

# Tomasz Załuski

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## Art on the Move

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## Art on the Move Tomasz Załuski, ed.

### Foreword by Tomasz Załuski

From the sixties onwards there emerged many time-based and site-specific art practices and initiatives related to cultural, social, economical and geopolitical contexts. This resulted in the increased mobility of artists, who devised their performances and installations while travelling or touring around various countries. These trips have opened up spaces for inter-cultural exchange, shaped the circulation of ideas and drew new artistic geographical possibilities. They also manifested a politico-cultural hegemony of some countries and a self-colonization of others. Before the fall of the iron curtain, it was of particular importance to travel to countries on the other side of the geopolitical border, a border which defined the shape of the world during that time. However, the purposes of journeys by artists from socialist countries and capitalist ones differed, relating to the different conditions which existed on 'the other side' and this determined the selection of artistic performances and installations to be performed abroad. Some travelling artists strove to create a vision of a universal art idiom. Others, less numerous, showed critical awareness of the existence of the geopolitical division and drew from it consequences in their art.

After the fall of the iron curtain the newly globalising world was also re-configuring the divisions. Issues of travelling, mobility, transit, emigration and nomadism gathered new dimensions. For many artists these became essential elements of their artistic stance and leading motifs of their art. In contemporary art, travelling is an occasion to practice artistic anthropologies, histories, ethnographies and sociologies - urban, translocal, postcolonial and transcultural - but it also provides a basis for artistic tourism and symbolic neo-colonization, supported by the institutionalization of performance art and the phenomenon of the artists' residencies. In practices that challenge the current economic-political cartography and engage in tactical play with it, contemporary teletechnologies are increasingly important, especially mobile technologies. Artistic journeys have complex and differentiated relationships with the global flow of capital - economical, symbolic or social.

The authors of the texts gathered in the thematic issue "Art on the Move" analyse those issues in various thematic, historic and geopolitical contexts. Describing the projects by Romuald Kutera, and *My History of Art* in particular, Sylwia Serafinowicz focuses on how conceptual media and ways of artistic communication fostered the mobility of artists. Small sized photos, slides, prints or drawings were easy to take in the artist's private luggage of artist as they used the new fast means of international transport. This provided them with an opportunity to present the documentation of their ideas, actions and installations. The conceptual media also made it easy to document the 'life' and reception of the travelling works abroad as well as to make new works during the journeys. Tomasz Załuski shows the traces that the geopolitical division left between the East and the West, delimited by the iron curtain, in the biography, artistic practices and theories of the duo KwieKulik. The artists were critically aware of the existence of the 'divided world'; consequently, they pointed out the incommensurability of political and economic-social realities in the two geopolitical blocks. Nevertheless, they tried to spread into the other side of the iron curtain, information about their process based ephemeral art that was inextricably linked to the conditions of life and art in the People's Republic of Poland in the seventies and eighties. What seems to be highly interesting in this context is the fact that they often repeated in the West their performances that stemmed from socialist conditions. Magdalena Radomska describes journeys by artists from Central and Eastern Europe in the seventies, with particular focus on those from Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Russia. These journeys featured not only trips to art centers outside of the capital cities and travel to establish cooperation with artist from other countries of the Eastern block, but also trips and journeys of emigration to the West. This mobility is mainly interpreted in terms of setting the obligatory system of concepts and meanings into motion and revealing their contradictions, or – in the case of journeys to the West – getting away from them. Artistic journeys led towards the utopia of a free and universal language or towards aporias of translation and experience of miscomprehension by the Western public.

Julia Sowińska-Heim reconstructs the ideas behind the course of a series of urban projects that were organized during the last dozen or so years by the Manhattan Gallery in Łódź. She is especially interested in the ones that touched upon the immediate context of the gallery and its functioning - namely, Śródmiejska Dzielnica Mieszaniowa, a residential district consisting of large blocks of flats, known as 'Manhattan'. The enterprises in question joined artistic, educational and social practices together with field research into the anthropology of the city. The journeys around the area of Manhattan in Łódź gave a chance to excavate and rework the collective memory of the inhabitants of the district, as well as reveal some local myths and problems of everyday life. Unfortunately, work on the identity of the place was interrupted when the gallery had to move out of the district. The city also forms the context for artistic journeys described by Blanka Brzozowska. She uses Marc Augé's anthropology of the metro to analyse examples of contemporary *flânerie* that is performed by means of city transportation: the tube and the tram. Pierre Nadillon's 'tubist mapjacking', the interception of the official tube maps and transformation of them into his own poetic, cultural and social representations of space, helps to call into question the functionalism of relocation and transforms a journey into a vehicle of memory. Similarly, in his works, Patrick Corillon uses tram stops as landmarks on his maps of alternative poetical and narrative journeys around the city. What is at stake here is the possibility of an experience of the city, enriched beyond functionalist reductionism.

The issue of following an incorrect route, going off course and crossing cartographic divides comes back again in the text by Anna Nacher. The author deals with the subversion of the straight continuous line in projects dealing with the effectiveness of communication and the problem of borders - especially state borders. This phenomenon is analysed in the context of the situationist art of 'drifting' or 'meandering' and certain urban projects that can be linked to this tradition, then also the classical land art works, and, last but not least, the contemporary locative media projects. The next step in this tactical game is provided by projects called 'dislocative media', which have become important symbolic instruments in order to fight with the immigration policies of many countries nowadays. Ewa Wójtowicz brings to the fore the mediating role that image technologies play, together with traditional cultural codes, in shaping the experience of the journey. She looks at a couple of artistic projects that play with the state of image overproduction and poses a question concerning the 'authenticity' of the experience of the journey at a time when its new, collective and a priori forms are generated, for example, by the interfaces Google Earth and Google Street View. Today, the role of journey interfaces is also played by contextual art exhibitions that aim at bringing closer and explaining the cultural specificity and the way of life for people from outside of the Western world. Such postcolonial enterprises often risk becoming the tools of a hidden symbolic neocolonialism. This necessitates questions about the very possibility of intercultural translation, about a certain ethics of travelling and its image testimony as experiences of translation.

The last two texts both refer to biographical methods of research as appropriate tools of confronting the problem of "art on the move". Tomasz Ferenc uses his own research carried out within the perspective of biographically oriented sociology of art in order to describe the experience of emigration by contemporary Polish artists from different art fields who live in Berlin, Paris, London and New York. He asks if their individual biographical trajectories share any common features that would prove a certain experience typical of this social group. He therefore examines the reasons for emigration and the strategies used to adapt to the conditions in a foreign country. He also asks how a new situation translates into their art and their artistic success abroad - its individual factors, measures and definitions. Finally, Łukasz Guzek shows the possibility and validity of interpreting performance art as well as writing its history with the use of biographies and autobiographies of performers treated as formative factors of the discipline. An example of such procedure is *Metamuseum*, a project by Artur Tajber that aims at documenting performance art by referring to elements of performers' biographical data. Guzek grounds such biographism in a variety of philosophical and theoretical contexts. The biography not only helps to put into place the historical context of performance art but it also shows the intersection of personal and geographical trajectories of singular performers' activities - it sketches a net of routes and a map of places they visited. In this way, the history of performance art turns out to be at the same time, a history of performers' journeys.

## Sylwia Serafinowicz, "The mobility of Romuald Kutera's works"

Mobility is an indispensable part of conceptual practice. Its main mediums - photographs, slides, drawings and texts - allowed artists the possibility of circulating their works relatively easily, both in Poland and abroad. Smaller works, whose dimensions did not exceed the A4 format, were sent by post. The bigger ones were often transported in suitcases. In the late sixties and in the seventies, this strategy was often employed by radical conceptual artists to reach beyond the existing art scene and create an