

Viktória Popovics

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Cross-generational dialogue between Július Koller and Roman Ondák

The cross-generational dialogue, i.e. the reflective relationship of the post-1989 artist generation and the neo-avant-garde tradition of the 60s and the 70s is a striking phenomenon of the contemporary art of East-Central Europe.

Through contemporary artistic strategies like critical dialogue, remake, reenactment as well as borrowing, copying, and appropriation a broader re-evaluation concerning the legacy of the neo-avant-garde became possible, while the post-conceptual trends and artistic positions from the 90s became more comprehensible, too. The appropriation of the works of the “great generation,” the reenactment of the performances of the “fathers” from the 70s can be considered homages, the destruction of myths of the past, or the initiation of a critical dialogue with the artistic positions of the period. By doing so the new artist generation brings our attention back to the present and its own political dimensions.

This phenomenon can be observed in the work of Roman Ondák, starting his career in the 90s and achieving international recognition in the early 2000s. His relationship to the father of the Slovak concept art, Július Koller is not only professing his allegiance to a certain artistic genealogy, but expresses his desire engage with the experiences and problems embedded in Koller’s historical works. In my presentation I am going to analyze this “professional friendship,” the different stages and the development of their relationship, and the common pursuits of their artistic praxis as well as the links and interrelations of conceptual art of the 60s and post-conceptual trends of the 90s in Slovakia. The need felt by contemporary artists to pursue the attitudes developed in the 60s and the 70s by artists oppressed by the communist system even led to institutional dimensions. One such occasion was the exhibition 60/90 (the 4th Annual exhibition of SCCA Slovakia), which took place in Bratislava in 1997. 60/90 is of key importance from the perspective of the Koller-Ondák relationship. This initiative grew out of the need to define the local Slovak artistic tradition independent from both the communist regime and from former Czechoslovakia.

Through the analysis of the Koller-Ondák relationship I will investigate not only the academic exploration around the artistic production of the 60's and 70's, the commitment of (western) institutions, but the commercial aspect of the phenomenon, the role of the art market.