

Saturday 22.10.2016 – Sunday 29.01.2017

Art in Europe 1945–1968

The Continent that the EU does not know.

ZKM_Atrium 1+2

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The exhibition will open on Friday 21.10.2016 at 19:30. The press conference is taking place on Thursday 20.10.2016 at 11:00.

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Together with important institutions, such as the Palais des Beaux-Arts (BOZAR) in Brussels, the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts and the ROSIZO State Museum and Exhibition Center in Moscow, the ZKM | Karlsruhe is organizing the large-scale *Art in Europe 1945-1968* exhibition project – curated by Eckhart Gillen and Peter Weibel, with the assistance of Daria Mille and Daniel Bulatov. The exhibition focuses on the connecting cultural forces on the Eurasian continent and takes into account a central cultural region, which has been repeatedly shattered and disrupted by wars and crises in the 20th century. Using artwork and a documentary timeline, the exhibition highlights the fracturing of civilisation in World War II and the Neo-Avant-Garde approach of the post-war era, which occurred as a reaction.

With the collaborative efforts of three internationally-renowned museums, the exhibition unites approx. 500 loans from over 200 artists into a panorama of pan-European art development on both sides of the historic Iron Curtain. The three museums have different focuses depending on their history and geographic location. At the ZKM, which is focussing on the experimental artistic developments of the 1950s and 1960s in one of its programme lines, the exhibition is experiencing independent prioritisation and expansion. Representatives of Western Neo-Avant-Garde, such as Zero, Nul and the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, are now appearing at the ZKM for the first time in the context of new Eastern European and Russian trends that have developed in parallel – such as the Nove Tendencije and the Dvizhenie group. The latest on innovations, freedom of the individual, risk and resistance and narratives focussing on research and development for Europe can be seen.

Europe 1945 to 1968

The period of 1945 to 1968, which is highlighted in the exhibition, stands in many ways for forward-looking artistic and political perspectives. At the end of World War II, the political and cultural boundaries were increasingly solidified by the Iron Curtain, which separated Europe into Western and Eastern Europe. The Yalta Conference (1945) with Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin relinquished Eastern Europe politically to the dictatorship of Stalin, which was

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Lorenzstraße 19

76135 Karlsruhe

Cooperation partners of the exhibition



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tantamount to an auto-amputation of Europe. In 1968, a new eastern policy was introduced, which led to a reunification of Western and Eastern Germany in 1989 due to the Fall of the Wall. This can be seen as a signal for the subsequent formation of the European Union.

Art and the Cold War

To date, the attention of historiography was largely focussed on abstract expressionism as a symbolization of the free West, while the socialist realism embodied the conservatism of the Communist East. But today, we know that this dominant model of art history was a product of the Cold War. For this reason, the exhibition attempts to reinterpret the development of art in Europe from a pan-European perspective and accounts for a specific renaissance of European art and culture in the period of 1945 - 1968. While the exhibition project brings together the neo avant-garde from the East and West, it becomes evident that many new art forms (produced after the war) – from media art to conceptual art, from performance art to sound art – originated in Europe or were formulated simultaneously in Western Europe, the USA, Russia and Eastern Europe in parallel developments: e.g. representatives of Pop Art from Eastern Europe, whose art was often politically motivated, are as yet far less well-known than their American or English colleagues.

A new narrative for Europe

Several new narratives for Europe are developing with the exhibition and the catalogue accompanying it.

Firstly, post-war art is being interpreted as the processing of traumatic experiences of the World War II, the Holocaust and nuclear annihilation. On one hand, the answer is: Crisis and rejection of representation by abstraction, on the other hand: Destruction of the means of representation and processing of materials of the violations. Secondly, around 1960, the abandonment of abstraction and the devotion to objects begins, e.g. in the form of New Realism. As a result, the expansion of the arts into technical media and into the forms of action of the artist and public emerges. Thirdly, the departure from Utopia is exhibited, which is expressed intently in 1968. The invasion of Warsaw Pact troops into Prague took place at the same time in 1968. These events mark the end of the exhibition.

Fourthly, the exhibition aims to culturally unite the historically divided Europe. In doing so, the phenomenon comes to light that the nations, which have been separated for decades, have not given sufficient consideration to the cultures of the other nations despite the end of the Cold War.

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Peter Weibel: “With the exhibition, we are making a dedicated plea for Europe.”

“The foundation of the European Union in 1992 to 1993, based on the economic European Coal and Steel Community and the Monetary Union, do not seem to have led to a Europe which is really united. The divide is growing increasingly between the European Union and the states of Europe and more and more populist parties are demanding their nation’s exit from the EU. Brexit is a first and serious signal. The equation ‘less or more EU or less or more national state’ is the wrong equation. We are finding that religions, nations and politics are separating people. However, we know that art and culture can unite people and nations. It seems as if the ‘cultural continent of Europe’ is not acknowledged by the EU body – the subtitle of the exhibition ‘The Continent that the EU does not know’ expresses this painful experience. And the fate of the financial support of this exhibition bears witness to this experience. For this reason, the few sponsors must be given express thanks, the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin and the State Foundation of Baden-Württemberg. The EU only supported the project of the documentary timeline in the exhibition and the digital timeline developed in the ZKM (app with responsive website).

This reunification of Eastern and Western Europe, as put into place by the exhibition in the name of art, not only closes a gap within art history. It should also be taken as an active pleading for Europe – with the future in sight. The exhibition contrasts the current economic and political accounts, which are driving Europe apart, with a committed, alternative narrative. It is the task of art to show alternatives and facilitate change.”

Presented artists (selection):

Giovanni Anselmo, Arman, Vojin Bakić, Max Beckmann, Joseph Beuys, Günter Brus, Alberto Burri, Alberto Biasi, Dadamaino, Alexander Deineka, Herman de Vries, Öyvind Fahlström, Jean Fautrier, Stano Filko, Poul Gernes, Tomislav Gotovac, Karl Otto Götz, Raymond Hains, Eva Hesse, Alfred Hrdlicka, Tadeusz Kantor, Yves Klein, Gyula Konkoly, Vladimir Kristl, Erkki Kurenniemi, Laszlo Lakner, Fernand Léger, Heinz Mack, Karel Malich, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Mario Merz, Harald Metzkes, Frieder Nake, Nam June Paik, Pablo Picasso, Victor Popkov, Equipo Realidad, Gerhard Richter, Mikhail Roginsky, Alina Szapocznikow, Nicolas Schöffer, Kjartan Slettemark, Jesus Raphael Soto, Daniel Spoerri, Zdeněk Sýkora, Paul Talman, Jean Tinguely, Werner Tübke, Günther Uecker, Timm Ulrichs, Gabriele de Vecchi, Wolf Vostell, Stephen Willats, Ossip Zadkine, Gilberto Zorio

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The sites of the exhibition

BOZAR (Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles)
23rd June to 25th September 2016

ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe
22nd October 2016 to 29th January 2017

Pushkin State Museum Of Fine Arts
7th March to 28th May 2017

Thurs 17.11.2016, 18.30

Author reading

ZKM_Kubus, free entry

In cooperation with the BOZAR and this year's guest of honour of the Frankfurt Book Fair *Flanders & the Netherlands*, the ZKM invites you to an author's reading in the *Art in Europe 1945–1968* exhibition, in which Flemish and Dutch authors will read aloud literary works which they have written on the occasion of the exhibition. Each author has taken a piece of work from the exhibition as a source of inspiration for their writing.

Poet and author Armando speaks about his life and his collaboration with Matthijs de Ridder. Then poets Els Moors, Monika Rinck, Maarten van der Graaff and Peter Verhelst will read aloud their poetry.

Exhibition as part of the *Trauma and Revival* EU project

Together with the BOZAR in Brussels, the Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, the Association kim? in Riga, the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art in Poland and the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, the ZKM | Karlsruhe is part of the EU-subsidised *Trauma and Revival* project (2016-2018). Based on the documentary timeline presented three-dimensionally within the exhibition, which visualises central political and artistic events of the past in Europe, the ZKM is launching a digital timeline. As an app and responsible website, the digital timeline will be the connector between the different partner activities, such as artists' residences, conferences and round table discussions. In addition, it is to be used as an educational tool in selected schools in Karlsruhe for history lessons.

The digital timeline is made up of two narrative lines: firstly, historic events from 1945 to 1968 (including the Yalta Conference, the construction of the Berlin Wall, the student movements of 1968 and the Prague Spring) and secondly, significant contemporary art exhibitions, artist manifestoes, campaigns, quotes, etc. The timeline is made up of historic photographs and documents, posters, books, objects and film material.

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