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From Alternative Scene to Art Video  
Video Production in Slovenia

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This text was archived at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb collection, as part of the **Research project** conceived in 1997 by a SCCAN – Soros Centers for Contemporary Art Network, funded by the Open Society Foundation, New York.

The purpose of the project was to select, collect and disseminate texts on contemporary art practices in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, around Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, written in and about art of the 1990s. The coordination of the project was carried out by Janka Vukmir, SCCA – Zagreb, today the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

We did not intervene in any of texts more than just correcting obvious typos and spelling. On the occasion of collecting texts, we were given permission from all authors, to rightfully use them. If anyone now has different instructions, please, contact us at the [info@institute.hr](mailto:info@institute.hr).

All of the texts we have collected at the time have been later published on the website of the I\_CAN, International Contemporary Art Network, the short-lived successor of the SCCAN.

On the occasion of the exhibition **90s: Scars**, revisiting the art practices and social and political context of the 1990s in the postcommunist countries, the Institute for Contemporary Art is now reoffering a collection of **89 texts and a comprehensive list of then proposed further readings**, on the website of the Institute for Contemporary Art, [www.institute.hr](http://www.institute.hr).

The exhibition 90s: Scars is curated by Janka Vukmir and organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art and the MMSU – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, on the occasion of the **European Cultural Capital Rijeka 2020**. Originally planned to open May 14, 2020, at the MMSU in Rijeka, due to COVID-19 crisis, is postponed until further notice.

Barbara Borčić

## From Alternative Scene to Art Video Video Production in Slovenia

The Slovene environment only witnessed a growth of mass video production in the eighties. Previously, video was more or less an exclusive and almost inaccessible medium. The first video tape in Slovenia was made in 1969 by Nuša & Srečo Dragan, members of the OHO group, the only Slovenian conceptualist movement in the seventies. The video tape was actually a frozen image with changing inscriptions. In this "pioneering" period, video was conceived and used as a new medium of direct and interactive communication with the participants, or simply as a documentary registration of artistic ideas, actions, or events. The duration of these videos depended on the length of the actions, and the image was simultaneously - without a delay - screened on the monitor, thus constituting the unity of actual place and sound, of real time and action. Then Miha Vipotnik, a Slovenian video artist, started to produce entirely different video works in the late seventies, and he also made the first video clip with the music group *Na lepem prijazni*. He worked in TV studios, and by means of a video synthesizer took advantage of all technical possibilities of the medium (the editing and transformation of the material, the manipulation of colours, forms and sounds). On the other hand, the Slovene painter Emil Memon was shooting ambient video works in the spirit of Andy Warhol's films and the music of the Velvet Underground, and later he even transferred the frozen images from video onto canvas.

The scene opened wide in the beginning of the eighties. Video equipment was becoming more and more accessible, and although it was not of high quality and allowed for merely a rough editing process, it had unimagined impact on a number of protagonists of "the Ljubljana alternative scene", and through them on the social and cultural context of the time. Numerous

documentary videos, *videos d'auteur*, and video clips were produced, with pronounced contents and messages. Video played a role similar to that of Polaroid and Xerox: it was an "instant" medium which was cheap, accessible, and not subject to control and censorship. Since it was not hindered by traditional codes, the video works of the time explored social and cultural issues, they disclosed the functioning of ideological mechanisms and aesthetic effect, and openly unveiled marginal and taboo themes. One of the prominent characteristics of the video production in Slovenia at the time was its strong connection with mass culture on the one hand, and an elaborated and constructive theoretical background on the other. Besides, video also formed part of various multimedia projects and performances (FV 112/15, Marko Kovačič, Borghesia, Kolaps). The *Škuc-Forum* video production acquired a specific position which cut deeply into the social consciousness. Marjan Osole - Max founded the *Brut Film* production. Apart from being an author and producer of numerous video tapes, he - together with Bogdan Lešnik - devised the program for *ATV*, the first independent television studio (which unfortunately never started operating). In the eighties, the *Cankarjev dom* Cultural and Congress Centre of Ljubljana, organized four International Video Biennials, entitled VIDEO CD; the alternative *FV Disko* produced and presented various video programs; the *ŠKUC* Gallery opened weekly Video-Box-Bar; and *Ekran* magazine introduced a special column on media.

The main characteristic of video production in the late eighties and early nineties was the concept of individual authorship. Nevertheless, a few artists specialised only in video. They originated within various social and artistic contexts, being primarily visual artists, film directors, designers, or journalists, who used the video medium as just another means of expression, or as a constituent part of their *Gesamtkunstwerk* practice. Consequently, the starting-point and the form of presentation of their work became much broader: almost as a rule, the authors utilised the form of video installation (Nataša Prosenc, Jasna Hribernik, Srečo Dragan, Marina Gržinić & Aina Šmid, Damijan Kracina, Marko Peljhan), intermedia project (Borghesia, Institut Egon March, Marko Kovačič), video sculpture (Marko A. Kovačič, Darij Kreuh), or video clip (Peter Vezjak, Mateja Klarič, Sašo Podgoršek, Mirko Simić, Marko A. Kovačič, Z. Alajbegović & N. Korda).

Nowadays, video works in Slovenia are more or less products of elaborated scenarios and shooting scripts, of large crews and high technology. The blue key or croma key procedures, used for stratification of visual material,

have become almost indispensable; the appropriation of ready-made (documentary) material (directly from TV) is still very frequent; narration and acting (performance, theatre, dance) are prominent.

We can say that in its 25 years' history, the video medium in Slovenia has made a great transition in contents, technical equipment, and form of expression: from more or less simple and direct, smoothly and slowly running images (gestures, actions), to quickly alternating shots and an elaborated narration. Video has become similar to film, or theatre, and the post-production process is more and more crucial and complicated. But contrary to predictions made in the eighties, the (professional) video technology has not turned more accessible. Despite the fact that video is now being taught as a special subject at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts, video artists are scarce, and new ones even scarcer. The advanced technology that has become prerequisite for almost every video production is limited to the national television and a few private studios (e.g. Video Production Kregar) which, besides *V.S. VIDEO FORUM* remains the only video producers in Slovenia. There is no information and distribution network and no comprehensive documentation, analysis and interpretation of Slovenian video works. This remains to be done in a constructive collaboration of all interested parties which are seriously engaged in the production and presentation of video.

And, finally, what about the actual position of video within the frame of Slovene art? Every fresh video work has its well-attended premiere screening, and it is also shown on the national television. Then it enters the process of programme selection at various international video and media festivals - where lately, to be frank, Slovene video works have been quite successful and won a number of awards and prizes. But none of the video festivals formerly held in ex-Yugoslav cities (Sarajevo, Skopje, Belgrade, and Ljubljana) persists. The first Slovene video festival was organized in Idrija in 1992, but it seems that it was held once and for all. So, the only larger video event in the last few years in Slovenia remains the International Video Dance Festival, organised yearly by the Ljubljana Dance Theatre.