

# **IGOR ZABEL** **AWARD FOR** **CULTURE AND** **THEORY 2020**

## **Igor Zabel Award 2020 Laureate**

**Zdenka Badovinac, curator, art historian, art writer, and director of the Moderna galerija, Ljubljana**

*The jury has awarded Zdenka Badovinac the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory 2020 for her outstanding institutional leadership as the director of the Moderna galerija/Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (+MSUM) in Ljubljana as well as for her radical curatorial work and significant contributions as a writer and editor to international discourses on the geopolitics of contemporary art in Eastern Europe and global art history. Zdenka Badovinac has been one of the most important and rigorous locally rooted and globally connected professionals in the field of cultural production in recent decades.*

Zdenka Badovinac became the director of [the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana](#) in 1993, during a tumultuous period characterized by radical socio-political changes and (re)formations of artistic discourses influenced by reconfigurations in local and global geopolitical power relations. Since the beginning of her mandate, and through her curatorial innovations, Badovinac has developed one of the most progressive, critical, and referential art institutions worldwide. Under her leadership, Moderna galerija has continued to build on its historical foundations (since 1948) of collecting and presenting the full breadth of 20th-century artistic production. Badovinac and her team have conceptually and curatorially expanded the museum's vision and role in society by building on the paradigms of radical institutional critique and solidarity, and by forging new alliances and creating dialogues between generations of artists, modernist traditions and contemporary art, the East and the West. She successfully led the museum through renovation and expansion with the opening of +MSUM in 2011. At the same time, she worked towards providing favourable working conditions for local and international artists, and creating opportunities for raising critical awareness, learning, and knowledge exchange. Through relentless negotiations between various agents and (historical, political, artistic) narratives, she succeeded in creating new institutional frameworks that resist the hegemonic logic of art institutions. She is a founding member of [L'Internationale](#), an important confederation of European modern and contemporary art institutions for the exchange, research, and production of art, collections, and archives. She initiated the first collection of Eastern European art, Moderna galerija's Artest 2000+ Collection.

Since early on in her curatorial practice, Badovinac focused on art from the region of former Yugoslavia, with a special focus on Bosnia during and after the Bosnian War. For example, she co-authored the exhibition *For the Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo 2000* and the symposium *Living with Genocide*, both taking place in Moderna galerija in 1996. She also paid particular attention to processes of rewriting the history of international avant-garde movements, a focus that resulted in the significant exhibition *Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present* (1998) and continued with such large-scale exhibitions as *2000+ Artest Collection: The Art of Eastern Europe in Dialogue with the West. From the 1960s to the Present. Exhibition of Works for an Emerging*

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*Collection* (2000); *7 Sins: Ljubljana–Moscow* (2004, with Viktor Misiano and Igor Zabel); *Interrupted Histories: Arteast Exhibition* (2006); *Museum of Parallel Narratives* (2011, MACBA, Barcelona); and the *Present and Presence* at the +MSUM (since 2011, in co-curation). Her most important recent projects include: *NSK from Kapital do Capital. Neue Slowenische Kunst – An Event of the Final Decade of Yugoslavia* (2015), which traveled to the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, and the Reina Sofía Museum of Art in Madrid; *The Heritage of 1989. Case Study: The Second Yugoslav Documents Exhibition* (2017, with Bojana Piškur); *NSK State Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale* (2017, with Charles Esche); and *Sites of Sustainability: Pavilions, Manifestos and Crypts*, as part of the exhibition *Hello World: Revising a Collection* (Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, 2017). These curatorial projects attest not only to Badovinac's unrivalled knowledge of local and regional art histories, but also to her radical and innovative capacity to entwine local and global urgencies, historical depth, and contemporary relevance.

Badovinac was the Slovenian Commissioner at the Venice Biennale from 1993 to 1997 and again in 2005. She was the Austrian Commissioner at the São Paulo Biennial in 2002 and the President of CIMAM, the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, from 2010 to 2013.

She has been a prolific writer and lecturer, making immense contributions to new paradigms in art theory, politics of art, curatorship, practices of exhibiting, institutional critique, and strategies of solidarity within the (institutional) contemporary art field. Her most recent book, *Comradeship: Curating, Art, and Politics in Post-Socialist Europe* (ICI, New York, 2019), is a unique collection of critical writing offering in-depth reflections on counter-hegemonic curatorial strategies and artistic discourses.

Thus, the jury recognizes Zdenka Badovinac for her exceptional professional commitment, expertise, intellectual contribution, and outstanding personal devotion in generating changes in the field of artistic and public discourse. For more than 25 years, she has been an important voice in international discourses on the geopolitics of contemporary art in Eastern Europe and global art history as well as in reaffirming art's role in society and in creating new and reconfiguring existing spaces of cultural production. Zdenka Badovinac's remarkable achievements prove that the tremendous subversive potential for radical change lies not only in professional expertise, but also in combining this expertise with personal devotion, a sense of solidarity, and a commitment to building alliances.

## 2020 jury members:

Šejla Kamerić, artist, Sarajevo

Anthony Gardner, art historian, Oxford

Franciska Zólyom, curator, director of the GfZK – Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig