

Collective action as political, not organizational decision



Research project in the area
of art criticism

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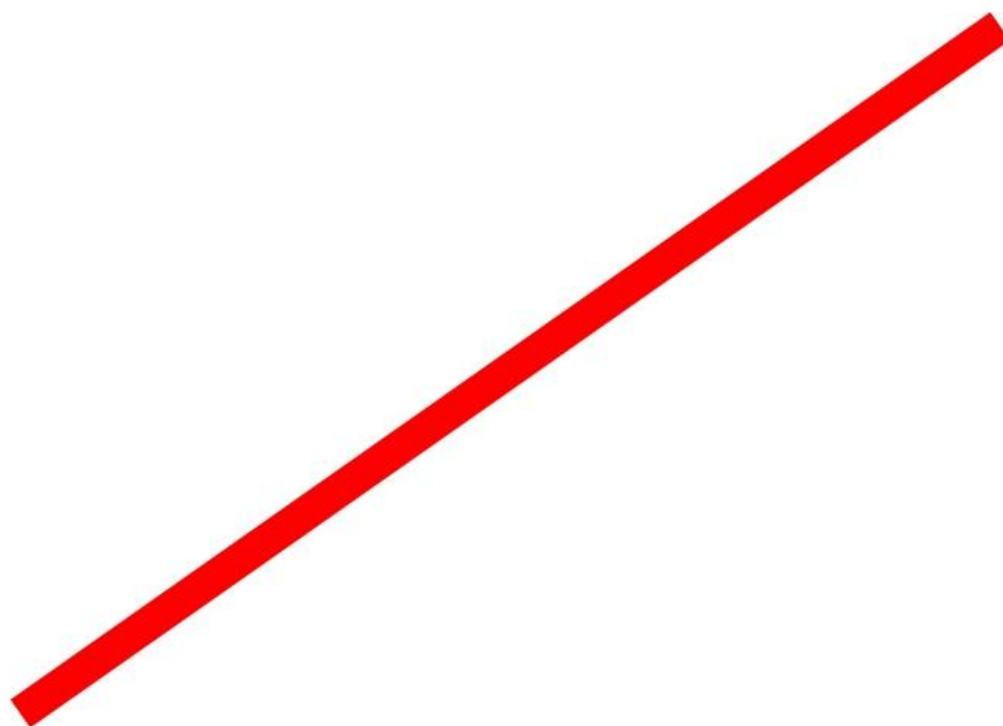
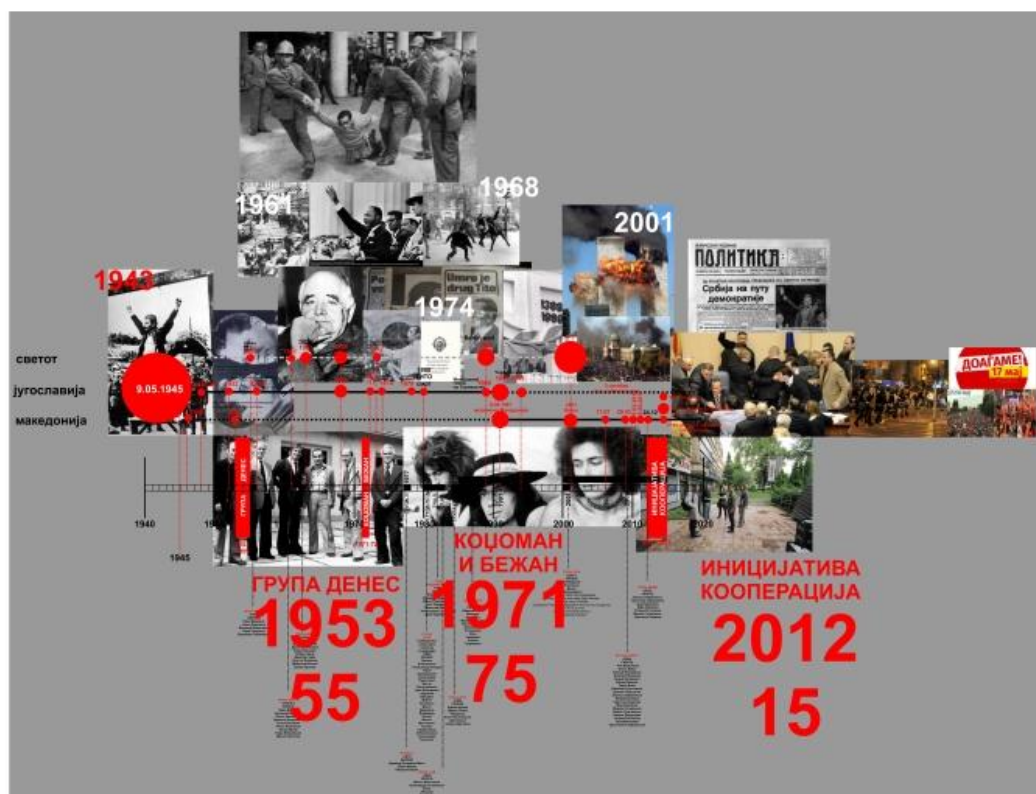
Diagrams and design: Filip Jovanovski

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* Due to the specific flow of the writing thought, the text was written only by Ivana Vaseva, based on the research performed by both authors.

** A note by Filip Jovanovski and Ivana Vaseva, authors of research "Collective action as a political, not organisational decision" and the M.B. of AICA Macedonia.

The rewarded research "Collective action as a political, not organisational decision" of authors Filip Jovanovski and Ivana Vaseva exists in two distinct versions: a summarized version 20 pages long, edited in Macedonian and translated and edited in English, according to the previously established criteria of the yearly award "Ladislav Barisik". The full version of the awarded research "Collective action as a political, not organisational decision" including additional information, is also existent, and it will be made available to the public via the AICA Macedonia web portal in further agreement with the authors.



INTRODUCTION

If we wish to really talk about political art, we need to reveal its relation to the communal. Through this perspective, we also need to rethink the social and political value of art, which is closely connected to the perception, recognition and establishment of the visibility of what we now have and will have in common in the future.

(Bojana Kunst)¹

1. Il faut faire des films politiques.

2. Il faut faire politiquement des films.

(Jean-Luc Godard)²

In these special times of the latest Macedonian history, especially in the last decade, collective spirit has been put up to a test. It is highly demanded, but it seems that its history is small and weak. It exists in the memory and in the public opinion, however, mostly it is not articulated in a sufficiently clear manner (with an epic-mythical component), discontinued to the extent that it runs away (and succeeds) to the margins and exists in the “glory” of the memory of the few proud, for some “glorious” times.

However, this spirit, gradually bypassing the trap of the pervasive self-negation (unlike another existing rhetoric of self-indignation), it can be established that this spirit was present in this country in different periods, forms and intensities.

What lies ahead of us in this research is the special area – art and its local manifestation in the period from 1945 to this date. The research includes and actively rethinks the most recent artistic occurrences – and the appearance of the collective art actions and their sensibility in the form of art groups and reviews them in a broader manner in the form of initiatives, platforms, collectives and informal groups³. The research examines the importance of such groups and focuses on their very establishment, which differentiates two extremes – making a difference that each group is an organizational structure – the group, whose establishment is an organizational decision and whose objective is the mutual assistance its members provide for each other in their individual production and exhibition practice and another one where the group is formed as a political decision, aiming to change aspects in the constellation where it creates and aiming to create new environment for production and receiving art, thus creating political relations and relationships. In this sense it is especially important to make a distinction between the terms “politics” and “the political”. “The political” is the dimension of antagonism which is constitutive of human societies while “politics” is the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of a conflictuality provided by the political.⁴

¹ Kunst, Bojana, “Budite politični, ili vas neće biti! (O političkoj umetnosti u postpolitičnom svetu)” во Dvojezično izdanje TkH (Teorija koja Hoda) časopisa za teoriju izvođačkih umetnosti (br. 19) Političnost performansa (Belgrade, 2011), 130

² Part of the manifest “What is to be done?” by Jean-Luc Godard, 1970. Translation: 1. We must make political movies. 2. We must make movies politically <http://www.derives.tv/Que-faire>

³ In order to avoid repetition of all manifestations of the term art group, which may come in the form of initiatives, platforms, collectives and informal groups, when discussing all three groups taken into consideration in this research, we will use the term group. When each of them is reviewed individually, its form as a group, informal group or initiative will be underlined.

⁴ Mouffe, Chantal. On the political (Routledge, London и New York, 2006).

In this research, we will not take into consideration all groups having existed in the country in the given period⁵. Instead, we will focus on three groups – the group DENES (1953-1955), informal group of the artists Kodjoman and Bezjan (1970-1975) and the initiative KOOPERACIJA (2012-2015). We will examine their activity through a similar set of parameters and criteria.

This research raises the following questions: does collective action in art open possibilities and thoughts which target and incite not only artistic development and experimentation, with an idea for mutual motivation and support, but also if there were/are in our country associations which can contribute to a political change through artistic action; and are there art collectives aiming to create new relations among people and new relationships in the specific system, which will differ from the previous ones.

These groups have been selected for several reasons: first, these authors have had an impact on the period of their action – they appeared in critical moments (renaissance and the building of Yugoslavia, relaxation of art controls and opening of the country to western influences and a type of regime perception of art and society in the last decades), both socially and politically; had a vision for a better society and therefore the arts; and had an active audience which reacted frequently and critically to their work. This research examines if the impact of these groups really changed something in the existing constellation of the artistic system and the artistic system – society, did it create fruitful grounds for future generations and if they created a structure which could win what it wanted and thus transfer the model to similar initiatives.

The actions of these groups are analyzed based on:

1. The description of the group – how they defined themselves and their public statements;
2. The opinions of 3 types of respondents;
3. Through publications and printed materials published for these groups.

What we want to show in this research is what is the role of collective efforts and actions in the development of the new generation of artists and thus on the art scene as well as its active institutional alternative capable to change the stale waters of local history and the established art institutions and institutional formats and possibly pave the way to the wider international scene. Therefore, the political initially refers to breaking the established order in the established structures of the environment and furthermore the wider social context. So here we are not talking about collective work, rather we talk about collective action, the group, group activities and their effects.

The interest to research the phenomenon of art groups, which is the action of multiple artists in a group, collective activity or action, regardless if it formal or informal, or a variation of the several possible interpretation of this term, arose from a specific political and social situation in Macedonia, which affected the cultural and artistic domain. This raised the need to reexamine the existing condition of the contemporary visual scene – more specifically, the independent scene, which has still not been registered in the official cultural policies, still representing the institutional formats and professions, flowing in stale waters. They in turn can use significant facts from the research in the collective acting throughout Macedonian history of art, in their readiness for making a change.

On the other hand, in the last twenty years several formal and informal groups of artists started to appear in this country, such as the ad-hoc choir Raspeani Skopjani, the art group and art space Art I.N.S.T.I.T.U.T., Skopje, the initiative Kooperacija, the art group Momi, the group of artists that formed the space Kula, the art group Dzee, etc., all having different reasons for their formation, with their own language, expression and methods of operation.

The concentration of such formations inspired us to think of the reasons for the more frequent appearance of this phenomenon, especially in specific circumstances where alternative centers do not

⁵ Although shortly are listed all modern and contemporary visual art groups that existed in the country. The research speaks as well about groups consisted of three or more members and does not consider artistic duos.

exist, there is almost no fund to help and stimulate artistic activities and no production conditions (so far, within these groups, the anachronous academic education in this country was not addressed).⁶

In the same period, there was a massive appearance and collective expression of citizen revolt with strength and frequency not typical in the newer Macedonian history, manifested in different protests and civil actions, starting from the ones against the famous government plan 'Skopje 2014', to the latest protests against the decision of the Constitutional Court to allow abolition and amnesty for electoral crime, for which the Special Prosecution already started investigations, based on the contents of the publicly announced materials from the illegal monitoring of communications.⁷

These collective forms inspired various forms of curiosity in different professional and social areas and they were subjected to different supervisions and analyses, which made us think about the possibilities for rethinking the internal structure, continuity and the effect from the existence of such groups.

Collective action is not very extensive in domestic history of art unlike the countries in the region. As the research shows, groups have existed, but they have only left impression in local history, whereas the groups in the larger centers, such as Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, were in the spotlight not only in Yugoslavia, but wider as well.⁸ In that sense, this research is a small step to outlining the existence of such a history in Macedonia, similarly to the main centers of Yugoslavia, leaving aside the events in Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.⁹

The authors Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette write that the spirit of collectivism appears in the late capitalism in the form of a new collectivism. For them collectivism should be periodized because it could be beneficial if it could be defined as history and it can occupy clear position and face clear possibility now, as a new period, which appears in that history. First and foremost they address the collectivism specific for the Cold War (they use a phrase such as 'Collectivism after modernism') and the repercussions of the new collectivism. According to them, this new collectivism carries part of the inheritance from past collectivisms but also it is realized in the hegemonic power of global capitalism. They also add the following: "This, then, is our fetish now: that the dream of collectivism realize itself as neither the strategic vision of some future ideal, of a revised modernism, nor as the mobile, culture-jamming, more-mediated-than-thou counter-hegemony of collectivism after modernism, but instead as Marx's self-realization of human nature constituted by taking charge of social being here and now. This

⁶ This research does not get into the discussions, analyses and criticism of the appearance and existence of art collectives on the international art scene. Its starting point is the fact that here (in this country) we have a specific artistic, but also, social context, completely devoid of commercial artistic market and creative cultural industry, which significantly change the thinking about art and its politicization. Thus, here we discuss art groups as part of the region which geographically, ideologically and politically belongs to a wider post-Yugoslav cultural and political context (under region we mean this specific area), which requires redefining the relationship between politics and art, established through contemporary curatorial and artistic critical practices.

⁷ Starting from 2009, when the First architectural rebellion was organized against the construction of a religious building on the main city square "Macedonia", to this date, several expression of citizen revolt took place of various extents. Some of the more popular citizen movements and protests since then until today were the Protests against police brutality, protest against the legal changes for payment of contributions, protests against external testing of university and high school students, which were one of the most massive to this date, protest activities within the civil initiatives AMAN and GO SAKAM GTC, the camp "Sloboda" in front of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, etc.

⁸ Suvakovic partly speaks of the avant-garde (1918-1935), neo-avant-garde (1950-1968) and post-avant-garde (1969-1995) in Yugoslavia, as occurrences on the margins, censored and repressed, and thus forgotten. Therefore they were subject of a wider interest lately in: Šuvaković, Miško. "Impossible Histories" in Djurić, Dubravka and Šuvaković, Miško eds. *Impossible Histories Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003)

⁹ It is interesting to mention that some of the groups in Yugoslavia, especially those in Novi Sad, such as "KÓD", "(Э", "Bosch+Bosch" and the textualists from Zrenjanin remained invisible until their recent exposure to the artistic audience.

means neither picturing social form, nor doing battle in the realm of representation but instead engaging with social life as production, engaging with social life itself as the medium of expression".¹⁰

From that point of view and due to the breadth of the subject, this research does not tackle issues such as the reasons for the existence of collectivism during the late capitalism and the internal turmoil – even though it has always been fascinating to look at the existence of the collective spirit today, when the senses of individualism have sharpened, leading to professionalize the creative force shaped in the individual as a professional norm¹¹.

Also, this research does not get into the group dynamics and all affective and emotional states which arise from working in groups, such as friendship, happiness, joy, pleasure from working together. Also, it does not analyze or criticize the organizations themselves, or their operational setup, may it be horizontal, where everybody takes charge for their own wish; or vertical, where, for instance, the leader of the group (the authority – the father of the group – Oedipal transference or Oedipal model according to which the leader tells the group members who they are and what they need to be doing; or the form of charismatic tyrannical leadership, which does not allow processes of emancipation in the group but uses the group, which believes in its leader, through means of manipulation, for personal benefits.¹²

THE ART GROUP

Loosely defined, it is a group of artists or art collective working together to achieve a common objective.¹³ Considering that groups may be different for various reasons, this research narrows the limits of examination to the method i.e. the main idea behind the functioning structure and the objective, which may be of a different nature.

One of the two extremes that this research examines are the groups, which from their very inception, are defined to create favorable and improved environment only for their members and serve only their needs, assuming mutual support and strengthening the capacities only in that circle. It is the kind of a "business ventures to advance individual artists' careers"¹⁴.

¹⁰ Stimson, Blake and Sholette, Gregory. „ Introduction: Periodizing Collectivism“ in Stimson, Blake and Sholette, Gregory eds. *Collectivism after modernism The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 13

¹¹ A deeper review of the reasons for the formation of groups and organizations, and for the interest of individuals in collective actions – to strengthen individual and mutual interest, may be found in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* of Mancur Olson, Jr. (Harvard University Press, 2002)

¹² Verwoert, Jan. "Notes on Collaborative Production" in Kolowratnik, Nina Valerie and Miessen, Markus eds. *Waking Up from the Nightmare of Participation* (Utrecht: Expodium, 2011)

¹³ In the web dictionary of one of the most significant museums today, the Tate from England, the art collective is loosely defined as a group of artists working together to achieve a common objective. Artists in the collective are surrounded around common ideologies, aesthetics and/or political convictions.

In the early modern period, there were roughly two forms of art collective. Those who sought to bring about social change by cultural means like the futurists. They looked towards the future where they envisioned a radically new way of life. Others, like the Dada artists, represented the psychological consequences of loss of a pre-modern existence and reflected that in their art. They spoke for a collective group, and in this case those mentally and physically scarred by the First World War.

Today, thanks to social media, art collectives have an extraordinary global reach, giving them the power to bring about change through direct action. Collectives today are about the present and how they can change society in the here and now. See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/c/collective>

¹⁴ Unterkofler, Dietmar. *Grupa 143 Kritičko mišljenje na granicama konceptualne umetnosti 1975 – 1980.* (JP Službeni glasnik, 2012), 59

The second extreme are groups, which in the existing social constellation, try to promote the position of art and actively involve art in social events. These groups usually try to create another type of institution, an alternative to the official institutions, enabling practices of individual and collective self-education and alternative to the myth of the individual artistic genius.¹⁵ It involves opening new forms of action and thinking in the artistic world and thus in the broader social context.

Misko Suvakovic, art theoretician and contemporary aesthete, defines the **art group (artistic group)** as a micro-social, non-institutional community, whose members share and achieve a common artistic program, objective, values, way of life, ideology or methodology of work in art. It is a constitutive structure in the world of art, typical for the avant-garde, neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde.

In his understanding, the art group may be: 1. A community with a formal organizational structure; 2. A community with informal organizational structure; 3. A movement and 4. A commune.

A community with a formal organizational structure has a name, program, members and defined roles in the group and it represents an alternative institution in the world of art and culture. A community with informal organizational structure undertakes the function of a group or movement where the collaborators of the group keep their individual or autonomous context of action.

Informal groups occur:

1. In unfavorable artistic, cultural or political conditions, when artists unite to create favorable social micro-social conditions for work, instead of a single program or methodological scope of work.
2. In the beginning of the artistic career, when several different authors clash coming from different generations and different styles of work.
3. When multiple groups and individuals create movement with specific artistic, theoretical or ideological foundations.

A movement is an open, unstable, large and heterogeneous community of artists, theoreticians of art, audience and collaborators which unite around a general idea that expresses the zeitgeist, a fashion style or an ideological stance. A commune is a community whose members do not only relate through an artistic, aesthetic or ideological program, but they also cohabit and thus create an alternative micro-culture against the society as a whole.¹⁶

Suvakovic limits his summary of art groups in the period from the avant-garde to post-avant-garde (the period between the two world wars until the fall of the Berlin wall)¹⁷ and points out to the difference of the function and status of artists in all periods¹⁸. According to him, avant-garde groups were a micro-social alternative space where new relations were being created, in terms of art, production, values and methodology, which spread further in the world of art, growing into a dominant norm of art and culture. In the neo-avant-garde, groups were shaped as movements or research communities (labs), which were created by the examples from the scientific community. In conceptual art, the group was not only an alternative micro-social creative space for artists, but also an auto-reflective object of research, analysis and discussions. In post-modernism, the art group is defined as follows:

¹⁵ Ibid, 58

¹⁶ Šuvaković, Miško. *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti I teorije posle 1950 godine* (Beograd – Novi Sad: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti Prometej, 1999), 112 – 113 и Šuvaković, Miško. *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti* (Zagreb, Ghent: Horetzky, Zagreb, 2005), 644 – 645. In both of his books he treats the terms collective art and art group as being the same thing.

¹⁷ Djurić, Dubravka and Šuvaković, Miško eds. *Impossible Histories Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003)

¹⁸ Šuvaković, Miško. *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti I teorije posle 1950 godine* (Beograd – Novi Sad: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti Prometej, 1999), 113 and Šuvaković, Miško. *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti* (Zagreb, Ghent: Horetzky, Zagreb, 2005), 645

1. Mimesis, quote or parody of the organization, activity and the meaningful achievement of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde groups.
2. Team of artists and organizers, who by their structure are close to the organization of a group in the sense in popular culture and show business.
3. Community of like-minded people within a marginal social group (national and racial minority, homosexuals, feminists, adolescents).

Therefore, this research presents a historical review of these phenomena in order to outline some future thoughts and actions, the future of collectives, and it reexamines the new possible occurrences of collectivism – having gone through the history, we end with the question: how to set up an alternative institution and do we need to think of new models of art collectives?

METHODOLOGY

This research does not strive to give a complete review of art groups in the country, instead, it reexamines three significant groups in the history of our country in order to show how such formations operated in different periods and thus re-examines their politicality.

Also, this research does not promote the academic, scientific methodology and discourse, but it sets up its own methodology of work inspired by the artistic research practice. According to Henk Slager, curator and professor of artistic research, this research does “not focus purposefully on generating ‘expert knowledge’, but specifically on expressing experiential knowledge. Such knowledge cannot be channeled through rigid academic-scientific guidelines of generalization, repetition and quantification, but requires full attention for the unique, the qualitative, the particular and the local”.¹⁹

This research was conducted in several stages:

I. Inventory of collective practices in the past in Macedonia, from 1945 to this date (the groups Denes, Vdist, Mugri, Kiks, the informal group from the 70s led by the artists Milosh Kodjoman and Dragoljub Bezjan, the groups 77, Usta, 1 AM, Tush Laboratorija, Krug, Zero, Elementi, OPA (Obsessive – possessive – aggression), Art I.N.S.T.I.T.U.T., Momi, the initiative Kooperacija, the art group DzEE and the group of arts united around the space “Kula”).

This has been presented in a diagram.

II. In the second stage, the research focuses on the reexamination of the three different artistic practices during the larger period: the group Denes, informal group from the 1970s led by the artists Milosh Kodjoman and Dragoljub Bezjan and Inicijativa KOOPERACIJA.

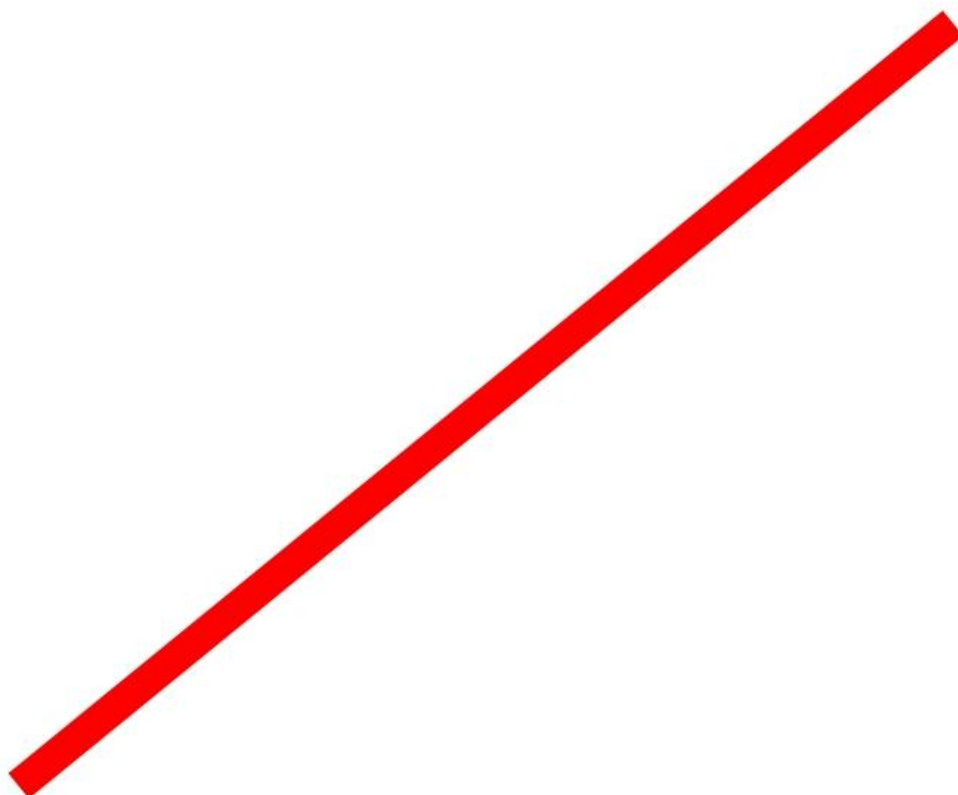
The three groups were examined through interviews, written questionnaires, by consulting published books, interviews and texts and by analyzing through several parameters, such as:

1. Credo/working concept
2. Relations with the art environment
3. Relation with society and political structure
4. Activities and their reactions and results.

Three types of respondents were being interviewed:

1. Members themselves
2. Friends and viewers
3. Critiques and art historians.

¹⁹ Slager, Henk, “Nameless science Introduction” in ART&RESEARCH: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods. Volume 2. No. 2. (2009) in <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/pdfs/slager.pdf>



From them, interviews were conducted with:

Group Denes

1. Slavko Brezovski

3. Vladimir Velichkovski, Sonja Abadjieva, Zoran Petrovski

Informal group of the 1970s led by the artists Milosh Kodjoman and Dragoljub Bezjan

1. Dragoljub Bezjan

2. Simon Uzunovski

3. Vladimir Velichkovski, Sonja Abadjieva, Zoran Petrovski, Nebojsa Vilikj (statement)

Initiative KOOPERACIJA²⁰

1. Founders and core-group (Gjorgje Jovanovikj, Nikola Uzunovski, Oliver Musovikj)

Members (Jana Jakimovska, Ines Efremova, Yane Chalovski, Hristina Ivanoska, Dijana Bogdanovska, Ivana Dragshikj, Aleksandar Spasovski, Igor Sekovski, Mirna Arsovska, Simon Uzunovski)

2. Iskra Geshoska, Sashka Bubevska

3. Zoran Petrovski, Sonja Abadjieva, Vladimir Velichkovski, Elena Veljanovska, Jovanka Popova

III. Summary of the result in a final text.

1. The politicality and art groups. Art and politics.

In order to get into the subject that reexamines the politicality of the collective action (art groups in the broadest sense), outlined in the introduction, this research will give a short intro in the relationship of art with politics and afterwards it will explain the politicality of groups i.e. their decision for founding and functioning as political.

When the relations of art and politics in the latest artistic constellations are reviewed, the thoughts of the contemporary thinker Jacques Ranciere must be mentioned. He suggested a complete rework of the relation between aesthetics and politics and he significantly rethought the historical models of understanding their development (relation of autonomy of art, politics and social change).

Ranciere argues that art (since the Enlightenment) is predicated precisely on a tension and confusion between autonomy (the desire for art to be at one remove from mean-ends relationships) and heteronomy (that is, the blurring of art and life). For Ranciere, aesthetics (he reinvents the term

²⁰ It is possible to have an articulated position on the initiative KOOPERACIJA, which functioned between 2012-2015, especially because contemporary art is archived in the moment of creation. However, for our research we did not have access to the thoughts of some of the founding and most active members of the initiative. Thus, the summarization or sublimation will be based on the respondents, out of which two are founders, 11 members, two regular and critical followers and 4 art historians. Four of the eight founders / the core group, such as Igor Toshevski, Denis Saraginovski and Slobodanka Stevchevska (OPA) and Vladimir Janchevski did not want to respond to our calls, give us answers to any questionnaire or a personal interview, under the explanation that there was not enough time for a critical distance from the work of the initiative, that they were too busy with their professional obligations, but also that everything has already been said in previous interviews and written texts, on different occasions, and therefore there is no need to answer our questions. They also questioned and criticized the method of our research, asking questions about the final outcome. Nikola Uzunovski is also part of the core group but he was not actively present because he worked outside of Macedonia, while Vladimir Janchevski and Oliver Musovikj, which are not founders, were very active, the former from the very beginning of the initiative and the latter in the last year. Filip Jovanovski, who is one of the founders of Kooperacija, was excluded from answering the questionnaire because he is one of the authors of this research.

aesthetics which now refers to a specific way of experiencing and to the linguistic and theoretical domain where the thinking of art takes place) and politics overlap in their concern for the distribution and sharing out of ideas, abilities and experiences to certain subjects or as he calls it *le partage du sensible*²¹.

For him, the kind of art which specifically deals with political issues (by transferring a special political message) is not really political because it only confirms the social order, while the “political” occupies the foreseen position within the social order of the country.

In contrast, Ranciere argues that the connection between art and politics should be one through which artworks produce effects of dissensus because they neither give lessons nor have any destination. By removing the assumption that art must have an effect on “real life”, a “rupture” is caused, exposing and disrupting the “distribution of social parts” and leading to reconsideration of the construction of the social order. Thus, truly political art would expose both an understanding of the politics which dictates the way society is arranged as well as exposing the resistance to that social order within the work itself.²²

When it comes to socially engaged practices, which are some type of collective action, but usually not art groups, Claire Bishop, supporting the ideas of Ranciere, but referring to artworks, says that the most attractive works of today reflect on the antinomy between the autonomy and social intervention, both in the structure of work and in the conditions of its reception, which can sometimes be uncomfortable, exploitative, confusing or provoking. These works usually use collaboration to create poetic and multi-layered events which resonate on many levels and understand the aesthetic as something that goes along with the political. Bishop says that “instead of extracting art from the ‘useless’ domain of the aesthetic to relocate it in praxis, the better example of participatory art occupy an ambiguous territory between ‘art becoming mere life or art becoming mere art’. To the extreme, each of these scenarios includes its own entropy, its own ending for art”.²³

In order to examine the complex relation(s) between art and politics, the philosopher and cultural critic Gabriel Rockhill points out two general positions on which these entities sustain and reviews their relationship through the politics of art and to the social politicization of aesthetic practices. He revisits the position of Ranciere (among others) and writes that his affirmation of consubstantiation of aesthetic and politics is blurred by his incessant claims that art and politics never met in a decisive sense. Rockhill writes that the work of Ranciere is utterly possessed by many shortcomings underlined in the writings of his predecessors.

One position, according to Rockhill, called politics of art is based on the ontological illusion which says that each of these entities has a fixed being and privileged relation which can definitely be described through the renowned lens of the episteme. Politics of art is focused on the alleged unique power of isolated artifacts – talismans in order to produce – more or less in a way from a sole reason – political effects and generally believes that the role of the interpreter is to claim authoritatively for the nature of art in general or the unique political meaning of certain works.

“Rather than separating art from its social inscription, rarifying politics as a discrete element and then searching for their supposedly privileged link, I have sought to break with the politics of art in this sense in favor of examining and participating in the social politicization of aesthetic practices. This has meant

²¹ Bishop, Claire “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents” in *ARTIFICIAL HELLS Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London, New York, Verso, 2012), 27

²² Johnson, Miranda. *Hell is Other People: Ethics, Aesthetics and Participatory Art*. http://www.academia.edu/4019730/Hell_is_Other_People_Ethics_Aesthetics_and_Participatory_Art and Ranciere, Jacques, *DISSENSUS On Politics and Aesthetics* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010)

²³ Bishop, Claire “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents” in *ARTIFICIAL HELLS Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London, New York, Verso, 2012), 40

undermining the ontological illusion and the talisman complex by radical historicist analytic of practice, which reveals that there is no being of art and politics or privileged relation between them. Instead, these sociohistorical concepts in struggle. It has therefore been absolutely essential to abandon the social epoché that has acted as a bulwark against understanding the social politicized of works of art in order to analyze three heuristically distinct social dimensions of aesthetic practices: production, distribution and reception".²⁴

These three dimensions were important for reviewing the phenomenon of the groups in the local context which is generally different from the wider international environment existing under the premises of the late capitalist logic. Bojana Kunst, philosopher and theorist of performing arts, introduces the component for engaged art in the post-political world today and the danger from an anachronous view on the political artist (as someone continuously deteriorating boundaries between life and art), since, as she says, contemporary art practices are articulated in the direction of the market and the power of creativity to emancipate becomes a vehicle of capital (world dominated by politics as a spectacle, creative industry and capital ruled by institutionalized critical and political discourses). Talking about politicization of art, which today is reflected in different forms, she writes that art is therefore not articulated within the discursive texts of self-referentiality and critical distance to itself, but directly challenges and demolishes a colourful range of contexts in which it appears and becomes visible; at the same time, it does not agree to the unique reduction of art to a moral and didactic stance. Art is a mode of life, opening up life's sensory and aesthetic power, the ways yet to come. It is those ways that radically change the conditions of community life, the intensity of co-being and the existing paths of subjectivisation²⁵.

In this wider context of thinking, it must be seriously taken into consideration and reexamine the position still dominating the Macedonian cultural and artistic views that art is an occurrence isolated from the real world i.e. it is autonomous and it is only possible from its position to act or achieve and act for a change²⁶. The reasons why this view dominates are many and they will be subject of a special analysis. There are two most current examples existing in this context which can be highlighted: one, that art is an isolated occurrence, still supporting the idea of artist genius and second, viewing art as representation or as a comment of the existing relations in the world, as its mirrored representation, as something that comes "after" the whole history has already happened.²⁷

However, in addition to the artworks, art groups are a characteristic phenomenon witnessing the politicization of art. Misko Suvakovic says that the excesses of some groups, active in former Yugoslavia, lies in the fact that coming out of the reservation, they sought recreation and action of the state and thus they disturbed many because they spoke of a world which is not desired even today, since these practices are disturbing, not soothing, and set difficult and critical issues. Therefore he explains that art is always political, not because it speaks of politics – that is the mistake nationalistic dissidents made, believing that if they painted our poor and squalid, but our Gvozden in a figurative manner, or if they wrote novels about the unfortunate and unrealised Serbian history, that they were changing the political paradigm. On the contrary, they replaced one realism with another, and that is why we have

²⁴ Rokhill, Gabriel. *Radical History & Politics of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 231

²⁵ Kunst, Bojana, "Budite politični, ili vas neće biti! (O političkoj umetnosti u postpolitičnom svetu)" *80 Dvojezično izdanje TkH (Teorija koja Hoda) časopisa za teoriju izvođačkih umetnosti* (br. 19) *Političnost performansa* (Belgrade, 2011), 128

²⁶ In this context, the view of Sartre is interesting about the responsibility of the artist, which kind of coincides with the dominant understanding of arts in this country. He writes "The reason to write (prose not poetry) is to discover a world and call upon the reader to take responsibility to change it". In Rokhill, Gabriel. *Radical History & Politics of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 78

²⁷ Uvod u Političke prakse u (post-) jugoslovenskoj umetnosti, *Izostavljena istorija Omitted History* (Frankfurt am Main, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2006), 14

the examples of national realism. Indeed, political art is one that acts within a certain micro-social world and makes changes in ways of behaving, perception and understanding art.²⁸

2. The art groups in focus - their existence as political and not organizational decision

Group Denes



²⁸ IZOSTAVLJENA ISTORIJA Transkript debate održane 18.11.2005. godine povodom otvaranja izložbe "Trajni čas umetnosti, Novosadska neoavangarda '60-ih i '70-ih godina XX veka", u Muzeju savremene umetnosti u Novom Sadu in Misko Suvakovic Izostavljena istorija Omitted History (Frankfurt am Main, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2006), 59

Name: Group Denes

Date of establishment: constitutive meeting held on 01.09.1953 in the studio of Shekerinski, Brezovski and Pecovski

Year the group ceased to function: 1955

Members:

painters: Dimche Protugjer, Borko Lazeski, Ljubomir Belogaski, Risto Lozanoski and David Bafeti, Dimitar Kondovski, Bozin Barutovski

Architects: Slavko Brezovski, Risto Shekerinski and Janko Konstantinov

Sculptors: Jordan Grabuloski-Grabul, Boro Krstevski

Short description of actions:

program - manifesto of Denes

PROMISING STEP (Ч Е К О П Ш Т О Б Е Т Ы Б А) – established group Denes

RAZGLEDI (VIEWS) – weekly supplement on culture and art

No. 42 November 1953

On 01.09.1953 five painters: Dimche Protugjer, Borko Lazeski, Ljubomir Belogaski, Risto Lozanoski and David Bafeti; three architects: Slavko Brezovski, Risto Shekerinski and Janko Konstantinovski and one sculptor: Jordan Grabuloski – held a meeting and officially started the work of the group Denes.

When creating the group, this group of artists was motivated by the inspiration for freedom of personal expression, as well as the struggle between different streams in arts. Based on the decisions adopted at the Third Congress of the Union of Artists of Yugoslavia, where the Union of Artists of Macedonia took part, held in May 1953 in Ohrid, a recommendation was issued to all artists in our country to form groups of artists with similar or same aesthetic views. The Congress only confirmed what had already existed in the more developed art centers (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana) and what was supposed to happen in the art centers in our country.

The main objective of this group was to use the modern art achievements around the world in order to create our contemporary art. In order to achieve this basic objective, the group unequivocally pledged the following:

1. To organize exhibitions with modern and clear art concepts. It considers the exhibitions organized to that point by the Association of Artists to be wrongly conceptualized, and hence the need of change. The exhibitions did not have any physiognomy and provided solely formal membership registration. Such exhibitions did not allow for affirmation of individual artists (any artist could exhibit only few works), nor affirmation of different art movements (the works were not organized according to similar artistic views, only the general arrangement was considered). Such organization of annual exhibitions is even more impolitic nowadays due to the fact that the number of artists in Macedonia has tripled, and there are significant differences in the artistic views. All of this clearly shows that collective and individual exhibitions should be organized, and at annual exhibition, besides solely registration, works should be organized according to similar artists' views.

2. The group is in favor of active struggle against outdated understanding of art, and in favor of creating contemporary artistic taste and contemporary artistic public. It pledged for active struggle of different views, or creation of groups of other artists. With such organization, a number of principal matters



Група ДЕНЕС

1953-1955

would become clear, which would pave the way for active and creative participation in this field of cultural and social activity.

3. The group pledged for connections with other groups and departments in our country that fought for promoting the contemporary art.

4. The group pledged for cooperation with architects with contemporary views. It considered that all three branches of art (architecture, sculpture and painting) are interconnected and inseparable and define one another. Such close cooperation must exist today. Every experiential division or separation is an obstacle to the creation of contemporary art. The group objective is to realize this in practice, which is confirmed by the fact that three of its members are contemporary architects.

5. The group fights for internal cooperation in order to settle the recent art issues. It considers that in the beginnings, its members should have similar views, which was understandable, and the internal synchronization was supposed to be a significant objective and perspective to be realized on a long-term.

6. The group objective is to attract active contemporary artists that are not members to the Union or the Association. It pledged to help those artists which could not be members to the Union or the Association due to different reasons, and were nevertheless artists with contemporary views.

7. The group pledged for creating a circle of public workers and artists (musicians, writers) in order to promote cooperation and settle contemporary art issues and matters via lectures, articles, discussions and similar activities.

On December 6, 1953, this group will open its first exhibition in the hall of the National University and thus present its achievements publicly for the first time. By: Dimche Protugjer

Informal group connected to the artists Kodjoman and Bezjan



Name: Informal group connected to the artists Milosh Kodjoman and Dragoljub Bezjan (SUB-KUL-TURISTI)

Date of establishment: 1969

Year the group ceased its operations: around 1975

Members: Milosh Kodjoman, Dragoljub Bezjan, Simon Uzunovski, Angel Panevski, Slobodan Zhivkovski

Extended group: Kiril Varoshanec, Angel Dimovski-Chaush, Dragan Nikodinovski Bish, Vladimir Shopov, Razme Kumbarovski-Rafaelo, Oliver Zlatku-Barni, Angel Panovski-Ufo

Hippie-movement „Pchinja Dezj“ – Milosh Kodjoman, Oliver Zlatku-Barni, Mishko Desovski-Mali, Shukjko, Elena-Enka Nikodinovska, Vide Vuchevski, Angel Dimovski-Chaush, Vlado Tunte, Razme Kumbarovski, Dragoljub Bezhan, Radovan Rosikj

Short description of actions

SUB – KUL – TURISTI

If it were not for THEM

WE would not have happened²⁹

Irrepressible in the artistic ranks, daring individual individuals, aware of the consequences that occurred due to the correctors of the collective awareness in the seventies, we ambitiously worked on our works, alternatively to their. The time machine did us honor to relive our youth at the beginning of the 21st century in the White Night in Skopje, when the impossible became possible. A night, at whose dawn, the genuine artistic vanguard of the seventies shone brightly in the Macedonian artistic constellation.

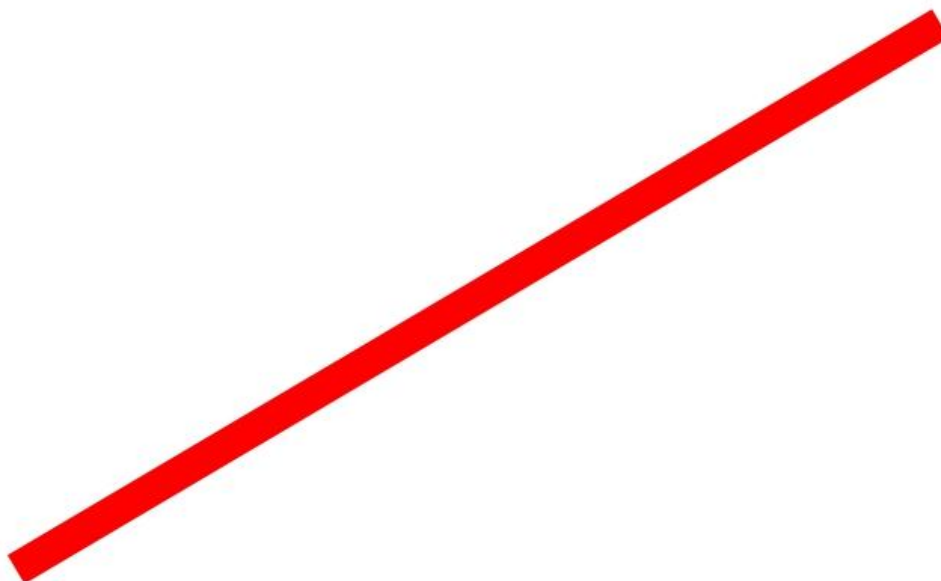
In the honor of all veterans of the free thought, and dedicated to the White Night in Skopje.
The event took place in a cosmic autumn, 2012, in Skopje.

²⁹ This is a text written by Milosh Kodjoman on the invitation of Ivana Vaseva, Filip Jovanovski and Jovanka Popova to be co-curator for the decade of the 70-ies (together with Simon Uzunovski) within the exhibition SKOPJE: Ultimate golden collection of personal memories 1960-2010, volume 1 in 2012, in Skopje during the manifestation White Night. The text was written for that occasion and it shows the personal memory of Kodjoman for that period. It seemed adequate to have that text in this context.



**Милош Коџоман
Драгољуб Бежан**

1969-1975



Initiative KOOPERACIJA



Name: Initiative Kooperacija

Date of establishment: 11.04.2012 (officially with the first show 800 REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE in the premises P1, Kosta SHakov Str., no. 6)

Year the group ceased its operations: March, 2015.

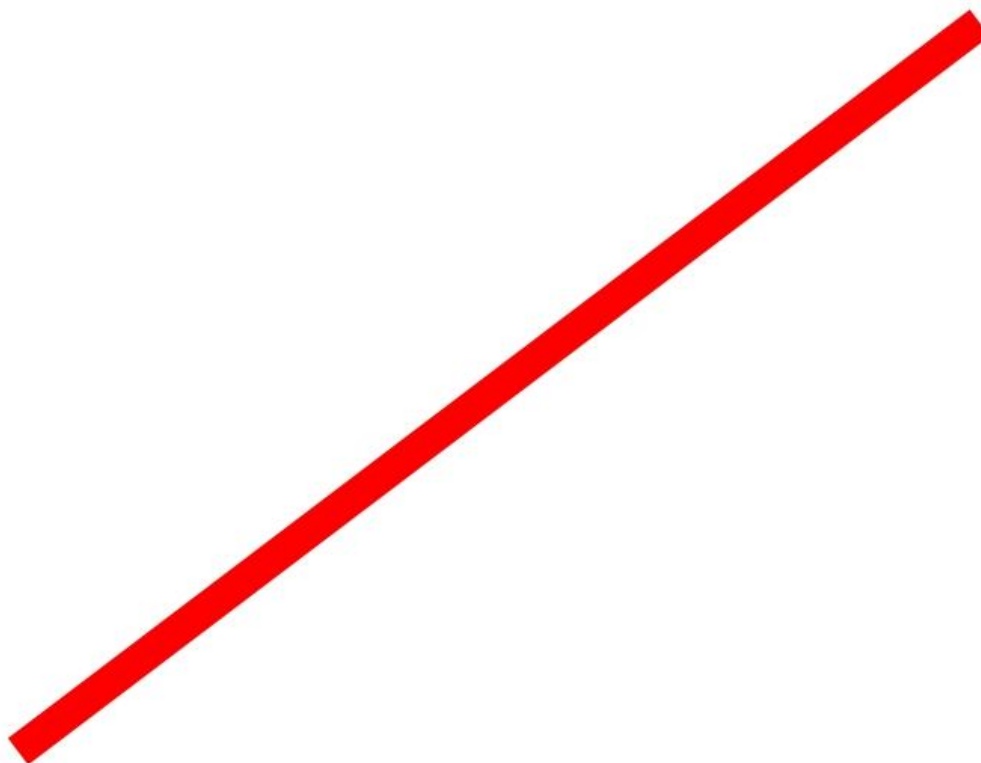
Founders/ Core team: Gjorgje Jovanovikj, OPA (Slobodanka Stevchevska and Denis Saraginovski), Nikola Uzunovski, Igor Toshevski and Filip Jovanovski. Vladimir Janchevski and Oliver Musovikj later became active part of the core team.

Members and number of exhibitions they participated in: Hristina Ivanoska (3), Ines Efremova (6), Velimir Zjernovski (3), Yane Chalovski (3), Vladimir Lukash (5), Slavica Janashlieva (1), Simon Uzunovski (5), Ljubisha Kamenjarov (1), Zoran Poposki (1), Snezjana Altiparmak (2), Dijana Bogdanovska (3), Boris Shemov (3), Harald Shenker (3), Nemanja Cvijanovikj (2), Marchelo Brajnovikj (1), Dijana Tomikj Radevska (1), Mirna Arsovska (3), Ivana Dragsic (2), Aleksandar Spasoski (4), Igor Sekovski (2), Slavica Toshevski (2), Tihomir Janchovski (1), Vladimir Nedelkovski (1), Jana Jakimovska (2), Danilo Mandikj (1), Mile Nichevski (2), Daniel Gonc (1), Sinisa Labrovic (1), Metodi Angelov (1), Uros Veljkovic (1), Fotini Gouseti (1), Marko Gutikj Mizjimakov (1), Sasho Dimoski (1), Dushan Drakalski (1), Dimitrie Duracovski (1), Ivan Ivanovski (1), Aviv Kruglanski (1), Ana Lazarevska (1), Nada Prlja (1), Vahida Ramujkic (1), Neda Firfova (1), Vitaly Komar (1), IRVIN (1), Santiago Sierra (1), Detext (Raul Martinez and Valentin Duceac) (1), Ibro Hasanovic (1), Kristina Gorovska and Jure Lavrin (1).



**ИНИЦИЈАТИВА
КООПЕРАЦИЈА**

2012-2015



Short description of actions performed:

KOOPERACIJA is an initiative whose purpose is artistic activity outside the inert institutional frameworks, thus suggesting an exceptional approach to the creation and experience of contemporary art. KOOPERACIJA stands for shifting and redefining the borders between public and personal space. Its objective is to unlock questions concerning the dynamic role of art in the context of centralized cultural politics and social discourse. KOOPERACIJA strives to encourage the interaction between the artist and audience.

KOOPERACIJA's basic strategy is the occupation of temporarily free space dispersed throughout the urban landscape and exhibiting via a chain of blitzkrieg events. The desired effect is a constructive dialogue regarding the re-questioning of the critical positions in art and producing a favorable environment for a free exchange of ideas, experience and freedom of expression.

*KOOPERACIJA is a non-profit, self financed group of artists who are open to collaborations with domestic and international artists and collectives.

3. Conclusion

This research, focused on three groups of authors that occur in three forms (group, informal group – association and initiative) tried to provide a summary of the existence of such phenomena of associations and collective actions of artists in a broader time period and thus in different social-political circumstances.

Finally, it seems that we did not follow a straight or linear trajectory of moving forward or upward, but we made a circle and went back to the initial position. We believe that we are in a period in which we should once again defend art and freedom of expression, and there are still authors that promote some kind of “classical values” that disable or make less able the progressive thought, diminish the opportunity for experiment and confirm the still existing aura of pure autonomy of art.

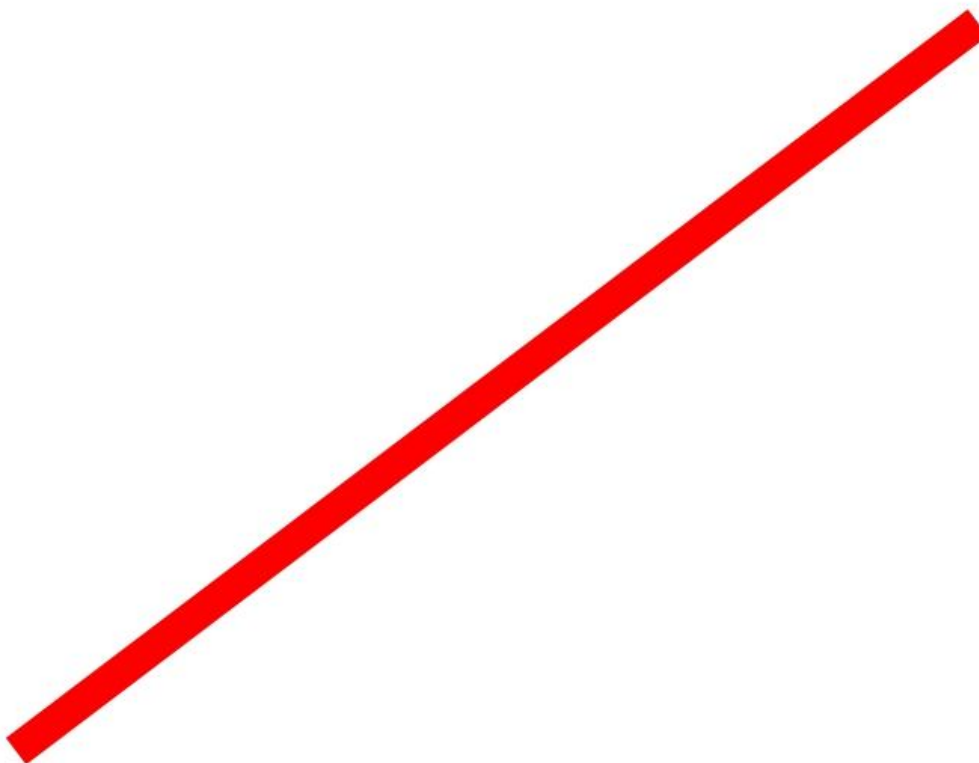
Such move, which would provide area for initiation, initiative and wish for something new, confrontation and articulation of intents is more realistic and possible if being collective and joint, if being grouped by authors that strongly believe in such move and are willing to use their artistic, social and political capacities to revive and refresh the cultural and artistic life in this country.

In 1952, Dimche Protugjer wrote that such “struggle” with works would “detect anything that is amateurishness, petty and reactionary... in the direction of creating a healthy, advanced and creative actions in all artistic fields”.³⁰

In this context, we can cite the speech of Miroslav Krležja at the Congress of writers of Yugoslavia in Ljubljana, on 5 October 1952. He said: “The contemporary socialistic aesthete has no right to deny the burning giraffe of Dali as surrealist nonsense, and promoting Picasso and Paul Eluard at the same time. This is illogical. One cannot deny the impressionism in the verse or pallet, and preach provincial, old-fashioned caricature of the Academic art, which was overpowered by symbolism and impressionism some eighty years ago, and to whom this despised *l'art pour l'art* presented superior artistic denial”.³¹

³⁰ Petkovski, Boris, „On the group „DENES (1953-1983)“, in DENES 1953 – 1983 (Skopje, Art Gallery - Skopje, 1983), 27

³¹ Gjurchinov, Milan „Builders of aesthetic pluralism” in DENES 1953 – 1983 (Skopje, Art Gallery - Skopje, 1983) 22-23



It seems like we have come along a road of 63 year and we are still discussing provincial, old-fashioned caricature of modernism and we still struggle for new values in arts, for new subjective adventures with reality and artistic intervention and realistic usurpation thereof. We live in times in which we must once again fight for the voice of the art, for its values and its political power, and to some extent the research itself has been performed to open this areas for consideration.

Generally, a question rises here regarding the power of expression that can be confined in a geographical area (although this is inadmissible when it comes to art, we are discussing here a contextual approach and thus a contextual art), or the power of our social existence as artists and cultural workers, and whether we can reach that level? What would the potential be, the willingness and determination to make a joint step forward and pave the way for the future generations and fresh artistic thoughts and actions?

Velichkovski in his book "Artistic Groups in Macedonia" says that the development of the Macedonian art to some extent has always lagged behind the leading cultural centers. There are no reactions to significant ideas and events happening in the world, and certain belated and art styles and actions are chosen and accepted. "The examples of direct analysis and dialogue with world accomplishments are rare, but the superficial adoption and remakes of certain examples of art are promoted. In Macedonian art, appropriately to the mentality and historical circumstances, the "moderate" is mainly selected, and not some radical position. Thus, one can rarely find an examples of solid figurative art in the Macedonian art, but on the other hand there are always traces of figurative reality of a kind of "mixed style".³²

Zoran Petrovski in his interview for this research said that when it came to groups in our country the main problem was the anarchism, in other words, when a group of individuals became a group they are faced the same problem we have in Macedonia, we are not inclined to collective actions, problems occur regarding what was to be done by whom and how, and this was why we lacked program actions and such communities.

Choosing the "moderate", the insufficient and untimely information from world developments in the field of art and relying on speculations with particular interpretation of the facts and developments is something that occurred as general atmosphere which served as basis for this research on the decisions to form such groups. Nevertheless, every group has left a mark on our surrounding, if not on broader environment, and has contributed to the developments of the artistic scene.

We have already mentioned the actions of these groups in separate texts that were produced on the bases of their concepts of agenda and action programs, the opinions of individuals in a form of interviews and questionnaires as well as of what is written in texts and publications. This part is dedicated solely to the general conclusion of this research.³³

All three groups were composed of young, decisive people that studied or worked together. This is a characteristic of the informal group of Kodjoman and Bezjan, whose members were connected not only through the studies, but at friendship level as well, and thus on the level of artistic influence, whereas Denes and Kooperacija are composed of different generations (heterogeneous composition) that showed interest for such activities. Most probably, this was the reason for the rapid disintegration of Denes and Kooperacija, the former after two years of existence, and the latter after three years of its existence, with no special pompous events and marking.

The introduction traces the line of the research which developed unexpectedly and gave completely other logic to the selection of the groups included in the research. Dimche Protugjer was Milosh

³² Velichkovski, Vladimir, Art groups in Macedonia (Skopje, Museum of Contemporary Arts, 2003) 17

³³ The texts for individual actions of these groups will be published additionally, at another occasion.

Kodzoman's professor at the School of applied arts "Lazar Lichenoski" in Skopje, department for decorative painting. Kodjoman on the other hand influenced Aleksandar Stankoski with whom he occasionally had encounters, including the hippie group. Stankoski was part of the art group Zero whose member was Igor Toshevski, and Toshevski himself formed the initiative Kooperacija together with few of his colleagues.

But, did they realize their intents and artistic ideas? Did they realize the political dimension of community?

If we consider a broader context which is not restricted only to the world of art, but is a part of a conglomerate of relations and social structures on a societal level, we could not refer to some tectonic movements made by these groups, although the artistic need of self-assertion of the members themselves can serve as proof of something else. Nevertheless, the establishment of these groups is a demonstration of an uninspirational social moment, and it seems that such groups occurred in the right moment.

The group Denes significantly supported the modern thought in Macedonia by opening new contemporary artistic aspirations, paved the way for the new generations to freely express themselves, opened the opportunities to discuss through polemics (although not always properly articulated) and some of them were even members to the group Mugri. But the sole establishment of the group, inspired by the recommendation at the Congress (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), and the will of the DLUM will create an artificial atmosphere that cannot keep the continuity of their actions, and thus significant changes of the artistic and social climate. They had broad and large plans and tasks that could not be created in a developing society without a solid and strong continuity.

Kodzoman and Bezjan, as well as the group of authors gravitating around them, have no vision for artistic movement, and hence they have not become a group. Through their youth rebellion expressed via the gatherings along Pchinja, and the art actions, they were the first to make performance, events and happenings in Macedonia, but unfortunately they did not find many followers to develop this field of art. They penetrated in strictly institutionalized system, but a decade later, and in general they did not change the firm indicator of the institutions (MOCA leading the way) that show the path of the art in Macedonia. However, they emphasize that young people can act more freely, and they show this most probably because of the loosened control of the socialistic order, and through their parents' support.

Kooperacija was the loudest in its display of intellectual willingness to explain its positions, introduce social and political themes in its works and establish critical ideas, however it did not use its power as collective action to create new relations internally (as art community) and externally (societal community) in order to interrogate the positions of power as basis for political actions. Hence, one can ponder whether, how and to what extent can the artist leave his/her safety zone of art and create a gap for new ideas for engaged artistic actions?

On one hand, these artists had the intention to create autonomous, independent initiative that would produce alternative means and methods for actions and work with audience directly and in an innovative way, but all we have seen and got from this research shows that the sole artillery of artists are social themes and selection of space, and not creation of economic, production and artistic system that would significantly differ from the institutionalized system, or criticize and improve it. They strive to be radically "autochthonous" and "autonomous" and work exclusively with their own (personal) means, completely rejecting the idea to become non-profit organization and show no positive mood of becoming part of JADRO – Association of independent cultural scene (as one of the possible formal organization that present the independent cultural scene) in the country, which seems to be completely self-isolating move. On the other hand, the members independently had exhibitions in institutions while the initiative was alive. The research clearly showed that in Kooperacija the reproduction of exhibited models of official institutions was practiced in premises that differ from galleries and thus the group has reduced its power of political action. It did not use its own resource which is different from the

institutional one (here implying that “no time”, “no means”, “no premises” is a resource) and thus it did not rise on a level higher than the official institutional models.

On a common level, these groups showed the following:

1. The long-term continuity or the projection of something like that is disaster that threatens every community, and in this case all three groups had the potential to lead to a grave development of the art in the country. However, no one resisted the opportunities, his/her own artistic egocentric assertion which in this case should be deliberated at a higher level as a joint assertion and on behalf of the collective, and most probably none of the groups had projected mechanisms and strategy which leads to the path of no political readiness and will.
2. It seems that all of the groups have expressed their practice via or through the prism of the institutions of culture and art – Denes was established by DLUM (Society of Artists of Macedonia) and had exhibitions within DLUM and presented themselves in the art institutions, Kodjoman and Bezjan were completely marginalized and were not even considered by the institutions up until a later period while Kooperacija created its own temporary premises as a sign of rebellion against non-functional institutions. Finally, none of the group “intimidated” the walls of these creations, and this still produces level of confidence in the (non – functioning) institutions, as inviolable critics that affirm or deny someone’s actions.
3. It seems like all the groups disagreed in terms of the wishes – the quest for contemporary artistic expression sometimes resulted in conservative approach in creativity. It was mentioned for all three groups that while being part of a community they rarely produced provocative works for analysis, but the atmosphere created by the event/exhibition itself was more important. The works and the concepts vary in terms of quality while the group was functional, whereas the contemporary character was more prominent in the members’ individual careers.
4. It is important that the three groups caused avalanche of reactions since the very beginning of their existence, reactions initially by the art historians and by the audience as well who welcomed their creation. The social atmosphere is the most important product of all these collective actions – they created temporary premises for socializing, not only between themselves, but with the public as well, and this created an atmosphere of social community which shared a moment that was not always in the direction of “raising the art agency”. It was more of a socializing moment that never grew into a solid tissue that would create a political feature.
5. The western orientation is something that occurred as a requirement for contemporary features, but some of the authors in the groups did not manage to use it in order to define their artistic language. They were provoked by the formalism, stereotypes and conventions that existed on this scene, but had no clear idea how to fight it.

Therefore, we cannot discuss a kind of collective act in the art with clear vision, mission and engagement that would provoke a change, but collective exhibitions.

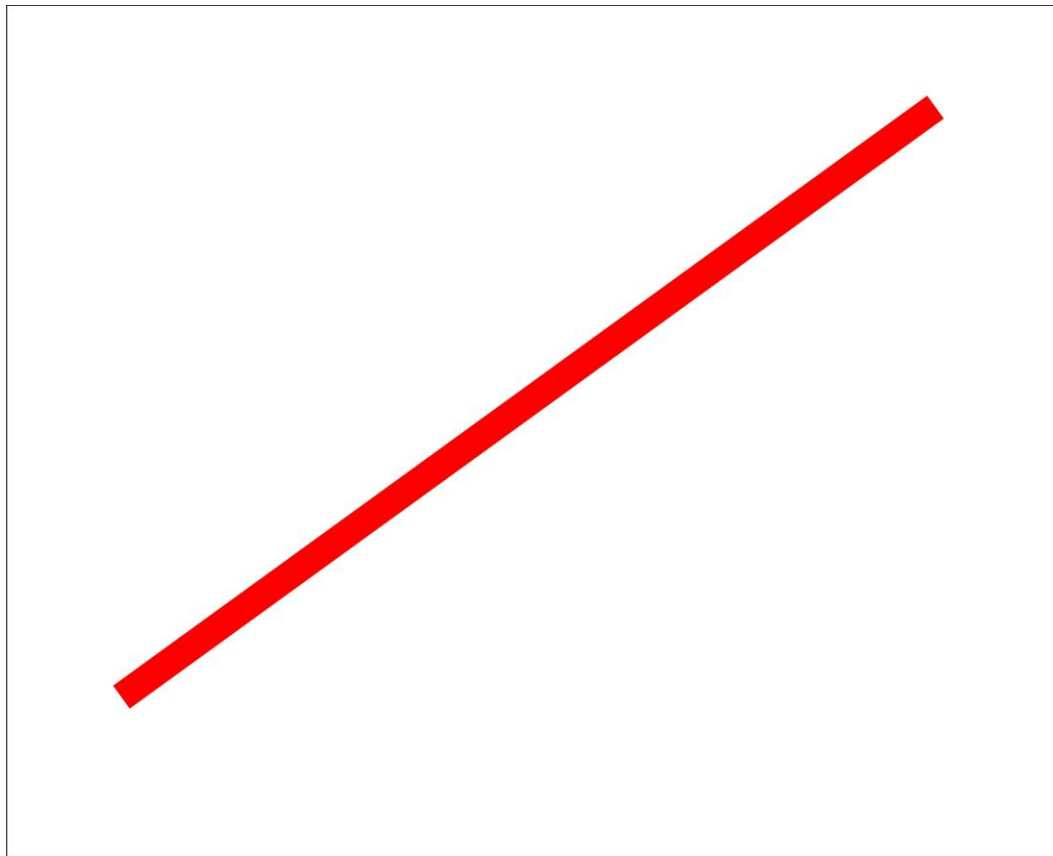
In the end of this research, one can ask whether the rapid disintegration of these groups, that is their inability to survive for longer period of time, has significantly contributed to the development of the art in the country. On the other hand, whether the future generation would even know about the existence of such groups since we live in a society with “short-memory”?

Finally, we can quote Milan Gjurchinov who wrote about the group Denes saying “the ephemeral nature of the art groups is a rule of creativity that does not reduce the need and significance of timely occurrence thereof”.³⁴

³⁴ Gjurchinov, Milan „Builders of Aesthetic Pluralism” in DENES 1953 – 1983 (Skopje, Art Gallery - Skopje, 1983), 23

It seems that the most important is to remind ourselves to the opinion of one of the “creators” of the group Denes: “It seems like today the need of struggle of opinions, and hence the need of establishing a group with conceptual and aesthetic program, has been surpassed. The occurrence of combative groups corresponds with time of changes. Such institutions contribute for such changes to be broader and lasting, mainly till the realization of a program. Opposite to this, there are art groups with no clear platform and they are prepared to officially exist even by having only two members. But such groups are basically ephemeral groups and have no capacity to bring any novelty.

However, today we are not discussing such formal groups. We are referring to the existence of formal groups, which are only clans and want to manipulate, and they do that, with the people that are not their members, clans with a single objective to dictate the rules on the market. We are facing moral crisis which would be difficult to get out off. We are in a nightmare created by villains capable to use threats even in spiritual fields when it comes to their own interests. This, according to me, the biggest social evil, when it comes to freedom in creation and democracy within the rights of creators, becomes imperative not for the fight of groups on conceptual and aesthetic level, but the fight of all artists who are not infected by the clan harnesses, all in direction of professional consolidation, because the elementary existential and human norms have been endangered. This situation seeks for urgent intervention of the entire society, especially of the subjective forces within”.³⁵



³⁵ Vladimir Velichkovski, Art groups in Macedonia, Museum of contemporary art, Skopje, 2003, p. 38 – 39