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Conditions and Pre-conditions of Art Criticism in Czechoslovakia in 60's

My PhD. topic is designed to answer my questions which bothered me for some time. As an art historian while reading some art critical text from magazines and newspaper from 60's I became more and more interested in what shaped them, in what situation they were written and why it sounds today so outdated (some of them) or still fresh (few others)? What had changed in redactions, in the process of preparing the magazine issue from what I know as today's practise?

There has been International Congress of Art Critics Association (AICA) in Prague and Bratislava in September 1966, where about 200 professionals from all over the world came together and discuss "*Essence and Function of Art Criticism*" (main theme of the congress). What brought them to Czechoslovakia and which infrastructure did they met here? From that time about four art critics had written regularly for Czech Art magazines (*Výtvarné umění* and *Výtvarná práce*). Then came all the events of Year 1968: from January plenum of the Party, followed by Action Programme (manifesto for democratic socialism "with the human face") through the abolish of censure, till August 21st invasion of the soviet-bloc army. Within next two years it led to an end of the most important periodicals (mentioned above, and some others).

As I started with the research, soon I realized that there is still very little written about the topic of art criticism in Czech context – and even less on art criticism in the 60's. First methodological problem is therefore how to write upon non-existing basements? There are some books and synthesis on art in 60's (at that time there was no such a category as un/official), there are historical studies on what happened around the year 1968 but there are just a few (2-3) monographies of some agents: art historians, art critics or curators.

My research is therefore concentrated on process and conditions of art criticism at 60's (rather than writing on important (male)figures). An important part includes mapping the history of Czechoslovak section of AICA (international association of art critics) and their Congress as a peak of their activities (how did the international contacts functioning? How did the communication run? How they financed their activities?)

Second part would be oriented on the redactions of few most important periodicals (Výtvarné umění and Výtvarná práce) and the Artist's union who published them (Position of an art critic back then? How much did they earn? How much time did they spend on writing?).

Third part should consist of case studies of exemplary field where art criticism plays an important role eg. forms and role of art market in 60's (basically in the time of planned-economy) or acts of censorship in art magazines (what was censored and how much was this common?).

The main methodological question for me is to which extend should I use the content of magazines (articles, critiques, reviews...) and how to work with them in compare to the process-oriented information? Art criticism is very consume-like reading – it is very much bound to the present moment, at the same time there is always call for timeless values in it. How to read it then?

Further question is then that of international comparison: does it make sense today to trace the logic of back-then international communication (mainly to France)? Or should we rather build the network between Central-East Europe within the research? What could we gain if we would compare Czechoslovak situation with the Polish or East German (DDR) one? These are the most urgent questions I would like to address during the Doktorandenforum.