

NEWS

WALKER ART CENTER TO PRESENT LARGEST SURVEY OF EXPERIMENTAL ART FROM ACROSS THE EASTERN BLOC IN UNITED STATES

Multiple Realities: Experimental Art in the Eastern Bloc, 1960s–1980s
Features Nearly 100 Artists and Many Works Never-Seen-Before in the U.S.

On View November 11, 2023–March 10, 2024

MINNEAPOLIS, November 1, 2023—On November 11, the Walker Art Center will celebrate the opening of [Multiple Realities](#), the largest survey of Central-Eastern European art to be presented in the United States. Through more than 250 works by nearly 100 artists, the exhibition explores the range of experimental visual art, performance, music, and material culture that emerged across East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, from the 1960s through the 1980s. Despite their geographical proximity, artists working at this time encountered different conditions and varying degrees of control from state authorities. *Multiple Realities* sheds light on these contexts and the many ways that artists refused and subverted these official systems, often creating new modes of expression and leveraging the power of wit, humor, and irony. *Multiple Realities: Experimental Art in the Eastern Bloc, 1960s–1980s* will remain on view at the Walker through March 10, 2024, before traveling to the Phoenix Art Museum and Vancouver Art Gallery. It is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue that foregrounds perspectives about the period's relevance and meaning through the lens of today.

To mark the opening, the Walker will host a [conversation between exhibition curator Pavel Pyš, Polish performance artist Ania Nowak, and Slovenian filmmaker Jasmina Cibic](#) that offers new perspective on the importance of past narratives to contemporary happenings. The discussion will be followed by impromptu performances in the galleries and public spaces of the Walker by artists Ľubomír Ďurček, Roman Ondak, and Mladen Stilić that amplify public engagement with the works on view. Beyond the opening, on every Thursday starting on December 7, the Walker will revive artist [Július Koller's Ping-Pong Club](#). As featured in *Multiple Realities*, Koller used ping-pong to activate a paralyzed public desensitized to the violence and corruption happening around them. In part an art installation and a sport, the J.K. Ping-Pong Club invites visitors to pick up a paddle and play, with special guests to be announced as featured competitors. Other events through the duration of exhibition include artist and curator talks and walkthroughs, including with [artist Paulina Olowska on December 14](#). Additionally, on February 1, the Walker will host the [Festival of Snow](#), inviting artists and the public to create interpretations of iconic artworks on the museum's front lawn. The event is inspired by artist Alex Mlynárčik's 1970 project, *First Snow Festival*, which explored the

possibilities of play and impermanent materials in artmaking. The event is co-presented with the Great Northern Festival and will also include traditional snow-related activities such as sledding.

Multiple Realities is the result of five years of extensive research and network-building to uncover works and documentation that have for many years been largely inaccessible. The effort has resulted in the inclusion of an incredible spectrum of art—much of which has never been seen in the United States. While the exhibition includes select canonical figures from the region such as Geta Brătescu, Sanja Iveković, and Alina Szapocznikow, it emphasizes lesser-known practitioners, especially women artists, artist collectives, and those creating work through an LGBTQIA+ lens. For more than a third of the artists, *Multiple Realities* also marks the first time that their work will be presented in North America.

“*Multiple Realities*, and its accompanying catalogue, explores a rich and layered history, and offers audiences a sense of how nuanced, adventurous, ironic, and absurd art can be, especially in the face of hegemonic structures of authority and control,” said Pyś. “At the same time, though the exhibition is rooted in the recent past, it unquestionably resonates today, examining the relationships between art and politics, the roles of institutions in our lives, and the significance of artists to spurring critical conversations and revealing the dynamics of power. The exhibition considers these essential concerns through a story of art that flourished through the support of community, friendship, and self-organization—a story that I am excited to share and to bring to greater visibility.”

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND HIGHLIGHTS

The exhibition unfolds in four thematic chapters that emphasize interconnectedness across the “Bloc”. This allows for a more complex range of juxtapositions and dialogues across artists and media that reflect both shared artistic approaches as well as highly specific conceptual and formal evocations that respond to localized experiences. The first chapter explores issues of control and surveillance, with works that capture the ways that artists responded to daily life in public spaces marked by protest, confrontation, and displays of national loyalty as well as to the extension of policing into personal environments like the home. Among the highlight installations is **Gyula Konkoly’s *Bleeding Monument*** (1969/2023), which will be recreated especially for *Multiple Realities*, marking the first time it will be shown in the U.S. The sculpture offers a pointed critique and meditation on the thaw that followed the 1956 Hungarian Revolution of the decade prior, while also acknowledging the aggression of the Soviet invasion of the 1968 Prague Spring. An iconic work by the Hungarian artist, it suggests a bleeding torso and constitutes a rare example of a work that immediately registers as a commentary on the political situation of the time.

The second chapter focuses on the notion of embodiment as artists considered representations and expressions of the self in the media and ideological propaganda. It includes artists who were questioning sexual identities and testing, through explorations of ritual, endurance, and duress, the limits of the body. This section features a rich selection of works by women artists, in particular those who were challenging patriarchal norms and socialist family models. An immersive installation captures the work of lesser-known women artists deserving of significantly greater recognition, such as **Vera Fischer, Teresa Gierzyńska, Eva Kmentová, Teresa Murak, Ana Lupaş, Cornelia Schleime, Gabriele Stötzer, and Teresa Tyszkiewicz**, among others. Their works examine and reflect distinct perspectives on sexuality, eroticism, and joy.

The third chapter highlights the work of artist collectives and subcultural groups who were exploring alternative forms of collectivity and galvanizing networks of exchange, both within and beyond the Bloc. The chapter includes **Lutz Dammbeck's *Revisiting of Herakles*** (1982), an installation that draws from the artist's interdisciplinary "media collages" in which he layered painting, objects, sound, moving images, and performance to create highly atmospheric installations that blurred the boundaries of mythic and historical events to explore and create new meanings. Finally, the exhibition revisits artists' imagined futures embodied by the Space Race, the advancement of nuclear energy, and new forms of communications and technologies. A selection of the featured works highlights the way that artists considered the possibilities of the "cosmos" as a pathway for escape, transcending the experiences and challenges of everyday life. **Stano Filko's *Poetry on Space - Cosmos*** (1967-1970 (reconstructed 2008)) offers a specially constructed environment for visitors to move through that combines the attributes of a disco dance floor, labyrinth, and spaceship, capturing a hopeful vision of a future communal space as well as the uneasy desire for a means of flight.

Multiple Realities also includes four interpretative rooms that feature additional explanatory texts, timelines, newsreels, and photographic documentations about artworks, presentations and performances, as well as the social and political happenings that shaped artistic production across the Bloc over these three decades. These galleries, with a bespoke exhibition design created especially for the exhibition by Walker designer Brian Huddleston, provide a critical anchoring, helping to familiarize viewers with key historical events, complex political dynamics and ideologies, and critical and, at times, conflicting terminologies.

CURATION AND CATALOGUE

The exhibition is curated by Pavel S. Pyś, Curator of Visual Arts and Collections Strategy, Walker Art Center; with William Hernández Luege, curatorial associate, Painting and Sculpture, San Francisco Museum of Modern art, and former curatorial assistant, Visual Arts, Walker Art Center; and with Laurel Rand-Lewis, curatorial fellow, Visual Arts, Walker Art Center

Curatorial Consultants for the exhibition include Daniel Muzyczuk, head of contemporary art, Muzeum Sztuki Łódź, Poland; Dušan Barok, editor, Monoskop.org; Joanna Kordjak, curator, Zachęta National Gallery, Warsaw; Michał Grzegorzek, independent curator, Warsaw; and Ksenia Nouril, gallery director, The Arts Students League, New York; and Suzana Vuljevic, historian, writer, and translator, Detroit.

Multiple Realities is also accompanied by catalogue, designed by Mark Owens and Ziga Testen, and produced by the Walker. The publication will include newly commissioned essays, an edited transcript of a roundtable discussion, and thematic timelines, with contributions by Ivana Bago (art historian, Zagreb, Croatia), Dušan Barok (editor, Monoskop.org), Michał Grzegorzek (independent curator, Warsaw), Daniel Muzyczuk (head of contemporary art, Muzeum Sztuki Łódź, Poland), Pavel S. Pyś (exhibition curator, Walker Art Center), Kathleen Reinhardt (director, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin), Natalia Sielewicz (curator, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw), and artists Anna Daučíková, Libuše Jarcovjáčková, Alexandra Pirici, and Karol Radziszewski.

EXHIBITION TOUR

Walker Art Center

November 11, 2023–March 10, 2024

Phoenix Art Museum

April 17, 2024–September 29, 2024

Vancouver Art Gallery

November 2, 2024–March 23, 2025

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER

The Walker Art Center is a renowned multidisciplinary arts institution that presents, collects, and supports the creation of groundbreaking work across the visual and performing arts, moving image, and design. Guided by the belief that art has the power to bring joy and solace and the ability to unite people through dialogue and shared experiences, the Walker engages communities through a dynamic array of exhibitions, performances, events, and initiatives. Its multiacre campus includes 65,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, the state-of-the-art McGuire Theater and Walker Cinema, and ample green space that connects with the adjoining Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The Garden, a partnership with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, is one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States and home to the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Recognized for its ambitious program and growing collection of more than 15,500 works, the Walker embraces emerging art forms and amplifies the work of artists from the Twin Cities and from across the country and the globe. Its broad spectrum of offerings makes it a lively and welcoming hub for artistic expression, creative innovation, and community connection.

Visit walkerart.org for more information about upcoming presentations, programs, and opportunities to experience the art of our time.

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For more information, please contact:

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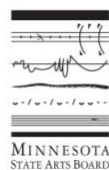
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