

On Thursday 14th March 2019, an exhibition on Goerge Soros and the historical network of SCCAs (Soros Centers for Contemporary Art) opened at Bukarest Nicodim Gallery, featuring, among other works, a portrait painting of investor-philanthropist George Soros I had painted years earlier as part of a wider research project.

I gladly agreed in participating in the show because I felt that an in-depth art historical assessment of the agenda and scope of the now historical network of Soros art centers was long overdue. The well-researched show included numerous documents from this specific segment of art history in Eastern Europe and beyond – a topic which has not been assessed thoroughly enough in terms of its strategic and cultural-political implications.

My personal research on George Soros and the political context of his financial and structural support for contemporary art was subject of my MA thesis completed in 2010. It stemmed from a wider interest in the transformations and influential factors in postcommunist transition, and the role that art voluntarily or involuntarily assumes in such processes of re-education.

Here I would like to make some corrections and comments to the press release accompanying the show at Nicodim Gallery:

The work was *not* commissioned for this show. It was a rather ironic statement, made in 2011 for graduation exhibition at University of Arts Berlin, after several months of research and completion of a thesis on the subject. In this moment it seemed appropriate as a conceptual pun, with its title *Soros Realism* referencing some important resources of my research (Rena Raedles and Miško Šuvakovičs comments on Soros-sponsored art).

Come 2019, the constellation has changed completely. Today I feel it is an untimely moment to address the figure of George Soros under the title "The Influencing Machine". We live in a time when art and culture seem to have lost much of their magical make-believe power. What influences us today are other covert activities injected into our minds and into the digital echo chambers, as shown in another exhibition (incidentally?) under the same title: Influencing Machine at nGbK Berlin beginning of 2019.

George Soros is known widely today, and this is largely thanks to the outrageous, ridiculous and often anti-semitic attacks against his person, especially in his native country Hungary and through prime minister Victor Orbán.

I had hoped that the organizers of "The Influencing Machine" and its curator Aaron Moulton would seize the occasion to not only shine a critical light on George Soros' cultural soft power, but at the same time come out publicly against anti-semitism, right-wing hate-speech and against all those crazy lunatics in Hungary, the US and elsewhere, who attack George Soros and his non-profit organizations from the political right. Sadly, it seems that this has not taken place in any visible form.

But we are now in a place where we all have to rethink our positions, leave the safe spaces of ironic criticality, and realign.

nh, March 2019