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Blažej Balař 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. Balař 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 (CELYŽIVOTPREZITVPROTISMER).

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 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 Postkomunismus' 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, Balař uncompromisingly values this relationship as the inability to balance.

This scepticism is also associated with a new visual form that Balař 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.

Balař'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 / PUPOKVÝCHODU (WESTOST / THENAVELOFTHEEAST), 2014, Duvilax, linseed oil, adhesive tape on used cardboard boxes, 121 × 570 cm

Bottom image: 
FIRSTLYWEWERESACRIFICEDBYTHEMTHEN THEYLIBERATEDUS, 2016, Duvilax, linseed oil, marker pen, adhesive tape on used cardboard boxes, 114 × 558 cm
Top image: OSTWEST / RITZÁPADU
(Ostwest / TheAssOfTheWest), 2014, Duvilac, linseed oil, adhesive tape on used cardboard boxes, 121 x 489 cm

Bottom image: CELYŽIŽIVOTREZÍTVPROTISMERE
(SpendTheWholeLifeInTheOppositeDirection), 2016, Duvilac, linseed oil, adhesive tape on used cardboard boxes, 131 x 493 cm
Bianca Baldi (born in 1985, Johannesburg, South Africa) grew up in Nunstberg, South Africa (2004), Dakar (2000), Johannesburg (2004), and graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Prague (2001). Balai has participated in many group exhibitions such as 'Private/Public', Nové Zámky Gallery of Art, Nové Zámky, Slovakia (2015), 'When Activism Becomes Art', Central Slovakian Gallery, Bratislava (2015), 'Epicentrum', Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2016), and completed her MFA in 2006 at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Prague (2002). Baldi's work has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions, including '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 Sesé Videoresó, São Paulo, Brazil (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 (born in 1989, Kasangalanga, Kinshasa, DR Congo), graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Kinshasa in 1999 and from the Nantes School of Art in France (l’ecole superieure des Beaux-arts de Nantes Metropole) in 2008. In 2010 he was awarded the first prize at the Dakar Biennal 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 Biennal. 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 Biennal in 2016. His artistic approach lies some-where 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.

Jose 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 1' at The Signs Gallery, New York, which Bedia was an integral part of. His passion for the primal Amer-indians 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 de la Villette, Paris (1989) and 'Congo Across the Waters' (2013).

Bianca Baldi's video installations reveal over-looked narrative strands and the hidden structures of power. By focusing on specific cultural or societal 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 Sesé Videobrasil, Sao 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).