Vice-Minister of Culture, in a speech inaugurating the exhibition in the Buda Castle.²⁴ In an introduction to the catalogue, the Ludwigs wrote:

The idea behind this exhibition was to show art from Western Europe, the United States of America, Canada, and East-Central Europe. This is the art of countries industrially highly developed, the art of superpowers in the East and in the West that make an impact on the world as a whole.²⁵

[25] The exhibition was greatly popular among the public, and received extensive press coverage. Regional *Somogyi Néplap* emphasised the potential of art to conduct dialogue between nations: "Apart from the great quality of the exhibited painting and sculpture, the significance of the exhibition is emphasised by the collectors' conscious effort to bring the nations of Europe closer together through art. To teach them mutual respect for their treasures of the past and the present, for common Europe that they all are required to preserve for future generations."²⁶

[26] That was the ground prepared for the Ludwig Foundation, which was established in Budapest in 1988. Significantly, in 1989, still before the political transition, the Foundation donated to the Hungarian government 70 works from the German collection

²³ I. Wagner, "Ludwig úr – a mecénás", *Magyar Hírlap* 06.10.1987.

²⁴ *Válogatás a Ludwig-gyűjtemény modern művészeti anyagából*, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria 16.10.1987, typescript, p. 3.

²⁵ *A Ludwig Gyűjtemény – Aus der Sammlung Ludwig. Válogatás a Ludwig Gyűjtemény Modern Művészeti anyagából*, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest 1987.

²⁶ I. Brestánszky, "A Ludwig gyűjtemény a Nemzeti Galériában", *Somogyi Néplap* 21.11.1987, p. 9.

in order to establish the Ludwig Museum within the next five years. The Ludwigs' philanthropic activity in the East was criticised in Germany, which the Hungarian press discussed openly:

The Western European press has recently voiced negative opinions about the Ludwigs' lingering interest in the socialist countries: they have purchased over a dozen of Soviet, East German, and Bulgarian works that they show in their collections in cities of Western Germany, and even outside of Germany, all over Europe. As their general director announced, it is not a secret that they are considering the purchase of fifteen Hungarian works.²⁷

[27] Initially, the collection was managed by the Hungarian National Gallery. In 1991, on the first floor of Building A of the former Royal Palace, where the Gallery is located, the Foundation opened a permanent exhibition of contemporary art with 91 more works donated as long-term deposits. The institutions were located in the same palace, yet they were not connected. Interviewed on the occasion of the opening, Peter Ludwig said:

We do not collect for our living space or for our surroundings, yet we would willingly do so. We have decided that everything we do in this respect should enrich public space. Our major motive for establishing the Ludwig Museums is not to present the work from the Ludwig Collection, but rather a wish so that these works – as a foundation of the collection – would become an inspiration for the presentation in a given museum of works of other artists.²⁸



5 Ludwig Museum in Budapest in the Palace of Arts. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[28] In 1995 the Museum became an independent institution, officially opened (this time with the space stretching over three floors of the buildings) in 1996. From the very beginning the position of the Museum was emphasised by its location in one of Budapest's most important objects, on the hill of the historic Buda, which is the key point on the tourist map of the city, and under the same roof with the National Gallery, which

²⁷ Wagner, Ludwig úr.

²⁸ K. Néray, *Selected Works from the Collection*, Ludwig Museum Budapest – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest 2000 (English leaflet from 2003), n. pag.

hosts the collection of Hungarian art from the Middle Ages to the present. From the very moment of its foundation, the Museum had a symbolic meaning – it marked a Western element in the country that was gradually moving away from its communist background. Locating in the same building the international collection of contemporary art and the national Hungarian art had a strong educational potential. After the transfer of the collection to the newly constructed Palace of Arts in 2005, located in Budapest's new representative, non-tourist district with a strong cultural element, the context changed entirely.

[29] In one of her texts, Katalin Néray, the museum's first director, considered why the Ludwigs decided to choose Budapest. She stated that

the last government of the so called 'soft dictatorship' was willing to show its openness and this was met with the long-time obsession of Peter Ludwig, who wished to do something behind the 'Iron Curtain.' If you think over the political situation of the early and mid 1980s, Hungary was the only possible target in the region.²⁹

[30] The collection donated by the Ludwigs pushed Hungary to the leading position in Central Europe with respect to the collection and institutionalisation of contemporary art. Budapest could only be matched by Łódź, which had an international collection of modern art created many years before. In both cases, international art (in Budapest – a donation and deposit from private collectors, in Łódź – donated by artists) became a starting point and a major reference for the creation of a collection of national art. In this respect, it may be of a surprise that the Ludwig Museum and the National Gallery, whose interest come together on the ground of contemporary Hungarian art, have not collaborated either in terms of their collections or in exhibition programmes.



6 Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art) in Łódź – branch ms², exhibition room. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

²⁹ K. Néray, *Destination, New Museum, Building*, a paper presented on 22.-24.06.2006 in Zagreb, typescript.

[31] The activity of the Ludwigs, who transferred works from their collection to various museums as donation or deposits, is of philanthropic nature, and personally they are unquestionable patrons of art. However, their activity is not entirely disinterested, since the institutions that receive their donations promote the name 'Ludwig' through their names, catalogues, and promotional materials. Their work in the field of art, stemming from their education and interests (both studied art history, while Peter Ludwig received his doctoral degree in art history in 1959 for his dissertation on Picasso), is then very much like a marketing strategy, which intruded the 'Ludwig' brand into the art market, just like previously it entered the market with its chocolate goods. As Hans Haacke noted in 1984, the Foundation promoted its art collection in countries where Ludwig "has or is suspected of trying to establish a favourable climate for his chocolate business."³⁰ The introduction of international art to communist countries (Hungary, Russia, China, Cuba) was the right step in terms of image of the company, which does not, however, exclude the collectors' idealistic motivations. Moreover, it needs to be noted that their support for Budapest was not terminated when their goal, namely the opening of a museum in the post-communist country of the former Eastern Bloc, was reached. Each year the Foundation donates money for the purchase of works of international contemporary art, while Irene Ludwig has been present at the opening of the museum at the Palace of Arts in 2005.

[32] On the other end of Central and Eastern Europe, Lithuania was the first country to attract the attention of both the Guggenheim Foundation and the Hermitage. The fate of the museum was not determined when the results of the competition for the concept of a new structure and the feasibility studies were announced, either with respect to the newly constructed building, or with respect to the involvement of two museum brands. Nevertheless, what is significant is that the former Soviet republic became the subject of a major international effort. In 2008 the press announced that one of the most desirable architects, Zaha Hadid, would design the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum for Vilnius.³¹ The competition in Vilnius was part of the feasibility study that the Jono Meko vizualiuju menų centras (Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Centre) in Vilnius (created in 2007 by the City Council of Vilnius) commissioned from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Hermitage. The study was to determine the architectural, economic, and cultural perspectives for the founding of a globally renowned museum in the capital of Lithuania. The closed competition featured three architects: Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and Massimiliano Fuksas. The six-person jury, including the President of Lithuania and the Mayor of Vilnius, announced Hadid's victory. All the submitted projects presented iconic buildings. The victorious project is a shiny, cylindrical structure that resembles a space ship, an aerodynamic vehicle, a whale, or a motorboat that soundlessly hitched at the Neris

³⁰ H. Haacke, "Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade", in: *October* 1984, No. 30 (Autumn), p. 12.

³¹ A. Cymer, "Zaha buduje nad Wilią", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 21.04.2008, p. 18.

riverbank. According to the plan, the museum is to be located directly on the riverbank, halfway between the old and the new town. It is to host the permanent exhibition of the collection of avant-garde art owned by the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Centre, with the particular focus on Jonas Mekas and Georg Maciunas, the founder of Fluxus, as well as to present the works from the collections of the Guggenheim and the Hermitage.³²

[33] The museum project is treated as a factor that will improve the image of the city, as well as the country as a whole and – to quote Thomas Krens – its goal is to put "Vilnius on the world's cultural map."³³ The Prime Minister of Lithuania, Gediminas Kirkilas, stated that Vilnius had decided to become

a premier international centre of art. We can think of no better institutions – the State Hermitage and the Guggenheim Foundation – to help guide us in this project. Their participation on our jury has led to selecting Zaha Hadid to design the new venue, which we believe will best enable our capital city of Vilnius to achieve this goal.³⁴

[34] The feasibility study produced positive results for Vilnius. As a result, the Lithuanian government placed the discussed enterprise on the list of Ten Strategic Projects. The work on this project – notably, the initial overly optimistic estimates suggested 2011 as the date of the opening of the museum for the public (the construction work itself is to last three years) – is said to be in progress, yet the economic crisis hindered the process. Since no binding decisions were made regarding the conditions of the collaboration with partners, the official name of the new institution is the Museum in Vilnius. As the combination of the names representing the West and the East, the museum would offer Lithuania a chance to take a position in the global museum discourse, as well as perhaps a similar chance for the East-Central Europe in general.

Central and Eastern European collections as an alternative

[35] What needs to be considered with respect to the wide criticism of the marketing of museums and of opening new venues in new geographic locations is whether a museum concern, as Clair suggests, poses a threat to the world of museums and the world of art? Each of the examples of the expansionist practices of museums discussed in this text is of different nature and each of them has been criticised by various groups in reference to different characteristics. The strongest criticism was targeted at the Guggenheim Foundation, whose ethically dubious activity was not so much its investment in new locations – meant as a long-term means to lower the costs of the work of the entire Guggenheim machine – but its financial profit from the brand name, for the use of which

³² *Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania*, <http://www.designbuild-network.com/projects/guggenheimvilnius> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

³³ Press release published by the Guggenheim Foundation *Zaha Hadid Wins Competition To Develop Design For Proposed Museum In Vilnius*, 09.04.2008, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/press-room/releases/press-release-archive/2008/1815-zaha-hadid-wins-competition-to-develop-design-for-proposed-museum-in-vilnius> (accessed: 06.04.2015).

³⁴ Zaha Hadid Wins Competition.

the cities interested in its collection are obliged to pay a fee. Equally strong criticism was aimed at the Louvre, accused of selling the French national heritage. The two institutions are significantly different: the Guggenheim is a private brand, while the Louvre is the first major public museum in the world. The project's leading idea of universality – namely, its goal to provide wide access to the global heritage of the humanity (seeing that the Louvre owns not only French art, but as an offspring of the French Revolution, it also owns the 'legally sanctioned' confiscated works of other nations) to new groups of viewers in France (Lens), as well as outside it (Abu Dhabi) – has partly been compromised – as Clair suggests – by unofficial agreements between the parties. Allegedly, the use of the name of the Louvre and the possibility to present its collection make it possible for France to gain preferential contracts in the arms industry³⁵. If it was not for this ethically dubious aspect, one could assume that the project is underpinned by noble intentions – the light of education has been brought both to the province, as well as to the remote Arabic culture. The question remains whether overseas, in the ultramodern and opulent Island of Happiness, the masterpieces of global heritage will actually reach the common viewer? The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums clearly states in article 2.16 that: *Museum collections are held in public trust and may not be treated as a realisable asset.*³⁶ Admittedly, this statement refers to the disposal of museum collections, yet it can also be read more broadly. And if the fee paid to the Guggenheim Foundation by the Arabic prince covers only the organisation of an exhibition in the new museum in the Emirates, is the code of ethics violated?

[36] Questions pertaining to the threats posed by museum concerns reach beyond the reflections on their involvement in the market and are linked with a wider issue of the commercialisation of museums, as well as with the significance of private patronage. Although gradually the situation changes in this respect, Central Europe still seems to be suspicious towards private museum initiatives and private collections. The latter rarely gain the prestige comparable to that of the public collections, while a private exhibition venue, exposed to criticism as it is, is often seen as a rich man's whim, a fancy of a person who by necessity lacks expertise and is driven by a desire for profit.

[37] Do museum concerns pose a threat to Central Europe? Most of all, they are certainly very much desired by politicians and specialists in city marketing. Suffice to mention an amusing event in Krakow, which occurred at the time of the debate about the location of the planned Museum of Contemporary Art. The competing venues were the Schindler's Factory and the building of the main railway station. One of the members of the City Council, unhappy about the choice, submitted an idea of creating in the city a branch

³⁵ Clair, *Kryzys muzeów*, p. 34. Clair is quoting in this matter Jean-René Gaborit, honorary conservator general.

³⁶ ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Ficom.museum%2Ffileadmin%2Fuser_upload%2Fpdf%2FCodes%2Fcode_ethics2013_eng.pdf (accessed: 06.04.2015)

of the Guggenheim Museum. A letter to the Foundation was even sent with an invitation to such a project (since the opening of the museum in Bilbao the Foundation has received thousands of such letters), yet the problem was that the letter was sent to an invalid address ...³⁷



7 Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[38] As examples of Budapest (Ludwig Museum) and Vienna (MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien) suggest, concerns do not pose a threat, especially when their activity does not go beyond the generally accepted ethical standards. Yet, they play an important role in terms of the image of the city, as well as they introduce variety into the local art scene. However, much more interesting would be an example of a local expansion, at least in the scale seen in Scandinavia, where in 2009 a branch of the prestigious Moderna Museet from Stockholm was opened in Malmö.

[39] The issue of the potential of the expansion of museums in Central Europe needs to be discussed in the context of the museum boom in the region after 1989.³⁸ The countries of Central Europe, each of them with similar historical experience, have made an effort to match the achievements of the West. The milestone was their access first to the NATO and then to the European Union. Significantly, at almost the same time, they all decided to invest in the development of the museum infrastructure. This museum boom was of particularly intense nature on the ground of contemporary art. The period after 1989, and especially since the beginning of the new century, has seen dynamic development of museums of both history and contemporary art, supplemented a number of art centres. Museums of contemporary art are a novelty in Central European countries, introduced only after the political change (the phenomenon of new art institutions in the region is thoroughly discussed in my book *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej. Muzea i*

³⁷ A. Maj, "Jaką kolekcję pokaże miasto w Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej?", *Dziennik Polski – Kronika Krakowska* 26.05.2009, p. B1.

³⁸ Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej*. My understanding of the museum boom is broad, it encompasses the foundation of new institutions, as well as investing in new buildings and additions.

centra sztuki współczesnej (1989–2014) [Museum Age in Central Europe. Museums and centres of contemporary art (1989–2014)]. The recognition of the shortage or lack of institutions that collect and display contemporary art has translated into over-optimistic initiatives of intense construction and modernisation. In Southern Poland, three cities – Krakow³⁹, Katowice⁴⁰, and Wrocław⁴¹ – have made up a route of modern museums of contemporary and modern art. Łódź⁴² already constitutes a dynamic place of influence. Warsaw has consolidated its position. Contemporary art institutions have sprouted up in Białystok⁴³, Gdańsk⁴⁴, Toruń⁴⁵, Poznań⁴⁶, Radom⁴⁷, and Szczecin⁴⁸. The centres of contemporary art in the Czech Republic are: Brno⁴⁹, Kutná Hora⁵⁰, Olomouc⁵¹, and Český Krumlov⁵². In Hungary and Slovakia, the number of institutions presenting contemporary artists' body of work may not be so large, but then they are smaller countries. Regarding Hungary, except for Budapest, Győr⁵³ and Pécs⁵⁴ have strengthened their position, accompanied by Veszprém⁵⁵, Debrecen⁵⁶, Paks⁵⁷, Siófok⁵⁸, and Dunaújváros⁵⁹. Interestingly, the provinces – Košice⁶⁰, Čunovo⁶¹, Trnava⁶², Modra⁶³, and Medzilaborce⁶⁴ – have overshadowed Bratislava regarding new art institutions in Slovakia.

³⁹ Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej w Krakowie MOCAK (Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow).

⁴⁰ Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach (Silesian Museum in Katowice).

⁴¹ Muzeum Współczesne Wrocław (Contemporary Museum Wrocław).

⁴² Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art).

⁴³ Galeria Arsenał (Arsenał Gallery).

⁴⁴ Instytut Sztuki Wyspa (Wyspa Institute of Art).

⁴⁵ Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej "Znaki Czasu" ("Signs of the Time" Centre for Contemporary Art).

⁴⁶ Galeria Art Stations (Art Stations Gallery).

⁴⁷ Mazowieckie Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej "Elektrownia" (Mazovian Centre of Contemporary Art "Elektrownia").

⁴⁸ TRAF0 Trafostacja Sztuki.

⁴⁹ Richard Adam Gallery.

⁵⁰ GASK – Galerie Středočeského kraje (GASK – the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region).

⁵¹ Muzeum umění Olomouc (Museum of Art in Olomouc).

⁵² Egon Schiele Art Centrum.

⁵³ Városi Művészeti Múzeum (Municipal Museum of Art).

⁵⁴ Modern Magyar Képtár (Modern Hungarian Gallery).

⁵⁵ Dubniczay-palotát – location of Károly László collection, Modern Képtár – Vass László Gyűjtemény (Gallery of Modern Art - Vass László Collection).

⁵⁶ Modern és Kortárs Művészeti Központ (MODEM Centre for Modern and Contemporary Arts).

⁵⁷ Paksi Képtár (Gallery of Paks).

⁵⁸ 320fok Contemporary Cultural Centre.

⁵⁹ Kortárs Művészeti Intézet (Institute of Contemporary Art).

⁶⁰ Kunsthalle / Hala umenia and Kasárne / Kulturpark.

⁶¹ Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum.

⁶² Galéria Jána Koniarka.

⁶³ Zoya Museum.

⁶⁴ Múzeum moderného umenia Andy Warhola (Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art).

[40] Institutions emerging in Central Europe since the 1990s – museums and centres of modern and contemporary art – often follow Western European and American models. The tradition of erecting new museum buildings for institutions dealing with collecting and exhibiting contemporary art had been hindered during communism. Due to the temporal holdup and geographical distance from the mainstream of European culture, the peripheries, for Central Europe is seen as such, follow these models with significant delay. This concerns museum architecture, the symbolic aspects of new projects, and locations of venues, as well as the often West-oriented type of collections and exhibition programmes. However, an increasing number of institutions begin to appreciate the value of regional art, which more and more often constitutes a basis for their exceptionality, thus offering an alternative to the mainstream international Western collections. Collections with a focus on Central European art are being formed by the Ludwig Museum in Budapest or by Museum Kampa in Prague, while certain interest in the region is evident in the programmes of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, while The Kontakt collection of the banking Erste Group focuses entirely on Central European art.



8 Museum Kampa in Prague. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[41] Museum Kampa in Prague has its roots in the private collection created by Meda and Jan Mládek. These collectors of Czechoslovakian origin moved to the United States, where they collected pieces of Czechoslovakian art, as well as the works of Polish, Hungarian, and former Yugoslavian artists. After the Velvet Revolution Meda Mládek decided to donate her collection to the city of Prague on the condition that it would create a museum for its permanent presentation (inaugurated in 2001). In Brno, on the other hand, Wannieck Gallery was started in 2006 (renamed to Richard Adam Gallery in 2013). The collection of Czech contemporary painting created by Richard Adam was located in a revitalised building of Vaňkovka factory. Although Czech art lies at the centre of this collection, it includes also work by artists from Slovakia, Germany, Austria, Poland,

Hungary, and Russia. The collection and the gallery are private, yet the location is a public property.

[42] Next to the Ludwig collection that has led to the foundation of the above-discussed Museum, Hungary is the home of several private collections that are on public display in museums and galleries. The collection of works by Salvador Dalí, brought together by the Sweden-based Hungarian collector Lajos Takács, led to the creation of Kortárs Művészeti Intézet (The Institute of Contemporary Art) in Dunaújváros (since 1997). Hungary's first large institution of contemporary art established by private capital was the MEO in Budapest (2001–2006). This art centre was founded on the basis of a private collection of contemporary art created by Lajos Kovács, a Hungarian entrepreneur and art collector. Together with Márton Winkler, an American-Hungarian businessman and collector, he created a permanent venue for the display of over a hundred and fifty works from their collection. In 2004 yet another collector, but most of all businessman and economist, Gábor Kovács, created KOGART. The gallery organises exhibitions of art of the 19th and 20th century, yet what is its most important activity from the point of view of patronage is the Hungarian collection of contemporary art, systematically created since 2008. A widely discussed issue in Hungary was the fate of János Vasilescu's collection of 20th-century Hungarian art. The collection of the Hungary-based Romanian collector was to be donated to a selected institution. The competition determined the choice of the City Museum in Győr. In 2005, the museum exhibited the most important works from the collection, while in 2006, pursuant to the will of the deceased collector, the museum created a permanent exhibition of the collection in a newly renovated synagogue. The Centre of Modern and Contemporary Art MODEM in Debrecen also had as its core a private collection, yet, in contrast to Győr, it is a deposit that the institution received in 2006 in order to exhibit it on a permanent display for the period of ten years.

[43] In Poland, Grażyna Kulczyk, a businesswoman, a millionaire, and an art lover, founded an art gallery (established in 2004) and a private collection. As the only private collector in Poland, she made efforts to locate her collection in a specially built museum. From 2002 to 2007 she organised the construction of 'Old Brewery' shopping and entertainment centre in Poznań, whose important part is occupied by spaces for the arts (featuring visual and performing arts), while the collection is displayed in spaces of the entire centre. Kulczyk planned to create an underground 'Art Stations' Museum of Contemporary Art right next to the existing centre, designed by the globally renowned architect Tadao Ando, yet the project failed due to the lack of financial support from the state. In 2009 Kulczyk stated: "I would have managed to erect the museum with my own resources, though my successors would certainly curse me for this for generations. Yet, when I consulted specialists, they showed me that financing this institution on an

everyday basis without any support from the outside would have been impossible."⁶⁵ There are very few private collectors in Poland who collect art as well as show it in their own galleries. The most important of them are Teresa and Andrzej Starmach, who have been running Starmach Gallery in Krakow since 1989.

[44] Considering the size of the country, Slovakia can boast of a greater number of private collections displayed in institutional frameworks. Danubiana Meulensteen Museum, constructed near Bratislava (opened in 2000), was founded by a Dutch businessman, collector, and art patron Gerard Meulensteen and the Slovakian gallery owner Vincent Polakovič. The museum presents a collection of international and Slovakian artists. A year later Peter Sokol opened in Bratislava a museum of Constructivism, starting from his own collection of the work of Milan Dobeš. In 2008 the owners of Zoya Gallery in Bratislava, collectors of Slovakian, Czech, and international art of the 20th century, have opened Zoya Museum, located 30 kilometres from the capital, in the village of Modra. It is a part of a vineyard park of ELESKO, which produces wine and runs an elegant restaurant. The exhibition rooms, the production, and the services are located in the same Modernist structure, yet each is distinctly separate.



9 Zoya Museum in Modra. Photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

[45] This brief, yet long enumeration of new art museums, centres and collections clearly shows great potential of the region of Central Europe in terms of the institutionalisation of art, significant resources and some visionary ideas. However, despite the construction boom, it seems that the countries of Central Europe are still economically too feeble to give rise to a true museum concern, or to a museum capable of opening remote branches that could match the discussed Western examples. In many

⁶⁵ I. Torbicka, "Grażyna Kulczyk nie zbuduje muzeum!", *Gazeta.pl Poznań* 09.10.2009, http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36037,7126194,Grazyna_Kulczyk_nie_zbuduje_muzeum_.html (accessed: 29.01.2012).

places it was the beginning of the 21st century, not the symbolic year 1989, that opened up favourable conditions for building up infrastructure for cultural institutions and developing museum collections, while the 1990s are considered as the time lost for culture in general.⁶⁶ Moreover, regardless of financial issues, none of the public museums suffers such shortage of exhibition or storage space to open a new venue in a different city, and especially a different country. Undoubtedly, such an institution – for example a branch of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź in the Czech Republic or a branch of the Slovenian Moderna Galerija in Hungary – would be very interesting in many respects. I do not mean here a relocation of the collection, for it could take the form of temporary exhibitions, but the very phenomenon of a museum working in a wider Central European perspective. Due to its distinct Central European character, the collection Arteast 2000+ of the Moderna Galerija would certainly be the main candidate for this role. This, however, is a case of a museological science-fiction. Most of all, because the institution in question has no need for such an initiative. Much more realistic and logical would be an expansion of a private collection, yet there is no collection in the region that would match with its size the one owned by the Ludwigs, whereas local collectors hardly ever invest in venues for a permanent presentation of the works they own.

[46] Equally attractive would be the creation of a regional, Central European brand that would offer an alternative for Western collections, usually dominated by works of the same artists who by principle belong to the mainstream of culture. Unfortunately, a potential candidate, the Central European Forum in Olomouc, has not been created. Its leading idea was the conviction that the countries of the region share many features, and their similarities are discernible in the field of visual arts. The Forum was to focus on art of Central Europe after the Second World War, create a collection of art, organise exhibitions, as well as cyclical events, and to work as a centre for information, a library, and a multimedia archive.⁶⁷ The permanent exhibition at the Forum was to include works by Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian artists, with some pieces from Austria and Germany. The project was not supported by the Czech authorities and, as a result, eventually given up.

[47] What could distinguish Central Europe as far as the world of museums is concerned, would be a network of Central European collections in various countries of the region, created on the basis of collections owned by museums and private investors, as well as centres of contemporary art. Collections of Central European art can be found in the already-mentioned Museum Kampa, Ludwig Museum, Moderna Galerija, and the Erste

⁶⁶ Jacek Purchla emphasizes that "in most countries of our region that have been undergoing difficult processes of transformation culture has been predominantly seen as a burden, as an encumbrance for the budget, rather than as a catalyst for change." (J. Purchla, "Medyceusze naszej transformacji," in: B. Gierat-Bieroń, *Ministrowie kultury doby transformacji, 1989–2005 (wywiady)*, Kraków 2009, p. 8).

⁶⁷ P. Zatloukal, *Středoevropské forum Olomouc – architektonická studie / Olomouc Central European Forum – Architectural Design*, Olomouc 2009 (exhibition catalogue), p. 23.

Group's bank collection of regional art. Moreover, a number of museums and art centres present temporary exhibitions of artists from the region – Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum in Čunovo, the Centre of Contemporary Art FUTURA and the branch of the National Gallery at the Veletržní Palace in Prague, Richard Adam Gallery in Brno, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, the Centre of Contemporary Art 'Łaźnia' in Gdańsk, 'Znaki Czasu' (Signs of the Time) Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń, and MODEM Centre for Modern and Contemporary Arts in Debrecen. Greater interest in Central European initiatives could also translate into their greater number. Promotional activities initiated by particular countries (for example within the framework of the regional cooperation of the Visegrad group) could lead to a creation of a brand representing original exhibition programme and attractive art (poorly known not only in the West, but also in the region as a whole), becoming at the same time a tourist product of this part of Europe.

[48] Instead, Central Europe constantly needs to provide proofs that its art is appreciated in the West. Recognition in the main centres of art translates into the recognition in the countries of the region. Without it, Central European countries are hardly interested in art created in their closest vicinity, despite several successful initiatives. This topic was addressed by Piotr Piotrowski, who wrote:

Poles have almost no knowledge of the history of Romanian art; more than that: they ignore it completely with a false sense of superiority of their own culture, which they prefer to compare to Western culture. Similarly, Czechs have little or no knowledge of Ukrainian art, etc. The Other looks up to the Master, not to 'another Other,' accepting – sometimes unknowingly – hierarchies of the centre which made him a victim too. If there is any kind of exchange of values, experiences, and knowledge between them, it is always mediated through the Master, that is, the West, who legitimises the Other in the eyes of 'another Other.'⁶⁸

[49] An attempt to break mutual ignorance and concentrate the attention on the region can be found in the programme of the collection of Kontakt. Its curator, Walter Seidl, and the member of the board, Boris Marte, stated:

In most of the former real socialist countries, artists were often less in contact with each other than with representatives of the international art world, since there was no coherent infrastructure to facilitate artistic production and more intensive communication. The new art collection thus aims to present works together that play an integral part in the formation of a pan-European art history.⁶⁹

[50] A greater concentration on the region on the part of both museum collections, as well as private collectors willing to invest in infrastructure for their art, could be possible through the engagement of the public sphere. After all, particular countries of the region would profit the most from the development of mutual cooperation. Geography does not

⁶⁸ P. Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Poznań 2010, p. 36.

⁶⁹ B. Marte, W. Seidl, *Towards a New Understanding. Kontakt. The Art Collection of Erste Bank Group*, in: *Kontakt... aus der Sammlung der Erste Bank-Gruppe / Kontakt... Works from the Collection of Erste Bank Group*, N. Krick, W. Seidl (eds.), Wien 2006, p. 18.

have to be the key factor of the region's particular character, for other aspects, such as particular topics addressed here, might be seen as more important. Significant in this respect is the shift of interests of the MoMA in Warsaw.



10 Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, temporary location. Photo by Bartosz Stawiarski

[51] In 2007 its director, Joanna Mytkowska, stated that the museum "could become an important centre for the research on the region with which we share historical experience,"⁷⁰ which was supposed to be an important step for the construction of a regional alternative. Over time, this vision evolved towards a thematically rather than geographically-oriented alternative.

We are interested in Eastern Europe only inasmuch as it is a region of transformation, where both in the past as well as now art has played a special role as a companion of social and political phenomena – argued Marcel Andino Velez, the deputy director of the MoMA in 2013. We have no 'geographical' interests, but we focus on points on the map where artists participate in changes or describe them. Sometimes we emphasise that these are the 'regions of transition,' such as the Middle East or Latin America, yet what becomes more and more important for us, is the map of big cities and the processes in them that work as inspiration for art.⁷¹

[52] Central Europe hardly matches Western Europe in the power of its museums and collections. This might raise doubts or concern whether it is possible to juxtapose the leading world collections of art with minor – in Western terms – collections located in Central Europe. My intention by referring to the Guggenheim, Louvre and Tate was to show the mechanism which could – at least in theory – in a smaller scale be copied in Central Europe. As discussed in the article there is a potential and good starting point to build a regional alternative. Undoubtedly it can become one of the important centres of

⁷⁰ D. Jarecka, "Być nowym centrum Europy Wschodniej, rozmowa z Joanną Mytkowską", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 08.06.2007.

⁷¹ An email statement by Marcel Andino Velez, sent for the purpose of an unpublished article by K. Jagodzińska on 31.05.2013.

contemporary art and culture, showcasing art that is unknown (or less known) elsewhere, rooted in the regional context, characterised by historically separate background, and, at the same time, drawing inspiration from the West. The problem still remains in Central Europe's poor self-recognition.

Translated by Karolina Kolenda