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Ewa Partum. Artistic Practice Seen from the Perspective of Horizontal Art History

My dissertation concerns the heterogeneous and ruptured artistic practice of Polish-born artist Ewa Partum who is considered a pioneer of Eastern European feminist art produced within the conceptual idiom. Ewa Partum's work belongs to two discursive formations: the historical neo-avant-garde that emerged during the sixties and contemporary art with its temporal and semantic transition, before and after 1989. Partum's work can also be chronologically divided into Polish (1965-82) and German (from 1982) periods.

My inquiry focuses simultaneously on historicization and interpretation of the semantic shift within Partum's work- from the autonomous conceptual practice to socially engaged feminist art, and the re-location of this practice from communist East to the capitalist West (Berlin) and further beyond, into the contemporary global world. I propose to articulate these trajectories rather within a non- linear narration focusing on the circulation of ideas and their local reconfigurations in alternated geo-political contexts than on the reconstruction of uninterrupted chronological narrative. Ewa Partum's Atlas constitute therefore a multi-perspectival configuration following the notion that *the whole is the untrue*.

My aim is to *work through* the local and fragmentary narrations on Ewa Partum's conceptual art and the artist's feminist engagement and transnational contemporary global reception, and to re-construct the narration about Partum's artistic practice within the paradigm of a critical transnational art history written from the post-1989 perspective. To articulate a complex of meanings of Ewa Partum's artistic practice, I am interested in two kinds of analytical operations: reconstructing historical contexts and discursive horizons of Partum's work and critically investigate narrations produced within the re-circulation of Partum's work in the context of contemporary curatorial practices.

In so far as the work of Ewa Partum has been produced, distributed and interpreted in three distinctive semantical, ideological and institutional spaces, specifically, in Communist Poland (1965-1982), West Berlin (1982-1989) and in the Former West (since 1989), the Piotr

Piotrowski's perspective of horizontal art history with its central notion of parallax effect (a localization of meaning) remains particularly valuable.

Considering all ideological and infrastructural differences between Communist Poland and West Berlin I will argue that until reemergence of the new global order in 1989 Partum has operated from within a cultural margin of the art world. Following Piotrowski's analysis three aspects of the cultural margin related to trajectories of communication and production of meanings can be singled out:

- only from the perspective of a cultural margin the center can be perceived in its heterogeneity;
- center often mediates communication between different cultural margins;
- *effect of parallax*: a meaning of complex terms alters in the center and on the margins.

This perspective enables to map a set of dynamic relations between Partum's work and time-places from which she operated as well as to trace the trajectories of movements (influences) and their vectors. The particular chapters:

On critical engagement with art infrastructures;

On "conceptual" label;

On Partum's feminist identifications and preposterous reading of her feminism;

On political engagement within Communist and Capitalist public spheres;

On redistribution of Partum's practice;

are conceptualized as "frames" following proposed by Piotrowski strategy of framing indebted in Bryson/Culler vocabulary that genealogically relates to Derrida's *parergon*.