DURING THE COLD WAR THE EXCHANGE OF ARTISTIC IDEAS AND PRODUCTS UNITED EUROPE’S AVANT-GARDE IN A MOST REMARKABLE WAY. DESPITE THE IRON CURTAIN AND NATIONAL AND POLITICAL BORDERS THERE EXISTED A CONSTANT FLOW OF ARTISTS, ARTWORKS, ARTISTIC IDEAS AND PRACTICES. THE GEOGRAPHIC BORDERS OF THESE EXCHANGES HAVE YET TO BE CLEARLY DEFINED. HOW WERE NETWORKS, CENTERS, PERIPHERIES (LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL), SCALES, AND DISTANCES CONSTRUCTED? HOW DID (NEO) AVANT-GARDE TENDENCIES RELATE WITH OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED SOCIALIST REALISM?


W ith 36 contributions by scholars from 14 countries, the present volume gathers an unusually high number of texts as a result of a collaborative process over several years. Most of them are case studies of a single artist, an image, an exhibition, or an encounter. The project was conceived as a kaleidoscopic research undertaking with the purpose of accounting for the heterogeneity of the historical material and to reflect the diversity of the academic community writing on art history across present-day Europe. The volume highlights the fluctuation of exchanges in the visual arts during the Cold War period, thanks to its deep contextualized analysis, paying particular attention to the discrepancy between the production and the reception of art. It offers a reflection on the historical sources available, the issue of languages, and the various geographical levels. It innovates a geographical narrative of shifting realities and expanding borders and abandons any kind of archetypal map. Academic publications on both the capitalist and communist side have shown the relevance of distinct universalizing ideologies. As a consequence, a large part of the art involved in exchanges that actually occurred has become mutually invisible. The authors scrutinized all tendencies of the art scene, without isolating the avant-garde from socialist realism, but tracking their coexistence at the heart of communist movements.

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