

Archival Chain Reactions: Archival Gaps and Forgotten Connections — Finissage Weekend

Venue: Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (+MSUM), Ljubljana

Date: Friday, 11 September from 7pm, Saturday, 12 September, 3 – 7pm,
and Sunday 13 September 5 – 6pm

With: selma banich and the Politics of Touch collective, Jule Flierl,
Agata Jakubowska, Mónica Mayer, Elva Peniche Montfort, Vesna Vuković

Curated by: Iva Kovač and Bettina Knaup

In the final stage of the *Archival Chain Reactions* exhibition the curators will bring together artists and writers whose diverse practices engage with archival gaps and forgotten artistic or institutional connections through the acts of voicing, metabolising, tracing, or gifting.

Referencing some of the works by GDR's performance artists and collectives featured in the exhibition, the choreographer Jule Flierl will perform an intergenerational attempt to recalibrate the gaze in relation to the opaque history of GDR's dissident art.

Another exhibit featured in the *Archival Chain Reactions* is a catalogue for a 1982 exhibition in Sarajevo, which testifies to an earlier connection across different geopolitical contexts. In the early 1980s, Mexico, West Germany, former Yugoslavia and other (Eastern) European countries all hosted a traveling exhibition featuring works by several generations of Mexican women artists, Mónica Mayer prominently among them. Attempts to trace the exhibition's impact on the local feminist (art) scenes yielded little on the former Yugoslav showings. However, along the way, the curators encountered current research that sheds light on the moments of its direct impact. By introducing the art historical research of Agata Jakubowska, Elva Peniche Montfort and Vesna Vuković, the finissage weekend brings this knowledge closer, strengthening connections between different sites and temporalities of feminist art organizing, with a particular focus on the intergenerational dialogue.

In the spirit of its title, the *Archival Chain Reactions* exhibition project will be concluded with ceremonial gifts made by Mónica Mayer and selma banich together with the Politics of Touch collective. Openly reciprocal, both gifts seek to bring people and stories less visible within national institutions to the forefront.

The event will take place within the framework of the *Archival Chain Reactions* exhibition, which emerged from a collaborative project dedicated to connecting and activating important yet precarious archives of feminist art. By addressing the historical erasure of women* and gender-nonconforming, queer feminist artists, the project aims to counter the threat of disappearing feminist archives

and emphasises the necessity of networking and exchange among archives in various global contexts. The project brings together Pinto mi Raya (Mexico City), an archive built by the artists Mónica Mayer and Víctor Lerma; re.act.feminism (Berlin), a project that has been travelling as a living performance archive across Europe since 2008; and City of Women (Ljubljana), with its significant but dispersed archive accumulated over 31 years of festival and programme activities.

Produced by: Association City of Women & cross links e.V. Berlin

Funded by: Visual Arts Project Fund of the Goethe-Institut, City of Women (co-funded by the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia)

Made in collaboration with: Moderna galerija and Goethe-Institut Ljubljana

PROGRAMME

Contributions marked "on zoom" will be streamed live and projected in the museum. The event will be held in English, with individual interpretation into Slovenian on request.

Friday, September 11th, 7:00 pm

The state in your mouth - fragments on the GDR underground in art and performance / Jule Flierl

Lecture Performance, followed by a conversation

In salivating the works of Gabi Stötzer, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeld a.o., Jule Flierl will attempt to partially digest and metabolize their work. This lecture performance is an inter-generational attempt towards calibrating the gaze in relation to the opaque history of GDR nonconformist art, that cannot be witnessed without questioning ones' own instruments of interpretation. Flierl attempts at exiting the competitive *Doppelgänger* logic of East and West, to regard the work of GDR underground artists as a fruitful toolbox for today's increasingly authoritarian realities in Germany and beyond.

On view during the performance: Gabriele Stötzer, *Veitstanz/ Feixtanz*, short film, 1988, 25', courtesy Gabriele Stötzer and Claus Löser.

Saturday, September 12th, 3:00 - 7:00 pm

3:00 - 5:30 pm Commemorating Erasure: Workshop / selma banich and the Politics of Touch collective

3:00 - 7:00 pm **Archival Gaps and Forgotten Connections: tracing, circulating, gifting**

3:00 pm Welcome and Introduction

3:15 pm Art and Labour: Women's art production in self-managed culture / Vesna Vuković

Art historical interest in women's art in post-socialist Croatia has focused heavily on the interwar period and a few rare, extraordinary events related to the neo-avant-garde art scene (so called "new artistic practices") and alternative culture. On the other hand, global feminist art history consistently overlooks artistic activities related to socialist state politics. In both these accounts, the socialist period is interpreted as a failure in women's emancipation, or rather an unfortunate interruption in the longer history of women's organising.

Starting from these insights, I took a more analytical approach to the art of the late socialist period through the lens of labour, juxtaposing the conception of art as a site of symbolic resistance with the conception of art as a site of labour. I examined a case of socially organized, self-managed culture of the mid-1970s and 1980s and women's art production in this radical experiment and its potential for the feminist art history.

Discussion

4:00 pm Organization and exchange between artists from Mexico and Berlin. The binational exhibition "La creación femenina", 1980 / Elva Peniche Montfort (on zoom)

This talk will analyse the organizational process and the impact of the 1980 exhibition "Mexico-Berlin: Women's Creation," organized by Mexican curators and artists Emma Cecilia García Krinsky, Magali Lara, and Gilda Castillo, who worked alongside the German artist Gisela Weiman on this project. This exhibition, which introduced innovative methodology based on a model of international and intergenerational dialogue and exchange among women artists—and which included several exhibitions, roundtable discussions, and trips to both cities—should be viewed as part of a lineage of initiatives that proliferated in the wake of the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975, aimed at promoting more spaces for women. This project fostered collaborative networks and had far-reaching repercussions. Special emphasis will be placed on the processes of memory-building surrounding this case, based on broader archival research into the Contemporary Art Forum—a

forgotten space in the Mexican history of art—which was characterized by the fact that it allowed artists to organize themselves autonomously.

4:30 pm Exhibitions of Mexican Women Artists in Europe in the Early 1980s: Feminism and Cultural Diplomacy / Agata Jakubowska (on zoom)

In February 1981, the exhibition *35 Künstlerinnen aus Mexico* opened in West Berlin. It featured works by artists from different generations, from Olga Costa (1913-1993), Marta Palau (1934-2022) to Maria Bustamante (born 1949) and Mónica Mayer (born 1954). The exhibition, initiated by the German artist Gisela Weimann, was a result of the cooperation between women from the two countries. Later, the same set of works was shown in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Romania. However, here, the exhibition arrived as a cultural diplomacy product presented with the framework of a cultural exchange programme. The talk reconstructs the history of the exhibition, focusing on how it changed from an independent to an official art event. The analysis is based on the traces of the exhibition(s) in private and state archives.

Discussion

5:30 pm Break with drinks and snacks

6:00 pm Activating and Donating 'Archiva - obras del arte feminista en México' / Mónica Mayer
Lecture performance (on zoom)

Archiva (2013-2021) is an archival project created by Mónica Mayer in which she has gathered the documentation on 76 works of feminist art produced in Mexico across several decades. The archive spans across several generations of artists whom Mayer considers feminist in practice, regardless of whether they themselves use that term or not, on account of the content of their work or the contexts in which it was made and shown. Rather than claiming comprehensiveness, the project positions itself as an archive that should keep growing. It has been presented through lecture performances in which specific audiences were introduced to the artists'

work, and copies of the dossier have been strategically donated to institutional collections, allowing feminist art to enter spaces that had previously ignored or excluded it. Mayer describes this as “lubricating the system,” a quiet, persistent strategy of infiltration. The exhibition *Archival Chain Reactions* features two replicas of the mobile document case in Spanish and (for the first time) in English language. At the occasion of the Finissage weekend of Archival Chain Reactions Mónica Mayer will activate *Archiva* and donate it to the Archive of the City of Women.

6:45 pm Erased Gazes: A donation to +MSUM / selma banich
and the Politics of Touch Collective

Erased Gazes, a memorial canvas commemorating the Erased, created by selma banich with the Politics of Touch collective (Aber Gendy, Ana Lora, Ivana Lukić and Slavica Đuričić in collaboration with Ana Dana Beroš and Saša Nemec), is a project initiated and produced by the City of Women.

In 1992, shortly after Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia, the administrative bodies of the Republic of Slovenia arbitrarily and illegally removed more than 25000 people from the register of permanent residents. The Erased became foreigners in their own country: without the right to work, without health insurance, many of them deported or forced to leave.

The *Erased Gazes* canvas was made during the workshops devised and run by selma banich. The workshops have been held since July 2022 in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and attended by women who today call Ljubljana, Logatec and Zagreb home among them people with first-hand or family experience of erasure, asylum seekers, activists, researchers and students.

Sunday, September 13th, 5:00 – 6:00 pm

Guided tour by the curators.

BIOGRAPHIES

Choreographer **Jule Flierl** grew up surrounded by the subcultural art scene of east Berlin. She works in the gaps of her memory, compiling historic examples and creating interventions into historiographic narratives. In her 2018 solo *Störlaut*, she revives and continues the legacy of Valeska Gert, avant-garde dancer from 1920's Berlin, who first conceptualized the term "ToneDance": to dance with one's voice. In the 2021 duet *U.F.O. - Hommage to Katalin Ladik*, Irena Z. Tomažin and Flierl explore the autobiography of their voices in relation to Katalin Ladik's performance „UFO party“ and her method „Phonic Action“. 2025 she has collaborated with Antonia Baehr, Claire Sobottke and Hermann Heisig in *Gut gemacht!*, a quartet which works with fluxus artist Robert Filliou's "Principe d'équivalence" to break down value systems in art and prove a point with the „geniale Dilletanten's“ ambition to fail. Recently, Flierl co-leads the class for performative arts at HGB Leipzig with interdisciplinary artist Anna Zett 2025-2027.
<https://juleflierl.weebly.com>

Vesna Vuković is a PhD candidate at the University of Zadar's Department of Art History. Her research interests include modern and contemporary art in relation to political and social movements, socially engaged art, and socialist and Marxist feminism. In 2024/2025 she has been a fellow researcher at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz. From 2025 she is an associate researcher on the project "Digital network, spatial and (con)textual analysis of artistic phenomena and heritage of the 20th century" at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb. As a member of the curatorial collective BLOK, she has realized numerous exhibitions and research projects. Since 2018 she has served as the editor of the book series *Tendencija*. She has been an associate at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, the Art Academy in Split, and has taught within several non-institutional educational programs. She is also a long-time contributor to the Croatian Radio 3.

Elva Peniche Montfort is a researcher, archivist, curator, and educator. Her interests include the intersections between artistic practices and archives, the history of exhibitions, genealogies of

contemporary art, and feminist art. Since 2024, she has been the Curator of Documentary Collections at Arkheia, the Documentation Centre at MUAC. She is a PhD candidate in Art History at UNAM, where her research focuses on the Foro de Arte Contemporáneo, a largely overlooked art space in the history of Mexican art. She is a member of the "Red Conceptualismos del sur" and the "Despatriarcalizar el Archivo" groups. She is the co-editor of two books on the Mexican photographers Enrique Bostelmann and Antonio Reynoso. She has co-curated several exhibitions that focused on archives, the most recent of them being *Rini Templeton*. Apuntes at MUAC.

Agata Jakubowska is a professor at the Institute of Art History at the University of Warsaw. She is the author and editor of numerous publications on women's art. She has recently published *Horizontal Art History and Beyond. Revisioning Peripheral Critical Practices* (ed. with Magdalena Radomska, Routledge 2022), a monograph on the Polish sculptor Maria Pinińska-Bereś under the title *Art and Emancipation of Women in Socialist Poland. The Case of Maria Pinińska-Bereś* (in Polish, Warsaw University Press, 2022) and an IKONOTHEKA issue titled *Feminist Art Historiographies in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (33/2023, ed. with Andrea Giunta). She is researching the transnational history of all-women exhibitions (a project funded by the Polish National Science Centre). Within the framework of this project, she is preparing a book, which will carry the title *Real and Imagined Communities of Women in International Art Exhibitions*.

Mónica Mayer has developed an integral focus in her work that, in addition to performance, drawing, and interventions, considers writing, teaching, and community participation as part of her artistic production. She is considered a pioneer in feminist art, performance, and digital graphics in Mexico. In 1983, she founded the group Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Hen's Dust) with Maris Bustamante, and in 1989, with Víctor Lerma, initiated the project *Pinto mi Raya* (I Draw the Line) of which the central element is a specialized archive of periodical clippings that has constituted the basis of diverse artistic proposals. Mayer has published several books, among them *Intimidades... o no. Arte, vida y feminismo* (2021), she wrote a column for the newspaper El Universal for twenty years and her

texts have been published in various journals both in Mexico and abroad. She is a member of the Sistema Nacional de Creadores (National System of Creators) with a project on art and archives.

selma banich is an artist, activist, community organizer, expressive art therapy practitioner, and SLC operator. Her practice is explorative, process-driven, and activist, politically inspired by anarchism and feminism. She works independently and with artists, curators, communities, and initiatives across the Balkans, and has taken part in numerous dance, theatre, opera, and film productions as a choreographer and performer. She is active in local and transnational solidarity initiatives tied to feminist, anti-colonial, anti-fascist, migrant, and workers' struggles, including Zagreb Solidarity City and Strike for Gaza. Her fellowships include ArtsLink, Akademie Schloss Solitude, and MuseumsQuartier AIR, and she received the Nada Dimić Award with the Women to Women and Sloga collectives.

<https://selmabanich.org/>

The artistic collective of the **Politics of Touch** project consists of Aber Gendy, Ana Lora, Ivana Lukić, selma banich, and Slavica Đuričić. The recently deceased Mirjana Učakar also contributed to the collective. In collaboration with Ana Dana Beroš and Saša Nemec as well as women from many parts of the world who today call Ljubljana, Logatec and Zagreb their home, they created the Erased Gazes protest canvas memorial. This was collectively made at the Politics of Touch workshops devised and run by selma banich.

SCHEDULE

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