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Artpool Art Research Center

A GHOST OF YOUR MASTERPIECE. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PAWEŁ PETASZ AND GYÖRGY GALÁNTAI (1978–2007)

“Paweł Petasz, an artist, teacher and social activist, died on 11 April 2019 at the age of 67,”¹ posted the bereaving EL Gallery, having operated in Elbląg, Poland, for almost sixty years with shorter and longer interruptions, on its social media page. From 1975 to 1977 Petasz was the second director of the progressive gallery, managed by the local government.²

As can be read on the invitation from 1975 on the homepage of the municipal library of Elbląg, Petasz mainly focused on painting and organised a solo exhibition in the ‘art lab’ of EL. It was under his directorship that the gallery learned about the Mail Art network. The vibrant international Mail Art network was such a refreshing discovery for him that by 1977, the year when the crumbling gallery was temporarily closed, he had become not only an enthusiastic participant of the movement infused with democratic thought but also its outstanding organiser and active correspondent.

“I learned about mail art accidentally in 1975. It was very exciting to suddenly have a chance to participate in a world in which the Iron Curtain didn’t exist.”³

Petasz mounted the first large-scale international Mail Art exhibition in the Eastern Bloc. He displayed the material of the show titled *In the Circle '77* with 172 participants in the cultural centre Pegazus, also in Elbląg. As a comparison, Chuck Stake’s big Mail Art exhibition held in Canada in the same year had 138 participants, while Maurizio Nannucci’s show in Florence had 100. It was only the Mail Art exhibition organised by Joseph W. Huber from West Germany on the theme of environmental protection that came close to the scale of Petasz’s exhibition with its 170 participants.⁴

The list of participants at *In the Circle '77* includes the most important Mail Art artists of the time, some of whose works – including Jerry Dreva, Buster Cleveland, Guglielmo Achille Cavellini, Michele Perfetti, Musicmaster, Horst Tress – Petasz reproduced in the catalogue *Antivalues* No. 1. John Held Jr. even used the poster of this exhibition on the cover of his pioneering catalogue *International Artist Cooperation: Mail Art Shows, 1970-1985* as his tribute to the large-scale Eastern-European show.



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Petasz helped several of his Polish contemporaries to join the international art scene. As Jaroslaw Mulczynski stated, he introduced the director of The Drawing Gallery in Poznan, Andrzej Wielgosz, into the Mail Art network, which gave him a boost in finding his own voice.⁵

As Petasz said: “The number of [Polish] mail artists were always small, fewer than twenty,”⁶ but despite this they played an important role: “The mail art network was useful, however, as one of many information holes punched through the Iron Curtain. Mail Art itself probably had little effect in breaking down Communist oppression. In a larger sense, however, Mail Art helped to free Polish artists from a feeling of rejection by others on the world.”⁷

Petasz posed the ailing question in one of his contemporary rubber stamp prints sent to György Galántai: *“If art is crown of intellect: is it crown of thorns, or the golden one?”*

It was through the Mail Art network that Petasz became acquainted with Galántai, who had started to run a community venue a few years before Petasz did. Galántai established an institution for alternative art in an abandoned chapel, receiving no support from the local government but funding it himself entirely: between 1970 and 1973 he organised his Chapel Studio in Balatonboglár, which can be regarded as the direct antecedent to the establishment of the Artpool Art Research Center in Budapest in 1979, which operates to this day and preserves among others works and letters by Petasz.

Galántai wanted to establish an art venue open to various media but not dominated by any interest group, nor under economic or political pressures. His best intentions were to create a rather fresh and valid presentation of the actual developments in the art world both in Hungary and internationally. Even then he was keen to develop liberated artistic communication in a collaborative atmosphere independent of the politically defined world.

The Chapel Studio, which today we would call an artist-run space, welcomed artists who didn’t want to always act according to the conditions imposed on cultural life by the state. Everything new and progressive in art was thriving

1. Works by Jean Michel Jauks, Musicmaster, Jerry Dreva, Horst Tress.
Antivalues, no. 1, ed. Pawel Petasz (Elblag, Poland: Arrière-Garde, 1977).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

2. Works by the participants.
Antivalues, no. 1, ed. Pawel Petasz (Elblag, Poland: Arrière-Garde, 1977).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

3. Cover with work by Pawel Petasz.
John Held, Jr., *International Artist Cooperation: Mail Art Shows, 1970-1985* (Dallas, Texas, USA: Dallas Public Library, 1986).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

4. Envelope with rubber stamp prints sent by Pawel Petasz to György Galántai.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

in this space during the four years of its existence (e.g. conceptual art, Mail Art, visual poetry, kinetic art, land art, actions, happenings) and the place quickly became a melting pot of critical ideas. Many Hungarian progressive artists⁸ participated in the exhibitions, happenings, events, concerts, theatre performances, and shows of experimental films, sound poetry readings, etc. organized by Galántai and his colleagues like the *Mirror*⁹ exhibition or the *Szövegek / Texts*,¹⁰ which was the very first visual and experimental poetry exhibition in Hungary and one of the last events at the Chapel Studio, which was closed down by force in 1973.

In the years after the closure Galántai's activities were made impossible: he was denied work and his acquaintances were afraid to be seen in his company. Moreover, he was forced into such a level of deprivation that his teeth fell out because of malnourishment. He managed to break out of this isolation by focusing on pursuing his creative efforts. At his solo exhibitions in 1975 and 1976 he displayed works reflecting upon his own situation as an artist and a member of society.

Mail Art emerged in 1975 in Petasz's life as a new channel of communication as well as a form of activity and a new artistic medium, while, thanks to the collaboration with Júlia Klaniczay, from 1978 Galántai became its active participant and even organiser. They founded Artpool in 1979. Galántai organized international projects, and its first Mail Art exhibition (*Sent Art*, APS no. 4) presented works by 300 artists from 24 countries (Young Artists' Club, Budapest, 1980); this was followed by almost a dozen other projects in the decade to come.

Galántai posted the programmes of the Balatonboglár Chapel Exhibition to the international mailing list he had received from Endre Tót, but first used the network as a real mail artist in 1979. Besides organising Artpool projects, he regularly participated in exhibitions organised by others. There were periods when he was part of an exhibition every day.

Galántai strove to make the Mail Art network accessible for his Hungarian contemporaries and tried to help them join the vibrant international network; as part of this ambition he published the newsletter *Pool Window* between 1980 and 1982, in which he shared news and information about Mail Art projects too. In addition to the world's numerous progressive artists, Galántai met Petasz in the Mail Art network.

Petasz "was joined by other Polish and Eastern European artists in his desire to communicate with the outside world, but his patient devotion to the Mail Art network and unique creativity made him a seminal figure in Eastern European alternative artistic circles. When the Staatliches Museum Schwerin published a catalog of their 1996 exhibition, *Eastern European Mail Art in the International Network*, they placed Petasz on the cover."¹¹ The photograph on the poster for the exhibition in Schwerin is a document from the *Intellectual Benefits of Art* Mail Art project announced in 1980. Petasz called on artists to submit textile works with dimensions of 16x23.5 cm and used these to sew a piece of clothing for himself. He took this project from Elbląg to Amsterdam upon the invitation of the Stempelplaats Gallery;¹² it was here that the photograph printed on the cover of the catalogue for the afore-mentioned exhibition on the Eastern European Mail Art network in 1996, was taken of him.

Several Hungarian names can be found among the 84 participants of the 1980 project, including that of Galántai, who issued the first ever assembling publication in Hungary with the title *Textile without Textile*.¹³

It sometimes happened that Galántai spotted self-adhesive Cavellini stickers on the briefcases of officials working at the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior; these stickers printed with the Hungarian national tricolour had probably been confiscated from his mail and were regarded as a curiosity in Hungary at the time. These officials thus involuntarily turned themselves into advertisers of these stickers, promoting the works of the Italian mail artists. Among other things, the censorship of the Polish postal services 'contributed' to the special letters characteristic of Petasz, which were sealed by sewing. "No work was more anticipated in one's mailbox during this period than that of the artist Paweł Petasz from Elbląg, Poland. In order to confound the censors in his country, he would sew his



1. Cover of *Mail Art: Osteuropa im Internationalen Netzwerk*, ed. Kornelia von Berswordt-Wallrabe (Schwerin: Staatliches Museum, 1996).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



2. Paweł Petasz standing in the show organized by him: *The Intellectual Benefits of Art*, in: "Six Mail Art Projects," *Rubber*, Vol. 3, Nos. 7-9, ed. Aart Van Barnevelt (Amsterdam: Stempelplaats, 1980).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Paweł Petasz's envelope to György Galántai.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

envelopes shut. As a result, it became immediately apparent if his letters were tampered with. To receive a letter from Paweł Petasz, no matter what the content, was an event. There was a sense of direct involvement in an international conspiracy of goodwill in opposition to the old international order fostering division among a global brotherhood.”¹⁴

Similarly to many other Eastern European artists at the time, Petasz also became so familiar with the censors' way of thinking that it was child's play for him to know what he could post. This is how Ginny Lloyd, an American mail artist who visited him in 1981, described this: “Censorship was delaying the mails. When I prepared several pieces of mail art to send from Poland, he easily edited out the ones that would be censored.”¹⁵

The obvious postal sabotage activities and the military dictatorship introduced in Poland in 1981 put paid to postal correspondence but despite this a significant material from the Polish artist originating from the correspondence between him and Galántai accumulated in the archives of the Artpool Art Research Center, which have been augmented with materials posted by other mail artists since the 1990s, such as Zoltán Bakos, András Lengyel, Tamás Molnár, Bálint Szombathy from Hungary, Peter Küstermann from Germany and Mario Lara from the USA. Drawing on this rich material, I will attempt to form an initial picture of Paweł Petasz's oeuvre, integrating sources by art writers who are well-versed in his works.

My study contains a description of Petasz's *Ghost of Your Masterpiece* project (thus far not done by others to my knowledge), a concise summary of the history of *Commonpress*, the Mail Art magazine launched by Petasz, a list of his works included in Artpool's international projects, and several separate supplements as follows:

- a bibliography (Paweł Petasz and *Commonpress*),
- a list of artist's publications by Paweł Petasz in the Artpool's archives,
- a list of published *Commonpress* issues,
- a lists of *Commonpress* issues published by its participants,
- a presentation of the exhibition *Hungary Can Be Yours* (*Commonpress* 51) based on the reports in the secret service dossier “The Painter” kept on György Galántai.

A Ghost of Your Masterpiece

In 1982 copy artists¹⁶ in the USA were able to use colour (!) photocopiers and organise the first large-scale copy art exhibitions.¹⁷ Moreover, Ginny Lloyd, who had been photocopying art for one and a half decades, created the first copy art archives.¹⁸

“The relative ease with which North American correspondence artists could access affordable printing technologies within a climate that tolerated their publications was not enjoyed by all members of the international community.”¹⁹ In Eastern Europe copy art did not have the chance to become a popular trend: artists in this part of the world had to use all their resourcefulness and take risks just to be able to work with the black-and-white photocopiers in government offices. Government employees who made black-and-white photocopies for György Galántai and other samizdat artists illegally risked losing their job if it was found out that they had helped unauthorised people to have access to photocopying.

Like so many others around him, Petasz was unable to have access to a photocopier,²⁰ a device so readily available to those in the West; therefore, in the late 1970s he resorted to photo-reproduction, which was regarded a traditional technique available at the time. Using photographic enlargement, he made reproduced prints on docu-paper, which he stapled together into booklets; the first edition of his *Commonpress* magazine in 1977 was made using this technique, for example.



E78. *Antecedents*, poster-catalog by György Galántai, 1978.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Two years later, in 1979, he made his series titled *Ghost of Your Masterpiece*, some of its pieces integrally fitting in with his correspondence with the members of the Mail Art network, since he reproduced projects he had received from them and posted back to them as copy art works bearing his signature style. One of these works was the modified version of the poster-publication *Antecedents* (1978) documenting Galántai's book objects.

Galántai received a great number of projects, catalogues, Mail Art works and art publications as a reply to his poster and the line stamped on it "Please send me information about your activity," which he had sent to more than one thousand foreign artists and networkers. The foundation of Artpool in 1979 and the *active archives* activity is has been pursuing ever since were to a great extent motivated by the founders' desire to make this material and share the information it contains accessible to the public. International correspondence and the exchange of information between artists signified no less than intellectual/spiritual survival for those living in the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

In her study on the relationship between Galántai and Ray Johnson, the leading figure of Mail Art in the USA, Kornelia Röder emphasised "the importance of alternative publications. They are crucial for the network of Mail Art. The network served not only as a space for communication and exchange, but also as a possibility to edit books, magazines and new forms of publications like assemblings. For East European artists the opportunity to publish within the network was very attractive because they were able to print material beyond the state control and the alternative art scene had thus found a medium to present their artworks internationally."²¹

Petasz himself sent back a notebook with a dark tone as a reply to Galántai's *Antecedents*, mailed in 1978. This unique piece numbered 26/79 formed part of his correspondence art book object

series titled *Ghost of Your Masterpiece*. It was a paraphrase of Galántai's *Antecedents* catalogue: a copy art work made of its inverted photographically enlarged reproductions.

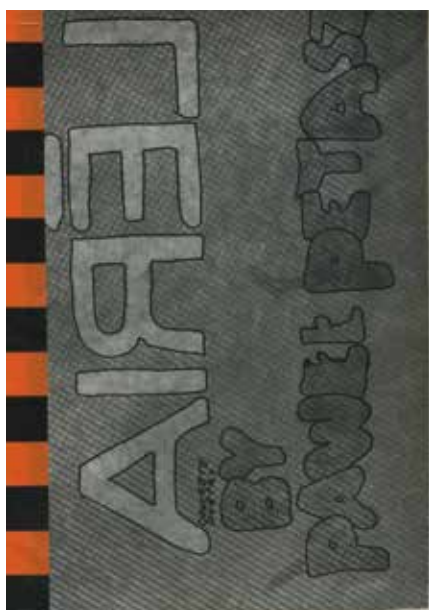
Little is known about Petasz's above-mentioned series, but it seems certain that in 1978 and in 1979 he posted reply-works – each unique and addressed personally – to his contacts by manipulating the works he had received from them. Based on the online databases, it transpired that the piece numbered 40/79 in his correspondence art series can be found in the Atelier Bonanova archives in Madrid²² (the description says that it is a booklet made using the reproductions of the postcard sent by the Atelier Bonanova), while the one numbered 55/79 (a 20-page bookwork), once posted to Russell Butler to the USA, is now preserved in the British Library²³. As shown by the descriptions of these works, both of them are reply-works that were made by creating a “ghost” copy of the original.

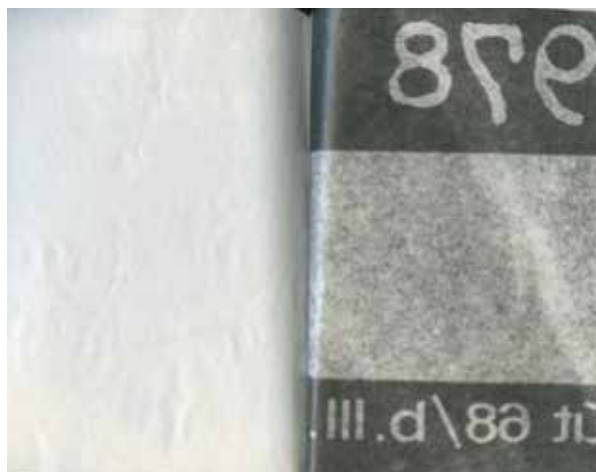
Only the serial number revealed to the addressees that the reply they received was part of a series, which they never had the chance to see in one. It is rather extraordinary that several of Petasz's works belonging to this series entered Artpool's collection. By adding these to the above-discussed bits found on the Internet we can start to understand Petasz's work method.

In addition to the work sent to Galántai, the Artpool archives preserves a postcard sent to Zoltán Bakos dated 26.03.1979 (no. 46/79), which bears the modified reproduction of the envelope Bakos had addressed to Petasz. The back of the postcard has the same rubber stamp print as the one he sent to the Atelier Bonanova: “Je prend mon bien où je le trouve.” (“I recover my property wherever I find it.”²⁴)

A work Petasz mailed to Bálint Szombathy can also be found in the Artpool archives. It is a sheet of paper folded in two with a fragmented reproduction of Szombathy's postcard *Post Card no. 2. 1979* on its right side, the rubber stamp print “Do You Recognize It? Yes! It Is the Ghost of Your Masterpiece” (which Petasz also used on his work sent to Russell Butler) at top left, as well as the numbering “Art Glossa 75/79” and the date “II.V.79” under it.

The replies Petasz received to his works was seen as a series only to Petasz himself: he mailed them back to the artists using similar methods and a few rubber stamp prints he made for this project.²⁵ The way I see it is that he intended to extend a kind gesture to his fellow mail artists by making “the ghost images of their masterpieces”, while also calling attention to the problem that if an artist posts a work that exists only in one copy, he or she is likely not to ever see it again.





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1a, 1b. Paweł Petasz, *Airel. Concrete Poetry, The Ghost of Your Masterpiece* (Elbląg, Poland: Arriere-Garde, 9th March, 1979), 26/79. Cover and details.


Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

2. Paweł Petasz, *The Envelope. The Ghost of Your Masterpiece* (Elbląg, Poland: Arriere-Garde, 26th March, 1979), 46/79.

Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

3. Paweł Petasz, *Petart. The Ghost of Your Masterpiece*, (Elbląg, Poland: Arriere-Garde, 4th May, 1979), 75/79.

Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



is the periodical edited by common effort. Apart from providing materials for the particular edition (according to definite technical criteria), each of the participants is obliged Once to collect materials, to edit and print as well as to distribute edition among other participants - artists taking part in his edition - at ones own charge. Each of participants would be given at least 10 copies. The size of any single edition is depend on the number of participants. Every edition my be drawn up at choice. Only the title form, numeration and format being retained. The character of the edition depends on the abilities of the editor, who should define it, in order to announce his edition in the previous issue. Every edition is signed by its editor. Mailing materials to OUR magazine you are obliged to edit any next issue. We will come into contact with you. Send materials for next (2) edition to: Commonpress

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1978

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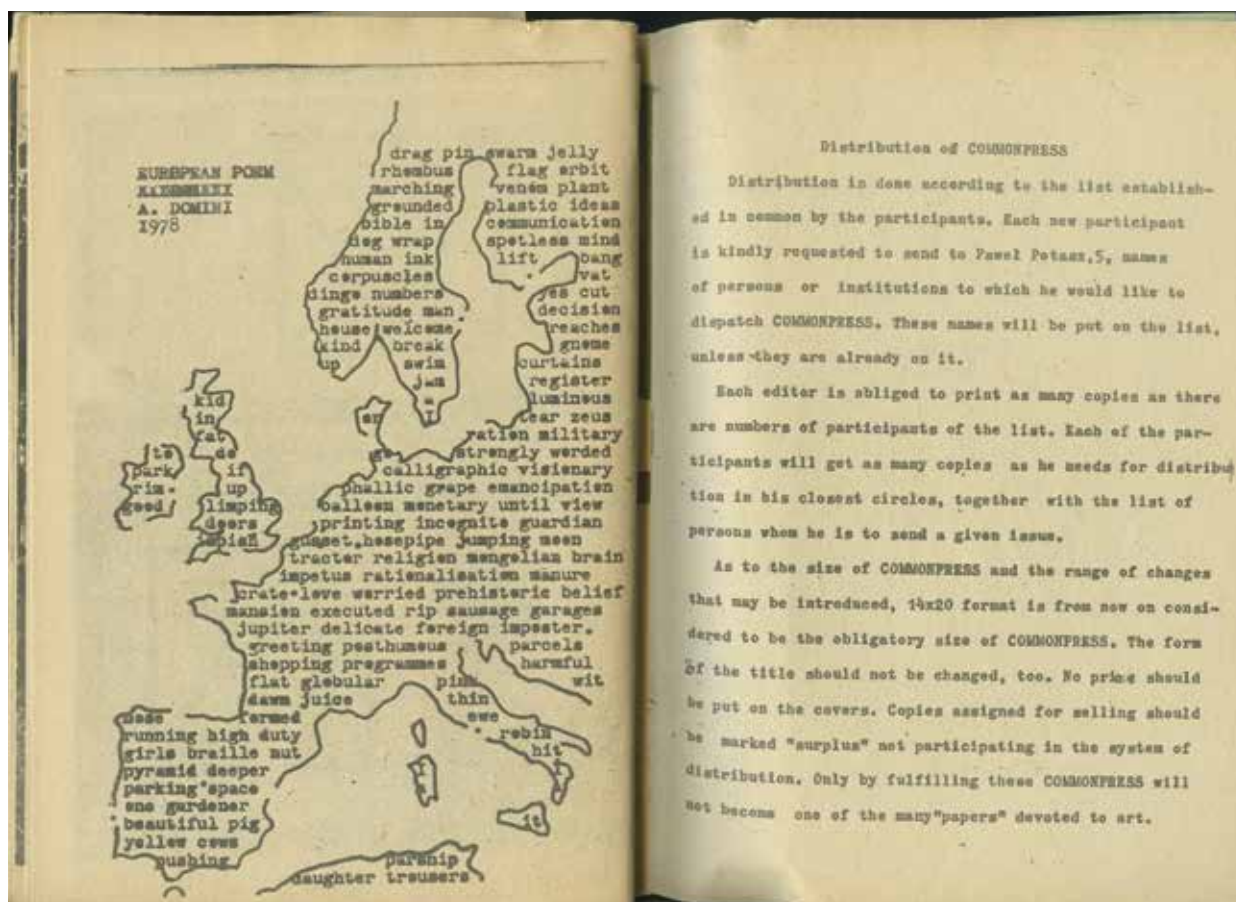
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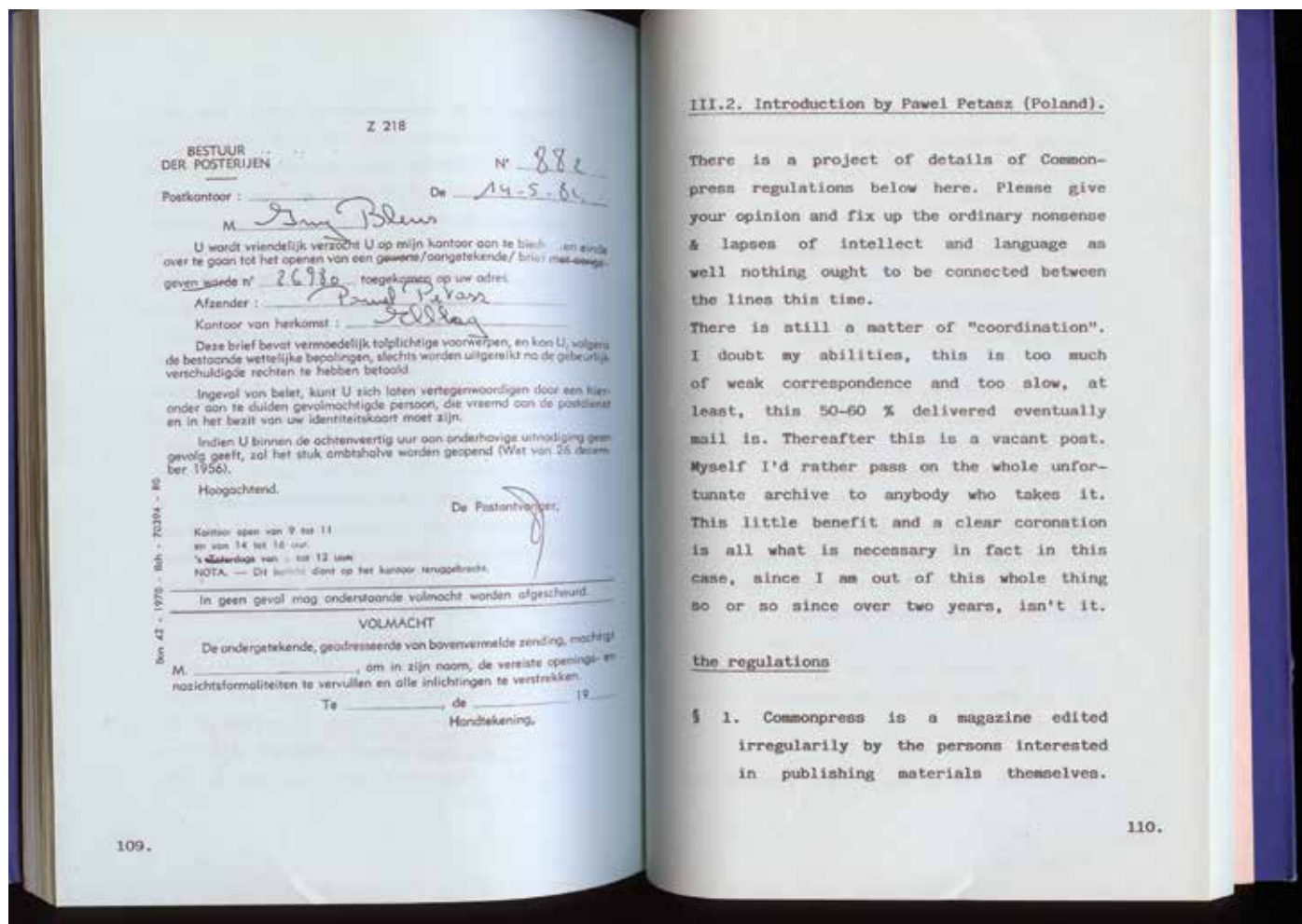
Rules of participation as put by Pawel Petasz

1. Rules of participation as put by Pawel Petasz on the back cover of the publication *Commonpress* no. 1, ed. Pawel Petasz (Elblag, Poland: Arrière-Garde, December 1977).

Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

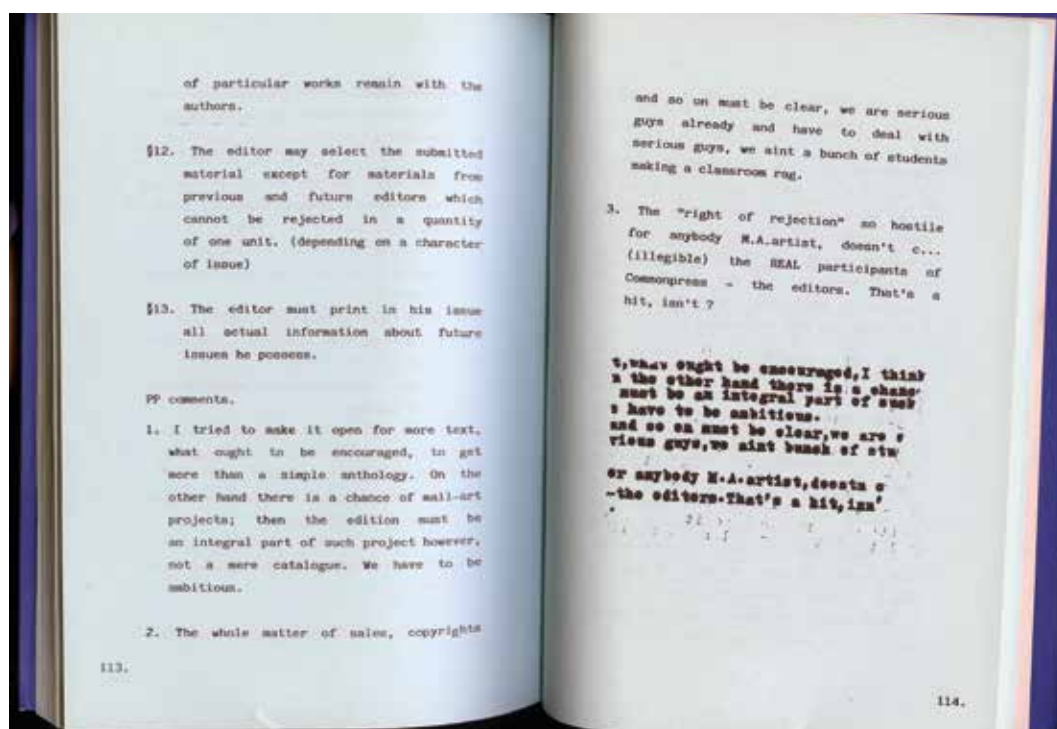
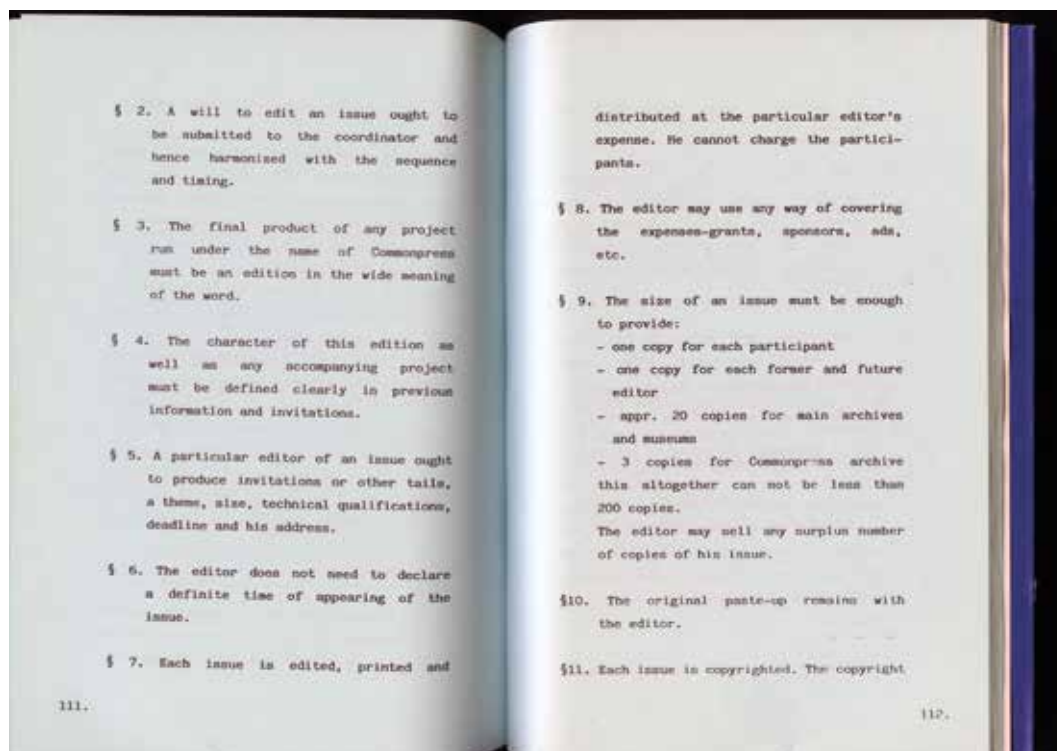
2. Pawel Petasz: "Distribution of Commonpress", *Commonpress* no. 4, *From Poetry to Poesy*, ed. Grzegorz Dziamski (Poznan, Poland: Maximal Art Edition, April 1978).

Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



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3a, 3b. Pawel Petasz, "Introduction by Pawel Petasz," *Commonpress* No. 56, *Born To Survive. Commonpress Retrospective*, ed. Guy Bleus (Wellen, Belgium: Administration Center, September, 1984), 110–114.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Commonpress magazine

Petasz stopped directing the El Gallery in 1977 and changed his alias *UniArt*, used thus far: he published the first issue of *Commonpress* under the name *Arrière-Garde*. So what does this name suggest? At the same time when he retired from running the state-owned gallery and joined the Mail Art network, he named his art publisher identity using a term from military jargon meaning rear-guard. As an artist he saw himself not as being avant-garde, although it was popular in the Mail Art circle, as he rather wished to be part of the rear-guard and protect all that is worth protecting, realising this of course with resort to his characteristically acrimonious humour.

It is a noteworthy parallel that George Maciunas, the leading figure of the Fluxus movement, also advocated for the rear-guard in his manifesto published in 1965: "Fluxus art amusement is the rear-guard without any pretension or urge to participate in the competition of 'one-upmanship' with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of simple natural event, a game or a gag. It is the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp."²⁶

When Petasz was working on his personal correspondence art project, his *Ghost of Your Masterpiece* series, the first issues of the *Commonpress* magazine were also published. The magazine was conceived and launched by Petasz, but each issue was edited and published by another mail artist and because of this special publishing and distributing method it is uncertain to this day if the complete *Commonpress* series exists at all somewhere.²⁷

As Chuck Welch put it in one of his emails to me: "In my view, COMMONPRESS is the 'Holy Grail' of Mail Art. There is, to my knowledge only one complete set in the world and it belongs to Guy Bleus."²⁸

But what is *Commonpress*? One of the aims of this article is to collect and list all important information published so far about the magazine and its history and to have it in one place for future researchers. To begin with, let me quote Guy Bleus, who edited the 56th issue of the magazine making it a retrospective publication. He wrote this in the introduction:

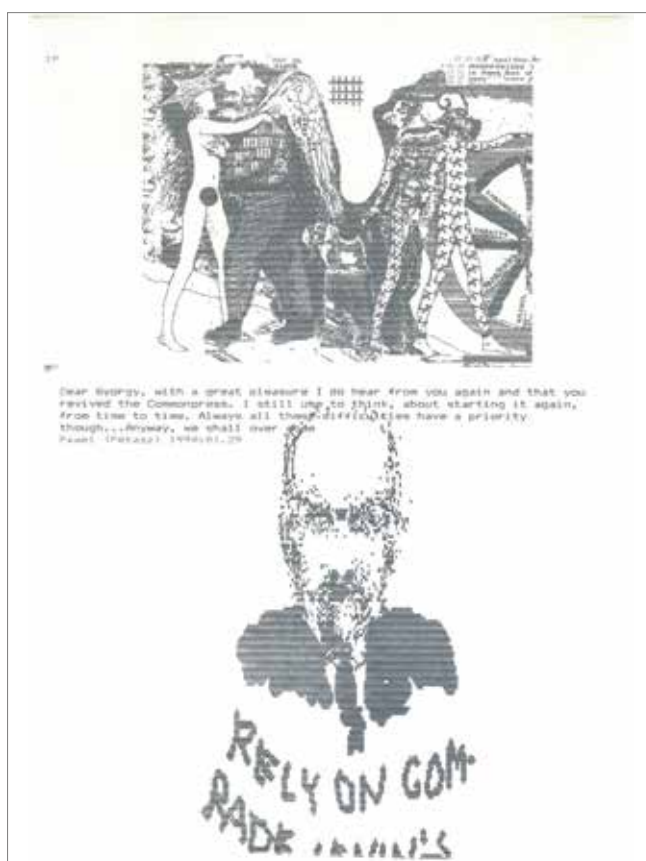
"CP is not a 'common' art-magazine. It is a special one, because it is 'common'. Created, produced and distributed by and to its participants each edition has a different editor. This almost seven years young artists-magazine has its own origin and evolution. The father and motor of CP is the Polish artist Pawel Petasz, who started this new art-medium, this remarkable art-forum and art-form in December 1977 (publication of the first edition). The short history of the magazine is closely related to the fast development of Mail-Art as a global movement. As the first threads of the Mail-Art-Web, CP started small. But this international small-press magazine with only 17 participants in the first edition had a solid concept. One can read in the first issues the participating rules which e. g. 'obliged' every contributor to print and distribute an edition once. This sounds severe, but is was a democratic principle, necessary for the survival of the alternative magazine and not insuperable to fix with only a decade of participating artists."²⁹

When *Commonpress* was launched, Stephen Perkins welcomed it as the type of art magazine once envisioned by the dadaists having become reality.³⁰ Indeed, in his journal Hugo Ball described a publication with similar editing principles to those of *Commonpress*: "My proposal to call it *Dada* is accepted. We could take it in turns to edit; a common editorial board which would entrust the task of selection and arrangement to one of its members for each issue."³¹ However, despite his proposal, the magazine of the dadaists was edited by Tristan Tzara throughout. It was Petasz more than 60 years later who launched the first international magazine in the era of global networks with each issue having a different editor.³²

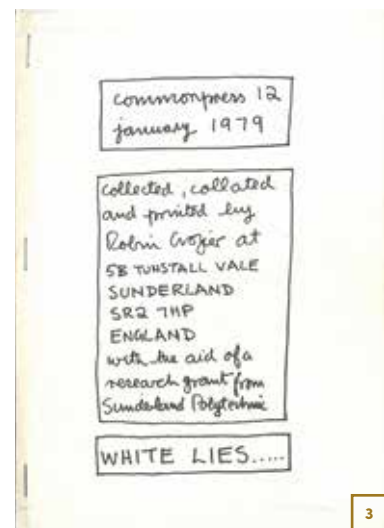
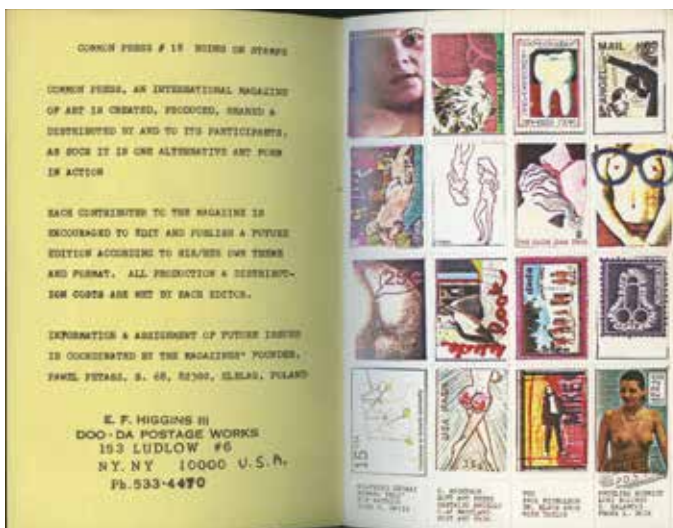
It was also very important for Petasz that the printing and distribution costs of the magazine per head were lower and the joint publication of this progressive magazine was sustainable in the long term thanks to the editorial efforts being shared. It is remarkable that circa 55 issues³³ were published during the thirteen years of the magazine's history: seven issues in 1978, twelve in 1979, eleven in 1980, three in 1981, six in 1982, two in 1983, six in 1984, three in 1985, two in 1986, two in 1989 and one in 1990.



Forewords by G. X. Jupiter-Larsen in his issue of *Commonpress* no. 59, *Why I Hate The World*, Vancouver, Canada, 1982.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Letter by Paweł Petasz to György Galántai congratulating the publication of *Commonpress* no. 51.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

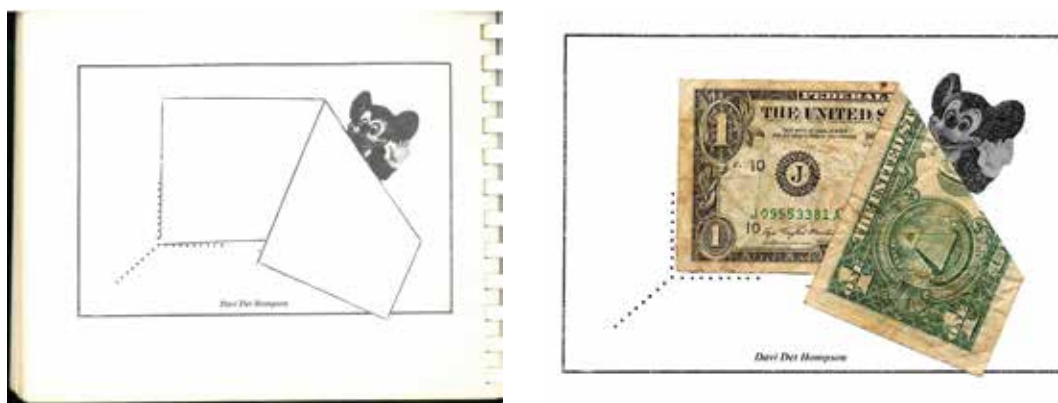


1. Postcard written by Paweł Petasz to Mario Lara, s.a.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

2. Pages from: *Commonpress* no. 18, *Nudes on Stamps*, ed. E. F. Higgins III (New York: Doo-Da Postage Works, August 1979).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

3. Cover of *Commonpress* no. 12, *White Lies*, ed. Robin Crozier (Sunderland, January 1979).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

4. Preface by Vittore Baroni to the *Commonpress* no. 23, *Political Satire, Post Scriptum*, ed. Vittore Baroni (Forte Dei Marmi: Forte Dei Marmi Library, 1979).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Work by Hompson as published in *Commonpress* no. 37, *Things to Think About in Space*, ed. Mario Lara (San Diego, California, USA, 1980).

Original work by Hompson as published at artpool.hu.

Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

According to the editing principles, after agreeing it with the coordinator, the compiler of the given issue had to announce the theme of the magazine in the network in advance so the editor's expectations would be clear to every artist.

The published issues had to contain the themes of the next few issues and the exact addresses of their editors, and most members tried to observe this rule. The magazine's coordinator was Petasz until 1981, and he would not have given this role up if the Jaruzelski regime had not introduced martial law in Poland, thus making regular correspondence with foreigners completely impossible. After this the job of coordinating the *Commonpress* issues was taken over by G. X. Jupiter-Larsen from Canada. "Pawel and I had been corresponding back and forth since 1977. After martial law was declared he didn't think he'd be able to keep *Commonpress* active. Since I had published the most recent issue at that time he reached out to me to keep the project going."³⁴

In 1982 Galántai wrote to Petasz asking him to make the 50th thematic issue titled *Hungary Can Be Yours*. In his reply Petasz asked Galántai to write directly to Jupiter-Larsen from Canada in order to avoid two versions of the same issue to be distributed by mistake. The issue Galántai edited was in the end published under number 51, while issue 50 was published by Emmett Walsh.

From this point onward, the numbering of the magazine is not strictly in chronological order: as Jupiter-Larsen wrote, "The numbering became irregular because at the time I didn't care much for chronology. Mine was the 45th volume in the series, but I asked Pawel if I could number it 59 because I liked that number more. I said I thought artists should be able to use whatever number they wanted. He said sure. I think he thought my whole 'anti-numbering concept was pretty funny. 'Anti-numbering' was his term for it, not mine."³⁵

In regard to the themes, Petasz, in his capacity as the founder of the magazine, did not impose any constraints, so editors were given a free hand, just like the organisers of Mail Art projects in general, i.e. they could announce any theme in the network. Artists who wished to participate in the given issue responded to the call of the editor by mailing their works. This collective effort was made unique by the running and coordination of the magazine: it was a strict structure but democratic to the core, as Bleus described it in his already-quoted text in 1984. It was strict because every participant who sent



Commonpress is a periodical edited by common effort. All artists may become participants by submitting material to the editor of next issue reflecting the theme chosen for the edition. Then each artist who has thus joined the common cause will have the privilege and responsibility of editing one of the subsequent issues of Commonpress. Being editor means selecting a subject or theme for your issue (announcing it in the previous issue), collecting material, editing and printing the issue (by means of a computer process) at one's own expense, signing all copies and distributing according to reserved list to the participants. Title, numbering and format (19x14 cm, 75g) remain consistent throughout. But in all other respects the character of each edition depends upon the ideas and abilities of its editor.

Forthcoming issues:

9	ADRIANO SPATOLA & GIULIA NICCOLAI SUBJECT: RAINY IN OZARINO, PA. ITALY THEME DEADLINE Sept. 10	10	PAOLO BRUSCKY & LEONHARD FRANK SUBJECT: RECORDING DUCH THEME DEADLINE Oct. 10
11	TOMMY MEW SUBJECT: BEYOND THE MT. GARY, N.Y. 10017, USA THEME DIARY PAGES DEADLINE Nov. 15	12	ROBIN CROZIER SUBJECT: CONTROL ONE SUBJECT: CONTROL ONE THEME white lies DEADLINE Dec. 30
13	KLAUS GROCH SUBJECT: THE SUBJECT: THE THEME Can the Artists help survive? DEADLINE Dec. 30	14	CHARLTON BURCH SUBJECT: THE SUBJECT: THE THEME DEADLINE Feb. 15 (1984)

*Please notice: This 5th Edition of Commonpress appears when the 6th edition has already been published.

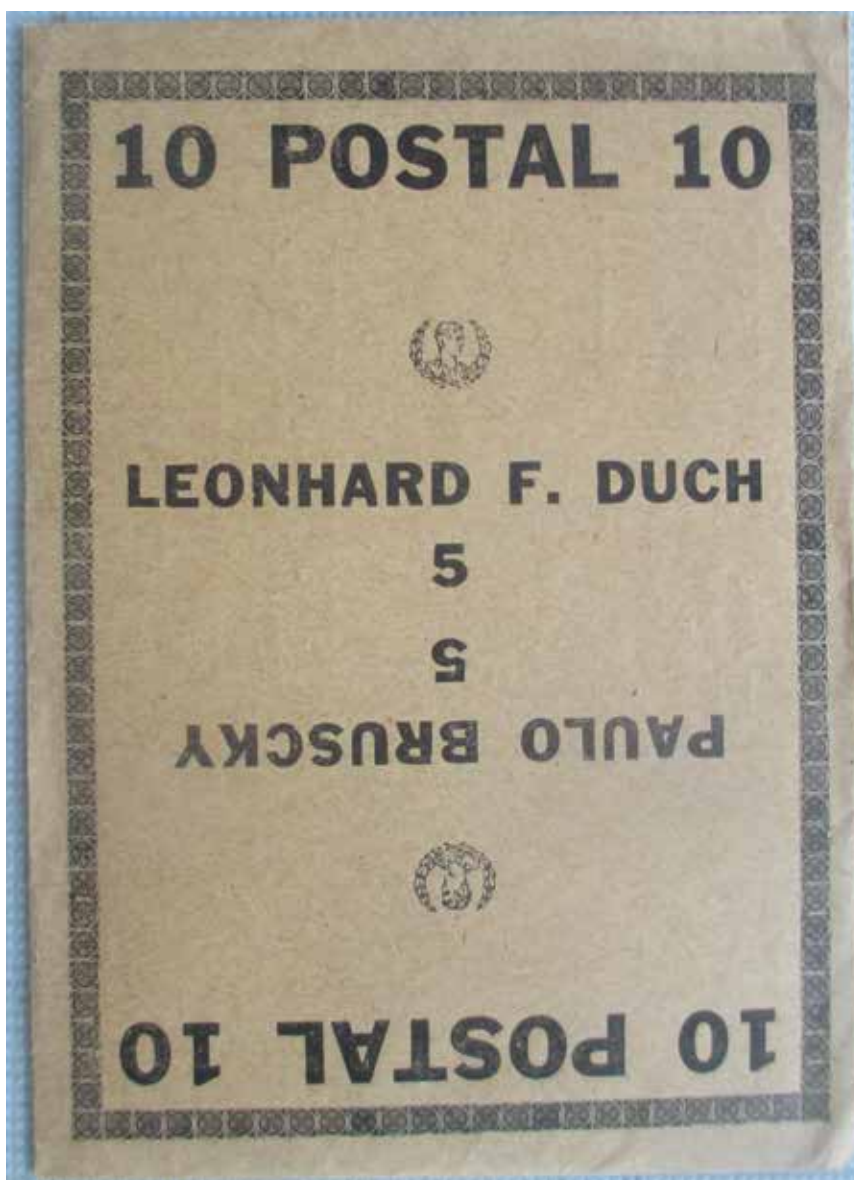
Additional notes from the 4th edition:

The form of the title should not be changed. No price should be put on the covers. Copies intended for selling should be marked "surplus", not participating in the system of distribution. Only by fulfilling these conditions Commonpress will not become one of the many "papers" devoted to art. The willingness to edit a new issue should necessarily be discussed with the co-ordinator: Pawel Peters, Kamienn 17/2, 33300 Włocławek, Poland.

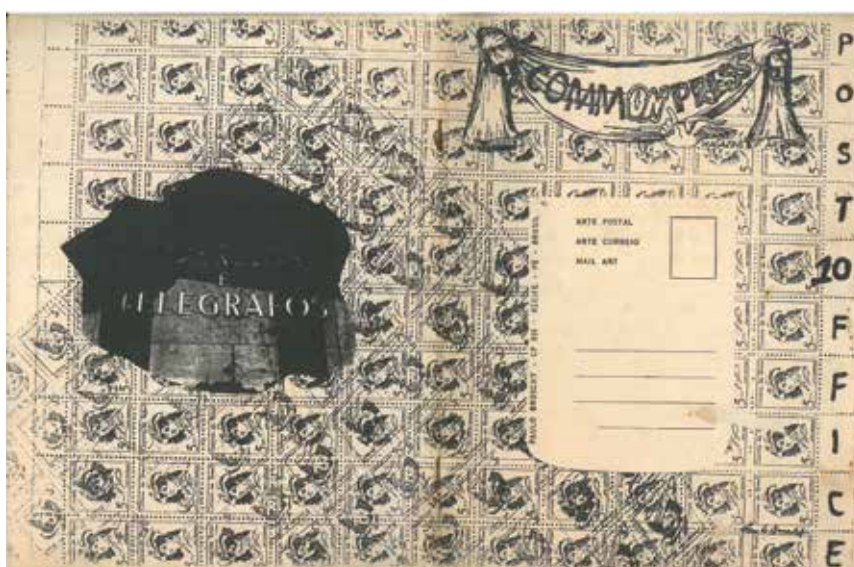
Thanks to Jost de Wit.

Spiegelman's *Mail Art Rag*, vol. 1, no. 1, ed. Lon Spiegelman [Los Angeles], October 1983. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Call for the 10th issue as published in *Commonpress* no. 5, Box Boxing Boxers, ed. Ulises Carrión (Amsterdam, 1978). Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



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1. Cover for the 10th issue designed by Leonhard Frank Duch, s.a.
Courtesy of Leonhard Frank Duch

2. Cover of the publication:
Commonpress no. 10, *Post Office*, ed.
Paulo Bruscky (Recife, 1979).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center
– Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

a work to an issue was obliged to compile and publish his or her own issue, and it was democratic because the running of the magazine was entirely dependent on the individual responsibility taken for it by the participants of the network. “The idea had enormous implications. For one thing, it was supportive of do-it-yourself publishing. It meant that consecutive people would make the effort and carry the cost of editing and printing the magazine. More importantly, however, it broke down the differences between the roles of contributor and editor.”³⁶

By the end of the late 1980s something had changed and *Commonpress* came to an end, despite the fact that according to the publishing principles³⁷ it was supposed to continue as long as there were participants, who were expected to take responsibility for the new issues. A list could be drawn up of those artists who participated in at least one issue with their original work but failed to compile their own issue, i.e. they owed an issue to the network.

After the change in the political system, in 1989, when Artpool was finally able to publish its own, 51st issue of *Commonpress* titled *Hungary Can Be Yours*, which was originally intended to be the catalogue of its exhibition banned in 1984, Petasz celebrated this issue in his letter of greeting as the resurrection of the magazine. The magazine has regrettably not been relaunched since then.

In the early 1980s *Commonpress* was so popular that the editors found it challenging to publish all of the great many works mailed to them. Editors of several issues apologised in the introduction for being forced to reduce some of the works in order to fit them into the given magazine and in some cases they even had to omit them.³⁸ In the issue of 1984, edited by Bleus, Petasz revised the editing principles, allowing editors to select from the material they received, freeing them from the obligation to include the works sent in by all the participants, however, they still had to include at least one work by earlier or future editors.³⁹

It transpires from one of Petasz's letters to Mario Lara that he was very sad that the magazine could only be printed in black and white due to the difficult circumstances. He informed Lara that prior to his issue only the magazine compiled by E. F. Higgins was published in colour, and even that one only contained small stamps. He expressed his hope that in the future a colour issue would be published by an editor with more funds. This did not happen despite the fact that the editors of several issues, among them Lara, were given support by an institution.

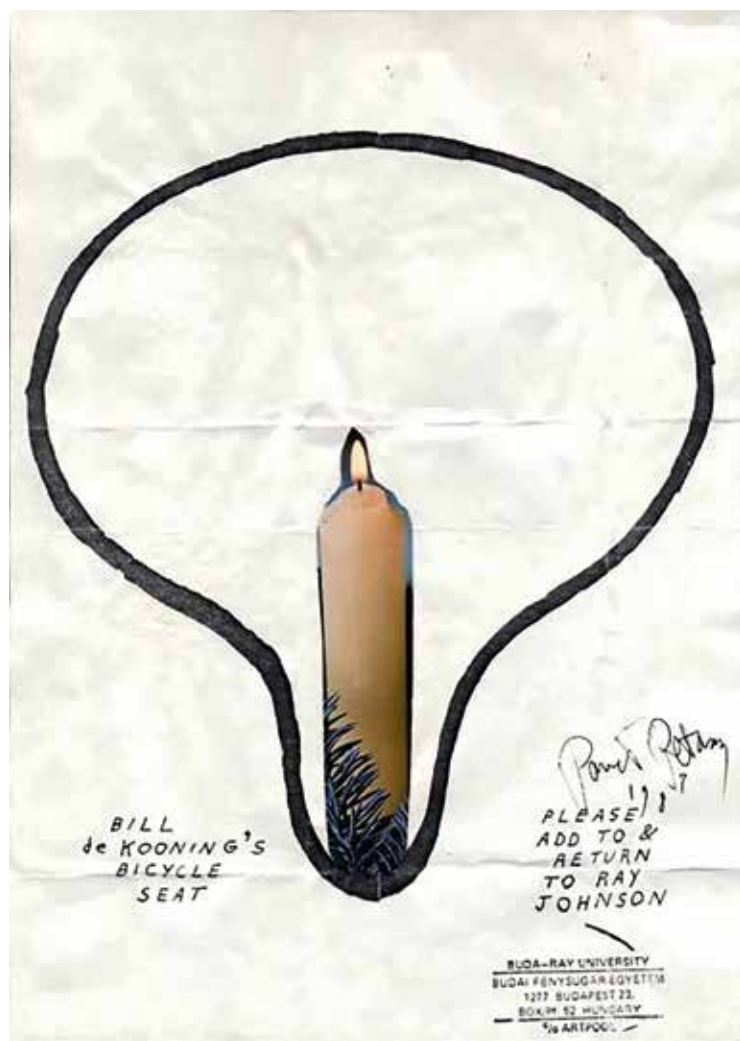
Thanks to modern technology as well as Artpool's enthusiasm and hard work, Mario Lara's issue can now be viewed online in colour, without any restrictions on the number of copies. The master-copy Lara had donated to Artpool is published on Artpool's site⁴⁰ edited by György Galántai.

This gesture even brought an end to a conflict between Davi Det Hompson and Mario Lara. What happened was that Hompson used a one-dollar note in his collage sent to the *Commonpress* issue titled *Things to Think About in Space*, and the printers were not willing to print it due to USA regulations. In Hompson's interpretation, Lara wanted to censor his work. This story is documented by the correspondence on this situation published in the magazine *Umbrella*, edited by Judith Hoffberg.⁴¹

If we take Hompson's work and look at how many people had the opportunity to interfere with the semantic layers of an artwork, we get a complex picture. After the author, understood in a classical sense, there was the editor of the given issue, the printers and the printing press' decision-makers and in Hompson's case even the legislation of the USA. Judith Hoffberg, who published the debate between Hompson and Lara in her magazine *Umbrella*, played an important role in clarifying the overall picture, while in 2010, three decades after its first publication, the public had the opportunity to see the colour and uncensored reproduction of the original issue thanks to György Galántai and the Artpool Art Research Center earning great recognition from Lara, who donated the only original master-copy to Artpool, which Artpool published and thus made available to all.



Work by Paweł Petasz sent for Artpool's *Buda Ray University* project.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Buda Ray University* project. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Many people knew about the magazine but few had it in their hands not to mention the impossibility of obtaining the whole run. Different sources vary about the exact number of issues published as some issues were only promised to be compiled but were never accomplished. “With no deadlines guiding the project, some editors delayed publication for many reasons.”⁴² Lon Spiegelman, for example, who took on the job of compiling issue number 21, announced the delay in publishing his *Commonpress* issue titled *Alphabets* in his own newsletter *Spiegelman's mailart rag* explaining it with problems at his workplace;⁴³ he died before being able to publish his issue.

While I will not discuss every single issue, let me mention issue number 10, which Paulo Bruscky and Leonhard Frank Duch from Brazil wanted to compile together. According to Chuck Welch, the issue was published but the post office of the Brazilian dictatorship confiscated all the copies called *Post Office*, ironically enough.⁴⁴ Leonhard Frank Duch said that “the magazine was apparently never published or distributed (...) However, one version exists in the archive of Paulo Bruscky in Recife and Duch has an alternative version in his own archive in Berlin.”⁴⁵ I contacted both authors, and Duch believes that only the cover of the magazine was completed, which he sent to me by email, while Paulo Bruscky sent me the complete published 10th issue by post, i.e. it obviously was completed after all.



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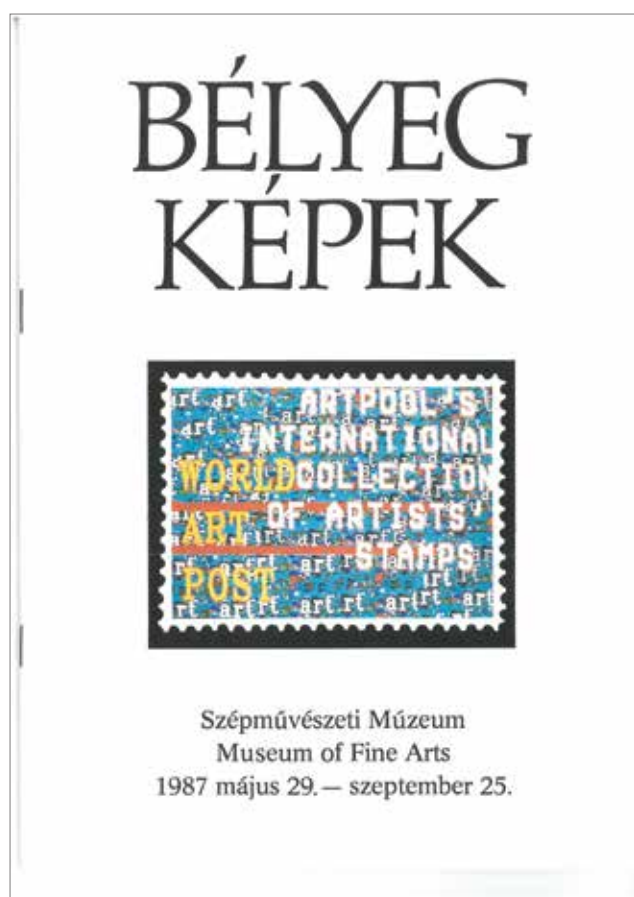
- 1, 2. Paweł Petasz, *Fallen Slogans' Land*. 1984, s.a.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
3. Paweł Petasz, *Atlantis Post*, 1978.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

The Network *Is* the Work

There have been several approaches taken to defining the genre as well as the unique authorship of the *Commonpress* magazine (and in a broader sense that of correspondence art). According to Chuck Welch “*Commonpress* was ‘an assemblage magazine’ that emerged as the most prominent publishing series in the history of Mail Art.”⁴⁶ Perhaps by saying this he wanted to stress that this magazine was more than a two-dimensional collaged work since, at least, it broke out into the third dimension. The compiling editor of the given issues assembled entirely different types of works submitted by the participating authors, and many of the magazine can thus be regarded as object-works.

Let us take for example issue no. 47, titled *Material Metamorphosis*, which was edited by Crackerjack Kid a.k.a. Chuck Welch: the participants sent him a piece of textile, which he used to make the paper the copies of the given issue were printed on: envelopes and sheets of writing paper, which he posted back to the participants.⁴⁷ It can be said about the editors of most of the *Commonpress* issues that they tried to create something extraordinary. They tried to break through into the next dimension of the artist magazine, and they mutually helped each other in this effort when they were the participants. This is what made *Commonpress* more than the rest of the Mail Art magazines and fanzines.

Ulises Carrión addresses the question of authorship in Mail Art magazines in several of his writings. In *From Bookworks to Mailworks*⁴⁸ he suggests that the greater the editor’s



Cover of the *Bélyegképek* ('Stamp Images') catalogue, designed by György Galántai (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987). Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Cover of '88 Kwadrat '89, ed. Paweł Petasz (Elbląg, 1989).
Courtesy of Subspace Archive - Stephen Perkins, Madison,
USA



Call for the project *Square '88*.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine
Arts, Budapest



Artist's envelope by Paweł Petasz, 1987.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine
Arts, Budapest
Object by Paweł Petasz, 1997.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine
Arts, Budapest

intervention was in the participant's works, the more they can be regarded as the author of the published issue. In another writing he emphasised that on the whole he regards the entire work and all its elements as the creation of the project manager. "A Mail-Art project is an artist's attempt to organize, in a coherent way, a chaotic range of ideas, feelings, experiences, objects, but also machines, distances, postal regulations, time uncertainties, and, most strikingly, Mail-Art pieces from other artists. By incorporating these pieces as one element of his work, he's depriving them of their original identity. He's giving them instead a role to play among other equally important elements of his own personal world."⁴⁹

Indeed, if we take a look at the individual issues in the history of the *Commonpress* magazine, they can be said to form an integral part of the given editor's oeuvre, which is not surprising.⁵⁰ An artist is engaged with a particular problem for years and he or she invites their friends and fellow artists to think about it together. But what do we see when we examine the history of the complete series? "Diversity was its single most defining characteristic. True, each issue bore the stamp of a particular artist/editor, but what is much more important is that as a publication, it bore a stamp of a *different* artist/editor every time,"⁵¹ writes Peter van der Meijden in his study of *Commonpress* No. 5, edited by Carrión.

Gerald Jupiter-Larsen, *Commonpress'* second coordinator, defined the magazine as an international and collective performance in his short introduction written for the retrospective issue no. 56, edited by Guy Bleus: "*Commonpress* isn't just an alternative magazine of art, but a kind of ongoing international performance. A performance in which each participant is encouraged to edit & publish an edition of the magazine with his own theme in his own format. It is a collective performance; created, produced, & shared by its many contributors."⁵²

A collective performance in a sense that it is not the printed matter held in our hands



Two Network Magazines, Subject Matter: The Network, Artpool, Budapest, 18 September – 4 December, 1992 (Curated by György Galántai).
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



Work by Pawel Petasz sent for the *Flux Flags* project organized by György Galántai, 1992. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center – Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

that is the artwork but the multi-layered performative actions of the network and all of its participants who are in a constant correspondence.⁵³ For Zana Gilbert the “process-based, performative approach (...) is reflected in the *Commonpress* logo – a set of theatrical curtains with the periodical’s title inscribed across them. (...) Indeed, one might consider the behavior associated with the publication to be more important than what was actually published, affirming the conceptual and anti-market principles of process over product: the network is the work.”⁵⁴

Epilogue

Last but not least, it must be mentioned that *Commonpress* was suitable to be exhibited. This was not a requirement and did not happen in the case of each issue; it obviously depended to a great extent on the ambitions and circumstances of the editor and compiler. Aart van Barneveld from Amsterdam exhibited the issue *Selfportraits* (no. 15), which he compiled from rubber stamp prints, in his own gallery called Stempelplaats, where Pawel Petasz had organised an exhibition a year before. Guy Bleus mounted a large-scale retrospective *Commonpress* exhibition in 1984 (Museum het Toreke, Tienen, Belgium). The list of issues published up to that point was included in issue no. 56, which also served as the catalogue for the exhibition. The updated list in the appendix of this study makes a reference to this issue too, which was published on more than 140 printed pages (making it perhaps the most voluminous *Commonpress* issue). Moreover, as a real technical innovation in Mail Art circles, this issue contained hundreds of microfilm images too, some of which were reproductions of the covers of already published issues.

The magazine to be edited by Artpool was also planned to be published in the Orwellian year of 1984. The topic “Hungary” was inspired by the Italian poet Adriano Spatola’s ninth “Italy issue.” Galántai organized an exhibition from the incoming material in the Young Artists’ Club in 1984. However, since the authorities considered some works to be offensive to the regime; only those with a personal invitation could attend the opening and see the exhibition. As a result, Galántai suffered intensified reprisals again; the secret service started openly observing and restricting his activities. In addition to other measures, they confiscated the next issue of *AL (Artpool Letter)*, a Samizdat art periodical with international information and progressive Hungarian art edited by Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay. The exhibition could only be restaged on the eve of the change of the political system (Young Artists’ Club, 1989), and it was accompanied by a roundtable discussion involving the banned artist - represented by Galántai - and the officials who banned the exhibition. The *Commonpress* no. 51 as the catalogue of the exhibition could be published in wider circulation at the time. The first, photocopied version, issued in the year of the banned exhibition, 1984, was only made in fifteen copies because the planned amount of the travel brochure used for the cover could not be obtained due to the ban. The final colour offset version was printed in 300 copies in 1989.

When the secret police reports about Galántai and Artpool became available for research, one was discovered relating to the opening of the exhibition. Using this report, Galántai reconstructed the original exhibition a couple of times (at Artpool’s venue, P60 in 2000; Centrális Galéria, 2002; Austrian Cultural Forum, London, 2003; Moderna galeria Ljubljana and Switch Room, Belfast, 2006; MACBA, Barcelona, 2011; Area 51, Kapolcs, 2018; Dox, Prague, 2019).

The appendix of this study includes the above secret service report, which helps readers to get a detailed picture of the *Commonpress* project⁵⁵ organised on the theme of *Hungary* with the participation of 110 artists from 18 countries, while documenting the artistic climate in the Eastern Bloc, in which Pawel Petasz and György Galántai produced their works and in which their main Mail Art work – the network – operated.

Pawel Petasz's works in the Artpool Art Research Center

Afer the *Commonpress* magazine ended, Petasz did not organise any international projects but participated in many of Galántai’s Mail Art projects.

Two of his works were included in the exhibition of Artpool’s *Buda Ray University* project, which was built on Galántai’s correspondence with Ray Johnson. Galántai had tried to establish contact with Johnson, who founded the New York Correspondence School in 1962,

from 1979 but received no response from him for a long time. In the end, the ice broke in 1982, when Galántai posted 20 postcards to him on a daily basis: as a reply Johnson mailed him drawings to be completed to Budapest, which Galántai sent to his contacts in the network, who then added their changes and posted them back to Budapest, to Artpool's by then bulky material.

Three works by Petasz were displayed at Galántai's exhibition titled *Stamp Images*, organised in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest in 1987. One of them, *Fallen Slogans' Land*, is a red rubber stamp print series compiled into a stamp sheet: in each of its four images concepts representing the eternal dreams of humanity – “Hope,” “Freedom,” “Future,” “Life” – are shown hurtling through an undulating landscape simplified to extremes and making an impact.

The rubber stamp prints of *Petapost of Freedomia* (1970s) do not convey any disillusionment but much rather an utopistic anticipation, which was so characteristic of Mail Art. As Géza Perneckzy expressed in his study written for the catalogue of the exhibition *Stamp Images*: “What is reflected in these stamps is not so much irony as rather a strong belief in the redeeming force of Mail Art and artistic subculture in general.”⁵⁶

He went on to say the following in connection with the series in question: “The ability to do art. A root of democracy,” “Wash your brain - mail the slops” and “In art we trust,” are stamp-slogans which not only attract attention through their arbitrary use of English, but also with the ingenuity with which they reinterpret the worn-out clichés of official moralism and religion and adapt them to Mail Art. But most of all, they indicate that although the official institutions have slowly begun to open their doors to this new and strangely profane art-form, the artists themselves who create the stamps still remain faithful to the sphere which, for the past couple of hundred years, has been the favorite form of expression in artistic internationalism: Utopia.”⁵⁷

The stamp sheets titled *Atlantis Post* and *Atlantis Free Post* seem to be a collection of Petasz's drawings with a grotesque and erotic tone akin to that of his Arrière-Garde logo. The traditional themes of sexuality and nudity are treated by Petasz in his characteristically sarcastic and mundane way, just like Galántai had used his own style, making references to his precedents, in his sheet *Nude Stamps* a few years earlier.

Galántai used one of his own artwork on the cover of the catalogue for the exhibition *Stamp Images* (1987), which he designed, and also on the exhibition poster. Perhaps it is not surprising that there is another parallel with Petasz, who threw himself into computer graphics with great enthusiasm around this time. The correspondence between the two artists also confirms this: Petasz asked Galántai if he knew other artists pursuing this genre and when Galántai was staying in Berlin on a DAAD scholarship, Petasz wrote to him about the new computer he was planning to buy.⁵⁸

Petasz organised one of the first “computer art” exhibitions of the international Mail Art network in 1988 with the title *Square 88*, which was a reference to his large-scale show *In the Circle* '77 eleven years before. Back then he could not display the high quality material in the El Gallery but by 1988 the gallery was partly renovated, allowing him to exhibit the works sent to him as a reply to his call.

In 1987, the year when *Stamp Images* was held, one of Petasz's signature collaged and stitch-sealed envelopes was included in the exhibition organised by Artpool to celebrate the centennial of Marcel Duchamp's birth. Then, in 1997, he did not think twice before submitting a 3D collage work to the 110th Duchamp anniversary: in the foreground a young naked girl in an open door is taken by surprise and quickly picks up a towel to hide her nudity, while in the background we can see Lenin and some other elderly men under a green 'exit' pictogram. At the bottom of the 3D work the question “What can you do?” can be read in Polish.

In 1992, after receiving funds from the local government, the active archives –restarting its activity as a non-profit institution under the name Artpool Art Research Center – moved from the studio of György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay to Liszt Ferenc Square in the centre of Budapest. It was here that Galántai presented the *Commonpress* magazine, and *Doc(k)s*, edited by Julien Blaine

from France, at the event *Two Network Magazines* held within the framework of the series of events *Theme: The Network*.

The first large-scale Artpool project presenting new works on Liszt Ferenc Square was *Fluxus Flags*, celebrating the 30th birthday of the Fluxus movement. At this international open-air public art exhibition organised with the participation of 42 artists from 18 countries Petasz displayed a Polish flag soiled with paint, torn by the tempests of history and bearing a red crucifix.

In 2004 Petasz used the Polish national flag again, when he took part in Artpool's exhibition *The Telematic Society: art in the 'fourth dimension'* with the video documentation of a performance. On the homepage presenting the international project Galántai, who also likes using the Hungarian national flag in his works, linked Petasz's work with Delacroix' painting titled *Liberty Leading the People*.

Here Petasz is shown holding an immaculate flag: contrasted to Delacroix' embattled female revolutionary, Petasz's figure stands forlorn on a red carpet in his own well-kempt garden next to his resting white dog. Then, wearing a red shirt he is circling around his tree with a whitewashed trunk; the green vegetation provides the background for the performance. Supplemented with green, the Polish national flag's colours – red and white – become the Hungarian national tricolour.

Petasz often sent Galántai his most recent collages, which in part were traditionally made by hand and in part by computer. Petasz participated with such collages in several international exhibitions organised by Artpool: at the exhibition *Foot-Ware* in 1999, at *The Year of Chance in Artpool* in 2000, in *The Year of Doubts/Doubles in Artpool* in 2002 and at *The Experimenter & The Art of Perception* in 2005.

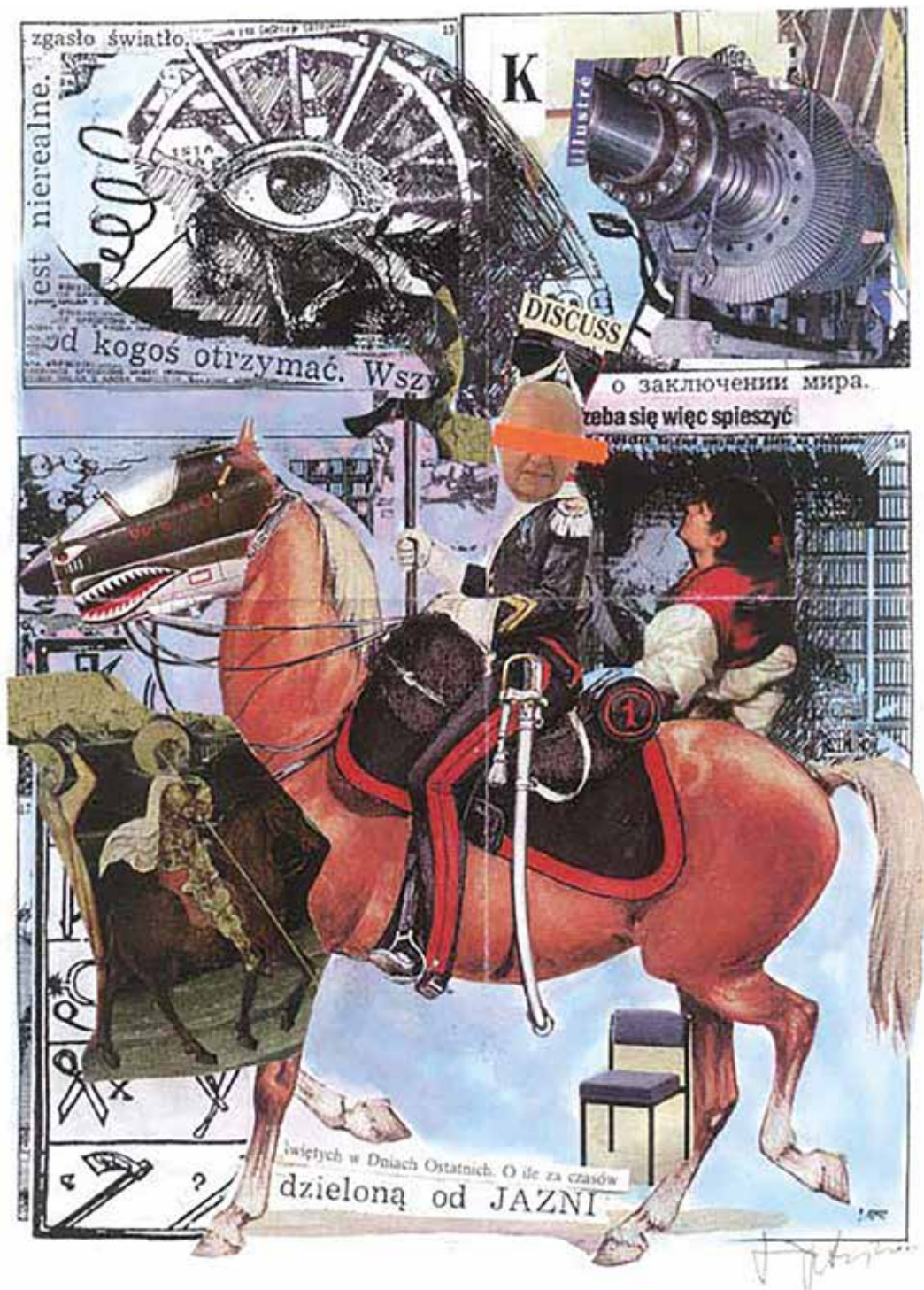
Petasz's computer graphics artworks and his collages supplemented with his old rubber stamp prints were exhibited in 1996 by John Held, Jr. in the San Francisco Stamp Art Gallery. In the booklet, which served as the catalogue for the exhibition, he wrote the following about Petasz computer art: "Petasz's computer artworks often display symbols of Communism mixed with old woodcuts, drawings, printed cartoons, dictionary definitions, and other iconography drawn from a variety of sources, which are then scanned into the computer and collaged. Text and visual imagery are intermixed, linking this newer work to his early rubber stamp experiments in visual poetry."⁵⁹



Video still from a work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's exhibition *The Telematic Society: Art in the 'Fourth Dimension,'* 2004.

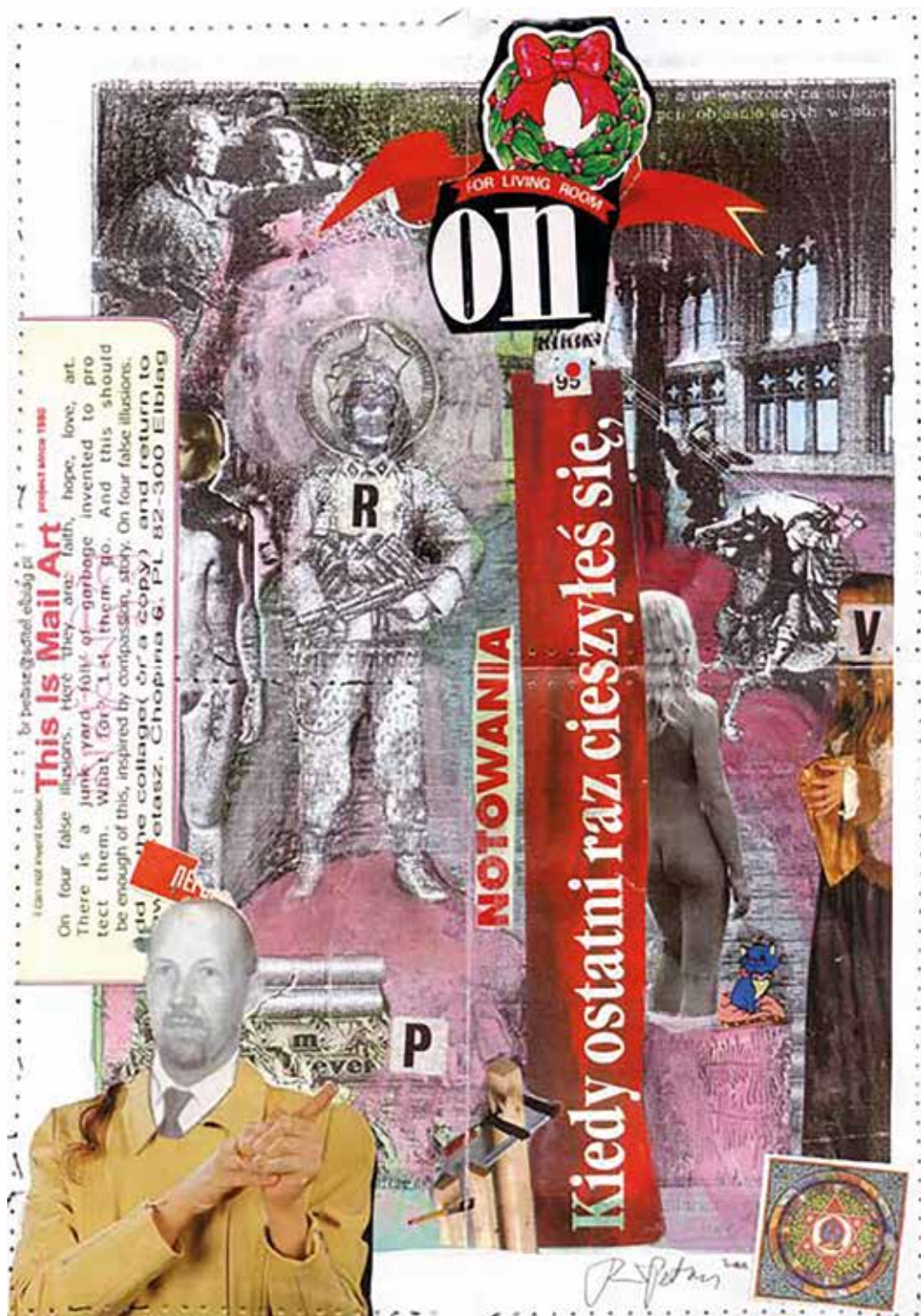
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

2000



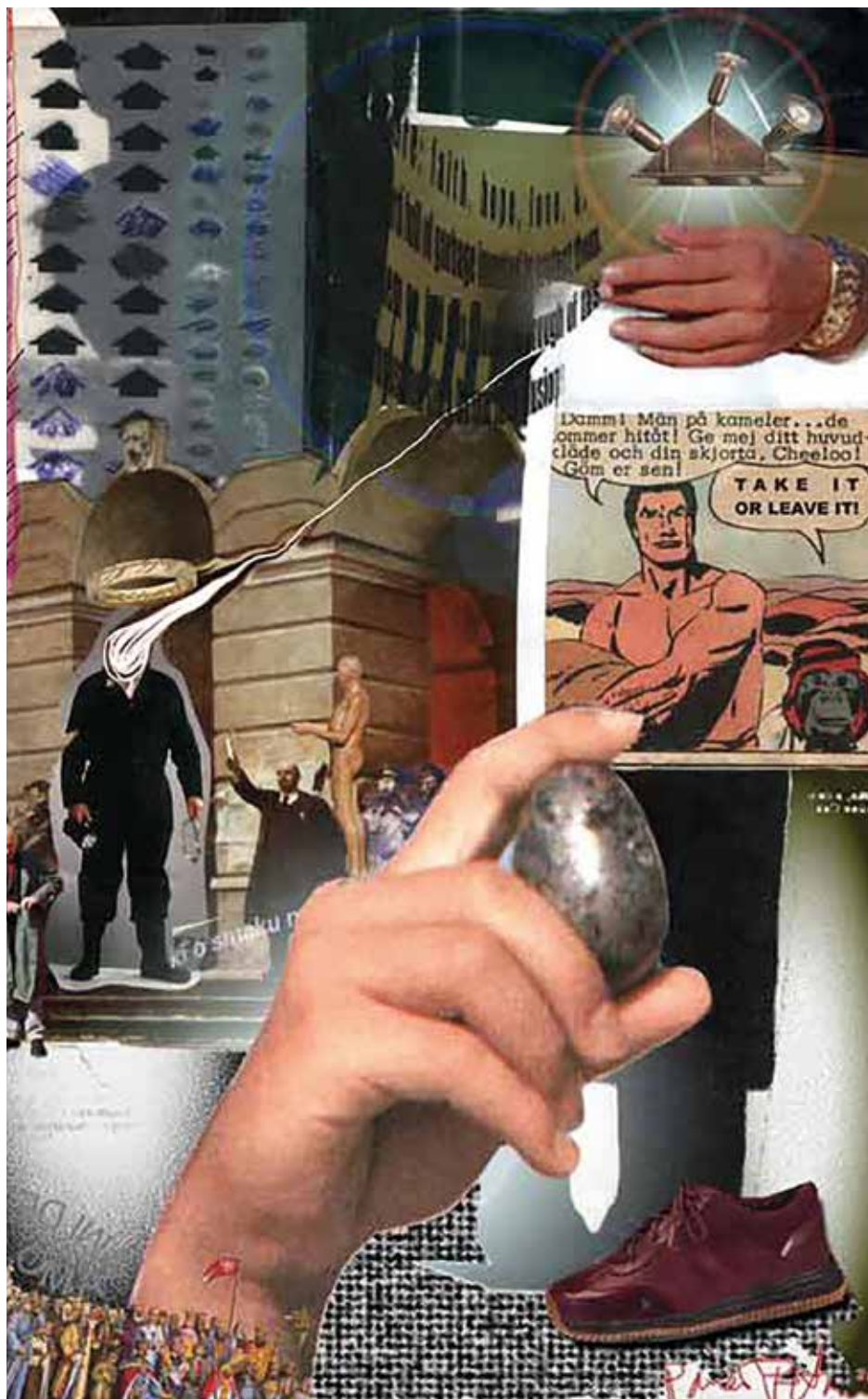
Work by Paweł Petasz sent for the exhibition *The Year of Chance in Artpool*, 2000.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

2002



Work by Paweł Petasz sent for the exhibition *The Year of Doubts/Doubles in Artpool*, 2002.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

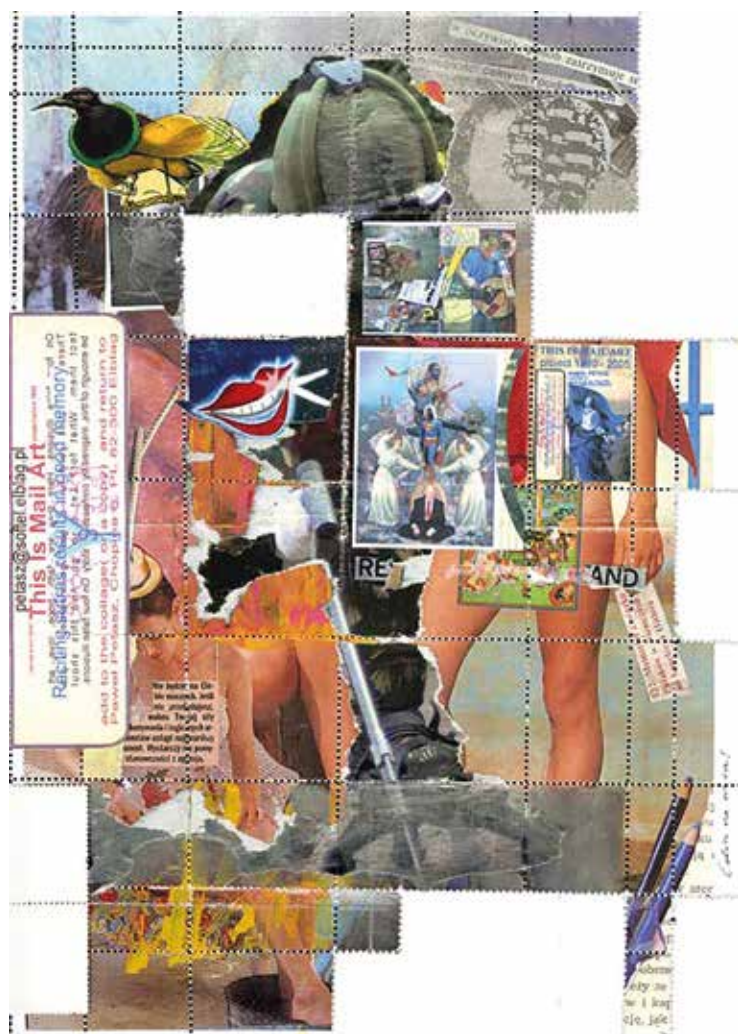
2005



Work by Paweł Petasz sent for Artpool's *The Experimenter & The Art of Perception* exhibition, 2005.
 Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

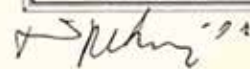
In 2007 Galántai organised another large-scale artiststamp exhibition in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, titled *Parastamp*, where five of Petasz's collaged computer graphics stamp sheets were displayed.

In two stamp sheets Petasz appears in a Zen meditation posture. In one of them titled *Proszce* he is sitting on a sea shore next to a huge red zero and it seems as if his consciousness was uniting with the roaring sea behind him through his opening skull; in the background we can see the silhouette of a dark ship either slowly advancing or waiting in the distance. In contrast to this basically tranquil imagery triggering different chains of association, the sheet titled *Nembutsu* is a more confusing and darker snapshot, which, in my interpretation, is closer to Petasz's inner world. Petasz is again sitting in a Zen meditation posture but this time collaged into the context of oppressive landscapes, this atmosphere being enhanced by the black-and-white motifs layered over it: figuratively speaking, these b&w elements with the iconography of Petasz' late 1980s post-socialist tone are stamped upon the consciousness yearning for peace.









1. Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Parastamp* exhibition, 2007.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
2. *Nembutsu*. Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Parastamp* exhibition, 2007.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
3. *Prosze*. Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Parastamp* exhibition, 2007.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
4. *Mani Pulate*. Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Parastamp* exhibition, 2007.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
5. *The*. Work by Pawel Petasz sent for Artpool's *Parastamp* exhibition, 2007.
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I'd like to thank György Galántai, founder of Artpool Art Research Center and all my colleagues there who helped me in discussing this paper. Special thanks goes to Júlia Klaniczay co-founder of Artpool, Emese Kürti and Zsuzsa László.

Translation: Krisztina Sarkady-Hart

Proofreading: Adrian Hart

Notes

- ¹ “Zmarł Paweł Petasz,” *elbląska multiplatforma internetowa*, accessed May 28, 2020, <http://www.elblag.net/artykuly/zmarl-pawel-petasz,39869.htm>.
- ² The building was once owned by the Dominican Order. “Centrum Sztuki Galeria EL w Elblągu. Wystawy, Koncerty. Sztuka Współczesna Pokazywana w Wielu Jej Aspektach.” *Galeria EL – Historia*, accessed May 28, 2020. <http://old.galeria.civ.pl/?page=history&lang=en>.
- ³ Paweł Petasz, “Mailed Art in Poland,” in *Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology*, ed. Chuck Welch (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1995), 90.
<https://www.artpool.hu/MailArt/chrono/1995/Petasz.html>.
- ⁴ See the chronology of international Mail Art exhibition I compiled on Artpool’s homepage. “1977 – Mail Art Chronology,” Artpool Art Research Center, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.artpool.hu/MailArt/chrono/1977.html>.
- ⁵ “Paweł Petasz helped him to establish many contacts and get addresses.” Jarosław Mulczyński, “The Drawing Gallery / Drawing Activity,” in *O Rysunku, obrazach, architekturze i utopii / About Drawing, Pictures, Architecture and Utopia*, ed. Andrzej Wielgosz (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Miejskie, 2004), 18.
- ⁶ Paweł Petasz, “Mailed Art in Poland,” 92.
- ⁷ Ibidem.
- ⁸ More times joined by artists from abroad already through the Mail Art network and/or a couple of times with their live presence as well. In 1972 Group Bosch+Bosch exhibits (6–13 August) from Subotica, Yugoslavia; László Beke organized a meeting of Czech, Slovak and Hungarian artists (26–27 August) with the participation of Imre Bak, Peter Bartoš, László Beke, Miklós Erdély, Stano Filko, György Galántai, Péter Halász, Béla Hap, Ágnes Háty, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, J. H. Kocman, Péter Legédy, János Major, László Méhes, Gyula Pauer, Vladjimir Popović, Petr Štembera, Rudolf Sikora, Tamás Szentjóbby, Anna Szeredi, Endre Tót, Péter Türk and Jiří Valoch. In 1973 another exhibition was held by Yugoslavian artists József Ács, Ferenc Baráth, Attila Csernik, Gábor Ifjú, József Markulík, Slavko Matkovic, József Smit and Bálint Szombathy (29 July–4 August).
- ⁹ *Tükör / Mirror / Spiegel / Miroir* exhibition with works by 35 artists (organised by László Beke) Balatonboglár, Chapel Studio, 5–11 August 1973. Restaged at the opening of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest, 23 March–15 May 1992.
- ¹⁰ *Szövegek / Texts*, an International exhibition organised by Dóra Maurer and Gábor Tóth, 19–25 August 1973.
- ¹¹ John Held, Jr., “The Sugar Coated Bullets of Paweł Petasz,” in *Paweł Petasz: Arrière Garde* (San Francisco: Stamp Art Gallery, 1996), <https://www.artpool.hu/MailArt/chrono/1996/TheSugar.html>.
- ¹² In 1978 he had already exhibited here; that time with an individual project made with a rubber stamp.
- ¹³ *Textile without Textile* (Galántai–Artpool: Budapest, 1980). Original works in an A4 format silk-screened folder, in a variety of techniques by 54 artists from various countries, 300 numbered copies.
- ¹⁴ John Held, Jr., “The Sugar Coated Bullets of Paweł Petasz.”
- ¹⁵ Ginny Lloyd, “The Mail Art Community in Europe: a First Hand View,” *Umbrella Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1982, <https://ginnylloyd.blogspot.com/2010/04/mail-art-community-in-europe-first-hand.html>.
- ¹⁶ Ginny Lloyd, “Copy Art: Europe and San Francisco,” *Art Com* (Winter/Spring ’82): 40.
- ¹⁷ Pl. *International Copy Art Exhibition*, LaMamelle, Inc., San Francisco, 1980. See: Barbara Cushman, “Copy art: San Francisco revolution,” *Umbrella* (California) 3 (4) (Summer 1980): 97.
- ¹⁸ Ginny Lloyd, “5 Cents a Page,” *Women Artists News* 7, (6) (Summer 1982): 11–12.
- ¹⁹ Stephen Perkins, “Utopian Networks and Correspondence Identities,” in *Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts: Subjugated Knowledges and the Balance of Power*, ed. Estera Milman, (Iowa: Artist Publications, 1999). http://wayback.archive-it.org/823/20120517183139/http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/atca/subjugated/two_5.htm.
- ²⁰ „Paweł had no access to photo-copiers during the years when Poland was still part of the eastern block and mail was regularly inspected, monitored or went missing.” Michael Leigh, “Paweł Petasz – Lino Print,” *A1 Mail Art Archive*, May 28, 2020, <https://a1mailart.blogspot.com/2004/10/pawel-petasz-lino-print.html>, 2004.10.12.
- ²¹ Kornelia Röder, “Ray Johnson and the Mail Art Scene in Eastern Europe,” *Kunsttexte.de*, 3/2014, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.artpool.hu/MailArt/chrono/2014/Roeder.html>
- ²² Antonia Payero Barbero, “Arte Correo (Mail-Art), 1975–1985 el Atelier Bonanova como referencia” (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Facultad de Bellas Artes, 1993, Doctoral Diss.), 101.
- ²³ <https://discover.libraryhub.jisc.ac.uk/search?q=title%3A%20Yes%20it%20is.&rn=22>. It transpired from the correspondence with the library staff that the British Library purchased the book-work in question from William Allen, an antiquarian art dealer, in 2008; the seller added the following comment to this work: “The book is dedicated to Russell Butler, and involves wax like photographic reproductions of a carbon paper used by Butler (USA mail artist) – it is therefore the palimpsest of the carbon letter that is the ‘ghost of your masterpiece.’”
- ²⁴ See: <https://www.bartleby.com/344/287.html>.

²⁵ They are: "Art Glossa No .../79. To: ... Concrete Poem, By Pawel Petasz." "Je prend mon bien où je le trouve." "Flashes of GENIUS in the mess of work" "a Ghost of your masterpiece" "ARRIERE- GARDE. Edition limited to one copy." etc.

²⁶ Quoted in: Estera Milman, "Process Aesthetics, Eternal Networks, Ready-made Everyday Actions and Other Potentially Dangerous Drugs," in *Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology*, ed. Chuck Welch (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1995), 82.

²⁷ The appendix of the volume *Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology*, edited by Chuck Welch, makes reference to the incomplete collections accessible in the following archives: ATCA, Crackerjack Collection, Sackner Archive, Bleus Collection. At this moment, the editor of the 1995 volume has four issues missing to complete the series, while 39 issues are available for research in Artpool.

²⁸ Chuck Welch: *Commonpress*, Letter to the author, Nov 30, 2019.

²⁹ Guy Bleus, "What is Commonpress?" in *Commonpress No. 56. Commonpress Retrospective*, ed. Guy Bleus (Wellen: Administration Center – Tienen: Museum het Toreke, 1984), 106.

³⁰ Stephen Perkins, "Commonpress," in <http://artistsperiodicals.blogspot.com/2012/07/commonpress.html>, 07.16.2012.

³¹ Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1965), 31.

³² Two Hungarians, Árpád Ajtony and Béla Hap, founded the periodical *EXPRESSZió* in 1971. To avoid legal obstacles, the rule was that each issue had to be typed and published in five copies. The recipients had to retype the received material but leave out some of the original articles, while adding new content. Through the whole process, each new editor had to publish in five copies.

³³ We do not know the exact number of published issues, just like we are not certain if there is a complete collection with all the published issues. Based on the sources studied, it seems likely that at least 55 issues were published for sure, of which 39 can be researched in the Artpool archives. I need to add here that there were two issues that were published in two editions, i.e. two versions. In 1982 due to his other engagements as an activist, Michael Duquette only published a stamp sheet in issue 42, which he edited, and he published the booklet-type catalogue in 1990. It was only in 1989 that Artpool was finally able to publish all the copies of the magazine's 51st issue, which was the catalogue of its banned 1984 exhibition, after slightly altering the original concept.

³⁴ Gerald X. Jupitter-Larsen, *Commonpress Chro-No-Logy*, Letter to the author, 30 Oct., 2019.

³⁵ Gerald X. Jupitter-Larsen, *Commonpress Chro-No-Logy*.

³⁶ Peter van der Meijden, "BOX BOXING BOXERS. Mail Art Projects, Exhibitions and Archives," in *Lomholt Mail Art Archive*, 2014. <https://www.lomholtmailartarchive.dk/texts/peter-van-der-meijden-box-boxing-boxers-mail-art-projects-exhibitions-archives>.

³⁷ "Each author was supposed to edit, print and distribute one issue at a future date at his own expense." Pawel Petasz, "[The idea of 'Commonpress']," in *Mail Art: Osteuropa im Internationale Netzwerk*, ed. Kornelia von Berswordt-Wallrabe (Schwerin: Staatliches Museum, 1996), 236.

³⁸ The second coordinator, Gerald Jupitter-Larsen X, also confirmed that after a certain time the editors could not afford to publish all the works posted to them: "Over time would-be editors would tell me that the costs of printing and shipping were getting to be too much. I think most mail-art publications worked by having the participants print their own pages, sending these pages to a coordinating editor, and then have the editor assemble everything into a coherent publication. The editor would then ship a copy back to each of the contributors. Commonpress was different. The editor took on the responsibility of printing as well as distribution. By the mid-1980s this cost was becoming too great for most to take on." Jupitter-Larsen, Gerald X. *Commonpress Chro-No-Logy*.

³⁹ Pawel Petasz, "Introduction by Pawel Petasz (Poland)," in *Commonpress No. 56. Commonpress Retrospective*, ed. Guy Bleus (Wellen: Administration Center – Tienen: Museum het Toreke, 1984), 113.

⁴⁰ <https://www.artpool.hu/Lara/Commonpress37/index.html>.

⁴¹ *Umbrella*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1981): 8-11.

⁴² Chuck Welch, "Global Network Zines: The Public Face of Mail Art 1970-1985," Lomholt Mail Art Archive, accessed May 28, 2020, <http://www.lomholtmailartarchive.dk/focus/focus-5-chuck-welch-global-network-zines>.

⁴³ *Spiegelman's mailart rag*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Los Angeles, California, October 1983): 2.

⁴⁴ Chuck Welch, "Global Network Zines: The Public Face of Mail Art 1970-1985".

⁴⁵ Zanna Gilbert, "Via Postal: Networked Publications in and out of Latin America," in *International Perspectives on Publishing Platforms: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Meghan Forbes (New York: Routledge, 2019), 127.

⁴⁶ Chuck Welch, "Global Network Zines: The Public Face of Mail Art 1970-1985".

⁴⁷ See a detailed description of the very issue at: Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 134-135. <http://dss-edit.com/dh/Saper,%20Craig%20J%20-%20Networked%20Art.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Ulises Carrión, "From Bookworks to Mailworks," in Ulises Carrión, *Second Thoughts* (Amsterdam: VOID Distributors, 1980), 24-31.

⁴⁹ Ulises Carrión, "Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies? Introduction to the Artists' Postage Stamps and Cancellation Stamps Exhibition," in *Artists' Postage Stamps and Cancellation Stamps Exhibition*, ed. Ulises Carrión (Amsterdam: Stempelplaats, 1979), 4.

- ⁵⁰ “The project became very popular, and one secondary element soon became the most attractive – each issue developed into a form of original, authorized product of the editor. The editions began to be associated with various individual projects.” Paweł Petasz, “[The idea of ‘Commonpress’],” in *Mail Art: Osteuropa im Internationalen Netzwerk*, ed. Kornelia von Berswordt-Wallrabe (Schwerin: Staatliches Museum, 1996), 236.
- ⁵¹ Peter van der Meijden, “BOX BOXING BOXERS. Mail Art Projects, Exhibitions and Archives.”
- ⁵² Gerald X. Jupitter-Larsen, “Introduction by Gerald X. Jupitter-Larsen,” in *Commonpress No. 56. Commonpress Retrospective*, ed. Guy Bleus (Wellen: Administration Center – Tienen: Museum het Toreke, 1984), 115.
- ⁵³ Ray Johnson, the father of Mail and correspondence art, humorously spelt the word correspondence as correspondance, referring to the playfulness, a kind of dance, that takes place between the participants of the network.
- ⁵⁴ Zanna Gilbert, “Via Postal: Networked Publications in and out of Latin America,” 125.
- ⁵⁵ Of course György Galántai also developed this project on Artpool’s homepage, and further details can be found in the interview conducted in 2011 with Júlia Klaniczay, Artpool’s co-founder: Juliane Debeusscher, “Interview with Artpool Cofounder Júlia Klaniczay,” *Artmargins*, 2011, <https://artmargins.com/artpool-cofounder-julia-klaniczay/>.
- ⁵⁶ Géza Perneczky, “Artists’ stamps,” in *Bélyegképek. Stamp Images*, ed. Judit Geskó (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 1987), 17. https://www.artpool.hu/Artistamp/Perneczky_e.html.
- ⁵⁷ Ibidem.
- ⁵⁸ The Galántais were issued passports in November 1988 and returned from Berlin in May 1989 upon hearing the news about the change of the political system. It is typical of the times that Galántai first had the opportunity to have access to a colour photocopier when he was in Berlin. See: <https://www.galantai.hu/appendix/biography.html>.
- ⁵⁹ John Held, Jr., “The Sugar Coated Bullets of Paweł Petasz,” in *Paweł Petasz: Arriere Garde*, ed. John Held, Jr. (San Francisco: Stamp Art Gallery, 1996), <https://www.artpool.hu/MailArt/chrono/1996/TheSugar.html>.

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LIST OF ARTIST'S PUBLICATIONS BY PAWEŁ PETASZ IN THE ARTPOOL'S ARCHIVES

Paweł Petasz was communicating with György Galántai regularly since 1978. Besides the material accumulated through their correspondence Artpool received works of Petasz from the following donors: Zoltán Bakos (H), Mario Lara (USA), Peter Küstermann (D), András Lengyel (H), Tamás Molnár (H), Bálint Szombathy (Yu/H).

The term 'artists' publication' is used as an umbrella phrase for all forms of published artworks. Here I only list bookworks, periodicals and various 'zines' created by Petasz. Besides these materials we have many individual works (collages, computer collages, envelopes, CDs, etc.). Verbal descriptions of the listed material were quoted wherever it was possible to do so.

[Airél]. Concrete Poetry, A Ghost of Your Masterpiece, 14,2x20cm, [18 p.], ill., bw, (unique bookwork, hand numbered: 26/79, dedicated to György Galántai) 1979/03/09.

Artforum International, Bimonthly Magazine of Mail and Ephemeral Art, no. 7, A4, [2 p.], 1981.

"Paweł Petasz's (Poland) hand-made *Artforum* from the mail art pieces others sent to him. The table of contents is exactly that, that is a list of the what the paper material is made of. Of course, the title *Artforum International: Bimonthly Magazine of Mail Art and Ephemeral Art* is a play on the official *ARTFORUM* journal. Petasz made the art paper in 1980-1981, but it wasn't mailed out until 1983 due to material law in Poland. Stephen Perkins has written about Paweł Petasz and the *Artforum International* in Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumarks, eds., *At a Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, MIT Press 2005." Madsen, Theis Vallø: From the Archive. Findings from the Mogens Otto Nielsen mail art archive, KUNSTEN, Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Denmark, 2014, <https://mailartarchive.wordpress.com/2014/05/30/pulped-mail-art/>.

Antivalues, no. 1, Arrière-Garde, Elbląg, Poland, 43.4x30.6 cm, [8 p.], 1977 (ed. by Paweł Petasz).

This poster size publication is the catalog for the Mail Art project *Circle '77* organized by Petasz. The 1st issue is printed with red ink, the 2nd with blue ink. We only have the 1st issue.

Commonpress, no. 1, Arrière-Garde, Elbląg, Poland, A5, [42 p.], December 1977.

Homages to Some People, vol. 1, Arrière-Garde, Elbląg, Poland, [A6], 16 p., s.a.

Imitations, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, A5, [16 p.], 1980.

Nedza. Destitution, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, 11,8x15cm, [34 p.], 1979.

Obsolete Rubber Stamps, vol. 3, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, ca. A5, [12 p.], s.a.

Obsolete Rubber Stamps, vol. 5 & 6, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, ca. A5, [16 p.], 1978.

Plenum 44. Rysunki Komputerem, Centrum Sztuki, Galeria El, Elblag, Poland, A5, [8 p.], s.a. [1990?].

Rub Rub, nr 62. *Waste Magazine of Art*, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, ca. A5, [14 p.], s.a.

Sehr Romantic. Bardzo Romantic. Sehr Romantyczne Landscapes. Computer Drawing and Collages. Buyers Guide Version 1, Elblag, Poland, A5, [20 p.], May 1st, 1991.

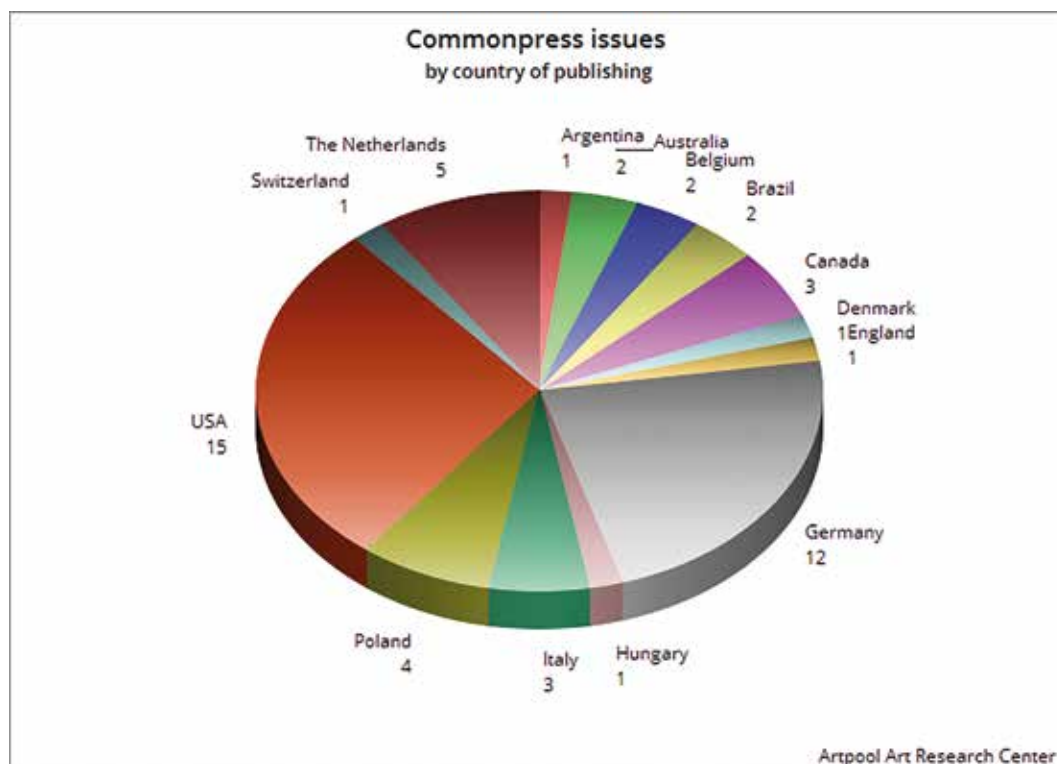
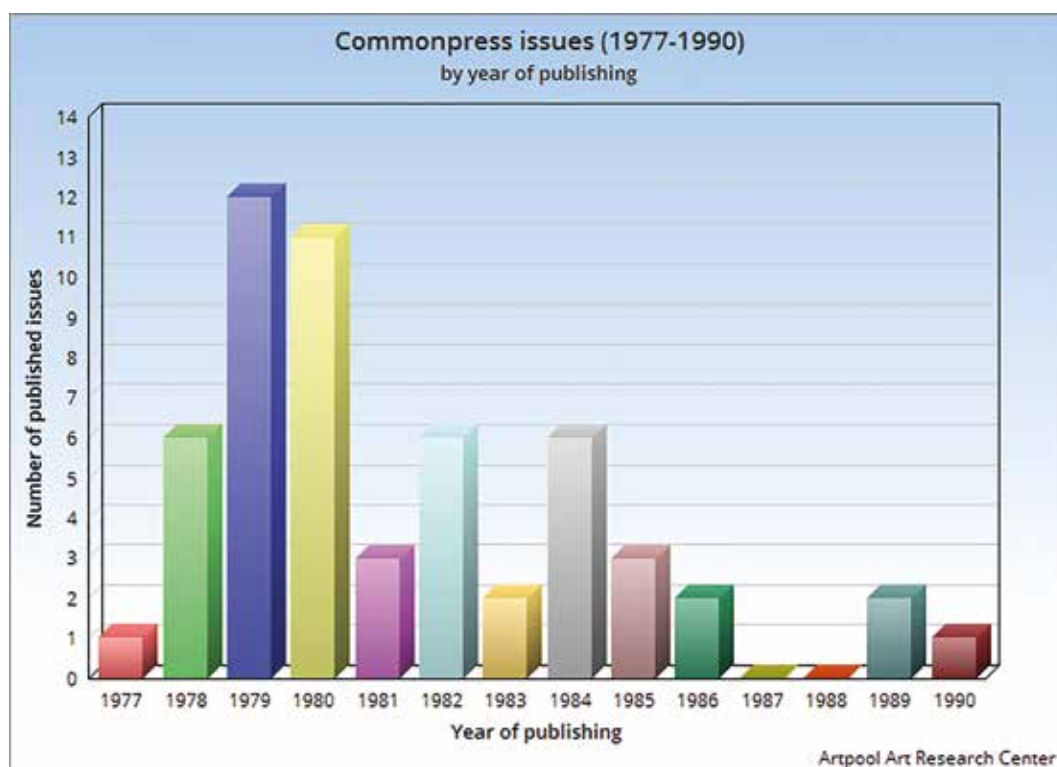
Square. The Magazine Devoted to Mail Art in Oblong Envelopes, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, 11x11cm, [24 p.], 1983.

This bookwork is made out of the envelopes addressed to Petasz. He cut them in half to make a booklet. The unique product is a pair of left and right side booklet.

To, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, A5, [18 p.], 1980.

Each page has one word printed in front of a pattern filled background. Through the pages the sentence is read out: "To be or not to be that is the freedom."

Transparent Self Portrait, Arrière-Garde, Elblag, Poland, A5, [44 p.], 17/31, 1979.



LIST OF PUBLISHED COMMONPRESS ISSUES

The issues typed in red are missing from the Artpool's archives. The issues typed in blue have never been published. No consecutive issue numbers means nothing has been published in between.

Issue	Title	Compiler / Publisher	Country (and city)
1	Commonpress	Petasz, Pawel (Arrière-Gard)	Poland (Elbląg)
2	What Is The Difference Between Open and Closed?	de Jonge, Ko (Key Art Edition)	The Netherlands (Middelburg)
3	Eroticism and Art	Below, Peter (Mixed Media Edition)	Germany, W. (Kitzingen)
4	From Poetry to Poesy	Dziamski, Grzegorz (Maximal Art Edition)	Poland (Poznań)
5	Box Boxing Boxers	Carrión, Ulises	The Netherlands (Amsterdam)
6	Ideas on Wheels	Carioca (Byron Lord)	USA (San Francisco)
7	Slight of Hand	Nounce, Toby A.	USA (Pennsylvania)
8	Positiv-Negativ	Brög, Hans – Thomas Grünfeld – Hermann Sturm	Germany, W. (Bergisch-Gladbach)
9	Speciale Italia	Spatola, Adriano – Giulia Niccolai (Edizioni Geiger)	Italy (Parma)
10	Post Office	Bruscky, Paulo (– L. F. Duch)	Brasil
11	Diary Pages	Mew, Tommy	USA (Mt. Berry, Georgia)
12	White Lies	Crozier, Robin	UK (Sunderland, England)
13	Can the Artist Help Survive?	Groh, Klaus	Germany, W. (Edewecht)
14	Shoes. Go Anywhere You Please	Burch, Charlton	USA (Ann Arbor, Michigan)
15	Selfportraits	van Barneveld, Aart (Stempelplaats)	The Netherlands (Amsterdam)
16	Artists' Postage Stamps	Schraenen, Guy	Belgium (Antwerp)
17	Modern Greek. Modern Turk	Pyros, John aka Epistolary Stud Farm (Dramatika Press)	USA (Tarpon Springs, Florida)
18	Nudes on Stamps	Higgins, E. F. III. (Doo Da Postage Works)	USA (New York, New York)
19	Pigeons of Freedom	Marx Vigo, G. E.	Argentina (La Plata)
20	Children	Gajewski, Henryk (Galeria Remont)	Poland (Warsaw)
21	Alphabets	Spiegelman, Lon	USA (Los Angeles, California)
22	You Can Know More Than We Can Tell	Durland, Steven	USA (Amherst, Massachusetts)
23	Political Satire: Post Scriptum	Baroni, Vittore	Italy (Forte dei Marmi)
24	Ethics and Art	Hitchcock, Steve	USA (San Diego, California)
25	Ruins	Gilmor, Jane Ellen	USA (Cedar Rapids)
26	Zen and Art	Frangione, Nicola (Armadio e Officina)	Italy (Monza)
27	Problems in Information Arts	Sandoval, Roberto	Brasil
28	Drawing Activity	Wielgosz, Andrzej	Poland (Poznań)
29	Ladies: Black and White	Buchholz, Willy	Germany
30	Light	Porter, Bern	USA
31	Meetings	van Dijk, Pier	The Netherlands (Hengelo – Duiven)
32	Areas of Artists' Activity	Wulle Konsumkunst (Gebhard Eirich)	Germany, W. (Cologne)
33	Meanwhile	Butler, Russell	USA (Gurdon, Arkansas)
34	Habitat's Range	Osewski, Wiesław	Poland (Suwałki)

	Date	Pages	Participants	EXHIBITION
	1977 (December)	42 p.	17	
	1978 (March)	52 p.	18	
	1978 (March)	24 p.	56	
	1978 (April)	50 p.	39	
	1978	46 p.	32	
	1978 (August)	24 p.	20	
	1978 (November)	20 p.	24	
	1979 (June)	44 p.	39	
	1979			
	1978 (December)	38 p.	31	
	1979 (January)	44 p.	34	
	1979 (March)	16 p.	31	
	1979 (September)	48 p.	51	
	1979 (September)	59 p.	57	Stempelplaats, Amsterdam, Holland, 15 September – 12 October, 1979
	1979	64 p.	31	
	1979 (December)	27 p.	27	
	1979 (August)	8 p.	120	
	1979 (June)	25 p.	24	
	1980			
	1979 (October)	42 p.	40	
	1979	110 p.	ca. 250	Forte dei Marmi Library, Forte Dei Marmi, Italy, 1–16 September, 1979
	1980 (January)	68 p.	63	
	1980 (February)	90 p.	83	
	1980	30 p.		
	1980 (October)	160 p.	140	Galeria Wielka 19 / Galeria Rysunku, Poznan, Poland, October 1981
	1980			
	1980			
	1981 (May)	78 p.	80	
	1980	222 p.	199	BBK-Gallery, Hahnenforburg, Cologne, West Germany, 7 March – 15 April, 1980; Künstlerhaus Hamburg, Germany
	1980	36 p.	30	
	1980	113 p.	47	BWA + ZPAP – Galerie Wigry, Suwalki, Poland

Issue	Title	Compiler / Publisher	Country (and city)
35	Special Spaces	Schulze, Heinz	USA (Austin, Texas)
36	IDEA and Communication	Ruch, Günter	Switzerland
37	Things to Think About in Space	Lara, Mario	USA (San Diego, California)
38	Save the Small Things	Anker, M. P. (Fachschule für Werbung und Gest.)	Germany, E. (Berlin)
39	Homosexuality	MachArt, Cristoph (Kunstproduktion)	Germany, W. (Witten)
40	Museums	van Geluwe, Johan	Belgium (Antwerp)
41	Mutual Illumination	Suin de Boutemard, Bernhard Prof. Dr. (Alternatives Vorlesungsverzeichnis Nr. 5, Suin Buch-Verlag)	Germany
42	Postal Regulations	Duquette, Michael	Canada (Toronto, Ontario)
42a	The Locals Show	Duquette, Michael	Canada (Toronto, Ontario)
43	Mail Artists Live on the Edge	Saunders, R. (OK Post East)	USA (New Boston, New Hampshire)
44	Artists' Body of Statements and/or Secrets	Erlj, Tania	USA (Cambridge, Massachusetts)
45		Jupitter-Larsen, Gerald X.	
46	Photoboothpicture. Automatenfotos	Schmidt, Angelika	Germany, W. (Stuttgart)
47	Material Metamorphosis	Kid, Crackerjack (Chuck Welch)	USA (Omaha, Nebraska)
48	Selfexamination	Schmidt-Olsen, Carsten	Denmark (Kiregardsvej)
49	U	Prost, R.	USA (Morton Grove, Illinois)
50	Synthesism (? Post Industrialism)(? Hybrids)	Walsh, Emmett	USA (South Gulfport, Florida)
51	Hungary Can Be Yours	Galántai, György (Artpool)	Hungary (Budapest)
52	Art and Play with Rubberstamps	Nold, Welfried	Germany, W. (Frankfurt)
53	The Dictionary	Fürstenau, Klaus Peter	Germany, W. (Frankfurt)
54	Language and Silence	Semah, Joseph (Makkom)	The Netherlands (Amsterdam)
55	Mail Art about Mail Art	Held, John Jr.	USA (Dallas, Texas)
56	Commonpress Retrospective	Bleus, George (Administration Center)	Belgium (Wellen)
57	Comment about the Impact of New Technology on Your Art	Post Co-Action Development	Australia (Newtown)
59	Why I Hate the World	Jupitter-Larsen, Gerald	Canada (Vancouver)
60	Fell of Vision	Postal Collective Depot	Australia (Newtown)
64	Ein Berliner in Pariser	Küstermann, Peter	Germany, W. (Minden)
77	The Big Golden Book of Flash / Tattoo	Fish, Pat	USA (Santa Barbara, California)
93		Ergen of Mer / Cetacean Advocacy	Santa Barbara, CA
100	Your Favorite Pornography	Jesch, Birger	Germany (Volkmanndorf)

LISTS OF COMMONPRESS ISSUES PUBLISHED BY ITS PARTICIPANTS

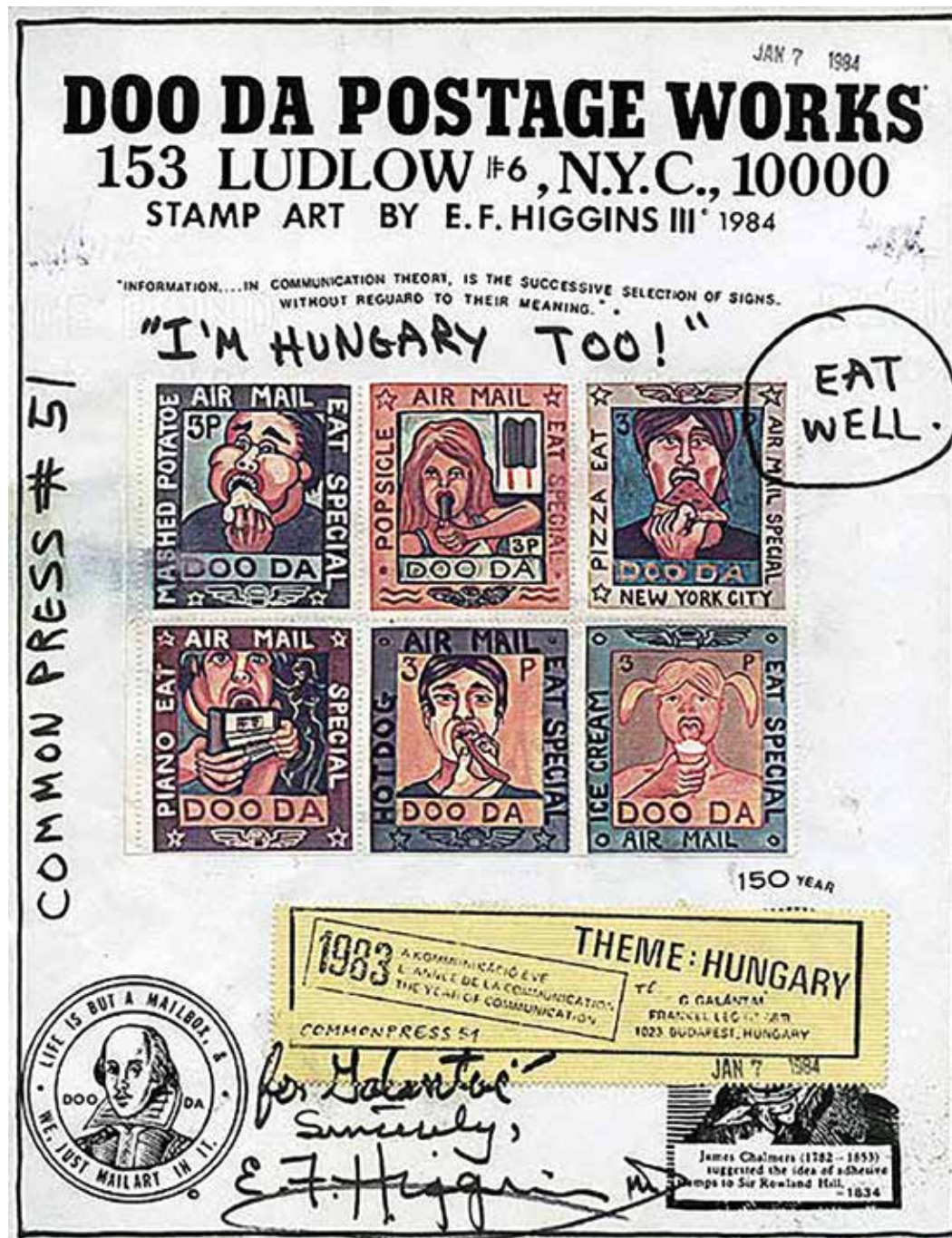
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	Date	Pages	Participants	EXHIBITION
	1980			
	1980	60 p.	120, 23 countries	
	1980	216 p.	197	
	1980 (December)	24 p.	66	Fachschule für Werbung und Gest., Berlin, GDR, 1981
	1981	38 p.	138, 18 countries	Kommunikations-Centrum-Ruhr (KCR), Dortmund
				The Museum of the Museums, Internationaal Cultureel Centrum, Antwerpen, Belgium, 17 January – 1 March, 1981
	1983			
	1981 (May 27.)	1 p.		
	1990 (May)	12 p.	386	The Locals Show. Mayworks Festival, Canadian Auto Workers Local 303 Union Hall, Toronto, Canada. May 1990; Eighteenth Constitutional Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress, Montreal, Quebec; National Convention of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, June 11–15, 1990.
	1982	35 p.		
	1982	1 p.		
	1982			
	1982	ca. 80 p.	130	Bellevue College Hitchcock Humanities Center, 02.12.1981–03.01.1982.
	1985	198 p.	133, 22 countries	
	1982	55 p.	41	
	1984	12 p.	140	
	1984. 1989	ca. 60 p.	110	Hungary Can Be Yours, Young Artists' Club (FMK), Budapest, Hungary 27 January, 1984; Reconstruction of a Banned Exhibition, 9 – 21 December, 1989, Young Artists' Club (FMK), Budapest, Hungary
	1984	156 p.	99	
	1984	46 p.	44	
	1984	34 p.	ca. 400	Richland College, Richland, Texas in March 1984
	1984	821 p.	570	
	1985			
	1982	13 p.	45	
	1986			
	1985	104 p.		
	1986			
	1987			
	1989	20 p.		



E. F. Higgins III
Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

TOP SECRET

III/III-4-b subdivision

Received from: "Zoltán Pécsi"

code named secret agent

Received by: Tibor Horváth police captain

Place of reception: Public place

Date: January 30, 1984

Subject: Exhibition of György Galántai

R E P O R T

"György Galántai launched his newest "arts competition" in 1983 under the title "Hungary can be yours". Of the "works of art" he had received, he organized an exhibition at the Young Artists' Club (Budapest, district 6. Népköztársaság útja 112). The opening of the exhibition took place on January 27, 1984 at 7 p.m. at that address, in all premises of the Club where my acquaintance was present. Entrance was granted for holders of an invitation card. At the entrance severe guards (probably the organizers from the Club or the local Committee of the Young Communists' Organization) were posted this time too, who did not let in those without an invitation or holding a membership card even if they paid the HUF 10 entrance fee. Undoubtedly, these persons later slipped in by way of being "helped" by people who had an invitation card but came alone (one card was a ticket for two). The exhibition, however, was opened as a "private event" due to which disputes erupted at the entrance.

What is to be said in summary: For Galántai's competition several "works of art" (in reality plain botch-works) had been provided that are politically problematic, destructively criticize and, moreover - primarily some of those made by Hungarian "artists" - mock and attack our state and social order as well as the state security organs. Galántai was unable to separate these pieces from the rest of the works, which most probably would have been against his intentions anyway. Thus, the above mentioned seriously problematic works were exhibited too and as a great number of visitors were present, the exhibition fulfilled a politically harmful, destructive and disorientating role. This function was enhanced by the fact that the most radical representatives of the Hungarian "opposition" appeared at the opening and, though behaving relatively modestly (none of them spoke to larger groups), in small conversation groups of 3 or 4 they had a chance to propagate their views.

At the opening there was an extraordinarily large number of people present (at least 250). The number of persons was more difficult to estimate than usually for the exhibition and the opening took place in three large rooms of the club and people were permanently fluctuating. Even hallways, stairways and the basement canteen (buffet) were occupied. Presumably, 30 to 40 people never even left the canteen; as this area was jammed, the number might have been even greater. On the whole, the maximum estimate is around 350 to 400 people. If so many were actually present, it was in defiance of the possibilities of the club for the size of the space allows for the civilized housing and entertainment of not more than 150 to 200.

Among those present there were Miklós Haraszti, Gábor Demszky (and his lady friend "Rozika"), György Krassó, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, János Kenedi – all of them the most radical representatives of the "opposition". Also present were several known members of SZETA [Foundation for Supporting the Poor] such as András Nagy, Ottilia Solt and their friend János Malina. Nagy and Solt were accompanied by two children of Solt, the elder daughter and the youngest son (Máté); 2 or 3 other children (aged 5 or 6) joined them. The presence of children especially aggressively highlights the irresponsibility of Nagy and Solt. In that environment small children naturally grew hapless and impatient in a short while. They constantly fell in the thick crowd, one of them hurt himself gravely (needed nursing), later they fought and danced on the stage in the darkened room (see below) provoking laughter from the audience. These small children were still in the club as late as a few minutes before 11 p.m.(!). Apart from these people, the audience included a few remote SZETA "sympathizers": a bearded and bespectacled man earlier seen in Nagy's apartment a few times (the one who wants to publish Orwell's 1984 in Hungarian) as well as László Algol and Péter Rácz. There was also a man addressed as "Tóth" who too is András Nagy's acquaintance and was at Nagy's several times. The number of artists and musician was significant. Apart from Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay, there were István Haász and Attila Pácser, the graphic artist. The number of artists providing works was probably much higher. László Beke and Éva Körner art historians; certain circles of the literary world, such as persons gathering around the "Lélegzet" [Breath] literary events were there too. Also present were Ádám Tábor, Balázs Györe, Endre Miklóssy. János Tamás Katona, a philosopher was there too who earlier made himself known by organizing opposition activities at the Faculty of Arts. According to Ádám Tábor, Endre Kukorelly, the poet, one of the editors of the "Jelenlét" [Presence] anthologies also was there.

It must, however, be emphasized that the exhibition was opened without permission. On this György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay said the following (I was given a brief account):

It is not the club that selected the material to be exhibited but the usual jury procedure was conducted. To be the jury for the Galántai exhibition, the Club asked artists Ádám Kéri and András Baranyai, who both accepted. Asking them is not hostile towards Galántai by any means as the two were in the same courses with Galántai at the Arts College; furthermore, according to Júlia Klaniczay, they had actively supported Galántai at various fora in the near past. Kéri and Baranyay, however, having a closer look at the works got "frightened" and refused to judge them as suitable for an exhibition. In fact, the Club thus was not in the position to grant its permission. Despite this, Galántai mounted the usual glass show cases and displayed the non-painting type objects (besides paintings and graphic works several spatial objects and objects of use had been provided), requiring a minimum of thirty to forty hours of work by Galántai at home and on the site. The majority of visitors – facing a most regular "exhibition" – obviously did not even know that the exhibition was illegal. Some people whispered others the gossip that there was no permission and the whole thing would be closed down soon. According to Júlia Klaniczay, Kéri's and Baranyai's comment on the material was that what Galántai had wanted could have been somehow OK-ed, but this Hungary topic ... just would not go, this was already politics and was a tough thing. (They said this despite they had their own works exhibited.) First I will describe the "works" displayed.

Then I will turn to the events at the opening and to the various private conversations of my acquaintance.

The first thing to be noted is that Galántai had received much fewer works and from much fewer artists, both from home and abroad, than in the case of the stamp competition. This is certainly to be explained by the political nature of the topic. Several of the competitors, while sending in a work, tried to hide the inevitable consequence of their act: notably that in one way or another, the "works" express an opinion on Hungary, a state and a society. About

three-quarters of the works were absolutely apolitical, insignificant and neutral, and only revealed something about the personality and thoughts of the creators, and Hungary was but a vague "excuse". The best illustration of these little problematic works is a painting by a domestic artist showing a monk who prays in front of a fire and is clad in oriental garment in a clearing in the Himalayas. The rising smoke winds into a spiral and lets see an unclear map of Hungary. Obviously, in this kind of painting any other country, or any other symbol could appear in the "smoke". There were, however, some gravely problematic and politically offensive and destructive "works of art" to be described here in detail.

Galántai separated domestic "pieces of art" from foreign ones and exhibited them in the so-called "small room" on the mezzanine floor. The two, undisputedly most aggressively oppositional works, were provided by the INCONNU group. One of them is the map of Hungary at the bottom of which it reads - cited nearly word by word: This map has been created to help the state security organs to better meet their task of tailing INCONNU. The creators wish them good luck!

(A word or two may be different but the meaning of the text was exactly this.) Next to it a French sign: "Où est l'inconnu?" which means "Where is the unknown?" or in a different interpretation "Where is INCONNU?" The map itself seems to find an answer (in an infantile way). The sign at the bottom of the map says that it has been created by INCONNU members Csécsei, Molnár and Bokros. They have located the towns Csécse, Molnári and Bokros in the map, marked them green and linked them as if INCONNU were there and should be looked for there. In the map the geography of Hungary had been considerably changed. The most conspicuous thing is not that regions had been pasted to different places, (for instance, the area around lake Balaton to the South of the South Plain, across the country border), but that huge lands had been "named after" the best known artists of the West of the 1970s (Cavellini, Rauschenberg etc.). As if these people owned estates in Hungary or regions and counties had been named after them. On the other side a huge sign reading "HUNGARY IS ART" [in English in the original] is running across.

INCONNU had submitted another, maybe even more aggressive "work of art". From a wood board mounted on the wall approximately 10 cm long nails stick out in a chessboard arrangement. A crumpled up paper map of Hungary, much smaller than the board, is pinned on the nails. Beneath, on a table black paint drops, imitating congealed blood, are sprayed on a heap of broken glass. The meaning of this "work of art" in a minimal interpretation might be that our homeland is humiliated and tormented. However, both the board and the nails being painted red, may bring further association (the red color being the symbol of the international workers' movement, communism or particularly the Soviet Union).

In a work by Miklós Erdély, a similarly poor "trick" is observed. In an artless drawing there is a three-strip flag (obviously the Hungarian tricolor) in black and white. In each of the strips the signs of traffic lights are drawn and marked "stop" "wait" and "go". (These signs are not colored either, the whole drawing is black and white (probably carbon paper was used). The sign beneath reads "villanyrendőr" [the word by word translation is "electric policeman", which in Hungarian is a popular name for traffic light]. Even viewers with little fantasy are able to make the connection between the tricolor flag as the symbol of the state with the word "policeman", and with the drawing of the traffic lights. Thus, the meaning of the work is: "Hungary is a police state". (This meaning is, however, not directly expressed, and Erdély can easily defend himself saying that the drawing means something completely different; for that particular audience, however, the above described interpretation was absolutely clear.)

Several other problematic "works of art" had been sent in by Hungarian artists. In one of the corners, for instance, four paper panels were hung from the ceiling to make the walls of a "room". People could "slip in" from under and see a series of photos inside. The photos are of a staircase in which 50 to 60 persons are walking;

the majority of them are young, one teenager is grimacing and flailing his arms in high spirits. In some of the photos, however, faces of Gáspár Miklós Tamás, György Krassó and Ferenc Kőszeg can be recognized by those who know them. So it turns out that the photos of the groups had been made at some "opposition" event - maybe at an illegal "flying university" - and the series popularizes the "opposition". The photographer is István Jávör.

The English title of another series of photos pasted on a sheet is "The invasion of Hungary" [in English in the original]. On a table, the map of Hungary is formed of slices of bread spread with pork fat, and the people sitting around the table gradually "annihilate" the map by picking up the slices and eating them. In another picture a fork is stuck in an apple, which is painted in the national colors, and a knife is peeling the apple. On the top of the picture the title reads: "The situation is hopeless but not hard" - the inverse of the well-known phrase "The situation is hard but not hopeless". This may rouse associations that fall in line with the Western propaganda. (The picture obviously means that life nowadays in Hungary is not especially hard but to break away from the alliance or to fundamentally change the current social system in terms of internal politics is "hopeless". It is hardly doubtful that most viewers interpreted the knife peeling the national colored apple as the Soviet Union "exploiting" our homeland. This kind of claim was found in some of the foreign works.)

There was a strikingly large number of pictures showing Greater Hungary, and other old maps copied and pasted. Besides graphic works and paintings, there was a number of purely literary works. (Here "literary" is meant as a genre category and to assess their value is beyond my undertaking here.) Endre Kukorelly, for instance, typed a long poem over the map of Greater Hungary, while another provider sent in a four-page plan on "Draining Hungary". (This work fits in the creative direction known as "project art" [in English in the original]: the artist designs a piece of art or action but does not actually carry it out, only exhibits the plans. In this case the plan itself is absurd: the author plans to drain lake Balaton through the Sió channel, then, inspired by a farfetched idea, would keep pumping until the whole country goes down to the Black sea.) At the beginning of this mess of pathological ideas one can read that the artist was inspired by a conversation published in the 5th issue of "AL", Galántai's periodical.

Among works by native artists, the topic of food and eating featured frequently. The same is found in works by foreign artists which Galántai exhibited in the basement show-room. That foreigners were "taken" in the direction of hunger and eating and food is due to several factors. First of all a linguistic accident: in English the word for Magyarország is Hungary, which is pronounced almost identically with "hungry" or "hunger". The sound of the letter a is hardly pronounced at all. This has been the ground for foreign puns on our homeland and Hungarians for decades. At the exhibition too, there is a foreign "picture" of an empty butcher's shop. The title: "And what about Hungary?" [in English in the original] (With the word Hungary, a little bit distorted, it says "And what about the hungry?"). Many European "artists" do know, of course, that our country has a well-developed agriculture and food industry, and there is a large food supply. Thus, in some of the pictures, next to "hunger" there are abundant piles of food, among them pepper. Similarly trivial are clippings cut out of advertisement brochures of Hungarian restaurants and bars.

However, there was an even more characteristic reaction by foreigners to the competition. In many works - obviously made independently from each other in different foreign countries - pages and entries of encyclopaedia are haunting, among them old ones (from the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy). There is only one explanation to that. Foreign "artists", having received the invitation to the competition, had thought that they did not know anything about Hungary. In order to start at least thinking, they applied the easiest solution: opened up an encyclopaedia. Later they copied in their pictures what they had found. A similar response is

found in the work by the German Klaus Groh, though with a slightly different solution: he used the method of "brainstorming" [in English in the original] to invoke thoughts about the word "Hungary". He lists the first ideas (which, by the way, politically are not critical, for instance he has the names of Bartók and Moholy-Nagy). A Dutch artist writes: "I don't know anything about Hungary, never been there."

One can find the other extreme, too, though in a smaller number: Galántai's personal friends, who "know a lot" about Hungary, and also know people personally. A series of paintings of six death's heads, for instance features Galántai himself, then Róbert Swierkiewicz, László L. Hegedűs, and the Inconnu members.

More concretely political works in the foreign sector are very rare. There are some, however, which are illustrations of the topic of the "iron curtain" or of Hungary being "closed". In a photo sent from abroad there is a wooded area with a huge sign in the center "Border zone!" Entering is strictly forbidden!" Another "work" bears a mocking English title "I love the Hungarian border guards". Only one single work was more offensive: an Italian artist wrote in English: "I sympathize with the brave Hungarian people who have to suffer a lot from their overlords" ["overlords" given in English]. Those who speak English well may find an anti-Soviet attitude in the word "overlords". The same Italian author also mentions that one of his grandmothers was born in the territory of Hungary.

Another, more political work illustrates a claim of Western propaganda that Hungary "has moved away from the ideals of communism" and is a "half socialist and half capitalist" country. In the picture there is a Coca-Cola can with a conspicuous Cola sign - a realistic representation. In the place of the brand logo, however, there is a classical Marx portrait.

There were also some bizarre works "out of line". For instance, a foreign artist wrote that he "hated government states [government states given in English], but hated anarchist states just as much". As practically all countries on Earth have governments, what the author wants to tell us is that he does not like any of them, even if there were countries where anarchy broke out. And as if this were not enough, he adds: "furthermore I hate all varieties of this two social maladies" (i.e. government rule and anarchy). Another work sent from Brazil - probably guided by true anti-fascist and leftist views - warns: Hungarians, do not forget what fascism was!" (This title is written exclusively in English. An indication how educated the author was that he had misspelled fascism twice). In the photo mass hanging, tortured men - maybe in a concentration camp -, destroyed neighborhoods are seen as well as a portrait of Hitler. (This work, if meaning anything at all, obviously is about the Brazilian junta rather than present day Hungary. Nevertheless, Galántai put this one on the wall, too.)

Events at the opening only loosely relate to the material of the exhibition. Galántai used the occasion of the exhibition to present his collection of sound recordings. The recordings, however, could have been played at any other exhibition or performance. The place of the main presentation was the darkened main room of the club. The audience here were seated in rows as if in a movie but nothing was projected, a sound montage was played on a stereo system. The montage was made up of short sections, on average 4 or 5 minute long each. The majority of the excerpts were recordings of pop bands, which, however, were not popular and well-known bands but groups having appeared in the last 2 or 3 years with scarcely any professional musicians among them. In many of the groups literary people and artists are trying to "do music", though the result is not music but recital of texts or unarticulated howling accompanied by a few instruments. There were, however, in between the musical parts, readings of poems and prosaic excerpts, and even parts of recorded every day conversations. The invitation letter by Galántai lists all the bands as well as the authors of the literary excerpts. Among the latter there are infamous members of the "opposition" such as István Eörsi. Listed are the deceased Tibor Hajas and

Tamás Szentjóby, who have "expanded" the domestic art as far as to include pathological sadism and symptoms that would require mental treatment. The sound montage itself is of a very bad recording and playing quality. Although some of the audience patiently listened to the pieces, in reality neither the "musical" nor the prosaic recordings were intelligible. The only exception was the politically absolutely uninteresting composition by a punk group ("I'll call you on the phone"). As for the rest, only snatches and fragments of sentences could be discerned. In one of the "poems" one could hear that "socialism is nice but communism is going to be even nicer because even toilet bowls will be made of gold ..." though several lines of this poem too could not be heard. (It may have been the passage by István Eörsi.) Another "account" said that the narrator for the first time in his life went in the District Council to pay taxes and the officer there makes the following statement: "That Taigetos was not such a bad thing after all." (This text did not have anything politically objectionable passage.) There was also one "lyrical" poem-like attempt in which the author relates his prison experiences - or rather a dream about a prison; in the middle of the cot there is a mirror from which not he himself but a stranger is looking at him. There were regular poems too, for instance by Ádám Tábor, but one could know it only later when Tábor himself said that it had been his work.

According to the invitation card, the sound montage included something from the CPg punk group. This is the group which has made a name for itself even in the radical "opposition" circles by writing harsh anti-state and anti-party attacks and by using an obscene language. In the montage, played by Galántai, there was a "musical" part which kept repeating "mother fucker", though it might not be the CPg. (András Nagy earlier mentioned that Péter Erdős, the director of Hanglemezőgyár [Records Company] and head of the Pro Menedzser Iroda [a management agency] was called that dirty and obscene name for a newspaper article of his. Erdős' name, however, could not be heard in Galántai's montage.)

Galántai's comment on the montage was that the "Eszperantó" group heard is not the same as the "Eszperantó Eszpresszó" from the town of Szentendre (a fairly conventional pop band playing at avant-garde art events such as the Lajos Vajda Studio) and the abbreviation VHK stands for a band named Vágtázó Halottkémek [Galloping Coroners]. Galántai seemed to have a special liking for this band. Some of the members of various punk groups came personally to the opening. My acquaintance was witness of a conversation of Galántai and a very young, 17 or 18 year-old musician in which the bad quality of the recording was complained about.

At the opening not this sound montage was the only "event". Galántai placed megaphones in the other two rooms (the "small room" on the mezzanine, and in the basement, in the room for foreign works), and also a TV set in the latter. Various materials were played there too. The material played in the small room on the mezzanine was not identical with the montage "broadcast" in the darkened main room. The former was made up of movement and mass songs. Galántai did not select the best known mass songs of the 1950s and 60s but the newer compositions of the 1970s, among them songs of the KISZ [Communist Youth Organization] and the of the workers' militia. (In most recordings there were choirs, soloists and the orchestra.) The total of the recording was longer than the montage in the main room, movement songs coming one after the other for over one hour and a half. Galántai's selection of the newest musical pieces was presumably a conscious choice. Older ones would strike this audience as outmoded, which had been mocked, disparaged by earlier performances, and sharply criticized even by official publications. The newest movement songs, however, contain a good many elements of pop music and seem to be closer to the taste of the young. For viewers at the Young Artists' Club, deeply sympathizing with the opposition, these songs seemed to be more suitable to provide a "counterpoint", to create the contrast with the works exhibited. Several of the songs caused great amusement.

During and after the events of the opening, my acquaintance had several private conversations.

He could meet Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay only briefly for they were "passed from hand to hand"; everyone seemed to want to talk to them. Apart from the issue of permission, described above, it was once again raised that my acquaintance placed some of his poems written in the 1970s in Galántai's archive (Art Pool). They agreed that my acquaintance would call Galántai in 2 or 3 weeks to set a date for a visit. (Despite the many months that have passed, Galántai received my acquaintance in a friendly way.)

A longer conversation took place between Ádám Tábor, Györe and Rác and my acquaintance. The leader of the conversation was Györe, who talked about what he had seen in the Attila József Circle (JAK). Györe seems to plunge ever deeper in the activities of the Writers' Association and of the Circle, which is not characteristic of the rest of the member of the group "Lélegzet" [Breath]. Györe said that there were preparations conducted in the Attila József Circle for the election of a leadership. He himself had been elected member of the committee to nominate the secretary. Ákos Szilágyi was a potential candidate for secretary. (A man not known by his name joined the conversation at this point and noted that many JAK members did not trust Szilágyi, though distrust was even greater towards young poets and writers with few publications and less reputation than Szilágyi. Szilágyi elected, he said, might find himself in the role of the "spin": he will not be able to get the Circle accept what the Ministry wants, while demands of members will be regarded out of question by the Ministry.) It was also mentioned that at a JAK meeting - held that day or 2 or 3 days before - Gáspár Miklós Tamás was present and made a longer speech. In his speech he had not addressed JAK issues but had presented his opinion on world politics and home politics in a sharp and aggressive way. Balázs Györe said that Gáspár Tamás' speech was harmful for the cause of the Attila József Circle and had better present his views at some other forum for it was not suitable there. (The discussion here turned back to the "Mozgó Világ" [Moving World, a periodical] meeting at the law faculty of the Budapest University, at which Gáspár Tamás confronted Dezső Tóth deputy minister.) Ádám Tábor said that the last "Lélegzet" evening had been a great success and they were planning to organize another one. Also the idea of founding a literary periodical was raised again. Allegedly, members of the "Lélegzet" group had already drafted a request for permission of launching a periodical to be submitted to the authorities in the near future."

"Pécsi Zoltán"

Evaluation: "Zoltán Pécsi" code named secret agent brought reliable, and from the operative perspective valuable information on Galántai's exhibition held in the Young Artists' Club, where several works representing enemy ideas were on show.

On Galántai's invitation, enemy persons belonging to the opposition came to the opening. There were, for instance, Miklós Haraszty, Gábor Demszky, Ottilia Solt and János Kenedi etc. present.

Action: On the circumstances of the exhibition and on the material representing enemy ideas an informational report will be drafted for the upper leadership.

On the planned presentation of the exhibition material in MTV a verbal signaling will be provided to the chairperson of MTV.

Task: Task assigned to secret agent concerning György Galántai.

Budapest, February 13, 1984

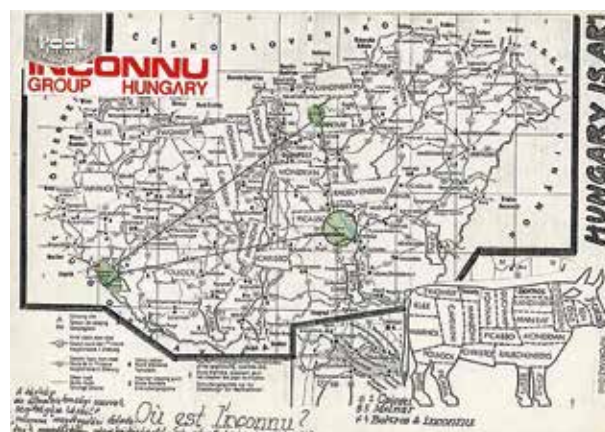
Tibor Horváth police Captain



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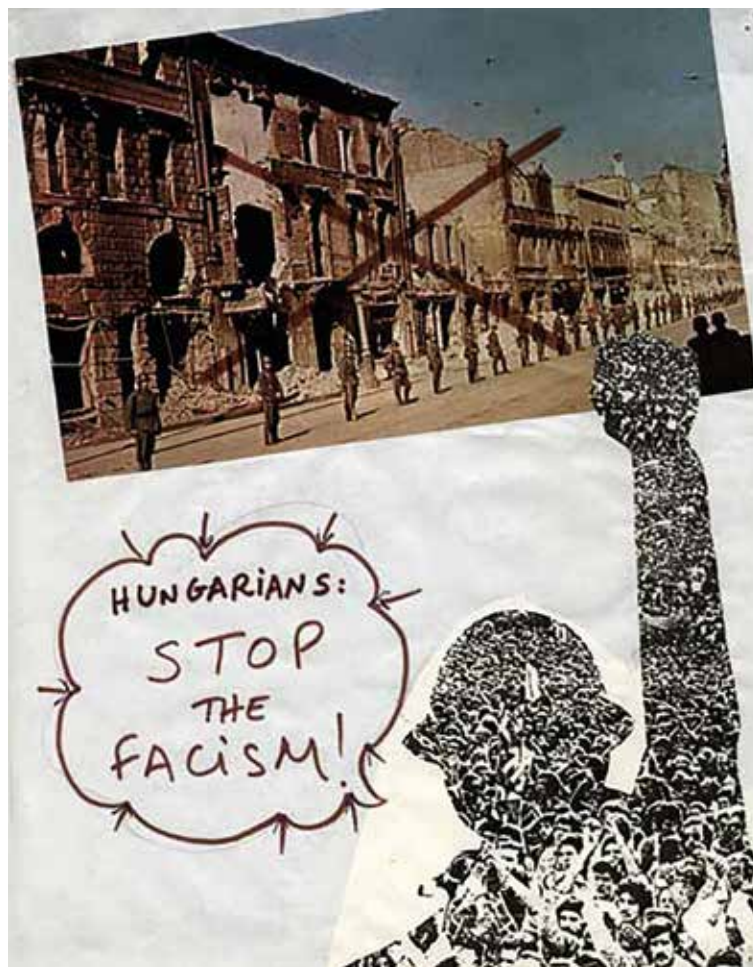
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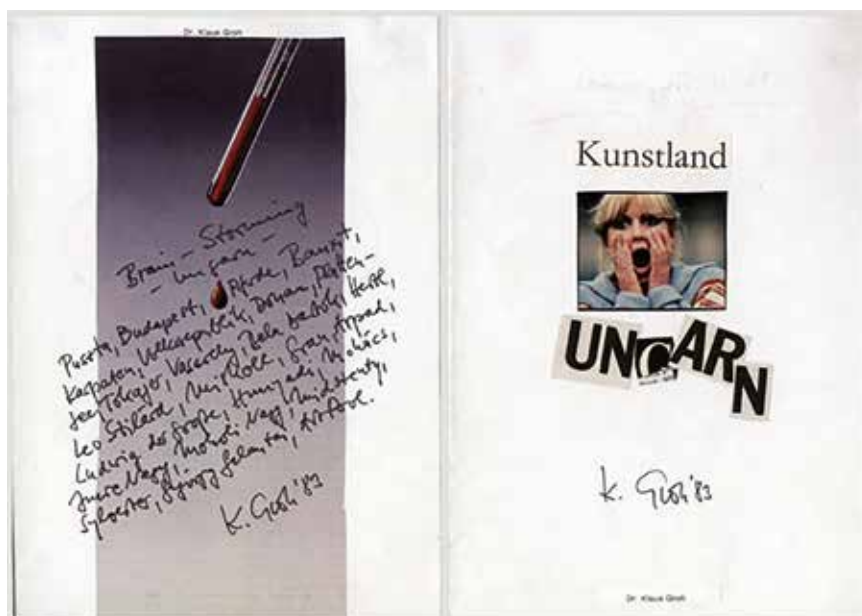


1. Pácser Attila
2. Inconnu Group
3. Inconnu Group
4. Clemente Padin
5. Klaus Groh

Courtesy of Artpool Art
Research Center
– Museum of Fine Arts,
Budapest



4



5

**To the attention of
the readers / researchers:**

The information contained in the reports can only be treated as source material in regard to the activities of the secret services. **The data they contain about the artistic scene of the era are to a great extent wrong or incorrect**, therefore they should not under any circumstances be used as reference in any scientific research unless confirmed by data found in reliable sources.

Documents about the Avant-garde art events in the period from the seventies to the change in the political system can be most comprehensively researched in the archives of the Artpool Art Research Center.

György Galántai: I decided to publish the material contained in the dossier codenamed "Painter" because **my entire life's work can only be understood if the environment in which it was built is known**. It was a world where through the practice of cultural security the secret police sought to control the general atmosphere, thinking and personal norms as well as the circumstances of acceptable social activity.

I can assertively say that **the greatest loss suffered by Hungarian art** was not the confiscation of large amounts of mail but **the destruction of normal human relationships**, which was achieved by the network through consistently (for decades) applying the method of disruption, disinformation and signalisation.

What can be done after all this? (according to the post-neo-Avant-garde approach of Miklós Erdély: "One must acknowledge one's own competence with regards to one's life and fate, and keep to it above all else. [...] Whatever one can accomplish with the limited tools at one's disposal one must do without delay.")

Quoted after: *Miklós Erdély: Optimistic Lecture: The Features of the Post-neo-avant-garde Attitude." Translated by Zsuzsanna Szegedy-Maszák. Originally read at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Aesthetics, Budapest, 22 April 1981.