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The Fourth Encounter in Motovun, 1976: a platform for experimentation for early video art.

LEUZZI, L.

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○ REVISITING HERITAGE

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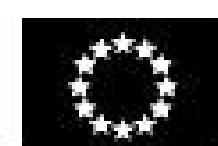
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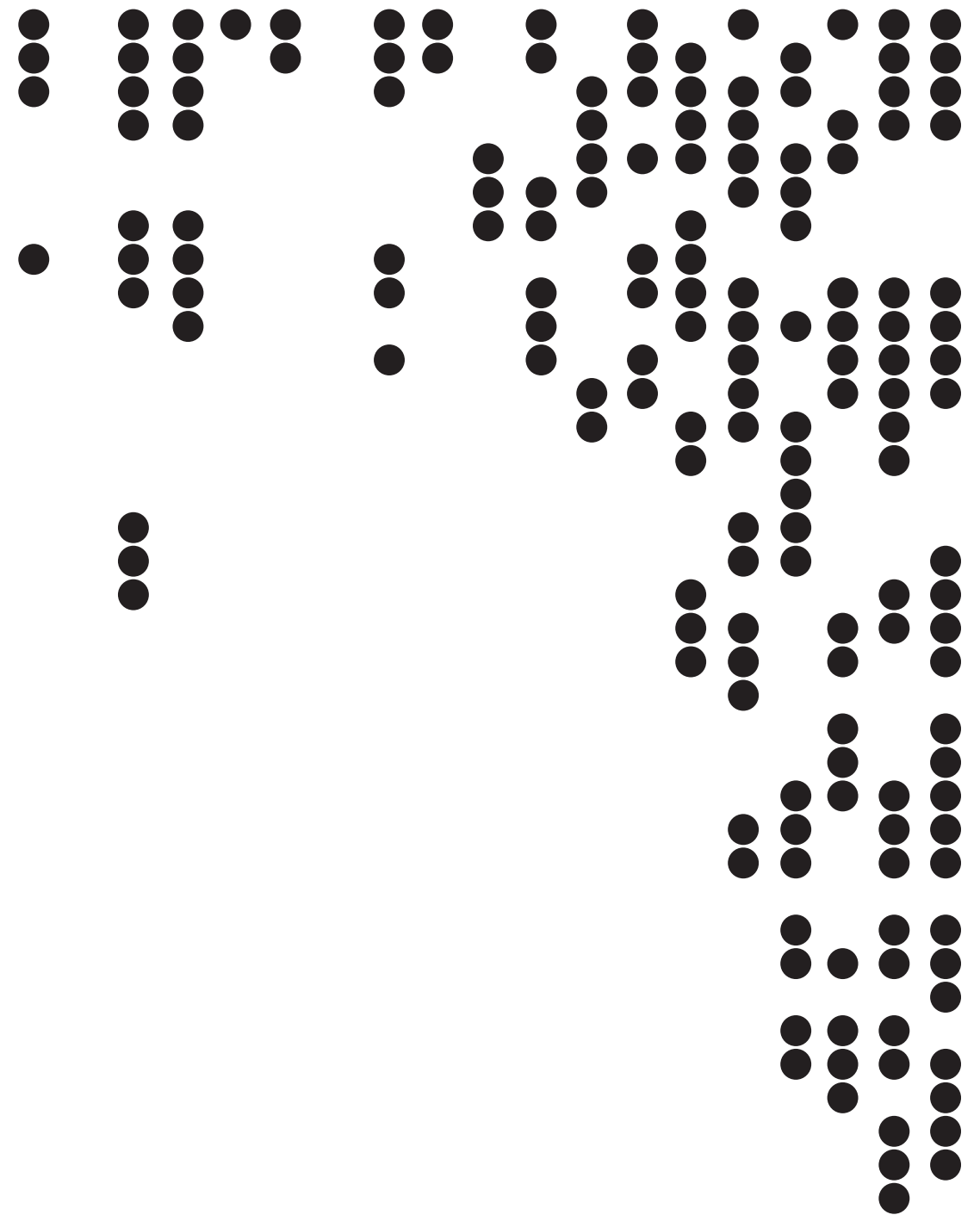
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○ Contents

- 6 Introduction
- 9 **Liesbeth Decan** /
"A" View on Belgian Art: Notes on Guy Schraenen and the Belgium-Poland Connection
- 17 **Sandra Križić Roban** /
Not only on Women's Day: Women in Croatian photography after the 1950s
- 27 **Marika Kuźmicz** /
From Forgotten Heritage to Unwritten Stories
- 39 **Leonida Kovač** /
Heritage, Legacy, Tradition, Transmission, Transformation, and So Forth
- 49 **Elnara Taidre** /
Discovering a Total Work of Art in the Home (and) Archive of Tõnis Vint
- 57 **Jelena Pašić** /
The Transformative Potential of Gorgonian Photography: The Case of Miljenko Horvat
- 65 **Lana Lovrenčić** /
The Petar Dabac Archive
- 73 **Radostaw Maciej Przedpetski** / Elements of Think Crazy Topology. Encountering
Neo-Avant-Garde Practices of Marek Konieczny through Ludwiński and Deleuze
- 83 **Peter Tuka** / The Avant-Garde and Post-War Totalitarianism: Július Koller and Conceptual Art
under Communism¹
- 93 **Wiktoria Szczupacka** /
Foksal Gallery, Women and Labour of Love in the 1960s and 1970s
- 101 **Petra Skarupsky** / Official Exhibitions from Czechoslovakia in Poland as a Tool for Remapping
the History of Art in Central Eastern Europe during the Cold War
- 109 **Łukasz Jastrubczak** / Recollection of the Last Exhibition
- 119 **Karol Radziszewski** / Queer Archives Institute: Institution as an Art Practice
- 127 **Pavĺina Morganová** / Performance Art: Remembered, Photographed and Filmed, Exhibited,
Sometimes Even Re-enacted
- 135 **Daniel Muzyczuk** / Is It Right to Perform an Installation? Between Reconstruction and Performance
of a Score
- 145 **Agnė Narušytė** / The Aesthetics of Boredom in Lithuanian Photography¹
- 155 **Barbara Borčić** / DIVA Station and Artists' Archives
- 165 **Laura Leuzzi** / The Fourth Encounter in Motovun (1976): A Platform for Experimentation for Early
Video Art



○ **Laura Leuzzi** / The Fourth Encounter in Motovun (1976):
A Platform for Experimentation for Early Video Art

○ Laura Leuzzi / The Fourth Encounter in Motovun (1976): A Platform for Experimentation for Early Video Art

In the summer of 1976 the fourth *Susret u Motovunu* (*Encounter in Motovun*, fig. 1) took place. As part of the festival, a video encounter dedicated to the theme of "Identity" (*Identitet=identità*) was held. It turned out to be a key event for experimentation in a medium that was still in an experimental phase and not widely available in many regions in Europe.

In this chapter I will give an overview and contextualize the importance of the fruitful relationships between Italy and Yugoslavia in the field of video and analyze

the importance of these exchanges and the Motovun encounter in particular for the development of the medium in Europe.¹

In the 1970s, international video festivals, exhibitions and meetings were key to experimentation in the medium and creation of a lively video community across Europe, allowing artists, curators and scholars to view works and access the equipment and network. Some of these events facilitated fertile contacts between Italian and Yugoslav video artists, producers and curators. We can arrange these events into two types: events held in Yugoslavia in collaboration with visiting Italian video centres (for example those at the Zagreb Contemporary Art Gallery (now the Museum of Contemporary Art) and the Belgrade Student Centre (SKC))² and early exhibitions and events in Europe where artists came from both geographical areas.

The latter included, for example, the *Audiovisuelle Botschaften* at Dreiländerbiennale *Trigon 73* in Graz, Austria, where artists from the New Art Practice such as Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis and Goran Trbuljak, Italy (with works by Vaccari, Baruchello and Colombo/Agnetti) and Austria were shown. Vera Horvat-Pintarić selected the Croatian participants, Martinis, Iveković, and Boris Bučan.³ In that context, Martinis remembers, he started to use video.⁴

The year before, in 1972, Horvat-Pintarić had contributed to the knowledge of Italian video art in Yugoslavia by guest-editing *Television Today*, an issue of *Bit International* dedicated to television which included seminal essays on video by Renato Barilli, Gillo Dorfles, and Colombo and Agnetti.

The pioneering *Impact Art: video art 74* at the Musée des arts décoratifs in Lausanne featured artists from Yugoslavia such as Iveković and Martinis, as well as the Italian centres art/tapes/22, Luciano Giaccari's Studio 970/2, Luca Maria Patella and Franco Vaccari.⁵

Other key events included the first April artists' encounter (4–11 April 1972) at the Belgrade Cultural Centre, with a video performance with the support of Giaccari,⁶ and the famous art/tapes/22 exhibition *Americans in Florence – Europeans in Florence* (*Amerikanci u Firenci – Evropljani u Firenci*) at the Belgrade Student Cultural Centre (Studentski kulturni centar),⁷ organized by Biliana Tomić, whom Bicocchi knew through Cardazzo.⁸

In spring 1976, curator Marijan Susovski organized the *Video Susret* at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Zagreb, which brought together Bicocchi (art/tapes/22), Lola Bonora (Ferrara's Centro Videoarte) and Paolo Cardazzo (Galleria del Cavallino, Venice), who once again had facilitated contacts. Artists whose video artworks were screened in Zagreb included Alighiero Boetti, Giuseppe Chiari, Marina Abramović, Dalibor Martinis, Zoran Popović, Michele Sambin and Guido Sartorelli. Bicocchi recalls a prolific debate about video art developing with

artists Martinis and Brazo Dimitrijević and other artists from the Zagreb Public TV Broadcast.⁹

On the event's flyer, Susovsky explained poignantly that Yugoslav artists' video, including video artworks and performance documentation, was only "sporadically" produced, during international events abroad. Only the Gallery of Contemporary Art had acquired video works by Yugoslav artists. During the event in Zagreb, Cavallino produced three videos with local artists.

In the summer of 1976 this collab the Fourth Motovun encounter organized by the Ethnographic Museum of Istria in Pazin, the Contemporary Art Gallery in Zagreb, Likovna Gallery in Motovun, and Galleria del Cavallino.

On that occasion, more than twenty video artworks by Italian and Yugoslav artists, including Iveković, Živa Kraus, Zdravko Milić, Martinis, Trbuljak, Michele Sambin, Luigi Viola and Claudio Ambrosini, were produced by Cavallino (fig. 2).

Galleria del Cavallino, directed at the time by Paolo and Gabriella Cardazzo, had started co-organizing the Artists' Encounters in Motovun in 1972 with Likovna Gallery in Motovun and the Ethnographic Museum of Istria in Pazin.

It was the intention of the organizers that these encounters could act as a cultural catalyst contributing to local regeneration. As recalled by Sartorelli, this civic spirit informed the choice of the themes and was shared by the artists.¹⁰ Cavallino facilitated contacts and networking with international artists and curators, including Richard



1. *IV Susret u Motovunu / IV Incontro a Motovun* (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1977). Cover, courtesy of Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Istituto di Storia dell'Arte, Fondo Cardazzo.

Demarco, who visited Motovun in 1975 with the Edinburgh Arts programme.¹¹

Although the early editions in 1972 and 1973 were dedicated exclusively to painting and sculpture, there are mentions in the archives suggesting that artists' films were shown.¹²

In the 1974 Motovun encounter, titled *Urban Interventions*, photography and video were introduced: Cardazzo and Peggy Stufi made the first Cavallino video artwork, *Da zero a zero* (From zero to zero) with the help of Guido Sartorelli.¹³ Stufi walked along the city walls in front of a camera operated by Cardazzo and every sixty-four steps placed a card on the ground with a numeral from 0 to 9. The performance ended when she picked the first card. This spatial investigation of the city borders became an exploration of the place through time and memory, and of the possibility of videotape's real-time recording and time loop.

In 1976 video was incorporated in a more structured and complex way. A video Encounter was also organized, in a format that today we would call a residency, to produce some video artworks.

The equipment was provided by Cardazzo, who produced, edited and mixed the videos with the technical support of Andrea Varisco.

The video encounter was dedicated to the theme of identity, and the session commenced with a plenary meeting in which the artists introduced themselves and a tight schedule for the production was arranged.¹⁴

In the following days, the artists, supported by Cardazzo, videotaped some pieces, which were mostly – if necessary and possible – edited and finalized later in Venice. Some videos were shot in Venice, such as *Open Reel* and *Video Immunity* by Dalibor Martinis.¹⁵

In 1977 a catalogue was published documenting the event with texts by Cardazzo, Susovski and the artists, illustrated by stills from the videos.

Susovski's text is key to contextualizing and critically assessing the importance of these international collaborations for Yugoslav video art, of which he gives an overview, including some events mentioned above. Susovski points out that "in the past three years the number of artists who have worked with video (in Yugoslavia) has not been considerable"; as he suggests, it was a "secondary activity" depending on the availability of the video equipment. He also writes: "For artists' video, video encounters like this in Motovun are still one of the rare occasions to be able to use the video apparatus and work in a group with other artists."¹⁶

Croatian curator Branka Benčić has noted that "the Motovun meetings opened up new possibilities for collaboration and exchange of Italian and Yugoslav artists", and from a political and social context this cooperation could be seen as a positive reflection of the Treaty of Osimo (November 1975). In that climate, the choice of the theme of identity was particularly relevant.¹⁷

When examining the videos, a key common feature is experimenting with the

technical and theoretical qualities and possibilities of the medium. The theme of identity was interpreted and explored with different perspectives and sensibilities: the identity of video with its function, form and structure in a sort of meta/tautological approach; self-portrait and self/representation; personal and collective memory and time; representation of women by media and culture (in particular Iveković and Ambrosini); what defines the concept of identity, of the self in relationship to the other; and the relationship between sound/

music/voice and identity (in particular Sambin and Ambrosini).

As pointed out by Susovski, Iveković's videos *Make Up, Make Down* and *Instructions No. 1* (fig. 3) analyze and challenge how society and media have influenced the representation and perception of women, a topic that the artist had been developing through photography and performance.¹⁸ In both videos produced in Motovun (*Make Up, Make Down* was remade in colour in 1978), Iveković reflects on identity as stereotype and representation.



2. Italian artists who took part to the Motovun Video Encounter, 1976. From left on top: Andrea Varisco, Luigi Viola, Paolo Cardazzo. In the front row from left/In Claudio Ambrosini, Michele Sambin, Piccolo Sillani, Luciano Celli, Enzo Pitacco, courtesy of Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Istituto di Storia dell'Arte, Fondo Cardazzo.

In his *Audioidentikit*, Ambrosini questions issues of identity, appearance and representation, exploring where self/perception and self/representation meet/diverge and how mass media culture represents women. The piece was researched in Motovun and finally shot in Venice. In the streets of Motovun, Cardazzo, Varisco and Sambin collected audio interviews with local girls. Ambrosini selected one of the recordings and prepared clippings from women's magazines purchased in Motovun, and when the camera started videotaping Ambrosini composed a collage/portrait stimulated by the recording.

The very concept of identity, perceived by ourselves and by others, of the ephemerality of what identity is, and as a cultural and personal construction, is at the centre of another artwork produced in Motovun: *Triptich* by Martinis. In the video, the camera focuses on the artist's face hidden by a cloth while three recordings describe the artist's identity from the perspective of the other (Cardazzo, Iveković and Ambrosini).

Kraus's *The Motovun Tape* offers a self-portrait reduced to minimal terms: the artist's hand on the walls of the city, charged with history, connects through collective and personal memory Motovun and Venice (where the artist moved in the early 1970s). Besides participating as an artist, Kraus had a very active role in the Motovun Encounters, offering translation and support to the artists, and significantly contributed to the production management and planning of the work.

Sambin also explored in some way



3. Sanja Iveković, *Instructions No. 1*, 1976, still from video. Production Galleria del Cavallino, Venice. Cardazzo Collection, Venice.



4. Luigi Viola, *Who is Luigi Viola?*, 1976, still from video, courtesy of the artist

a traditional genre, the group portrait, in his video *A Sound Each*. Instead of showing the group, Sambin attributes a distinctive tune to each character and moves the camera, playing the portrait as though it were a score, creating a melody. The result is a visual/sound collective portrait featuring some of the artists participating in Motovun, such as Iveković, Kraus, Martinis and curator Susovski.

In his *Who Is Luigi Viola?* (fig. 4), Viola investigates poetically the persistence of identity through time. Iveković, Martinis, Trbuljak and Viola perform in the video, focusing on a specific activity – praying, shaving, playing ping-pong – while a sign reads “I am ... same to myself in the series of time.”

Other artists focused on the “identity” of video. For example, Trbuljak's *Untitled (Cut)* is a meta-reflection on this topic, on video's ability to capture reality in real time. As pointed out by Susovski, since Trbuljak started to use video at *Trigon 73*, he became interested in analyzing video as a “medium of expression”. *Untitled (Cut)*

investigates the double quality of video, both ephemeral and material as a tape and video signal.¹⁹

It emerges from this brief excursus that video artworks produced in Motovun explored key theoretical and artistic issues around video art which were emerging in Europe at the time. The residency played remarkably as a forum for discussion, debate, production and experimentation, and stimulated collaboration, participation, co-operation, relationship and creativity. Further studies on the subject could uncover more about the event and contribute to the reassessment of the importance of the Motovun encounters to video art.

1. This is an initial study of the topic and is based on the AHRC-funded research projects *REWIND*Italia, *EWVA European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s* and *Richard Demarco: The Italian Connection* (DJCAD, University of Dundee). The research team includes Prof. Elaine Shemilt, Prof. Stephen Partridge, Adam Lockhart, Prof. Sean Cubitt, Dr Cinzia Cremona and Deirdre MacKenna. I would like to thank Jon Blackwood, Angelica Cardazzo, Gabriella Cardazzo, Richard Demarco, Ziva Kraus, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis, Terry-Ann Newman, Michele Sambin, Goran Trbuljak, Branka Bencic, Luigi Viola, Janka Vukmir, and Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice.
2. Miško Šuvaković and Dubravka Đurić (eds.), *Impossible Histories: Historic Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 494–495.
3. See Branka Benčić, “Trigon as Network”, *KM Journal*, 10 December 2017, <https://journal.km-k.at/de/posts/trigon-6717/trigon-network/>; Armin Medosch, *New Tendencies Art at the Threshold of the Information Revolution (1961–1978)* (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 2016), available at https://monoskop.org/media/text/medosch_2016_new_tendencies/; “Televizija Danas/Television Today: Television and Culture the language of Television experiments”, ed. Vera Horvat-Pintarić, *Bit International*, no. 8/9 (1972): 83–91, 209–219, 223–226.
4. Interview with Dalibor Martinis, 24 March 2017, via email, unpublished.
5. *Impact art video art 74: 8 jours video au Musée des arts decoratifs* (Lausanne: Groupe Impact, 1974).
6. Ješa Denegri, “Video Art in Yugoslavia 1969–1984”, *RTV – teorija i praksa*, No. 36, Belgrade, autumn 1984; reprinted in *Videosfera*, Mihailo Ristić, ed., SIC, Belgrade 1986, available in English at <https://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/jesa-denegri-video-art-in-yugoslavia-19691984-english-no6586/>. See also <https://www.arhivaskc.org.rs/hronografije-programa/velike-manifestacije/aprilski-susreti/5833-i-aprilski-susreti.html>
7. See <http://www.arhivaskc.org.rs/hronografije-programa/likovni-program/5-1975/141-7-17-jun-1975.html>
8. Interview with Maria Gloria Bicocchi, via email, 24 March 2017, unpublished.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Interview to Guido Sartorelli, 13 September 2011, http://www.rewind.ac.uk/rewind/index.php/I-banca_dati
11. Programme of the trip available at Richard Demarco Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh, GMA A37/2/105/2.
12. See *Invite* (May 1972) from Cavallino Gallery, transcribed in Giovanni Bianchi, “Paolo Cardazzo e gli incontri a Motovun (1972–1984)”, *Ricerche di S/Confine*, Dossier 2 (2013): 130 and 133.
13. Dino Marangon, *I videotapes del Cavallino* (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 2004), p. 24.
14. Interview with Sambin, 28 February 2017, via Skype, unpublished.
15. Interview with Dalibor Martinis, 24 March 2017, via email, unpublished.
16. M. Susovski, “Video Meeting”, in *IV susretu motovunu/IV incontro a Motovun. Identitet/Identità* (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1977).
17. Branka Benčić, “Cinemaniac 2015: Motovun Video Meeting 1976, the First Video Art Workshop in Croatia: A Contribution to the Research of Motovun Meetings and Media Art History”, *Motovunski video susret 1976. Motovun video meeting 1976...* (Vodnjan: Apoteka, 2015), p. 49.
18. See Sanja Iveković, *Dvostruki Život: 1959–1975* (Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, 1976).
19. M. Susovski, “Video Meeting”, in *IV susretu motovunu/IV incontro a Motovun. Identitet/Identità* (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1977), unpaginated.