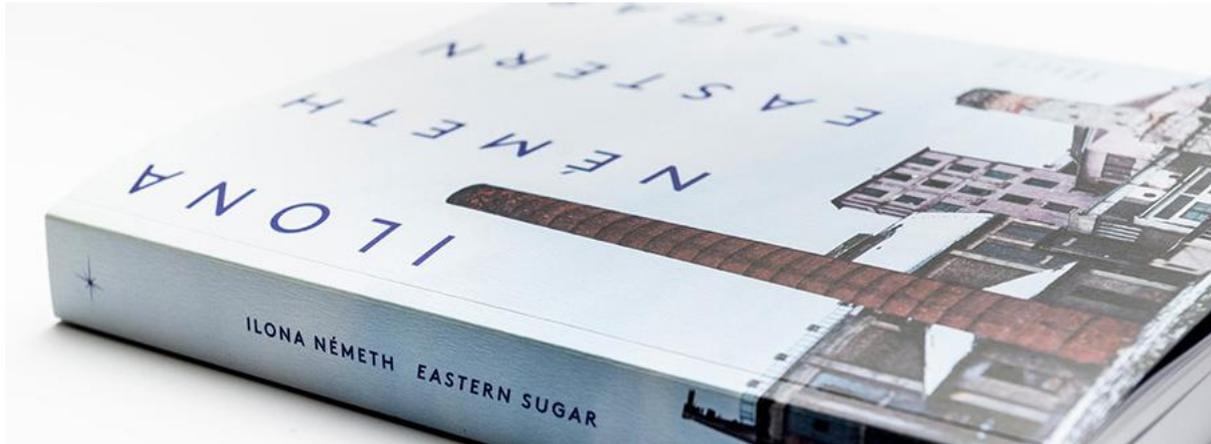




The significant international project by Ilona Németh **EASTERN SUGAR** has a publication

Bratislava March 18, 2021 | **The Slovak National Gallery in cooperation with the Sternberg Press present a more than a 300-page richly illustrated book *Ilona Németh: Eastern Sugar*, which takes as its starting point the Slovak artist's extensive research, and has been implemented as part of a prestigious international project.**



Through critical texts, conversations, and artistic interventions, the book *Ilona Németh: Eastern Sugar* restores complexity to the history of the rapid decline of the Slovak sugar industry, and by extension the wider social and economic infrastructures of transition in Central Europe. This book takes as its starting point contemporary artist Ilona Németh's extensive research into the history of sugar production in Slovakia and our region, from its beginnings in the early 19th century, when northern sugar beet emerged as a competitor to southern sugar cane, to the social impact of the rapid decline of the industry in the era of peak globalization.

Eastern Sugar was the name given to Juhocukor, the former largest Slovak sugar factory in Dunajská Streda, after a foreign trading company entered the Central European sugar industry in the 1990s following the fall of communism. In the first decade of the new Millennium, the company collected its investments through the European Union's compensation scheme and permanently shut down its factories.

The book examines the fate of this company as a microcosm of mechanisms of the post-communist transition throughout Central Europe, from the opportunism of financial speculators to the widespread corruption of privatization. And, at the same time, it raises the question whether a neo-liberal market policy was really the only viable strategy to escape from state socialism. The contributions elaborating on the social and environmental heritage of the Caribbean sugar plantation economy put the history of the sugar industry in Eastern Europe into context of longer periods of the spread of the mono-cultural system based on (neo)colonial extractivism.



“The publication *Ilona Németh: Eastern Sugar* and the exhibition *Sucre de l’est / Sugar of the East* present highly innovative artistic approaches combining traditional formats of artistic work with ambitious practices of artistic research, containing a whole range of current artistic strategies, among which we can mention the procedures of participation, archival work, community involvement and educational methods. At the same time, these strategies are focused on multidisciplinary effects that combine artistic creation with social activism and a broader community and environmental responsibility. In this sense, the creators of the project - artists, curators, art theorists - are looking for or, perhaps expanding more the space for a responsible and involved being in art, with art and with other members of the community,” – commented Michal Koleček, Member of the Steering Board of the *EASTERN SUGAR* project.

The book is part of the *EASTERN SUGAR* extensive international project of contemporary art with a strong educational mission implemented by the Slovak National Gallery in cooperation with international partners. It takes as its starting point the research of the history of the sugar industry in Central Europe and its consequences and socio-political and environmental impacts. In addition to the publication of the mentioned book, the discussion has also taken place through collaborative curatorial practice, creation of new works, interdisciplinary research and educational programs aimed at involving the audience. The project, initiated by Slovak artist Ilona Németh, runs from November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2021, and includes activities implemented in six European countries in collaboration with five foreign partners. At its very beginning, there was an exhibition with the same name in the KHB in 2018.

“When I started artistically dealing with the former sugar factory in Dunajská Streda, I did not think that the topic of the sugar industry would accompany me for many years following the presentation of the Eastern Sugar exhibition in the KHB in 2018. However, during the research, the topic broadened and gathered a complex of topics, areas, and expert perspectives, which widened my horizons more and more. The originally local or perhaps regional research has become a global research of sugar production. Experts claim that it was sugar, as the first capitalist commodity, that over the recent centuries significantly affected the development of several continents and caused many human and environmental disasters. On the one hand, in *Eastern Sugar* we strive, through the contributions by foreign experts, to pay attention to the broader social, economic, and environmental challenges associated with the sugar industry while, on the other, with our own contributions, visual essays and artistic interventions we hope to facilitate the incorporation of the rich and instructive story of the Central European sugar industry in the global map of the story of sugar,” - explained Ilona Németh, Artistic Director of the *EASTERN SUGAR* project.



You can buy the English version of the book in the Ex Libris bookstore or in the [e-shop SNG](#). Moreover, you can also look forward to the Slovak version to be published soon in cooperation with the Absynt Publishing.

For more information on the *EASTERN SUGAR* project please visit www.easternsugar.eu or www.facebook.com/easternsugar.eu.

Publication

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Editors: Maja and Reuben Fowkes, Ilona Németh

Contributors: Edit András, Rado Baťo, Fedor Blaščák, Johanna Bockman, Kathrin Böhm, Anetta Mona ChiȘa, Cooking Sections, Annalee Davis, Maja and Reuben Fowkes, Ferenc Gróf, Dušan Janíček, Katarína Karafová, Jason W. Moore, Ilona Németh, Michael Niblett, Raj Patel, Joanna Sokołowska, Imre Szeman, Raluca Voinea

Photographs in the Visual Essays: Olja Triaška Stefanović

Photographs: József Rosta and others

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International exhibitions of the *EASTERN SUGAR* project

12. 11. 2020 – 11. 1. 2021, **Sucre de l'est / Sugar of the East**, La Box Gallery / ENSA, Bourges, FR, Curator: Ferenc Gróf

15. 1. – 18. 4. 2021, **Listening to Voices**, Centre for Contemporary Art FUTURA, Prague, CZ, Curators: Mira Keratová, Caroline Krzyszton

23. 4. – 6. 6. 2021, **Eastern Sugar Oberbayern: Ilona Németh – Manufacture and Archive; Crossing Borders**, Schafhof – European Center for Art Upper Bavaria, Freising, DE, Curators: Nina Vrbanová, Eike Berg

20. 8. – 20. 10. 2021, **Will there still be sugar after the rebellion? (Potential Agrarianisms)**, Kunsthalle Bratislava, Bratislava, SK, Curators: Maja and Reuben Fowkes

17. 9. – 30. 11. 2021, **Eastern Sugar Graz**, < rotor > Center for Contemporary Art, Graz, AT, Curators: Margarethe Makovec and Anton Lederer



The *EASTERN SUGAR* project is implemented by the Slovak National Gallery in cooperation with partners: < rotor > center for contemporary art (AT), Centre for Contemporary Art FUTURA (CZ), The Schafhof – European Center for Art Upper Bavaria (DE), La Box gallery of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art (FR), T-TUDOK Inc., Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research (HU) and associated partners – Kunsthalle Bratislava (SK), Muzeum Sztuki Łódź (PL).

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