

Summary

TOMASZ GRYGLEWICZ / Student rebellion of March 1968 in Cracow and its artistic consequences

The year of 1968 comes as a break in the world narration of culture. The special significance of 1968 is based on correlation between dramatic political and artistic events. The best known events that achieved the level of a symbol of the world political and moral revolt were those in Paris in May 1968. However, if we take a closer look at the chronology of events, we should note down that two months earlier than in Paris the streets of Warsaw, and later of other Polish cities, were the scene of forceful student protests pacified brutally by order forces.

The text is devoted to Polish events in March 1968, with a special attention paid to incidents that took place in Cracow. The demands for political freedom, democratisation of life, annulment of censorship were accompanied by artistic milieu's struggle for more autonomy and freedom of expression. On Cracow ground this strong political pressure could be noticed in the avant-garde milieu of Tadeusz Kantor, the Cracow Group and the Krzysztofory Gallery on the one hand, while on the other in the groups of new figuration, mainly in the Wprost Group who led a critical discourse. The article interprets and presents in a more detailed way appearances and manifestations in the circle of the mentioned above streams of the end of the 1960s, especially these of Tadeusz Kantor (happenings, cooperation with Cracow hippies, performances by the Cricot 2 Theatre), Jerzy Beres ('Prophesy' I and II) and some other artists.

Pacifying student rebellions in March 1968 in Poland, subsequent repressions, anti-Semitic clearances and tackling the reform fraction within the communist party effected in giving up a naive hope for the possibility of creating a communist system with a human face. Similarly, although from the contrary point of view, after Parisian May 1968, the belief in the possibility of peaceful transformation of the unjust – in the opinion of Western youth circles – capitalist world according to the left wing utopia was eventually dropped.

In artistic aspect, giving up a homogenous modernist model of autonomic art and replacing it with artistic pluralism, a critical and sceptic attitude engaged in reality came as a consequence of the protest movements in 1968 – both in the world art and culture, and in Polish art.