

In this episode we discuss the concept of weak avant-garde in relation to the artwork of Ewa Partum, her three performances from the early 1980. In these artworks the artist challenged her own position as recognized artist, and invited stupidity, idioticism, naivete as her allies. Theories of Boris Groys and Jack Halberstam are referenced, and the discussion goes direction neo-avant-garde - showing that Partum's artwork, just as many post-1960 art project by women, people of ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as groups, do not fit in the 'neo-avant-garde', as defined by Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloch, but nevertheless can be seen as avant-garde practices.

Host: Ewa Majewska

About:**Ewa Majewska**

Associate professor at the SWPS University in Warsaw, Poland. I am a feminist critical theorist of culture, working in the fields of cultural, feminist and critical studies, and researching the vast fields of social, political and artistic agency to discuss resistance and avant-garde, in their non-heroic, ordinary and weak formats. As a feminist scholar, I am sure that another resistance - one that had not been shaped accordingly to the masculine privilege and socialization, is possible, and I have conceptualized it as weak resistance. The notion of weak avant-garde quickly followed, as an offspring of my research into feminist, queer and other minoritarian strategies of negotiating and resisting the canon.

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Transcript:

Hello. This is the first episode, or actually the pilot, for Ewa Majewska's podcast, Post-Critical Psychogeographies, from Weak Resistance to Weak Avant-Garde. This podcast is based on the premise that comparisons are useful, however, should also be limited and conducted with caution. It also reclaims transdisciplinarity as approach that allows grasping the formation and evolution of such phenomena as resistance and avant-garde. The aesthetic experience, understood as one conducted by senses in a cultural context, is the most general premise for theories, social movements, art projects and other things discussed here. The host of this podcast is me, Ewa Majewska, Associate Professor at the SWPS University in Warsaw, Poland.

I am a feminist critical theorist of culture, working in the fields of cultural feminist and critical studies and researching the vast fields of social, political and artistic agency to discuss resistance and avant-garde in their non-heroic, ordinary and weak formats. As a feminist scholar, as well as activist, I am sure that an other resistance, one that has not been shaped accordingly to the masculine privilege and socialization, is possible and I have conceptualized it as weak resistance. The notion of weak avant-garde quickly followed as an offspring of my research into feminist, queer and other minoritarian strategies of negotiating and resisting the canon.

Why would I want to move between the weak resistance and weak avant-garde? Because I think that an act of weak resistance, disagreement with the canon, always takes place before a weak avant-garde event, project or agency appears. I called this podcast Post-Critical Psychogeographies because I like the situationists and lethists. You could say that I grew up reading them and about them and doing psychogeography with my friends in Warsaw. I also grew up with the critical tradition and my use of post-critical as a way to expand, not to stop the current legacy.

The psychogeographical practice consists in walking, in moving within the city, coming across places that are savage, are unknown, that are surprising. And while this walking, this flannery takes place, also rethinking, reconceptualizing and revolutionizing the city. The concept was first used in the 1950s by the members of the La Triste Internationale in Paris, a group composed of members of different avant-garde. social, political, artistic, they were basically thinking of themselves as all of these things, contesting the hegemony on one hand of the capitalist consumerism, but on the other hand of the communist party in its rigid, dogmatic, Stalinist version, which in Paris apparently was a thing. The latterists insisted that by poetic agency, by creating situations, hence the later version of the group, international situation, so the situation is international. So by making situations, by changing, by introducing change into the status quo, the world can be changed and also that can take place in the micro scale and perhaps the micro scale is best as it allows a detachment, also an alternative to the consumerist capitalist scene.

So psychogeographic practices sometimes looked like what Walter Benjamin or Charles Baudelaire would call flannery, the practice of walking around the city without any specific purpose. However, these people, the laterists and later situationists, they had a task, and this task was revolution. So what amazed me and always amazes me is the jump, is the leap of faith, I would say, consisting in the fierce belief that what a group of five or ten friends can do over several bottles of wine and several streets of Paris can and will immediately translate into a social political revolution on larger scale. And so perhaps this question of scale and this, to be honest, disagreement with the solely small scale radical and revolutionary thinking has led me to the first topic of the sort of the topic of the first episode of the first actual episode of the post critical psychogeographies, which will be planetarity.

I decided to at the larger scale, perhaps not cosmic yet, but planetary is already big enough, I think, for all of us to be a little bit scared. However, the thinkers and curators working on planetarity are unpacking the large-scale phenomena such as climate crisis, such as rise of border regimes, neoliberal globalization and the return of fundamentalisms in their planetary

scale. They also think of responsibility as something that has to be done in the larger scale practice. And I believe that with my perspective of weak resistance and weak avant-garde, I can have quite an interesting and fascinating conversation with them.

This podcast does not have one specific host. It is initiated as a private project of me, of Ewa Majewska, posted on my personal website by the author of the website, Sergio Frutos. But it might expand into something bigger or more visible perhaps, so therefore I'm not excluding the possibility of collaborating with artistic or academic institutions, social movements and persons or groups that might be interested in that kind of collaboration.

This podcast is going to be conducted in several languages, most certainly in English and in Polish languages. However, I wouldn't exclude other linguistic versions and also it will have different topics. So we will start with planetarity, but we will look into the canon, most certainly in the feminist and queer strategies towards canon. We're going to look into post-criticality and post-critical perspective more deeply and we'll visit artists and art theorists in order to determine what good of avant-garde is still left. So I hope that this is a good introduction and I hope I believe this is enough.

As an introduction I would like to thank you for your attention, to kindly and politely invite you to follow the further episodes and perhaps also to spread the word about this podcast. And also I would like to thank the sponsor of this podcast, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland and the Minister Hanna Wróblewska in person for offering me a one-year stipend for the year 2025 for realizing a research and cultural project of which the main topic is the Week Avant Garde. So I'm happy to have this podcast and to see this podcast also as a part of the book that I plan to write about the weak avant-garde practices based on the Polish artists' experiences. Okay, so have a good night, day, afternoon or whatever you have and I hope to hear you very soon.