

IGOR ZABEL AWARD FOR CULTURE AND THEORY 2020

Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory 2020 Grant according to the laureate's selection

Ivana Bago, curator, art historian, and art writer, Zagreb

The Igor Zabel Award Grant 2020 is given to Ivana Bago in recognition of her excellency and insistence on the art historical research, writing, and exhibiting of Yugoslav and Eastern European art in the past decade as well as for her remarkable contribution to the formation of new approaches to writing and curating in this region.

Ivana Bago is an independent scholar, writer, and curator. She began her career as an independent curator and writer in Zagreb, Croatia where she developed a collaborative practice firmly situated in its immediate social and political context. The project *Where Everything is Yet to Happen* (2009–2010) – co-curated with Antonia Majaca for the Spaport Biennale in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina – already presented a comprehensive effort to address the destruction of socialist and multinational Yugoslavia from the perspective of contemporary art production. By employing a process-based approach, the project replaced the idea of a central exhibition in favour of a series of discursive, exhibitionary, and intersubjective “exposures”. The experimental and research-based method is also characteristic of other collaborations between Bago and Majaca within Delve – Institute for Duration, Location and Variables, which the two co-founded in Zagreb in 2009. Through Delve they have developed projects for venues ranging from Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana to the University Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City, while at the same time participating in the shaping of the independent cultural scene in Zagreb and the region.

Bago's curatorial work has been increasingly marked by a dedication to art historical research and writing, which has become her primary focus in recent years. She has published extensively on conceptual art, the history of exhibitions and curating, performance, feminism, (post)Yugoslav art, and post-1989 art historiographies. Her writing on Croatian and Yugoslav art and the curating of the 1960s and 1970s has informed a new understanding of the relation between aesthetics and (geo)politics in socialist Yugoslavia. Her membership on the editorial board of *ARTMargins* represents a recognition of the importance of Bago's scholarly contributions.

Bago's current research project, *Yugoslav Aesthetics: Monuments to History's Bare Bones*, emerges from her recently defended doctoral dissertation from Duke University. In it, she proposes the notion of a “Yugoslav aesthetics” to examine the historical and contemporary relation between art and Yugoslavism, a vision of the emancipated, supranational political community that was thoroughly dismantled by the triumph of ethnic nationalisms in the 1990s.

Feminism is another central commitment of Ivana Bago's work. She was a researcher for *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, the landmark exhibition curated by

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Bojana Pejić (2009–2010). Her art historical engagement with Sanja Iveković's work now continues in the form of her most recent curatorial project, the "essay exhibition" *Meeting Points: Documents in the Making, 1968–1982* that will take place at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka in 2021. In it Iveković's artworks are taken as the starting point and invitations to contemplate and think through the legacy of progressive post-1968 artistic practices and their potential lessons in the present moment of planetary upheaval and crisis.

The Igor Zabel Award Grant 2020 will provide Ivana Bago with important support for her ongoing independent curatorial and art historical endeavours.

Zdenka Badovinac, Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory 2020 laureate