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DESCRIPTION OF AN (UNREALIZED) PROJECT: WOMEN IN AVANT-GARDE - GENDER ASPECTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Abstract. In its historical context, avant-garde movements represent a wide range of cultural and artistic practices which aimed to introduce new modes of identity that could overcome social, political, national and other differences in the European space, at the time of the socio-political crisis related to the First World War. However, it is often said that many, essentially avant-garde techniques and strategies had become an indistinguishable part of the contemporary popular and mass culture (art, media and advertising, film, theatre); thus, losing their critical edge and intention to foster people's individual personalities and truly critical, international cooperation. Therefore, a new research into the avant-garde should be based on the attempt to revisit and revise the historical context, looking for some less known avant-garde practices, in order to assess and transform current trends in the affirmation of the European cultural heritage and promotion of Europeanism.

Within the avant-garde itself, there is a significant segment of production that has been overlooked and neglected by scholars, educators and cultural institutions – *women's artistic and cultural work*. The research project (working title "Women's avant-garde / Women in avant-garde") will attempt to "uncover" the role and significance of the female authors during the period 1905–1939, to investigate how women participated in the international avant-garde events, how they collaborated at various levels (local, regional, national, etc.) and throughout Europe, establishing new models of aesthetic, cultural and political activism. The research would specifically emphasize the historical and contemporary importance of the women's avant-garde legacy of multilingualism, the ways in which the avant-garde multilingualism corresponds with language/culture politics in Europe. Also, the research will show the significance of the gender aspect in the avant-garde movements and how this gender perspective helps in revising and reaffirming core cultural values of the avant-garde (internationalism, Europeanism, individualism, antimilitarism, productive criticism of socio-political institutions).

Following the multidisciplinary and multimedia nature of the avant-garde itself, the project would include scholars from various disciplines, representatives of different cultural institutions (museums, galleries and other centres...), IT experts and people that are particularly engaged in the digital humanities, educators and contemporary artists or artistic groups.

Having in mind that cultural heritage and values are at the heart of our capability to overcome the current EU crisis, the results of this research project – disseminated through workshops, conferences, printed publications and digital databases – will present a new historical perspective on the less known part of the avant-garde production: women's work. Furthermore, by critically revising the contemporary understanding of the historical avant-garde movements, and uncovering new data on the role of women, this research will offer a deeper understanding of what "truly European identity" should mean, and an innovative approach to establishing new, synergetic models of collective cultural memories.

Keywords. avant-garde, gender aspects, repository

Cultural, scientific and technological project objectives

The aim of the project "Women in avant-garde" is to analyse different ways in which multicultural, multilingual and gender aspects of women's artistic production in the avant-garde address the ongoing European identity crisis; starting from the representative sample of the avant-garde material, the project will emphasize those core values of the women's avant-garde that could be "used" in the process of resolving

current social and cultural crisis in Europe, by building a dynamic, highly informative and educational digital repository, available to all audiences and users online.

One of the first steps of the project is to create a representative sample – consisting of primary (textual and audio-visual material of the avant-garde...) and secondary sources (articles and scholarly publications on the women's avant-garde) from different cultures and regions – which will be done separately by each partner country, on the basis of the previously defined sampling criteria.

The technological objective of the project is development of digital repository that would include basic materials related to the subject – the artistic contribution of European female avant-gardists and relevant supporting material, articles, studies, as well as facilitation of the search in listed materials, further referencing and automatic connectivity with the related resources on the Internet.¹

In order to create an interoperable intersubjective structure of a given repository containing the possibility of (automatic) addition of inter- and multi-media material of each member of the consortium, as well as the inclusion of new members / nodes in the semantic network, it is necessary to draw up a set of specific rules and procedures for processing the collected material and its adaptation to the needs of digital repositories in the manner provided in general guidance for the development of semantic networks of culture and science.

This type of digital repository would offer us a possibility to present both the primary artistic material – for example, Milena Pavlovic Barilli's painting – and many other important sources and (meta)-data, in a dynamic, user-friendly environment of the computer screen. These secondary data could include:

- basic data on the painting and its material (production year, first exhibition year, material, painting technique, genre, information on the ownership...)
- secondary, scholarly sources which would all be hyperlinked, leading to other library databases or repositories
- connections, influences and similarities between Milena Pavlovic Barilli's work and works of other women or men in the avant-garde movement; if some authors were of specific importance their names could be visually placed on the screen closer to Barilli's name.
- in-depth genre description of the work (list of keywords or detailed explanations on various issues and concepts; definitions of key terms that could facilitate the interpretation of the work)

Collection, distribution and juxtaposition of the above mentioned data require analysis of the phenomenon of women's participation and contribution to avant-garde, as part of the avant-garde artistic and cultural phenomena in general, identifying types, properties and relationships of its elements in order to design specific logical structure appropriate to the collected art materials and program requirements for inclusion in digital repositories.

¹ It is necessary to envisage and create this repository as a part of the European avant-garde digital repository, in accordance with the general characteristics of Thematic Research Collection, composed of original documents and the results of appropriate research and semantic relationships. The corresponding thematic research collection of (women in) European avant-garde should, therefore, be electronic; made of heterogeneous datatypes; extensive but thematically coherent; structured but open-ended; designed to support research; authored or multi-authored; interdisciplinary; consist of collections of digital primary resources.

In addition to determining the nature of objects and their descriptions (objective facts and subjective interpretation of those facts) it is required to develop indicators in the form of metadata and ontologies (classification systems, thesauri), and to apply appropriate tools for annotation, allowing adding of comments and new knowledge to the existing core.

It is necessary to constantly monitor and coordinate the definition and description of digital objects with trends in digital libraries and virtual memory institutions as distributed repositories to ensure the preservation and permanent access to knowledge.

Current digital repositories and digital libraries, available online and in open access, offer rich collections of avant-garde works but mostly in a conventional, non-dynamic way; most of these repositories have basic search engines (by author, title, publication year, etc) and only some of them provide additional information (hyperlinks, secondary sources, links to other repositories). There are, also, several examples of digital databases where users can freely add new materials but these are usually, albeit rich, only basic digital collections of avant-garde works.

Therefore, it is necessary not only to present a variety of women's avant-garde works to the wider audience online but also to present it in a functional, highly informative, dynamic and visually attractive way. On the other hand, academic communities could benefit significantly from this project because they would have a two-way access to the digital repository: they could both add materials and use them for their research purposes; furthermore, since the aim of this project is to put all primary and secondary sources online, in a user-friendly environment, it represents an excellent tool for wider social, cultural and academic public offering a range of possibilities for their particular needs: new ideas and concepts for museum and gallery exhibitions, new outlines for university programs and courses, new e-learning platforms where all citizens could find out more on the diversity of the European cultural identity and its core modern values. Also, this type of repository would be of great use for new scientific disciplines, i. e. *computer creativity* and new trends in the creative industry.

Project description

This project includes the period between 1905 and 1939, from the early social changes (Russian revolution from 1905, which announces *The October Revolution in 1917*) and changes in art (forming of the group *Die Brücke* in Dresden, prior to the Expressionism, established in 1911 in the group *Der Blaue Reiter* in Munich). This period is covering Cubism (1907), Futurism (1909), Suprematism (1915), Dadaism (1916), De Stijl (1917), Bauhaus (1919), Surrealism (1924). The period was ended with the beginning of the *Second World War in 1939 and the new, radically changed image of Europe, it's civilization and art, after which the Avant-garde will become the Neo-avant-garde, Postdada, Postmodernism, turning to the new goals and ways of expression*. On the level in which in the new created system are preserved the characteristics and the actions of the Avant-garde, the activities of the women artists will be followed also beyond that period, in the era of Neo-avant-garde.

The problem of women in the European Avant-garde is not studied well and enough, nor in our country or in the world. As far as we know there is not a study or a collection that is dealing in the comparative manner with the question of women in the Avant-garde. This field have been researched or only from the national aspect (e. g. women in Russian or French Avant-garde), or within one movement (e. g. Dadaism or Surrealism), or only from certain aspects (feminism, gender studies, etc.). So this

project would be brand new, and it would include into the research native and foreign scholars.

Special modules of project could be developed based upon few principles, such as, first of all, national/geographical determinations of the Avant-garde:

1. Avant-garde in Serbia/Yugoslavia.
2. Avant-garde in Eastern Europe.
3. Avant-garde in Russia/USRR
4. Avant-garde in Western Europe.
5. The phenomenon of American women living in Europe (The Lost generation) and their discovering of the Avant-garde.
6. Women in fine art, literature, theater, applied art, film, photo, politics, in the movements of the Avant-garde.
7. Women collectors and maecenas of the artists of the Avant-garde.

Finally, in order to establish the primary contours of the subject field, we are giving the selective and expandable list of women artist from different European countries, potential topics of research:

Serbia/Yugoslavia: Anuška Micić, Vjera Biler, Nadežda Petrović, Milena Pavlović-Barilli, Dora Maar, Dorotea Teja Černigoj-Roter, Radmila Bunuševac, Otti Berger.

Russia/USSR: Elena Gouro, Nathalie Sarotte, Varvara Stepanova, Natalia Gontcharova, Nina Kogan, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Polina Hentova, Vera Schlesinger, Elie Nadelman, Hana Orlova, Nina Genke-Meller, Maria Gaken, Liubov Popova, Nadezhda Mandelstam, Aleksandra Ekster, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Sonia Brik, Eleonora Bloch, Nina Niss-Goldman, Beatrice Sandomirsky, Olga Rozanova, Ana Pavlova, Ana Ahmatova, Marina Tsvetaeva, *Lou Andreas Salome*, *Galla Dali*, *Bronislava Nijinska*, *Liubov Kosintseva*, *Ana Golubkina*, *Olga Metchnikov*, *Maria Vasillieva*, *Vera Muhina*, *Elsa Triolet*, *Zinaida Hippius*, *Alexandra Kollontai*, *Maya Deren*.

Poland: Katarzyna Kobro, Tamara de Lempicka, *Sophie Suzanne Brzeska*, *Franciska Themerson*, *Teresa Żarnower*, *Stefania Zahorska*, *Maria Putsiatitzka*.

Czech Republic: Marie Čermínová Toyen, Lucia Schulz-Moholy.

Hungary: Margit Téry-Adler, Ida Thal, Zsuzsanna Leppien, Georgina Geuberger, Zsuzsa Bánki, Etel Fodor, Ruth Hollós, Judith Kárász.

Germany/Austria: Emmy Hennings, *Hannah Höch*, *Claire Goll*, *Gabriele Münter*, *Leni Riefenstahl*, *Käthe Kollwitz*, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, *Alma Mahler*, *Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, *Hanya Holm*, *Mary Wigman*, *Lilly Reich*, *Martha Erps Breuer*, *Naftali Avon*, *Kate Steinitz*.

England: *Virginia Woolf*, *Mina Loy*, *Leonora Carrington*, *Eileen Agar*, *Nancy Cunard*, *Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh*, *Emmy Bridgwater*, *Edith Rimmington*.

France: *Germaine Dulac*, *Leonor Fini*, *Gisèle Prassinos*, *Céline Arnould*, *Gabrielle Dubuffet*, *Suzanne Duchamp-Crotti*, *Camille Claudel*, *Suzanne Valadon*, *Marie Laurencin*, *Claude Cahun*, *Germaine Berton*.

Switzerland: *Méret Oppenheim*, *Florence Henri*, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*.

Italie: *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, *Maria Goretti*, *Dina Cucini*, *Valentine de Saint-Point*, *Sibilla Aleramo*.

American women in Europe: *Gertrude Stein*, *Alice B. Toklas*, *Isadora Duncan*, *Anaïs Nin*, *Dorothea Tanning*, *Peggy Guggenheim*, *Berenice Abot*, *Djuna Barnes*, *Sylvia Beach*, *Janet Flanner*, *Natalie Barney*, *Mary Cassatt*, *Josephine Baker*, *Loie Fuller*.

Module I

Women in avant-garde – possible proposals from Serbia

- Anuška Micić – Nina-Naj, wife of Ljubomir Micić, muse, of great help in *Zenit*, translator, typist, Zenithisme.
- Milena Pavlović-Barilli – painter, poet, modiste, illustrator, Surrealisme.
- Nadežda Petrović – painter, sister of Rastko Petrović, Postimpressionisme.
- Maga Magazinović – dancer, women activist.
- Georgette – travestite, makeup in larva daemonis style.
- Eileen Forrester Agar – English painter, belonged to the Surrealist circle. Ljubiša Jocić stole her from Paul Eluar and brought to Belgrade round 1930.
- Živka Job – wife of Ignat Job, painter. She was a student of philosophie.
- Ljubica Marić – first woman composer in Serbia, atonal music, pioneer.
- Leposava-Bela Pavlović – painter.
- Ljubica Sokić – painter.
- Zora Petrović – painter, Expressionisme.
- Vida Jocić – sculptor, Neo-Avant-Garde.
- Ksenija Atanasijević – first woman PHD and philosopher in Serbia.
- Danica Antić – painter, Neo-Avant-Garde.
- Radmila Bunuševac – first Serbian female professional journalist and the founder and the first editor of *Politika* newspaper culture section.

Module II

Women in avant-garde: the case of Spain

Decades of intense research of the avant-garde movements, in Serbia, as well as in Spain, has led to a series of new information, changing the image of the avant-garde movements, and of their protagonists. Intensive studies of female authors, in Serbia, and in Spain, in a series of significant individual and group projects, allow us to form a different image of female authors in the first decades of the 20th century, and especially in the period between the two World Wars.

The period between 1901 and 1939 is certainly one of the most interesting in the sense of winning the women's right to artistic voice, directly connected with the conquest of the right to a political voice. There were many women writers, but only a few of them have dared to publish, and even less has been successful in it. Conquering these rights in these two countries was a parallel endeavor, in a sense, and therefore, the intention of creating a “Spanish branch” of the repository is to help the comparative aspect of the research of “the Spanish case” and “the Serbian–Yugoslav case” in that regard.

In the repository, there will be presented texts and material collected while studying the Spanish Literary Avant-Garde, translated into Serbian. The combined material in a digital presentation should point to the possibility of establishing a parallel between a number of female authors in Spain and in Serbia–SHS–Yugoslavia that have initiated their work in the field of literature, philosophy, art, dramatic arts, etc., precisely in this period. In the later stages, the repository could be extended to the consideration of the relationship of women to the avant-garde arts, through research of those female authors who have approached avant-garde arts in various critical aspects, for example, because of the generation gap, or ideological issues, etc., and observed it from a certain distance. Special attention must be paid to various aspects of translation in the avant-garde movements and women's participation in the translation enterprise. Translation needs to be seen as a form of “transferred” authorship, substitution for their own artistic activities, form of support for their own views, and as a dialogue with foreign authors.

In the first phase of the elaboration, the repository would include biographical notes on Spanish authors, in Serbian language, a representative selection of texts translated into Serbian, bibliographic references, and references to the most important digital resources in Spanish. In addition to the female writers, there would be included the work of a certain number of female painters, actresses, etc., whose works would be presented with the appropriate graphic material, commentary, biographical and bibliographical information. Special attention would be paid to indicate the parallels, convergences and divergences in relation to the Serbian female artist from the same period, and the digitized material would be arranged accordingly. The material presented in the first phase should facilitate finding the points that connect, for example, the work of Ksenija Atanasijević in Serbia-Yugoslavia and the work of María Zambrano in Spain, both of them pupils of the greatest philosophers of their nation in its time (José Ortega y Gasset and Branislav Petronijević). The two of them are a part of Avant-Garde phenomena not only by the very fact that they are women-philosophers, but by the themes they choose, connecting different areas of artistic and philosophic activity, and researching various aspects and personalities of the avant-garde art.

Ten representative Spanish artists in the avant-garde (Chronologically, by the year of birth)

Margarita Xirgu (1888–1969) Spanish actress and theater director. Of particular interest is her staging of the works of Federico Garcia Lorca. After the Civil War, she lived in exile in Uruguay.

Margarita Nelken (1896–1968) was a writer, art critic, politician, and one of the most important figures in the Spanish feminist movement in the fourth decade of the 20th Century. First translator of Kafka in Spain (in Ortega's magazine *Revista de Occidente*, in 1925), she translated from German, French and English. She wrote studies in history of art, novels and stories.

Magda Donato (artistic name, born Carmen Eva Nelken, 1898-1966) journalist, dramaturge, story-writer and actress. After the Civil War, fled to Mexico.

Rosa Chacel (1898–1994) writer of the Generation '27.

Concha Méndez (1898–1986) writer of the Generation '27.

Maruja Mallo (1902–1995) surrealist painter of the Generation '27.

María Teresa León (1903–1988) writer of the Generation '27. She wrote books of stories and film scenarios, was a theatre director and translator from various languages. In the thirties, she worked, together with Rafael Alberti, Rosa Chacel, and many others, to gather numerous paintings, objects of art, and more than 40.000 books, in order to safeguard them during the Civil War.

María Zambrano (1904–1991) Spanish thinker and essayist. Pupil of Jose Ortega y Gasset. Author of important opus, spreading from the civic engagement to the poetic thought. In Spain, she gained official recognition only in the last quarter of the 20th Century, after a long period of exile. In later years, she received some of the highest awards, as "Principe de Asturias" in 1981, and "Cervantes' Prize", in 1988.

Federica Montseny (1905–1994) anarchist, minister in the period of the Second Republic. She was the first women to occupy the post of a minister in a government in Western Europe. Published some fifty stories with the romantic-social thematic, destined to female workers, and series of texts with political, ethic, biographic and autobiographic themes.

Ernestina de Champourcín (1905–1999), poet of the Generation '27.

Carmen Conde (1907–1996) poet and story-writer. In the year 1931, she was one of the founders of the first Popular University in Cartagena, Spain. She was the first woman to be a member of the Royal Academy of Spain (1979).

Josefina de la Torre (1907–2002) poet, novelist, singer and actress closely related to the Generation '27 and Hispanic Avant-Garde of the first half of the 20th Century.

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