

RED THREAD

Issue 2

Introduction

This issue is the product of a collaboration between Red Thread e-journal and SWEET 60s project. Red Thread has provided a theoretical platform for SWEET 60s, a long term experimental, curatorial, scientific and educational research project that investigates the hidden territories of the revolutionary period of the 1960s through contemporary artistic and theoretical perspectives, which has developed around itself a wide international network of interested and cooperating individuals and institutions.

The curatorial and artistic focus of SWEET 60s lies on "post ideological societies" (in post-Soviet, post socialist, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, West and Central Asian as well as North African countries and in a second phase in China and Latin America), in making a comparative analysis and contextualizing the historical developments in the arts, culture and societies of the 60s and 70s and researching their subsequent effects on contemporary socio-political and cultural situations.

The project mainly concentrates on the still underexposed global cultural shift in the 60s and its effects in countries that were omitted in the historical explorations of that particular revolutionary period; situations that were developing beyond the, so to say, "Prague Line." The general perception of the 60s period is still associated with Western culture and with the formal fragmented replications of Western processes in the "peripheries" and "outskirts."

Despite the differences in their geopolitical and sociocultural contexts, the political, social and cultural processes ongoing in countries in West Asia, the Middle East, the Southern Caucasus and North Africa (including the Arab world) since the mid 60s were tightly interconnected with each other and they played a momentous role in shaping subsequent developments on both a regional and a global scale. The effects and the logic of the political, social and cultural paradigms and constructs that were established in that period can still be traced today when we also witness the culturalisation and aesthetization of this epoch of "rebellious euphoria."

The project explores the differences and similarities of that turbulent period in the aforementioned countries through a comparative analysis of the important (from the contemporary artistic or critical points of view) symbols, expressions, and developments in the social, cultural, political and economical fields (like social/political movements, significant works and trends in architecture, literature, visual arts, cinema, pop culture, mass culture, subcultures, etc...).

In the early 60s, a hopeful spirit of modernism had moved into the private ateliers in many art-scapes that were then conceived as peripheral or provincial. In the so called Soviet Block, the existential fears risen in the period of the Stalinist dictate of realism had already elicited initial counter-reactions after 1956, leading to a reenactment of extreme subjectivism. In the totalitarian and colonial art-scapes of the Arab world and North and Central Africa as well as West and Central Asia, new groups and positions that emerged

joined an international artistic spirit of late modernist universalism and were able to feel accepted again in the international canon with their kinetic objects, light works, and their structural-geometric abstractions. In the second postwar decade, a generation of neo-constructivist artists on both sides of the Iron Curtain and the former colonies had formed a kind of international association.

During these years, the loosening of the repressive climate created more freedom regarding artistic means of expression - and also enabled a new approach to aesthetic work. In a way, neo-constructive modernism, the new abstraction, functioned not only as a sign of the end of an era, but also a kind of repression machine: the new modernism was also a substitute for the errors and oversights of fordism and socialism and their models of social modernization; it criticized mass culture and its everyday objects, placed artistic work in an abstract space of work on the form, and was the vanishing point of the real world of the Cold War. The era of the neo-avant-gardes left their traces around the globe. Yet it is still the neo-avant-gardes of the centers that have been canonized.

In contrast to the currently accepted master narratives and historical canons, the project considers the processes of the 60s not as an eruption of a volcano generating echoes in the rest of the world, but as a general socio-cultural, political, economical condition which evolved in a global context and determined the development of parallel modernities interrelated with the development of diverse sociopolitical and cultural radical processes in every part of the world.