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Introduction

The texts presented in this volume were written by the participants of a research seminar entitled "Narrating Art and Feminism(s): Eastern Europe and Latin America". The seminar gathered scholars from both regions who met online to exchange interregional and trans-regional perspectives on how to undermine the dominant narrative regarding art and feminism and how to envision the construction of an alternative global discourse.[1]

By dominant narrative, we understand ideas originating from Western second-wave feminism. In Eastern Europe, the intensive process of incorporating them started only in the 1990s. Previously, they had circulated to various degrees in different countries, depending on their openness to what was happening outside the Bloc. They were often considered alien, inappropriate for the local context (with socialist, not capitalist economics), and sometimes even belated (e.g. concerning issues related to women's labour or reproductive rights, most Eastern European countries had liberal anti-abortion laws introduced in the second half of the 1950s). In the era when second-wave feminism developed, Eastern Europe, immersed in Cold War politics, was separating itself from the capitalist West. Latin America was experiencing economic and social expansion, particularly in Argentina and Brazil, with popular democratic regimes. Feminist authors from France and the US were introduced here and developed. This process was interrupted by dictatorships but resumed in the

1 The seminar ran from 2021 to 2023 and was co-led by Agata Jakubowska (University of Warsaw, project director) and Andrea Giunta (Universidad de Buenos Aires). It was made possible thanks to the support from the Getty Foundation through its Connecting Art Histories initiative.

1990s. Yet, after the dictatorships, the word "feminism" lost its relevance in the academic field, where it was replaced by "gender". Just after 2015, feminism returned as a dominant term.

The second-wave feminist ideas that were less or more present in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the second half of the 20th century did not, however, resonate in art history until the 1990s. Few copies of the catalogues of feminist art exhibitions could be found in the hands of the artists who participated in these exhibitions or in the libraries of some art historians who travelled.[2] In Latin America, these narratives – with authors like Linda Nochlin or Judy Chicago – had some impact in the 1970s in México. In the context of the International Women's Year in 1975, with the conferences and exhibitions organised in Mexico City, their ideas spread.[3] Exhibitions by women artists were also organised at that time in other countries in both regions. Yet, they did not reflect ideas of Western second-wave feminism (see Wiktoria Szczupacka's text in this volume on exhibitions in 1975 in Poland).

Systematic efforts to build a historiography of female artists began in Latin America and Eastern Europe after the 1990s. The feminist scholarship that started to develop slowly and to manifest itself in exhibitions and publications was informed mainly by the US feminist theory and practice. In Eastern Europe, this was due to the extensive import of US-produced or translated knowledge in the form of book donations, scholarly visits, joint programs, and transfer of know-how (e.g. in archival and documentary projects) that happened in this period. Before 1989, second-wave feminist theories had not been widely known or applied to academic research, but the political transformation taking place in the region brought a boom. Latin America did not see this kind of expansion, and the development of feminist art history inspired by second-wave feminism had a different dynamic. It started to develop more intensively in the 2000s, which can be marked, for example, by the first anthology on feminist art history in Spanish in 2007, edited by Karen Cordero Reiman and Inda Sáenz.[4]

The recent decade brought new impetus to the development of feminist scholarship, including in art history. In Latin America, 2015 and 2016 involved a shift in feminist activism that expanded legislation on sexual identity politics and reproductive rights. This process led to the legalisation of abortion in Argentina (2020), Colombia (2022) and Mexico (2023). In this volume, Cecilia Noriega and Una Pardo Ibarra demonstrate how it influences discussions

2 For an example from Poland see A. Jakubowska, "The Circulation of Feminist Ideas in Communist Poland", in: *Globalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present*, eds. B. Hock, A. Allas, New York–London, 2018, pp. 135–148.

3 A. Giunta, "Feminist Disruptions in Mexican Art, 1975 – 1987", *Artelogie*, 2013, 5, https://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/5103 [accessed 25 January 2024].

4 K. Cordero, I. Sáenz, eds., *Crítica feminista en la teoría e historia del arte*, Mexico City, 2007.

on art and feminist activism in Mexico. In Eastern Europe, recent feminist activism, also rapidly developing, results from the growing significance of right-wing politics and its attempts to restrict women's rights. In both regions, the impact of feminism in the field of art is radical. Not only is it visible in new artworks and the visuality of protests, but also in calls for equity by introducing parity regulations in awards, exhibitions and collections. There has also been intense development in feminist historiography, where women artists, their art and their histories are recovered, and the significance of art as a field of symbolic emancipation is discussed.

This latest period also brought extensive development of de-colonial thought in art history, impacting feminist art history, and, above all, the critical reassessment of the impact of second-wave feminism on narratives on feminist art created in our regions. In Eastern Europe, this early phase of feminist art history, the 1990s/2000s, met with a mixed reception. While, undoubtedly, feminist scholarship (criticism, curatorship) developed in this period, its status was alternative to the feminism developed in the West, marked by backwardness—many years of "catching up" made scholars in this region frustrated. Not only by the constant feeling of "lagging behind" but also by growing awareness that the dominant discourse we want to be part of is ignorant of our experiences and, more generally speaking, misses the point in its attempts to be global. The relationship with the United States has always been ambivalent in Latin America. Resistance to what is considered knowledge of the "empire" is strong.

The texts that appear in this volume attempt to grasp the dynamics of the above-mentioned processes both in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Previous years saw an increased number of projects that offered a comparison of art created in Eastern Europe and Latin America, such as *Subversive Practices: Art under Conditions of Political Repression: 60s–80s / South America / Europe* (Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, Ostfildern 2010), *Artists' Networks in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (ARTMargins, 2012, 1, nos 2–3, 2012, eds. Klara Kemp–Welch, Cristina Freire), *Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960–1980* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2016), or *The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s – 1970s* (Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017), to name just a few. Many of them deal with art that reacted to dictatorships/totalitarianism and their diverse forms of action in society, such as censorship, violence, and rights restrictions. They concentrate on avant-garde art from the second half of the 20th century and analyse networks built by artists from both regions around joint ideas, be they artistic or political. Our seminar contributed by discussing feminist art that, so far, has almost been ignored. But it also proposed a different perspective – instead of analysing transfers of artists and ideas, we focused on a comparative analysis of the development of feminist practice in art and art history. We wanted to contribute to a better understanding of feminist art created in Eastern Europe and Latin America,

but also of how feminist art is written about in our regions, and it is the latter that is presented in this volume.

As correctly stated Antje Kempe, Beáta Hock, Marina Dmitrieva – the editors of the newly published volume *Universal – International – Global. Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe* – "While we can note a comprehensive discussion about the artistic production of Socialist Europe and its framing in narratives, art historiography was until recently only partly visible in this discourse". Both in Eastern Europe and Latin America, we can observe the development of the history of art history in the recent decade. Our volume can be perceived as a further contribution to our regional historiographies of art history that adds an analysis of the feminist perspective in art historical writing. In both regions, some effort has already been made to historicise the relationship between art and feminism, usually in each country separately, without focusing on the specific concepts that would help differentiate the historiography of the regions. *Radical Women. Latin American Art, 1960–1985* was the first historical overview of the development in fifteen countries of Latin America, providing materials for a comparative study on how artistic and historiographic production occurred in each of these countries.[5] In Eastern Europe, such a comparative project on feminist art historiography has yet to be initiated. Our volume, which seeks to develop inter-regional discussions, is simultaneously a contribution to the global historiography of feminist art history that – as it seems – is yet to be written.

Eastern Europe and Latin America occupy different positions in colonial/imperial and postcolonial/post-imperial histories and power relations in the knowledge field resulting from them.[6] Yet, in the past decades, both regions have experienced epistemological dominance of the discourse born in centres of knowledge production, including those on feminist art. Art history scholars, as art curators, face their epistemic authority and the institutional power behind them. The hegemony of Western discourse is conditioned by regional specificities of knowledge production determined by local and global requirements (e.g. current, dynamic political and economic situations in various places, but also the demands of globalised neoliberal art and academic worlds). This results in both the over-visibility of "Western" ideas in local research and the under-visibility of local research in global feminist art history. As pointed out by Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard, the relationship between what is generated

5 C. Fajardo–Hill, A. Giunta, eds., *Radical Women. Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, Munich, 2017.

6 See for example W. Mignolo and M. Tlostanova, "Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2006, 9, no. 2, pp. 205–221; "Descolonizaciones inciertas I and II– Uncertain Decolonization I and II", in: *ArteBA. Memoria semestral de arte contemporáneo*, 2016, 3, and 2017, 4, eds. Dorota Biczel, Andrea Giunta and Luis Santiago Vargas, Descolonizaciones_inciertas_Uncertain_Decolonizations_I_2016.pdf (monoskop.org); Descolonizaciones_inciertas_Uncertain_Decolonizations_II_2017.pdf (monoskop.org) [accessed 25 January 2024].

in Latin America (e.g., literature, works of art) and Latin Americanism (discourses on Latin America) is mediated by Northern American universities which, from the departments of Romance languages, administer what she calls the "centre-function". From this perspective, Latin America produces objects, while the North American academy produces concepts, or, in colonial terms, Latin America offers the "raw material" and the centre of its "industrialisation", that is to say, the power to process art, visual culture, literature, the original works.[7] To these limitations should be added those that originate from the national art histories, where not only women were underrepresented. In Latin America, this refers obviously to the indigenous people and African descendants whose presence has only recently started to be introduced in the art world and art historical narratives.

Richard's observations can also refer to Eastern European art and its conceptualisation in global art history. Yet, it refers mainly to Soviet Russian culture, which has always attracted more attention than the culture of other Eastern European countries.[8] Much has been written on the disproportion in visibility and significance of scholarship produced in different parts of the world in the global knowledge economy. Colonial power relations have produced it, but also, which is crucial for Eastern Europe, imperial relations that resulted in hierarchisation within Europe.[9] Specifically, in relation to feminist art historiography, we could talk about the low international visibility of major locally organised exhibitions and publications (due to the language in which they are written or poor distribution).

Both regions struggle to have the findings of research conducted locally recognised in the global academic and art worlds. Latin American and Eastern European feminist artists get visibility more easily than feminist art historians, thanks to the art market's eagerness to incorporate new regions and new names. But it is not rare that these are art historians based in the US or Western Europe who write about them in globally oriented publications. Although feminist art history developed in both regions, today it is still the case that local specialists are ignored, but it refers to a greater extent to Eastern European than Latin American scholars. For example, in the *Global Feminisms* exhibition catalogue, Charlotta Kotik, a Prague-born, US-based scholar,

7 N. Richard, "Intersecting Latin America with Latin Americanism: Academic Knowledge, Theoretical Practice, and Cultural Criticism", in: *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*, eds. A. Del Sarto, A. Ríos, A. Trigo, Durham, 2004.

8 See for example texts by Éva Forgács on the concept of East European art: É. Forgács, "How the New Left Invented East European Art", *Centropa*, May 2003, 3, no. 2, pp. 93–104 or É. Forgács, "1956 in Hungary and the Concept of East European Art", *Third Text*, 2016, 20, no. 2, p. 177–187.

9 Mignolo, Tlostanova, op. cit. and publications by Manuela Boatcă, e.g. "The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 2006, 79, no. 3, pp. 463–482 and *Global Inequalities Beyond Occidentalism*, Farnham, 2015.

wrote the text on Eastern European artists. In the *Iconic Works of Art by Feminists and Gender Activists,* a text on Natalia LL was written by a Warsaw-born US-based Joanna Inglot, and a text on Tanja Ostojić by a UK scholar Hilary Robinson. It indicates that Eastern European scholarship attracts much less attention in the global art and academic world than artists from these regions. The case of Latin America is different. Georgina Gluzman writes in the text included in this volume about an influential exhibition *Latin American Women Artists 1915–1995,* touring through the U.S. that was curated by Geraldine Pollack Biller, who lacked competence in this field. But gradually, the situation started to change. For example, in *Global Feminisms*, a chapter dedicated to Central America was written by Virginia Pérez–Rattón from Costa Rica (the rest of Latin America did not have a specific chapter in this catalogue), and the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Wack. Art and the Feminist Revolution* had a chapter dedicated to artistic feminism in Chile written by Nelly Richard. In the *Iconic Works of Art and Feminism*, the chapter on Ilse Fuskova was written by Argentine feminist researcher María Laura Rosa. The link between Latin American and North American researchers is active in art history. Probably, the early collecting of Latin American art in the United States or the presence of research centres dedicated to Latin American art influenced the representation of curators and researchers based in Latin America in publishing or curatorial projects in the United States. This has not been the case with Eastern European scholars, which may result from the dominance mentioned above of interest in Soviet art over art from other Eastern European countries. Another issue we discuss in this volume is to what extent local knowledge production reflects local intellectual traditions and social contexts and to what extent it replicates hegemonic narratives.

This dossier consists of texts written by scholars who were educated and are based in Eastern Europe or Latin America. Being at various stages of our academic careers, we differ in terms of scholarly experience. Yet, we all face several similar problems. Some of them are quite easy to define: for example, English is the first language for none of us. Others are subtler and relate to how we are perceived and how we perceive ourselves in the global field of art historical research, struggling with persistent inferiorisation. In the case of Eastern Europe, it is because it is still not perceived as Western-European enough. In the Latin American case, the sub-alternising vision embodied in "peripheral" or "derivative" concepts is also persistent. Even though the condition of the periphery was critically elaborated in both regions as privileged to undermine seemingly universal narratives, the truth is that such a condition has affected the insertion of Latin American and Eastern European art and art research in terms of market and museum collections.

Our two-year seminar can be considered an alliance of feminist art historians from Eastern Europe and Latin America who face similar problems vis-a-vis dominant discourses. It also incorporated a comparative perspective to analyse correspondence in art historical processes and our strategies.

At the end of this project, after many meetings and discussions, we know that feminist art histories in Eastern Europe and Latin America are not the same, although they do bear some similarities. This is in no way a failure but rather a confirmation of what had been our presumption from the beginning – that a multiplicity of traditions, histories, and experiences must inevitably lead to a multiplicity of art historian voices. As much as the universal claims of Western knowledge have been challenged, we also understand that coalitions of "peripheral" bodies of knowledge reveal as many similarities as differences, also in their aims and strategies. Our alliance, the results of which are presented in this volume, respects this diversity.

There is, for example, a significant difference between the two regions discussed here concerning the inner circulation of knowledge. Latin American scholars are connected by the history of colonial institutions established by colonial empires that lasted for more than four centuries. It is a continent divided into two language spheres and colonial traditions, Spanish and Portuguese. Recently, one can observe the existence of a Spanish-Portuguese mixed language, which occurs particularly in the academic field. The countries that form what is called Eastern Europe also have a complicated colonial history. Today, we perceive them primarily as united by the post-World War II experience of dependence on the Soviet Union. Yet, earlier, they constituted parts of the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian empires, and this legacy is still visible. This colonial history did not result in adopting one or three (considering three empires) languages. Eastern European scholars speak different national languages, sometimes known to quite a small number of people, and use sources created in them. Today, they use English (previously French) to communicate. The process of communication between them is, thus, to some extent, parallel to the communication with the global art/academic world. Only "to some extent", as although discussions during the academic events taking place in the region are in English, they do not necessarily attract much attention from the world outside the region.[10] The situation in Latin America is different. The common use of Spanish for academic production brought scholars active in the region together, but isolated them and their publications from the academic world outside the region. As previously explained, this has changed recently, propelled by the exchange of scholars, and by the agenda that globalisation imposes on the academic world, introducing English as a *lingua franca* for global exchanges.

Latin America and Eastern Europe are by no means homogeneous regions, and differences between countries have resulted in various developments

10 E.g., *Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists in Central and Eastern Europe* in: "The Conference: Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists in Central and Eastern", September 2021, *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/events/fundacja-arton/the-conference-not-yet-written-stories-women-artists-in-central-and-eastern-euro/396156615442011/ [accessed 25 January 2024].

in feminist art and feminist art historiography. Examples of these differences are discussed in, for example, Andrea Giunta's text in which she compares the development of feminist historiographies of art and artistic activism in Argentina and Chile, or in a text written by Agata Jakubowska, Marianna Placáková and Vesna Vuković in which they offer parallel narratives on feminist art history in post-socialist Poland, Czechia and Croatia. The comparisons can also be read between texts. Giunta's text corresponds in this regard with the one written by Talita Trizoli in which the reception of second-wave feminism in Brazil is discussed. The contribution by Jakubowska, Placáková and Vuković can then be read together with Marina Vinnik's essay that talks about the development of feminist perspective in German art history based on the example of Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig (situated in former East Germany).

It should be underlined that writing about the development of feminist art history (criticism and curatorship) in particular countries in no way implies our wish to contribute to reinforcing national discourses. Instead, it results from the conviction that local circumstances – internal and external politics of particular states or legal regulations in power – have contributed significantly, and on many levels, to how discourses on women and art developed.

As is clear from the remarks above, only several countries from both regions are discussed in the texts presented in this volume. We point out some interesting aspects of feminist art historiography as it developed in our regions and study some cases that only represent the tip of the iceberg. In a general sense, our objective is to contribute to the visibility of an emerging area of study, which aspires to provide an inclusive map generated from situated perspectives instead of those proposed from generalisations.

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