

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS
AICA WORLD CONGRESS

"IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY"

DEBATE PROGRAMME
WARSAW

May 31st - June 2nd 1999, ZaiKS hall

First day **subject: EUROPES**
Monday, May 31st 1999

- 9.30 – 11.00 Opening of the Congress
Speech by AICA President Kim Levin
Speech by Minister of Art and Culture Andrzej Zakrzewski
- 11.00 – 11.40 **María Teresa Beguiristain** "El retorno de las Españas"
11.40 – 12.00 coffee break
12.00 – 12.40 **Bojana Pejic** "After the wall"
12.40 – 13.00 **Hiroshi Minamishima** "Portrait of Godot – Whom is
"Europe" waiting for?"
- 13.00 – 14.00 lunch
- 14.30 – 15.10 **Piotr Piotrowski** "Grey zone of Europe"
15.10 – 15.40 **Jane Lee** "Race, Milieu, Moment: the continuing influence
of Hyppolite Taine"
15.40 – 16.00 coffee break
16.00 – 16.30 **Tomasz Gryglewicz** "Three Europes: Western, Central
and Eastern ones?"
16.30 – 17.00 **Tomasz Kitliński & Paweł Leszkowicz** "Is
Cosmopolitanism Possible?: Identity and Difference in the
Visual Culture of Europes?"
17.00 – 17.30 discussion

Bojana Pejic

AFTER THE WALL

The actual fall of the Berlin Wall which started to disappear as a physical man made "object" after November 9, 1989. Ten years after this event is, I believe, proper time to re-think art and culture in the post-Communist part of the world. International exhibition AFTER THE WALL was initiated by David Elliott, the director of Moderna Museet in Stockholm and its basic intention is to map political, cultural and artistic changes which took place in the "East" over last ten years. The purpose of this project is not to claim that there is something like "essentially Eastern" art. What the exhibition and the catalogue will, however, try to indicate is that today the conditions of production and presentation in the former "East" still did not reach the expectations of the artists living in the "region": there is hardly a new museum of contemporary art, there are some 6-7 good professionally run commercial galleries and still not enough art journals.

After so many "geographical" exhibitions dedicated to the national productions like Contemporary Lithuanian, Slovak, Albanian or Armenian art which have been organized in the Western museums after 1989, it is moment, I believe, that we start to implement a different approach. AFTER THE WALL it is an exhibition based on thematical reading the art of the post-Communist regions. After one and a half year of research and visiting all the countries which survived Communism, we have invited the artists to show one or two particular works. The exhibition comprises artworks produced by some 120 artists coming from 22 post-Communist countries. By "Communist country" I mean here a country that was based on one-party system and state-run economy. The focus of the exhibition is the art of the 1990s and the project is not based on the national representations but on the individual artistic attitudes. The exhibition is not, however, a project dedicated to "political" art: it comprises the works which deal with the given socio-geo-political reality, but many of them are very personal narratives as well.

The works in AFTER THE WALL will be grouped in four thematical "chapters": (1) social plastic, (2) re-inventing the past, (3) subjectivity revisited and (4) genderscapes. The exhibition opens on October 16, 1999 in Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The opening for the press is scheduled for the October 14. Between October 14 and 17, 1997 an international symposium, performance programme will take place as well as the beginning of the video and film program.

Bojana Pejic (born in Belgrade, 1948). She studied History of Art at the Faculty for Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Belgrade 1968-1974. B.A., 1975. Has been writing on contemporary art since 1972. Curator in the Student Cultural Centre of Belgrade University (1977-1991). Member of AICA since 1981. She curated many exhibitions of Yugoslav and foreign art in SFR Yugoslavia. Editor for the art theory journal Moment, Belgrade (1984-1991). Lectured in SFR of Yugoslavia, France, Australia, Austria, Poland and Germany.

Has lived since 1991 in Berlin. Contributor to Artforum, art press, Siksi, neue bildende kunst, zitty (Berlin) and New Moment (Belgrade). She has organized the international symposium "Body in Communism," Literaturhaus, Berlin, 1995. Has published essays on contemporary art in catalogues and books since 1971. Currently working on her Ph.D. "The Communist Body - Towards the Archeology of an Image." She is the chief curator of the international exhibition "After the Wall" organized by the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Fall 1999.

Hiroshi Minamishima (AICA Japan)

Portrait of Godot - Whom is 'Europe' waiting for?

In the congress of AICA Japan last year, A variety of subjects regarding treatment of identity were presented. It seems to me that many of the presentations are unconditionally based on the simple belief in identity as definitive property. Majority of the presentations deal with identity, doubtlessly, as justice of a certain race and nation to which one believe he/she belongs. Through their attitude I see that the conventional criticism is still enclosed in geo-graphically separated lands.

In other words, although the most important subject to discuss first should be the blinded belief in precondition that identity is inviolable justice and speaking on identity is also justice, art criticism and exhibitions are continuously pouring the whole energy into recovery and maintenance of the world atlas drawn with identity, as if they were captured and driven by the fever named identity.

We can see this tendency in recent international exhibitions held in Europe.

For example, despite of the exhibition's concept that it is organized mainly by artists who are/were related to Berlin, Berlin Biennial actually is an exhibition aiming at making an appeal to Europe and the rest of the world for re-establishment of metropolis of Berlin and a nation of Germany. And even though the purpose of Manifesta, an antithetical biennial to this Berlin Biennial and a conventional biennial like Venice Biennial, is to liberate identity of art that has controlled by the Great Powers of the world, by shifting the city in which the show is opened, another conflict of identity among races still lies just beneath the surface.

But these means of realization of identity do not account for the main subject. Essential of the subject is probably in this question: „What kind of self-identity do art criticism and exhibitions try to seize, running in a fever of sewing up a blue globe using patches of identity? And does such self-identity that satisfies themselves really exist?"

My attempt to touch the train of the long robe of the identity religion anchored at the bottom of Europe, through describing how these exhibitions, basically organized by European people for European people, are reflected in the eyes of non-European people who are generally uninvited to the exhibitions.

In a sense 'Europe' is like an empty and uneasy stage on which those who waiting for Godot keep standing. If 'Europe' were actually an empty theatre, or, in spite of the vacant circumstances, what or whom does 'Europe' keep on waiting for?

Hiroshi MINAMISHIMA (AICA,Japan)

Professional Post

Lecturer of Women's Art College and Iwate University (present)

Curator, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (1988 - 1990)

Curator, Iwaki City Art Museum (1985 - 1988)

Grant

Fondition Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Paris), 1993

Publications

Initiation to Contemporary Art (coauthor); Bijutsu Shuppansha; 1986, Beate Angelo; Trevill; 1992

Contemporary Art Dictionary (coauthor); Bijutsu Shuppansha; 1993, St.Maria; Trevill; 1993

Pigs and the Gospel; Shichiken Publishing Co.,Ltd ; 1997

Why did I throw a stone to Cezanne ?; Sanko-sha Publishing Co.,Ltd; (in printing)

Exhibitions of Contemporary Art Curated (selected)

„Angels' Parade with Tadanori Yokoo" Ginza Pocket Park, December 1996

„Contemporary art of Central Europe" Shisendo Gallery, January 1996

„Dance-Sculpture collaboration between Abakanowicz and Akiko

Motojuji" Ujazdowski Castle (Warszawa), October 1995

„Japan Festival" Harbour Front Centre (Toronto), October 1995

„Tatsuo Miyajima Exhibit -- Death of Time"; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (Hiroshima); February 1990

„Japan - Korea Exchange Exhibition -- Eight Individuals from East"; Dongsung Art Center (Seoul); July 1989. Sagacho Exhibit Space (Tokyo); March 1990

„Prospects of Contemporary Art -- Celebration of Painting"; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum ; March 1989

„Masterpieces of Sprengel Museum, Hannover"; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (Hiroshima); May 1989

„To the Depth -- Venuses of the Spiral Country"; Spiral (Wacol Art Center); March 1987

„Art Today '85"; The Contemporary Art Gallery (Seibu Department Store,Tokyo); September 1985

„Another Art Museum -- Pulling Down the Old Building"; Iwaki City Art Museum (Iwaki City, Fukushima); May 1985

Piotr Piotrowski, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Grey Zone of Europe

Europe has never been a uniform continent. It has always been divided into the West (formed by the states founded on a Latin culture, ethnically more or less uniform), the East (dominated by the Byzantine religious culture and social tradition), and the Middle (an area of mixed ethnic groups, cultures, and languages where nothing has ever been stable, be it borders or even climate). This division has been imposed on the other one - into the North and South - which can be observed in the mores, cuisine, and art. After 1945 all the traditional divisions have been largely simplified and in part even eliminated. The binary tension between the East and West, determined by politicians, suggested a simplified and schematic view of Europe in terms of two different (though internally uniform) blocs. Of course, that division was of a naturally hierarchical character. There was a "better" Europe and a "worse" one - more and less civilized, open, rich, and democratic on the one hand, and closed, poor, and despotic on the other. Besides, there was absolutely no doubt which Europe was "better" and which "worse". In particular the inhabitants of the "Other" part of the continent were quite sure about it, turning their eyes to the West, where they hoped to find stamina necessary to outlive the "Asian," as they called it, political system.

The fall of the Berlin wall made that schematic model more complicated, which, however, does not mean that it ceased to exist. It is clear now that between the West and Russia, burdened by its Soviet heritage, there has opened a new, "grey" zone which does not want to belong to the "East" any more, but which is not yet in the "West." What is more, the old divisions, which seemed so stable, have given way to new ones. There are new states, new political tensions, new wars, and new problems on the cultural map of the region. Still, it is hard to predict how long this process is going to last. The new Central Europe which has emerged from the Soviet (and, in the case of Yugoslavia, near-Soviet) world, bordering on the Baltic sea and the Balkan mountains, may not last long. The pro-Western ambitions and dreams of bureaucrats on the one hand, and the economic chaos and xenophobic nationalisms on the other may soon draw a new border and build a new wall, running (similarly to the Berlin one) across the traditional Central Europe. A new frontier of the newly divided continent may run across the very heart of the historical region - between Slovenia and Croatia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania.

As every grey zone, the grey zone of Europe has a hardly graspable identity, since some of the actors appearing on the metaphorical stage, as well as some outsiders, are not really interested in specifying it. On the contrary, they may often conceal it, while to the observers who approach cultural processes in terms of long duration and in a wider historical perspective grey zones provide extremely interesting material, indicating the condition of the organism under scrutiny. Maybe this brief period between the past division enforced by the Cold War and a new one, marked by the tariff wall and monetary union, will provide us with the knowledge that is more necessary to define Europe on its profound level than that supplied by politicians and economists. First of all, it may help us define the "Other" Europe - that grey zone between the East and West, the past and future, the primitive Berlin wall and a new, more advanced barrier of eurobureaucracy, built by means of modern technology.

For the art historian and art critic there is no doubt that the most nutritious food for thought, the most sensitive material for the reflection on reality, is provided by artists and their art. The value of individual creation, which is always characteristic of artistic production, makes generalizations and general conclusions difficult to draw. Still, drawing a rough outline of the map of the grey zone of Europe from the Baltic sea down to the Balkans, we may notice some problems whose analysis will provide us

with the instruments of interpretation which may turn out suitable for this unique moment in history and specific geographical area.

Such analysis must focus on two aspects. First, it should seek a critical attitude to time - both to the past, in particular the recent one when the Berlin wall was still standing, and to the future, determined by the globalization of culture and economy. Second, its field of interest must imply a critical attitude to geographical tensions - to parts of the world which can never be reduced to neutral and purely spatial terms, but which are related to cultural and political meanings. What is more, such tensions are never static, but reveal some "vectors" - the "trajectories" of a given culture which tell us more about it than any static historical frame of reference. The intersection of these two perspectives seems, then, to be the best point to develop an analysis of dynamic location and its local, constructed identity; of the dialectical placement in space and history; of the involvement in a particular *genius loci* and the temptations of dislocation: technological, political, and psychological.

The art of Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Romania, Slovenian, and other artists, operating in historical and geographical gaps and responding to the challenges of the time and space, may help us draw a map of the grey zone of Europe and construct some frame of reference for its cultural identity which is unstable, developing in endless confrontation both with history and geography. Hence, a deconstruction of the European geography or, more precisely, of its space-time - historical geography and geographical history - will determine a perspective of analysis of the power of center and the structure of space in which it has been constituted. Such analysis is a challenge to a hierarchical and one-dimensional Europe; to the dictatorship of the center, which eliminates thinking in terms of geography by dissolving space in the immaterial structures of the globalization of culture, and which tries to conceal the basis of its hegemony by naturalizing it in the alleged universalism of the uniform, modernist/postmodernist European culture.

Piotr PIOTROWSKI, Professor of history of modern art, Deputy Chair of the Department of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland;
Vice-President of AICA-Poland;
former Chief-Curator of contemporary art, National Museum, Poznań.

Major grants and fellowships:

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst [DAAD] (1997)

J.P. Getty Fellow, Columbia University, The Heyman Center for the Humanities, New York (1994);

A. Mellon Bruce Senior Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, D.C. (1989 - 1990);

Cambridge University, England (1988);

University of Kent, Canterbury, England (1987).

Books:

The Metaphysics of the Picture, 1985;

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, 1989;

The Decade. On the Artistic Culture of the 1970s, 1991;

The odNOWA Gallery. 1964-1969 [ed.], 1993;

Artist between the Revolution and Reaction. A Study on Russian Avant-Garde and Politics, 1993;

The "Thaw." Polish Art ca. 1956, [ed.], 1996;

In the Shadow of Duchamp, 1996;

Jarosław Kozłowski: Spaces of Time [ed.], 1997;

Meanings of Modernism. Towards a History of Polish Art after 1945, 1999.

Jane Lee

Race, Milieu, Moment: the continuing influence of Hippolyte Taine

From 1864 to 1883 Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) was professor of Aesthetics and the History of Art at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris. His *Essays in Criticism and History* (published at various times in his life) and his *Philosophy of Art* (1885) are influential through Europe. Taine sought to provide a „modern“, „scientific“ basis for aesthetics. He presented art as the product of a complex of physical and psycho-social facts. Such facts could be gathered up and analysed in the same logical way as one would with a mechanical problem. The problem was the critical one of accounting for the salient characteristics of works of art Taine held that the three forces which condition all art are racial inheritance (a natural aptitude), milieu (both physical or material and socio-political) and historical moment (in the positivist narrative of human development). In Taine's science, art is a *natural* product of the adoption of the human species to its environment. Taine set himself to account for the essentially Dutch qualities of art in Holland, the irreducible Englishness of Gainsborough, the differences between Neapolitan and Florentine painting. The facts from which he worked were sometimes basis: topography, barometric pressure, and sometimes very complex constructed facts: religion, language. The method was analytical so that it led naturally to finer and finer distinctions. His writing, however, was seductive, rich in memorable images often poetic and, it seems, very convincing.

The appeal of such a theory to Regionalist and Nationalist such as Maurice Barres is obvious. The survival of Taine's thinking within our own critical assumptions at the end of his century, however, depends upon the liberality, the tolerance, which was implied by this „enlightened“ science of culture. The acceptance of African and Oceanic Art in Europe a century ago depended upon artists and collectors' reading of Taine. In Taine's system, not only can extra-European art be valued „in its own right“ but there will be classics of his art, which can be distinguished by the connoisseur (who understands the race, milieu, and moment of his art). There can, therefore, be dealers and this art. from overseas can enter the same coils of value as the domestic product. If Taine's theory was present at the introduction of African art into Europe it cannot be said to have entirely left us. Al. Recent arguments about „authenticity“, in which Europeans tell each other which works of art are „really“ of another culture, draw upon Taine. Taine is in the background of many stubborn, but liberal, preconceptions when the European critic faces outwards. From what are we arguing when we deplore globalisation of the arts. When critics in Thailand or India or in South America argue for the protection of a cultural „milieu“ for their artists to develop „As they should“ are they arguing from a non-European critical base or have they accepted a system, devised first to account for the different European schools, and since exported to account for all difference.

Jane Lee: Senior Lectured, Master's degree programme at Kent Institute of Art and Design, School of Fine Art, New Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3AN

I have published widely both as a critic and as an art historian in Britain and abroad. I have contributed to journals as different as the *Burlington* and *Art Monthly* and have written catalogue essays for very young artists as well as for Anthony Caro and other senior figures. I have done a good deal of exhibition selection most notably selecting for the CCA with Douglas Gordon and Nicola White and for the CAS as a buyer with Richard Cork. The Course which I teach integrates art criticism and critical theory with studio practice.

TOMASZ GRYGLEWICZ

Three Europes – western, central and eastern one? Artistic geography of the European continent of post-communist era

In this paper I would like to touch the subject of current situation of Polish art, in context of traditional Yaltan division of Europe into western and eastern part.

My speech is provoked partly by widely discussed book by Steven Mansbach "Modern Art in Eastern Europe. From the Baltic Sea to the Balkans, ca 1890-1939", Cambridge University Press, 1998, I would like to refer critically to, in the introduction of my paper. Counting Polish art and other artistic environments of our region – Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Slovenian etc. Art - into the Eastern-European sphere evokes protests. Basing on the essays and prose by Milan Kundera, my own researches (Tomasz Gryglewicz "Painting of Central Europe 1900-1914, Cracow, 1992 and numerous articles) and experiences of the educational subject of inter-university co-operation "Art of Central Europe in the second half of XIX and in XX century" led by me (co-operation with universities in Budapest and Bratislava) with CEEPUS programme, I would like to take up, in my paper, historical and current contexts of notions Western, Central and Eastern Europe in sphere of modern art.

In contrary to my purely scientific texts, I long to adapt the art critic's perspective, analysing current phenomena in art of post-communist countries. Therefore selected examples of artistic activities after 1956 involving comparison of Polish art with art of other countries of Central Europe will be presented. However, the problem of new situation in art of nineties after the abolition of so-called Eastern Block will be emphasised. Thus contemporary issues will be domineering.

Tomasz Gryglewicz: born in 1949, assistant professor of art history, art critic, director of Art History Institute, UJ, Cracow. Author of numerous papers, studies, critical texts, concerning art. of the end of XIX and XX century. Published two books: "Grotesque in Polish art of XX century"(Cracow 1984) and "Painting of Central Europe 1900-1914" (Cracow 1992). Lives in Cracow.

Dr Tomasz Kitlinski & Pawel Leszkowicz

Is Cosmopolitanism Possible?: Identity and Difference in the Visual Culture of Europes

Contemporary visual culture is characterized by transnationality, decentered, plural and polyvalent. After a crisis of the grand narratives which legitimized the mission of the Western human being to transform the planet 'in his own image' (Jean-Francois Lyotard 1979: 63), cultural theory and art alike stands for diversity, although occasionally it is used by partisans of the identitarian politics of nationalism. Does the visual culture of today fulfill our hopes for a transnational society or will it contribute to political divisions of 'imagined communities' (Benedict Anderson 1983: passim)? In other words, is it possible for multiculturalism to continue its role as 'one of the most pervasive and controversial intellectual and political movements in contemporary Western democracies' (Christian Joppke 1996: 449)?

Craig Owens and Jean Baudrillard develop the Heideggerian diagnosis of the world becoming the image: the objective of the image according to Owens is a culture of control and repression (Craig Owens 1992: 175). Therefore nationalism may prove powerful in visual culture; one cites the examples of totalitarianisms which employ aesthetics to serve political goals. However, the sense of artistic expression has always been freedom and the community of artists has tended to shelter the outcasts, refugees and persecuted. The distinctive feature of 1980s and early 90s in visual culture is according to Edward Lucie-Smith plurality and multiculturalism. A feminist critic, Lucy Lippard, also accentuates the multiplicity of the visual in her 'mapping'. In my view the contemporary multicultural art may be viewed at the junction of philosophy and social sciences: thinking about the Same and the Other from Hegel, Freud, Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze (for an interpretation of the problematics see Vincent Descombes: 1985 and Juergen Habermas: 1979) to contemporary social theorists of identity and alterity such as Charles Taylor (1993), Julia Kristeva (1988), Tzvetan Todorov (1993) Ira Katznelson (1995), Zygmunt Bauman (1995) as well as analysts of multiculturalism such as Joseph Raz (1994) and Will Kymlicka (1995). Here, too, belongs the thought of Aristide R. Zolberg (1981) and Yasemil Nughoglu Soysal (1994) on international migrations and the emergence of a transnational civil society.

Let us remind the artistic expression of an identification with the stranger as epitomized in Rimbaud's *Je est l'Autre*. It seems that after a domination of anti-representation, the artists of the 1980s returned to prioritizing the figuration of subjectivity, foregrounded the communication of social, ethnic and sexual belonging and, in some outstanding works, went as far as realizing the Rimbaudian postulate. Usually while discussing multiculturalism the names of artists who reacted to social problems: to attitudes of intolerance towards the homeless, immigrants, AIDS patients. Although the output of Ilya Kabakov and Joseph Kosuth is less obviously multicultural and critical, I would like to discuss briefly their project *A Corridor of Two Banalities* specifically designed for Warsaw's Centre for Contemporary Art and on show there April 25 - June 13, 1994. The interior of the Centre was converted by the two artists into a conference hall. A hundred and twenty tables with lights above them were divided into a row of Kosuth and that of Kabakov. The two artists of different backgrounds dialogued: the table-tops of the two rows changed into the

textual space of the dialogue. *Du cote de chez* Kosuth, the tables were covered with unifying grey colour and inscriptions by means of silk-screening: quotations from political personalities. The tables in Kabakov's row were raw, cracked, rickety; on their tops the artist nailed the colour photocopies of details of Russian iconography. The rows were arranged in such a way that they sometimes connected: the 'two banalities' of everyday humanity struggled to communicate and relate to each other.

The project explored the stories of individuals in History. Here the subject was the Same and the Other, *le Je* as well as *l'Autre* while a difficult synthesis was achieved. The synthetic genre of installation was conducive to a plurality of social meanings; as Kabakov comments on the art installation which 'may unite- *on equal terms*, without recognition of supremacy phenomena and concepts that are extraordinarily far from one another' (Brandon Taylor 1995: 157). Joseph Kosuth is a consciously intertextual artist who in his works and manifestos celebrates nomadism, including *flanerie* a la Walter Benjamin. Explicitly, Kosuth argues against art for art's sake and for a socially critical and dialogic culture, an alternative cultural activity: in the West within liberal toleration, in the East outside of the official stream of history. The two trends countered the artistic practice of orthodox formalism (Joseph Kosuth 1994: 8).

When approaching visual culture, the institutionalization of art should be analyzed. It took the curator of *A Corridor of Two Banalities* three years to talk the venue and the artists into a mutual project. The museum and gallery is often made part of the system of nationalism; thus the exhibiting practice reduce the origin and meaning of an artwork to that of a product of a 'national spirit'. It is not accidental either that museums and their departments function in the nineteenth-century fashion of national divisions ('temples of national art'); the same being true of the history of art which explores the evolution of national art from its 'invented tradition' (Eric J. Hobsbawm 1983: passim) to the full expression of the national idea. 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation.' (Ernest Renan 1994: 17) On the other hand, more and more exhibiting spaces provide ground for transnational events: one of them is the Venice Biennale. As Achille Bonito Oliva has it, 'the Venice Biennale has created a new cultural territory which I call transnational and multicultural' (Achille Bonito Oliva 1995:341, my emphasis) Thus the plurality of cultural practices characterizes the Venice Biennale which for over a century has presented a variety of art forms and identity representations. Let us, however, not forget about a dichotomy of general exhibition and national pavilion organization as politics of space in the Biennale. It is important to note the episode when the Biennale, manipulated by Benito Mussolini, entered the fascist propaganda politics. With these reservations in mind, one can speak of a multiculturalism of the Venice Biennale; in particular the 1980s witnessed it in the exhibiting policy. It was the 80s Biennale which hosted the successful neo-expressionist artists, in particular those of the Italian movement of the 1980s, the *Transavanguardia*, which seems a remarkable instance of multiple identity-narrating art. In 1990 Achille Bonito Oliva inaugurated a zone of the Biennale devoted to young artists and tellingly called *Aperto*. The 1995 centennial Biennale when the epitome of the vast subjective heterogeneity of the Biennale was an installation by Christian Boltanski, Jewish-Polish-French artist: on the Padiglione Centrale he installed fifteen thousand names of the artists who had participated in its editions were curated by Jean Clair, author of psychoanalytic and cultural studies, Director of Musee Picasso in Paris and Conservateur General du Patrimoine. He presented the exhibition *Identita ed alterita* of deep intellectual ambitions whose catalogue contained essays by such thinkers as Levi-Strauss, Fabbri, Fumaroli. In Palazzo Gustinian a multicultural exhibition *Transcultura* was mounted. In 1995 the

United States were represented by an artist of Italian origin, Marco di Suvero, whereas this year it is an African-American artist, Robert Colescott.

It is tempting to juxtapose the participants of the Biennale from Italy and Poland; since the Polish Pavillion had been built in 1934 more and more Polish works were shown, interestingly, many of them by women artists. It is not accidental that this year it is a woman artist, Zofia Kulik, represents Poland as the trend of women's art is far from monocultural tendencies. Parallel to the *Transavanguardia*, their works represent the artists' subjectivity and assertion on the body. The artwork in question narrates multiple cultural identities more often than not in multimedia. Zofia Kulik's are montages of photographic mise-en-scene which explore human corporeality, psyche and historical narrations, for instance, parodies of social realism. In contrast to the avant-garde which according to Giulio Carl Argan searches *al di la*, the *Transavanguardia* concentrates on *al di qua*. 'To me the *Transavanguardia* means looking *al di qua* (inside, into one's interior). And that is the core of art, of culture, of freedom and of cultural nomadism' (Achille Bonito Oliva 1995:341) The case of a leading Italian painter of the *Transavanguardia*, Francesco Clemente, is culturally striking: born in Naples, his background is in the classics and philosophy. Clemente studied architecture in Rome where Cy Twombly introduced him to the contemporary visual arts. Since 1973 he has repeatedly travelled to Madras, India and to New York. Erudite and painter of individualized expressionism, Clemente searches for his sources in a variety of cultural and religious traditions.

The contemporary Venice Biennale does not negate local identities, but attempts to build a view of global art, to synthesize the Same and the Other. In the context of nationalisms and fundamentalisms, it seems that multiculturalism constitutes an ethical and cultural therapy: it is urgent to practice the polycentric, dialogical and multicultural postulates in visual culture. Luckily, the Venice Biennale in the 1980s and 90s happen in the cultural context where multiple cultures co-exist.

When 'cultures flow in, out, around, and through state borders' (Michael Schudson:77), in particular art represents a cosmopolitanism -where the artist and the public desire to fulfill a Stoic dream of becoming citizens of the universe- and, on the other hand, the politics of identity which prioritizes belonging to a particular group.

The challenges provoked by our 'Second Media Age' which involve epistemology and ethics are addressed among others by a sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman: 'once we have obtained an electronic equivalent of the portrait of Dorian Grey, we may have earned ourselves a world without wrinkles, but also without landscape, history, and purpose.' (Bauman 1995: 44) Likewise, would artworks on line push globalization based on reason and digital logic too far without developing an inner experience of psyche? Although cyberspace may contribute to universalism, it is also used to disseminate identitarian statements as exemplified by projects of a Polish new technologies artist who propagates the issue of the national. Mass visual culture is sometimes used by nationalists who manipulate symbolisms. This is countered, however, by such initiatives as a campaign of Andrzej Pagowski's billboard poster, distributed in Poland by 'Outdoor' Agency, which depicted a baseball bat against a background of blood with a caption 'It is for playing, not for killing'. The bat is frequently used by nationalist skinheads. Although the message of the poster is univocal, it may paradoxically contribute to the stereotype of the baseball bat as instrument of aggression. (Aneta Gryczka 1997: 28).

It seems that the traditional position of art is beyond the national (transnational aesthetic trends, artists' mobility, *Republique des lettres*) whereas a nationalization of the fine arts was produced by the nineteenth century; the problematics calls for further research. Suffice it to say now that contemporary art, as we have analyzed it in *A Corridor of Two Banalities* and in the rationale behind the Venice Biennale, stands against monocultural trends. An ironic comment on nationalism comes from Andrzej Dłużniewski: he installs barbed wire around a little piece of soil in no way different from the land around it (Cornelia Lauf 1992: 120). The epitome of an 'imagined community' centred atavistically around a *Blut und Boden* and overprotecting them violently.

Both post-Communist and postindustrial societies witness a rise of xenophobia and racism; does a globalization of visual culture constitute a sufficient counterbalance to it? Contemporary artworks are heterogeneous, open-ended and polyphonic objects-messages which represent subjectivity as well as History, individual and global alike. The critical work of a Polish-American artist, Krzysztof Wodiczko, is very revealing here: he projected the image of a swastika on South Africa House in London, constructed a vehicle for the homeless in the United States and, last but not least, sculpted a staff *The Alien's Spokesman* by which a stranger can communicate with others; Wodiczko's *Spokesman* may be regarded as an element of a transnational civil society, a *cosmopolis*. The topical question is how to live together and to respect differences: the visual arts of today provide an answer, however, not without reservations.

Dr Tomasz Kitlinski: holds his Diplôme d'Études Approfondies in the History and Semiology of Text and Image from Université Paris 7 where he prepared his dissertation, supervised by Julia Kristeva, and a Ph.D. He is author of essays on contemporary philosophy and art, published in Poland, the Czech Republic, Britain and France. For Poland's arts journal, 'Magazyn Sztuki', he interviewed Sir Ernst Gombrich, Helene Cixous, Jean Clair, Philippe Sollers and Kiki Smith. In 1994 Kitlinski participated in 'Art and Power' Symposium at the Hayward Gallery and the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. He teaches at Curie University in Lublin, Poland. In 1996 he realized a research visit to the Courtauld. Currently, he is a Fulbright scholar at the Transregional Center for Democratic Studies, New School University, New York City.

Paweł Leszkowicz: Ever since his thesis which dealt with the American political art of the 1980s and his studies at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Paweł Leszkowicz has published a number of articles and art reviews, including a paper on Hannah Wilke and Helen Chadwick delivered at the University of Vienna and published in Holland. His publications include a text about the Polish erotic art of the 1960s and 70s in the proceedings of the Polish Association of Art Historians' Congress and a chapter on Cindy Sherman in a book *The Image of the Artist* published by the Catholic University of Lublin. In *Magazyn Sztuki* and *Obieg* Leszkowicz wrote about such European artists as Orlan or Helen Chadwick and, generally, on multiculturalism in art. He also continues to explore the visual culture of Europe in his doctoral research at Poznań University under Piotr Piotrowski as well as during his visit to the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and as a Fulbright scholar at the New School University, New York City.