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### **“The Killing of the Father”. Neo-Avant-Garde Tradition in Post-1989 Art in Eastern Europe**

The focal point of my research is the relationship of the post-1989 artist generation to the neo-avant-garde tradition of the 60s and the 70s. In the context of this phenomenon I examine direct references, ties and the question of the continuity of tradition. My hypothesis implies a broader re-evaluation concerning the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde legacy through contemporary artistic strategies, including borrowing, copy as well as appropriation, remake and reenactment.

Appropriating the works of the “great generation”, reenacting performances of the “fathers” from the 70s is an expression of homage or even homage through “murder”. By examining the oedipal relationship between the generations not only the archaic concept of master-student relationship but the anarcho-critical tradition (Piotrowski, 2012) can also be deconstructed. The common pursuit of the works I will examine is the questioning of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde as legacy or strategy and the increased awareness of the art historical tradition. By this pursuit the artists are often pointing out the missing elements in the construction of the narrative or trying to fictionalize and deconstruct the myths of this period.

Artists like Piotr Uklanski and Oskar Dawicki (Poland), Roman Ondák and Boris Ondreička (Slovakia), Little Warsaw (András Gálik, Bálint Havas) and Tamás Kaszás (Hungary) are referring to the foundations of 60s and 70s conceptual art from a distanced position and often with critical approach. In his series *Polish Neo-Avant-Garde* (2012) Piotr Uklanski appropriated the works of artists like Grzegorz Kowalski, Natalia LL, Zofia Kulik, Ewa Partum, Zbigniew Warpechowski, reflecting on the institutionalization of these artists and their coming onto the art market. The master of Polish performance art, Zbigniew Warpechowski is the main point of reference for the middle generation artist Oskar Dawicki, in whose latest film project, *The Performer* (2014) Warpechowski is acting out his own death. A strong cross-generational relationship characterizes the cooperation between Július Koller (1939-2007), pioneer and classic of the Slovak neo-avant-garde, and Roman Ondák, who

started his career in the early 90s and since then has achieved international recognition, as well as contributed to restoring the master to his deserved place. The same phenomenon occurs in the practice of the Hungarian artist collective Little Warsaw, who are dealing with the art historical tradition and the controversial cultural, social as well as political history of the last decades. In their video work *Game of Changes* (2009) they used a detail of Gábor Bódy's experimental documentary film, *The Third* (1971) as found footage, which is matched with a video interview featuring the same person nearly 40 years later. The protagonist of the work is Zsigmond Károlyi, Little Warsaw's former professor, a well-known monochrome painter, who is confronted with the same questions, but in a changed social-political situation. In their latest project *The World as Objectness* (2014, together with Dezső Szabó and Gábor Erdélyi) they entered into a contract for shared ownership of a painting by the mentor. The reenactment *Tableau Vivant* (2005/2007) aims to reconstruct the famous performance *Exclusion exercise. Autotherapy to prevent punishment*, from 1972, by re-contextualizing the work with the participation of the artist, Tamás Szentjóby. The research-based installation *Crew Expendable* (2007) is the most direct and complex reflection on the Hungarian neo-avant-garde, on the IPARTERV generation of artists and especially on János Major's (1934–2008), graphic and conceptual artist's role in this group.

By juxtaposing three different artistic traditions, three different post-communist countries - Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – not only the different relationships, the several ways of reflections, but the diverse institution-driven discourses of the region can also be detected. The research intends to contribute to the extensive debates and discourses on the neo-avant-garde through contemporary artistic practices, to provide deeper understanding of the transitions that Eastern European art underwent throughout the last more than 40 years, and attempts to determine the role of the post-conceptual trends of contemporary art in this process.