

Europe envies Slovenia for its independent cultural scene and for *Maska*

When I came to Ljubljana for the first time – in 1994 – I was absolutely amazed: about the fact that such a small country (with half of the population of Berlin, no offense meant!) had such a vibrant and outstanding independent cultural scene. At the time it felt like Ljubljana was full of people with an incredible energy – who were standing on the shoulders of subcultural giants that had grown up and evolved in the 1980s (obviously, that is my personal perspective).

Back then, *Maska* journal was a hugely important source for me and my research about Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK). Not only that it covered relevant issues discussed in the (sub-)cultural scene – already back then *Maska* was also one of the cultural magazines that stood out from European publications in general. Always timely in covering certain issues, always at the forefront of contemporary discourse in Europe, while at the same time acting as a discourse space, giving, as they so aptly write in their open letter, „the independent performing arts scene the ability to self-reflect, identify the field as being of common interest and strengthen the public sphere, which far surpasses the interests of a single organisation.“

In 2006, it was an incredible honor for me when *Maska* translated my PhD thesis (originally written in German) into Slovenian and published it in the *Transformacija* series. The book *The Avant-Garde in the Rear-View Mirror* looks at how artists in Slovenia (and ex-Yugoslavia) and in Russia (and the former Soviet Union) in the 1980s and 1990s look back at the historical avant-garde, condemning, criticizing or praising it – and what this means for the future.

In the last 30 years, independent culture in Slovenia has done a lot for the international reputation of the country. What will it mean for the future when so many protagonists of independent culture are being de-funded? Especially an institution like the *Maska* Institute which successfully handed over the baton to a younger generation? Slovenia will certainly be poorer without *Maska*. Do not allow this to happen.

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