

Distinct Aesthetics– Objects of Art as Political Markers

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Art intercepts social changes before they have fully matured. It situates itself on the outside, offering glimpses into society.¹ However, in order to do so it must also reside within society, while being committed to the culture that created it as opposed to any higher organization that wishes to control it.² Within a totalitarian regime artists become dichotomized between those who serve their government by producing state sanctioned propaganda, and those who are viewed as non-compliant intellectuals. Some, however, learn to navigate such polarizing labels. The period of pseudo-cultural liberty experienced in Eastern Europe in the 1960s came to an abrupt end as artists fled politically fraught milieus that were becoming entrenched in Neo-Stalinist ideologies. The year 1970 marked the beginning of a mass exodus of artists from several Eastern European countries, highlighting a larger, more tumultuous relationship between art and politics that stretched across the region. Post World War II, the world was left in a precarious position between having witnessed massive destruction and knowing that the potential for even larger scale devastation was on the brinks of being created. This was indicative of the brusque transition from socialism to communist totalitarianism in the middle of the ongoing Cold War. In a political frenzy for popular support, artists of the 1960s in numerous nations throughout Eastern Europe were persuaded to represent their government, remain silent, or risk being silenced. Those left behind had to figure out new forms of expression.

By determining the continuum through which artistic endeavors existed at pivotal moments in recent history, the long held belief that posited Eastern Europe as a single entity becomes challenged – Eastern Europe’s multiple countries were not acting with one accord. Additionally, the focus of this work remains on art pieces made by those artists who refused

exile and chose to navigate the changing aesthetics in parallel fashions to those who migrated abroad. Arguably, those who stayed faced greater challenges, both politically and artistically. They answered to unwavering regimes, while negotiating the disparity between artistic “realism” that was concerned solely with truth telling and “socialist realism” that was concerned with ideology. The represented artists and artworks in this paper were chosen to provide examples in a variety of media, ranging from the plastic arts, to painting, video, and photography. Further, they are grouped thematically by region to demonstrate the essence of distinct aesthetics as each grouping responds to the distinct political environment in which the works were created, using media that is appropriate to their respective milieus – not all the works were subversive, or even examples of underground art, nonetheless they suited the needs of the nation and the people for whom they were built and created. Case studies in three geographically related countries, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, will elucidate that while they all participated in artistic movements during communism, their approaches, agendas, and methodologies differed substantially and deserve to be looked at now in the same way they were created then – as *sui generis* manifestations of culture, politics, and art.

Bulgaria’s “Real Socialism”

Among the three countries featured in this study, Bulgaria had the closest relationship to Russia – culturally, socially, and linguistically. Bulgaria, in fact, until much later than the 1960s and 1970s, remained unwaveringly loyal to the Russian state. Its art responds to, but does not challenge Russian ideals, and thus Bulgaria serves as the perfect *Ansatzpunkt* from which to later view Hungarian art’s flagrant animosity towards Russian notions and communism in general, and Romanian art’s more cautious approach towards communism, and complete disinterest in

Russian ideas. Bulgaria also provides an example of political monuments on a large scale, both in size, and number. Moreover, ideologically, the various features Bulgaria and Russia shared shaped the way the Russian influence was felt in communist Bulgaria and, more importantly, how it was perceived in art. Historically, Russia's role in liberating the Bulgarians from the Ottomans defined the relationship that would later be replicated in Russia's post World War II role in liberating Bulgaria from fascism.³ The cycle of salvation solidified the positive association between liberation and the presence of the Russian army and its political body within Bulgarian borders. The door allowing socialism, communism, and essentially totalitarianism into Bulgaria had been opened from the inside. Subsequently, contrary to modern beliefs, the monuments and art pieces dedicated to the Russians were not mandated by any state apparatus, as much as they were genuine tokens of recognition that responded towards the Russians with gratitude. They were certainly commissioned by the government, but the artists that erected them were not coerced into doing so. Yet there was a turning point, within the country and from abroad.

Bulgarian art's close adherence to Russian ideals left critics remarking that the most original aspect of Bulgarian art was its refusal to follow Western tendencies. Piotr Piotrowski, in his book *In the Shadows of Yalta*,⁴ goes as far as to assert that underground, or alternative art never really existed in Bulgaria, unlike in other Eastern European countries. It is hard to argue against this claim considering the Russian-inspired monuments and sculptures erected in Bulgaria that greatly outnumber those in any other region.⁵ Further, the rampant attempts at destroying these pieces following the 1989 Revolution reflect the public reaction to the inundation with these objects. The once amicable relationship between Bulgaria and Russia soured during the 1980s, and the works became regarded as overbearing. Todor Zhivkov's

forced resignation as Bulgaria's leader on November 10, 1989 prompted a series of upheavals as the public demanded information about the government, which the government was not prepared to give. Václav Havel reminds readers that in a socialist regime, truth is fluid and relativistic.⁶ To exist, truth must be culturally and socially created and confirmed. However, in totalitarian regimes the discourse between the administration and society becomes so skewed as to mimic public consent to a manufactured truth. This phenomenon was so prevalent in Bulgaria that many people genuinely embraced the regime until the last moments when the gap between appearances and truth widened beyond repair, leaving the regime unable to fill the breach with state validated ideology, and the state apparatus was finally publicly seen for what it was, "a world of appearance trying to pass for reality."⁷

In Bulgaria's frenzy to shed the lingering cloaks of the iron curtain, pieces of art were torn down at such an alarming rate the government had to step in to protect the remaining historical monuments, while attempting to preserve others in the name of posterity. It was established that lashing out at these pieces in light of recent memories would be a disservice to future generations, and an erasure of national history. Instead of regarding these works of art as flashbacks to a time of oppression, they became symbols of survival, and reflections of the peoples' strength. The people, however, were not buying into this rebranding as can be evinced by the numerous public debates, physical protests, and acts of vandalism still being committed on and around many of the remaining standing structures. Numerous groups, including the Union of Democratic Forces, viewed these pieces as attempts at rewriting history to rehabilitate the communist regime,⁸ or even worse, fetishize the communist past for the sake of present consumption.⁹ Displaying only those works that were commissioned by the Bulgarian Communist Party would, in their eyes, dismiss the memory of those who were not in the party's

favor – artists and general citizens – who were force-fed large doses of ideology through these works of art. In other words, celebrating these works was interpreted not as a service to future generations, but as a disservice to those of the past.

The sheer number and size of these monuments was calculatingly large as a demonstration of the power behind the movement that influenced their creation, as well as the power of the current government machine that commissioned them. Further, they spanned large territories, rearing their heads in town centers across the country, refusing to be hidden away in museums where it could be argued that one would only view the pieces if one wished to visit the museum and do so. Yet even this had a purpose. Socialist art relied on community and public motifs, and it aimed to highlight a sense of fraternity. These monuments served this two-fold purpose: their depictions of comradery between the Russians and Bulgarians were prominently laid out; then they further interjected into public settings while functioning as backdrops to communal activities, constantly being linked to Bulgarian solidarity. Their prevalence in everyday life invited a sense of identification with those Bulgarians who fought alongside the Russians against menacing outside forces, while simultaneously presenting enough of a distance between onlookers and those being celebrated to lend the monuments a patina of mythology, casting them into the realm of a treasured past. However, their locations also forced everyday interactions that began echoing the shift of Russia's role from omnipresent harmless benefactor, to overbearing omnipotent oppressor which then became representative of the regime.

While the most notorious and well-debated example is the monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, several other monuments came into being during the 1950s in Burgas, Plovdiv, Tolbuhin, Varna, and Pleven, among other places. The latter location featured a Soviet soldier atop a pedestal bearing the message of freedom. It was prominently placed in conjunction with

the mausoleum for the fallen Russian and Romanian soldiers of 1877, tellingly reminiscent of the sacrifices suffered by the Russians on behalf of the Bulgarians. Similar symbolic gestures were found at the monument in Plovdiv that focuses on a statue of a Soviet soldier on a granite pedestal atop of a staircase, at the bottom of which lays a smaller mausoleum encasing an urn containing soldiers' remains with a plaque extolling the glory of the Soviet liberators. The bas-relief of the pedestal serves two purposes – on the south it notably depicts Soviet victories and casualties, and on the north, it displays Bulgaria's warm reception of the Soviets. These two events are indelibly interwoven in stone as a reminder of Bulgaria's need for Russia and the results of Russian interference. The Russian-Turkish war and the aftermath of WWII became conflated where the former prefigured the latter, and both provided a promise for the future.

In order for a socio-politically dominant group to maintain power it must appear to have obtained and to hold its power through the consent of its people. Russia legitimized itself in Bulgaria, among other countries, by constructing a social reality in which it was always already the ruling force or the leading example. In Antonio Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony, this consensual aspect implies mutuality between the state and the people that serves to reshape power dynamics.¹⁰ The relationship, however, is less symbiotic and often leaves the individual searching for equilibrium between the self, society, and the multilayered aspects of society that the state introduces and insists upon. The disparity between Gramscian ideology and physically experienced reality becomes exceedingly apparent in the context of a totalitarian regime in which the relationship between the state and the individual is strikingly one-sided. Bulgarian monuments did more than commemorate the importance of Soviet intervention in Bulgaria, as they also announced the idea of international solidarity, helped establish order, and ironically created national stability. They were the mouthpieces of the state, working to construct social

identity by constantly reminding the people of their indebtedness to Russia for providing them with their nationality. Bulgaria's need to establish itself was in large part made possible by the onslaught of Russian-inspired artwork, and unlike other Eastern European countries, it used these monuments to glorify itself as the recipient of aid from an important nation such as Russia.

While there was tension between those in support of Russian interference, and the consequent artwork associated with such a relationship, and those who would destroy the monuments to rebuild a national identity from within, this discrepancy further fueled the creation of Bulgarian identity. The resulting cultural identity all but elided producing new pieces of alternate art, and instead of creating art, Bulgaria defined itself through destruction. As passers-by shrank in the shadows of overbearing monuments at every corner, these objects no longer symbolized peace and salvation. They were too large to compete with – no alternate art could stand up to these monuments and speak with the same force. Thus, vandalism and mutilation became acts of creation onto themselves, and by defiling these statues and memorials, Bulgarians used Russian prompted and inspired pieces to either align themselves with or against the regime. Bulgaria defined itself from the outside.

Nevertheless, the dichotomization of art as existing either in favor of one ideology or another is an oversimplification of the complexities of art and its ability to represent a multitude of ideas during a time of duress. Eastern Europe was not the last example of totalitarianism, nor were its revolutions the first of their kind. Art has borne witness to it all. Moreover, art has betrayed its ability to present the past from multiple angles, and has divulged much more about its history than those who created or commissioned it had perhaps intended.

Hungarian “Socialist Realism”

In Hungary artists took on a completely different stance from Bulgaria, and Hungarian art during communism almost overtly opposed the communist state and its ideology.

Geographically, and politically, Hungary found itself between the USSR and the GDR (German Democratic Republic). The latter was under the influence of the former, but culturally still adhered to many of its previous ways of thinking. Additionally, Hungary had always had closer ties to Germany than Russia.¹¹ After 1956, Hungary became even bolder in its stance against communism, and staged various, albeit failed, attempts at dissent. Amidst the turmoil, even as direct critique of the Russian state remained taboo, Hungarian art mocked the apparatus in control and exposed the problems with that *status quo* more blatantly than other countries dared to do.¹² Hungary took advantage of the emerging trend of national identity. In an attempt to rid other communist states of the reputation of being Russia’s minions, the installation of national pride was erected to create the illusion of false autonomy given by Russia to its satellite states. Thus, as nationalism advanced socialism,¹³ socialism advanced national endeavors such as the arts.¹⁴ Potentially controversial works of art were somewhat publicly displayed in private quarters, such as communally rented out flats that would act as galleries for several artists. Some displayed their artwork in their own apartments that would act as salons for other artists and thinkers. The anti-communist messages were clear, while the pieces almost comically proposed to uphold conservative values. Self-preservation has always been a driving force, to be sure, but subversive acts against injustice and oppression have also always held a dear place in the artist’s heart. Nevertheless, as overt as the critique against the government ever became, it was always clouded in a miasma of doubt, providing a certain duplicity for each work that would allow it to negate blatant anti-communism, if the need to do so arose. After all, much like the Russians

allowed for local nationalism, they could also remove the privilege should it stop functioning desirably, as it once did in the 1940s, leading to massive revocation of previously granted freedoms. For the better part of the decade, Hungary felt the full wrath of the Soviet Union and did not quickly forget that freedom, much like liberation, was an illusion, and the artist only had as much independence as those in control would allow. Resistance, though satisfying, had to be subtle.

Gyula Pauer's sculptures exemplify a facet of the political resistance embodied by Hungarian art. His medium, at least initially, spoke to contemporary artists such as Gyula Gulyás' work with cobblestones, while his concepts are reminiscent of Victor Vasarely, whose Op-Art played with the distinction between what is and what is perceived. Pauer's aptly named *Pseudo* series depended on its title to work in conjunction with the pieces to convey the message of society's falseness and deception. He created cubes of different sizes, including installations that occupied entire rooms in which the folded and crumbled materials on the walls were painted to maintain the illusion of wrinkles or textures. However, as viewers were invited to touch the art, they found that the walls were, due to the paint, completely smooth. Despite appearances, the objects had no actual depth. The disparity between reality and illusion was directly reflective of the regime that projected multifarious aspects of itself, pretending a complexity that simply did not exist. In fact, communism depended upon uniformity from the top down, and actual wrinkles were, much like in real life, unfavorable blemishes to be removed or covered over. During the 1970 exhibit at the József Attila Cultural House in Budapest, Pauer created a life-sized exhibit into which people could walk and touch the walls. The public entered a microcosm of their world outside that starkly contrasted what they saw against the way it felt to the touch. The perceptions they had been fed were brought into question in the face of the reality of their surroundings. The

exhibit was open for two days – long enough to be filmed and documented, and to remain as an irremovable wrinkle in the communist agenda. Along with the other Hungarian art of the period, it would be later celebrated for its innovativeness, and public efforts would emerge to restore, reproduce, and in some cases, reacquire it.

In his *Gladness* series, Endre Tót relies upon the ways in which joy, or happiness, is demonstrated to hint towards its exact opposite. Typically, the works depict a photograph or image of him with an object in which he smilingly professes his gladness at an event that would not normally be read as such. For example, in one photograph, the Russian newspaper *Pravda* is held up, and through a hole at its center, Tót's face appears smiling, with the caption "I am glad if [I] can read newspaper." "Pravda" translates to "truth," which is an already ironic name for a newspaper designed for disseminating Soviet propaganda. Tót underscores the insincerity of the paper's title and prerogative with his own insincere smile and caption – in reality, like most others, he would be glad if they never had to read the paper again. His statement echoes public sentiment; people were not only fed up with the regime, but even more so with being constantly subjected to its indoctrination. The subtle, yet direct, approach was emblematic of his style, and over several decades, Tót created dozens of works combating the disingenuity of his government.

Whereas Tót and Pauer focused on the artificiality that plagued communism, Tamás Szentjóbby fixated on the dangers the regime posed for those, like himself, who outright opposed communist doctrine. For a few months in 1968, Czechoslovakia witnessed a brief period of social liberalization in which its government attempted to grant its citizens extended rights. These acts bred hope for other countries operating under communist regimes, and the artistic community immediately responded with support. However, before September of the same year,

the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia to halt the reforms and restabilize the country. In 1969, Szentj6by produced “Portable Trench for Three People.” It is a large canvas attached to two poles. When the canvas is folded, three people can duck into the “trench” and use the cloth that is typically associated with artistic programs as a barricade against invading forces. Art becomes the prophylactic against propaganda. However, it is after all only a piece of cloth – it cannot protect against devastating oppression from a giant body of government. When the canvas can no longer be utilized as a trench, it can be pulled apart and serve as a gurney to nurse those wounded by the state. The canvas, the quintessential symbol for art, can be used as a protective measure, and as a means of offering relief. In conjunction with the other contemporaneous artistic movements, specifically in Czechoslovakia in which self-inflicted violence became a common genre in performance art,¹⁵ Szentj6by’s piece becomes even more relevant.

However, not all nations were as overtly anti-communist as Hungary, or as welcoming towards communism as Bulgaria. Romania, for instance was far more cautious of overstepping its bounds and participated in the politics of avoidance, expressing the people’s disdain for the regime covertly. Romanian artists’ ideologies were completely buried within state funded artistic endeavors. Artists were hired by and worked for the state to develop state sanctioned art that garnered steady wages. Open dissent under one of the most brutal dictators in Europe was not an option.

Romanian “Social Realism”

After the death of Romania’s previous communist leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Nicolae Ceaușescu initially won popular support by making his version of the regime appear to be far more lenient than the one before. However, the freedom was short-lived, and by 1971, his

“Proposed measures for the improvement of political-ideological activity, of the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members, of all working people” speech, typically referred to as the July Theses, not only revoked previous allowances, but further restricted anything even remotely deemed artistic across all media, including the importing of any such things from abroad.¹⁶ The directives at first had the appearance of strong suggestions, curbed by the “imposition of themes, censoring of work, and obstacles to publication,” but would quickly escalate to imprisonment if an artist did not adhere to the initial prescriptions.¹⁷ Independent thoughts were dangerous enough, but outside influence upon independent thinkers posed a significantly greater threat that needed to be immediately addressed. In the face of other politics and their aesthetics “communism respond[ed] by politicizing art.”¹⁸ These new stringent rules produced duplicity in the artistic culture that demanded the coexistence of sanctioned and forbidden art, where the former functioned as a cover for the latter. In fact, as opposed to those who chose exile, those who buckled to state demands and used their skills for the creation of mandated propaganda remained a part of the larger artistic community and used their perspectives to offer inside commentaries on the regime, often using the tools at their disposal in order to critique the very system that commissioned their work subtly enough to go undetected.

Geta Brâtescu’s *Towards White* is a series of nine photographs featuring the artist in her atelier. With each progressive exposure she, the canvas before her and her surroundings become increasingly whiter, until her outline is barely visible. Officially, it is interpreted as the process undertaken by the communist regime to purify uncensored and thus corrupt ideas in order to make them wholesome for public consumption. However, this piece can also be read from the artist’s perspective: by acquiescing to state demands the artist loses her flavor – she becomes bland. Her style and ideas are washed away and replaced by uniform propaganda. In the end,

there is only a shell of an artist remaining. In other words, the piece can be read according to the ideology of the beholder.

By the same token, there were artists who created overt anti-communist art, but it was meant to be displayed strictly in trusted private quarters, and it did not publicly emerge until after the regime's fall. Ion Grigorescu used short films to convey his messages, including his *Dialogue with Ceaușescu* in which he played both sides of a mock interview with the dictator. In 1978, when he completed the project, it would have been treason, but today it is featured at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in Manhattan as a representation of artistic reactions to Eastern Europe's era of repression. Moreover, such pieces were instrumental in preserving the memory of pre-1989 Romania in a more authentic light than the government reconstructed narrative which emerged shortly after the Revolution.¹⁹ Personal mementos were quickly discarded by many, for various reasons, whether they were grieving their traumatic past and wanted to cleanse themselves of reminders, or they were afraid of the consequences for having communist keepsakes. Art then also steps in to reconstruct history, providing the touchstones necessary for those who wish to remember. Ion Grigorescu also participated in creating art that could be openly displayed, and that more than likely influenced Brâtescu. In 1974, he created *House Painter*. It is a picture of himself in which he is dressed as a common house painter, underscoring the collapse between artist and worker-for-hire that had occurred during communism. It is another instance in which the artist has his varied nuanced layers peeled away, leaving only the physical manifestations of the profession intact.

Ion Dumitriu's 1975 series of slides *Groapa de gunoi (The Litter Pit)* turns the lens from the dictatorship onto the results of the regime. Communism relied on falsification to the point where reality was too painful to bear. Ceaușescu created a government built on utter illusion,

which constantly demanded the gaze to be turned away from any undesirable facets of society, including poverty. The government's official stance cast the entire country as a realm of idealic perfection. However, the people were well aware of their surroundings, and it was only the government that lived in self-created ignorance. Thus, the depiction of the very aspects of society that were most offensive to the administration's sensibilities could become very problematic for the artist who wanted to shoot photographs of the marginalized denizens. Nevertheless, Dumitriu ventured into the margins, and photographed homelessness, people living in squalor, knee-deep trash on the streets of poor neighborhoods, and an overflowing sense of despair. While he did not portray anything new, the act of highlighting the government's failure to provide for its people was a revolutionary act onto itself.

Finally, there were those whose only act of dissent was a refusal to take sides, and even then they were acutely aware of their boundaries. In 2005 Sabin Bălașa gave an interview with the Romanian magazine *Marea Dragoste (The Big Love)* in which he was asked to consolidate his artistic independence with his government employment. He replied:

I do not refuse orders. When I needed money, and I needed it, because I have two children, and [the government] would come to me to command a work for Ceaușescu, I would accept with pleasure. But only with a single condition – to do it the way I want! If a rich woman from America commissioned me to paint a portrait of her dog, I would not be offended. I liked commissions during the time of Ceaușescu. But I painted them the way I wanted to.

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I didn't do politics, and no one told me what to do. Because I didn't do politics, and I didn't cause trouble, those from the Securitate didn't treat me badly. Why complain? Would I say I was a dissident? I stayed away from dissidence, from complaining, because dissidence is a form of complaining.²¹

Sabin Bălașa was a state artist who was at times even commissioned to paint official portraits of Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena. When not producing state art, his cooperation bought him the freedom to pursue personal interests like painting nudes without incurring punishments for

creating lewd and unsavory materials unfit for the public – the very types of works Geta Brâtescu’s photo series secretly condoned as she subtly critiqued the government’s censorship. Other artists did not necessarily share Bălașa’s compliance, but he was also not a rare example. Many neglected to have strong ideologies when faced with everyday concerns that could be mollified if they acquiesced to their government. When faced with the potential of avoidable hardships, artists, like people of all professions and standings, turned their backs on ideals and preferred to take a more opportunistic route towards self-preservation. As Bălașa candidly reminded his audience, he has two children, and simply could not afford to be political.

Withal, the majority of Romanian artists felt the disparity between what had been promised by Ceaușescu during his election campaign, and what had occurred. Even though the idea of politicians reneging on their campaign promises is not a novel concept, the extent of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship and the damage he would do to the country had not been foreseen. On his path to obliterate ideologies incompatible with his own, he left artists scampering to pacify both their government and their need to create. In other words, self-preservation in Romania was two-fold: there was the ever-present pressure to preserve the self in the midst of a despotic and unforgiving government, but also the artists’ strong desire to preserve their art in the face of erasure. These are not opposing positions, but rather two sides of the same coin, and the artist was constantly walking along the edge. At different points in their careers many artists made decisions as to which side they would be on, and provided the appropriate accompanying artwork to illustrate their life choices.

Conclusion

Disparate factors drove the impetus for the creation of art in different countries, and there were as many methods employed as there were countries and artists – art during communism, or any other politically fraught time, did not have a regional center. Had this study expanded to include, for example, countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, or Ukraine, just as many more artistic styles would have been brought to light. Essentially, when societies are pushed beyond their comfort levels, coping mechanisms abound, and art is first to react to and reflect them. For the purposes of discussing art in the communist regime, it is important for its multiple characteristics to be acknowledged; otherwise, it will remain inadequately documented and diluted with erroneous portrayals of censored state sanctioned art accounting for most of the output, as if nothing else ever existed. After all, in times of distress, the art that tells us the most about a culture is often created in the margins, but once created, it always finds its place at the center of society – as monuments in town squares and programs in national galleries.

¹ Caterina Preda, “Artistic Critiques of Modern Dictatorships,” *The European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms*, 17.7 (2012), pp. 899-917.

² Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1982).

³ J. M. Winter and E. Sivan (Eds.). *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: UP, 2000).

⁴ Piotr Piotrowski, *In The Shadows of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), pp. 55-93.

⁵ Anders Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era: An Aspect of Cold War History*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT UP, 1992).

⁶ Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1990*, (New York: Knopf, 1991), pp. 125-214.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 135.

⁸ Nikolai Vukov, "The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia and the Politics of Avoidance," *Cultures of History Forum*, <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/exhibitions/bulgaria/the-museum-of-socialist-art-in-sofia-and-the-politics-of-avoidance/>.

⁹ Duncan Light, "Gazing on communism: Heritage tourism and post-communist identities in Germany, Hungary and Romania," *Tourism Geographies*, 2.2 (2000), pp. 157-176.

¹⁰ Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci e la concezione della societa civile," *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea*, Ed. Pietro Rossi (Rome, 1969). pp. 75-100.

¹¹ Oliver Botar, "Constructivism, International Constructivism, and the Hungarian Emigration," *The Hungarian Avant-Garde 1914-1933*, (William Benton Museum of Art, 1987), pp. 90-98.

¹² Éva Forgács, "Between Cultures: Hungarian Concepts of Constructivism," *Exchange and Transformation: The Avant-Gardes of Central Europe*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT UP, 2002), pp. 146-164.

¹³ Steven Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917-1924*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 1994).

¹⁴ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, (New York: Cornell UP, 2001).

¹⁵ Lara Weibgen, "Performance as 'Ethical Momento:' Art and Self-Sacrifice in Communist Czechoslovakia," *Third Text*, 23.1 (2009), pp. 55-64.

¹⁶ Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate, Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989*, (London: Hurst & Company, 1995).

¹⁷ Ana Maria Cătănuș, "Capitolul IV. Represiunea împotriva intelectualilor: forme și manifestări," *Intelectuali români în Arhivele Comunismului*, Ed. Dan Cătănuș (Bucharest: Nemira, 2006), p. 168.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1992), p. 242.

¹⁹ Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou and Stefan Troebst, eds. *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014); Caterina Preda, "Looking at the Past through an Artistic Lens: Art of Memorialization," *History of Communism in Europe*, 1.1 (2014), pp. 131-150.

²⁰ A portion of the interview has been omitted for brevity.

²¹ "Sabin Bălașa: am avut și simțul creației și al procreației," *Marea Dragoste/Tango*, July 9, 2012. The interview was originally conducted in 2005. All translations are mine from Romanian.

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