

27th-28th JUNE, 2023

# Enchanted Socialist Modernity?

ONLINE CONFERENCE

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY

ART OF CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE IN THE  
FACE OF ESOTERISM  
AND UNCONVENTIONAL  
SPIRITUALITIES

1945-1989

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

# June 27th

---

9.45–10.00 am Justyna Balisz-Schmelz, Kamila Dworniczak,  
Welcome & Opening Remarks

## SESSION 1: DEFINING OCCULT IN SOCIALIST STATES

---

10.00–10.20 am Agata Stronciwilk  
*The Spirituality of Carbocene. On Coal and the Art of the Upper Silesia*

10.20–10.40 am Martin Jemelka  
*Silesian Spiritist Media Drawing: Contemporary and Social Contexts, Representatives and International Response*

10.40–11.00 am Erzsébet Tatai  
*Occult Hungary. Spiritual in Art in Hungary between 1945–1989*

11.00–11.30 am Discussion

11.30–12.00 pm Coffee Break

## SESSION 2: UTOPIAS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ESOTERICISM

---

12.00–12.20 pm Łukasz Żuchowski  
*'Are there ghosts in the fourth dimension?'*  
*Xawery Dunikowski's Late Paintings and the Cosmic Esotericism in Early Communist Poland*

12.20–12.40 pm Veneta Todorova Ivanova  
*"Unity, Creativity, Beauty": Art, Aesthetics and Spirituality in Late Socialist Bulgaria*

12.40–13.00 pm Andres Kurg, Mari Laanemets  
*Forecast and Fantasy: Two Case Studies*

13.00–13.20 pm Radek Przedpełski  
*Esoteric Conceptualism. Ancient Funerary Magic and Talismanic Media in Natalia LL's and Marek Konieczny's Cosmotekhnical Intermedia Performance Practices in the 1970s*

From 13.20 pm Discussion

PROGRAM

ENCHANTED SOCIALIST MODERNITY?  
Art of Central and Eastern Europe  
in the Face of Esotericism and  
Unconventional Spiritualities 1945–1989

ONLINE CONFERENCE  
27–28th June 2023  
University of Warsaw  
Institute of Art History

2

# June 28th

---

PROGRAM

## SESSION 3: INNER LANDSCAPES

---

- 10.00–10.20 am Stella Peļše  
*Making Visible: Mandalas and Fibulae of Genādijs Suhanovs*
- 10.20–10.40 am Bohdan Pylypushko  
*Spiritual Turn and Inner Emigration in Ukrainian Artistic Nonconformism of the 1970s–1980s on the Example of Oleksandr Aksinin*
- 10.40–11.00 am Dora Derado Giljanović  
*Alternative Artists in Search of Altered States of Consciousness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis*
- 11.00–11.30 am Discussion
- 11.30–12.00 pm Coffee Break

ENCHANTED SOCIALIST MODERNITY?  
Art of Central and Eastern Europe  
in the Face of Esotericism and  
Unconventional Spiritualities 1949–1989

## SESSION 4: TOWARDS CAPITALISTIC OCCULTISM

---

- 12.00–12.20 pm Jakub Banasiak  
*The Art of the New Spirituality. Polish Art between Socialist and Capitalist Modernity*
- 12.20–12.40 pm Jarosław Lubiak  
*Mystical Materialism? Koto Klipsa as a Case Study for the Spiritual Turn in Poland of the late 1980s*
- 12.40–13.00 pm Marta Kudelska, *Dark Side of the Young Art in Poland*
- From 13.00 pm Discussion

ONLINE CONFERENCE  
27–28th June 2023  
University of Warsaw  
Institute of Art History

# Abstracts & Biographical Information

(in order of presentation)

## SESSION 1: DEFINING OCCULT IN SOCIALIST STATES

---

### *The Spirituality of Carbocene. On Coal and the Art of the Upper Silesia*

Timothy James LeCain proposed an alternative to the term Anthropocene, emphasizing our dependence on burning black hydrocarbons. Defining the "Carbocene" as the age of coal and oil, he mentions the tremendous power of hydrocarbon fuel sources and the influence of their excavation on the environment. During the socialist period coal mining became a vital industry in Poland. In the proposed paper I concentrate on the non-professional Upper Silesian art, not solely on the renowned Janowska Group but also graphics by Gwarek'58 and Ludwik Hołesz's carboniferous-inspired paintings. I argue that the spiritual dimension of the non-professional Upper Silesian art was not solely the result of Teofil Ociepka's occult and esoteric fascinations and his direct influences. The spiritual aspect was also connected with the symbolism and metaphysics of exploring (and exploiting) the underground. Catabasis is one of the most prevailing symbolic narratives that appears in cultures worldwide. Humans and heroes descend to the underground to meet, speak to, or even bring back the dead. The underground space of a coal mine was once considered sacred. The fear and awe of exploring the mysterious subterranean world were visible in coal miners' belief systems, customs, and art. There is also a metaphysics of the coal itself – as we realize that it is an undecayed organic matter, former life forms which are being excavated and then burned. The paper concentrates on the spiritual aspect of the coal industry and how it was reflected in art. There is also one vital aspect – the relation between the spiritual dimension of the Upper Silesian non-professional art and the official state politics, which was reluctant to metaphysical inquiries.

AGATA STRONCIWILK, PhD, visiting professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, assistant professor at Institute of Art Studies at the University of Silesia in Katowice. She received the Fulbright

Slavic Award for the year 2022/2023. She also received a scholarship at the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies at the University of Edmonton. From 2014 to 2018 she worked at the Silesian Museum in Katowice.

---

*Silesian Spiritist Media Drawing: Contemporary and Social Contexts, Representatives and International Response*

From the end of the 19th century, the spiritist movement took deep roots in the Ostrava–Karviná coalfield. After the end of the First World War, it had hundreds of followers, dozens of associations and thousands of supporters in the region. Silesian Spiritualists made their presence known in a number of forums and social or artistic activities. Among the most important ones were visual arts, led by the so-called medium drawing. Among the Silesian Spiritists we could find a number of amateur draughtsman who exhibited their drawings between the world wars at the local level as well as at foreign exhibitions (Vienna). Among the crowd of anonymous men and women who were engaged in spiritist drawing in anonymity even during the Nazi occupation and the era of state socialism, the figure of Josef Kotzian, whose automatic medium drawings were admired by Alfons Mucha, stands out. Kotzian's life and mediumistic drawing, as well as the broader context of his artistic and other artistic activities, will be the subject of a paper.

MARTIN JEMELKA, PhD, a Czech historian of modern religious, economic and social history (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), who has been working on the history of Silesian Spiritism for several years.

---

*Occult Hungary. Spiritual in Art in Hungary between 1945–1989*

In post-World War II Hungary, dialectical and historical materialism took hold of intellectual life. From 1948, the communist dictatorship made socialist realism compulsory in art, for which the first Soviet art exhibition was organized as a model. Although a slow modernisation began after the 1956 revolution, the doctrine of socialist realism remained in force until 1989. So occult art had no place in the public sphere – in fact, for decades anything that was not socialist realist was in some sense considered occult. The boundaries of certain categories have become blurred, all the more so as the notion that anything with a spirituality is occult, esoteric, mysterious and mystical has become commonplace in the (secret) circles of the opponents. In my paper I will review how occult knowledge spread and how artists were connected to it during the 40 years of communism. The questions of mapping “occult modernism” are what was the content of this “secret knowledge”, who



and how did they get it, and finally, how do the artists' works relate to this secret knowledge.

ERZSÉBET TATAI, PhD, Art Historian, senior research fellow at the Institut for Art History of the Research Center for the Humanities and senior lecturer at the Metropolitan University Budapest. Her main research fields are Environmental Culture, Modern and Contemporary Hungarian Art, Visual Culture, Neo-Conceptual Art and Feminist Art. She was the chief curator of Bartók 32 Gallery and of Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle) Budapest, she has published more than 2000 articles and essays, edited books. Her books: *Introduction to Art History* (2002), *Neo-Conceptual Art in Hungary in the Nineties* (2005), *Say You Love Me – on Endre Koronczai* (2013), *Marianne Csáky* (2014), *Tempting the impossible. Creative Women – Essays and Studies on Contemporary Hungarian Art* (2019), *Survival Practices – On Ágnes Szabics* (2020) .

## SESSION 2: UTOPIAS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ESOTERICISM

---

*'Are there ghosts in the fourth dimension?' Xawery Dunikowski's Late Paintings and the Cosmic Esotericism in Early Communist Poland*

In a period between 1946 and 1960 Xawery Dunikowski (1875–1964), one of the most important Polish sculptors of the 1st half of 20th century, turned to painting to create what he termed his 'philosophical cycle' that deals with 'the mystery of being'. The resulting project seems to have been designed as a creative testament, articulating more openly than ever before his interest in strands of esotericism, romantic thought and science of higher spatial dimensions. The paper, based on research in the artist's archives, analyzes Dunikowski's work in relation to his public image as a state sculptor of communist Poland. It highlights how Dunikowski's religious syncretism was being consistently censored, mainly by his secretary Maria Flukowska (1904–1977), in order to make his work fit a new political regime's animosity towards religion. Following Steven Shapin, the paper argues that Dunikowski's work was not only at odds with the state policy, but with the rising skepticism towards the use of analogy in popular-scientific language as well. Within the context of that period the artist was an outlier in a triple sense as one of the last members of the Young Poland generation touched by the influence of esoteric thought and its speculative interests; as an artist engaging with science in ways that are unfit for the newly established paradigm. Finally, as a public figure being forced to conceal his spiritual and religious beliefs in order to keep his position.

The paper argues that Dunikowski's work 'lateness' is paradoxical it summarizes his 'theory of art' as much as it anticipates esoteric revival of the late 1960s.

ŁUKASZ ŻUCHOWSKI is a doctoral student at the Institute of Art History at University of Warsaw, where he also completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. He is currently working on a PhD thesis related to Xawery Dunikowski and the problems of the fourth dimension in Polish modernist and avant-garde art under the supervision of prof. Iwona Luba. His main interests are modern and contemporary art and science and contemporary relationships between art and counterculture. He has published his articles in the publications of the National Museum in Warsaw and the University of Warsaw. He is a recipient of the second edition of Joseph Conrad Fellowship.

---

*"Unity, Creativity, Beauty": Art, Aesthetics and Spirituality  
in Late Socialist Bulgaria*

This paper explores the unlikely infusion of state-sponsored spiritualism into the materialist ideology of Bulgarian late communism. In the 1970s, Minister of Culture and daughter of party leader Lyudmila Zhivkova initiated grandiose state programs to inject the "occult" into Bulgaria's national culture, art, science, and even political philosophy. Inspired by her Eastern religious beliefs, she sought to "breed" a nation of "all-round and harmoniously developed individuals," devoted to spiritual self-perfection, who would ultimately "work, live and create according to the laws of beauty." How are we to explain such a paradoxical lapse into state-sponsored spiritualism in a milieu dominated by materialism as a philosophy and way of life? How did Zhivkova's occultism inform and transform Bulgarian late socialism? In pursuit of these questions, the paper opens with Zhivkova's intellectual and political trajectories, especially her spiritual formation, as I see her religiosity as the cornerstone of her cultural theory and praxis. The second part reconstructs Zhivkova's aesthetic theory, while the third demonstrates how it was translated into a large-scale aesthetic-spiritual utopia, which posited art, culture, aesthetics, and spirituality as a way to revamp the entire communist project. I argue that as utopian as Zhivkova's vision was, her policies contributed to the liberalization of art and culture in a period that has long been associated exclusively with stagnation and decay. In so doing, I demonstrate that impulses to attach "a human face" to the communist project endured even after the Prague Spring of 1968.

VENETA T. IVANOVA, received her PhD in History from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2017. She held a Max Weber Fellowship at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy (2017–2018). She

was a Visiting Assistant Professor at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia (2018–2019), where she taught courses on East Central Europe, Modern Europe, and Global Utopias. Currently she is a researcher at the Research Centre for Modern History Panteion University of Social & Political Sciences. She is a historian of modern Europe with focus on Eastern Europe and the Balkans, with broader research interests in comparative socialism, the history of science and religion, global utopias, and theories and philosophies of modernity. Her current project "Socialism and Occultism: Global Entanglements" centers on the interplay between socialism, occultism, religion, science, and utopia in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. Charting the concrete historical entanglements between socialism and occultism from Victorian London, to fin-de-siècle Greece to early Soviet Russia to late communist Bulgaria, her research suggests that the ideological amalgam between spiritualism and socialism is not as paradoxical as it appears.

---

*Forecast and Fantasy: Two Case Studies.*

The exhibition "Forecast and Fantasy: Architecture without Borders, 1960s to 1980s" held at the Estonian Museum of Architecture (January – April 2023) brought together scientific predictions and futuristic fantasies that were manifested in architecture and art of the Eastern bloc. We looked at works that emerged from the new technological reality that followed the Second World War, and which took it along unexpected paths: foreseeing the replacement of work with games and collective pleasures in computerized societies, turning away from the overarching machine logic and replacing it with myths and romantic ideas of the human being, or looking for traces of other civilizations from space, instead of conquering it. Among other groups, we looked at works by the Moscow collective *Dvizhenie*, that from the late 1960s worked on several projects bringing together ideas of technological and scientific development in biology and cybernetics, with fantasy scenarios bordering on mysticism. In our presentation we will focus on two close readings as an example for how to frame the turn towards mystical and spiritual in Soviet architecture and art. One would be the *Dvizhenie* group and the second the competition entry for the Arctic Centre by Vilen Künnapu and Ain Padrik (1984).

ANDRES KURG, Ph.D. is a Professor, Senior Researcher and Head of the PhD Curriculum in Art History and Visual Culture at the Institute of Art History, Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn. His research focuses on architecture and design in the Soviet Union in the 1960s–1980s in relation to changes in technology and everyday life, and to alternative art practices. He studied Art History at Estonian Academy of Arts, Architectural History at University College London and he was a Guest Scholar at the



Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles (2015). In 2017 he was a Visiting Senior Researcher in European Studies at MacMillan Center, Yale University. He has published numerous articles in scholarly journals, such as "AA Files", "ArtMargins", "Journal of Architecture", collected volumes and catalogues. In 2008 he co-edited (with Mari Laanemets) a volume *Environment, Projects, Concepts: Architects of the Tallinn School 1972–1985*. He is also an exhibitions curator, with Mari Laanemets he co-curated: *Forecast and Fantasy: Architecture Without Borders, 1960s–1980s* (Museum of Estonian Architecture, 2023), *Our Metamorphic Futures. Design, Technical Aesthetics and Experimental Architecture in the Soviet Union 1960–1980* (Vilnius National Gallery of Art and Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2011–12).

MARI LAANEMETS, Ph.D. is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Art History, Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn. Her research focuses on 1960s and 1970s alternative art in the Soviet Union and its intersections with architecture and design practices, on post-war abstractionism and the aesthetics of modernisation in Eastern Europe. She studied Art History at Estonian Academy of Arts and earned her Ph.D. at the Institute of Art History at the Humboldt University of Berlin (with a work *Zwischen westlicher Moderne und sowjetischer Avantgarde: Inoffizielle Kunst in Estland 1969–1978*, published in 2011). She has published several articles and essays (on such artists as Leonhard Lapin, Mladen Stilić, Sirje Runge). In 2008 she co-edited (with Andres Kurg) a volume *Environment, Projects, Concepts: Architects of the Tallinn School 1972–1985*. She is also an exhibitions curator. In 2018 she curated *Abstraction as Open Experiment* at Tallinn Art Hall and with Andres Kurg she was a co-curator of *Forecast and Fantasy: Architecture Without Borders, 1960s–1980s* (Museum of Estonian Architecture, 2023) and *Our Metamorphic Futures. Design, Technical Aesthetics and Experimental Architecture in the Soviet Union 1960–1980* (Vilnius National Gallery of Art and Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2011–12).

---

*Esoteric Conceptualism. Ancient Funerary Magic and Talismanic Media in Natalia LL's and Marek Konieczny's Cosmotechanical Intermedia Performance Practices in the 1970s.*

Ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead* is a New Kingdom-era text concerned with funerary magical techniques for ensuring a deceased's passage into a robustly material otherworld which then acts as a portal allowing to revisit the world of the living. The present paper will advance a *preposterous* (in the sense of Mieke Bal) claim that on the margins of techno-scientific conceptualism in Peoples' Republic of Poland under First Secretary Edward Gierek (1970–80), there arose a transversal, untimely thread of neo-avant-garde intermedia performance that can

be called an *esoteric conceptualism*. This esoteric conceptualism sought to counter-actualise the state's ideological takeover of the body, time and the future in particular by embracing the idea that technology is cosmological and cosmology—already technical. Though a case study of practices of Natalia LL (1937–2022) and Marek Konieczny (1936–2022), forerunners of Polish feminist and queer fetish art, respectively, the presentation will show how Ancient Egyptian funerary practices surrounding passage into the otherworld and techniques for ensuring immortality are reinvented to create a new commons grounded in the unground—emphasizing intuition; non-ocularcentric sensing and modes of embodiment; talismanic operations whereby the image is no longer representational but a relay folding in the cosmos; dreaming and ways of bending, or counter-actualising (in the sense of Deleuze), linear time. This preposterous media archaeology will employ the framework of *cosmotronics* developed by Yuk Hui, the processual philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Laura U. Marks' work on talismanic media in Islamic Neoplatonism, as well as insights from Jalal Toufic on "encounter[ing] modes of the dead-as-undead" to tackle a host of practices marginalized by both mainstream "global" (i.e. West-centric) art history and Polish conceptualism.

RADEK PRZEDPEŁSKI, Ph.D. is an artist and media scholar lecturing in interactive digital media at Trinity College Dublin. Radek's PhD was on 1970s neo-avant-garde intermedia in the Polish People's Republic, with a focus on Marek Konieczny (the topic of Radek's upcoming monograph). Radek co-edited a volume on *Deleuze, Guattari and the Art of Multiplicity* published by Edinburgh University Press in 2020. Radek is a curator, together with Laura U. Marks, of the annual Small File Media Festival hosted by SFU's School for the Creative Arts (SCA). Radek is a member of Substantial Motion Research Network founded by Laura U. Marks and Azadeh Emadi for cross-cultural investigation of media art, as well as a curator, together with Marks, of the annual Small File Media Festival hosted by the School for the Creative Arts at Vancouver's Simon Fraser University (SFU). In 2022 Radek managed and co-organised a symposium "A Light Footprint in the Cosmos" on decolonial media philosophy and practice at SFU Goldcorp Centre for Arts, accompanied by performances, exhibitions, and screenings. Radek's practice in small-file video explores ecological systems and rituals of tuning into the earth, with a view to create focal points (*points-clefs*) for connecting with the cosmos. Radek's multi-channel video installation *Mountain Soul-Assemblages* was recently exhibited at the SCA's Studio T exhibition space in Vancouver. Radek is currently coediting—with Marks and scholar Farshid Kazemi—a special journal issue of *Techniques* on apotropaic powers and contemporary media.

*Making Visible: Mandalas and Fibulae of Genādijs Suhanovs*

Swiss artist Paul Klee who was much fascinated by enigmatic, hieroglyphic signs wrote in 1920 that "art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible". Works of the graphic artist of Russian origin Genādijs Suhanovs (1946–2005) who resided in Latvia since 1973 are not formally close to Klee's output. Still, they seem to be similarly interested in visualizing what is beyond the simply visible. They are visions of strange, semi-abstract structures with an esoteric flavor. Interest in mystic and esoteric subjects can be seen as a counter-current to the official omnipotence of science upheld by the Soviet ideology. As its grip on all spheres of life began to wane in the late 1970s – early 1980s, ethnographic heritage with its ornamental signs as bearers of ancient wisdom also came to the fore. Technically, Suhanovs used lithography in an experimental way, mixed with ink washes, pencils, gold and silver pigments, etc. His works, for example, titled *Exit to Biofield* or *Energetic Fibula*, often hint at maps or plans of some secret facilities, oriental mandalas or Bronze-age archaeological finds. Geometric elements are at times complemented with amorphous, irregular blobs and color fields. Technical draughtsman's precision largely evident in his works contrasts with Suhanovs' bohemian image and lifestyle, retaining some traits of a romantic "artist-outsider".

STELLA PELŠE received PhD in art history from the Art academy of Latvia for the study "History of Latvian Art Theory: Definitions of Art in the Context of the Prevailing Ideas of the Time (1900–1940)" (2004, published in 2007). She has worked at the Institute of Art History since 1993. Research interests: art theory, art history, art criticism, aesthetics, contemporary art. Numerous publications in scholarly journals, collected articles, catalogues, albums, etc. Contributor to the books *Latvijas mākslas vēsture* (Art History of Latvia, Riga, 2003), *Deviņdesmitie. Lai kmeņīgā māksla Latvijā=The Nineties. Contemporary Art in Latvia* (Riga, 2010), *Reinterpreting the Past: Traditionalist Artistic Trends in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1920s and 1930s* (Warsaw, 2010), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks* (Leiden & Boston, 2012), vol. 1 of *Latvia and Latvians* (Riga, 2018), *State Construction and Art in East Central Europe, 1918–2018* (Routledge, 2022), etc. One of the principal authors and translators in the multi-volume project *Art History of Latvia* launched in 2013 (vol. 4 – 2014; vol. 5 – 2016; vol. 3 – 2019). Currently working on the upcoming 6th volume *Art History of Latvia: Period of Occupations and the Diaspora: 1940–1985*.

---

*Spiritual Turn and Inner Emigration in Ukrainian Artistic Nonconformism of the 1970s–1980s on the Example of Oleksandr Aksinin*

One of the paths in development of artistic nonconformism in Soviet Ukraine in the 1970s–1980s was a silent internal protest accompanied by an arrangement according to individual rules of personal and cultural life. It is also a period of de-hermetization of Ukrainian artistic nonconformism. The inner emigrants' network extended beyond the apartment-workshop-city through the practice of correspondence and visits. These tendencies have a vivid expression in the environment of Lviv's unofficial art, which included the underground graphic artist Oleksandr Aksinin (1949–1985). He spent his whole life in Lviv, but actively exhibited and published in Poland and the Baltic countries, and maintained creative contacts with artists such as Stasys Eidrigevičius, Stanisław Fijałkowski and Tõnis Vint – one of the key figures of unofficial Estonian artistic life. The young generation of Lviv artists (Yury Charyshnikov, Valery Demyanishin, Nadia Ponomarenko) tended to avoid political and national themes, that were significant to the older generation, instead focusing on literal and creative explorations, western and eastern philosophy, alchemy and Buddhism. The spiritual turn to the East determined the fascination for esoteric practices and religious themes, which continued in the artistic work. Lviv graphics was heavily influenced by this new way of thinking – a mixture of Zen, mysticism, irony and author's commentary. The art of Aksinin sheds light on the influence of Eastern philosophy. He often referred to philosophical texts in his works, in particular the „I Ching“. One of Aksinin's series of bookplates is an interpretation of hexagrams from this important text of Chinese culture.

BOHDAN PYLYPUSHKO, born 1990, Sumy, Ukraine, lives in Warsaw. Is an artist and art historian. His study focuses on inner emigration and unofficial culture in Soviet Ukraine and the research perspectives of art methodology in relation to literary theory and texts of culture.

---

*Alternative Artists in Search of Altered States of Consciousness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis*

This paper will present three case studies of artists that lived and closely worked together in the city of Split in Croatia: Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Pavao Dulčić, and Zlatan Dumanić. While Trokut and Dulčić were both part of the Red Peristyle group (formed, no less, in 1968), Trokut and Dumanić collaborated closely in a different context, sharing many similar interests and ideas, including an affinity towards collecting oddities and fashioning their living spaces into Gesamtkunstwerke or Wunderkammera of sorts. One thing all three had in common was a taste for esoteric practices to a lesser or larger degree. Trokut has been called an

alchemist and a mystic and some of Dumanić's works can be interpreted as having an almost ritualistic component to them or perhaps a magical meaning. Dulčić, whose œuvre has yet to be thoroughly researched, has, to the author's knowledge, produced installations that can be considered surrealistic and perhaps even psychedelic in nature and which have not been shown to the wider public. By presenting these case studies and selected works from these artists' œuvres, this paper will attempt to not only present their works but also shed new light on them, presenting them as a possible alternative means of expression in a context that was not always receptive to the ideas that youth and alternative culture promoted. The paper will demonstrate how the artists' biographies (their economic and social status, as well as their artistic status within art institutions) could have contributed to their interests and forms of artistic expression.

DORA DERADO GILJANOVIĆ received her MA in Art History from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split in 2016 where she worked as a research assistant from 2018 to 2022. She is currently an independent researcher and owns her own business. She is currently finishing her doctoral thesis entitled *Appropriation Strategies in Contemporary Art in Croatia* at the Postgraduate program of Art History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

#### SESSION 4: TOWARDS CAPITALISTIC OCCULTISM

---

##### *The Art of the New Spirituality. Polish Art between Socialist and Capitalist Modernity*

In the late 1980s, socialist modernity began to collapse. It was a time of new kind of modernization and the social anxieties and tensions associated with it. As anthropologist Zuzanna Grębecka has shown, there was then a so-called "magiogenic situation": a surge of interest in mysticism, esotericism, or alternative forms of spirituality. This phenomenon was present in all Eastern Bloc countries and manifested itself in a different areas: social, market, even medical – and, above all, cultural (Grębecka: 2007). In my presentation, I would like to show how the "magiogenic situation" manifested itself in the field of art. This was such a broad phenomenon that I propose to call it "The Art of the New Spirituality". Taking it into account allows us to look at the art of the 1980s and 1990s in a new way, conventionally separated by the date of 1989. "The Art of the New Spirituality" does not fit either into the model of

Neo-expressionism of the 1980s, nor critical art of the 1990s. It belongs to specific period of an "interregnum", when the old order no longer functioned, and the new one had not yet crystallized. In fact, it was a period between two models of modern rationality: socialist and capitalist. „The Art of the New Spirituality" *sensu largo* allows to see the disintegration of socialist modernity as a time when non-communist forms of community are being produced, and Catholic monoculture is giving way to unconventional models of spirituality. Both belong to the realm of "potential history" (Azoulay: 2019), which ultimately did not materialize: post-communist capitalism not only negated the very idea of community, but also formed a tactical alliance with the Catholic Church (Buden: 2012). "The Art of the New Spirituality" reminds us that things could have been different.

JAKUB BANASIAK, Ph.D., Department of Artistic Research and Curatorial Studies, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Art historian and art critic, Assistant Professor at the Department of Artistic Research and Curatorial Studies, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Author of the book „Proteous Times. The Decay of the State Art System 1982–1993" (2020), for which he was nominated for the Jan Długosz Award. Editor-in-chief of the academic journal „Miejsce" (with Marika Kuźmicz), and „Szum" magazine (with Karolina Plinta). His research interests focuses around two main fields: the state art system of the communist era and the art of the transition era in Poland. He has curated exhibition Tectonic Movements at the Museum of Art in Łódź (2022/2023, from director Jarosław Suchan's programme), where he has presented, among others, the results of his research on esoterism and unconventional spiritualities in Polish art in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He is currently completing a book on the same subject.

---

*Mystical Materialism? Koło Klipsa as a Case Study for the Spiritualist Turn in Poland of the Late 1980s*

The philosophy on which Koło Klipsa's activity was based can be described as vitalist, although it underwent a significant redefinition in the group's final period. In 1988, the group proclaimed a manifesto of mystical realism, and vitalism is linked to chthonic forces and the transformation of matter in the earth. The point of reference for the analysis will be the spiritualist turn in Polish art of the 1980s as recognized by Jakub Banasiak. On the other hand, its methodological framework will be Jacques Derrida's notion of hauntology (formulated at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s) and the interconnected dynamics between spiritualization, materialization, and spectralization. It will allow us to recognize the paradox of mysticism revealed through expressive materiality and to consider possible conceptual frameworks in discussions of spirituality in art.



JAROSŁAW LUBIAK, Ph.D., is a curator of contemporary art exhibitions, lecturer, head of the Department of Art History and Theory at the Academy of Art in Szczecin, in the years 2014–2019 he was deputy director for programming at the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. He is the author of one of the first artistic and research programs in Poland devoted to the climate and environmental catastrophe – *Plasticity of the planet* at the CCA Ujazdowski Castle in 2019. He was the curator of international and national exhibitions – among others: *Xawery Wolski. Material poetics*, Center of Polish Sculpture, Orońsko, 2022; *Angelika Markul. Time formula*, Openheim, Wrocław, 2021; *Waiting for Another Coming*, with Anna Czaban, Ūla Tornau, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, 2018; *The State of Life: Polish Contemporary Art within the Global Context*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing 2015; *Vital realism of the Koło Klipsa group*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2014–2015. He is the editor of publications, author of scientific articles and critical texts among others: *Pandemia. Science. Piece. Geopolitics*, with Mikołaj Iwański, Szczecin – Poznań 2018; *The State of Life: Polish Contemporary Art within the Global Context*, National Art Museum of China, People's Fine Art Publishing House, Beijing 2015; *Katja Strunz, Zeitraum #9 for Władysław Strzemiński*, Łódź – Cologne 2011; *The Museum as a Bright Object of Desire*, Łódź 2010.

---

### *Dark Side of the Young Art in Poland*

In 2022, the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw hosted the exhibition titled: "Anxiety Comes at Dusk". The event focused on presenting the work of the young generation of Polish artists, i.e. artists born in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the characteristic motifs that appeared throughout the exhibition was something that could be called: the romantic turn existing in the art of this generation. The exhibition works included references not only to trends corresponding to the black romanticism: ghosts, vampires, Slavic beliefs but also to the content characteristic for esotericism, occultism and spiritualism. This tendency noticeable in the above mentioned exhibition was not uncommon in the context of the Polish youngest generation artists' works. However, the following questions arise: Why do these artists increasingly often adapt such motives as Tarot or magic in their art works? Why do they refer to spiritualism and esotericism? In my speech, I would like to analyze the works of some young Polish artists, such as Jakub Woynarowski, Daria Malicka, Krzysztof Gil, Aleksandra Lipuť, the Oleq&Kaśka collective, Jan Możdzyński and Zuzanna Romańska, who refer to these motives in their artistic work. By presenting their artistic creation, I will try to answer the questions: Why, in the seemingly rational 21st century and in the period of great crises, do young artists choose such topics? Why are they inspired by the Tarot, why do they create their own cards, why do they use

the spiritualistic séance as the tool in their artistic work? In my presentation, I will not only explore the works of the artists but also the latest art exhibitions presenting such themes.

MARTA KUDELSKA is the Assistant Professor at the Department of Contemporary Culture of the Institute of Culture at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. She is also the independent art curator, art critic and member of the Polish Section of the International Association of Art Critics – AICA. Marta Kudelska is preparing the doctoral dissertation devoted to the activities of young art curators who were active in Kraków and Katowice in 2010–2015. As the researcher and art curator, she is not only interested in the relationships between contemporary art and Romanticism but also in magic, horror and esotericism. She has prepared numerous art exhibitions devoted to this topic, including: "Black Trilogy" – exhibition at the Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art, "Magic Renewal Salon" – exhibition at the Widna Gallery in Kraków. Her papers were published in magazines such as: "Szum", "Obieg", "Znak", but also in scientific publications such as "Elements". Art and Design", "Missing Piece. Esoteric trends in contemporary art" or "Management in culture". Marta Kudelska is the lecturer at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts.