

bal
conference
2024

Repeated Words Lose Their Meaning

Date: October 5, 2024

Participants: Augustas Čičelis, Viktorija Kolbešnikova, Sveta Grigorjeva, Nina Dragičević, Hana Čurak

Moderators: Hana Čeferin, Luīze Nežberte

Location: Seminar Raum 2 at Angewandte (University of Applied Arts Vienna), 1010 Wien, Oskar-Kokoschka-Platz 2

About *bal*:

bal is a transdisciplinary comparative collaboration project delving into the realms of art and culture the Baltics and the Balkans. This project serves as an active interspace, fostering diversity tension, and opening avenues for cultural mutation and transformation. The project's framework encompasses residencies, exhibitions, conferences, and publications while its research extends across all Baltic States and the post-Yugoslav space.

The project aspires to engage artists, curators, and researchers across diverse disciplines. It aims to provide an accessible exploration of two European regions, examining them through the lenses of queer*feminist perspectives, endeavors related to humanity's survival and environmental restoration, collective care practices, and identity politics. With the focus on language as the central theme of 2024.

Central to *bal* is the geographical positioning of the northern and southern peripheries of Eastern Europe, challenging the conventional categorization of the region as homogeneous from a global perspective. A dynamic remixing of shifting political, cultural, ecological and aesthetic stances is necessary to overcome Europe's asymmetry, as opposed to suppressing or assimilating diversity within Western narratives.

Topic 2024 - *Repeated Words Lose Their Meaning*:

bal 2024 will suggest dynamic discussions and quick exchanges of notions of language, highlighting how crucial it is to look to the past and future to comprehend the present. Language is a powerful tool as well as dangerous; it all depends on the message, which is manipulated into someone's perspective for one's benefit. By changing and transforming language, we can foresee the future of more equal and democratic societies. Taking, for example, the challenges language holds when discussing marginalized identities, as many languages are trapped in binary stagnation, justified by the need to preserve the polished version of language as a symbol of national identity. On the other hand, language controls our thoughts with its imposed structures; the non-existing neutral form of gender and masculine norm defining all juxtaposes non-binary language. Does gender equality differ based on that? Language, as masters of language, finds another way to misogynize the main tool of communication, ensuring the patriarchal basis upon which our contemporary societies are built remains firm.

In the focus regions of our project, the notions of nationalism can be open and can be covered with the importance of patriotism, considering the region's past. This can also, on the contrary, be strongly nostalgic for the socialist past, condemning the painful consequences of national movements. Despite the different past, nowadays, right-wing ideology prevails in the region. So we ask, what is the lingua franca of right-wing politics, and can we recognize it and take over control? How does civil society use language for common benefits, especially for the benefits of marginalized identities and communities? Queer and feminist topics are often restricted by language, with identities demonized by language; thus, some are reclaiming the negative language used to describe them.

Language is a very dynamic, ever-changing tool of communication. It also manifests in different ways, not only as text, sound, still and moving images, inscriptions, but also as feeling, or as an absence. In the 2024 *bal* publication with texts by authors from Latvia, Serbia, Austria, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, we look into the diverse ways and impact of language on our societies. The texts will vary from essays, translations, poetry, excerpts, some also in more than one language, ensuring that all texts are also available in English for the broader audience of readers.

About participants:

Augustas Čičelis and **Viktorija Kolbešnikova** are curators of the *išgirsti* queer archive and organisers of the Vilnius Queer Festival *Kreivės* as well as the queer project space in Vilnius. Both are active participants in the queer and feminist movements, have a background in gender studies, and base their practice in the broader fields of social justice, support, self-education and self-organising.

Dr **Nina Dragičević** is a poet, writer, and a composer, the author of the books *Kdo ima druge skrbi* (Škuc, 2014), *Slavne neznane* (Škuc, 2016), *Med njima je glasba* (Parada ponosa, 2017), *Ljubav reče greva* (Škuc, 2019), *To telo, pokončno* (Škuc, 2021), *Kako zveni oblast* (Založba /*cf, 2022), *Ampak, kdo?* (Škuc, 2023), and *Auditory Poverty and Its Discontents* (Errant Bodies Press, 2024). Dragičević is the recipient of the 2023 Werner Düttmann Fellowship (Akademie der Künste, Berlin), the 2023 Dr Ana Mayer Kansky Award, the 2021 Jenko Award, the 2020 Župančič Award, two 2018 Knight of Poetry Awards, and was a 2018 Palma Ars Acustica finalist.

Hana Ćurak (b. 1994) is a researcher, writer and producer. Her eclectic experience involves work in strategic communication, visual arts production, project management and advocacy in Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She is a founder of “Sve su to vještice” (It's all Witches), an independent communication platform for the promotion of a feminist approach to security and radical democracy through digital tools and humour. Since its creation in 2015, this platform has established a new visual form of feminist communication that has been adopted by many activists across the region.

Sveta Grigorjeva (1988) is an Estonian choreographer, dancer, and poet. Her performances include "Rebel Body Orchestra" (2017), "TEKHNE" (2020) and "FAKERZ" (2021), "Dances to Dream, Res(is)t and Sleep to" (2022), which won the Best Dance Performance at the yearly Estonian Theater Awards. Grigorjeva has published three poem collections: "Who is Afraid of Sveta Grigorjeva?" (2013), "American beauty" (2018) and "Frankenstein" (2023). Counted among Estonia's "young angry women" of poetry, her writing is characteristically brash and wears no kid gloves. Grigorjeva prefers the temporal over the timeless, lavishly dealing sharp critique to the social issues we face today. In 2022, she received her second master's degree from the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, Germany, and in the autumn of 2023 she started her doctoral studies at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theater as a junior researcher.

Program:

11 - 11:30 AM

Arriving, coffee, tea

11:30 - 11:55 AM

Introduction, welcoming speech, presenting the new issue of the *bal* publication

12:00 - 12:30 PM

Augustas Čičelis, Viktorija Kolbešnikova

Topic: *Queer archiving as (self)empowerment*
“*išgirsti*” queer archive

The stories of people condemned to the margins remain on the margins. These stories are contradictory, inconsistent, and their existence is bound by silence and secrecy. Queer people's stories are trapped between absence and presence. In this way, stories become queer not only because they are about queer people. They become queer because they resist being generalized, condensed into a single narrative, straightened out.

Augustas Čičelis and Viktorija Kolbešnikova will talk about the story of išgirsti queer archive in the background of other existing queer archiving practices in the region, share theoretical and practical knowledge and personal experiences about queer history and its presentation in the field of culture and art.

12:30 - 1:00 PM

Hana Čurak

Topics: *Language and ideology in Sve su to vještice memes*

"Neither the original nor the translation, neither the language of the original nor the language of the translation are fixed and persisting categories. They don't have essential quality and are constantly transformed in space and time." - Boris Buden.

In this talk, we will try to understand the process of cultural translation on the example of collages produced by the *Sve su to vještice* platform.

1:00 - 1:30 PM

First discussion

BREAK

3 - 3:30 PM

Nina Dragičević

Topics: *Auditory Poverty and its Discontents*

A sonic event enters, hoping to add to the audible sphere, perhaps disrupting it somehow. A sonic event is a relational event, and its source relies very much on the reaction of its listeners. Such an event is no longer merely a matter of sense, e.g., hearing; it has infused a sphere of power relations, perhaps even the political economy. That being said, can one's use of voice affect their ability to pay the utility bills?

3:30 - 4:00 PM

Sveta Grigorjeva

Topic: *On being a „female poet“ and an „Estonian-Russian identity-poet“ in 21. century Estonia*

Sveta Grigorjeva reflects on the reception and controversy that surrounded her debut in the Estonian literary scene, questioning the implications around women in poetry and discussing the experience of a multi-layered identity.

4:00 - 4:30 PM

Second discussion

10 PM

After party: Queer Yugo Pop Party

Location: celeste, Hamburgerstraße 18, 1050 Vienna