

VESNA VUKOVIĆ

Women's/Feminist Art in the Late Socialism: A Shift of Perspective

The conceptual ambivalences between *women's art* and *feminist art* have marked feminist debates until the 1990s, when the issue was largely considered settled. Drawing on the recent “revisionist turn” in post-socialist feminist art history, I argue that this debate has gained renewed momentum, necessitating a critical re-evaluation of established paradigms. Existing interpretive models of Western feminist theory and art history exhibit limitations when applied to artistic production in socialism as a different socio-political organization – a factor that has contributed to the historical marginalization of women's visual production in Croatia and Central Eastern Europe in general. Furthermore, the feminist canon's historical preference for non-traditional media (such as performance, body art, and photography) has inadvertently obscured significant contributions within traditional forms. By moving beyond this historical deadlock, my research seeks to expand the scholarly horizons of women's art production in the socialist Croatia and to feminist aesthetics in general, calling for a shift of perspective. It could be argued that women's art production of the late socialist period has been double-marginalized: once in the national framework, due to the gendered institution of art and gendered structures of art history as a discipline, and again by Western hegemony in narrating global art history from a feminist standpoint.

Vesna Vuković is a researcher, curator, and critic, and a PhD candidate at the Department of Art History at the University of Zadar. In the 2024/2025 academic year, she was a visiting researcher at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz. Since 2025, she has been an external collaborator on the research project *Digital Networked, Spatial, and (Con)textual Analysis of 20th-Century Artistic Phenomena and Heritage – DIGitART* at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb. Her research interests focus on the relationship between modern and contemporary art and political and social movements, socially engaged art, and feminism. She is a co-founder of the curatorial collective BLOK, with which she has realized numerous exhibitions, research projects, publications, and initiatives in the field of contemporary art. Since 2018, she has edited BLOK's *Tendencies* library series. As an external lecturer, she has taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and the Arts Academy in Split, as well as in a range of non-institutional educational programs.

TOBEY YUNJING PAN

Prettiness on Screen and the Global Division of Sexualised Labour at the End of the Twentieth Century

This lecture examines the application of Marxist feminism and social reproduction theory in art history. The lecture first problematises how the theorisation of “the body” in art often overlooks the materiality of bodies as labour power shaped by historical conditions. Marxist feminists' engagement with Marxian concepts such as “free” labour power, the working day, abstract time, and social reproduction is especially helpful in understanding how the image of the body goes beyond the realm of visual representation of meaning – rather, it is grounded in its materiality as labour power. I will demonstrate this method by comparing hyper-sexualised representations of women's bodies on screen in the capitalist centre, exemplified by the Hollywood blockbuster *Pretty Woman* (1990), and those in the so-called peripheries, as seen in the Hungarian documentary *Pretty Girls* (1987).

Tobey Yunjing Pan is currently in the writing-up stage of her PhD in History of Art at the University of Edinburgh. Her thesis examines women's experimental art in East-Central Europe during the 1970s and 1980s and is supported by a scholarship from the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities, under the supervision of Prof. Angela Dimitrakaki and Dr. Lucy Weir. Drawing on archival research, interviews with artists and researchers, and Marxist feminist debates on social reproduction theory, her PhD explores whether—and how—the work of women artists produced in contexts with a tentative relationship to market demands can contribute to the histories of transnational feminist thought. Before beginning her PhD, Tobey worked in the Beijing contemporary art market and the charitable sector; she is originally from China, where she studied Linguistics at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

KATA BENEDEK

Against Speculation: Empiricism as Method in State-Socialist LGBT Cultural History

The lack of continuous, mediative, and preservative state-socialist-focused public dialogue on sexual minorities, combined with the post-socialist eagerness for epistemic alignment with liberal-democratic narratives, prevents us from recognizing East Central European queer (cultural) history as a complex form of discourse. This is demonstrated in the sporadic body of secondary literature, which is often caught in belief biases and circular arguments. Taking Hungary as a case study, I present a set of experimental methodological approaches aimed at evidence-based partial reconstructions of LGBT epistemes under state socialism. Through these methods, I seek to reposition and reinterpret forms of LGBT representation within their specific historical, cultural, and political contexts.

Kata Benedek, PhD, is an art historian focusing on queer cultural history and memory politics in East Central Europe. Her approach combines cultural analysis with evidence-based historical reconstruction. Her recent publications include [*Cross-border chaos: A Corrective Review of Monika Talarczyk's "Cross-Border Lesbian Romance? On the Reception of Another Way in Poland and Hungary, Deconstructing the Imagined Queer Censorship in State-Socialist East-Central Europe: The Hungarian Case of Cinema, El Kazovszkij Revisited: Queer \(In-\)Visibilities in State Socialist East Central European Cultural Fields, and Circulation of Queer Ideas in the State Socialist Hungarian People's Republic.*](#) From April 2026, as a postdoctoral fellow at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague, she is researching the HIV/AIDS pandemic in late socialist societies through a comparative regional lens: *Transnational Responses to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in State-Socialist East Central Europe, 1983–1989. State Policy, LGBT Citizenship and Activism in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland.* Alongside her academic work, she engages in public discourse as a freelance journalist.