Sovjetski *underground* naraštaji: Tranzicijsko polje suvremene umjetnosti u postsovjetskoj Rusiji

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The Soviet Underground Outcrops: Artistic Recognition and Transitional Field of Contemporary Art in Post-Soviet Russia

SAŽETAK

Umjetničko prepoznavanje „neslužbene" sovjetske umjetnosti rezultat je uzajamnog utjecaja novonastalog privatnog medijskog sektora, koji više ne podliježe ograničenjima države, i disidentske umjetnosti prošlih generacija koje su stvorile cijeli jedan svijet koji umjetnička profesija do tada nije istraživala.

Autorice analiziraju strukture umreženosti kritičara i umjetnika u ovom razdoblju i objašnjavaju kako se oblikovala zajednica umjetnika i kritičara, kakva je njezina struktura i kako su tokovi informacija pomagali umjetnicima da dosegnu višu razinu prepoznatljivosti. Analiza baze podataka ilustrirala je i potvrdila posebnu značajku tog sustava, a to je da jedna osoba može istovremenu biti umjetnik (ili kustos) i kritičar. To je rezultat nesigurnog položaja umjetnika i daleko stabilnijeg položaja kritičara—pisanje o umjetnosti bio je jedna od rijetkih poslova koji su se plaćali.

Bimodalna mreža kritičara i umjetnika novina *Kommersant* ima oblik koji je vrlo blizak tipu jezgra–periferija. Ova mreža ima jezgru, ali manje očitu nego što je jezgra mreže MAM, a karakterizira je pojava utjecajnih kritičara na periferiji i s time povezani rast „ekskluzivne klijentele".

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the ways of evaluating artistic recognition by analyzing critical writings. Focusing on the post-war unofficial contemporary art scene in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, we put an emphasis on the mechanisms of legitimation and the dynamics of artistic prestige in the restricted field of underground art. The research reveals major patterns not only in the process of recognition of unofficial Soviet art, but also discusses the role of criticism in the transitional period in a post-Soviet republic. Political turbulence caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union facilitated radical changes in the conditions for artistic production and transformation. By employing methods of social network analysis (SNA), we reconstruct and evaluate interconnections between unofficial post-war artists and critics, working on the case study of the three most significant newspaper media from the 1990s.

KEYWORDS

Unofficial Contemporary Art, Post-Soviet Russia, Social Network Analysis, Underground Art, Artistic Production

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Danas mreža ima još manje eksplicitnu jezgru i utjecajnije kritičare na periferiji kao i širu mrežu „ekskluzivne klijentele". Ovaj je fenomen moguće objasniti na dva načina. Prvi je nedostatak konsenzusa u kritičkom polju, a drugi je korištenje posebnih strategija: predstavljanje novih umjetnika publici i preuzimanje monopola nad kritikama njihovih djela.

Uobičajena praksa među kritičarima bila je da se određeni događaji dodjeljuju određenim kritičarima. Tek je nekolicina događaja bila spomenuta od više kritičara. To se moglo dogoditi iz najmanje dva razloga: (1) kritičari su radili kao recenzenti, pa nije bilo potrebe da više kritičara prisustvuje istom događaju, osim ako se radilo o iznimno popularnom ili događaju visokog profila; (2) niska razina financiranja nije dopuštala da više kritičara bude plaćeno da piše o istom događaju.

Samo je jedan časopis (*Moscow Art Magazine*) imao profesionalan stav, a time i čvršću komunalnu strukturu. Ostala dva medija nisu bila fokusirana samo na umjetničku sferu, zbog čega su imali manji utjecaj na stručni milje i manji doprinos procesu umjetničkog prepoznavanja i institucionalizacije. Unatoč tome, agregacija svih navoda u tri tiskana medija otkriva određene umjetnike koji su bili najuočljiviji i najpopularniji među kritičarima.

Ovu scenu može karakterizirati nedostatak ekonomskog kapitala i nesigurnost svih uloga. Čak i popis najcitiranijih umjetnika otkriva složenost i eksperimentiranje kao važne vrijednosti ove scene. Štoviše, umjetničke zvijezde nisu ovisile o državnom financiranju ili privatnom kapitalu, kao ni o kulturnim institucijama. Podaci su također otkrili visok stupanj nejednakosti na sceni. Prvo, jezgra daje jasnu ilustraciju društvene homofilije (vidjeti McPherson et al, 2001), budući da su većina kritičara i umjetnika bijeli muškarci iz Moskve. Valja napomenuti da je sudjelovanje žena bilo ograničeno i u kritičkim (36,3 %) i u umjetničkim zanimanjima (18,9 %); međutim, čini se da je pristup zanimanju kritičara bio lakši.

Prikupljeni skup podataka svjedoči o temeljnoj promjeni umjetničke organizacije u Rusiji. Međutim, dinamika priznavanja pokazuje da je simbolički kapital akumuliran u prethodnom sustavu („neslužbena umjetnost") vrijedio i u novoj formaciji. Nužnost javnog priznavanja najprestižnijih agenata prethodnih generacija (čime se istovremeno osiguravalo vlastito priznanje kao kritičara, vidjeti de Nooy 2002.) odgodila je priznavanje novih generacija. Slijedom toga, samo je vrlo mali broj mlađih umjetnika postsovjetske Rusije dobio dovoljno pažnje kritičara.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
„neslužbena" suvremena umjetnost, postsovjetska Rusija, analiza društvenih mreža, *underground* umjetnost, umjetnička produkcija

INTRODUCTION*

The 1990s not only became a crucial period for Soviet and post-Soviet political history, but it also laid the foundation for a variety of cultural phenomena. The dissolution of the USSR, and the consequent cancellation of censorship led to the emergence of new opportunities for the recognition of artists'.[1] However, professional and non-professional art-critics of the 1990s tended to turn back a few decades and dedicate their reviews to nonconformist art of the post-war period. Significant growth of critic's attention to unconventional "underground" art led to the launch of recognition mechanisms, and the subsequent increase in popularity of this art field among the new generation.

The process of artistic recognition is complex and can be understood in diverse ways. The most notable outcome of this process is the creation of new meanings and ways of validation of the heretofore censured and censored art. In the case of unofficial Soviet art, recognition was the result of censorship cancellation and a new era of the freedom of speech. Suchwise, artistic recognition in our context represents mutual influence of the newly emerged private media sector, no longer limited by the state, and dissident art from past generations, which created an entire world, previously unexplored by artistic professionals.

The process of recognition, which leads to the legitimation and acceptance of unofficial art can be perceived as one of the forms of institutionalization. According to a neo-institutional approach, a researcher's focus should be devoted to both the institutions and organizations as well as their mutual relations and structural patterns.[2] Organizations function inside organizational fields, which are embedded into the fields of cultural production and where all the processes that affect the success of artists' recognition take place.[3] The establishment of new conventions inside and outside the field and the creation of new rules and norms allow the field of underground art to fit into an existing art system, and artists to accumulate volumes of capital that can be converted to symbolic forms such as artistic prestige and authority.[4]

According to the existing body of literature, art critics are among the key agents of artistic recognition, alongside the art historians and curators. These actors are perceived as gatekeepers, who have legitimated rights to introduce artists to an established field and act as a relevant source of artistic recognition. In the case of post-war unofficial art scene, art critics should be accepted as gatekeepers. The artist-critic system, which emerged in the 19th century during the appearance and ascension of Impressionism, highlighted the importance of critics as actors in the art field, whose agency assists the growth of artists' prestige as well as their economic and symbolic success.[5] Acting as gatekeepers, critics can choose one of the two strategies, depending on their chosen public: (1) interaction with other gatekeepers through the sharing of information and ideas, (2) autonomous intercommunication directly with art producers that excludes other gatekeepers from

1
Duncan, *From Glasnost to Freedom?*
2
Mohr, *Introduction: Structures, institutions, and cultural analysis*; Peterson, Anand, *The production of culture perspective*; Zucker, *The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence*.
3
Powell, DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism*.
4
Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art;* Meyer, Rowan, *Institutionalized Organizations*; Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*; Zucker, *The Role of Institutionalization*.
5
White, White, *Canvases and Careers*.

this communication system.[6] However, choosing the strategy also depends on the critic's position in the community structure and their authority, level of autonomy and innovativeness. De Nooy[7] also emphasized the role of artist-critic collaboration in the construction of the field's structure and determining artist's position in this structure. As long as they act as gatekeepers, critics not only inform the wider audience about artists and shows, but are oriented inside the community of critics and artists, shape the group structure and form new patterns of interaction between artists, critics and both of them.[8]

The main research question of this paper is to address issues of critical recognition in distinctive cultural contexts and political environments. The paper also examines a common simultaneity of institutionalization among several generations of post-war underground artists. It is supposed to trace the process of shaping the structure of critics' and artists' networks and how these networks define artists' positions in the art field. By analyzing these networks' structures, we explain how the community of artists and critics was shaped, what structure it took, and how information flows helped artists reach a higher level of recognition.

Social network analysis allows us to quantify the structure of the artist-critic system in the post-Soviet Russian paper media context by aggregating all ties between critics and artists based on article references. Understanding the network structure reveals some useful characteristics of artists, and shows which factors influence individual and group success. For example, the position of the individual relative to the core and the periphery of the network shows the level of artists' creativity and then determines the number of awards that an individual receives —intermediate position between the core and periphery yields the best performance.[9] Uzzi and Spiro (2005) specified the relations between the number of connections between art producers and critical and commercial success: few connections lead to a modest success, while the growth of network density means the growth of success, but too tight connections between artists reduce the level of success because of the conformity effect and the absence of new ideas. Moreover, an analysis of a publication network allows us to define ways and reasons of critics' clusterization and collaboration.[10]

Before analyzing the position and trajectories of actors in the field of contemporary art in post-Soviet Russia, it is necessary to define the position that this field occupies in society and culture.

ART CRITICISM AND THE EMERGING INDUSTRY OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

Although art-criticism is one of the major resources of legitimization in the restricted field of cultural production,[11] prior to 1991 one could barely talk about it as a relevant source of recognition for unofficial art. Official art magazines ignored the existence of these artists, while *samizdat* was very restricted as a professional media: for example, as Solomon (1999) puts it, Kabakov wasn't mentioned in Boris Groys' famous article on Moscow romantic conceptualism (1979) due to political reasons. In particular, if he got a mention in a *tamizdat* [12] periodical, he would have not been able to continue his work in the official cultural production industry, i.e. as an illustrator. These restrictions, together with a limited number of publications, would render any quantitatively designed analysis insufficient.

On the contrary, the early 1990s was the time when Russian criticism, primarily in Moscow and St. Petersburg, blew up: not only because of freedom of speech and the change of cultural policy, which now recognized all forms of art, but also due to economic reasons—writing about art was among those rare professional jobs one got paid for.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a key point for contemporary art sector in Russia's big cities. Although the sector was particularly shaped by the large tradition of 'non-official' or 'underground' art, which was forbidden during the Soviet times, during the 1990s it found new resources for legitimation. Thus, the key galleries of the 1990s (such as XL, Regina, Marat Guelman's or '1') became major exhibition venues for several generations of nonconformist artists, from Moscow's romantic conceptualists to the St. Petersburg-based group The New Artists. The early 1990s was also the time of expansion for newspaper art criticism. The reasons were not only the freedom of speech and a change of cultural policy, but economic as well, because writing about art was among those rare professional jobs in the art sector that one was paid for.[13]

There were also a few independent educational initiatives, such as the independent Institute for Problems of Contemporary Art (IPSI), founded by Joseph Bakhstein in 1992, and Victor Misiano's Social Anthropology workshop for artists and philosophers (1993–1994). To summarize, in the mid-1990s, an artistic community that had grown up from the unofficial artistic tradition formed an industry, which although risky and lacking in resources, was nevertheless independent from the state. In contrast to Kharchenkova, Komarova and Velthuis (2015), who consider the newly emerged Moscow galleries first and foremost as an extension of a Western-style art market, we stress the art centres' embeddedness in the local context.

Another distinctive feature of early post-Soviet contemporary art scene is the interconnectivity of the majority of agents (simply due to the small scale of this community), and the

convergence of different professional groups. For instance, the majority of critics were also artists, curators, or editors. This may be a feature of many creative worlds, but here this characteristic occurs extensively due to the scene's lack of institutionalisation and high permeability of professional boundaries. For instance, one could become a critic without any credentials such as a degree or experience in similar jobs. Victor Misiano (2002) conceptualised this state of art world as tusovka, which he operationalized as a case of Alberoni's serial community (status is only ascribed by agent's physical presence at parties and events).

METHODOLOGY

The empirical grounding of this paper is a corpus of art-periodicals from the early 1990s. It consists of 824 articles from three major paper media of the 1990s: Moscow Art Magazine ('Художественный журнал', 1993–1995), and newspapers Today ('Сегодня' 1993-1996) and 'Kommersant' (1993–1999). This data was provided by the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, whose archive of critical journal articles has been transferred to an electronic form containing all necessary information, including the author of the review, main personalities, artistic groups and unions, and cultural institutions.

This article employs social network analysis[14] to re-evaluate the process of artistic recognition through the reproduction of the structures of the unofficial art field and the artist-critic relations.

The first step was to draw up bimodal social networks based on artists' mentions by critics. There are two modes: art critics and the mentioned artists. Edges between nodes define mentions of artists by critics, which is why there are no edges between two artists or two critics in the bimodal network. Every mention correspondents to one point of an artist's degree, so the higher this value, the more often artist was mentioned in reviews and the higher his recognition rate. Secondly, we built a unimodal projection of the bimodal network. There is only one mode of nodes presented, which is artistic structure. Links between artists appears when both of them were mentioned by the same critic.

Since the only professional art media of the time was Moscow Art Magazine, while Today and Kommersant were unspecialized and art criticism was only a small part of the topics they covered, so it would be reasonable to compare the two types of media.

To evaluate the level of an artist's authority and recognition, the authors used metrics such as degree centrality and eigenvector centrality.[15] Degree centrality is the calculation of the absolute number of links a node has. Eigenvector centrality is the relative measure of a node's influence in the network; in other words, the centrality of the node is considered through connections with other central and influential actors. To understand the overall network structure, network's density was calculated, and ORA and RStudio software was used for analysis.

6
Foster et al., *Gatekeeper Search and Selection Strategies*.
7
de Nooy, *A Literary Playground*.
8
Ibid., 393.
9
Cattani, Ferriani, *A Core/Periphery Perspective*.
10
de Nooy, *The Dynamics of Artistic Prestige*.
11
Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*; de Nooy, *A Literary Playground*.
12
Tamizdat, sub-type of samizdat, literally 'published there', refers to any literature or music of Soviet Union released abroad.
13
Cf. Kuricyn, *Zhurnalistika* 1993–1997.
14
Bottero, Crossley, *Worlds, Fields and Networks*.
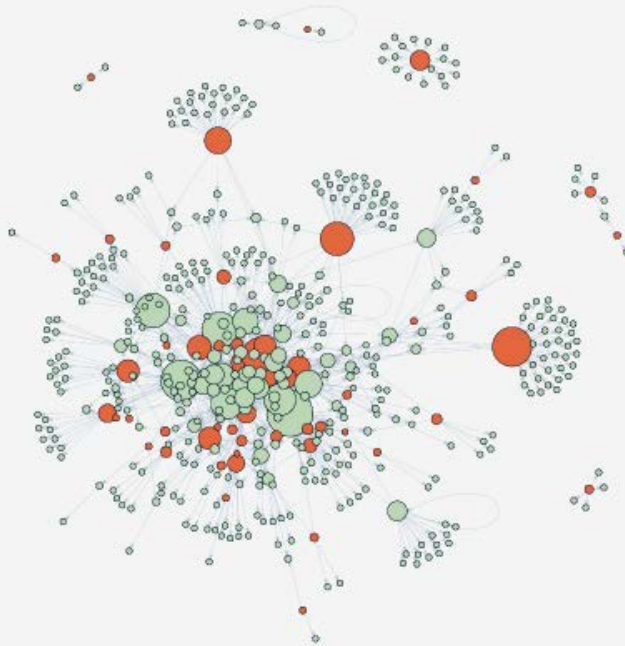15
Wasserman et al., *Social Network Analysis*.

Fig. 1 Bimodal critic-artists network, *Moscow Art Magazine* (Red nodes—critics, green nodes—artists, links between nodes—mentions of artists by critics); density = 0.00337217, transitivity = 0.04805031 / Sl. 1 Bimodalna mreža kritičara i umjetnika, *Moscow Art Magazine* (crvena čvorišta—kritičari, zelena čvorišta—umjetnici, poveznice između čvorišta—spominjanje umjetnika od strane kritičara); gustoća = 0,00337217, tranzitivnost = 0,04805031
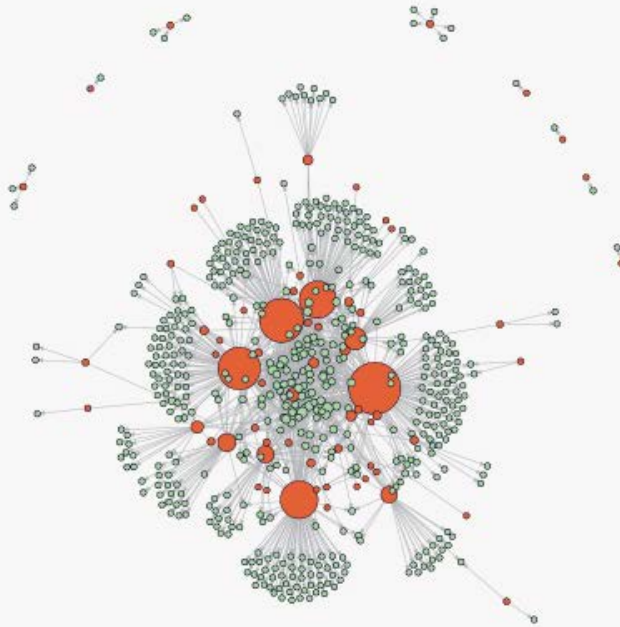↑

Fig. 2 Bimodal critic-artists network, *Kommersant* (Red nodes—critics, green nodes—artists, links between nodes—mentions of artists by critics); density= 0.003346056, transitivity = 0.01702622 / Sl. 2 Bimodalna mreža kritičara i umjetnika, *Kommersant* (crvena čvorišta — kritičari, zelena čvorišta—umjetnici, poveznice između čvorišta—spominjanje umjetnika od strane kritičara); gustoća = 0,003346056, tranzitivnost = 0,01702622
↑

FORMS OF ARTISTIC RECOGNITION IN POST-SOVIET PRESS

The paragraph below draws some results from the conducted analysis. First of all, we start with a comparison of the three media outlets in order to explore the key features of this kind of cultural production and artist-critic interconnections. Then, we look at the professional art-media (MAM) to put an emphasis at particularities of how the cultural scene of that time was represented in terms of key institutional and individual agents.

Due to the fact that critics collaborate with many media in addition to their main jobs, lists of critics from the three analyzed media partly overlap. Furthermore, lists of artists mentioned in reviews overlap as well.

Database analysis can illustrate and reaffirm a special feature, which is that the same person can be both an artist (or curator) and a critic. This was the result of the precarious position of the artists and a far more stable position of the critics—writing about art was among those rare professional jobs one got paid for. Overall, out of 93 critics from the *Moscow Art Magazine*, 38 of them held the position of both critics and artists at the same time, while the *Tomorrow* and *Kommersant* papers, with a total number of 109 critics, had 26 of them acting also as artists or curators. However, it is necessary to separate the personalities of the artist and the critic, even despite the fact that belonging to the artists' community can make a critic's reviews more biased.

As a first step, we compared three bimodal critic-artist networks from all three media to find if there were any differences between them and trace the changes in the community structure while changing the type and specification of the media.

The bimodal critics-artists network of MAM has an explicit core, where many critics write about the same noteworthy artists, and a periphery, located near the core, which consist of artists that are connected with only one particular critic. Such critics write about artists that no one else writes about, so we can talk about the phenomenon of "exclusive clientele". The media visibility of artists, who belong in this exclusive clientele, is strongly associated with certain critics, while artists in the network core are much less dependent on specific critics because they are covered by many reviewers (Fig. 1).

The bimodal critics-artists network of the Kommersant paper has a shape that is quite close to the core-periphery type. It has a core, but a less obvious one than the MAM network. In contrast with the previously described network, this network is characterized by the appearance of influential critics on the periphery and the associated increase in the size of "exclusive clientele" (Fig. 2).
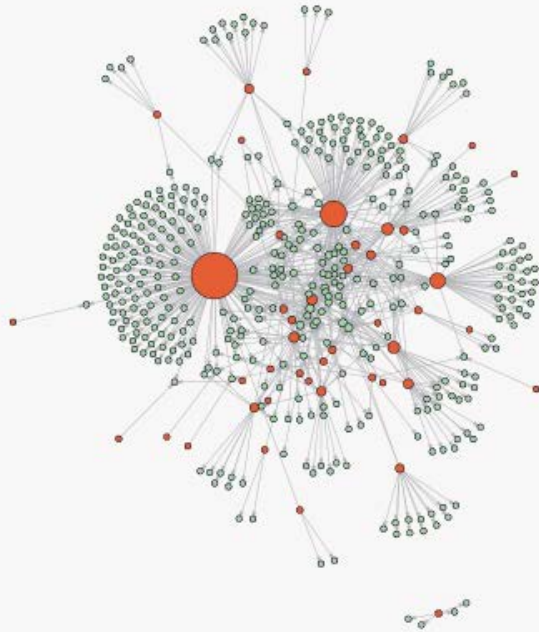
Fig. 3 Bimodal critic-artists network, *Today* (Red nodes—critics, green nodes—artists, links between nodes—mentions of artists by critics); density = 0.002827081, transitivity = 0 / Sl. 3 Bimodalna mreža kritičara i umjetnika, *Today* (crvena čvorišta—kritičari, zelena čvorišta—umjetnici, poveznice između čvorišta—spominjanje umjetnika od strane kritičara); gustoća = 0,002827081, tranzitivnost = 0
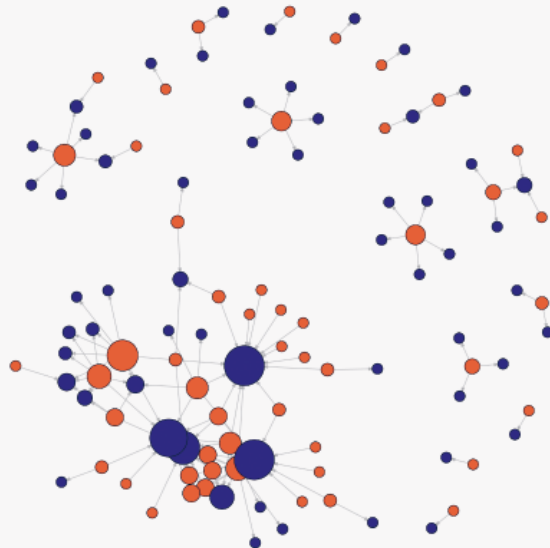↑

Fig. 4 Bimodal critic-art-group network, *Moscow Art Magazine* (Red nodes—critics, blue nodes—art-groups, links between nodes—mentions of art-groups by critics); density = 0.01104315, transitivity = 0 / Sl. 4 Bimodalna mreža kritičara i umjetničkih grupa, *Moscow Art Magazine* (crvena čvorišta—kritičari, plava čvorišta—umjetničke grupe, poveznice između čvorišta—spominjanje umjetničkih grupa od strane kritičara); gustoća = 0,01104315, tranzitivnost = 0
↑

Compared with two previous networks, the *Today* network has an even less explicit core, and more influential critics on the periphery with a wider network of "exclusive clientele". There are two options that explain this phenomenon. The first is the absence of a consensus inside the critics' field, while the second is the use of special strategies: presentation of new artists to the audience and seizure of monopoly on reviews about them (Fig. 3).

The *Moscow Art Magazine* has the densest critical community structure among the three compared media. This is the result of a higher level of media specialization and autonomization, since their critical reviews are aimed primarily at the professional community, rather than at a wide audience, i.e. art professionals write about art professionals for art professionals.

MOSCOW ART MAGAZINE: A CLOSER LOOK AT CRITICISM AS MEDIA PRODUCTION

Moscow Art Magazine is the only Russian specialized media that is fully dedicated to critical opinions on the art field. It was founded by members of the professional art community, and is aimed at that same art community. In other words, MAM created a high-end narrative of the Russian art scene, allowing artists and critics to construct the framework for defining relationships and positions. Because of that, we decided to consider this media in more details.

The bimodal network based on critical reviews from the *Moscow Art Magazine*—the only professional paper media about art—shows that critics, who were also artists or curators, were more likely to write about those art-groups with whom they collaborated as artists (curators), but not as critics. For example, a separate cluster with the Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe as the central node connects five different art-groups, all of which were situated in Saint-Petersburg and all directly or indirectly collaborated with Mamyshev-Monroe as an artist (Fig. 4).

The structure of the network built on articles on art events shows that it was a commonly practice among critics to have some particular event (e.g. art exhibitions, festivals, art fairs, etc.) assigned to particular critics. Only few events were mentioned by more than one critic. This may occur for at least two reasons: (1) critics worked as reviewers, so there was no need for many critics to attend the same event, except if it was an extremely popular or high-profile event, (2) low level of funding that did not allow several critics to be paid for the same item (Fig. 5).

One-mode projection of the bimodal network illustrates artists' community structure based on their media appearance. Artists were considered to be connected if they were mentioned together in a critical review.
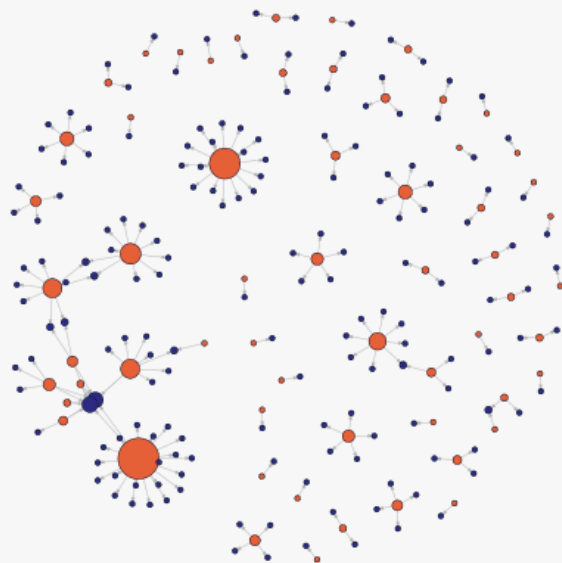
Fig. 5 Bimodal critic-events network, *Moscow Art Magazine* (Red nodes—critics, blue nodes—events, links between nodes—mentions of events by critics); density = 0.003613108, transitivity = 0 / Sl. 5 Bimodalna mreža kritičara i događanja, *Moscow Art Magazine* (crvena čvorišta—kritičari, plava čvorišta—događanja, poveznice između čvorišta—spominjanje događanja od strane kritičara); gustoća = 0,003613108, tranzitivnost = 0
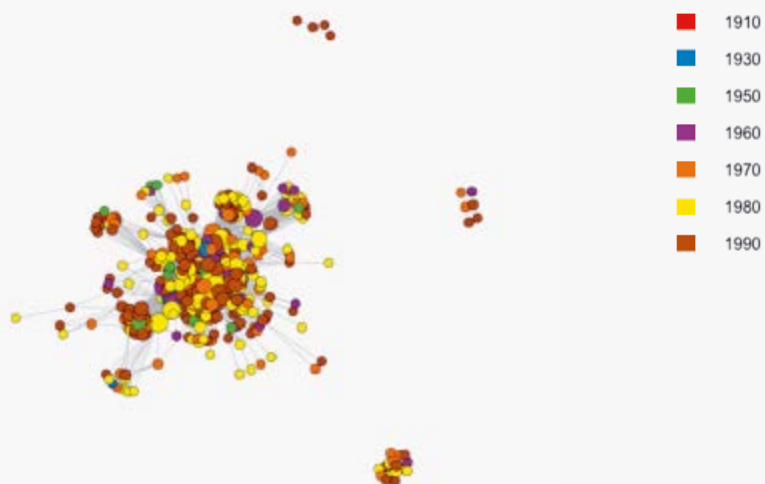↑

Fig. 6 Unimodal artists network by generation, *Moscow Art Magazine* (Generation defines as a year of first professional activity); density = 0.05831919, transitivity = 0.4452199 / Sl. 6 Unimodalna mreža umjetnika po generacijama, *Moscow Art Magazine* (Generacija je definirana prema godini prve profesionalne aktivnosti); gustoća = 0,05831919, tranzitivnost = 0,4452199
↑

If we look at the generational attribute, we notice that the core of the network is a mixture of different generations, or rather that different generations of artists were mentioned together in critical reviews. Furthermore, the community structure of the network reveals that the new generation of artists, who started their artistic career in the 1990s, weren't closer to each other than to other generations (Fig. 6), because the inter-generational connectivity was denser than the intra-generational one.

KEY AGENTS: WHO ARE THEY?

The data from all three media was used to compile a list of the most frequently mentioned artists. Notably, the leaders of this list were all men from Moscow, but with diverse artistic backgrounds and from different generations.

Oleg Kulik (born in 1961) is a Soviet performance artist who started his artistic career in the 1990s, member of the Moscow actionist movement. He is known for his provocative performance and the role of a dog person. Ilya Kabakov (born in 1933) is a Soviet and then an American artist, a key representative of Moscow's romantic conceptualism. This artistic movement was described by B. Groys as "romantic, dreamy and psychologizing version of international conceptual art of 1960-70s".[16] Anatoly Osmolovsky (born in 1969) is a Russian artist, art theorist and curator, an outstanding figure of Moscow's actionist movement who is also known for a series of provoking and showy actions. Alexander Brener (born in 1957) is a Soviet artist, performance artist and writer, who does not accept involvement in any kind of art and describes himself as a political activist. Konstantin Zvezdochetov (born in 1958) is an artist, one of the founders of the art-group "Muhomory", who is a representative of post-conceptualism and known for his criticism of conceptual art and for creating a specific aesthetic of deviation and the hard reality of the Soviet and post-Soviet times.

The most frequently mentioned artists represent a mixture of three generations—1960s, 1980s and 1990s—and three artistic genres, such as the Moscow conceptualism, post-conceptualism and Moscow actionism. The only common feature is that they are all men, which illustrate the gender disproportion and reproduction of gender inequality in this field.

Notably, three out of five top mentioned artists were the representatives of the Moscow actionism movement. Moscow actionism is a 1990s art movement, known for a set of public performances with a primarily political subtext, which caused a media resonance as a result of their violation of accepted norms of behavior. Moscow actionism arose partly as an answer to the earlier movement of Moscow conceptualism. Members of this movement preferred not to participate in any exhibition due to the actionist nature of their artistic production, so they chose another way to draw the audience and critics' attention, which was through a series of unauthorized actions, mostly performed on the streets of Moscow. An art event held

16
Groys, *Moscow Romantic Conceptualism*, 42.

in Guelman's gallery was Kulik's tool to present the audience with a new milestone of his artistic career, and also the opportunity to make money during a destitute period.

Other artists, such as Kabakov and Zvezdochetov, had other strategies. Ilya Kabakov, who started his artistic career in the 1960s, had by the 1990s already immigrated to the United States, which means that his recognitional process was based on his earlier works. Konstantin Zvezdochetov was distinguished by his special artistic approach, closely connected to the hippie culture and the children of stagnation aesthetics. Only Zvezdochetov represented both the past of the Soviet Underground art, having started his career in the 1980s, and the contemporary art of the 1990, having continued his artistic activity after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION

This article builds the theoretical and descriptive background for further research of unofficial Soviet art during the process of recognition that took place decades later. Giving a rich evidence of the early post-Soviet artistic life, it contributes to the understanding of recognition in alternative cultural production contexts. As a limitation of this research, we should note that our current results present only an introduction to further analysis, since we have included only descriptive statistics. However, the artist-critic networks of three post-Soviet media illustrate the current situation in the field of art criticism. Only one media (the *Moscow Art Magazine*) was fully part of the scene and therefore had a more dense community structure. Due to their lack of focus solely on the art sphere, the other two media had less of an impact on the professional milieu, and a smaller contribution to the process of artistic recognition and institutionalization. Even so, the aggregation of all mentions across the three paper media reveals certain artists who were the most noticeable and popular among critics. However, at this stage it is too early to claim that these agents were highly recognizable and characterized by high level of authority and prestige. That examination would require a semantic analysis of critics' articles and reviews with the aim of evaluating the emotional coloring of every artists' mention.

Some of the other outcomes related to community structure lead us to theoretically prominent conclusions. As it was stated in the introduction, this scene can be characterized by a lack of economic capital and precariousness of all the roles. We can also make a claim about the high autonomy of this field: even the list of the most cited artists reveals complexity and experimentation as important values of this scene. Moreover, star artists were not dependent on state funding or private capital, nor on cultural institutions. Kabakov had already been an emigre for several years and the actionists had only rare occasions to participate in the White Cube exhibitions; all the major actions happened in public spaces. The subsequent question is does this autonomy make the scene more equal in terms of access to recognition? Our data revealed a high degree of inequality in the scene. First of all, the core gives a clear illustration of social homophily[17], as both the majority of critics and artists are white males from Moscow. It should be noted that the participation of women was limited in both the critical (36.3%) and the artistic occupations (18.9%); however, it appears that getting access to work as a critic was easier.

The dataset collected bears witness to a fundamental change in artistic organization in Russia, as stated above. The dynamics of recognition, however, shows that symbolic capital accumulated in the previous system ('unofficial art') was valid in the new formation. Again, Kabakov, who wasn't physically present and had no shows in Moscow at that time, saved his volume of cultural and symbolic capital and became one of the leaders of the new art scene. The necessity of voicing the recognition of the most prestigious agents of previous generations (and, by doing so, also be recognized themselves as critics[18]) delayed the recognition of the upcoming generations. Consequently, only a very limited number of younger artists of post-Soviet Russia received enough critical attention. In order to achieve this recognition sooner than their colleagues from the same cohort and grasp more critical attention, they used less conventional tactics (unauthorized performances).

To summarize, this article looks at the processes of art recognition in turbulent political times of the first post-Soviet years. First, we would like to underline that art criticism became one of the key institutions of contemporary art in the 1990s, supplementing social functions of other institutions and infrastructures of contemporary art that haven't emerged yet. Second, the analysis presented above illustrates that, even in times of high uncertainty, the velocity of artistic recognition was as low as in more stable systems.[19]

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17
McPherson et al., *Birds of a Feather.*
18
Cf. de Nooy, "The Dynamics of Artistic Prestige".
19
Bull, *The two economies of world art.*

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THE LIST OF KEY ACTORS / POPIS KLJUČNIH SUDIONIKA

1. Oleg Kulik
2. Ilya Kabakov
3. Anatoly Osmolovsky
4. Alexander Brener
5. Konstantin Zvezdochetov
6. Vitaly Komar
7. Andrei Monastyrsky
8. Yuri Leiderman
9. Alexander Melamid
10. Gutov Dmitry
11. Igor Makarevich
12. Semion Chuikov
13. Vadim Fishkin
14. Guia Rigvava
15. Sergei Shutov
16. Ilya Glazunov