

**Gordana Novaković**

Short History of Electronic Art,  
Part One

[935 words]

Serbia



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This text was archived at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb collection, as part of the **Research project** conceived in 1997 by a SCCAN – Soros Centers for Contemporary Art Network, funded by the Open Society Foundation, New York.

The purpose of the project was to select, collect and disseminate texts on contemporary art practices in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, around Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, written in and about art of the 1990s. The coordination of the project was carried out by Janka Vukmir, SCCA – Zagreb, today the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

We did not intervene in any of texts more than just correcting obvious typos and spelling. On the occasion of collecting texts, we were given permission from all authors, to rightfully use them. If anyone now has different instructions, please, contact us at the [info@institute.hr](mailto:info@institute.hr).

All of the texts we have collected at the time have been later published on the website of the I\_CAN, International Contemporary Art Network, the short-lived successor of the SCCAN.

On the occasion of the exhibition **90s: Scars**, revisiting the art practices and social and political context of the 1990s in the postcommunist countries, the Institute for Contemporary Art is now reoffering a collection of **89 texts and a comprehensive list of then proposed further readings**, on the website of the Institute for Contemporary Art, [www.institute.hr](http://www.institute.hr).

The exhibition 90s: Scars is curated by Janka Vukmir and organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art and the MMSU – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, on the occasion of the **European Cultural Capital Rijeka 2020**. Originally planned to open May 14, 2020, at the MMSU in Rijeka, due to COVID-19 crisis, is postponed until further notice.

Gordana Novaković

## Short History of Electronic Art, Part One

To discuss electronic art nowadays in Belgrade sounds pretty bizarre. But we did. Belgrade has always been a crossroad of different initiatives and exchange from all parts of our ex-country.

The series of presentations and lecturing on that topic started in this first phase of the project with the pioneers of that kind of art in ex-Yu.

So, we have begun with the computer music and videoart, as a natural starting point, leading to the complex interactive projects via internet or environments/installations. Artists from Ljubljana (Bor Turel, computer music and video), Maribor (Marjan Šijanec), Novi Sad (Vojin Tišma, Jozef Klacik, Boris Kovač), Holland (Predrag Šidjanin) and Belgrade (Čedomir Vasić, Sveta Nikolić, Mihailo Ristić, Miša Savić and Gordana Novaković) who formed long time ago (May, 1991) The Association of Electronic Media Artists, presented their old and new works. It was a good possibility to follow the developing thread leading us to the contemporary computer art. The event was daily updated on the web-site, contenting also short artistic statements by the participants concerning the topic. And technical support done by Cinema Rex was a real support. It was real pleasure to collect all the memories and the results, not talking on good old days, but talking on future.

But there is also some not very pleasant conclusion: the theory of new media art does not follow the results of artist here. Very few of theoreticians writes from time to time, but we are out of competent and consequent critics. And it was one of the reasons for organizing such a manifestation: to try to establish the archive of that new contemporary art, as a basis for funding a coherent artistic scene with adequate critics and theory. All presentations are audio/video taped. It is a great collection of data

concerning previous events and authors. A book/catalogue and CD-ROM out of thus collected materials are the next step. (The last book on that topic, on videoart, "Videosfera" by M. Ristić was published in 1986!)

And the decision of transforming the idea of Association into a mailing list seems also as a good result. Here is the text of "Manifesto" from the meeting on 15 of April, by: Gordana Novaković, Miša Savić, Čedomir Vasić and Mihailo Ristić:

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Once upon a time, there was a city named Belgrade. It was the time when its citizens did not need to carry transparencies saying "Belgrade is the world", it was a fact. These were the times when artists who marked this century visited it, from all over the world and from all ex-Yu countries, to promote their work and ideas and to exchange them with Belgrade artists.

Then, in a few years everything changed. Everything has been forgotten, due to the great magic of war. That was also a time of desperate street protests that changed nothing. But it was also the time when Belgrade started to live and communicate emanating its' spirit to the rest of the world through the internet and by radio-waves.

Now, all over again, in Belgrade a new huge group of intellectuals and young people are packing their suitcases facing another chapter of going on catastrophe. That is reality and we must accept it. We have no country, but however sad it sounds we should not spend our lives crying over our bad luck and destiny, for the whole world became our country, whatever our current address is at the moment. We all became nomads in a way: those who are spread all over the world as well as those who are staying. It is a new quality that has been generated out of great disaster, death and suffering. We have to face it and to take it as a certain form of human vitality.

Those who have left long ago, and the ones who are just about to, together with the ones that are brave enough to stay and try once again to resist, feel the need for keeping contacts and exchanging energy and ideas. Many artists are dispersed in different countries, slowly losing connection with people and the essence of their surrounding that has been generated their creative energy. The ones that are staying are unhappy feeling loneliness and isolation. We need each other, and we all need our friends from all over the world. We need a place where we can be together. But there is no Belgrade any more. Our Belgrade does not exist as a notion. Nowadays, it could only be a virtuality. The need to unite our personal contacts is obvious, and the Internet, something that for a great number of us is a part

of our everyday communication, is as a logical solution for creating our new artistic scene.

The idea of an Association of Media artists, that has been proclaimed in Belgrade in May 1991, has to be transformed into a mailing list for artists (not only media, but all kinds of art) and theorists, not only born or living in Belgrade, but for everyone who feels bonded with the artistic scene of this city, or has any interest for its abstract geography as a place for exchanging ideas and information concerning art and artistic theory.

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Now we are preparing the second part of our project. It will be a series of guests, artists and theoreticians from different countries, to discuss and present their works and ideas on media-art.

It will continue, in the future, with the presentation of nowadays results of diverse forms of electronic art, by artists of all generations, as a continuity of archiving the data.