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**The circulation of unofficial art from Central Europe across the Iron Curtain;
international exhibitions and transnational networks between 1970 and 1989**

This PhD dissertation examines the circulation of unofficial art from the Socialist states of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland between 1970 and 1989, focusing on its diffusion and visibilization across the Iron Curtain by the means of international exhibitions and transnational artistic networks. Addressing comparatively the forms through which Central European artists and their work acquired visibility in distinct social and cultural contexts in the West, it discusses whether, and how, their conditions of public *appearance* were influenced or shaped by specific practices of exhibiting, disseminating and reporting, in a context strongly influenced by Cold War politics and culture.

Transnational exchange and collaboration in the artistic realm over the Cold War period (1946-1991) have been increasingly put under scrutiny over the last decade, giving place to significant studies dealing with a large range of scenes, artifacts and procedures. They contributed to challenge the idea of an isolated Eastern-Soviet block that had so far prevailed in historiographies addressing alternative or unofficial art in Soviet-type Communist countries. In the wake of this approach, this dissertation project drifts away from binary grids of interpretation and articulates a situated and case-based analysis of the processes of inclusion, mediation and representation of Central European art in different cultural systems and institutions in the West.

Departing from the trajectories of artists including Petr Stembera, J.H Kocman, Jiří Kolář, Endre Tót, Gabor Attalai, KwieKulik (Zofia Kulik and Przemysław Kwiek), Jaroslaw Kozlowski whose participation - whether through physical presence or not - to international exhibitions and artistic networks can be acknowledged, this study identifies specifically related nodes of activity and production, mainly exhibitions, biennials and publications in Western Europe and Latin America, as well as cultural agents (art critics, exhibition organizers, gallerists) who contributed to activate these transnational cultural exchanges. A cross analysis of bibliographical, archival and oral sources permits to discuss the reception of

this artistic production and its authors abroad – and its frequent overlaps with the broader designation of Eastern European art -, their self-representation, the nature of the artworks that were put into circulation and their reception, as well as the possible differences in critical reception, according to factors as diverse as their origin, artistic training, language skills, social connections and political sensibility.

Beyond the mere recognition of the complexity of East/West artistic relations, this research project develops a critical and theoretical reflection around the concepts of circulation, visibility and publicity (understood here as the condition of what/who is public, or is becoming public) in relation with the particular historical scenario of the late Cold War. In line with this approach, the Forum for Doctoral Candidates in East European Art would constitute a good opportunity to discuss the implications of the transposition of an art not officially acknowledged in its own country of origin to others social, cultural and political scenes, relying on a comparative analysis of two specific cases put under scrutiny in my PhD dissertation: the 10th Paris Biennale and the Venice “Biennale del Dissenso” (Biennial of Dissent), both held in 1977 and involving artists from East-Central Europe.