

# PRŌTOCOLLUM

2016/17

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Blažej Baláž

## In Opposite Direction

Blažej Baláž is a Slovak artist whose work has been linked to post-conceptual tendencies for more than two decades, using text as the main medium of expression to criticise the institutional and political world. An interest in the political was already present in his post-conceptual texts, systematically elaborated since the 1990s. Baláž remains a radical revolutionary, but his revolution generates a network between the historical narrative and subjective forms of survival. Against the background of political change, personal history follows up on historical events, ceasing to be an unbiased commentary, instead becoming interested survival (*CELÝŽIVOTPREŽÍŤVPROTISMERE*).

The events of the post-communist era, variations of political tensions that modelled the relationship between East and West, and the onset of a transformed institutional power that brought Slovakia to the turn of 1989 and 1990, are linked closely to his need to critically express his personal and civil attitude in various art forms.

Piotr Piotrowski writes that, although the experience of political and artistic history has been different in each country, the socialist past was traumatic for all of them. The act of looking back to the past and drawing from it denotes a kind of revocation of trauma to Piotrowski. From this perspective, the intensity with which Baláž is devoted to the events of the past in his work appears strongly traumatic and thus as an attempt to rethink and rework this trauma again, rather than keeping it suppressed (*FIRSTLY-WEWERESACRIFICEDBYTHEM-THENTHEYLIBERATEDUS* and *FIRSTLYWEWERELIBERATEDBY-THEMTHENTHEYOCCUPIEDUS*).

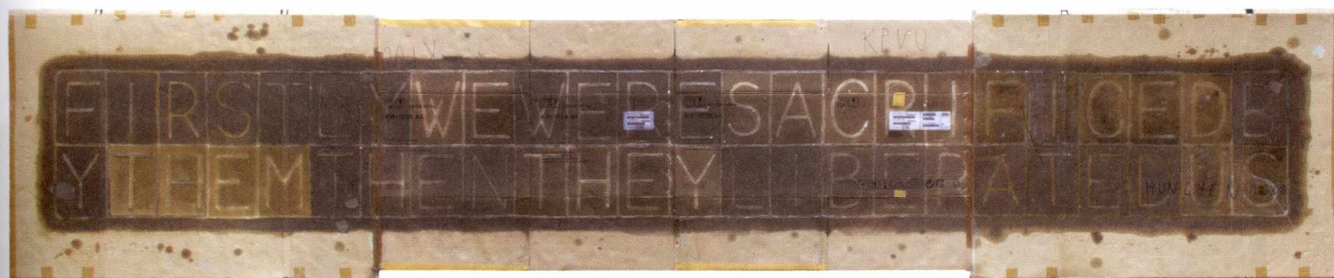
In these writings, defects, errors and a shrinkage of the text represent the

inability of language to reveal clear meanings in the background on the one hand, while on the other hand they deliberately speak to an audience whose native language is not English; to a viewer whose home (like the author's) is repeatedly associated with the prefix 'East'. In the book 'Zone des Übergangs — Vom Ende des Postkommunismus' Croatian philosopher Boris Buden describes communism as a past one cannot get rid of: 'Societies that have come through are doomed to culture catching up.' So the East carries its post-communist branding with the image of backwardness and the need to catch up. According to Buden, Baláž uncompromisingly values this relationship as the inability to balance. *WESTOST (PUPOKVÝCHODU)*, *OSTWEST (RÍŤZÁPADU)*

This scepticism is also associated with a new visual form that Baláž brings to his works. Painting on canvas is reduced to a matter of status which sanctifies the autonomy of artistic expression, and is replaced with another type of groundwork, representing a kind of resignation on visual thinking. This is supported by the use of grease, primer impregnation, which in addition to its metaphorical and literal preserving effect (fixing trauma) also refers to the artistic activities of Joseph Beuys. Baláž's texts find themselves on used cardboard boxes as a memento of instability and disposables and constitute not only an ironic metaphor of the weak border between the eastern and western Blocs (*THEIRONICCURTAIN*), but also a metaphor for the ever catching up part of Europe, which, with its post-communist fate, will perhaps forever remain a depot for commodities destined for export to the 'Western world'.

— Roman Gajdoš





Top image:  
 WESTOST / PUPOK VÝCHODU  
 (WESTOST / THEN AVE OF THEE-  
 AST), 2014, Duvilax, linseed oil,  
 adhesive tape on used cardboard  
 boxes, 121 × 570 cm

Bottom image:  
 FIRSTLY WE WERE SACRIFICED BY-  
 THEM THEN THEY LIBERATED US,  
 2016, Duvilax, linseed oil, marker pen,  
 adhesive tape on used cardboard  
 boxes, 114 × 558 cm



Top image:  
RITZAPADU / RITZAPADU  
JOY WEST / INLAND OF THE WEST,  
2004, Durillo, Inland oil, adhesive  
tape on steel cardboard boxes,  
121 x 480 cm

Bottom image:  
CELYZIVOTERETIVERCHISMERE  
JUNONIMWOLLEWENTHOP,  
POSDERECTON 2004, Durillo,  
Inland oil, adhesive tape on steel  
cardboard boxes, 121 x 480 cm

Yokohama, Japan (2013) and Frac Île-de-France, le Plateau, France (2012). Orawan has spoken on her work at Art Stage Singapore (2015) and Bophana Center, Phnom Penh (2014), among others.



BLAŽEJ BALÁŽ → Page 94

Blažej Baláž (born in 1958, Nevoľné, Slovakia) studied at the Secondary School of Applied Arts, Kremnica, from 1973 to 1977 and at the Academy of Fine Arts, Bratislava, from 1977 to 1983. He has worked in the areas of neo-conceptual and activist art and is also known for political and environmental art. His practice also comprises media paintings, works on paper, drawing, objects, performances and printmaking. Baláž's work has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions such as 'Private / Public', Nové Zámky Gallery of Art, Nové Zámky, Slovakia (2015); 'When Activism Becomes Art', Central Slovakian Gallery, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia (2015); 'SUCHARATOLEST', Kunsthalle Bratislava (2009); 'Texts 1988 / 2007', East Slovakian Gallery, Košice, Slovakia (2007); 'Geld macht Kunst', Gallery of J. Koniarek, Trnava, Slovakia (2003) and 'The Discreet Charm of the Painting', House of Art, České Budějovice, Czech Republic (2002). Baláž has participated in various group shows such as 'Here and Now', Kunsthalle Budapest (2015); the International Drawing Triennial, Tallin Art Hall, Estonia (2015); 'Blood', Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava (2012); 'Formate der Transformation 89–09', MUSA – Museum auf Abruf, Vienna (2010) and 'Object/object', The Czech Museum of Fine Arts, Prague (2001).



BIANCA BALDI → Page 86

Bianca Baldi (born in 1985, Johannesburg, South Africa) grew up in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and completed her BA at the The Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town. She pursued her postgraduate studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and at the IUAV University of Venice, Italy. She now lives and

works in Brussels. Bianca Baldi's video installations reveal over-looked narrative strands and the hidden structures of power. By focusing on specific cultural or sociological artefacts, historical plots reveal complex webs of political, economic and cultural influence in Baldi's work. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include: The AV Festival 2016, Newcastle, UK (2016); 'The Image Generator II', Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp, Belgium (2016); Open House, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany (2015); 19th Contemporary Art Festival SESC Videobrasil, São Paulo, Brasil (2015); Sightings, KZNSA, Durban, South Africa (2015); The 8th Berlin Biennale of Contemporary Art at KW – Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2014); Zero Latitude at the Goethe Institut, Johannesburg, South Africa (2014).



MORIDJA KITENGE BANZA → Page 224

Moridja Kitenge Banza (born in 1980, Kinshasa, Congo), graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Kinshasa in 1999 and from the Nantes School of Art in France (l'école supérieure des Beaux-arts de Nantes Métropole) in 2008. In 2010 he was awarded the first prize at the Dakar Biennial for his video *Hymne à nous* and his installation *1848 à nos jours*. In 2012 Banza was selected to participate in the first edition of the Casablanca Biennial. His work has been exhibited in France, Denmark, Germany, Austria and Canada as well as in South Africa and again during the 12th edition of the Dakar Biennial in 2016. His artistic approach lies somewhere between fiction and reality and serves as the means by which he questions history, memory and identity through the lens of social, economic and political contexts.



JOSÉ BEDIA → Page 104

José Bedia (born in 1959, Havana, Cuba) excelled in drawing, comics and illustration from an early age on and joined the famous San Alejandro Academy as a teenager. After San Alejandro he graduated with honours from the ISA, Instituto Superior de Arte de la Habana, Cuba. He was a pioneer of the radical transformation

of Cuban Art that inaugurated the Exhibition 'Volumen I' at The Signs Gallery, New York, which Bedia was an integral part of.

His passion for the primal Amerindians complemented his anthropological research on Afro-Transatlantic cultures, studying in depth the faith, beliefs and religion of the 'La Regla Kongo' (in which he was initiated in 1983), as well as many other tribal groups. He travelled to Angola with the Cuban Army. This contact with the mother continent and the war increased his interest in the African roots in Latin American culture. After residing in Mexico he moved to Miami, Florida, where he currently lives. Bedia's work has been shown in various group exhibitions throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia, including 'Magiciens de la Terre' at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grand Halle at the Parc de la Villette, Paris (1989) and 'Congo Across the Waters' (2013). He received the first prize at the Beijing Biennale in 2010. His works are also held in renowned private and public collections such as the Museo Nacional Palacio de Bellas Artes, La Habana; MoMA, Metropolitan Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate Modern, London; Smithsonian Museum, Washington; The Colección Daros, Zurich and others.



BILI BIDJOCKA → Page 56

Cameroonian painter Bili Bidjocka (born in 1962, Douala, Cameroon) has been living in Paris since 1974, where, after originally coming from a background of theater and dance, he enrolled at the School of Fine Arts. His confrontation with market laws, history and his own African identity forced him to see with new eyes the notion of art. After trying painting, he turned to installation and theatrical staging. His pieces began to function as puzzles, riddles through which he continues the essential examination of the meaning and purpose of creation. Bili Bidjocka participated in many international exhibitions, including the Biennales of Venice (2007), Taipei (2004), Dakar (2000), Johannesburg (1997) and Havana (1997). Exhibitions in museums and art galleries include at New Museum of Contemporary Art New York; ARC Museum of Modern Art Paris; Palace of Fine Arts Brussels;

Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg – Cape Town and on the occasion of the exhibition 'Africa Remix' and 'The Divine Comedy' by Simon Njami. He is one of the founders of the creative platform Matrix Art Project (MAP) in Paris, Brussels and New York.



DAVID BÖHM & JIŘÍ FRANTA → Page 147

Jiří Franta (born in 1978, Prague, Czech Republic) and David Böhm (born in 1982, Prague, Czech Republic) give performances, shoot videos, create spatial installations, intervene in public spaces, paint murals and illustrate books and magazines. Both Böhm and Franta live and work in Prague, where they graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts. They won the second prize of the Erasmus exhibition 'My Neighborhood' in Porto, Portugal, in 2006, and were nominated for the Jindřich Chalupecký Awards in 2009, 2010 and 2012. Solo shows include 'Blind Man's Dream', Fait Gallery, Brno, Czech Republic (2016); 'If a Street Where Time and I Would Stand at the End of the Street', City Gallery Liberec, Czech Republic (2015); 'NO', Budapest Art Factory, Budapest, Hungary (2015); 'Small Town, Big Mystery', Soda Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia (2014); 'Survival Only the Humorous', Gallery Trinec, Czech Republic (2014); 'Epicentrum', Gallery Blansko, Czech Republic (2013); 'David Böhm – 100 Weeks', Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague (2013); 'Copy of Reality', Nitranská galéria, Nitra, Slovakia (2013); 'Echolog', Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague (2012).



VESNA BUKOVEC → Page 2, 18

Vesna Bukovec (born in 1977, Ljubljana, Slovenia) graduated in 2002 and completed her MFA in 2006 at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. She works independently and in the art group KOLEKTIVA (with Metka Zupanič and Lada Cerar). Her artistic work finds its expression in a variety of media (drawing, video,



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