



## OFF-BIENNALE BUDAPEST

24 April - 31 May 2015

### Participants include:

Carlos Amorales, Balázs Antal–László Hatházi, Barácková Daniela, Hilla Ben Ari, Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, Borsos Lőrinc (János Borsos –Lilla Lőrinc), János Brückner – Milos Toth, bupap, Celine Condorelli, István Csákány, Gabriella Csoszó, Attila Csörgő, Dobrila Denegri, Lina Džuverović, Gábor Ehrlich, Sári Ember, Ágnes Eperjesi, Miklós Erdély, Marcell Esterházy, Máté Feles, Andreas Fogarasi, Kendell Geers, Fokusz Grupa, Péter Forgács, Freudmann Eduard, független képzőművészeti tanszék / f\*\*\*k, András Gaat, Goldin + Senneby, Alenka Gregorić, Igor Grubić, Gruppo Tökmag, Ábris Gryllus, Heidrun Holzfeind, innen, Barbara Ipsics, Sven Johné, Dávid Karas, Tamás Kaszás, Káva Theater, Zsolt Keserue, Szabolcs Kisspál, Barbara Klímová, Meiro Koizumi, Ádám Kokesch, Csenge Kolozsvári, Eva Kotátkova, Endre Kovács, Hilda Kozári, Susanne Kriemann, Krisztián Kristóf, Anton Lederer & Margarethe Makovec, Zbigniew Libera, Little Warsaw, Tevž Logar, Maha Maamoun, Dóra Maurer, Attila Menesi, Metanois Artopédia, Mladen Miljanović, Edit Molnár, Ivan Moudov, Daniel Muzyczuk, Csaba Nemes, Hajnal Németh, Anton Ovidiu, Eszter Óze, Adrian Paci, Livia Páldi, Krsto Papić, Júlia Perczel, Dan Perjovschi, Alexandra Pirici – Manuel Pelmuş, Tomáš Pospiszył, Pedro Reyes, Rooe Rosen, Łukasz Ronduda, Clara S Rueprich, Katarina Šević, Kati Simon, Konrad Smoleński, Société Réaliste, Borbála Soós, János Sugár, Attila Szabó, Pál Szacsva y, Beatrix Szörényi, Tehnica Schweiz, The Corporation, Milica Tomić, Péter Tornyai, Villő Turcsány, Ulay, Péter Vályi, Valyo, Tomáš Vaněk, Gyula Várnai, Zsolt Vásárhelyi, Júlia Vécsei, Claire Waffel, Clemens Von Wedemeyer, Ana Witt, Katarina Zdjelar, Brigitta Zics

### GOALS

OFF-Biennale Budapest seeks methods to support diversity and autonomous practices in art and culture within a landscape that is ruled by an expropriated (thus "nationalized") infrastructure and institutional system. We have launched this project with the aim of establishing a base for a sustainable, well-connected, independent and interdependent art scene in Hungary. For the sake of this cause, we implement a **structural model that is based on a commonality of interest, on voluntary work,**

**on networking, collaboration, trust, and solidarity.** We are attempting to establish the **widest possible platform** on which a diverse group of stakeholders can collaborate. Professional collaborations are to be based on shared problems and values; and financial contributions should come from sources committed to democracy, transparency, and diversity.

Working internationally in our case is not only an inherent sine qua non of the operation, a framework in which cultural workers can strengthen their professional relations and multiply their possibilities: also, we rely on the support and commitment of our colleagues in order to **make a powerful statement about the cultural and professional values we stand for.**

One of the main objectives of the project is to produce and present a wide spectrum of **collaborative, DIY, network-based, and risk-taking art projects** that engage with the emergent possibilities and critically address the set of problems that result from the recent conservative/nationalist/populist/anti-democratic turn in Hungary and beyond.

An important aim of the project is to reinforce non-governmental cultural infrastructure and funding in the field.

The project intends to emphasize our conviction that culture is not the terrain of party-political battles and propaganda; it originates and prospers in civil society. The OFF-Biennale Budapest is a proactive professional initiative with the aim to generate change.

### WHY IS THE OFF-BIENNALE BUDAPEST NEEDED?

(Ethno-)nationalism, xenophobia, homophobia, historical amnesia, and falsification are gaining force across Europe. As one of the consequences of a widespread conservative and populist turn, public support for the arts has been drastically cut and/or reorganized, often in line with the political agenda. In some cases governments are promoting retrograde values in culture, allowing anti-democratic tendencies to spread. Hungary has been moving into this direction with extreme speed in the past few years, and the changes in the cultural sector are just the symptoms and means of a masterplan to build an “illiberal workfare state,” in which the checks and balances are eliminated, the media is under tight control, and the civil society is aggressively intimidated. The government officially promotes “traditional”, national, and Christian values in contemporary cultural production. The contemporary art scene, which has been largely dependent on state funding and infrastructure, has proved very vulnerable to these changes. That is why OFF-Biennale Budapest seeks methods to **facilitate diversity and autonomous practices in art and culture.**

## THEMATIC FOCUS

The main focus of the OFF-Biennale Budapest is how art can contribute to **the development of the civil society**: through de- and reconstructing the existing ways of thinking, and by arousing activity of the audience concerning social issues. The OFF-Biennale Budapest thus primarily aims to investigate and present artistic positions that intend to develop an intimate and **engaged relationship with the audience, working with very limited material means**: ready-made elements, do-it-yourself attitude, cheap materials; using their creative imagination, their thoughts, their bodies.

We would like to offer a creative response to the given economical and political circumstances that influence and, for the most part, limit art production. We work with artists from the region whose practice is based on tenacious critique, who challenge the spectators to rethink existing schemas and patterns, whether institutional or mental, sociological or psychological.

## HOW WILL THE OFF-BIENNALE BUDAPEST LOOK?

### Participants

OFF-Biennale Budapest aims to **converge the energies of the different actors of the art scene in order to create a strong common voice**. That is why we invite individuals, groups, NGOs, or for-profit enterprises in Hungary and internationally that agree with the principles and goals of the OFF-Biennale Budapest to submit program proposals.

The participants are invited to work with us, on the one hand, in putting forward artistic projects that generate an intense discussion around the complex set of problems described above, and, on the other, in developing methods that can work through the issues that prompted the event. The invited international participants are renowned artists and art professionals active in and/or focusing on the Central and Eastern European region.

### Programs

The program of the OFF-Biennale Budapest consists of the projects of the invited participants (curators, collectives, artists etc.) Besides contemporary (visual) art, the project builds on other art fields such as film, theater, music, design to strengthen the collaboration among the different artistic fields.

### Financing

As the project is also to test the possibilities of non-governmental cultural funding in Hungary, we are **not applying for Hungarian state funds and neither do we accept projects with such a background**. While we consider this an extreme restriction (see also: Venues), it is necessitated by the extreme circumstances that the project responds to, namely the rampant political interference in the current Hungarian cultural infrastructure as well as the strong dependence of the scene on state funding. As one way to loosen this dependence is working in an international network, we do not set the same stipulation for our international participants.

We are seeking ways to make project-production more cost-effective (establishing such an umbrella project as the OFF-Biennale Budapest for all the various small-scale activities is one such way; also, we are launching an on-line platform where participants can share information, sources, costs, skills, etc.), and in the program, we will focus on artistic concepts and methods that assert their independence by not relying on large budgets and high-end production.

All curators, team-members and artists commit themselves to the OFF-Biennale Budapest without being paid for it. Their passion comes from the profound belief in the case and in the common mission they can achieve only together.

#### Timing

The official date of the event is 24 April – 31 May 2015.

The start and the most intense period of the OFF-Biennale Budapest is scheduled for the days 24-26 April 2015. Many programs will have a longer timespan and not every event belonging to the project will happen within these days, either.

#### Venues

The main venues of the OFF-Biennale Budapest are in Budapest where various private and public spaces are involved, but the programs extend well beyond it to spaces outside the capital and international venues. Sites may be non-governmental\* spaces. (*\*restriction applies only to Hungarian venues*)

#### Curatorial team:

Nikolett Erőss, art historian, curator, formerly curator at Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2011-2013), ran Trafó Gallery, Budapest (2006-2011)

Anna Juhász, art historian, curator; program supervisor at ACAX-Agency for Contemporary Art Exchange, formerly assistant at Kassák Museum, Budapest

Hajnalka Somogyi, art historian, freelance curator, formerly curator at Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2009-2012), ran Trafó Gallery, Budapest (2001-2006)

Tijana Stepanovic, curator, artistic director at acb Gallery, Budapest, formerly head of ACAX-Agency for Contemporary Art Exchange at Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2008-2013)

Borbála Szalai, art historian, curator at Trafo Gallery, Trafo - House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest

Katalin Székely art historian, curator, formerly curator Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2008 – 2013), assistant curator at the The First Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2007). Currently PhD fellow at ELTE, Budapest

János Szoboszlai, art historian, cultural worker, Head of Department, Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Art Theory and Curatorial Studies, Hungarian University of Fine Art

Main supporters: EEA/Norway NGO Fund, Open Society Initiative for Europe, Erste Stiftung

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