

From Buenos Aires to Brno to Lublin

Transnational Infrastructures of Mail Art and the Circulation of Czechoslovak Conceptualism

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For conceptual artists from the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the global infrastructure of the postal system was essential for the transfer and exchange of artworks. Favored materials, technologies, and formats in Conceptual Art production – such as printed texts, photographs, and graphic reproductions were often characterized as ‘poor,’ lightweight, accessible, and cheap. These qualities made them ‘ideal’ for circulation beyond the Iron Curtain, allowing artists to circumvent economic restrictions and evade official censorship. The 1970s were the heyday of what came to be known as Mail Art with a growing international community of artists.¹ The following text explores different forms of Mail Art practice, from the transfer and exchange of artworks via postal services with the aim of presenting them in exhibitions, catalogs, or magazines to the use of Mail art’s infrastructure as a site of art production, with the work constituting itself in the process of circulation.

My analysis focuses on a series of case studies of Czechoslovak conceptual artists who participated in the exhibition *arte de sistemas* in Buenos Aires in 1971, as well as Mail Art projects and exhibitions by Czech artist and curator Jiří Valoch. My selection emphasizes the global reach of these endeavors, which were entirely dependent on the postal infrastructure as a fundamental prerequisite for their realization. Mail Art and transporting conceptual artworks via post in general is analyzed in relation to the infrastructural space of postal services, which depend on standardized formats and media to facilitate easier and more efficient transportation. Infrastructure studies in the field of media theory that focus on aspects of standardization, format, and media infrastructures provide the foundation for this investigation (Jancovic et al. 2020; Volmar 2020; Volmar 2023). Further, my analysis is informed by an understanding of infrastructural space as a field of power relations, where social, governmental, legislative, and ideological structures are at play (Larkin 2013; Easterling 2014; Beck et al. 2022) and calls for an investigation of its

¹ On the significance of Mail Art for artists in Eastern Europe, see esp. Berswordt-Wallrabe 1996; Röder 2008; Dittert 2010.

material conditions located in a field of structural violence (Vishmidt 2017). What follows, is the attempt to question the dependencies and regulating factors in this supposed ‘free zone’ for non-conformist, unofficial art from Socialist Czechoslovakia. How are the infrastructural conditions of postal transportation “*productive*, as relays through which social and material processes are instantiated and formatted” (Daugaard et al. 2024, 6) and how do they shape the materiality and aesthetics of Conceptual Art? What is its impact on the production, distribution, and presentation of these art objects based on its infrastructural circulation? And what are the strategic potentials of this bureaucratic or infrastructural aesthetics?

Mail Art from Czechoslovakia in Buenos Aires: the Exhibition *arte de sistemas* (1971)

In April 1971, the Argentine critic, businessman, and exhibition maker Jorge Glusberg invited artists from all over the world to send material for an exhibition entitled *arte de sistemas*, which was to open in July of that year at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires.² The exhibition was organized, as the invitation letters emphasized, “completely independent”³ of the Argentine government by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC), a private art space that Glusberg had founded with a number of Argentinian colleagues in 1968. The CAyC became a collaborative platform for interdisciplinary and experimental art for Latin American and international artists. Glusberg’s networks not only connected US and British art scenes to CAyC but also artists from Eastern Europe, some of them active in unofficial art circuits of the Soviet bloc countries, others officially working artists. As early as the 1960s, he made private trips to Czechoslovakia and in the following decades he traveled to Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia as well, mainly in his official capacity as an architectural expert for the CICA and AICA.⁴

arte de sistemas opened on 19 July 1971 with the participation of more than 100 international artists, showing mainly conceptualist works or, as Glusberg

² For fundamental research on *arte de sistemas* and the CAyC, see Herrera/Marchesi 2013, Spencer 2021, and Schwaller 2023.

³ See the invitation letter to Jochen Gerz, reproduced as Gerz’s contribution to the exhibition catalog (*arte de sistemas* 1971, n.p.).

⁴ On Glusberg’s and CAyC’s relations with Eastern Europe, see Cytlak 2017; Cytlak 2018; Kemp-Welch 2018, 287–294; Schwaller 2023, 168–171 and 272. On CAyC’s relations with the Czech art scene, see Štěpánek 2014, 130–132 and Kappel 2024; Jana Písaříková has also recently explored connections between Czechoslovak artists and CAyC resulting in the exhibition intervention *The Argentine Experiment* (2025) within the permanent collection exhibition of the Moravian Gallery in Brno.

put it in the catalog's introduction, "art as idea, political art, ecological art, the art of proposals or cybernetic art," which he summarized under the label of "art systems" (Glusberg 1971a, n.p.).⁵ Alongside artists from Latin America, mainly Argentina, the US, Japan, and Western Europe, Czechoslovakia was the only Eastern European country present in the exhibition. All of the nine participating artists were active protagonists in the unofficial art circuits of Conceptual and Performance Art: Jiří Valoch, Dušan Klimeš, and J.H. Kocman from Brno, Eugen Brikcius, Olaf Hanel, Josef Kroutvor, Petr Štembera, and Robert Wittmann from Prague, and Stano Filko from Bratislava. From the outset, *arte de sistemas* was conceived as having two independent forms of presentation: the exhibition and the catalog. For each of these, separate instructions were communicated through the CAyC newsletter, the so-called '*gacetillas de trabajo*' (worksheets), which were regularly sent out from 1970 onwards and were an essential promotional strategy within Glusberg's intensive utilization of publishing infrastructures. As a businessman and owner of the lighting company Modulor – with numerous public and private sector contracts – Glusberg was certainly no stranger to marketing and public relations techniques.⁶ Known as the "yellow sheets" (Herrera 2013, 40), because of the light yellow color of the paper with a standardized visual and typographical style (the cut corners of the sheet, the rectangular linear structure, and the popular lowercase Helvetica font), Glusberg aimed to create a highly recognizable visual identity inspired by information aesthetics, data processing, and statistics. The "Instructions for the exhibition Art Systems" (CAyC, GT-34, 1971) and "Instructions for the catalog Art Systems" (CAyC, GT-35, 1971) included specific recommendations for shipping and international customs clearance: all shipments should be clearly marked as "SIN VALOR COMERCIAL, MATERIAL PARA PUBLICIDAD," i.e. material intended for publication with no commercial value. The material – such as documentation, photographs, serigraphs, and drawings – should be sent unframed, between cartons, in rolls, or flat packages. Negatives would be enlarged to a specified size (0,6×0,7 m) and provided with wooden frames and transparent acrylic panels. Proposals for installations would be carried out by local technicians

5 The terminology is, according to the time, an expression of the widespread interest in systems aesthetics and structuralism in art and theory. Glusberg's knowledge of the concept of 'systems esthetics' introduced by US art and technology theorist Jack Burnham in 1968 is more than likely, although Glusberg didn't refer to Burnham's text in the exhibition catalog at any point.

6 The CAyC was partly financed by Glusberg's entrepreneurial business. This raises the question of how independent of government policy the CAyC actually was. On this question, see Schwaller 2023, 100 and Spencer 2021, 55.



Fig. 1 Exhibition views of *arte de sistemas*, 1971 (Courtesy, J.H. Kocman Archive, Brno).

and architects and texts would be translated into Spanish. Each participant received the same size wall or panel (fig. 1).⁷

The standardized and egalitarian principle of the installation of the artworks in the exhibition also determined the production and concept of the catalog. The publication consisted of a collection of unbound sheets in a folder, presenting over 300 text-based artworks, photographs or drawings that had been sent to Buenos Aires (Schwaller 2023, 260). Each artist was given two pages: one for a biography, a personal photograph and a reproduction of a characteristic work; the other for an individual idea. For this purpose, each artist was given a gridded sheet for the sketch of a project that would constitute a “sheet work” (“*la hoja-obra*”) in its own right. The line grid had the function of visually unifying the catalog, as was emphasized in the instructions. The logo and address of the CAyC on each sheet, the lines reserved for the artist’s name, the title and the date, added to the bureaucratic order and equal treatment of each contributor. The catalog contained, in alphabetical order, names of North American and Western European Conceptual Art, as well as in the international art world less visible Latin American artists such as Mirtha Dermisache, Marie Orensanz, or Edgardo Antonio Vigo.

The Czechoslovak artists sent material ranging from conceptual poetry, proposals, and drawings to photographic documentations of happenings and landscape actions. The Brno artist J.H. Kocman received his invitation to *arte de sistemas*, typewritten on CAyC’s characteristic letterhead, as early as February 1971 (Glusberg 1971b).⁸ For the exhibition he sent two photographs from his series *Weather Activity* and photo-documentation of the collective action “10 white squares,” a series of activities led by his artist colleague Jiří Valoch in 1970 in the Pálava countryside, 40 km South of the Moravian city of Brno. Since 1970, Kocman had been interested in communication in his artistic endeavors and the effect of “communicative materials” such as statements, texts, etc. on the relationship between the artist and “the addressee” (Valoch 2017, 103). Throughout the 1970s, he practiced so-called stamp art, creating individual rubber stamps, printing them on card and sending them out to friends and colleagues. In this process, the materiality and tactility of the paper, the act of inserting the printed matter into the envelope and the opening of it by the recipient, were crucial for Kocman.

⁷ The instructions refer to a planned follow-up edition of *arte de sistemas* at the 11th São Paulo Biennial in September 1971, which ultimately never took place due to the boycott of the Biennial by many cultural workers who spoke out against the Brazilian military government and its crimes (Spencer 2021, 69f). See also the instructions for *arte de sistemas II* in Glusberg 1972.

⁸ Kocman was actually invited to two exhibitions: *An International Show of Propositions [...] (poetic research)* in June and *Systems Art*.

His colleague Valoch sent several pieces of conceptual poetry to Buenos Aires: the photo series *Valoch pronounces his poem 'POEM'* and examples of what he called “earth-poems” and “earth-actions” – all of them photographs and text-pieces which could be easily shipped and reproduced. Valoch was very active as an artist and curator in his hometown of Brno and beyond, and established contact with Glusberg through the German computer artist Georg Nees, who had participated in Valoch’s *Computer Graphic* exhibition at the House of Arts in Brno in 1968 (Musilová 2018, 100). Another well-connected artist was Petr Štembera from Prague, who in the early 1970s made intensive use of Mail Art infrastructures and participated in a number of projects:⁹ for example, in Jan Dibbets’s *Art & Project Bulletin* in 1969, in various book projects by German Mail artists Klaus Groh and Walter Aue (both participated in *arte de sistemas*), such as the anthology *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa* published by Groh in 1972. The realization of these projects was mainly based on contacts made through Mail Art networks and built on its inherent generative principle of the constant expansion of personal infrastructures. Štembera’s contribution to *arte de sistemas* is exemplary for those networking activities. He addresses the practice of postal dispatch, such as the packaging of items, as an integral part of the work: next to Štembera’s portrait, a photograph shows the artist’s hands wrapping an unidentifiable object as if preparing it for shipping (fig. 2). Instead of a title and date, the artist has given his postal address, signaling his wish to be contacted. One reason for Mail art’s popularity among Eastern European artists, but also for artists working under difficult economic or political circumstances in general, was the very low cost of postage – which was even lower if the mail was classified as ‘printed matter.’ A small package to Canada, for example, could be sent for as little as 50 Czech hellers.¹⁰ Although customs officials were said to inspect the letters – they were said to be ‘x-rayed’ – in the case of Kocman, he reports that he never suffered any consequences for his mail art activities and did not notice any decline in his mailings.¹¹ It must have been the materials’ “official’ conspicuousness” (Kemp-Welch 2018, 284) that didn’t arouse suspicion and prevented them from being confiscated by the authorities.

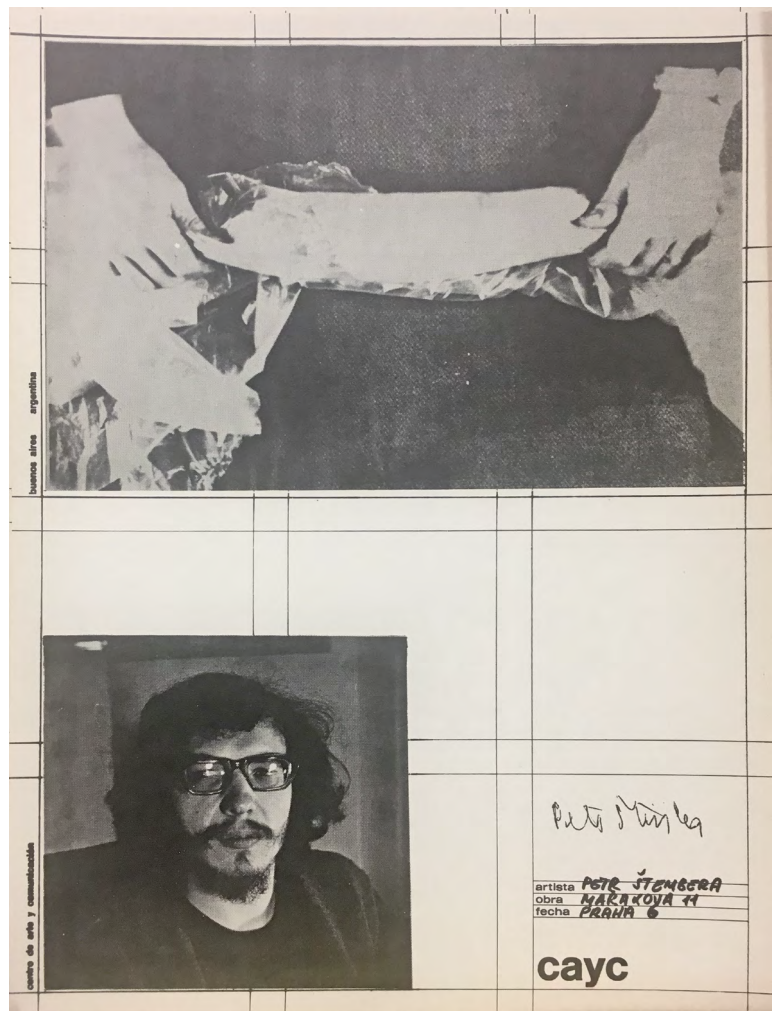
The circulation of artworks within postal infrastructures inevitably led to adaptations of the material, technique, and format for better transportability;

⁹ On Petr Štembera’s networking strategies, see Buddeus 2018.

¹⁰ Email from J.H. Kocman. Received by the author, 22 October 2024. This information is based on a parcel labelled as “*tiskopis*” (Czech for printed matter) sent to B.P. Nichol in Toronto in May 1970.

¹¹ Email from J.H. Kocman. Received by the author, 22 October 2024.

Fig. 2 Petr Štembera's contribution to the catalog *arte de sistemas*, 1971 (*arte de sistemas*, exh. cat. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires, 1971, n.p.).



at the same time, this aesthetic adaptation¹² to infrastructural conditions held the strategic potential to subvert existing political restrictions, providing an ideal ‘camouflage’ for conceptual artists living under communism. For Glusberg, who saw works of art as “communication channels,” the value of the new media used in art lay in their standardized and reproducible form (qtd. in Schwaller 2023, 134). He saw this as the “regional answer” of the technologically and economically underdeveloped Latin American countries (CAyC GT-133, 1972). And he knew how to use it in the many traveling exhibitions he organized in the following years to promote Latin American art on a global

¹² I thank Burcu Dogramaci and Ursula Ströbele for their valuable comments in this regard.

scale.¹³ In these efforts, he also showed solidarity with the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe, which were under the control of the Soviet Union and lacked economic resources and presence on the international art scene. In this spirit of unification of the peripheries against the dominant Western art world during the Cold War, Glusberg organized numerous exhibitions which were increasingly political and ideologically motivated. He not only collaborated with Eastern European artists working unofficially, but also co-organized exhibitions with institutions and museums in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia through official channels of cultural policy.¹⁴

Jiří Valoch Curating Through Mail Art's Infrastructures

Like Glusberg, Jiří Valoch also knew how to make use of networking strategies, as he was very well connected internationally as an artist and curator at the House of Arts in Brno.¹⁵ Not only did he realize entire exhibitions with material collected solely by post, he also carried out artistic projects that were constituted by the very act of sending, receiving, and returning material. In 1973, he created the Mail Art project *dedication piece*, a series of twenty numbered and signed sheets, copied on a Xerox machine, with a list of twenty recipients to whom he dedicated each sheet (fig. 3). These included artists from Western Europe such as Timm Ulrichs or Jan Dibbets as well as colleagues from neighboring countries such as Endre Tóth or Dóra Maurer. The

13 For example, CAyC's traveling exhibition of heliographic posters, *Hacia un perfil del arte latinoamericano* (1972): Glusberg instructed participants to send works only in the standardized dimensions of IRAM 4504 and 4508 (which correspond to the formats A0 to A4 defined by the ISO 216 standard). For a study of this exhibition series, see Schwaller 2023, 112–190. Interestingly, only Jiří Valoch remained a constant presence in Glusberg's subsequent exhibitions among the Czechoslovak artists. Between 1972 and 1975, his work was presented in the exhibition series *Towards a Profile of Latin American Art*. He even contributed political artworks, which were an absolute exception in Valoch's oeuvre. The reasons for Valoch's continuous participation under the label of Latin American Art and the withdrawal of the other Czechoslovak artists remain unsolved and call for further investigation.

14 For instance, an exhibition on experimental photography from Poland supported by the Polish Embassy in Argentina in 1971 or the exhibition *121 grabados checoslovacos* showing graphic art from Czechoslovakia organized in collaboration with the National Gallery in Prague in 1972; both shown at CAyC.

15 During the so-called normalization period in Czechoslovakia, he presented short exhibitions of artists from the unofficial art scene between exhibitions of officially accepted art. Valoch's activities during these years were highly ambivalent, as from 1975 on he was registered as a secret agent for the State Security (StB). In the late 1970s and 1980s, under severe pressure, Valoch was forced to report on several artists from the unofficial cultural sphere. See Musilová 2018, 178–182 and Vodrážka 2018, 111–117.

this is copy nr. 5 from twenty numbered and signed identical sheets copied by means of xerox from one typewritten original.

copy nr. 1 is dedicated to endre tót, budapest
copy nr. 2 is dedicated to ben, nice
copy nr. 3 is dedicated to günter uecker, düsseldorf
copy nr. 4 is dedicated to jochen gerz, paris
copy nr. 5 is dedicated to j.h. kocman, brno
copy nr. 6 is dedicated to kajetan sosnowski, warszawa
copy nr. 7 is dedicated to ken friedman, san diego
copy nr. 8 remains to me
copy nr. 9 is dedicated to dóra maurer, budapest
copy nr.10 is dedicated to sol le witt, new york
copy nr.11 is dedicated to g.a. cavellini, brescia
copy nr.12 is dedicated to jan dibbets, amsterdam
copy nr.13 is dedicated to robert rehfeldt, berlin
copy nr.14 is dedicated to robin crozier, sutherland
copy nr.15 is dedicated to p.-a. gette, paris
copy nr.16 is dedicated to ladislav novák, třebíč
copy nr.17 is dedicated to timm ulrichs, hannover
copy nr.18 is dedicated to j.o. mallander, helsinki
copy nr.19 is dedicated to rune miels, köln
copy nr.20 is dedicated to john cage, new york

the typewritten original is dedicated to armin hundertmark,
west berlin

the real sense of this piece is the relation arising
between the receivers to whom the copies are dedicated.

the original version of this piece is dated 20/2/1973.

Yin Kabe ch

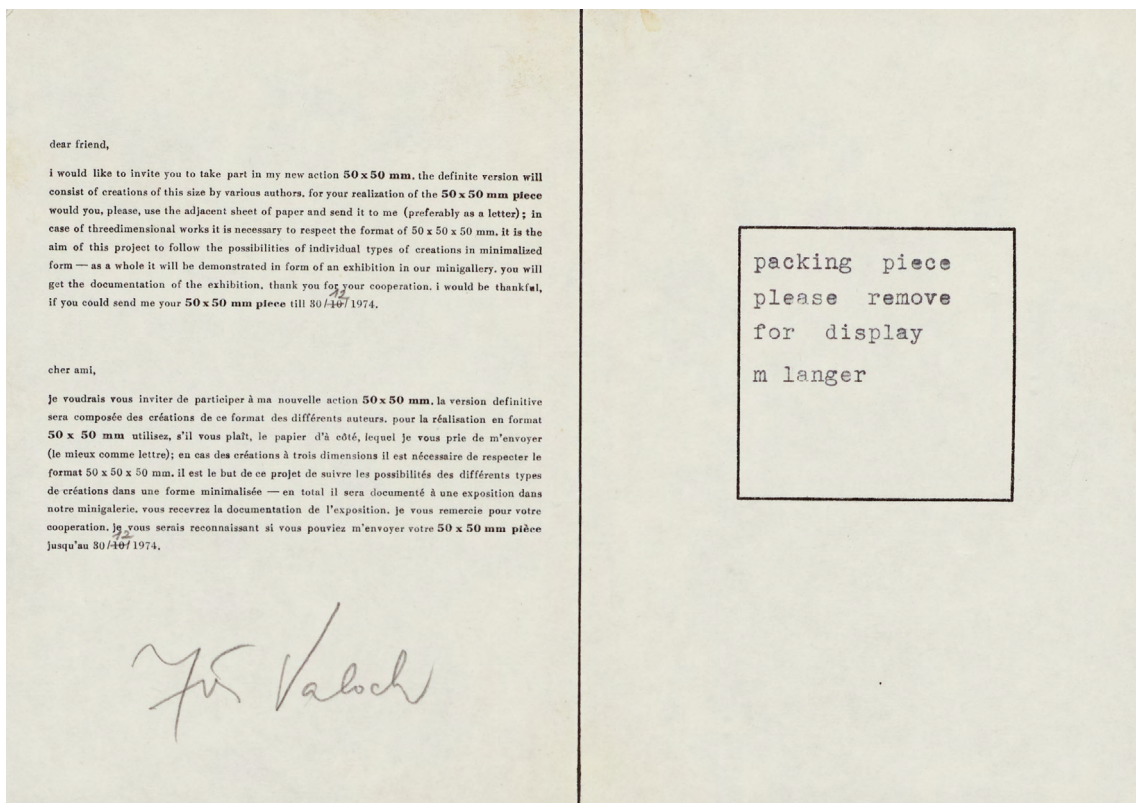


Fig. 4 Jiří Valoch and Michael Langer, *action 50×50*, 1974, Printing, typewriting, 210×150 mm (Courtesy Moravian Gallery, Brno).

typewritten original was dedicated to the West Berlin gallery owner Armin Hundertmark. In the text, Valoch explained that the “real sense of this piece is the relation arising between the receivers to whom the copies are dedicated.” He also emphasized the fact that a Xerox photocopier had been used, which was certainly not a matter of course in Czechoslovakia at the time as every purchase of a copying machine had to be approved by the authorities. Valoch had access to this reproduction technology through friends who worked in a printing workshop. Copying machines by the US company Xerox were considered new and innovative, they were emblematic of the modern communications industry and held “the cachet of vanguardism” (Alberro 2003, 148). Valoch certainly chose xerox for its ‘flat’ and impersonal aesthetic and its popularity among US conceptual artists and curators like Seth Siegel. Its promise of “instant publishing,” which allowed everyone to “become both author and publisher” (McLuhan/Fiore qtd. in Alberro 2003, 130), made it a favorable technology for Valoch’s projects. In 1974, he went one step further in another participatory Mail Art project that explicitly asked the recipient to be creative and stick to a certain format. In *50×50 mm*, he sent a

half-folded sheet of A5 paper to around 100 fellow artists – such as Ruth and Robert Rehfeldt, Heinz Gappmayr, or Meret Oppenheim, to name just a few – and invited them to create a work of art using the given space of a 50×50 mm square (fig. 4).¹⁶ The results were to be preferably returned by letter post, with the aim of presenting them in the ‘minigallery’ at the Veterinary Research Institute in Brno, where his colleague Kocman, a veterinarian by profession, was employed. But the campaign never culminated in an exhibition,¹⁷ and two years later Valoch was still sending out invitations for this project, even while already working on his next ambitious Mail Art exhibition.

In the summer of 1976 Valoch organized the exhibition *Teksty Wizualne – Visual Texts* for the Galeria Labirynt in Lublin, Poland. It was one of several exhibition sections in the course of the *OFERTA '76* art festival. The exhibition was divided into thematic sections like photo art, film and video, and ‘contextual art,’ along with a separate section on Henryk Stażewski, each with its own curator. Valoch was invited by Polish filmmaker Józef Robakowski, who was responsible for the film and video section, to curate the section “visual texts.”¹⁸ Valoch had the infrastructural networks – he was informed about names and thanks to his curatorial position at the House of Arts had the economic and organizational structures to contact around 100 artists from all over the world. This time, all submissions were to be sent directly to Galeria Labirynt’s director Andrzej Mroczek in the format of an A4-page. After collecting all the material, Valoch traveled to Poland to sort everything out, which was possible after Mroczek issued an official invitation on behalf of the gallery. Due to Galeria Labirynt’s formal status as a cultural institution, Czechoslovak citizens like Valoch were able to travel abroad legally on official invitation (Wasiak 2010). Art historian Tomasz Załuski pointed out Galeria Labirynt’s significance as a “formal, public, alternative and experimental art institution [...] in a peripheral region of Poland” that combined “formal institutional structures with informal networks of cooperation” (Załuski 2023, 61, 83).¹⁹ In the 1970s, working in Poland allowed Valoch (and others) to curate large group exhibitions that would not have been possible in Brno at the time.²⁰ Valoch’s

16 Three-dimensional objects were permitted as well, but should not exceed the dimensions of 50×50×50 mm.

17 The action is partly documented in the Moravian Gallery in Brno. Works sent in the conjunction of 50×50 mm by artists such as Imre Bak, Robin Crozier, Michael Langer, Jacques Lenep, Sol LeWitt, Michael Kidner, and others are stored there.

18 Other commissioners were Zbigniew Dżubak, Zdzisław Sosnowski, and Jan Świdziński.

19 The gallery was established in 1969 by local artists from the Lublin Group. It operated as part of the Lublin House of Culture and was supported by local political authorities.

20 For Valoch’s collaborations and connections with the Polish art scene, and the *Visual Texts* exhibition in particular, see Musilová 2018, 158–166.



Fig. 5 Exhibition view of *OFERTA* at the Galeria Labirynt, section *Teksty Wizualne – Visual Texts*, Pstrowskiego Street 12, Lublin, 1976 (Courtesy Galeria Labirynt, Lublin).

first contact with the Polish art scene came through another by now famous Mail Art project to which he had been introduced by Klaus Groh: Jarosław Kozłowski's and Andrzej Kostołowski's *NET*, created in 1971 as an open networking platform in the form of an ever-growing list of names and addresses (Kemp-Welch 2018, 97–123; Kemp-Welch 2019).

Valoch structured *Visual Texts* according to his understanding of the basic categories of contemporary visual-textual art production, showing “visual poetry as one of the most widely spread intermedium” (Valoch 1978, n.p.). The works were grouped into concrete and visual poetry, handwriting, mail art and rubber stamps, textbooks and book-objects, photography, and works at the boundary of visual poetry and Conceptual Art (*ibid.*). The primarily two-dimensional works were presented on equally-sized partitions; a small collection of booklets and small objects were arranged on tables or pedestals (fig. 5).²¹ A small brochure was produced over the course of the exhibition,

²¹ In 1978, Valoch donated the entire collection to the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, where it is now kept.

containing a list of artists and some installation photographs. The collected material stayed in Poland and the exhibition was repeated two years later at the House of Creative Environments in the city of Łódź, supplemented by a colloquium with lectures, presentations, and discussions. A more elaborate catalog was produced, which, with its sophisticated material and typographical design, was closer to an artist's book. It included a detailed introduction to the exhibition concept by Valoch and reproductions of works by Josef Honys,²² Robin Crozier, Aaron Marcus, Klaus Burkhardt, Horst Tress, John Furnival, Michael Wulff, Ferdinand Kriwet, Andrzej Partum, Luciano Ori, and Seiichi Nikuni. This selection of exclusively male protagonists for the catalog belies the fact that the exhibition included a relatively large number of an international selection of female participants, such as Mirella Bentivoglio, Betty Danon, Fria Elfen-Frenken, Amelia Etlinger, Katalin Ladik, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, or Mary Ellen Solt.

In Conclusion

“Just printed sheets of paper” did not arouse suspicion among officials and therefore remained unrecognizable to people outside artistic circles (Mroczek qtd. in Wasiak 2010, 305). But for a large community of artists in the 1970s it was more than just printed text and paper. As Valoch pointed out in his introduction to *Visual Texts*, while Mail Art was not new in terms of its materials, “its contribution [was] the introduction of a new communicative medium as intermediary of an artistic message” (Valoch 1978, n.p.). This included elements of correspondence that went beyond the mere objects sent, such as the opening of the envelope or the way it was read and/or viewed. Postal services were the essential infrastructure, deeply embedded in everyday life practices. They were the premise for the realization of exhibitions like *Visual Texts*, and the festival's poster, framed like an airmail envelope with its typical red, white, and blue striped edge, underscores the post's significance (fig. 6). The nature of Mail Art is fundamentally shaped by the infrastructural conditions of postal services: how objects move within them, and the possibility of circulation at all, very much depends on specified norms and standardized formats that ensure transportability, compatibility, and interoperability. Scholars have highlighted infrastructure being the “*embodiment of standards*” (Borgman 2000, 19) and the production of standards as instruments of control and

²² Other Czechoslovak artists in the exhibition were: Karel Adamus, Miroslav Klivar, J.H. Kocman, Jan Kubíček, Karel Miler, Ladislav Novák, Jan Steklík, Petr Štembera, Jan Wojnar, and Jiří Valoch himself.



Fig. 6 Exhibition posters, *OFERTA* at the Galeria Labirynt, 1976 (Courtesy Galeria Labirynt, Lublin).

regulation (Brunsson/Jacobsson 2002). The powerful role of infrastructural space and organizations such as ISO (International Organization for Standardization), creating standardized formats as a form of “a ‘soft law’ of global exchanges” (Easterling 2014, 18) has a profound impact on everyday life practices and artistic production. Their embeddedness in geopolitical and ideological power structures must always be considered. Recent research in the field of media studies stresses the importance of formats “as specific formal and aesthetic configurations of media” in the study of infrastructures (Volmar et al. 2020, 10). These approaches promise to be fruitful for the study of artistic production, where technological developments and media infrastructures have a profound impact on the materiality and aesthetics of current and past artistic production. In the exhibitions and Mail Art projects outlined, there is a conscious choice for standardized formats in favor of optimum transferability of the art objects. The incorporation of the material and aesthetic characteristics of administration, an “infrastructural aesthetics” (Daugaard et al. 2024), if you will, represents, against the backdrop of global geopolitical tensions during the Cold War, a subversive potential to evade censorship, cross national and political borders, and gain international mobility and visibility.

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