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Complexity and Contradiction in Central European Radical Architecture Experiments in Art and Architecture in the 1970s

'If you could ever imagine a situation in which this could be done you would have the revolution.'
Herbert Marcuse¹

In 1966, the American architect Robert Venturi published an influential book titled *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in which he diagnosed a disease of early modern architecture consisting in 'forced simplicity' and 'exaggerated clarity'.² Venturi also aptly pointed to the problematic lag between a modern architect's vision and the day-to-day architectural experience of modern buildings' inhabitants. Seen as a prophetic manifesto of postmodern architecture, the book expressed revulsion towards the austerity of the functionalist approach, synthetically encapsulated in the slogan 'Less is a bore' — Venturi's paraphrase of Mies van der Rohe's famous doctrine 'Less is more'.³ Venturi's statements had equivalents in architectural practice of the time. The need for experimentation in the field of architecture and the rejection of functionalist austerity were not only an American but a global phenomenon, spreading from Europe to Japan. In the mid-1960s in Western Europe, a tendency emerged in architectural practice that advocated a rapprochement between art and architecture. This trend was embodied in prospective projects that were more artistic than architectural in character and proposed utopian visions of society. Those futurological visions of urbanism and sculptural buildings, associated with artistic movements from Pop Art to Conceptual Art, were qualified by an Italian art critic, Germano Celant, as 'radical',⁴ or by a British architect, Peter Cook, as 'experimental'.⁵ Developed by such groups as Archigram

in Britain, Aérolande in France, Superstudio in Italy, or Haus-Rucker-Co, and by the artists and architects gathered around the Austrian periodical *Bau*, projects of visionary architecture favoured formal and conceptual innovations over the functional aspect and in some cases advocated direct connections between art and society. At times, they were connected to the contestation movement of May 1968.

We could find artists and groups of architects in Central and Eastern Europe around the same time whose projects showed formal and conceptual similarities to those of their Western colleagues, advocating a break with the common-sense understanding of architecture. Although we could mention here examples of projects by professional architects, such as the Czech SIAL group of architects, awarded the prestigious Grand Prix Auguste Perret in 1969,⁶ Hungarian Elemér Zalotay,⁷ or Pole Jan Głuszek,⁸ radical architecture in Central Europe was developed mainly by artists. In the 1970s artists creating architectural projects or participating artistic activity related to architecture and urbanism with the ambition to redefine the public space included: VAL, Milan Knížák, Karel Malich, Václav Cigler, Hugo Demartini, Stanislav Kolíbal, Jozef Jankovič, Július Koller and Stano Filko in Czechoslovakia; Tadeusz Kantor, Edward Krasiński, Jerzy Rosołowicz, Włodzimierz Borowski, Jarosław Kozłowski, Zbigniew Gostomski in Poland; Sigma Group, Mihai Olos, or Paul Neagu in Romania; and Tibor Gáyor, Dóra Maurer, István Harasztý, János Megyik, Endre Tót, György Jovánovics or Tamás Hencze in Hungary.

Like the work of their Western colleagues, their projects were in many cases impossible to carry out.

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Their formal experiments focused on the application of new materials that were rarely used in construction but offered new formal possibilities. Unlike the creators of traditional architecture, the creators of experimental buildings neglected the aspect of the sustainability in their projects, which instead represented prototypes and took the form of a drawing, collage, photomontage, or architectural model or environment, and were thus a work of a temporary nature. Initially, they expanded general thinking on architecture and architectural practice concerning some of the traditionally contradictory aspects of architecture, such as flexibility and elasticity and mobility, or ephemerality. Thus, by offering new architectural forms and shapes, such as inflatable structures, they created a disruption of the architectural field. As a result, their projects were characterised, among other things, by a nomadic quality and by the absence of solid, durable materials and a rejection of right angles.

However, while a number of publications, monographs, and exhibition catalogues have been published on visionary architectural projects that were developed in Western Europe and in the United States,⁹ not enough attention has been devoted to *radical* architecture, understood as a common tendency in art or architectural practice in the 1970s in the Eastern bloc.¹⁰ In reference to Venturi's book title, I will endeavour to discuss the existence of a *radical approach* in East European artistic and architectural practice. I will focus on two major features connected with this question: the complex relationship of East European art to global (Western) architectural tendencies; and the specific nature of

the Eastern approach, resulting from the particular context of this region and its peculiar, sometimes contradictory and ambiguous characteristics.

'Prospective Architecture'

In 1967 Mladá Fronta (Youth Front), a publishing house in Prague, published a book titled *Kde budeme žít zítra?* (*Where Will We Live Tomorrow?*),¹¹ a Czech translation of the manifesto-book *Où vivrons-nous demain?* by the French art critic and architectural theorist Michel Ragon.¹² This translation, published only four years after its release in France, together with the book *Města utopistů* (*Utopian cities*), published in the same year by the Czech architect and urban planner Jiří Hrůza,¹³ became fundamental sources of information about visionary and experimental architecture close to the visual arts. Ragon's theory and architectural criticism had a significant influence on the work of such artists as Slovak, Alex Mlynářčík and the group VAL (*Voies et Aspects du Lendemain — Cesty a aspekty zajtrajška — The Ways and Aspects of the Day After Tomorrow*).¹⁴ Founded in 1968 in Žilina, a city in northern Slovakia, by Mlynářčík and two Slovak architects, Ludovít Kupkovič and Viera Mecková, VAL took Ragon's theory as one of the main impulses for its activity.¹⁵

In the course of more than twenty years of collaboration (from 1968 to 1993), VAL developed eight projects: four cities-edifices, two buildings-monuments, a hotel, and a building for the National Assembly. All their projects lay halfway between art and architecture and could be classified as towns-sculptures or buildings-sculptures. These



1 / VAL (Alex Mlynářčík — Viera Mecková), *Istroport*, 1974–1976
photocollage
56 × 90 cm
Collection of Alex Mlynářčík, Žilina
Photo: Archive of the VAL Group, Žilina

were rare examples of the complex development of visionary architecture that Michel Ragon defined as 'prospective'. These projects seemed to illustrate the content of Ragon's *Where Will We Live Tomorrow?* They included every variant of prospective architecture described by the French theorist: megastructures, space cities, submarine buildings, inflatable structures, sculptures-architectures, suspended cities, seaports, mobile homes, flexible architecture, etc. In his projects, Mlynářčík interpreted most of the architectural shapes described by Ragon as new architectural forms: simple geometric figures, ovals (the project *Akusticon*, 1969–1971), spirals and shells (the space-city *Scarabea*, 1986–1989), domes and spheres (*Homage to Hope and Courage. Memorial to Eugene A. Cernan/ Pocta nádeji a odvahe. Památník E.A. Cernanovi*, 1974–1975, and *People's Assembly of Argillia/ Národné Zhromaždenie Argillia* to be located on Bora Bora, 1980–1994), or constructions resembling flying saucers (*Heliopolis–Olympic City/ Olympijské mesto*, 1968–1974). In his designs Mlynářčík also tried to address all the issues mentioned by the French critic: increasing urban concentration, progressive urbanisation of the countryside, traffic problems, exploitation of new energy sources, establishment

of a new relationship with nature, climatised cities, and the spatial expansion of man. In his book, Ragon wrote about twin cities (*Istroport* — a port on the Danube River near Bratislava, 1974–1976), architecture generating sound effects (*Akusticon* — a kinetic concert hall), and the construction of grand holiday resorts (*Heliopolis* — a city-nest perched atop the Tatra Mountains between Czechoslovakia and Poland).¹⁶

Monumental Everyday Objects

Another tendency that could be observed in architectural practice in the East in the 1970s was the use of the shapes of everyday objects in the designs of monuments and buildings. Artists and architects used images of enlarged common objects but also parts of the human body for this purpose. In this respect, the architectural imagery that certainly had an impact on Central European artists was that created between 1965 and 1969¹⁷ and later presented in the *Proposals for Monuments and Buildings* by Swedish-American artist Claes Oldenburg. At this point, mention must also be made of the work of two artists in particular: Tadeusz Kantor of Poland and his Czech colleague Milan Knížák, both of whom incorporated the idea of



2 / Tadeusz Kantor, *Bridge — Clothes Hanger*, 1970–1971
photocollage
31 × 34 cm
Archive of Jacek Maria Stokłosa, Cracow
Photo: Jacek Maria Stokłosa

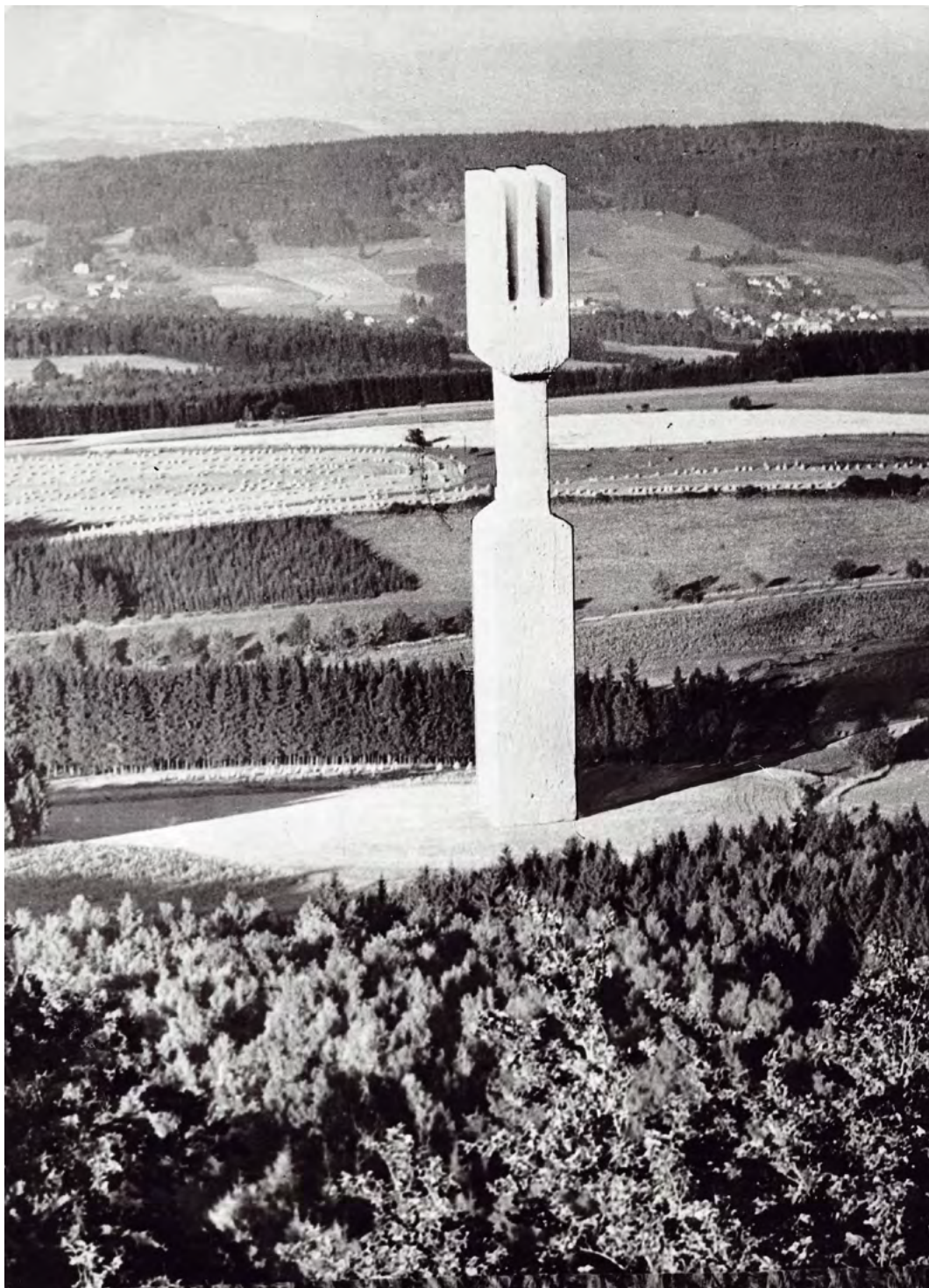
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enlarging common objects in their work, probably (or at least partly) under the influence of American art.

One can clearly see Oldenburg's impact on the cycle of black-and-white photo collages entitled *Impossible Architectures* (*Architektura niemożliwa*) by Tadeusz Kantor, created around 1970, just a few years after his visit to the United States between June and December, 1965. During his stay in the US, the artist had a unique

opportunity to confront his work with the American art scene at the time. Kantor fascinated by the art of Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage.¹⁸ According to his wife, Maria Stangret, he also visited Oldenburg's studio.¹⁹

Kantor's *Impossible Architectures* designed for the city of Cracow comprised the projects: *Chair* (*Krzeseł*), a colossal chair which in the first version of the project was placed in the Main Market Square (Rynek Główny)



3 / Milan Knížák,
Fork Building, 1964
 photomontage
 29.7 × 21 cm
 private collection
 Photo: Milan Knížák

and in the second version in the Small Market Square (Mały Rynek); *Electric Bulb* (Żarówka), in which an electric bulb was placed in the Small Market Square; and *Bridge-Clothes Hanger* (Most-wieszak), in which a giant clothes hanger was stretched across the Vistula River near Wawel, the former seat of the Polish kings.²⁰ His project for a monumental folding chair made of concrete, *Placement of the Chair* (Usytuowanie Krzesła), was designed for the Symposium Wrocław'70, and like Oldenburg's projects was meant to be placed in the city centre.²¹

Although his interest in architecture dated back to the 1960s and the streets of Prague were where his work began as part of the group Aktuální Umění (Contemporary Art), Milan Knížák began working on his illustrated manuscript entitled *Dreams of Architecture* (Sny o architektuře)²² in the 1970s, after returning to Czechoslovakia from a trip to the United States between

1968 and 1970.²³ Like Tadeusz Kantor, this Czech Fluxus artist, in a cycle of drawings based on photographs, entitled *Houses*, created his architectural propositions mainly from the forms of everyday objects, such as a fork or a comb, or from a small table covered with dishes, such as a pitcher and a plate, and, like Kantor's colossal chair for Wrocław these propositions were supposed to be made of concrete. In this series, the Czech artist juxtaposed images of everyday objects and furniture or even fragments of the body (a head) and some natural phenomena (a cloud) with photographs of a landscape to create an impression of monumentality. An example is his *Comb-House* (Dům hřeben), representing a monumental comb on an architectural scale in a mountainous landscape. Other projects included *Fork-House* (Dům vidlička), *Table-House* (Dům stůl), *Head-House* (Dům hlava), *Star-House* (Dům hvězda), or *House-Cloud* (Dům oblak),

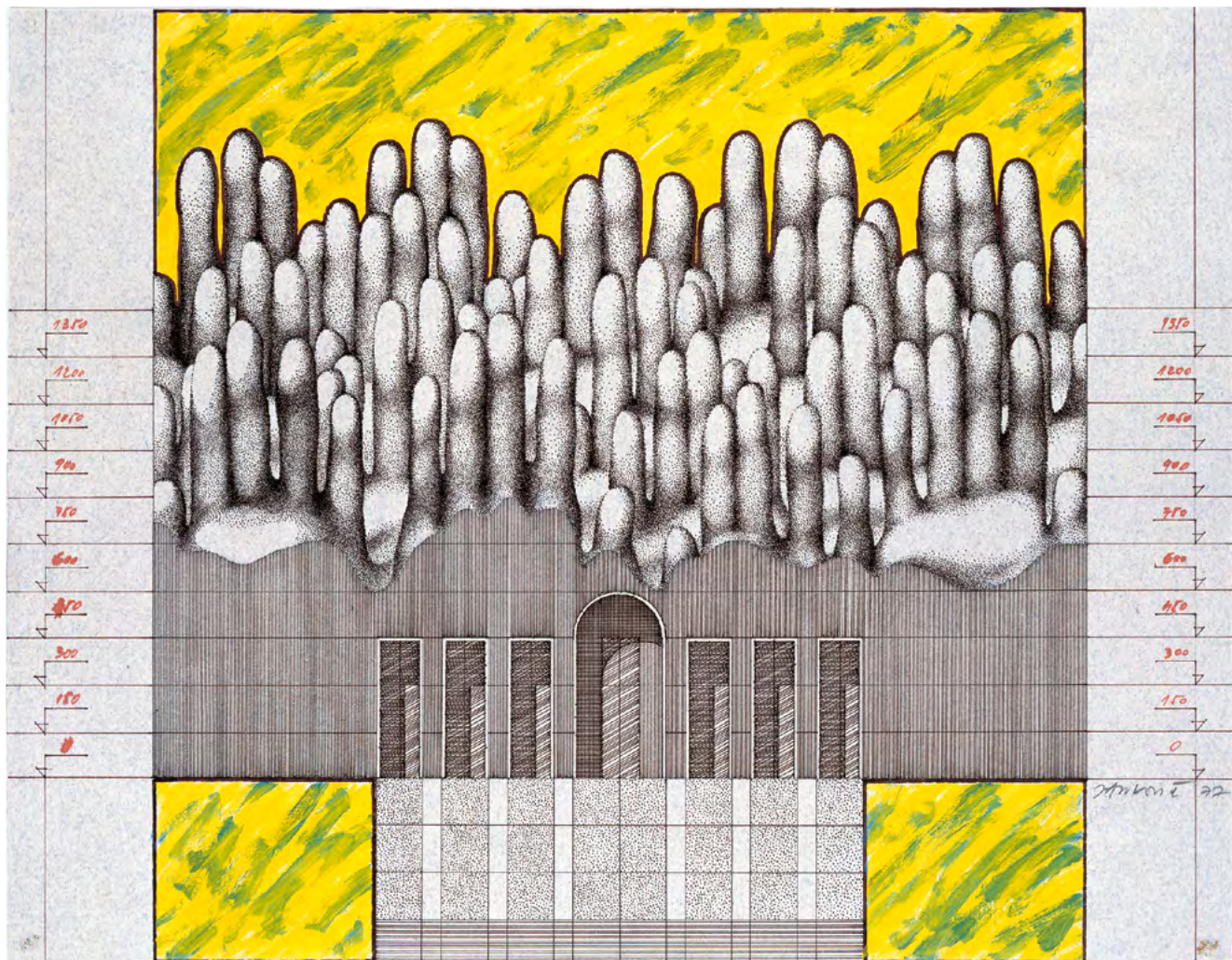
4 / Jozef Jankovič, *Project of Parliament with a Pneumatic Roof n°2*, 1975-1977

drawing, ink, acrylic

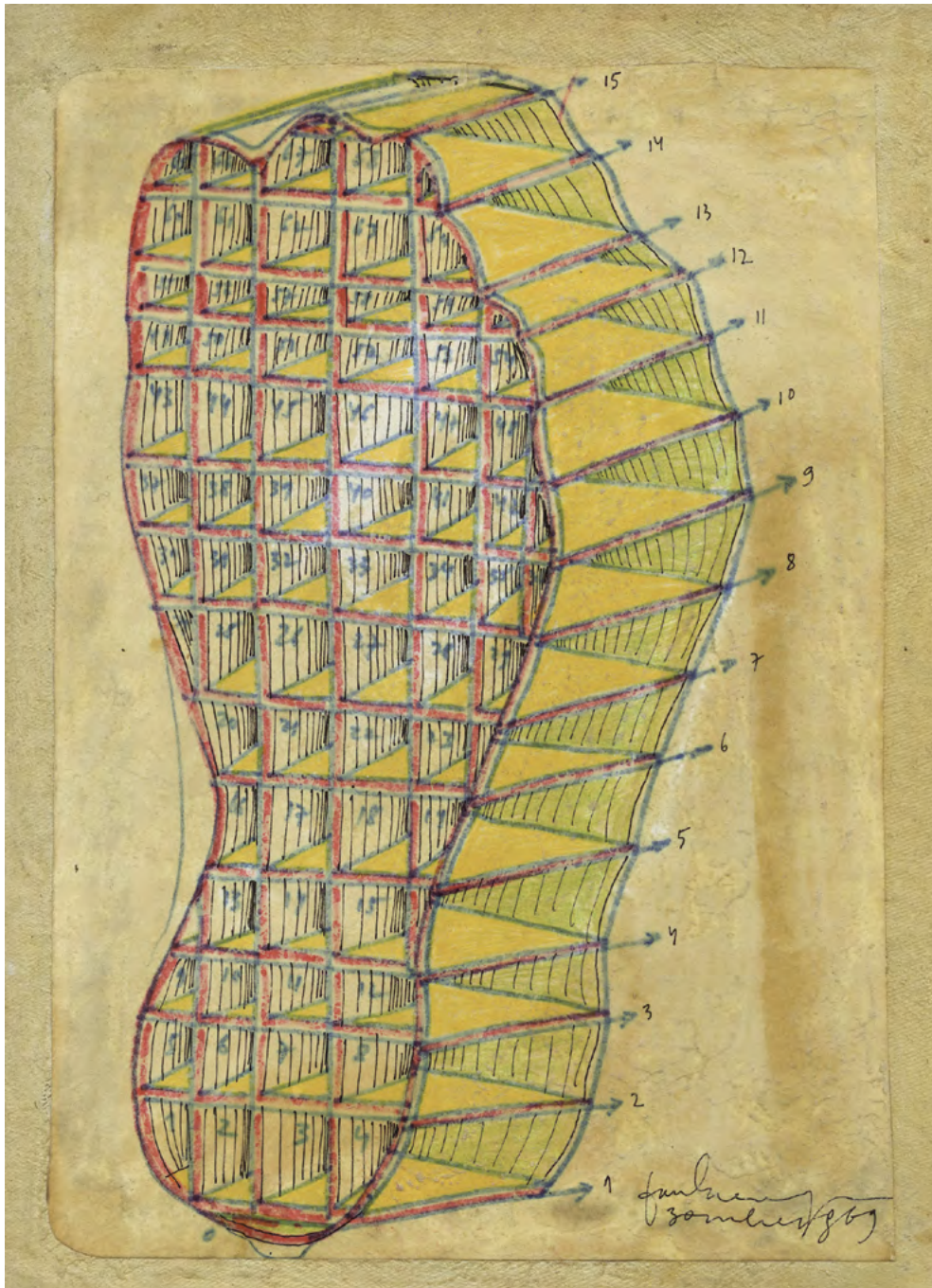
51 × 64 cm

Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava

Photo: Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava



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5 / **Paul Neagu, Human Foot, 1969**
gesso and ink on paper
glued on canvas
30 × 22.4 cm
Ivan Gallery, Bucharest
Photo: Paul Neagu Estate London

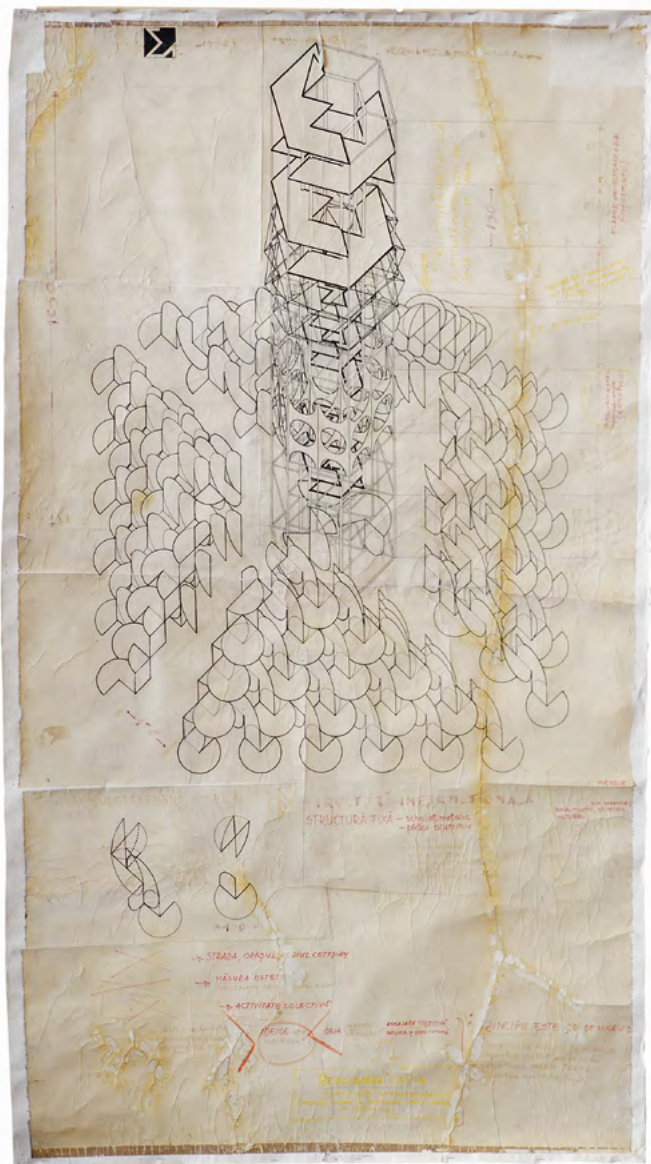
based on the same principle. Unlike Tadeusz Kantor, who almost always situated his proposals in an urban context (at sites of public interaction and exchange, such as a square, a market, or a street), Knížák's designs were located in a mountainous landscape.

From Sculpture to Project Art

Looking at the architectural work of Slovak sculptor Jozef Jankovič in the 1970s, we can observe some parallels between his projects and architectural experiments

emerging in Austria, similarities first pointed out by Slovak art historian and critic Tomáš Štrauss, who in 1982 noted that architectural Jankovič's projects were influenced by Hans Hollein's conceptual architecture.²⁴ What seems to have been instrumental to this was Jankovič's direct contact with the Viennese art scene, which was made possible in 1967, when he won the Künstlerhaus Prize, which gave him an opportunity to spend a few months in Vienna.²⁵

Jankovič started to work on his architectural projects in 1972, beginning with the building series



6 / **Sigma, Informational Tower, 1971**

ink, tracing paper

200 × 100 cm

Art Museum of Timișoara

Photo: Constantin Flondor

a building envisioned as the site of an imaginary institution presented in the *Project for the Slovak National Eros Centre* (*Projekt Slovenského národného Eros centra, 1974*).

Slovak art historian Aurel Hrabušický has suggested that some formal links can be identified in Jankovič's architectural conceptions and the architecture and proposals of Viennese visionary architects,²⁷ who leaned towards the use of simple geometric shapes and created stereometric detailed drawings, always set against a contrastive monochrome background and often brightly coloured. It is possible to see similar formal characteristics, for example, in Hans Hollein's *Die Stadt als Grossprojekt* (*The City as a Large Project, 1962–1963*) and particularly in his *City-Communication Interchange* (dating from the same period),²⁸ and in some of Jankovič's architectural projects. But the oscillation between geometrical and natural shapes in Jankovič's work is also typical of the work of other Central European artists. For example, Romanian artist Paul Neagu, in the 1970s drawings, paintings, and, in some cases, comestible objects-environments he created for a series of performances entitled *Anthropocosmos*, combined the human shape with geometric modules resembling 'honeycombs' (*Cake Man/ Omul-prăjitură, 1971*).²⁹

Pneumatic architecture was a type of experimental architecture of the 1960s and 1970s adopted in the Eastern bloc by Sigma Group (Grupul Sigma), a group of Romanian artists from Timișoara. Working on the boundary between art and architecture, Sigma's two founders, Ștefan Bertalan and Constantin Flondor Străinu, were also visual artists who in the 1960s had already gained some international recognition as the creators of kinetic art and as members of the neo-constructivist group 111.³⁰ In 1970 they invited a mathematician, Lucian Cordeanu, and some members of the young generation artists, Doru Tulcan, Elisei Rusu, and Ion Gaita, to participate in the group's activities.³¹ In the 1970s Sigma's projects for buildings, environments, inflatable structures (*Structuri gonflabile — Pneumatic Structures, 1974*),³² and experimental outdoor actions-environments made with nylon threads, translucent bands, plastic elements, and struts (*Action on the River Timiș, 1976*) were resonant of certain

Arab Cycle (*Arabský cyklus*) — fantastic representations of richly decorated architecture whose shapes were based on the silhouette of a human body. He continued this idea of 'figural' or 'human architecture', as it was called by Czech art historian Jiří Valoch,²⁶ in a cycle of architectural projects inspired by forms of modern and socialist-realist architecture. The cycle of architectural projects that Jankovič initiated in 1973 and continued to work on till the end of the decade are mainly exterior views of buildings. The Slovak artist worked on new designs of public buildings (this large sub-category includes buildings occupied by propaganda institutions), monuments, tribunes, cultural centres, housing estates, hotels, and private villas for artists, politicians, and members of the Communist Party. The artist created projects for the seats of imaginary as well as existing public institutions. There is an element of humour to these designs — for example, the phallic shape of

7 / **Sigma, Informational Tower, 1970**

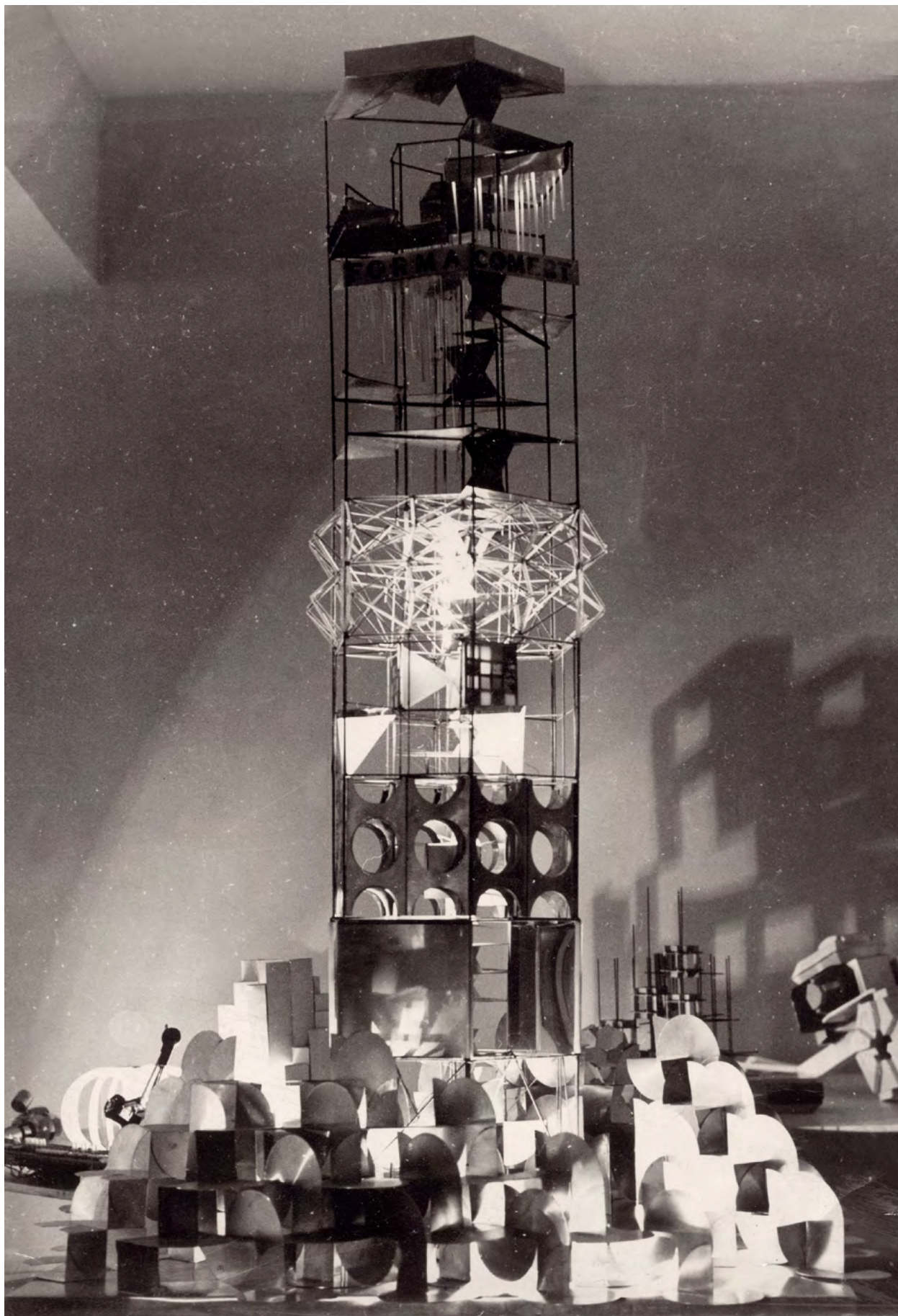
black and white photography of the model

14.5 × 10.5 cm

Ileana Pintilie, Timișoara

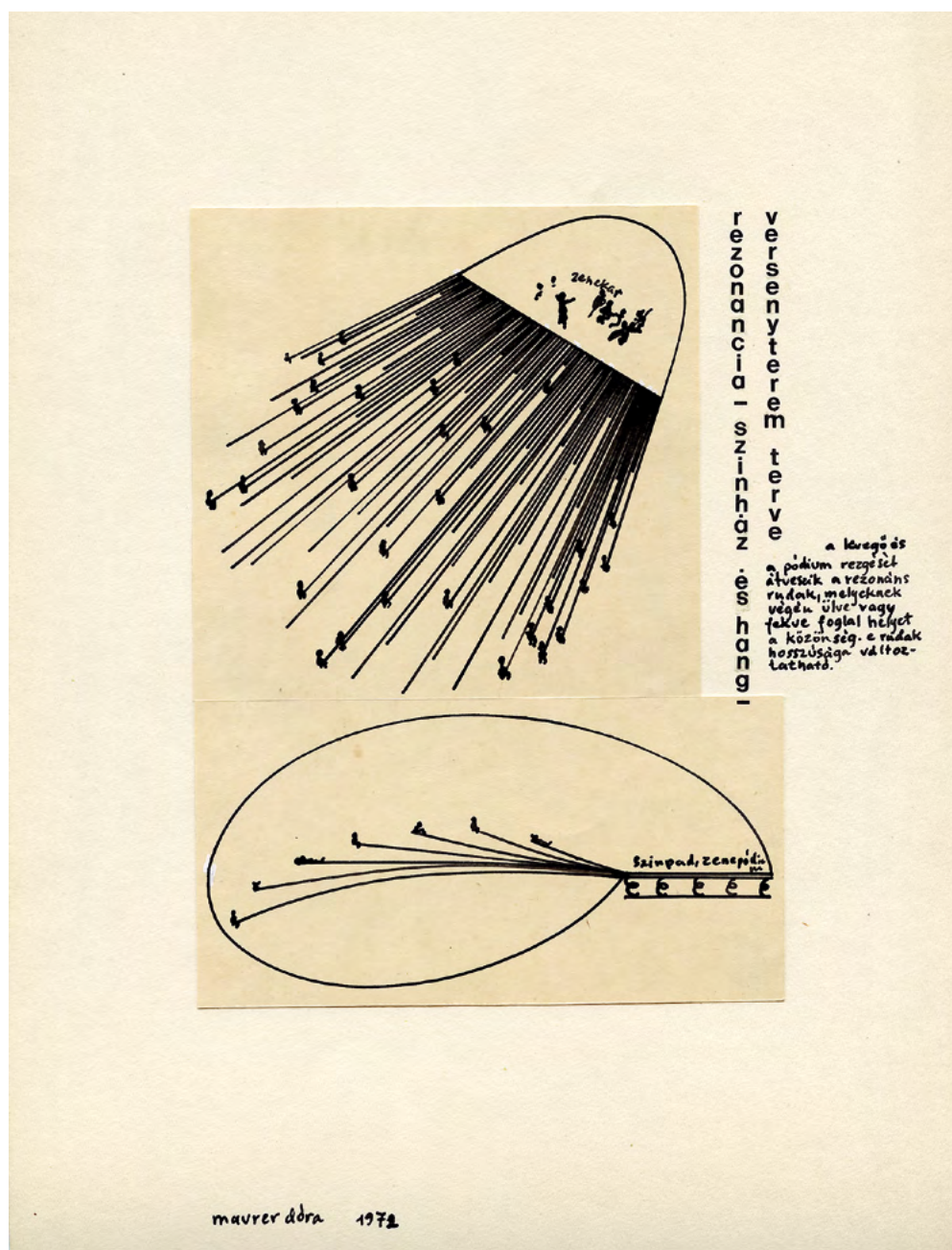
Photo: The Sigma Group

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trends in Western architecture, from Nicolas Schöffer to Richard Buckminster Fuller.³³ But their projects, such as the *Informational Tower* (*Turnul informațional*, 1970), which revealed the group members' interest in geometry, mathematics, and bionics, also showed parallels with projects by Russian artist Lev Nussberg and Dvijénie group (Movement), with the *Kinetic Tower* (*Kinetická věža*) by Milan Dobeš, and with the kinetic machines of Hungarian artist István Harasztj.³⁴

Like Sigma, Slovak artists Alex Mlynárčík, Stano Filko, and Jozef Jankovič also put forward some proposals for inflatable architecture. Jankovič's projects of inflatable architecture adopted the sculptural forms that were characteristic of Austrian inflatable designs.³⁵ For example, in his *Project of Parliament with a Pneumatic Roof* (*Projekt Parlamentu s pneumatickou strechou*, 1975–1977), the inflatable roof took the shape of monumental human palms rising from the cubic



8 / Dóra Maurer, *Resonator*, 1972

ink, paper

29 × 21 cm

SUMUS Foundation, Budapest

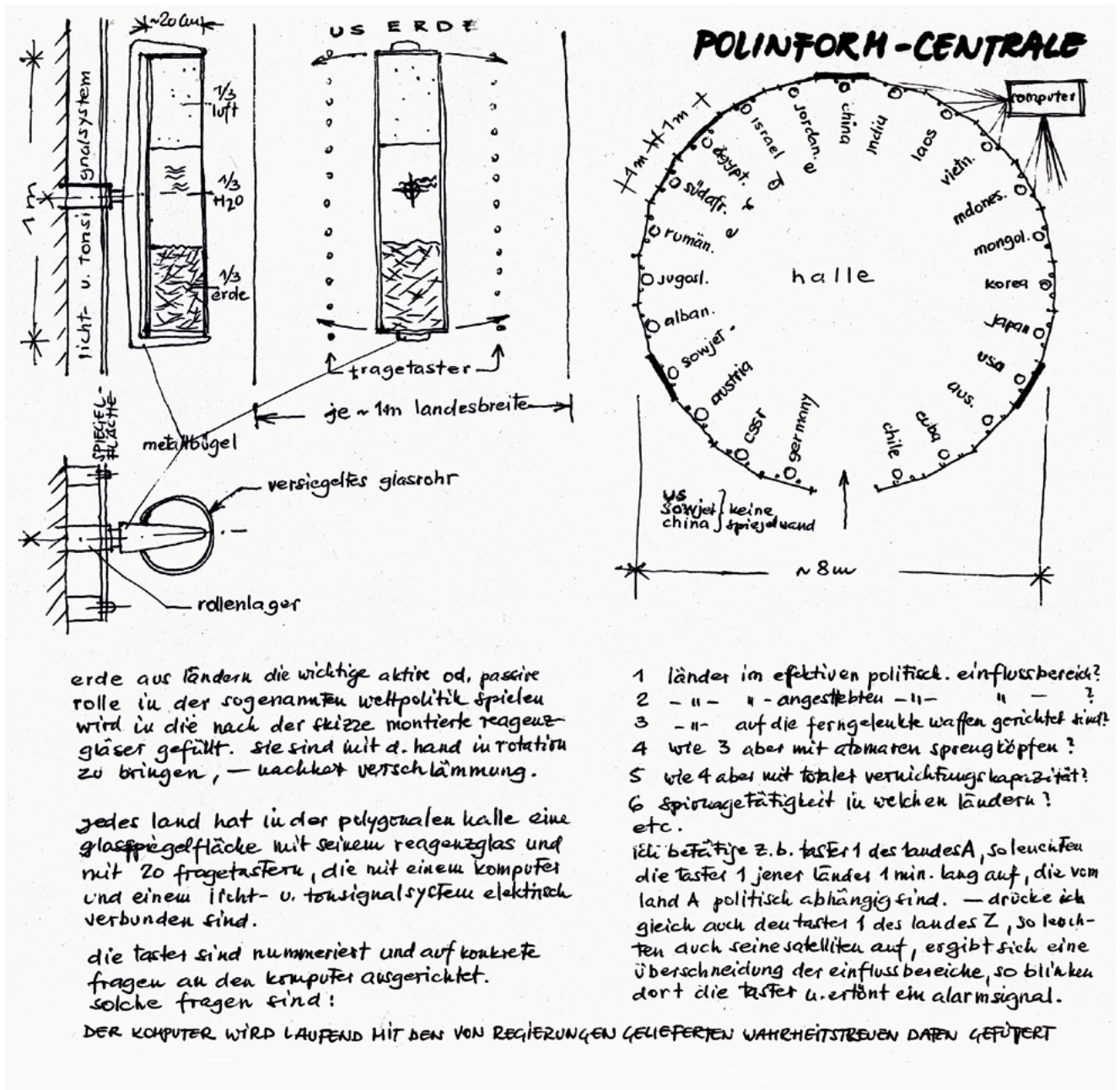
Photo: Dóra Maurer

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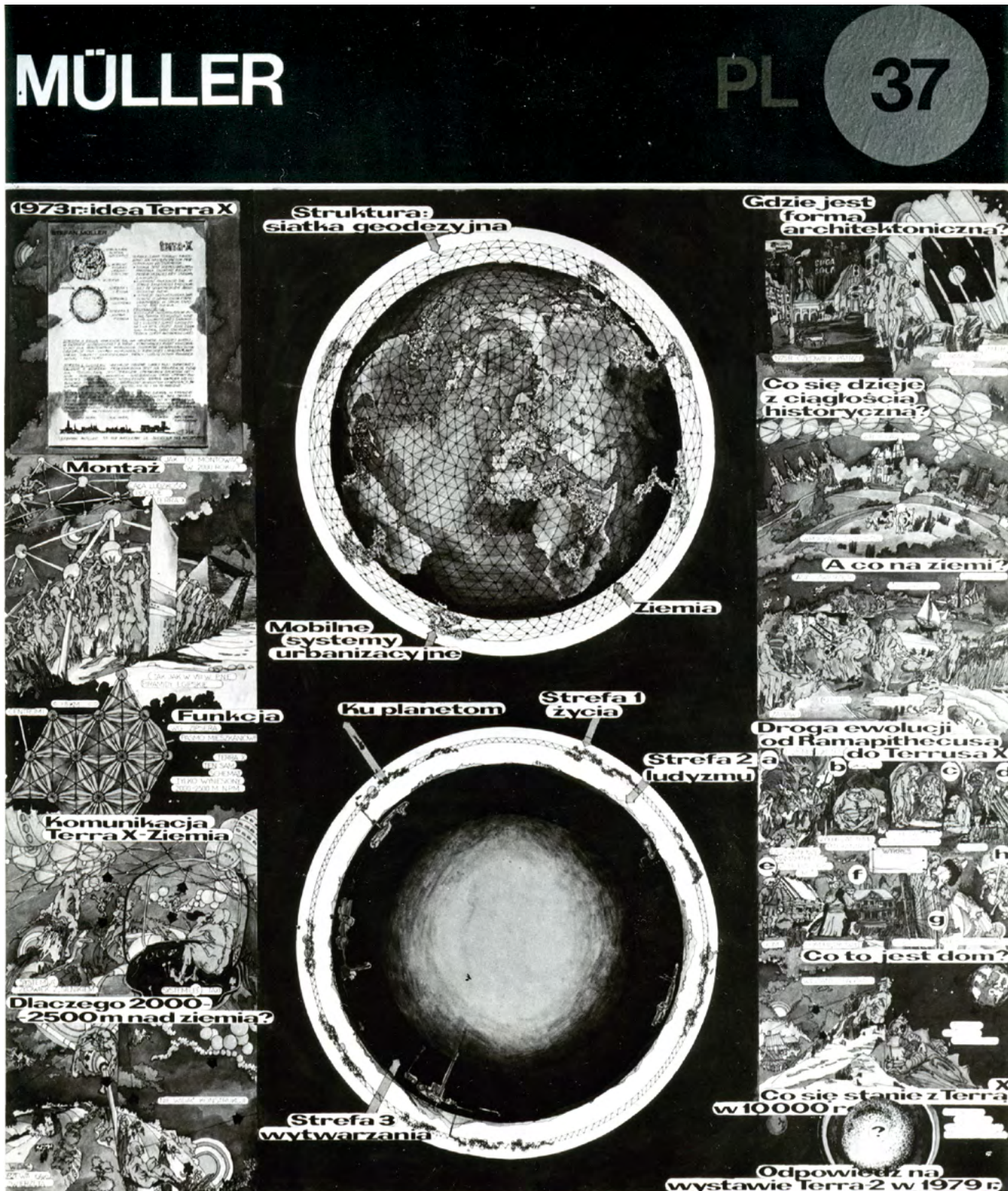
volume of the building. But first and foremost, the feature that Jankovič's projects shared with the Viennese architectural projects was their social criticism. Like politically engaged groups in Austria, such as Zünd-up (Timo Huber, Michael Pühringer, Bertram Mayer and Hermann Simbock), known for its radical actions-performances in the public space, Jankovič used the language of visionary architecture to make a direct comment on Czechoslovak society

of the time. His early 1972 drawings, such as the ones for the Project for a Consolidated Space (Projekt konsolidačného priestoru) or Project for 81 Ups and Downs in Life (Projekt 81 vrcholova a pádov života), made an allusion to the situation in Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the normalisation period and the increasing control of Czechoslovakian citizens by the state.

Allusions to the political situation were also present in architectural projects by a couple of Hungarian artists



9 / Tibor Gáyor, Polinform-Centrale, 1971
 ink, paper
 21 x 21 cm
 Archiv FSO — Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen
 Photo: Tibor Gáyor



10 / Stefan Müller, Terra X. A photograph of the plate presented at the TERRA I exhibition in the Museum of Architecture, Wrocław, 1975

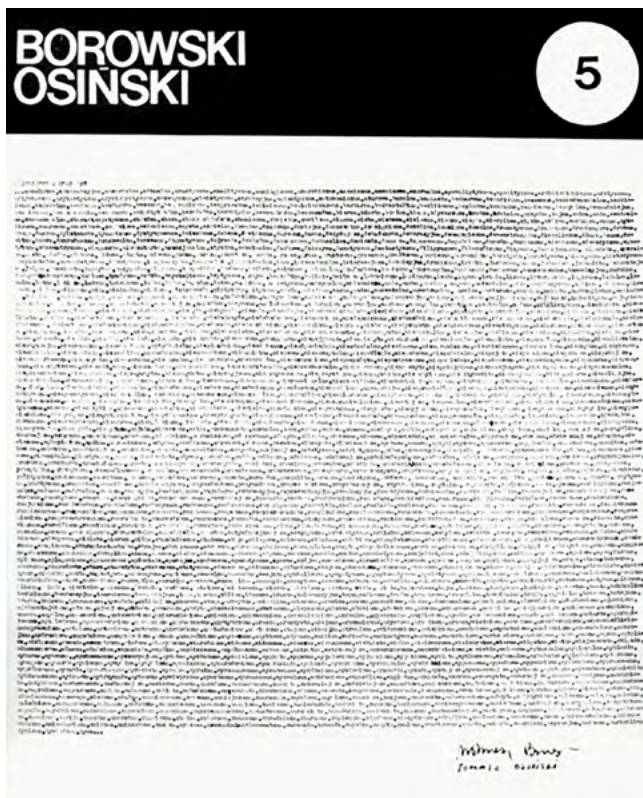
black and white photograph

23.8 × 18.3 cm

Museum of Architecture, Wrocław

Photo: Stefan Müller

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11 / Włodzimierz Borowski — Tomasz Osiński, *Architecture must be... A photograph of the plate presented at the TERRA I exhibition in the Museum of Architecture, Wrocław, 1975*

black and white photograph

18 cm × 13,8 cm

Museum of Architecture, Wrocław

Photo: Włodzimierz Borowski — Tomasz Osiński

any architecture seem very close to the ideas conceived in the West, their significance was in the majority of cases different and sometimes even the very opposite to that of similar work in the West. Nevertheless, divergent approaches could be easily explained.

The main feature that many radical architectural projects on both sides of the Iron Curtain shared was the fact that they were created by architects and artists in opposition to past conventions, thus making a break with previous architectural practices. In both cases, we can speak of a heterogeneous tendency rather than an established artistic movement. On both sides of the Iron Curtain, these trends would be characterised by a permanent oscillation between art and architecture. Nonetheless, while the projects of most Western groups, such as *Aérolande*, *Archigram*, or artists grouped around the Austrian *Bau* review were associated with Pop Art, East European projects, which began emerging about 1970, were closer to Conceptual Art, as too was the work of the younger generation of Austrian architects and of Italian radical groups such as *Superstudio* and *Archizoom*. Kantor's *Impossible Architectures* belong to the 'conceptual' period of his art.⁴⁰ Dóra Maurer's and Tibor Gáyor's projects were created at a time when both artists were working on a series of conceptual artworks called *Sumus*.⁴¹ In 1982 Slovak art historian Tomáš Štrauss described Jozef Jankovič's architectural concepts as 'a stylistic turn towards conceptual thinking' (*štylistický obrat ku konceptuálnemu mysleniu*).⁴² Jiří Valoch, a Czech promotor of Conceptual Art, defined Václav Cigler as a conceptual artist.⁴³

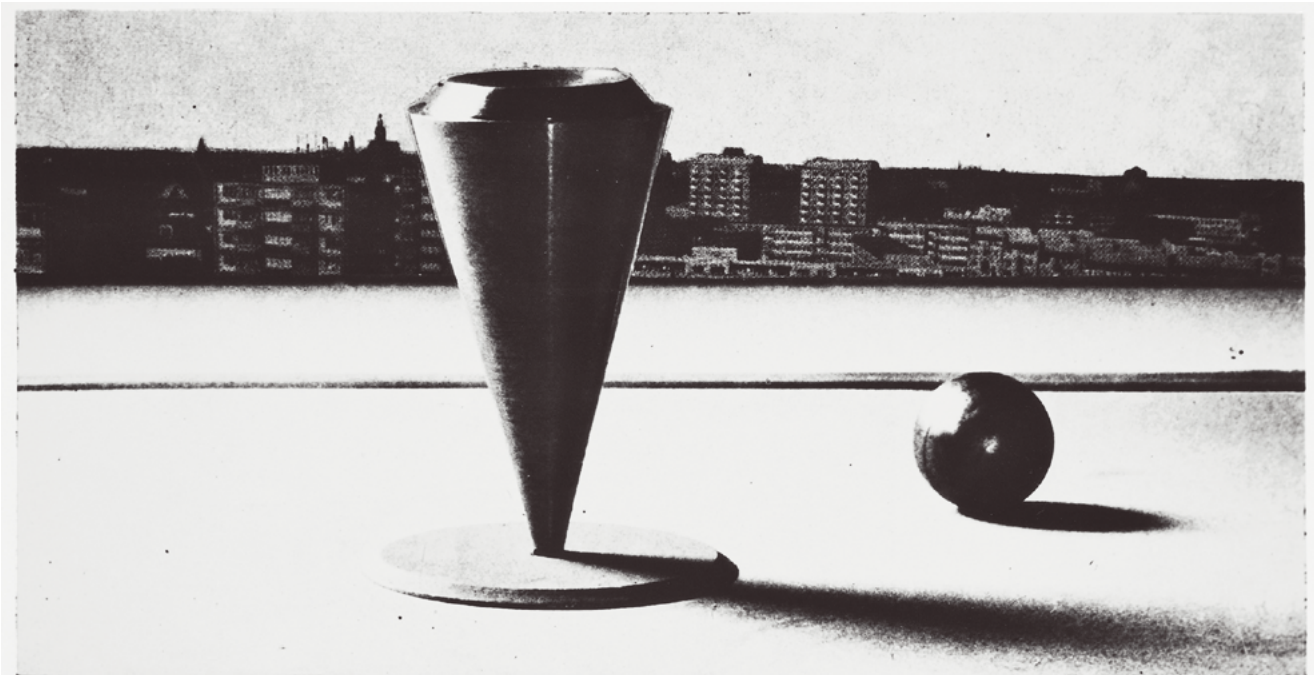
Many of these projects were also presented at exhibitions and in publications considered manifestoes of East European leanings towards conceptual art — for example, at *Wrocław '70*, a symposium that became the manifesto for project art and conceptual art in Poland (the exhibition presented projects by Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Rosołowicz, Włodzimierz Borowski, Jarosław Kozłowski, and Zbigniew Gostomski),⁴⁴ or the German critic Klaus Groh's book *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa (Actual Art from Eastern Europe, 1972)*, showcasing projects by Tibor Gáyor, Dóra Maurer, Paul Neagu, Karel Malich, Václav Cigler, Jerzy Rosołowicz.⁴⁵ Jozef Jankovič's architectural proposals were then presented, for instance, at the exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s* in New York in 1999.⁴⁶

In characterising Czech visionary architecture of the 1960s and 1970s, Ludmila Hájková and Rostislav

based in Vienna and Budapest — Dóra Maurer and Tibor Gáyor.³⁶ In the beginning of the 1970s, they produced architectural drawings and conceptual projects representing discrete interventions in the public space and in the open air (a joint project by Gáyor and Maurer — *Marking of Wind-Direction (Széllirányjelzés)*, 1971), a project for an interactive concert hall (Maurer's *Rezonator*, 1972), or even the construction of a primitive hut (Gáyor's *Soft House*, 1971). Those projects were similar to Jankovič's designs in their use of irony and political overtones — some of these works constituted a critical commentary on the Hungarian socio-political situation.³⁷ As an example we can cite Dóra Maurer's *May-Day Private March on Artificial Ground (Május 1-I privát felvonulás mesterséges talajon)*, consisting in walking on crumpled newspapers in the shape of a rectangle on the ground on the Worker's Day, 1 May 1971.³⁸ In 1971, Gáyor, who studied architecture,³⁹ created a project entitled *Polinform-Centrale*, a computer-controlled circular platform with an electronic system offering alternative solutions and providing answers to questions about geopolitics.

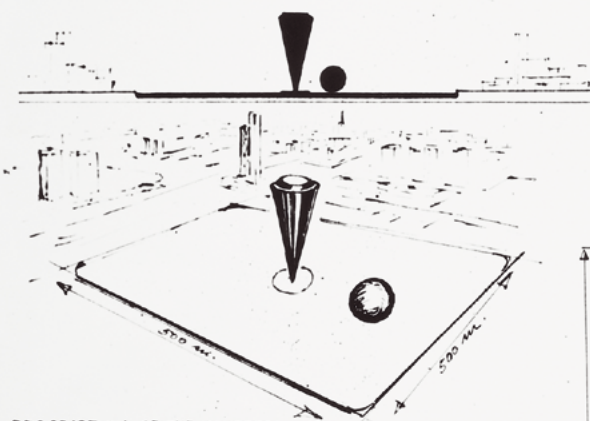
Radical Architecture vs. Authoritarian Power

The aforementioned formal similarities that existed between Western and Eastern visionary architectural proposals could be treated as evidence of the Iron Curtain's permeability on the level of artistic creation. But even if formally East European concepts of vision-



NEUTRDROM
Wrocław 1967 Jerzy Rosołowicz

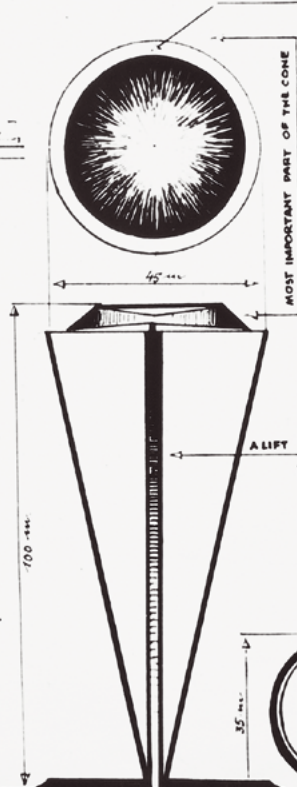
EXIT ON THE MIRROR PLATFORM AND GETTING SUSPENDED IN THE SPACE



DESCRIPTION OF THE NEUTREDROME

FIELD WITH HARDENED SURFACE OF DIMENSIONS 500 X 500 mm. ON WHICH IS ERECTED A STATIC ELEMENT (UPTURNED CONE 100 mm HIGH) WITH MOBILE ELEMENT (BALL WITH A DIAMETER OF 35 mm). THE LOCATION OF THE NEUTREDROME SHOULD BE EFFECTED WITH DECISIVE CO-OPERATION OF TOWN-PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONE, TOGETHER WITH SUPPORTING CORE, LIFT ETC. - IN CO-OPERATION WITH CONSTRUCTORS AND ARCHITECTS. THE FINIAL OF THE CONE BASE REQUIRES IMMEDIATE CO-OPERATION OF ELECTRONICS SPECIALISTS, CONSTRUCTORS AND ARCHITECTS.

THE PROGRAMMING OF THE FUNCTIONAL INTERIOR OF THE BALL REQUIRES CO-OPERATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS, PHYSICISTS, PHYSIOLOGISTS, MATHEMATICIANS, ELECTRONICS SPECIALISTS AND CYBERNETICS SPECIALISTS, ITS CONSTRUCTION-THE CO-OPERATION OF MANY HIGHLY SPECIALIZED PLANTS AND FACTORIES AND OF SKILLED MOUNTING AND BUILDING TEAMS.



CONE

ENTERING INTO THE TOP OF THE [UPTURNED] CONE - DRIVE TO THE BASE [WHICH IS OVERHEAD] BY LIFT. WE ENTER INTO THE BRIGHTLY AND UNIFORMLY ILLUMINED WITH MILKY, DIFFUSED LIGHT DRAWER OF THE LIFT AND DRIVE UPWARDS. AS WE GO UP, THE DARKNESS BECOMES MORE AND MORE DENSE-UNTIL ABSOLUTE BLACK. THE LIFT BRINGS US TO THE PLACE FROM WHICH WE ENTER INTO THE ZERO POINT OF A CIRCLE I.E. TO THE CENTRE OF THE BASE OF THE UPTURNED CONE. WE FIND US SUDDENLY IN A LOW PLACE WHICH IS BRIGHTLY ILLUMINED WITH UNIFORM MILKY LIGHT, A HIGH, VIBRATING, NOT TOO LOUD SOUND CAN BE HEARD.

FROM THE CENTRE, WE GO ON AN INCLINED PLANE STRAIGHTLY TO THE BORDERS OF THE CIRCLE. AS WE GO AHEAD, THE CEILING ASCENDS, THE SOUND ABATES AND DECAYS, THE DARKNESS BECOMES MORE AND MORE DENSE UNTIL ABSOLUTE BLACK. THEN FOLLOWS THE MOST ESSENTIAL MOMENT OF EXIT OF THE CIRCLE AND BEING SUSPENDED IN THE SPACE.

BALL

SET IN MOTION BY THE PEOPLE, - ROLLING, IT ACTUATES PUSHES WHICH SWITCH ON RESP. OFF VARIOUS ELECTRONIC APPLIANCES. AT UNFORESEEN MOMENTS, THERE OCCUR VARIOUS LUMINOUS - VISUAL - ACOUSTIC PHENOMENA INCREASE AND DECREASE OF PRESSURE, OF HUMIDITY, LOSS OF BALANCE, PHENOMENA PERCEIVED BY THE SENSES OF TASTE AND SMELL, ANTI-GRAVITATION ETC. VARIOUS PHENOMENA CAN OCCUR INSIDE THE BALL SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE MOVEMENT OF THE BALL CAN BE STOPPED FROM OUTSIDE AND FROM INSIDE ALSO ACCIDENTALLY, WHEN A CUT-OUT HAPPENS TO BE TOUCHED.

ELECTRONIC APPLIANCES

CONTACTING PUSHES FOR SWITCHING ON AND OFF ELECTRONIC APPLIANCES
PEOPLE

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING STAGES OF THE KREATION OF THE NEUTREDROME ARE PROVIDED FOR: ① WIDEST POSSIBLE PROPAGATION OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE NEUTREDROME ALL OVER THE WORLD, ② COLLECTION OF APPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS OF CO-OPERATION FROM INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES, ③ STAGE OF DESIGNING, CONSULTATIONS AND MEETINGS - COLLECTION OF MEANS - REALIZATION OF THE NEUTREDROME. OCCASIONAL LOCATION AND REALIZATION SHOULD BE EXCLUDED. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE NEUTREDROME CAN BE AMENDED UPWARDS.

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Švácha very justly remarked that, in contrast to western architects, gathered in experimental groups, in Czechoslovakia, visionary architectural proposals were designed by 'isolated individuals'.⁴⁷ This statement seems to refer globally to the context of the Eastern bloc and here we can name a few groups such as VAL or Sigma⁴⁸ only as exceptions. We can even go further and claim that the specific nature of radical architectural projects in Central Europe stems, among other things, from the fact that most of them were designed by artists and these projects were very different, remote from the type of artistic work they were usually engaged in. Initially, these artists were not particularly interested in architecture and its applications in art. Alex Mlynářčík, for example, was mainly active in the field of environmental art and performance and in the 1960s and 1970s he organized a number of actions, which were part art festival and part popular celebration and always had a wide audience of people who often had no connection to the world of art. Jozef Jankovič even today works primarily in the field of sculpture. He became well-known in the 1960s because of his figurative spatial compositions, with very grotesque and ironic characteristics, that speak emotionally about the human condition. Tadeusz Kantor originally studied to be a painter, but went on to become a theatre director as well and expressed himself in these two fields by putting on happenings and performances, creating paintings and art objects, and directing plays. The architectural designs that these artists began to produce, more or less in the early 1970s, were of only secondary importance to their main artistic work, exceptions to their otherwise rather homogeneous work, both at the formal level and in terms of their content.

The architectural designs of East European artists, in the form of sketches, prints, photo collages, or even technical drawings, revealed the ambition of the creator behind them to create real architectural projects. The aforementioned examples were thus a break from the artists' usual creative activity. But what is even more interesting is the fact that sometimes, for example, in the cases of Jozef Jankovič and Milan Knížák, architectural projects were created in response to the state's omnipresent control. Jankovič was expelled from the Union of Czechoslovak Artists (*Svaz československých výtvarných umělců*) during the normalisation period, and he was consequently obstructed in continuing his work as a professional artist or even obtaining materials for his sculptures. He saw the origin of his architectural drawings in his need to respond to the fact of being rejected by communist society.⁴⁹ Knížák's architectural proposals were created in a period when, after returning from the United States in 1970, he was under constant surveillance by the Czechoslovak police.⁵⁰

Moreover, the use of architectural language allowed these artists to express social criticism, without being censored, by expressing it in a covert

manner that was nevertheless apparent to anyone who knew the codes of avant-garde art. This function of architecture was confirmed by Slovak artist Jozef Jankovič commenting on how he was questioned by the police about his architectural drawings. In an interview he gave in 2011, he recalled that in the 1970s, while working on his architectural drawings, he wanted to create 'irreproachable' works in order to avoid censorship.⁵¹ He claimed that the police obviously suspected there were elements of mockery in his projects, but actually could not accuse him openly because of the implicit, highly subjective, and indirect character of his criticism. The positive undertone to most architectural projects was due to the fact that in the language of communist ideology architecture itself was presented as something very positive (there were all sorts of images connected with construction in the iconography of Socialist Realism and they were associated with a conception of the modern communist state that was redefined after the Second World War).⁵²

Both in the East and the West, the liberation of the imagination was an essential feature of architectural designs. Architects and artists on both sides of the Iron Curtain opted for architecture beyond reason (anti-formalism), the architecture of sensation, non-functional architecture, and mobile architecture. In the formal sense, great importance was attached to the idea that architectural structures should be flexible, making new edifices adaptable to changing external circumstances, and in the figurative sense, one of the postulates of these projects was to be responsive also to social development. It is easy to provide East European examples of visionary and, in most cases, high-tech architectural designs that responded to major tendencies represented by individual Western European artists: ideas for inflatable architecture (Sigma, Stano Filko, Alex Mlynářčík), mobile homes (Jozef Jankovič's *Walking Block of Flats (Kráčající panelák, 1978)*, Jerzy Rosołowicz's vehicle *Traveling Neutronikon (Neutronikon podróżny, 1970)*, cosmic architecture (VAL's cosmic city *Scarabea*, Karel Malich's *Proposals for the New Planets*⁵³), climatisation projects and environmental designs (VAL's climatised city *Heliopolis*; Maurer's *Inhalomediator* — a utensil producing chamomile steam for 'densely populated, busy cities'⁵⁴), psycho-sensorial spaces (Sigma's *Pneumatic Structures, 1974*, Stano Filko's *Cosmos, 1969*), kinetic concert halls (VAL's *Akusticon*; Maurer's *Rezonator, 1972*; Rosołowicz's *Natural Neutrdrom (Neutrdrom naturalny) for A Concert for 28 Pillows and a Sunset (Koncert na 28 poduszek i zachód słońca), 1968*), outdoor actions-installations (Sigma's *Action on the River Timiș, 1976*; Gáyor and Maurer's *Marking of Wind-Direction, 1971*) or global cities (Mihai Olos's design of a modular town in *Universal Town, 1970*; Stefan Müller's megastructure *Terra X, 1973*).

Nevertheless, the latter designs were distinct for the way in which they were rooted in their specific local context, and their distinctiveness was then also reflec-

ted in terminology, which was strikingly different from that used by the Western artists. When Archigram was developing their *Plug-In* or *Instant Cities* (1964–1968), in Czechoslovakia architect Karel Honzík was at that same time speaking about *Domurbia* (*Town-House*, 1962–1965). To define his rather utopian and futurological projects, Alex Mlynářčík used Michel Ragon's concept of 'prospective architecture', but Tadeusz Kantor was already speaking about 'impossible architecture', Milan Knížák about 'dreamt architecture', and Polish architect Stefan Müller about 'intentional architecture'.⁵⁵ The manifesto of total appropriation by Austrian architect Hans Hollein titled *Alles ist Architektur* (*Everything Is Architecture*, 1968) had its Eastern counterpart in Polish artist Włodzimierz Borowski's project *Architecture Must Be...* (*Architektura musi być...*). Prepared in collaboration with Tomasz Osiński for the *Terra 1* exhibition held in Wrocław in 1975, the project tried to redefine architectural practice with the help of more than a thousand adjectives, listed in alphabetical order.

From Radical Avant-garde to Radical Architecture

When examining the specific nature of the radical tendency in art and architecture in Central Europe it becomes obvious that the socio-political context played a crucial role in its crystallisation. First of all, the fact of living in the Eastern bloc brought about significant aesthetic consequences. While Western architects took clear positions on the margins of the Functionalist architecture of the International Style, artists from Central and Eastern Europe realised their projects also in opposition to official architecture in communist countries; notably against Socialist Realism, but also against some 'modernist' achievements after 1945, and especially against cheap, standardised housing estates.

Visionary architectural practice was seen as an alternative, for example, by Ludovít Kupkovič, a VAL member and an architecture graduate, who worked between 1967 and 1976 in the Žilina branch of Stavoprojekt, a national architectural institute founded in 1948 to renew urbanism and architectural design in Czechoslovakia. While continuing his activity as a member of VAL, he stated distinctly that for him it represented a rupture in his own work. 'VAL was a new challenge', he said, 'free creativity in architecture, architectural dreams, poetry'.⁵⁶

We can, however, observe that East European artists and architects also distanced themselves from the didactic function of architecture, which was used to strengthen the official authorities' ideological influence on the citizens of the communist states. In Jankovič's projects, criticism of the Czechoslovak authorities was combined with the artist's disapproval of the officially accepted aesthetic programme. Some of his proposals were a grotesque transposition of

Stalinist architecture and the Palace of Soviets, like his project for a monument to an unknown politician (*Projekt památníka neznámého politika*, 1975) with a classical columnar facade. In other works, he criticised the megalomania of the communist authorities. Thus, in the *Design for a Building with 44 Floors Constructed to Mark the 44th Anniversary...* (*Návrh 44-poschodovej budovy postavenej k. 44 výročiu...*, 1979) Jankovič not only mocked the shape of the buildings being designed in communist Czechoslovakia, but he also made an ironic comment on the practice of the state authorities to commemorate every event of significance for its propagandist function with a building, monument, statue, etc. (resulting in large numbers of such works). Like their Western colleagues who were following such thinkers of the time as Herbert Marcuse (who, in 1967, announced the end of utopia⁵⁷), East European artists distanced themselves from the avant-garde legacy and its utopianism. According to Jerzy Rosołowicz, those proposals seem also to parody the utopian architectural and artistic projects of the avant-garde, as functionalism anticipated, among other things, a building whose function was to disrupt the visitor's impression of equilibrium and to neutralize their actions (*Neutrdrom*, 1967).⁵⁸ However, they created their designs mainly as a form of protest against the use of architecture for propagandist purposes. Such was the case of the *Project for a Tribune for 1 May* (*Projekt tribúny prvého mája*, 1974), which parodied the drawing *Lenin Tribune* made in 1920 by El Lissitzky.

On both sides of the Iron Curtain, most radical architectural projects were never implemented, which in no way detracts from the formal aspects of these sometimes highly developed architectural designs, whose implementation was often postponed to some 'near' future. In conformity with Ragon's idea of prospective architecture, which in contrast to utopian architectural projects could theoretically (technically) be carried out in the near future,⁵⁹ VAL's architectural projects were actually also feasible. By maintaining a distance from utopian concepts, which Ragon judged to be a negative and imprecise mode of visionary architecture,⁶⁰ the Slovak group elaborated their projects in minute detail. They prepared very neat, professional architectural documentation for their projects: drawings of cross-sections, plans, models, technical descriptions, exactly described location, etc., making them, in a way, equal to standard architectural proposals. The need for visionary, high-tech architecture to also be feasible was at that time also being declared by other East European artists and architects. Polish architect Stefan Müller, in his project *Terra X*, envisioned creating a megastructure in the form of a grid composed of triangular modules suspended at a height of two to two and a half thousand metres above the ground, where all human everyday activity was to be located. The surface of Earth was to become a 'ludic zone' (*'strefa ludyzmu'*), dedicated exclusively to recreation, while

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13 / Jozef Jankovič, **Walking Block of Flats**, 1978
 pencil drawing, ink, photographs
 63 × 48 cm
 Collection of Jozef Jankovič, Bratislava
 Photo: Jozef Jankovič

the whole 'production zone' would thereafter be moved underground. According to Müller, his project was meant to remedy the 'utilitarian urbanisation of Earth' and was technically possible, but only decelerated by obstacles of a political, social and ethical nature.⁶¹

However, there are some important discrepancies between VAL's approach and Ragon's concept. The main difference with Ragon's theory consists in the potential role of VAL's architecture as an instrument of socio-political contestation. VAL's projects for holiday resorts and cosmic cities share much in common with Situationist cities or *New Babylon*, a megastructure for Homo ludens designed by Dutch architect Constant Nieuwenhuys.⁶² VAL's urbanist designs with complete infrastructure providing for consumption, communication, and leisure were in sharp contrast with the everyday experience of urban life in communist Czechoslovakia. As a result, VAL's proposals could be viewed, indirectly, as a form of social criticism. VAL's design for the *National Assembly of Argillia*, which was supposed to be located on an island in French Polynesia, reflected the group's ambition to create a new state system. *Argillia*, a fictitious global kingdom invented by Mlynářčík in 1972, could be seen as a way of escaping the isolation of Czechoslovakia in the period of political normalisation. The National Assembly project also made reference to the *House of Agricultural Guards (Maison des Gardes Agricoles)* in Maupertuis Park that was designed in 1780 by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, a major French neoclassical architect. VAL's reinterpretation of Ledoux's design provides further support for understanding the group's projects as a form of social and political protest. Ledoux's visionary buildings that were meant to 'speak to the eyes' (*parler aux yeux*)⁶³ and were designed for a new, harmonious society reflected the awakening of civil society and, so to speak, anticipated the French Revolution.⁶⁴

Although the political convictions in VAL's architectural designs are rather implicit in character, they can nonetheless be linked to the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and the Marxist vision of a society,⁶⁵ in which urbanism was regarded as a natural outcome of society and a manner of establishing as a means to radical social criticism. Lefebvre's search for an alternative society, expressed in his works, can be seen as an alternative to the ideological discourse of the Czechoslovak state at that time.

VAL's projects however also related to the local context and responded to the needs of local communities. VAL's most-discussed project, *Heliopolis*, was a reaction to the need for environmental protection of the Tatra Mountains.⁶⁶ VAL created the plan for *Istroport* (1974–1976), a parallel city, at the same that Bratislava underwent an expansion and embraced the district of Petržalka, a new housing estate of *panelák* buildings — blocks of flats made of precast concrete panels. In this context, VAL's design

offered a solution to Bratislava's urban problems and an alternative to standardised blocks of flats.

Finally, the focus on the postulate of feasibility advocated by VAL can be seen as a return to the local avant-garde tradition, which, it must be emphasised, developed in Central Europe under very exceptional circumstances — most notably, countries in the region regained national independence after World War I. Architectural projects of the 1970s in general were reminiscent of such earlier work as the lumino-kinetic sculptures of Czech artist Zdeněk Pešánek or of Władysław Strzemiński's design for a train station in Gdynia (1923), which was inspired by Kazimir Malewicz's *Architectons* but, in contrast to its utopian predecessors, was designed for a real location — a new Polish seaport (Gdynia) that came to represent a window on the world. The use of everyday monumental objects in architecture had a totally different meaning on either side of the Iron Curtain. The objects that were the starting points for Western architectural designs were new, modern, desirable, attractive, ludic, serially produced, available in the supermarket, and designed to be consumed. What distinguished Oldenburg's proposals from East European object-monuments was their obvious anchoring in American popular culture.⁶⁷ Tadeusz Kantor, Milan Knížák, and other artists from the Eastern bloc who introduced everyday objects into their artistic work did not have extensive experience of American-style profuse consumption. Therefore, they used the forms of different objects that were available in the East, which could be described as poor, worn, banal, ugly, and unattractive to everyone.

Kantor's *Impossible Architectures* were also deeply rooted in the art theory and practice he developed in the 1960s. The objects he used in his artworks and theatrical performances were trivial, obvious, ordinary and commonplace: they were present in everyone's life and very familiar. Once selected or rather annexed by Kantor, they did not lose their original characteristics. What made them different from other objects was their uncommon use, the reversal of habitual perception and exploitation of their narrative, expressive, and poetic side. With Kantor it was not a matter of the artistic appropriation of everyday objects raised to the level of art, but rather of the 'descent of the artist in reality' and 'his resignation from his aspirations and superior prerogatives'.⁶⁸ Kantor called this process 'creation around the zero point', the purpose of which was not the repetition of the object in the field of art, but its rescue through an act of artistic creation.⁶⁹

The basic differences between Eastern and Western objects were their age and their 'attractiveness'. Oldenburg's objects expressed a quest for novelty and everything that was modern and temporal. There was nothing desirable about the objects used by Kantor and other artists in the East; they could rather be

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defined as discarded. Even though the 'throw-away aesthetic' was also implicit in some of Oldenburg's projects (such as a nibbled ice cream, or a giant cigarette butt); in the case of Kantor's objects, their discharge resulted not from excessive consumption (the possibility and temptation to consume something else), but from their formal defects. His objects were old, worn, overused, and disabled: 'apparently of no use to anyone'.⁷⁰ Kantor emphasised the service function of the thing in relation to man. His objects were of no utility and thus invisible, existing on the margins of daily reality, and not, like Oldenburg's objects, desired or consumed.

The everyday objects Knížák used as models for buildings are, like Kantor's, common, cheap, and familiar. As with Kantor, they had also already appeared in Knížák's art before. Everyday objects figured in the actions he began performing in the streets of Prague in 1962, and that he continued to perform with the group *Aktuální umění* (Actual Art), founded in 1964. Like in Kantor's happenings, Knížák's actions often made use of found, worn, and second-hand objects. In this respect mention should be made of the actions entitled *Short-Term Exhibitions (Krátce trvající výstavy)* that were organised in Prague. In one of these actions, in 1963, Knížák took advantage of the fact that the municipality asked Prague's residents to throw everything in their homes they did not need out on the streets. All the piles of furniture, garbage, and everyday objects became an outdoor assemblage — a statement on the present.⁷¹ Like Kantor's objects, those used by Knížák represented an opposition to Western consumer culture, which Knížák criticised in his text *The Architecture of Relationships* (1973–1974), calling for the socialisation of man in a 'common space' through the embeddedness of the individual in 'small communities' responsible for improving the quality of life.⁷²

Both Kantor's and Knížák's architectural projects seek to disrupt the public space or embody an alternative to urban life. By choosing public squares in which to locate his works and by his ambition to use public monuments to express himself artistically, Kantor seemed to be seeking confrontation, not so much directly with the authorities, but rather with its mechanisms of propaganda. His projects served as anti-theoretical proposals to the official monuments; he sought a mode of presence in the social space for his art that would be different from that of the public sculptures commissioned by the state. Moreover, Kantor's overt display of the poor quality of the objects he used contrasted with the communist state's propaganda which proclaimed that communist society was flourishing economically, intellectually, and artistically and that everyday life in the East was extraordinarily prosperous. Knížák's art objects made of concrete — the main material used to build standardised housing estates in the Eastern bloc — can be viewed as comments on official architecture in Czechoslovakia at that time.

In this sense, the desire and ambition of both artists to create buildings and, above all, public monuments, had political overtones. They proposed a redefinition of the public space, which, in normalisation-era Czechoslovakia or Poland in the 1970s, can be read as a politically critical outlook. The exaltation of everyday life embodied by cheap and banal objects had the power to dislocate the public space, a space that was totalitarian — homogeneous and fully controlled. Thus, Kantor and Knížák adapted a horizontal view of the public space. They did not open it up, so to speak, to the outside, but to its social interior: to its everyday reality, which was trivial and poor, ordinary and, at the same time, concealed behind ideological discourse.

The social visions Jankovič articulated in his dystopian projects were very pessimistic and revealed the communist regime with all its faults: the horror of life in the community life, the ceaseless control of citizens, the absence of freedom. They expressed not a hope for a better future, but rather an utter disbelief in the possibility of change. They also presented visions of a nuclear disaster and the death of human individuality, visions that were both also present in film and literature created during the Cold War and the normalisation period in Czechoslovakia. Jankovič's visions are grotesque and overwhelming. His buildings are ridiculous for the monumentality of their geometric structure, and also illogical. They are not designed for a new, happy society, but, like the projects of the Italian groups Superstudio or Archizoom, they are dystopian in nature and aimed at the heart of the state's ideology. Some of them directly reflected Cold-War rhetoric, putting forth a vision of a nuclear or chemical catastrophe — for example, the *Project for a Villa for an Unknown Politician — Project for a Well-Hidden Stately Villa for an Unknown Politician, Protected against an Atomic Attack (Projekt vily pre neznámeho politika — Projekt dobre utajenej reprezentačnej vily pre neznámeho politika, bezpečnej aj proti atómovému útoku, 1976, the second version — 1977).*

A Different Radicalism

The radical approach in art and architecture pursued in the 1970s by Eastern bloc artists was very unique and original. The above examples of radical architectural projects created in the East reveal some formal links between architectural concepts in Eastern European and the visionary, experimental, or radical architecture of the West, and these links are clear proof that artists in the Eastern bloc were aware of the recent Western experiments in architecture. However, uncovering the similarities between Eastern and Western variations of visionary architecture also reveals the differences between the two approaches. As noted above, the uniqueness of East European architectural projects also derived from the region's historical, socio-political, and cultural circumstances and distinct artistic tradition.

These projects were responses to local needs and problems, and as such were, so to speak, unparalleled.

East European projects inverted some of the manipulative strategies practiced by the authorities in communist countries, which treated and used architecture as an element of ideological propaganda. By distancing themselves from the concept of utopia the artists behind these projects were expressing not just criticism of the avant-garde groups of the first decades of the 20th century but primarily resistance to the utopian ideals of the socialist state. Projects of radical architecture served as a medium for the expression of diverse views on society, the authorities, and artistic creation itself. The architectural projects of the 1970s did not imply a sudden social revolution, as was the case with the radical architectural projects that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. They were rather what Manfredo Tafuri conceived as 'criticism in the form of a project' ('*critica come progetto*').⁷³ East European artists used architectural vocabulary to develop a counter-utopian discourse and offer an alternative vision of the reality of their times, and they thereby drew attention to the social problems of the socialist state.

NOTES

1 Herbert Marcuse in an interview with Stuart Werde, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 1968, published as: Herbert Marcuse, Commenting on Claes Oldenburg's Proposed Monuments for New York City, *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal*, 1969, No 12, pp. 75–76, p. 75.

2 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York 1966.

3 Ibidem, p. 17.

4 Germano Celant, Senza titolo, *IN II*, 1971, No. 2–3, pp. 76–81. Celant distinguished this new type of architecture from that stimulated by public or private funding.

5 The term 'experimental architecture' referred to in this study was formulated in 1971 by British architect Peter Cook, who in this way intended to redefine architectural practice, promote openness to other areas of creation and other aspects of human activity. Moreover, Cook advocated formal, material, technical, or symbolic inventiveness and argued for a more effective articulation of architecture with the social reality of its time. Peter Cook, *Experimental architecture*, New York 1970.

6 The SIAL architects (Sdružení inženýrů a architektů Liberec — Association of Engineers and Architects of the City of Liberec), a group of graduates from the Technical University of Prague, founded by Karel Hubáček, Miroslav Masák and Otakar Binar, were active from 1968 to the 1980s in Liberec, a city in northwest Czechoslovakia. The projects realised by the group's members were characterised by experiments with materials, and futurological innovative design. About SIAL: Rostislav Švácha (ed.), *SIAL*, Olomouc 2010. — See also: Miroslav Masák (ed.), *Architekti SIAL*, Praha 2008. In 1969 the group received the Grand Prix Auguste Perret for its project of the television transmission tower situated on Ještěd Mountain.

7 See: Péter Mujdricza, Zalotay Legends. The endless distress of building with free spirit, *Magyar Építőművészet / Hungarian Architecture*, 2013, No. 2, pp. 29–31.

8 See: *Dagarama. Powrót do przyszłości* (exh. cat.), Muzeum Architektury, Wrocław 2011.

9 Among the recent complex publications on this subject, mention should be made of one large catalogue, *Architectures expérimentales. 1950–2012. Collection du FRAC Centre*, Orléans 2013.

10 Among the current publications and exhibitions catalogues on the subject, mention should be made of a text by Ludmila Hájková and Rostislav Švácha, *Kde budeme žít zítra* (Where will we live tomorrow) that, by alluding to Michel Ragon's book of the same title, discusses the existence of the visionary tendency in Czechoslovak architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. Two recent Hungarian publications should also be mentioned: *Elképzelés, 1971*, presenting Hungarian conceptual art projects from the collection of László Beke, and a tiny catalogue of the exhibition *Interspaces*, organised at the Vasarely Museum in Budapest in 2013. Experiments in architecture conducted by Romanian artists are discussed by Ileana Pintilie in her book on *Actionism in Romania*. An important contribution, centred on the question of East European post-war architecture, is a publication of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw titled *Team 10 East. Revisionist Architecture in Real Existing Modernism*. The book proposes a revision of the architectural practice and theoretical position of Central European architects, and especially those who were contributors to the Team 10 group (Charles Polónyi, Oskar Hansen), by revealing its international character, situated beyond the divisions of the Cold War, but at the same time by trying to explain its specific nature in the context of the socialist state. The question of visionary East European architecture has been addressed in such publications as *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970*, 2008. The issue was also discussed in recent publications concerning the conquest of space during the Cold War: *Star City. The Future under Communism*, 2011, and *Cosmos Is Calling! Art and Science in the Long Sixties*, 2014. See: Ludmila Hájková — Rostislav Švácha, *Kde budeme žít zítra*, in: Vít Havránek (ed.), *Akce, slovo, pohyb, prostor: experimenty v umění šedesátých let / Action, Word, Movement, Space: Experimental Art of the Sixties* (exh. cat.), Galerie hlavního města Prahy 1999, pp. 114–159, 390–399. — László Beke, *Elképzelés, A magyar konceptművészet kezdetei, Beke László gyűjteménye, 1971*, Budapest 2008. — *Interspaces* (exh. cat.), Vasarely Múzeum, Budapest 2013. — Ileana Pintilie, *Actionism in Romania during the Communist Era*, Cluj 2002. — Lukasz Stanek (ed.), *Team 10 East. Revisionist Architecture in Real Existing Modernism*. Warsaw 2014. — David Crowley — Jane Pavitt, *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970* (exh. cat.), Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2008. — Łukasz Ronduda — Alex Farquharson — Barbara Piwowska (eds), *Star City. The Future under Communism* (exh. cat.), Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham–Warsaw 2011. — Joanna Kordjak-Piotrowska — Stanisław Welbel (eds), *Kosmos zwywa! Sztuka i nauka w długich latach sześćdziesiątych / Cosmos Is Calling! Art and Science in the Long Sixties* (exh. cat.), Zachęta — Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, Warszawa 2014.

11 Michel Ragon, *Kde budeme žít zítra?*, Praha 1967.

12 Michel Ragon, *Où vivrons-nous demain?*, Paris 1963.

13 Jiří Hruza, *Města utopistů*, Praha 1967.

14 Ragon, who was the founder of GIAP (Groupe international d'architecture prospective — International Group of Prospective Architecture) in 1965, promoted in Paris Polish sculptor Alina

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Ślesińska's work, which lay on the boundary between sculpture and architecture, and which was shown at the exhibition 'Architectural Sculptures and Sculptural Architectures — Sculptures Architecturales et Architectures Sculptures' that this French critic organised with Tony Spiteris at the Biennale de Paris in Autumn 1963. The exhibition took place at the Anderson-Mayer gallery in Paris, between 19 September and 12 October 1963; and at Théâtre-Maison de la Culture in Caen, in November 10–30, 1963. The exhibition accompanied the publication of Ragon's above-mentioned book-manifesto *Où vivrons-nous demain?*

15 When analysing the influence of Ragon's theories on VAL's activity, we should note his direct relationship with Alex Mlynářčík, whom Ragon met thanks to another French art critic Pierre Restany, a friend of Mlynářčík since 1964. Ragon and Mlynářčík's friendship was decisive in providing a theoretical background to the architectural projects of VAL. According to an unpublished interview with Alex Mlynářčík, in Žilina, 28 September 2007.

16 About VAL's activity, see: *Voies et aspects de lendemain*, VAL 1967–1976: Ludovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynářčík, Bratislava 1976. — Ludovít Kupkovič — Viera Mecková — Alex Mlynářčík, VAL. *Cesty a aspekty zajtrajška / VAL. Voies et aspects du lendemain*, Žilina 1995. — Jindřich Chaloupecký, *Na hranicích umění: několik příběhů*, Munich 1987, second edition: Praha 1990, esp. pp. 106–122. — Pierre Restany, *Ailleurs*. Alex Mlynářčík, Paris — Bratislava 1994, esp. pp. 69–79, pp. 81–97, pp. 189–208. In the 1980s VAL also did the project *Antarctica*, 1982 — a memorial to two polar explorers, Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott, to be located in Antarctica, and *E-Temen-An-Ki. Sheraton-Babylon Hotel*, 1980–1994.

17 Claes Oldenburg, *Proposals for Monuments and Buildings 1965–1969*, Chicago 1969.

18 According to: Małgorzata Jurkiewicz — Joanna Mytkowska — Andrzej Przywara (eds), *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum galerii Foksal*, Warszawa 1998, p. 17.

19 According to Lech Stangret's unpublished interview with Maria Stangret, Warsaw, March 2012.

20 About this subject, see: Jarosław Suchan, *Tadeusz Kantor. Niemożliwe / Tadeusz Kantor. Impossible* (exh. cat.), Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków 2000.

21 The Symposium that was organised to mark the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the recovery of Western territories after the Second World War. 39 Polish artists were invited to do art projects for public space that were subsequently exposed on March 17–30 at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław. See: Zbigniew Makarewicz (ed.), *Symposium Plastyczne Wrocław '70*, Wrocław 1983. — See also: Tomasz Gryglewicz (ed.), *W cieniu krzesła. Malarstwo i sztuka przedmiotów Tadeusza Kantora*, Kraków 1997.

22 The book contains architectural proposals and reflections on urban space, taking the form of drawings, watercolours, collages, photo collages, and notes. See: Milan Knížák, *Dreaming of Architecture*, Ostrava 2012.

23 From an unpublished interview with Milan Knížák, Prague, 10 January 2014. According to Knížák, the idea of those projects should be dated back to 1962–1964 (as it is presented in: Knížák (note 22). However, after the above-mentioned interview, the photo collages were created after his return from the United States.

24 Tomáš Štrauss, *Die satirische Aufmunterung (Jozef Jankovic)*, in: *Bilder aus der Slowakei III*, Essen–Kettwig 1982, unnumbered pages.

25 Jankovič was not directly connected to Hans Hollein and to other architects of his circle. However, today he claims that he was acquainted with the Austrian magazine *Bau* and with Hollein's achievements. According to an unpublished interview with Jozef Jankovič, Bratislava, 28 April 2011.

26 Jiří Valoch, *Tvorba Jozefa Jankoviča*, in: *Jozef Jankovič* (exh. cat.), Považská galéria umenia, Žilina 1994, esp. p. 33; quoted from: Aurel Hrabušický, *Zamurovanie po Vel'kom Páde (Sedemdesiate roky)*, Enclosed In A Wall After The Big Fall (The Seventies), in: *Jozef Jankovič, Tvorba z rokov 1958–1997* (exh. cat.), Slovenská národná galéria, Bratislava 1997, pp. 79–141, esp. p. 98.

27 Hrabušický (note 26), p. 100.

28 *The Austrian Phenomenon. Konzeptionen, Experimente*, Wien, Graz, 1958–1973 (exh. cat.), Architekturzentrum, Wien 2004, pp. 438–439.

29 Pintilie (note 10), pp. 27–34.

30 111 was the first experimental artistic group in Romania after World War II. Founded in Timișoara in 1963, by Constantin Flondor Strainu, Ștefan Bertalan and Roman Cotoșman, who had just returned from Paris, where he got acquainted with the works of GRAV — Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel. 111 members, whose artistic production oscillated between neoconstructivism and kinetic art, won international recognition at that time: in 1969, 111 group founders and two of their colleagues from Bucharest, Pavel Ilie and Mihai Rusu, participated in the First Biennial of Constructive Art (Konstruktive Kunst Biennale), held in Nuremberg, West Germany. See: *Konstruktive Kunst: Elemente und Prinzipien* (exh. cat.), Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Institut für Moderne Kunst, Nürnberg 1969. 111's creation was also described also in Michel Ragon's monograph on abstract art. Michel Ragon, *L'art abstrait, Volume 3. 1939–1970 en Europe*, Paris 1973.

31 In that line-up, the group was active between 1970 and 1974; from 1974 till 1981 it was limited to Bertalan, Flondor and Tulcan.

32 It is important to emphasise that the Sigma environment, along with the already mentioned Slovak projects, was one of the few examples of pneumatic architecture and environments in Eastern Europe.

33 See: Ileana Pintilie, *Ștefan Bertalan. Drumuri la răscruce*, Timișoara 2010. — Doru Tulcan, *Grupul Sigma. O perspectivă*, Timișoara 2003. — *Sigma 1 Bertalan, Flondor, Tulcan* (exh. cat.), Triade Interart Foundation, Timișoara 2013.

34 *Harasztj István: retrospektív kiállítás / A Retrospective Exhibition: 1963–1998*, Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle, Budapest 1998.

35 We may cite here some proposals of the group Haus-Rucker-Co such as a pneumatic capsule entitled *Gelbes Herz* (1968), and those by the group Coop Himmelblau, namely, their pneumatic habitat *Villa Rosa* (1968). See: *The Austrian Phenomenon* (note 28), pp. 358–360, 750.

36 Gáyor emigrated to Vienna in 1956; Maurer received a scholarship in Vienna in 1967–1968, where she married Gáyor. Since then, the artists have been living and working in both Hungary and Austria. See: Dóra Maurer — Tibor Gáyor, *Maurer Dóra / Gáyor Tibor. Párhuzamos életművek / Parallele Lebenswerke / Parallele Oeuvres* (exh. cat.), Városi Művészeti Múzeum, Győr 2001. — *Dóra Maurer. Traces 1970–1980* (exh. cat.), Bunkier Sztuki, Cracow 2011.

37 According to László Beke, *Objective Tenderness*, in: Dieter Ronte — László Beke, *Dóra Maurer, Arbeiten / Munkák / Works 1970–1993*, Budapest 1994, pp. 99–112, p. 101.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 100.

39 In 1951 Gáyor received his degree in architecture from the Technical University in Budapest and after he emigrated to Austria, between 1956 and 1959, he worked as an assistant in Vienna, in the Institute of Architecture, at the University of Technology. Between 1965 and 1967 he created an interesting project called *Modular Systems for Children's Playgrounds* (*Baukastensysteme für Kinderspielplätze*) — a flexible structure of juxtaposed boxes, which can be linked to the idea of adaptable megastructures that was present in the architectural theory of the time — for example, in Constant Nieuwenhuys's *New Babylon*, or Yona Friedman's concept of mobile architecture. See: Dóra Maurer, *Az invenció két szólama / Zwei Stimmen der Invention*, in: Gáyor Tibor. *L'Arte d'invenzione 1964–2009*, Paks 2009, pp. 5–15, esp. pp. 7–8.

40 On this subject, see: Joanna Mytkowska, *The Object That Is Got Back by Chance*, in: Suchan (note 20), pp. 57–66.

41 Dóra Maurer. *Traces* (note 36).

42 In: Štrauss (note 24); quoted from: Aurel Hrabušický, *Umenie fantastického odhmotnenia*, in: *Slovenské vizuálne umenie 1970–1985* (exh. cat.), Slovenská národná galéria v Bratislave 2002, pp. 143–188, esp. p. 157.

43 Jiří Valoch, *Konceptuální projevy*, in: Rostislav Švácha — Marie Platovská, *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, Praha 2007, pp. 555–574, p. 555.

44 Makarewicz (note 21).

45 Klaus Groh (ed.), *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa: CSSR, Jugoslawien, Polen, Rumänien, UdSSR, Ungarn*, Köln 1972.

46 Jane Farver (ed.), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s* (exh. cat.), Queens Museum of Art, New York 1999.

47 Hájková–Švácha (note 10), p. 397.

48 A feeling of isolation was certainly a part of the experience of Czech and Slovak artists; living in the 1970s, during the normalisation period, they saw various forms of persecution (according to the above-mentioned interviews with Alex Mlynářčík, Jozef Jankovič and Milan Knížák). However, this experience is familiar to other East European artists, too. Hungarians Dóra Maurer and Tibor Gáyor recalled the beginning of the 1970s as a period of artistic loneliness. Maurer recollects a 'sensation of double-edged isolation'. From: Dóra Maurer, *SUMUS*. Data with a subjective commentary in: Maurer–Gáyor (note 36), pp. 127–158, p. 128. Constantin Flondor, a founder of the Sigma group, speaks about 'the group solitude'. From: Pintilie (note 10), p. 42.

49 While recalling the beginning of his cycle of architectural drawings in the early 1970s Jankovič stated: 'I was not really anti-Communist, or in other words, my attitude was never really political, it [my architecture] was not supposed to be political. I think art should be autonomous and should not serve as an instrument of political struggle, it must be wary of ideological clichés... On the other hand, I needed to respond, to express my opinion on everything that happened here, to position myself against this refusal...'. According to the unpublished interview with Jozef Jankovič, Bratislava, 28 April 2011.

50 According to the unpublished interview with Milan Knížák, Prague, 10 January 2014.

51 According to the unpublished interview with Jozef Jankovič, Bratislava, 28 April 2011.

52 Ibidem.

53 This project by Malich entitled *Projekt der Neuen Planeten* was presented in Groh's book *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa*, 1972. See: Groh (note 45), unnumbered pages.

54 According to Dóra Maurer. *Traces* (note 36), p. 9.

55 The term 'intentional architecture' was used as a title of the *Terra-1* exhibition, which represented an important manifesto of international experimental and radical architecture and was organised in Poland in 1975. The *International Exhibition of Intentional Architecture Terra-1* took place in the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław (14 September — 12 October 1975) and was organised by Polish architect Stefan Müller, who focused on presenting contemporary architects' 'intentions', anticipatory and futurological designs, those ambition was to rethink the global urbanism and to redefine the relation of man to nature. See: Jolanta Gromadzka — Paweł Juszczyk (eds), *Stefan Janusz Müller. Wynurzenia czyli nic* (exh. cat.), Muzeum Architektury, Wrocław 2010, esp. pp. 180–183.

56 According to an unpublished interview with Ludovít Kupkovič, in Žilina, on April 10, 2014.

57 Herbert Marcuse's eccentric lecture diagnosing 'The End of Utopia' was presented at the Free University in West Berlin in July 1967. See: Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*, Boston 1970, pp. 62–82. Marcuse indeed spoke about the persistence of the critical function of utopia in contemporary society.

58 See: Jerzy Rosołowicz, *O koncepcji neutrdromu*, in: Makarewicz (note 21), p. 127.

59 The notion of 'prospective' appeared in Ragon's writings since the 1960s, in *Où vivrons-nous demain?* 1963, and obviously in the manifesto of GIAP (Groupe International d'Architecture Prospective), March 1965. Ragon owes this expression to the French philosopher Gaston Berger, who, drawing on Henri Bergson's phenomenology of time developed in the 1950s and on his philosophy of anticipation, focused on the development of the modern world. On this topic see: *De la prospective. Textes fondamentaux de la prospective française. 1955–1966*, Paris 2008.

60 Michel Ragon, *Histoire de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes*, Vol. 3: *Prospective et futurologie*, Paris 1978, esp. pp. 19–22, 24–30.

61 Stefan Müller, *Architektura intencjonalna. Terra X*. Rozmowa z Jerzym Ludwińskim (1975), in: Gromadzka–Juszczyk (note 55), pp. 174–179.

62 See: Libero Andreotti, *Le Grand jeu à venir. Textes situationnistes sur la ville*, Paris 2007.

63 Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs, et de la législation*, Paris 1804, p. 52.

64 According to Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. Architecture and utopia in the era of the French Revolution*, Bâle — Berlin — Boston 2006, pp. 145–151.

65 This approach is explored in several of Lefebvre's publications, notably in: Henri Lefebvre, *La pensée marxiste et la ville*, Paris 1973. — Idem, *La production de l'espace*, Paris 1974. — See also: Idem, *Espace architectural, espace urbain*, in: *Architectures en France, modernité, post-modernité* (exh. cat.), Institut Français d'Architecture — Centre Georges Pompidou / Centre de la Création Industrielle, Paris 1981, pp. 40–46.

66 This project was recently discussed by: David Crowley, *Looking Down on Spaceship Earth: Cold War Landscapes*, in: Crowley–Pavitt (note 10), pp. 249–267, esp. pp. 259–260.

67 Claes Oldenburg reworked fetish objects of American society of the time: junk food of the working class such as a burger, pizza, sausage with tomato sauce, baked potato, children's toys: teddy bear, rabbit, and objects of erotic connotations such as a lipstick or female

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legs. See: Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg* (exh. cat.), Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970.

68 Wiesław Borowski, Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Kantorem, in: Wiesław Borowski, *Tadeusz Kantor*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 17–114, esp. p. 18.

69 Ibidem, p. 18. See also: Tadeusz Kantor, Teatr autonomiczny. Manifest teatru zerowego, in: Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz (ed.), *Tadeusz Kantor Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1938–1974*, Kraków 2000, pp. 233–243, esp. pp. 237–238.

70 ‘... Gdy [przedmiot] traci swój prestiż użyteczności codziennej, / Staje się biedny. / Nikomu zdawałoby się niepotrzebny. ...’ (‘... When [the

object] loses its prestige as a thing of everyday utility, / It becomes poor / it seems of no use to anyone. ...’). According to Tadeusz Kantor, Przedmiot, in: Józef Chrobak — Lech Stangret — Marek Świca, Marek, *Tadeusz Kantor. Wędrówka*, Kraków 2000, p. 172. Author’s translation from Polish.

71 Milan Knížák. *Action as a Life Style. Auswahl der Aktivitäten 1953–1985* (exh. cat.), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg–Altona 1986, an unnumbered page.

72 Milan Knížák, Phase 4. The architecture of relationships, 1973–1974, in: Knížák (note 22), pp. 103–156, p. 104.

73 Manfredo Tafuri, *Teoria e storia dell’architettura*, Bari 1968.