

Spatial Cities in the East and South. Gyula Kosice's Artistic Dialogue with Hungarian and Slovak Artists

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—— The article aims to reveal similarities between the artistic approaches of the Czechoslovakian-born Argentine artist Gyula Kosice and the Slovak art scene. Referencing Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski's concept of "horizontal art history", the article focuses on the artistic dialogue between kinetic and op art artists developed during the Cold War period in the countries of Central Europe and Latin America. The goal of the article is twofold. Firstly, it will expose the specificity of artistic practices and strategies developed in non-Western art scenes. It also aims to reveal certain proximities among artists, especially those engaged in kinetic and geometrical art. Adopting a transnational and transmodern approach, the text will focus on Gyula Kosice's contact with the Slovak artist Alex Mlynářčik, established through the French art critic Michel Ragon. It will also highlight similarities between Kosice's hydrosatial cities, Mlynářčik's architectural proposals realised with the VAL group in the 1970s, and the concept of prospective architecture coined by Michel Ragon.

Keywords: Slovak Art, Argentinian Art, Kinetic Art, Art of the 1950s–1970s, Art and Architecture, Horizontal Art History.

1. Horizontal Art History, or a Historical Reconsideration of Post-War Art's Transnationality

In 2009, Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski, an advocate of a comparative approach to the study of art, coined the term “horizontal art history”. In his article “Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde” he developed the idea of a history of art based on non-hierarchical dialogues between artworks, events and cultural actors¹. It would be developed in opposition to “vertical” art history, based on a centre/periphery model, and intrinsically connected to Western cultural hegemony. As Piotrowski observed:

This vertical narrative implies a certain hierarchy. The heart of modern art is the center – a city or cities – where the paradigms of the main artistic trends came into being: Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London, New York. From those centers particular models come to the periphery, radiating all over the world.²

In opposition to this, the horizontal model renounces all hierarchies, and is concerned more with so-called peripheral contexts and the direct relations among them, even those that often constitute blank spots in globalised art history. “Alternative narratives <...> more aptly bring into scope the history of modern art in the margins”³, Piotrowski continued, as “horizontal art history should begin with the deconstruction of vertical art history, that is, the history of Western art”⁴. This particularly concerns world regions that were not connected by colonial dependencies in their mutual relations, such as Eastern Europe and Latin America. As Piotrowski later stressed in his book *Globalne Ujęcie Sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe)⁵, these regions, often marginalised in canonical and vertical narrations of art history, could develop truly

1 Piotr Piotrowski, “Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde”, in: *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate – of a Continent*, ed. Sascha Bru et al., N. York: De Gruyter; 2009, pp. 49–58, [online], [cited 29-08-2021], https://monoskop.org/images/9/93/Piotrowski_Piotr_2009_Toward_a_Horizontal_History_of_the_European_Avant-Garde.pdf.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

5 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne Ujęcie Sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań: Rebis, 2018.



1.
The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Museum on the Vistula, 2017, photo by Bartosz Stawiarski, Courtesy: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

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dialogic and non-hierarchical cultural relations and therefore should unite in their claim for horizontality in art history⁶.

This contribution of Piotrowski, which aimed at deconstructing and decolonising hierarchical and hegemonic approaches to art history, was particularly relevant for the organisation of recent shows. One of them was *The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s*⁷ [Fig. 1]. It was held in November 2017 at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, together with the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow and the SESC Pinheiros de São Paulo. By adopting a comparative approach, the exhibition highlighted similarities between the kinetic art and op art movements, which were developed by Latin American and East European artists in their home countries and abroad. The curators extended the chronological scope of the exhibition from the 1950s to the 1970s – one decade more than what usually appears in considerations of kinetic art and op art in the West. The show provided a new map of the non-Western metropolises where kinetic art emerged: Warsaw, Budapest, Zagreb, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Bogotá and São Paulo⁸. The exhibition, which included works by more than forty artists, included masterpieces like Brazilian artist Mira Schendel's installation *Ondas Paradas de Probabilidade* (Still Waves of Probability, 1969) and Romanian artist Constantin Flondor's aluminum sculpture *Pentagona* (1971). The catalogue contained twelve conscientious contributions by East European and Latin American scholars and source texts by ten artists who were important to the development of both artistic tendencies.

The Other Trans-Atlantic [Fig. 2] was significant, as it helped raise several urgent questions concerning new decolonial narratives in art history and historical narrations on the geometrical art and kinetic art movement. By observing similarities in the cultural and political contexts in

6 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

7 Marta Dzięwańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), *The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s*, Warsaw: The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2018. The exhibition was displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw between November 2017 and February 2018; it travelled to the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow and was presented there between March and May 2018; and finally, it was shown at the SESC Pinheiros, in São Paulo, between March and July 2019.

8 The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, "The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s", in: *artmuseum.pl*, [online], 2017, [cited 26-07-2019], <https://artmuseum.pl/en/wystawy/inny-trans-atlantyk/1>.



2.

The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Museum on the Vistula, 2017, photo by Bartosz Stawiarski, Courtesy: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

both regions – such as slower dynamics in modernisation processes, inferior economic development in respect to the West, and the presence of political systems with authoritarian tendencies, the exhibition attempted to ask a question:

Co właściwie sprawiło, że artyści z tak różnych kontekstów kulturowych, jak Wenezuela lat 60 i Jugosławia w tym samym okresie skupili się wokół paradygmatu estetycznego, który został potem tak pośpiesznie wykreślony z kanonu historii sztuki XX wieku przez przedstawicieli północnoatlantyckich ośrodków władzy artystycznej? (What exactly led artists in such divergent cultural contexts as 1960s Venezuela and 1960s Yugoslavia to rally around an aesthetic paradigm that was so hurriedly written out of the 20th-century art-historical canon in the power centres of the North Atlantic?).⁹

⁹ Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd, “Inny Transatlantyk”, in: *artmuseum.pl*, [online], 22 January 2018, [cited 16-07-2020], <https://artmuseum.pl/pl/news/inny-transatlantyk-sztuka-kinetyczna-i-op-art-w-europie-2>.

Another issue under examination concerned the character of artistic connections between the above-mentioned distanced contexts. How to deal with artistic relations between global regions such as Eastern Europe and Latin America? Could we go beyond a comparative approach and find some points of encounter between these cultural contexts? Can we speak about an artistic collision or the circulation of ideas between actors? What were the reasons for their entering into a relationship? Did Western cultural actors also participate in these exchanges? If so, could we speak about horizontal art history in these cases? By taking as an example the artistic relations of the Argentine artist Gyula Kosice with the Hungarian and Czechoslovak art scenes – which is still a blank spot in canonical narratives of art history – this article develops a hypothesis concerning East-South cultural relations – which even if sometimes mediated, as it was the case of Kosice and the Slovak artist Alex Mlynárčik, both related to the French critic Michel Ragon – were highly significant for cultural actors in both regions. The article will include in particular Kosice’s conceptualisation of hydrospatial cities, a project in dialogue with Michel Ragon’s concept of “prospective architecture”¹⁰, which revealed several similarities with the praxis of experimental architecture developed simultaneously by the Slovak artist Alex Mlynárčik, who was also acquainted with Ragon and the French art scene.

1.1. Kosice in the City of Košice and Slovaks and Hungarians in Río de la Plata

In 2013, the Argentine artist Gyula Kosice, who was celebrating his 89th birthday that year, prepared an outdoor sculpture in Košice, the city in Eastern Slovakia where he was born on 26 April 1924. Born into a Jewish-Hungarian family, he travelled at the age of four to Argentina, where he became aware of and attached to his Hungarian roots. His choice to change his surname from Fallik to Kosice – a Hungarianised and Argentinised version of the Slavic name of his home town (today Košice is the second largest city in the Slovak Republic; in the 1920s, it was part of Hungary and had the name Kassa) proved the strong connection he had with his

¹⁰ Michel Ragon, *Histoire de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes*, Vol. 3: *Prospective et futurologie*, Paris: Casterman, 1978, pp. 19–22, 24–30.

birthplace and its culture. Titled *Socha pre Košice (Statue for Košice)*, this multimedia artwork was realised as part of the project Košice *European Capital of Culture 2013* and was located in front of the freshly renovated art space Kunsthalle / Hala umenia in Košice¹¹. Kosice's metallic sculpture – a meshy oval form and with a mirrored sphere placed in the centre of the composition – constitutes the essence of the experimental, futurological and hydrokinetic art Kosice has developed since the 1950s. The sculpture also harmonised well with the Kunsthalle – built according to a project by the Slovak architect Ladislav Greč between 1957 and 1960, and which up till the 1970s functioned as a swimming pool¹². The horizontal modernist edifice, divided in half by a translucent main hall with a semi-cylindric vault, was placed next to an outdoor swimming pool, and thereby seemed to fulfil the criteria for a hydrosatial architecture¹³, akin to Gyula Kosice's own architectural work. In the semi-cylindric main hall, sculptures and artworks by Kosice were also put on display during the opening of the Kunsthalle, together with artworks by two prominent European sculptors: the Romanian Constantin Brancusi and the British Tony Cragg¹⁴. *Statue for Košice* appears as a vertically positioned human eye in the pupil of which the artist's hometown is reflected. Metaphorically, it marks the artist's return to his roots¹⁵.

Slovak and Hungarian kinetic and op art have been exhibited in Latin America since the end of the 1950s, especially in the Río de la Plata region, which includes Argentina and Uruguay. The Hungarian-born and Paris-based artist Victor Vasarely's monographic exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires in 1958 was described by the museum's director Jorge Romero Brest as an exhibition *de alta calidad*

11 Veronika Cholewová, "Košice's Hall of Art offers particularly contemporary visual art", in: *Košice – Európske hlavné mesto kultúry 2013*, [online], 3 July 2013, [cited 25-08-2020], <http://www.kosice2013.sk/en/kosices-hall-of-art-offers-particularly-contemporary-visual-art/>.

12 Košické kultúrne centrá, "Kunsthalle/Hala umenia", in: *K13 – Košické kultúrne centrá*, not dated, [online], [cited 16-07-2020], <https://www.k13.sk/o-nas/centra/hala-umenia/>.

13 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*, Manifesto, Buenos Aires, 1971. First published in: *Košice. La ciudad hidroespacial*, Buenos Aires: Anzilotti, 1972.

14 Veronika Janušková, "V obrazoch: V Košiciach otvorili Kunsthalle", in: *Korzar Košice*, 3 July 2013, [online], [cited 25-08-2020], <https://kosice.korzar.sme.sk/c/6858015/v-obrazoch-v-kosiciach-otvorili-kunsthalle.html>; Veronika Cholewová, Cholewová, *op. cit.*

15 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice, Buenos Aires, 10 September 2013.

(of high quality) and a magnífica lección (a wonderful lesson) for *tanto los artistas argentinos como los aficionados a la pintura* (both Argentinean artists and painting enthusiasts)¹⁶. The show deeply impacted the local scene. As the Argentinian art historian Andrea Giunta remarked, Vasarely's work "represented another important step forward for concrete art"¹⁷. As the Argentinean art historian Cristina Rossi rightly observed, this exhibition:

resultó reveladora para los jóvenes que, estimulados por las clases de visión, se interesaban por indagar los fenómenos ópticos y estudiar la teoría de la percepción visual (was revealing for the young artists who, stimulated by the classes of seeing, were interested in investigating the optical phenomena and studying the theory of visual perception).¹⁸

In 1958 la Asociación Arte Nuevo (The Association of New Art) published in the fifth issue of its bulletin the Spanish translation of Vasarely's *Manifiesto jaune* (Yellow Manifesto) – a seminal text he prepared for the exhibition *Le Mouvement* (The Movement), which took place in Paris at the Galerie Denise René in 1955¹⁹. As María José Herrera, curator of "Real/Virtual", the first retrospective exhibition of Argentinian kinetic art, which took place in Buenos Aires between June and August 2012²⁰, stated:

Es precisamente a partir de esta muestra cuando diversos artistas interesados en dar un nuevo cauce a la geometría comienzan a trabajar inspirados en la metodología serial y las leyes de la visión que Vasarely aplicaba en sus obras (It is precisely from this exhibition that various artists interested in giving a new direction to

¹⁶ Jorge Romero Brest, *Vasarely*, Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1958.

¹⁷ Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 324. First published as: *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política. Arte argentino en los años sesenta*, Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001.

¹⁸ Cristina Rossi, "Imágenes inestables: tránsitos Buenos Aires-París-Buenos Aires", in: *Real/Virtual, arte cinético argentino en los años sesenta*, edited by María José Herrera, Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2012, p. 55.

¹⁹ Victor Vasarely, "Conceptos de Vasarely sobre la pintura", in: *El Boletín de la Asociación Arte Nuevo*, No. 5, 1958, p. 15; Fábian Lebenglik, "Cómo fue que Le Parc se transformó en Le Parc", in: *Página 12*, [online], 1 October 2019, [cited 16-07-2020], <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/222407-como-fue-que-le-parc-se-transformo-en-le-parc>.

²⁰ María José Herrera (ed.), *Real/Virtual, arte cinético argentino en los años sesenta*, Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2012.

geometry began to work, inspired by the serial methodology and the laws of vision that Vasarely applied in his works).²¹

This curatorial statement was confirmed by Julio Le Parc, one of the leading Argentinian artists in the kinetic trend and for whom Vasarely's first exhibition in Buenos Aires in 1958 *fue como un respiro* (was like a breath of fresh air)²². It helped set the course for the future development of Le Parc's artistic goals and career, and even his move to Paris as the recipient of a grant from the French Cultural Service that same year, where he became friends with Vasarely and well acquainted with the kinetic art scene in the French capital. The curators also quoted a number of Argentinians who were directly inspired by Vasarely's show, such as Horacio García Rossi, Rogelio Polesello, Luis Tomasello, Jorge E. Lezama, Hugo de Marziani, Jorge Luna Ercilla and Juan Carlos Romero²³.

A decade later, Milan Dobeš, the leading Slovak artist of the kinetic and op art trend, developed his own relations with the art scenes of the *Cono Sur* – the southern part of Latin America. Dobeš, who graduated in 1956 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava and started to produce light-kinetic objects and mobiles in the early 1960s, was present at international exhibitions in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. In November 1969, his kinetic installation was displayed in Montevideo, Uruguay, during the first edition of *La Bienal de Escultura al Aire Libre* (the Biennial of Outdoor Sculpture), held in Roosevelt Park²⁴. Organised by la Comisión Nacional de Artes Plásticas (the National Commission of the Visual Arts), and juried by

21 María José Herrera, "Escenas del arte cinético argentino (Fragmento)", in: *Ars Omnibus*, [online], 2012, [cited 24-08-2020], <http://www.arsomnibus.com.ar/web/muestra/real-virtual--arte-cinetico-argentino-en-los-anos-sesenta>.

22 Celina Chatruc, "Como en los 50, un 'joven' Julio Le Parc revive en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes", in: *La Nación*, [online], 14 August 2019, [cited 25-08-2020], <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/como-50-joven-julio-le-parc-revive-nid2277476>.

23 Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, "Real/Virtual. Arte cinético argentino en los años sesenta. Muestra colectiva. Del 14 de Junio al 19 de Agosto de 2012", in: *MNBA – Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires*, [online], June 2012, [cited 25-08-2020], <http://www.arsomnibus.com.ar/web/muestra/real-virtual--arte-cinetico-argentino-en-los-anos-sesenta>. See also: Cristina Rossi, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

24 Miriam Hojman, "Arte y espacio público en Montevideo (1959–1973). Intercambios rioplatenses en los discursos y prácticas artísticas", in: Seminario de la Carrera (A paper presented during the seminar), Uruguay, [online], 3 June 3 2016, [cited 16-07-2020], <http://www.iaa.fadu.uba.ar/publicaciones/critica/0206.pdf>; American Embassy Montevideo, "First International Open Air Sculpture Biennial, November 1969", Unclassified document, 1 July 1969. Accessible at: El Grupo de estudios interdisciplinarios sobre pasado reciente – GEIPAR, Uruguay, [online], [cited 25-08-2020], <http://www.geipar.udelar.edu.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CULTURAL-ACTIVITIES-CUL-General.-U-1969.pdf>.

the French art critic Pierre Restany, the American art historian Edward F. Fry and the Israeli art curator Yona Fischer, the Biennial included sculptures by Uruguayan and international artists²⁵. Seven of them were Latin American: Amalia Nieto, Manuel Pailós and Salustiano Pintos from Uruguay; Gyula Kosice from Argentina; Paraguayan artist Laura Márquez; Brazilian Jackson Ribeiro; and Lautaro Labbé from Chile²⁶. The Biennale also included sculptures by Roland Goeschl from Austria, Menasche Kadishman from Israel, and Hungarian-born and Paris-based artist Nicolás Schöffner²⁷, who won First Prize at the Venice Biennial in 1968 and whose presence was supported by the French Embassy²⁸. Eastern Europe was represented by Milan Dobeš and the Polish artist Władysław Hasiór. The sculptures were supposed to be produced locally, during the two weeks preceding the opening of the Biennial²⁹. Some of the outdoor projects were representative of the kinetic and constructive trend³⁰. Such was the case of Gyula Kosice's "hydraulic sculpture" – a fountain made of crystalline plexiglass³¹ and Nicolás Schöffner's light-kinetic project. This was also true of Milan Dobeš's *Kinetický objekt* (Kinetic object), a six-metre-high aluminum tower with both gloss and mat surfaces, containing seven circles that were moved by the wind³², and which, according to Uruguayan critics, *produciendo un efecto de belleza poco común* (produced a rare beauty effect)³³.

Thanks to this exhibition and contacts between Jorge Glusberg – an Argentinean curator, entrepreneur and director of the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (the Centre for Art and Communication, known as CAYC) in Buenos Aires – and two seminal Uruguayan art critics, Nelson di Maggio and Ángel Kalenberg, some of the artists presented at the Biennale in Montevideo were subsequently exhibited in Argentina³⁴. An outdoor exhibition

25 Miriam Hojman, *op. cit.*

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*

28 American Embassy Montevideo, "First International Open Air Sculpture Biennial, November 1969", unclassified document, 1 July 1969.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Miriam Hojman, *op. cit.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 The photograph of this project is accessible at: "Milan Dobeš, *Kinetický objekt*, Montevideo, 1969", in: *Artlist – Centrum pro současné umění Praha*, [online], [cited 25-08-2020], <https://www.artlist.cz/dila/kineticky-objekt-113644/>.

33 Eduardo Vernazza, "1a. Bienal de Escultura al aire libre", in: *El Día*, 17 December 1969.

34 Miriam Hojman, *op. cit.*

entitled *Escultura, follaje, ruidos* (Sculpture, foliage, noise) co-organised in November 1970 at the Plaza Rubén Darío by the CAYC, included works by some forty Argentinian and eleven foreign artists. Among them were four participants of the Biennale in Montevideo: Roland Goeschl, Lautaro Labbé, Gyula Kosice and Milan Dobeš³⁵. In the personal archives of Jorge Glusberg, which contains documentation of this exhibition, we find Milan Dobeš's drawing of a light-kinetic sculpture-architecture project, together with a proposal for an experimental architecture by another Slovak sculptor, Jozef Jankovič, who was also part of the show³⁶.

The wind-powered outdoor kinetic sculpture that was exhibited at the Rubén Darío Plaza was made in Argentina, according to Milan Dobeš's project and managed by the engineer Mario Garrone, who at that time held the position of cultural advisor for the Municipality of Olavarría – an industrial city in the province of Buenos Aires, and the home of the local Czechoslovak community³⁷. The sculpture was 3 metres high and 2.5 metres wide, and was composed of two blue quadrants arranged perpendicularly, constituting a kind of windmill with rectangular, mirror-like wings³⁸. In 1979, it was donated to the city of Olavarría, where it is currently located³⁹.

Another light-kinetic South-East art connection was the presence of Romanian and Latin American artists at the Biennale of Constructive Art in Nurnberg, West Germany between April and August of 1969⁴⁰. Organised by Dietrich Mahlow, head of the Institute for Modern Art and titled

35 Jorge Glusberg, *Escultura, follaje, ruidos. Adquisición noglas*, Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970.

36 *Ibid.* The materials of the personal archives of Jorge Glusberg, in Buenos Aires, were consulted thanks to the courtesy of his family.

37 El Popular; "Repararon y reinstalaron el Monumento a los Checoslovacos en Sierras Bayas", in: *El Popular*; [online], 11 December 2016, [cited 16-07-2020], <http://www.elpopular.com.ar/eimpresa/249535/repararon-y-reinstalaron-el-monumento-a-los-chechoslovacos-en-sierras-bayas>.

38 Carlos Ferrer; "Un monumento recuerda en Sierras Bayas a los inmigrantes checoslovacos", in: *Radio Prague International*, [online], 21 December 21, 2016, [cited 16-07-2020], <https://espanol.radio.cz/un-monumento-recuerda-en-sierras-bayas-a-los-inmigrantes-chechoslovacos-8205411>.

39 El Popular; *op. cit.*

40 The text by Attila Tordai-S published in the catalogue of *The Other Trans-Atlantic* places the production of 1+1+1 in a broader East European and international context, marked by still-persisting narratives of Cold War politics. However, it does not explore or suggest any connections or parallels between the members of this group and the Latin American artists featured at this show. Attila Tordai-S, "The Sigma Experience", in: *The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s*, edited by Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd, Warsaw: The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2018, pp. 183–184.

Konstruktive Kunst: Elemente und Prinzipien (Constructive art: elements and principles), the biennale included among its curators the above-mentioned Argentinean art historian and critic Jorge Romero Brest, who had previously invited Victor Vasarely to Buenos Aires⁴¹. Thanks to his presence, the show displayed, alongside works by Paris-based and internationally recognised Latin American artists like Julio Le Parc, Jesús Rafael Soto and Waldemar Cordeiro, the works of younger and less visible internationally artists from the region, such as the Argentinians Ary Brizzi and Enio Iommi⁴². The biennale also invited several artists from Eastern Europe, such as Milan Dobeš, Miloš Urbásek, and Zdeněk Sýkora from Czechoslovakia; Ivan Picelj, Zoran Radović, Vjenceslav Richter, Miroslav Šutej, and Aleksandar Srnec from Yugoslavia; and Henryk Stażewski, Ryszard Winiarski and Zbigniew Gostomski from Poland⁴³. It also included the artistic collectives Dvizhene (Movement) from the Soviet Union, founded in 1962 by Lev Nussberg, and 1+1+1 from Romania, which included three artists from the city Timișoara (Ștefan Bertalan, Roman Cotoșman and Constantin Flondor) and two from Bucharest (Pavel Ilie and Mihai Rusu)⁴⁴. Curated by the Romanian art historian and critic Octavian Barbosa, who like Jorge Romero Brest was invited to collaborate with the Biennale, the artistic production of the 1+1+1 group found kindred spirits in Latin American artists such as Julio Le Parc who likewise explored in their kinetic art projects the poetic effects of the sublime play of form, light and shade, and made use of natural phenomena such as wind and water as a natural mirror. As Constantin Flondor recalled, he not only personally met Latin American artists during the Biennale, but he had an extensive discussion with Julio Le Parc⁴⁵.

Existing East-South kinetic relations, which remain under-researched, and the examples given above, are without a doubt anti-hegemonic in character. However, the above-described relations between Latin American and East European kinetic and op art artists cannot always be defined by means of Piotrowski's horizontality. Even if the narration remains

41 Jorge Romero Brest, *op. cit.*

42 *Konstruktive Kunst: Elemente und Prinzipien. Biennale 1969 Nürnberg*, Nürnberg: Institut für moderne Kunst, 1969.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*

45 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Constantin Flondor.

horizontal, the relations themselves sometimes are not. Even if East European artists were invited to Latin America, they could have played a role that was previously reserved for Western artists. Vasarely had his solo show in Buenos Aires, not because of his Hungarian roots, but due to his strong position on the Parisian kinetic and op art scene. Milan Dobeš's exhibition in Montevideo was also connected to the presence of Western art critics. His participation in the *Escultura, follaje, ruidos* (Sculpture, foliage, noise) exhibition, organised by Glusberg, who himself was increasingly interested in establishing cultural relations with Eastern Europe – was in touch at that time with the Czech experimental poet Ladislav Novák⁴⁶ – who initiated an interchange between the Argentinean and Slovak artistic milieus. Without any doubt, the relations established between Flondor and Le Parc were truly dialogic and horizontal.

Another horizontal parallel that can be drawn between East European and Latin American artistic production is that between Gyula Kosice's concept of the hydrosatial city and the Slovak artist Alex Mlynárčik's idea of architectural projects⁴⁷. Although both concepts were developed in the 1970s and could be seen as a final stage in the kinetic-op art trend, which had already oscillated towards conceptual art, its analysis seems useful nowadays as a means of revealing the East-South flow of kinetic artistic relations and the affinities found in the ideas and concepts circulating in both regions.

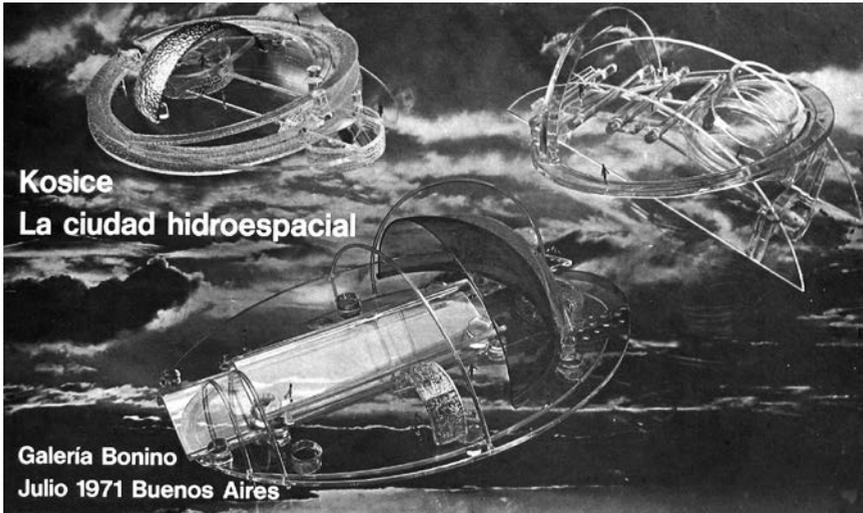
2. Transatlantic Prospective

2.1. Parallels Between Gyula Kosice's and Alex Mlynárčik's Approaches in Architecture

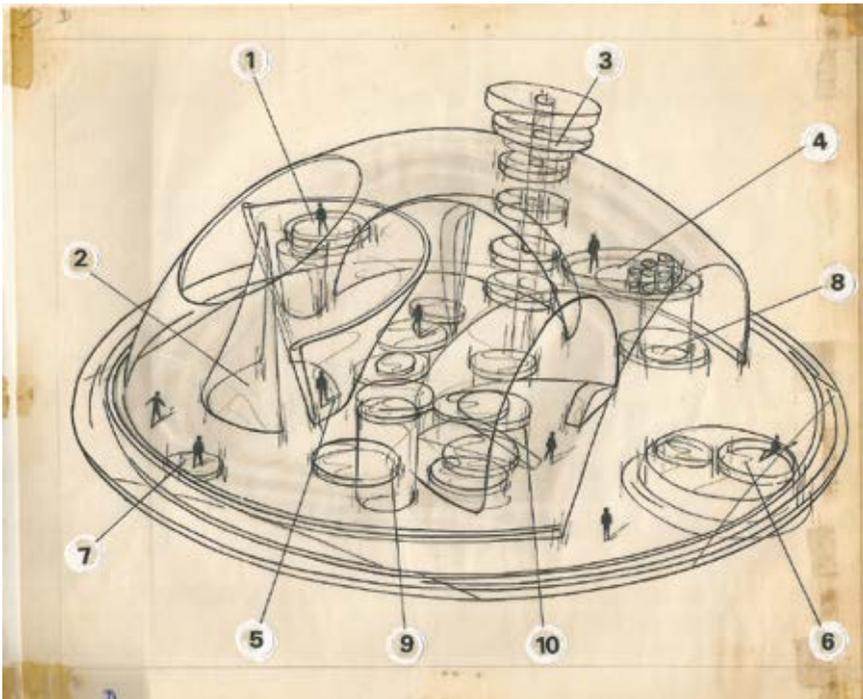
In July 1971, Gyula Kosice presented at the Bonino Gallery in Buenos Aires some twenty models of experimental dwellings that were part of a larger project titled *La Ciudad hidroespacial* (The Hydrosatial City) [Figs. 3–4], together with fourteen kinetic works described as

⁴⁶ Glusberg speaks about his relationship with Novák in: Jorge Glusberg, *De la Figuración al Arte de Sistemas*, Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970, s. n.

⁴⁷ Kosice's projects for hydrosatial architecture are reproduced in the catalogue of *The Other Trans-Atlantic*. His manifesto was also translated into English and published as "The Hydrosatial City Manifest, 1971", in: Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), Winograd (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 341–343.



3.
Gyula Kosice, Poster of the exhibition *La Ciudad Hidroespacial*, Bonino Gallery, Buenos Aires, July 1971,
Courtesy: Kosice Foundation, Kosice, Buenos Aires



4.
Gyula Kosice, *Ciudad Hidroespacial, Maqueta D* (Hydrospatial City, Model D), not dated, pencil and ink on
paper; Courtesy: Fundacion Kosice, Buenos Aires

“agua-luz-movimiento” (water-light-movement)⁴⁸. The catalogue included a black-and-white photomontage of three spaceship-like translucent, circular megastructures floating freely against the background of a cloudy sky⁴⁹. The model for the capsule-like hydrospatial habitat, now belonging to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (*Hábitat hidroespacial, maqueta Y* (Hydrospatial habitat, Model Y, 1971), is made of metal, acrylic, and plexiglas translucent blue elements, reminding one both of futurological visions of life in outer space and the translucent capsule over Manhattan produced by the American architect Richard Buckminster Fuller (*Plan for a dome over Manhattan*, 1961). Another photomontage included in the catalogue contains drawings of the same three floating or flying structures over a photographed image of the Earth from the perspective of an airplane⁵⁰. A drawing of a flying bird in the upper side of the last image, as well as little human silhouettes that are part of the circular structures suggest the scale of the envisioned projects – its architectural dimension. To mark this occasion Kosice published his manifesto *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial* (The Hydrospatial Architecture and Urbanism), which explained to the public the principles behind this project⁵¹. Formally, his experimental habitats in futurological structures and his translucent megastructures that “está[n] condicionad[os] para estar suspendid[os] en el espacio indefinidamente” (are conditioned to be suspended in space indefinitely)⁵² clearly have their roots in Kosice’s hydrokinetic projects developed in previous decades. However, the concept of architecture and urbanism he described in this manifesto seemed to be a new and original contribution to Argentinian culture – one with no previous antecedents, or perhaps, just some vague resemblance to some Concrete Art projects created by local Avant-Garde artists, such as Tomás Maldonado, an Argentinian artist and designer, and founder in 1945 of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invencción (Association of Concrete Art-Invention)⁵³. Moreover, it was also commonly considered a solitary phenomenon – innovative but detached from everything that was being produced

48 G. Kosice, Buenos Aires: Galería Bonino, 1971.

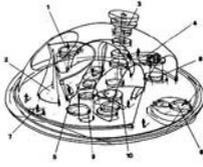
49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Maria de los Ángeles de Rueda, *La Nostalgia de las Vanguardias en Argentina La Aventura Concreta – MADI – Cinética*, Buenos Aires: Fundación Klemm, 2000.



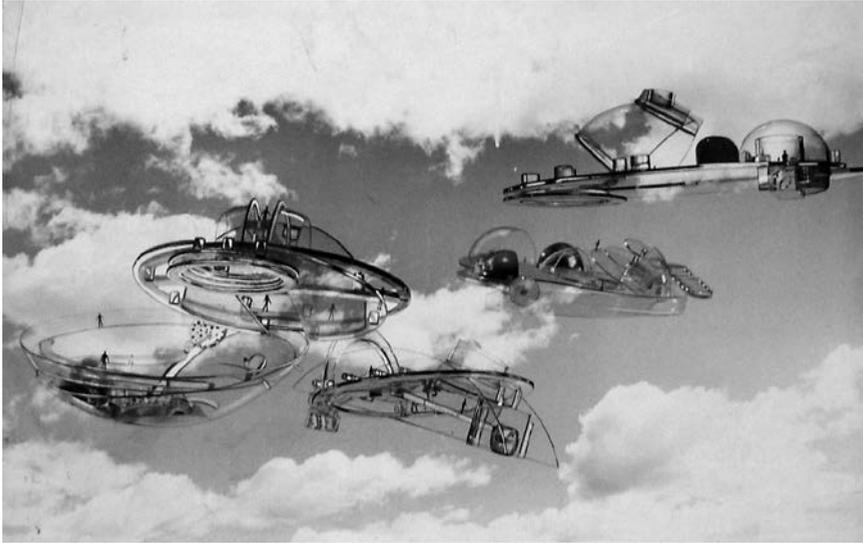
Lugares:

1. Energía generadora de circuitos abiertos al mismo pensamiento;
2. Lugar abstractor y reducción del relieve;
3. Estrategia de evacuación de espesores, puramente aérea;
4. Para recorrer en aventuras hidrométricas promovidas desde el sur hasta alcanzar los medios;
5. Para valorizar los cambios físicos y orgánicos Transformación biológica y sensible;
6. Lugar de dispersión del fenómeno y su justificación objetiva;
7. Decisión técnica de residuos;
8. Alimentación, gestión pre-vitamínica;
9. Para canalizar la oportunidad por el control del azar;

Maqueta D

5.

Gyula Kosice, *Ciudad Hidroespacial, Maqueta D* (Hydrospatial City, Model D), not dated, in: *Kosice. La ciudad hidroespacial*, Buenos Aires: Anzilotti, 1972, Courtesy: Fundación Kosice, Buenos Aires



6.

Gyula Kosice, *Fotomontaje de la Ciudad Hidroespacial* (Photomontage of the Hydrospatial City), 1974, black and white photomontage, Courtesy: Kosice Foundation, Kosice, Buenos Aires



7.

Gyula Kosice, Gyula Kosice and the *Hydrospatial City* (4), not dated, black and white photograph, Courtesy: Kosice Foundation, Kosice, Buenos Aires

in Argentina at that time⁵⁴; some saw it as an example of a belated utopia: “exceedingly optimistic and naïve by our contemporary standards”⁵⁵. This connection between Kosice’s concept of hydrosatial architecture [Fig. 5], Michel Ragon’s prospective architecture, and Slovak proposals is absent in seminal texts about both Kosice’s work and the Latin American kinetic art movement by Argentinian art historians of the 1970s, such as Guillermo Whitelow⁵⁶, and even contemporary critics like Cristina Rossi and Elena Oliveras⁵⁷. Possible connections with Latin American kinetic and op art are still disregarded by Slovak art historians, as well. However, by adopting a transnational and trans perspective, we can notice some similarities between Kosice’s concept of hydrosatial cities [Fig. 6] and the Slovak artist Alex Mlynárčik’s architectural proposals, realised with the VAL group in the 1970s – so at roughly the same time [Fig. 7].

The collective VAL (Voies et Aspects du Lendemain (Ways and Aspects of the Day After Tomorrow))⁵⁸ was founded in Žilina (Slovakia) in 1972 by the artist Alex Mlynárčik (born 1934) and two architects, Viera Mecková and Ľudovít Kupkovič, who started their collaboration in 1968. Between 1968 and 1993, the VAL group developed eight projects: three megastructure city-buildings, two building-monuments, a hotel, a concert hall and a building for the National Assembly. All of these projects oscillated between the disciplines of sculpture and architecture and could be described

54 Maria de los Ángeles de Rueda, *Arte & Utopia: La ciudad desde las artes visuales*, Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso, 2003.

55 Giovanna M. Bassi Cendra, “La Ciudad Hidroespacial: Challenging the Functional City”, in: *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers*, [online], No. 6, December 2018, p. 12, [cited 25-08-2020], <https://icaa.mfah.org/files/original/0614a9d6ceddfc13334376c1271efd63cd1c77287.pdf>.

56 Guillermo Whitelow, “La propuesta hidroespacial de Kosice”, in: *G. Kosice*, Buenos Aires: Galería Bonino, 1971.

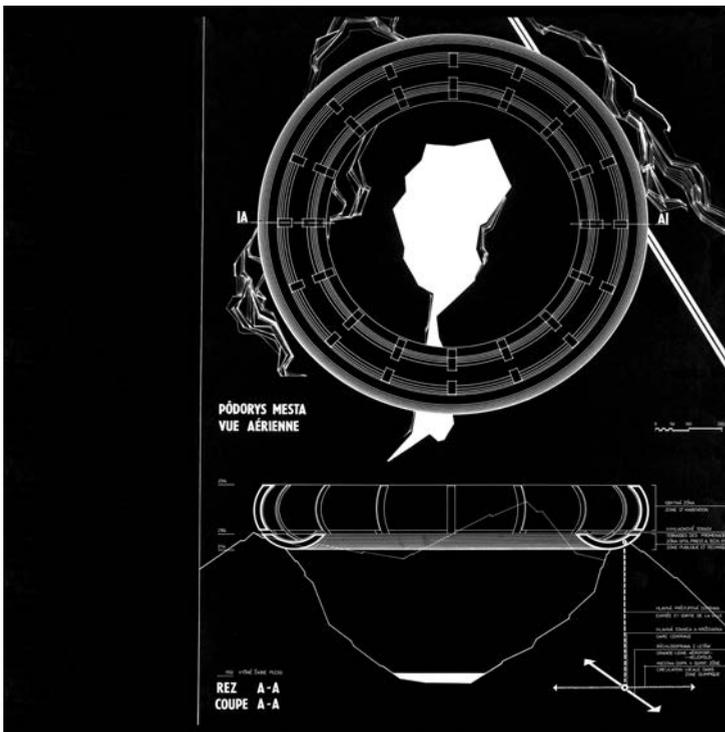
57 Elena Oliveras provides a complex analysis of the Argentine kinetic movement, including its development in relation to the Parisian art scene (the GRAV) and in a broader philosophical and cultural context (she reveals some connections with the thought of Herbert Marcuse, Umberto Eco, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty). However, in analyzing Kosice’s hydrosatial architecture, she does not speak about his contact with Michel Ragon. Elena Oliveras, “Motivaciones conceptuales del arte cinético argentino”, in: *Real/Virtual, arte cinético argentino en los años sesenta*, edited by María José Herrera, Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2012, pp. 33–45. Cristina Rossi in her seminal text emphasizes the visit that Kosice made to Georges Vantongerloo’s studio in Paris, in 1958. The innovative use of plexiglass by the Belgian artist could have inspired Kosice to start his experiments with this material. However, she also fails to mention Michel Ragon as a possible intellectual reference that could deepen our understanding of Kosice’s work. Cristina Rossi, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

58 The name of the group was in French.

8



9



8-9.

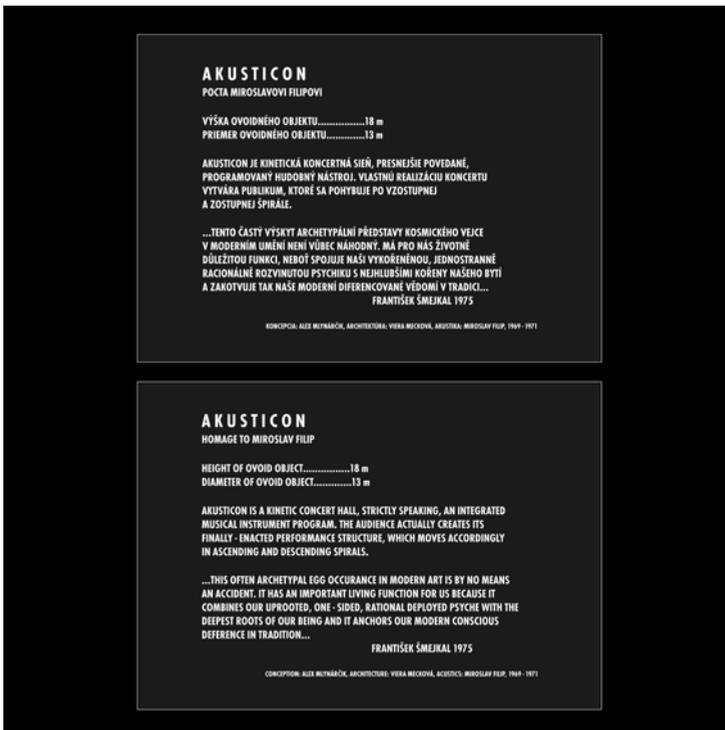
VAL (Alex Mlynárčik, Viera Mecková, Ludovít Kupkovič), *Heliopolis*, 1968-1974, ink on paper and photocollage, 90 × 90 cm, Courtesy: Archives of the VAL Group, Žilina

10

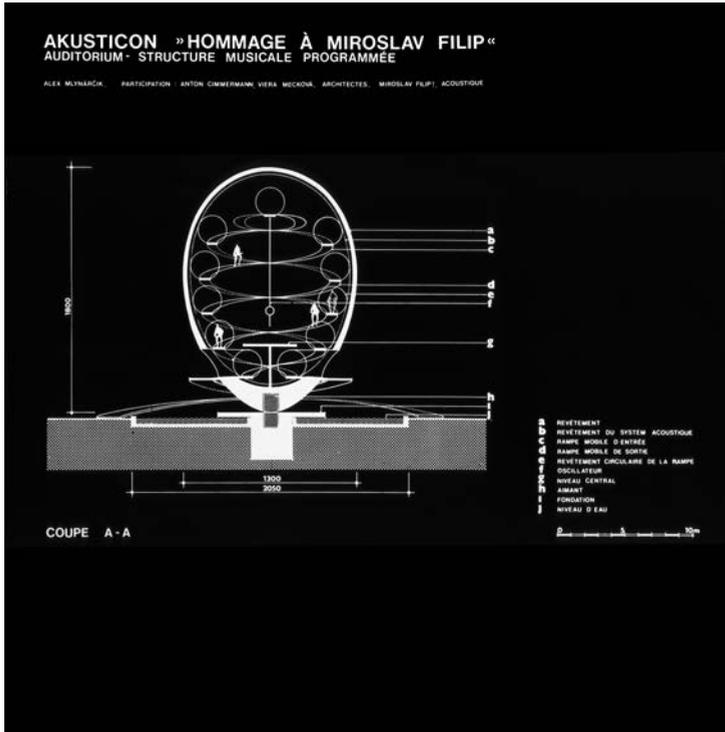


10.
VAL (Alex Mlynářčik,
Viera Mecková, Ľudovít
Kupkovič), *Heliopolis*,
1968–1974, ink on
paper and photocollage,
90 × 90 cm, Courtesy:
Archives of the VAL
Group, Žilina

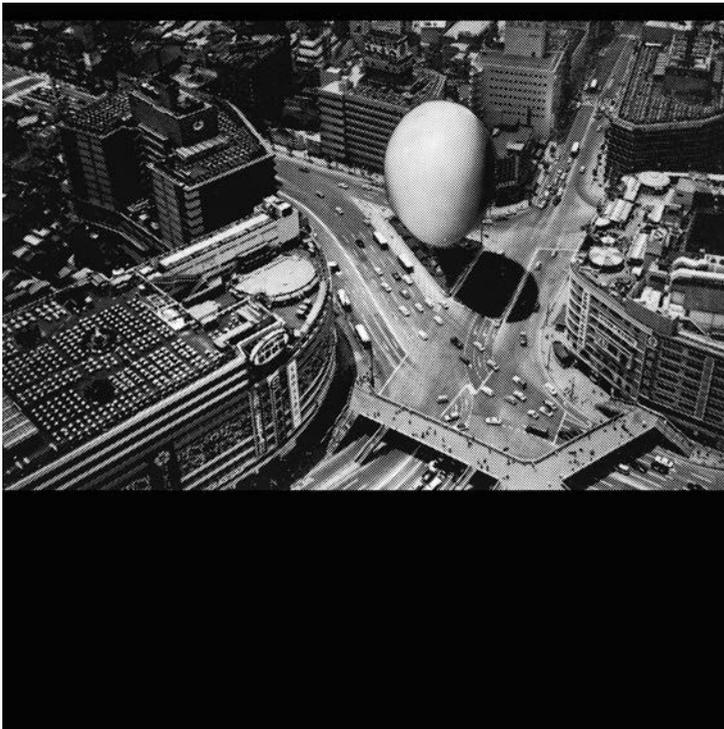
11



12



13



11-13.
 VAL (Alex Mlynárček,
 Viera Mecková),
Akusticon, 1969-1971,
 ink on paper and
 photocollage, 90 × 90
 cm, Courtesy: Archives of
 the VAL Group, Žilina

as “city-sculptures” or “building-sculptures”⁵⁹. Formal approximations between Kosice’s hydrospatial megastructures and VALs projects are less relevant than their common source of inspiration, though some of VALs projects do vaguely resemble Kosice’s circular floating buildings. This is also somewhat the case with two megastructures: *Heliopolis* (1968–1974) [Figs. 8–10] – an Olympic nest-city in the shape of a ring, perched atop the Tatra Mountains on the Polish-Czechoslovakian border, and *Scarabea* (1986–1989) – a cosmic city in the form of a circular shell. Like Kosice, the VAL group envisioned a floating spherical structure for its *Hommage à l’espoir et au courage* (Monument in Homage to Hope and Courage), from 1974–1975, dedicated to Eugene A. Cernan, an American astronaut of Slovak origin and captain of the 1972 Apollo lunar mission⁶⁰. Also conceptually close to Kosice’s works was *Akusticon*, envisioned by Viera Mecková and Alex Mlynárčik between 1969 and 1971. It was a light-kinetic environment with an ovoid shape that served as a concert hall and a giant musical instrument activated by the spectator [Figs. 11–13]⁶¹. What Kosice’s and VALs proposals for architecture had formally in common was that they existed as drawings, and models, and black-and-white photocollages that envisioned the placement of architectural structures in nature (Kosice, VAL) or sometimes in an urban environment (VAL).

What Kosice’s vision seems to share with VALs is the conceptualisation of architectural practices. The words of Kosice’s manifesto⁶² and the texts that accompany VAL projects⁶³ reveal certain similarities. Kosice’s and VALs proposals for experimental buildings and urbanistic visions went beyond common architectural practices, identified in both cases with the functionalist approach of the International Style. Criticism towards the rigidity of the functionalist approach in architecture is implicit in VALs projects. This was explicitly expressed in Kosice, who considers the modular,

59 Ludovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynárčik, *VAL. Cesty a aspekty zajtrajška / VAL. Voies et aspects du lendemain*, Žilina: VAL, 1995; Katarzyna Cytlak, “Larchitecture prospective en Tchécoslovaquie. Convergences et divergences entre l’approche du groupe slovaque VAL (1968–1994) et la théorie architecturale de Michel Ragon”, in: *RIHA Journal (International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art)*, [online], 27 September 2017, pp. 1–30, [cited 16-07-2020], <http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2017/0179-cytlak>.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*

62 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

63 Ludovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynárčik, *op. cit.*

modern and functional approach to be explicitly limiting and limited by rationality:

Hasta ahora sólo utilizamos una mínima proporción de nuestras facultades mentales, adaptadas a módulos que de alguna manera derivan de la arquitectura llamada moderna o “funcional (Until now we only use a minimal proportion of our mental faculties, adapted to modules that somehow derive from so-called modern or “functional” architecture).⁶⁴

Both Kosice and Mlynářčík, who was the main idea-giver for VAL, advocate “otro lenguaje arquitectónico, marcadamente revolucionario” (another architectural language, markedly revolutionary)⁶⁵. Both artists predicted the conquest of outer space by man. “El hombre no ha de terminar en la Tierra” (Man is not going to end up on Earth)⁶⁶ argued Kosice, who understood the space race “como necesidad biológica” (as a biological necessity)⁶⁷. “Quo Vadis Humankind? <...> Are there any possibilities in space? Is cosmic inhabitation even possible? A city in space?”, asked the VAL group in the description of its project *Scarabea*.⁶⁸ Although Kosice and Mlynářčík developed futurological visions of architecture and urbanism, both took a critical distance from the concept of an architectural utopia. Moreover, both insisted on the fact that their architectural proposals were technically possible to construct. The members of VAL stated that their project *Heliopolis* should not be seen “as some futuristic utopia, but rather as a most tantalising synthesis between our physical and technical capacities on one hand, and the real needs of both men and nature on the other”⁶⁹. Analogically Kosice claimed:

La arquitectura ha dependido del suelo y las leyes gravíticas. Dichas leyes pueden ser utilizadas científicamente para que la vivienda hidroespacial pueda ser una realidad, es decir viable desde el punto de vista tecnológico (Architecture has depended on the soil and the laws of gravity. These laws can be used scientifically

64 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*

68 Ludovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynářčík, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

so that hydrosatial housing can be a reality, that is, viable from a technological point of view).⁷⁰

Moreover, in order to achieve this goal, the artists envisioned collaborating with engineers, scientists and astrophysics. Alex Mlynářčík invited two architects – Viera Mecková and Ľudovít Kupkovič – to create VAL because he sought to authenticate his architectural visions and to make them scientifically credible. Retrospectively, Mlynářčík emphasised:

Grâce au travail des architectes, mon projet est devenu possible à réaliser, techniquement, bien évidemment” (Thanks to the work of the architects, my project became possible to realise, technically, of course).⁷¹

For the same reason Kosice claimed directly in his manifest “me dirijo a todos los científicos de la NASA para recabar sus opiniones” (I am directing myself to all NASA scientists for their opinions)⁷², when he conceptualised the creation of “la energía de sustentación” (lift energy) in order to resolve the issue of gravity⁷³.

For that reason, Kosice retrospectively emphasised in 2004, in a conversation with Rafael Cippolini:

La Ciudad Hidroespacial está viviendo en maquetas, en animaciones. Está viviendo en una justificación injustificada por hoy. Está viviendo en el porvenir. Estoy hablando de una propuesta, no de un programa. En mi caso no tengo sólo un programa sino la justificación de haber ido a NASA y me hayan confirmado que el proyecto es posible (The Hydrosatial City is living in models, in animations. It is living in a justification unjustified for today. It is living in the future. I’m talking about a proposal, not a program. In my case I do not have just a program but the justification of having gone to NASA, and they have confirmed that the project is possible).⁷⁴

70 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

71 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynářčík, Žilina, 28 September 2007.

72 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Rafael Cippolini, “Hidraulizar tu mente”, in: *Ramona*, [online], No. 43–44, August / September 2004, pp. 131–141, [cited 30-08-2020], <http://70.32.114.117/gsd/collect/revista/revistas/ramona43–44.pdf>.

NASA's statement was even confirmed by Dr Antonio Las Heras, President of the Humanistic Institute of Buenos Aires⁷⁵. With the same firmness as Mlynárčik, Kosice had insisted in the 1970s, and again insists nowadays, that the concrete realisation of his hydrosatial and nomadic dwellings “es posible” (is possible)⁷⁶. Finally, thanks to new type of architecture, they aimed to create an impact on social life, to improve social relations (VAL), or even to create a new “hidrociudadano” (hydrocitizen)⁷⁷. Both *Scarabea* and *Heliopolis* – two cities envisioned by the VAL group – were climatised and provided with a developed transport network. They also had “social zones”⁷⁸, “cultural centres”⁷⁹ and “leisure time areas”⁸⁰, where inhabitants could spend their free time together agreeably. The “free-time area” in the *Astralium* – the spherical core of the city of *Scarabea* – was to be divided into four zones: “area of sensitive contemplation”, “area of sound, music and silence”, “area of solitude and meeting” and, finally, “area of light, darkness and colors”⁸¹ – in order to talk about privilege and the development of a new type of social relations⁸². As Alex Mlynárčik retrospectively stated:

Nous avons réfléchi non seulement au bâtiment, mais également aux gens qui auraient pu vivre là-bas. Nous avons pensé à la communication, à la circulation des voitures, à tous les aspects techniques. Nos projets n'étaient pas seulement des images. Dans nos projets, il y avait également une réflexion sur la vie sociale et une pensée écologiste (We thought not only about the building, but also about the people who could have lived there. We thought about communication, car traffic, all the technical aspects. Our projects were not just images. In our projects, there was also reflection on social life and ecological thinking).⁸³

75 Antonio Las Heras, “Técnicos de la NASA lo escucharon respondiendo: ‘es posible’”, in: *Ramona*, [online], No. 43–44, August / September 2004, pp. 161–162, [cited 30-08-2020], <http://70.32.114.117/gsd/collect/revista/revistas/ramona43-44.pdf>.

76 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*; Katarzyna Cytlak, unpublished interview with Alex Mlynárčik.

77 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

78 Ľudovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynárčik, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 Katarzyna Cytlak, “L'architecture prospective en Tchécoslovaquie. Convergences et divergences entre l'approche du groupe slovaque VAL (1968–1994) et la théorie architecturale de Michel Ragon”, pp. 1–30.

83 *Ibid.*

Gyula Kosice went even further in his idealistic projection of a new social life in hydrospatial megastructures and dwellings. In his manifesto the artist promised:

en la ciudad hidroespacial nos proponemos destruir la angustia y las enfermedades, revalorizar el amor, los recreos de la inteligencia, el humor, el esparcimiento lúdico, los deportes, los júbilos indefinidos, las posibilidades mentales hasta ahora no exploradas, la abolición de los límites geográficos y del pensamiento (in the hydrospatial city we propose to destroy anguish and illnesses, to revalue love, the recreation of intelligence, humor, ludic recreation, sports, indefinite joy, mental possibilities not yet explored, the abolition of geographical limits and thought).⁸⁴

Furthermore, all the above-mentioned features are characteristics of the concept of prospective architecture coined in 1963 by the French critic of art and architecture Michel Ragon in his book *Où vivrons-nous demain?* (Where Will We Live Tomorrow?)⁸⁵. This common source of inspiration is not accidental, as both artists Gyula Kosice and Alex Mlynářčík were not only familiar with this publication but were also personally acquainted with the French critic.

2.2. Dialogues with Michel Ragon's Concept of Prospective Architecture

Michel Ragon, one of the initiators of the GIAP – Groupe International d'Architecture Prospective (International Group for Prospective Architecture), a collective of artists and architects that formed in Paris in March 1965 and that counted among its founding members the Hungarian-born kinetic-light artist Nicolas Schöffer⁸⁶, shared with his intimate friend Gyula Kosice an interest in abstract art and experimental environments; their relationship was marked by intense conversations during their day-to-day encounters⁸⁷. Kosice became one of GIAP's affiliates and sympathisers

⁸⁴ Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

⁸⁵ Michel Ragon, *Où vivrons-nous demain?*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1963.

⁸⁶ The GIAP manifesto was signed in Paris, in May 1965 by Yona Friedman, Walter Jonas, Paul Maymont, Georges Patrix, Michel Ragon, Ionel Schein, and Nicolas Schöffer; Yona Friedman, Walter Jonas, Paul Maymont, Georges Patrix, Michel Ragon, Ionel Schein, Nicolas Schöffer; *Le Manifeste du Groupe International d'Architecture Prospective*, Paris: GIAP, 1965.

⁸⁷ Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice.

(“techniciens, artistes, sociologues et spécialistes divers qui recherchent des solutions urbanistiques et architecturales nouvelles” (technicians, artists, sociologists and various specialists looking for new urban planning and architectural solutions))⁸⁸, together with Hungarian-born artists such as Marta Pan or Victor Vasarely⁸⁹. One chapter of Ragon’s seminal publication *Où vivrons-nous demain?* (Where Will We Live Tomorrow?)⁹⁰ was devoted to Kosice’s “villes en suspension” (suspended cities)⁹¹ and “sculptures hydrauliques” (hydraulic sculptures), designed for public spaces in Buenos Aires⁹². The concept of prospective architecture developed by Ragon – an architecture that adapts experimental forms and innovative solutions that are groundbreaking, but possible – based on scientific research and the technological possibilities accessible at the time or in the near future⁹³ – was crystallised at roughly the same time as Kosice’s hydrospatial architectural and urbanistic proposals – during the 1960s and 1970s. Undoubtedly, both were under their mutual inspiration, and Kosice’s cities indisputably illustrate well some of the architectural concepts defended by Ragon, such as nomadic architecture, spatial architecture, futurological architecture that was circular and capsule-like, and spaceship-like forms⁹⁴. Ragon continued to defend Kosice’s hydrokinetic and architectural projects during the following decades. In 1970, Ragon claimed Kosice’s legitimate place in the history of Parisian light-kinetic tendency⁹⁵. In 1974, the French critic defended his architectural and urbanistic projects during the presentation of Kosice’s Hydrospatial city at the Espace Pierre Cardin in Paris⁹⁶. Undoubtedly, Ragon’s theories of architecture also helped Kosice to formulate his manifesto on Hydrospatial architecture⁹⁷.

⁸⁸ Yona Friedman, Walter Jonas, Paul Maymont, Georges Patrice, Michel Ragon, Ionel Schein, Nicolas Schöffer, *Le Manifeste du Groupe International d’Architecture Prospective*.

⁸⁹ Kosice’s name is on the list made by Ragon of signatories of the GIAP manifesto. Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice, Buenos Aires, 10 September 2013.

⁹⁰ Michel Ragon, *Où vivrons-nous demain?*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁹³ Michel Ragon, *Histoire de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme modernes*, Vol. 3: *Prospective et futurologie*, Paris: Casterman, 1978, pp. 19–22.

⁹⁴ Michel Ragon, *Où vivrons-nous demain?*

⁹⁵ Michel Ragon, “Kosice, un précurseur méconnu et le mouvement MADI”, in: *Cimaise*, No. 95–96, January–April 1970, p. 30.

⁹⁶ Pierre Restany, Michel Ragon, *Kosice: Eau – Lumière – Mouvement 1974 (La Cité Hydrospatiale)*, Paris: Espace Pierre Cardin, 1974.

⁹⁷ Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*; Katarzyna Cytlak, unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice.

Alex Mlynářčík's insights into prospective architecture came later, and date back to the 1970s and 1980s – a period that saw a hardening of the political regime in Czechoslovakia after the events of the Spring of 1968. Ironically labelled “normalisation”, this period of social isolation was particularly difficult for those visual artists who had lost the opportunity to realise their artworks – as in the case of the sculptor Milan Dobeš – or who were no longer allowed to travel abroad – as was the case with Mlynářčík⁹⁸. When Mlynářčík later met Ragon it was the already crystallised concept for prospective architecture that inspired him to create the VAL group. He was introduced to Michel Ragon by another art critic, Pierre Restany, who maintained relations with a number of artists in Czechoslovakia⁹⁹ and with whom he became an intimate friend during his travel to Paris in 1964¹⁰⁰. Moreover, Mlynářčík became familiar with Ragon's theory of prospective architecture due to his conversations with the latter¹⁰¹, but also following the Czech translation of *Où vivrons-nous demain?* published in Czechoslovakia in 1967¹⁰².

Michel Ragon first wrote about Mlynářčík's art, including his architectural work, in 1971 in the magazine *Les Chroniques de l'Art vivant* (The Chronicles of Living Art), during the Biennale de Paris¹⁰³. Ragon's article gave the French public an overview of Mlynářčík's artistic activity, starting from his object-based triptychs that were displayed in 1966 at the Raymonde Cazenave Gallery in Paris¹⁰⁴. He also analysed numerous outdoor performances by the Slovak artist in both Paris and Czechoslovakia¹⁰⁵. The article's conclusion was devoted, however, to Mlynářčík's architectural

98 Ludmila Hájková, Rostislav Švácha, “Vizionářská architektura”, in: *Akce, slovo, pohyb, prostor: experimenty v umění sedesátých let = Action, word, movement, space: experimental art of the sixties*, edited by Vít Havránek, Prague: Galerie hlavního města Prahy, 1999, pp. 114–159.

99 Zuzana Bartošová, “Rozhovor Zuzany Bartošovej s Pierrrom Restanym / L'entretien de Zuzana Bartošová avec Pierre Restany”, in: *Očami X: desať autorov o súčasnom slovenskom výtvarnom umení*, edited by Jan Bakoš, Zuzana Bartošová, Bratislava: Ornan and Európsky Kultúrny Klub na Slovensku, 1996, pp. 183–200; Pierre Restany, *Ailleurs. Alex Mlynářčík*, Paris and Bratislava: Galerie Lara Vincy, and Galerie Nationale Slovaque, 1994.

100 Henry Périer, *Pierre Restany. L'Alchimiste de l'art*, Paris: Les Éditions Cerle d'Art, 1998, p. 268; Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynářčík. Žilina.

101 Katarzyna Cytlak.

102 Michel Ragon, *Kde budeme žít zítra*, Prague: Mladá Fronta, 1967.

103 Mlynářčík was invited to participate in the mail art section of this biennale. Michel Ragon, “Alex Mlynarcik”, in: *Les Chroniques de l'Art vivant*, No. 26, December 1971–January 1972, p. 20.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*

proposals, which he compared with spatial and kinetic works by the previously mentioned collective Dvizhene (Movement), which was personally supported by Ragon¹⁰⁶; and to the concept of revolutionary and total art as formulated by the LEF review (ЛЕФ, or «Левый фронт искусств» (Left Front of the Arts)), led by Vladimir Mayakovsky in Soviet Russia during the mid-1920s¹⁰⁷. Ragon defined VAL's projects as “un art de environnement total, c'est a dire une architecture et un urbanisme utopiques” (an art of the total environment, i.e. utopian architecture and utopian urbanism)¹⁰⁸; and mentioned two projects by the Slovak group founded by Alex Mlynářčík and Viera Mecková¹⁰⁹: a concert that assumed an ovoid form (*Akusticon*, 1969–1971) [Fig. 11–13] and a climatized and pneumatic city suspended atop the Tatra mountains (*Heliopolis*, 1968–1974)¹¹⁰. In the 1970s, Ragon was the first art critic to write about the VAL group's activity.

Five years later, Ragon authored the text accompanying VAL's exhibition at the Lara Vincy Gallery in Paris in January of 1977. In it he stated:

HELIOPOLIS (1967–1974) conçue par Alex Mlynářčík et une équipe d'architectes et d'ingénieurs tchécoslovaques (Viera Mecková, Ludovit Kupkovič), se situe dans la perspective de la recherche architecturale prospective mondiale. Tous les pays industrialisés se trouvent en face d'un dilemme. Comment répondre aux besoins croissants du tourisme, des sports d'hiver ou balnéaires, du besoin d'air pur et de contact avec la nature, sans en même temps détruire la nature par des installations multiples?

Comme la plupart des équipes qui recherchent – en France (le GIAP), en Angleterre (ARCHIGRAM), au Japon (METABOLISME), en URSS (la section « prospective » de l'Institut d'histoire de l'architecture à Moscou) – de nouvelles méthodes d'aménagement de l'espace, le groupe tchécoslovaque VAL de HELIOPOLIS a pensé que la meilleure solution était de créer une macrostructure, c'est-à-dire une structure-ville, un immeuble-ville, dans lequel soient intégrées toutes les microstructures d'une cité de loisirs pour 50.000 habitants (HELIOPOLIS (1967–1974),

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*

109 Ludovit Kupkovič joined the group only in 1972, and did not author some projects, such as *Akusticon*, 1969–1971. After: Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynářčík.

110 Michel Ragon, “Alex Mlynarcik”, p. 20.

designed by Alex Mlynářčík and a team of Czechoslovak architects and engineers (Viera Mecková, Ľudovít Kupkovič), is situated in the perspective of global prospective architectural research. All industrialised countries face a dilemma. How to meet the growing needs of tourism, winter or seaside sports, the need for clean air and contact with nature, without at the same time destroying nature with multiple installations?

Like most of the teams looking for – in France (GIAP), in England (ARCHI-GRAM), in Japan (METABOLISM), in the USSR (the ‘prospective’ section of the Institute of History of Architecture in Moscow) – new methods of spatial planning, The Czechoslovak group VAL de HELIOPOLIS thought that the best solution was to create a macrostructure, i.e. a city structure, a city building, in which all the microstructures of a leisure city for 50.000 inhabitants are integrated).¹¹¹

Ragon’s analysis of *Heliopolis* put the VAL group on the same level with the most influential formations in terms of experiments in the field of architecture during the 1960s (such as the British Archigram or the Japanese Metabolists). By placing it on the same level as the projects of the world’s most visionary architects, Ragon not only acknowledged the innovative character of the projects of the Slovak group, but also seemed to claim the importance of the architectural proposals on the other side of the Iron Curtain and their contribution to the development of the discipline. Mlynářčík and VAL’s architects, Ľudovít Kupkovič and Viera Mecková, carefully followed Ragon’s definition of prospective architecture and developed their projects in a very systematic way: every project included detailed technical data and was envisioned in the form of drawings of plans and cuts, models, photomontage and descriptions. Each project also had an exact location where it was to have been constructed¹¹². In this respect, Gyula Kosice was less rigorous than the VAL group. Moreover, his hydrosatial dwellings and megastructures were supposed to be nomadic and circulate freely in the incommensurable realm of outer space¹¹³.

111 Michel Ragon, Untitled (text written on the occasion of the exhibition: “Ľudovít Kupkovic, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynářčík: Voies et Aspects de Lendemain, V.A.L., 1967–1976”, Paris, Galerie Lara Vincy, January 1977), published in: Pierre Restany, *Ailleurs. Alex Mlynářčík*, p. 247.

112 Katarzyna Cytlak, “L’architecture prospective en Tchécoslovaquie. Convergences et divergences entre l’approche du groupe slovaque VAL (1968–1994) et la théorie architecturale de Michel Ragon”.

113 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

We might even be tempted to hypothesise that some of VAL's proposals, such as *Scarabea* or *Homage to Hope and Courage*, could have been directly inspired by Gyula Kosice's visions of architecture, considering that the Argentinean artist was not only present in the Parisian artistic milieu – with whom Mlynářčík was familiar – but Kosice was also widely recognised among Slovak artists of that time, as recollected by the Slovak op art artist Viktor Hulík, who was in touch with Kosice¹¹⁴. Undoubtedly, the family name of the Argentinian artist, which is similar to the name of the Slovak city, might have awakened the attention of the Czechoslovak art scene to Kosice's artistic activity¹¹⁵.

Artistic-architectural projects authored by both Argentinean and Slovak artists – such as Kosice's hydrospatial cities and Mlynářčík's monuments and megastructures – were present in the third volume of Michel Ragon's anthology about the history of modern architecture¹¹⁶. Published in 1978 by Casterman, the volume was titled *Prospective et futurologie* (Prospective and futurology). The volume contained a sub-chapter devoted to VAL's architectures: “1967 Groupe V. A. L.” (Tchécoslovaque) (1967 V. A. L. Group, Czechoslovak)¹¹⁷, that was accompanied by a photocollage of *Heliopolis*¹¹⁸. Michel Ragon also devoted several pages to Gyula Kosice's projects for a hydrospatial city and dwellings¹¹⁹. He explained how Kosice developed his vision of “une vie extra-terrestre” (an extraterrestrial life)¹²⁰. Ragon analysed his spaceship-like structures and “plates-formes de sustentation” (sustenance platforms) circulating freely in space, in violation of the laws of gravity¹²¹.

In this book, both Kosice's and Mlynářčík's architectures were offered as perfect illustrations of Ragon's concept of prospective architecture, which he separated from both futurological architecture and utopian visions¹²². The architectural and urbanistic theory and praxis he labelled

114 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished conversation with Viktor Hulík, Budapest, 25 November 2014.

115 *Ibid.*

116 Michel Ragon, *Histoire de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes*.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 349.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 350.

119 *Ibid.*, p. 292 and pp. 322–324.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

121 *Ibid.*

122 *Ibid.*

“prospective” brought together studies on the future possibilities of architecture and urban planning by offering a vast set of solutions concerning the organisation of human life (prospective forecasting should not exceed, according to Ragon, the duration of a generation). These futurological visions of architecture were to be accomplished in some vague future. Both terms – “prospective” and “futures studies” – were opposed to utopian conceptions of architecture, which tended to involve poetic and imprecise fantasies without a sound technical basis, each offering a single and separate vision of a new world¹²³. Formally futurological hydrospace dwellings and climatized city-nests were scientifically demanding, but potentially realisable.

3. Horizontal Mediation

Michel Ragon’s book did not constitute the only meeting point for Gyula Kosice and his Slovak colleague Alex Mlynárčik. In December 9–15, 1972, a tombola-lottery took place in Paris at the Lara Vincy Gallery. This was in fact an artistic project by Alex Mlynárčik titled *Inter-Etrennes* [Fig. 14]. Photographs documenting the event reveal a festive and ludic atmosphere¹²⁴. The gallery’s entrance was decorated with white chains of paper snowflakes. Images of the interior show an enthusiastic crowd participating in the game organised by the artist. The lottery was directed by Mlynárčik’s friend, the prominent French critic Pierre Restany, who is seen carrying a microphone on a small stage with a wheel of fortune on it¹²⁵. The public had a unique chance to win original artworks by internationally recognised contemporary living artists of different generations and diverse artistic backgrounds. The lottery tickets were sold to the public for one French Franc¹²⁶. Artworks could also be bought for the reasonable price of 100 French Francs¹²⁷. The list of 110 artists whose artworks were on stage

123 *Ibid.*, pp. 19–22; Katarzyna Cytlak, “L’architecture prospective en Tchécoslovaquie. Convergences et divergences entre l’approche du groupe slovaque VAL (1968–1994) et la théorie architecturale de Michel Ragon”.

124 Pierre Restany, *Ailleurs. Alex Mlynárčik*, Ivan Jančár, *Alex Mlynárčik*, Bratislava: Galerie de la ville de Bratislava, SLOVART, and Krása, 2014, pp. 284–285.

125 Ivan Jančár, *op. cit.*, pp. 284–285. Ultimately, the artist was unable to come from Czechoslovakia to Paris due to passport difficulties. After: Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynárčik.

126 Henry Périer, *Pierre Restany. L’Alchimiste de l’art*, Paris: Les Éditions Cercle d’Art, 1998, p. 339.

127 Ivan Jančár, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

INTER BRATISLAVA
SECTION CULTURELLE

INTER · ETRENNES

tombola vente du cadeau de vos rêves sous l'égide de
PIERRE RESTANY · ALEX MLYNÁRČÍK
avec la participation de

ADZAK · ARNAL · ASNAGHI · BAJ · BAVIERA · RAFAEL BEJAR · BEKE · IMRE BAK · JP BERANGER · GIANNI BERTINI · BONA · ZIZINE BOUSCAUD · MARK BRUSSE · CANIARIS · CARM · CESAR · CHOULET · CIGLER · CIMMERMANN · CONTENOITE · CORPORA · R.CYPRICH · DANIL · JOSEE ANNE DECOCK · DEMONTAUT · DOBEŠ · DUFRENE · EIELSON · FILHOS · FILKO · HERVE FISCHER · FRED FOREST · RUTH FRANCKEN · DAGMAR FREGNAC · GEBAUER · FRANCO GELLI · GILLI · ARABELLA GIORGI · SANDRO GRECO · HUIN · PM JACOT · JAKUBIK · JOURNIAC · KAPERA · KARAHALIOS · HERBERT KAUFMANN · MARGUERITE KLÁY · EVA KMENTOVÁ · KOSICE · KOWALSKI · ALENA KUCEROVA · KUDO · LAVIER · CORRADO LORENZO · MAGLIONE · MARCHEGIANI · MARIANI · MAROCCO · ADELA MATASOVA · LIBERA MAZZOLENI · MEEBSON · MILENA MILANI · LUIZA MILLER · MIRALDA · MARIAN · MUDROCH · MYDLO · NEIMAN · NEMEC · NEROI · NICOLA · NIKOS · NOBLET · LEV NUSSBERG & LE GROUPE DVIJENIE · GINA PANE · LUCA PATELLA · PLESSI · POLI · RABASCALL · ELIANE RADIGUE · EDITH RAYMOND · GIANI PISANI · RAYNAUD · CHRYSSE ROMANOS · BENI ROSELL · ROTELLA · ROUGEMONT · SANEJOUAND · SANTARELLA · DOROTHEE SELZ · JANA SHEBALOVA · SOSNO · ALINA SZAPOCZNIKOW · MARGITA STRBIKOVA · TOBAS · URBASEK · BORIS VANSIER · VERDET · WOODY VAN AMEN · PAUL VAN HOEYDONCK · JEAN-PIERRE VAN THIEGEM · WOLMAN · XERRA · XIFRA

GALERIE LARA VINCY, 47 RUE DE SEINE, PARIS
● **VENEZ JOUER AVEC NOUS** ●

TOMBOLA · LOTERIE LES 8 & 16 DECEMBRE DE 18 A 24H ● VENTE A PRIX UNIQUE 100F DU 9 AU 15 DECEMBRE 1972

14.

Alex Mlynárčik, *Inter-Etrennes*, 1972, flyer, edited by Lara Vincy Gallery, Paris, Courtesy of the artist

include such names as: Gianni Bertini, César, Bertrand Lavier, François Dufrêne, Luca Patella, Jean-Pierre Raynaud and Mimmo Rotella, all of whom belonged to Pierre Restany's French-Italian network¹²⁸. It also contained authors from the younger generation, who made body- and photography-based performances, such as Michel Journiac and Gina Pane; Fred Forest and Hervé Fischer – two advocates of the “Art sociologique” (Sociological Art); Spanish artists Antoni Miralda and Joan Rabascall; and the Argentinean rebel Alberto Greco, who had passed away in 1965. The lottery also included works by several East European artists: two Paris-based Polish artists: Piotr Kowalski and Alina Szapocznikow, and two Hungarians: László Beke and Imre Bak. Czech and Slovak artists included Eva Kmentová, Alena Kučerová, Václav Cigler, Róbert Cyprich, Stano Filko and Miloš Urbásek. To the other noteworthy participants, we can add the previously mentioned light-kinetic artist Milan Dobeš, who was Mlynárčik's colleague¹²⁹, Lev Nussberg and the Dvizhene Group, and finally, Gyula Kosice¹³⁰.

128 Henry Périer, *op. cit.*

129 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynárčik, Žilina, 28 September 2007.

130 Pierre Restany, *Ailleurs. Alex Mlynárčik*, Ivan Jančár, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

In 2013, Kosice did not have any sharp recollection of that event¹³¹. It is highly possible that his artwork was donated to the lottery by one of his Parisian friends, perhaps Michel Ragon. It also may have been deposited by Pierre Rerstany himself, as he was in touch with Kosice and even authored texts about his kinetic art and hydrosatial architecture¹³². Nevertheless, it is important to note that Latin American and East European artistic exchanges and collaborations took place in the 1970s. Moreover, it is crucial for the development of new perspectives in art history and in global art studies to observe that on several occasions artistic production from both distant regions developed similar strategies, and manifested parallel interests. Even if Alex Mlynárčik did not participate in the constructive, geometric and kinetic art movement in Slovakia, his *Akusticon*, from 1969–1971 – a light-kinetic building-environment that, activated by the spectator, became a monumental instrument – is akin to Kosice’s synesthetic works. Michel Ragon’s mediation between Kosice and Mlynárčik could be described as horizontal in that case, as he did not establish any hierarchy between the two artists. Moreover, his relationship with them was based on friendship and on mutual commitment. From a transnational and transatlantic perspective, focused on artistic connections between so-called “peripheries”¹³³, Gyula Kosice’s projects for hydrosatial dwellings and megastructures were neither isolated nor belated, as has been claimed by some Latino-Americanists, who have sometimes shown a tendency to overlook the broader transatlantic context of Kosice’s works. Such a perspective reveals a number of disregarded plots in art history, such as the transatlantic dialogue on architecture of the future formulated both in and outside of the ‘traditional’ artistic capitals. In a special issue of the *Ramona* review devoted to Kosice, published in Buenos Aires in 2004, Ragon’s name is mentioned only once¹³⁴. Although several articles discussed his hydrosatial architectural projects, there was no reference to the concept of “prospective architecture”¹³⁵.

131 Cytlak Katarzyna, Unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice.

132 Pierre Restany, Michel Ragon, *Kosice: Eau – Lumière – Mouvement 1974 (La Cité Hydrospatiale)*, Paris: Espace Pierre Cardin, 1974. Pierre Restany, “La ciudad hidroespacial e constelación”, in: *Domus*, No. 613, January 1981.

133 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne Ujęcie Sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań: Rebis, 2018.

134 Gustavo A. Bruzzone, Rafael Cippolini (eds.), “Homenaje a Gyula Kosice. Adelantos de un archivo porvenirista”, Special Issue, in: *Ramona*, [online], No. 43–44, August / September 2004, [cited 30-08-2020], <http://70.32.114.117/gsd/collect/revista/revistas/ramona43-44.pdf>.

135 *Ibid.*

However, Kosice himself discussed Ragon in 2013, when he recalled their intense friendship, Ragon's help in conceptualising hydrospatial architecture, and a text about hydrospatial cities the French critic had written for his exhibition in Paris in 1974¹³⁶. Similar recollection had appeared earlier in Kosice's previous interviews, including his conversation with Rafael Cippolini¹³⁷, and an interview with Pierre Restany, reprinted in September 1985¹³⁸.

Even if the artists who participated in the kinetic and prospective global movement did not develop clearly decolonial attitudes and did not establish any strong, systematic criticism of the modern World-System, their experience of being in touch with or aware of artistic production on the other side of the Atlantic became crucial for the next generation of artists, who constructed their own transatlantic networks in the 1970s and 1980s. These "kinetic" relations served as a prototype for artists from the so-called peripheries who were searching for international allies in the promotion of their visual poetry, mail art, conceptual tendencies, body-based performance, and so on. Such international "kinetic" experience constituted a genealogy for those who started to question the concept of modern art as it functioned after 1945 in the so-called West (in Western Europe and

136 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Gyula Kosice. Kosice mentioned his exhibition at the Espace Pierre Cardin, in January 1974: Pierre Restany, Michel Ragon, *Kosice: Eau – Lumière – Mouvement 1974 (La Cité Hydrospatiale)*.

137 Kosice remembered: "Dí una conferencia en la Sorbona, en la que me ayudó Michel Ragon, dirigida a arquitectos y alumnos de bellas artes. Había quienes decían que como iba a tratarse de una ciudad grande iba a tapar al sol. ¿Cómo tapar al sol si está suspendida sobre el agua? ¿Sombra sobre las aguas? Se trata de crear ciudades que se irán desplazando con una plataforma diferenciada de la ya conocida" (I gave a conference at the Sorbonne for architects and fine arts students, which I prepared with the help of Michel Ragon. There were those who said that since it was going to be a big city, it would cover up the sun. How can you cover up the sun if it is suspended over the water? Shadow over the waters? The idea is to create cities that will move with a platform that is different from the one we already know). Rafael Cippolini, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

138 In an introduction for this interview, Kosice noted a recollection of his meeting with Restany: "Hablamos luego de mi amistad con Lucio Fontana y de mi colaboración en el Manifiesto Blanco, del entrañable respeto que tengo por Michel Ragon, autor de un lúcido prólogo para mi exposición en el Epace Cardin y de un exhaustivo y documentado fascículo aparecido en Cimaise N.º 197 contra la piratería de que fuera objeto madí a manos de algunos oportunistas del arte" (We then talked about my friendship with Lucio Fontana and my collaboration in the *White Manifesto*, the deep respect I have for Michel Ragon, author of a lucid prologue to my exhibition at the Espace Cardin and an exhaustive and documented booklet that appeared in *Cimaise* No. 197 against piracy of what was a madí object at the hands of some art opportunists). Pierre Restany, "Percibí el ready madeready-made como una anticipación de la estética industrial. Diálogo entre Gyula Kosice y Pierre Restany", in: Gustavo A. Bruzzone, Rafael Cippolini (eds.), *op. cit.*

Northern America)¹³⁹. For that reason this tendency played an important, even if still indirect, role in establishing South-East coalitions that aimed to liberate concepts and categories from Western and colonial patterns¹⁴⁰. The kinetic and op art tendency remained in its big part a Parisian-based and, in a sense, Eurocentric Avant-guard movement – its Latin American and East European protagonists had either travelled to Paris or emigrated there, or were particularly aware of what was going on in the French capital and developed their art in dialogue with the Parisian art scene, even if they also exhibited in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. A more total liberation from Western-centric patterns came later, with the spread of conceptual art and mail art practices. This does not mean that East-South relations were not horizontal. We might follow Piotrowski in stating that they were and are horizontal in principle. However, in some cases, as in the example of Vasarely's exhibition in Buenos Aires, their actors were treated as Western ones – and in these cases the relationship is less dialogic and more vertical, to use Piotrowski's term. The decolonial turn seems to be particularly perceptible in Latin America in the 1970s, with the spread of socially and politically engaged art that protested against local dictatorships. This does not mean that kinetic and op art of the 1960s was not particularly aware of its context, or was not politically and socially engaged in "local" issues. On the contrary, several artists were more unequivocally connected to political projects – or more attached to political parties' structures – than in the late 1970s, during a time of more severe authoritarian regimes. Art of the 1970s and 1980s is commonly considered "politically engaged" or "dissident art" related to "conceptualismos ideológicos" (ideological conceptualisms) in Latin America, but it also functioned analogically in Eastern Europe, as was the case with Sots Art or Russian Conceptualism, for instance¹⁴¹. Kosice's

139 Katarzyna Cytlak, "Redes marginales. Relaciones artísticas entre Europa del Este y América Latina" (Marginal networks. Artistic relations between East Europe and Latin America), in: *desbordes - review of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur*, [online], No. 0.6, December 2019, Special Issue: "Conexiones sur-este / Ecologías de la acción.", [cited 16-07-2020], <https://des-bor-des.net/2019/12/17/redes-marginales-la-especificidad-de-los-intercambios-postales-y-las-colaboraciones-del-arte-correo-entre-europa-del-este-y-america-latina-1969-1989/#autor>.

140 *Ibid.*

141 The classification "conceptualismo ideológico" (ideological conceptualism) was coined in 1974 by the Spanish art critic Simón Marchán Fiz. Simón Marchán Fiz, *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto (1960-1974)*, Madrid: Akal, 2012, p. 404. First edition: Madrid: Corazón Comunicación, 1974. See also: Aleš Erjavec, "Introduction", in: *Postmodernism and the postsocialist condition: politicized art under late socialism*, edited by Aleš Erjavec, Boris Groys, Misko Suvakovic, and Péter György, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003, pp. 1-54.

manifestations, especially those linked directly to his artistic activity in the mid-1940s, were of a political colouring¹⁴². He himself, like Michel Ragon and artists from the AACI – Asociación Arte Concreto-Invencción (Association Concrete Art-Invention), founded in Buenos Aires in 1945 by Tomás Maldonado¹⁴³ – was a member of the communist party¹⁴⁴, even if he “was much more detached from the Marxist leanings of his peers”¹⁴⁵. In 1979, Kosice himself recalled his “non-dogmatical” ideological engagement and his unorthodox reading of Marx during the first period of the Madí movement, which he initiated in 1946:

We were a group of people who could be broadly defined as leftists, but only ideologically and not in the sense of being militants. We had all embraced Marx with enthusiasm and without preconditions, but we were not at that moment searching for a theory. We believed in totally free expression in the political and social realm, in a world where all forms of exploitation of man by man had been eliminated.¹⁴⁶

However, his artistic projects are remittent of his political and ideological convictions and, as the Argentinian theoretician Daniela Lucena has observed, Kosice and his Concrete Art colleagues aimed at the transformation of social life and their objective was “una superación dialéctica de lo abstracto, un arte que no refleja ni representa la realidad, sino que la inventa” (a dialectical overcoming of the abstract, an art that does not reflect or represent reality, but invents it)¹⁴⁷. In a similar fashion, Kosice’s *Manifiesto de la Ciudad hidroespacial* begins with the sentence that:

142 Daniela Lucena, “Arte y comunismo en la Argentina en la primera mitad del siglo XX”, in: *Sztuka Ameryki Łacińskiej / Arte de América Latina*, Special Issue: *Búsquedas (anti)estéticas y compromiso político y social del arte en Argentina en los siglos XX y XXI / (Anti)Aesthetics Investigations and Sociopolitical Commitment of Art in Argentina During the 20th and 21st Centuries / (Anty)estetyczne poszukiwania oraz zaangażowanie polityczne i społeczne w sztuce w Argentynie XX i XXI wieku*, edited by Katarzyna Cytlak, No. 7, 2017, pp. 57–77.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 69. See also: footnote No. 67.

144 Alexander Alberro, *Abstraction in Reverse: The Reconfigured Spectator in Mid-Twentieth-Century Latin American Art*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017, p. 244.

145 *Ibid.*

146 Gyula Kosice, “The Founding of Madí (1979)”, in: *Readings in Latin American Modern Art*, edited by Patrick Frank, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 14–145, p. 145. Quoted after: Alexander Alberro, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

147 Daniela Lucena, “Arte y comunismo en la Argentina en la primera mitad del siglo XX”, p. 70.

Debemos reemplazar a las habitaciones que se han convertido en ritual arquitectónico y periférico: Living, comedor, dormitorio, baño, cocina, muebles, por serenas o intensas pero en todo diferenciadas, propuestas de lugares para vivir (We must replace the rooms that have become an architectural and peripheral ritual: Living room, dining room, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, furniture, by serene or intense but in everything differentiated, proposals of places to live).¹⁴⁸

Here he makes a clear reference to the concepts of the minimal dwelling and of the commune-house developed in Soviet Russia during the 1920s and in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. Both concepts presumed a break with the bourgeois way of living and housing, and aimed to resolve the “problem of popular, proletarian housing in all its social, economic, technical, and architectural aspects and prospects”¹⁵⁰. These proposals implied an alternative social model that was to be implemented in hydrospace cities in the near future¹⁵¹. The architecture of Mlynářčík likewise aimed at creating a new social order. It expressed the dream of a better society, based on relations between people that differed from those proposed by the Czechoslovak government of the time¹⁵². Mlynářčík’s relation to politics, and more specifically, to the practice of power relations in Czechoslovakia from the 1960s to 1989, is not free from controversy. As Claire Bishop observed, Mlynářčík, who is incontestably a major figure on the Slovak independent cultural scene, was – along with artists and intellectuals such as Egon Bondy or Ján Budaj – on a list of those who collaborated with the regime published after 1989¹⁵³. However, the projects for architecture he created with the VAL group in particular, implicitly criticised the power relations and the ideological discourse associated with the authoritarian regime in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the 1970s¹⁵⁴. Michel Ragon himself

148 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

149 Karel Teige, *Nejmenší byt*, Prague: Václav Petr, 1932. See: Anatole Kopp, *Quand le moderne n’était pas un style mais une cause*, Paris: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1988, p. 95.

150 Karel Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling*, Cambridge, MA, London and Chicago: The MIT Press and Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, 2002, p. 9.

151 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

152 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Alex Mlynářčík.

153 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London and New York: Verso, 2012, pp. 141, 147, 324.

154 Katarzyna Cytlak, “L’architecture prospective en Tchécoslovaquie. Convergences et divergences entre l’approche du groupe slovaque VAL (1968–1994) et la théorie architecturale de Michel Ragon”.

openly sympathised with the political Left – he authored several engaged texts about the proletariat (Ragon is considered a representative of “la littérature prolétarienne” (proletarian literature)) and wrote a biography of Karl Marx¹⁵⁵.

In their artistic production, both kinetic and “prospective” artists and architects referenced modernist myths concerning technological development, cosmopolitanism, and the universalism of languages, ideas and shared goals. They did not consider themselves to be “provincial”, “peripheral”, or in any way “different” from the mainstream artists of the so-called metropolises – which is a necessary condition for the implementation of a decolonial delinking. They were “international” and “cosmopolitan” artists whose creative work could not be stopped by the Iron Curtain – as claimed during the Biennale in Nurnberg in 1969: they represented “equally” art from the East and West¹⁵⁶.

“Idealismo utópico?” (Utopian idealism?), asks Kosice in his manifesto¹⁵⁷, signaling that perhaps the kinetic-prospective tendency should be seen by art historians as the last effort to create an international Avant-garde art movement – one that was idealistic and unrealisable. However, he immediately replies in the negative: “En absoluto” (Absolutely not)¹⁵⁸. The viewer is asked to believe that Kocice’s futurological cities would be created soon. Since cities will float in outer space, people will not need any nationality, passports, permission to stay in one place or another. The same is true of the cosmic city *Scarabea* by the VAL group – it is freely nomadic and completely realisable¹⁵⁹. This attitude was pointed out by the generation of artists that followed, who not only situated their art in peripheral East and South contexts, but also claimed a decolonial break with Western-canonical vision of art and, especially, with a very Eurocentric concept of internationalism. In 1986, the Uruguayan artist Jorge Caraballo created a tiny artist’s book titled *Breve historia del arte en Latinoamérica* (Brief History of Art in Latin America)¹⁶⁰. Caraballo, whose early artistic career was associated

155 Michel Ragon, *Karl Marx*, Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1959.

156 Katarzyna Cytlak, Unpublished interview with Constantin Flondor: *Konstruktive Kunst: Elemente und Prinzipien. Biennale 1969 Nürnberg*, Nurnberg: Institut für moderne Kunst, 1969.

157 Gyula Kosice, *Arquitectura y urbanismo hidroespacial*.

158 *Ibid.*

159 Ludovít Kupkovič, Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynářčík, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

160 Jorge Caraballo, *Breve historia del arte en Latinoamérica*, Montevideo: Artist’s book, 1986.

with kinetic and geometrical abstract art, received in 1971 a Premio Lauréamont (Lauréamont Prize) from the French Government to study in the *atelier* of Victor Vasarely¹⁶¹. Later, during the civic-military dictatorship in Uruguay between 1973 and 1985, he became a political prisoner after being arrested due to the politically subversive content of his artistic creations and his left-wing convictions, leading him to assume a critical distance from his own Parisian experience. A booklet he later distributed via mail art networks was composed of photographs taken on the streets during the 1970s and 1980s. Each photograph included a short commentary. As the Italian and Uruguayan-based art historian Riccardo Boglione justly remarked:

Ocho fotos relativas a movimientos de protesta y represión dictatorial, asociadas, con una palabra, a ocho estilos artísticos, en un ferozmente divertido y funestamente ingenioso comentario sobre la inextricable *liaison* entre ética y estética, realidad y símbolo (Eight photos relating to protest movements and dictatorial repression, associated by one word with eight artistic styles in a fiercely funny and amusingly ingenious commentary on the inextricable link between ethics and aesthetics, reality and symbol).¹⁶²

Caraballo applied here the denominations of artistic movements and -isms in order to depict, in an ironic way, the social conflicts that arose during the Uruguayan dictatorships. The photograph depicting “guana-cos” – water cannons – scattering demonstrators is labelled “hidrocinetismos” (hydrokineticisms)¹⁶³, a term immediately associated with Gyula Kosice’s concept of hydrokinetic sculpture-environments and architecture. As Caraballo points out, each attempt to “realise” an artistic vision for humanity is a kind of lottery that in most cases does not end well. In Caraballo’s work, local translations of utopian projects became instrumentalized, and ended up ultimately as another apparatus of social and political oppression.

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¹⁶¹ Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, “Jorge Caraballo”, in: *Centro Cultural Pareja, Montevideo*, [online], 2015, [cited 05-09-2020], <http://centroculturalpareja.com/creadores/jorge-caraballo/>.

¹⁶² Riccardo Boglione, “Cinético poético político”, in: *La Diaria*, [online], 12 October 2015, [cited 05-09-2020], <https://ladiaria.com.uy/articulo/2015/10/cinetico-poetico-politico/>.

¹⁶³ Jorge Caraballo, *op. cit.*

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Santrauka

Futuristiniai miestai Rytuose ir Pietuose. Gyulos Kosices dialogas su Vengrijos ir Slovakijos menininkais

Katarzyna Cytlak

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Slovakijos dailė, Argentinos dailė, kinetinis menas, XX a. 6–7 deš. dailė, dailė ir architektūra, horizontali dailės istorija.

Straipsnyje aptariamos sąsajos tarp Čekoslovakijoje gimusio argentiniečių menininko Gyulos Kosices meninių strategijų ir Slovakijos meno scenos. Remiantis lenkų meno istoriko Piotro Piotrowskio „horizontalios meno istorijos“ samprata, straipsnyje susitelkiama į Šaltojo karo metu išsivysčiusį meninį dialogą tarp Centrinės Europos ir Lotynų Amerikos kinetinio meno ir oparto atstovų. Straipsnio tikslas dvejetainis. Pirma, jame pristatoma nevakarietiško meno scenoje vystytų meninių praktikų specifika ir strategijos. Taip pat atskleidžiami tam tikri bendrumai tarp skirtingų regionų menininkų, ypač kinetinio ir geometrinio meno srityse. Taikant transnacionalumo ir transmodernumo prieigas, tekste aptariamas Gyulos Kosices ryšys su Alexu Mlynárčiku, užsimezgęs prancūzų meno kritiko Michelio Ragono dėka, ir pabrėžiami panašumai tarp Kosices hidroerdvinių miestų, VAL (Voies et Aspects du Lendemain) grupės XX a. 8 deš. realizuotų Mlynárčiko architektūrinių vizijų ir Ragono pasiūlytų futuristinių architektūros idėjų.