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Performance by women artists in socialist and post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe.

The theme of the paper is the performance art of women artists creating in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the two decades of the twentieth century: in the 70s and 90s. The aim of the presentation is an indication of the relationship between performance art of the women artists in Central and Eastern Europe and the political, social, economic, legal etc. situation of women in the countries of this part of the continent. Speech will be a presentation of doctoral project, in which I intend to discuss the work of a few artists working in that area in two different historical moments. This will be the works created in two different decades by the same artists, but also works of a new generation - women starting out in post-communist Europe. I am going to select works of artists from different countries and compare them with each other to identify the similarities and differences arising not only from a particular historical moment, but also a place in which they were created. Each of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc has a different context, because of different law, tradition and cultural practices.

The 70s were a period of development of avant-garde art, ie. conceptualism, performance art and body art, as well as the emergence of new ideas and change of behavior in the aftermath of the revolution of 1968. In Central and Eastern Europe the end of the 60. was also marked by the events of Prague Spring. After the invasion by Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia there was a retreat from liberal cultural policy and repression. Situation was different in Yugoslavia and Poland, where until the introduction of martial law there was relative freedom in art. In the 90s, came the new geopolitical order in Europe as a result of political changes and the collapse of communist regimes. The 90s were also the time of socio-political chaos, marked by the war in the Balkans and the birth of new nationalist regimes in Serbia and Croatia. Along with transformation economic, social and cultural situation has changed in post-communist countries. Eastern art scene opened on the western market, new exhibition spaces were created and artists slowly enter the previously inaccessible public

space. This changes determined the type of practiced art and the emergence of new trends in this region, e.g. critical art in Poland.

This paper will be an attempt to look at the performative works by women artists from global perspective, taking into account the specific geo-political and social context each of them.

According to the Slovenian researcher of Eastern European art Zdenka Badovinac socio-political context of the the work is as important as the individual condition of the artist. In the paper “Body and the East” she writes: *One of the essential differences between East and West lies in fact that similar gestures read differently in different spaces*¹.

¹ Zdenka Badovinac, *Body and the East*, in: *Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe*, Artworld 2009, s. 217