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Abstract

The comprehension of centre and periphery in culture is subject to historical changes. In this process, instead of being monolithically paradigmatised, this comprehension itself also becomes a complex of multiplied multifacetedness. The paper develops this thesis by observing the events between the performativity of Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) and Ljubljana's urban subculture around 1980 and between the performativity of Neue Slowenische Kunst and the para-civic movement NSK Folk Art around 2010. Performative appropriations unfolded among these practices, which led to the subversion of the central and peripheral within the cultural counter-current to the social hegemony. The latter is the result of the ability or inability to build a *habitus*, that is, a web of memory and understanding of history, expressible within the linguistic grammar of a (sub)cultural group. NSK remains an aesthetic impulse that empowers socially engaged thought but loses its position as the absolute centre of this thought because it distances itself from its embodiment, thereby – paradoxically – intensifying the existential dimensions of its own performativity. The border between the cultural centre and the cultural periphery becomes blurred, thus making the avant-garde attack on culturally expressed hegemonies problematic.

Keywords: habitus, Neue Slowenische Kunst, centre, periphery, avant-garde, subculture

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Neue Slowenische Kunst and Thought as the Centre of the Avant-Garde

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The key issue in this paper is how the *habitus* itself is centred. When we talk about the centeredness of the *habitus*, we are talking about the centeredness of cultural intertextuality from the perspective of the habituated subject. The >centre< is from where the subject can always go, or return, it can start and end there.

It seems as if the important question for Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) today is whether its *habitus* is centred in the political or in the aesthetic. As we show, for NSK, the >centre< is thought. NSK expects an avant-garde change in the attitudes of humanity and, therefore, presents to humanity the tradition of the avant-garde art as a suitable flow-together point for memory and the understanding of history.

We see Neue Slowenische Kunst's >centre< as something historicised, but it exists as something potentially ahistorical: as a permanent (and, given the historical facts, conditionally universal) effort of avant-garde artists to (self-)build an authentic epistemology of their own art, independent of scientists. Because they are outside of science, thus in art, avant-garde artists build an authentic epistemology "larpurlartistic". But as, in an ideal situation, an avant-garde artist's life is the same as art, this construction is oriented towards the impact on life.

The attitude towards those who define something as avant-garde is just one in a complex structure of Neue Slowenische Kunst's moral posture. Also, sovereignty in relation to factual politics, which the avant-garde generally touches upon with many moral attitudes towards it (pro-political, anti-political, apolitical, post-political ...), is one of the factors that NSK relies on in the process of its own subjectivation.

In the logic of Neue Slowenische Kunst, culture, subculture, factual politics, ontology, state (country), city, 1980s, 2010s, etc. may be just peripheries of their central mission: to assert avant-garde art as the category of all categories. With the latter, the thinking leaned on the life determined by avant-garde art geometrises the *cosmos*..

Neue Slowenische Kunst's >centre< speaks from visual representation to mental reception. Its preservation depends on becoming self-evident: the reflection of the artistic avant-garde must preserve in humanity's memory, and this should serve as the anchoring point for NSK's position. Only by fulfilling this condition can the habitual consciousness of humankind integrate NSK's >centre< into the imaginative faculty of recollection – transforming what was once visual into the cognitive.