

SYMPOSIUM AT THE BELVEDERE 21 ABOUT MODERNISMS IN AN EXTENDED TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

Storms and Networks. In the Eye of the Storm

WHAT

Modernism is not a compact phenomenon of art history. At the end of the 19th century there is more and more a decisive diversification of the art scenes in the established cultural centers, but Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna were not the only places where the paradigm shift occurred. From 1900 onwards, very intense impulses for the entire movement of modern art came from the various Central-South-Eastern European regions. But how to delimit the territory of networked and exchanging modernity? Where are the geopolitical boundaries of what we call "modernity", in the broad cultural sense? How far has the notion of a new art that breaks its formal norms and deconstructs social conventions penetrated? Instead of drawing alternative maps that, with a diachronic approach, limit the boundaries of the modernist world again and in a different way, we are also moved to critically examine this topic considering current revisions of concepts such as nation, border, identity, history, myth, etc. On the occasion of the exhibition „In the Eye of the Storm“, the Austrian Gallery Belvedere is organizing a scientific symposium, the aim of which is to discuss with experts on this period of art the questions of the situation of modernism within the peripheral centers of art history. Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, but also Kosice, Krakow, Brno, Miskolc, and many other places but also small regions outside the mainstream of international gallerists have an exciting scene or just solitaires of art, without which modernism could not achieve the global impact.

WHEN

Tuesday, May 7th 2024
9 a.m. – 7.30 p.m.

WHERE

Belvedere 21
Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Wien
Blickle Kino

HOW

Get your free online ticket at:



www.belvedere.at/event/symposium-storms-and-networks

PROGRAM

📍 LOWER BELVEDERE

9:00

In the Eye of the Storm. Modernism in Ukraine

Exhibition tour with the curators

Konstantin Akinsha, Katia Denysova, Maryna Drobotiuk, Miroslav Halák

📍 BLICKLE KINO IN BELVEDERE 21

10:30

Greetings & Introduction

Stella Rolig, Luisa Ziaja (Belvedere, Vienna)

11:00

PANEL I: Preconditions / Situation / Continuity / Discontinuity ...

Moderation: Konstantin Akinsha

Brno Modernism and the Formation of Regional / Transnational Identity, 1900–1939

Matthew Rampley (Masaryk University, Brno)

ANNOTATION:

In 2018, the National Gallery of Art in Prague opened a new permanent exhibition, *The First Republic, 1918–1938*, that examined the modernist artworld of interwar Czechoslovakia. It marked a departure from traditional narratives of Czechoslovak modernism, in that it drew attention to the multiple centres of modern art in the Republic, such as Bratislava, Košice, Uzhhorod and Brno. A year later, the Moravian Gallery in Brno installed a new exhibition, *Brno: A Suburb of Vienna (Brno, předměstí Vídně)*. It foregrounded the many cultural and social links that existed between Brno and the Austrian capital in the decades before the First World War. Taken together, these two exhibitions began to dismantle well-established Prague-centric narratives of Czechoslovak art, and instead pointed to the polycentric nature of the republic's artistic and cultural landscape.

This paper examines the complex cultural legacies of Brno as a useful case study for the examination of this phenomenon. It suggests that when interrogating the traditional relation of centre-periphery, we have not only to recognize that a city such as Brno was an important cultural site in its own right (and not merely subordinate to Prague), but that due to its history, it was situated in a cultural and artistic landscape that did not necessarily map onto the political boundaries of the state.

11:30**Vsevolod Maksymovych: from Secession to Futurism**

Maryna Drobotiuk (National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv)

ANNOTATION:

Vsevolod Maksymovych (1894, Poltava – 1914, Moscow) was a renowned Ukrainian artist-modernist, a representative of the contemporary bohemian scene, who ended his life by suicide at the age of 20, leaving a note stating that he was tired of living.

He studied under Ivan Myasoyedov (Poltava) and was a member of his artistic-philosophical association „Garden of the Gods“, attending classes at the studio of Fedor Rerberg (Moscow), while simultaneously working as an illustrator for local periodicals. Joining the circle of Futurist artists and poets, he interacted with David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, the Sinyakov sisters, and others. Shortly before his death, Vsevolod Maksymovych played one of the main roles in the avant-garde silent film „Drama at Cabaret No. 13“ (1914, dir. Volodymyr Kasyanov).

Despite his short life, he managed to achieve certain heights and create a significant number of artistic works in various techniques, genres, and trends.

Vsevolod Maksymovych lived a short but eventful life, leaving behind over 200 paintings and graphic works, most of which are preserved in the National Art Museum of Ukraine (Kyiv).

12:00**How to get to a common art history of European Modernism.****A somewhat naive proposal**

Dorota Kudelska (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)

ANNOTATION:

The starting point for this article is Matthew Rampley's (2021) critique of Piotr Piotrowski's (2008) research proposal. Both seek a way to bring the art of Central and Eastern Europe into the academic circulation of Western art history. Rampley aptly points out the weaknesses of Piotrowski's theory. But Rampley's new proposal to look for themes attractive to the West (e.g., the reception of Oriental exoticism through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Polish textiles) also has limitations, especially in relation to modernism. The basis of the „Younger Europe“ offer cannot be the exoticism of the West alone. This way of thinking in relation to the years 1900-1939 limits the subject of modernity research to the analysis of the reception of folk art and, in a broader sense, to folk art.

First, it proposes a return to thinking about the problem of high culture without the dominant focus on ethnic and nationalist themes (the point is not to exclude them, but to explicitly broaden perspectives). Second, the focus is on Viennese connotations, and not just because

they fit the location and theme of the conference. As Arnheim wrote, significant changes are caused not only by conscious decisions and predictable events, but also by the entropy of artists' encounters and their works.

12:30

Discussion and lunch break

14:00

PANEL II: The fetishism of folk art and the crime of ornament

Moderation: Alexander Klee (Belvedere, Vienna)

From Folk to Abstract: Ukrainian Embroidery as a Medium for Modernist Experimentation

Katia Denysova (The Courtauld Learning Centre)

ANNOTATION:

This paper examines the relationship between the stylistic iconography of traditional Ukrainian embroidery and the experiments in modernist painting that led to the emergence of abstraction. It focuses on the artistic output of the embroidery workshop in the village of Verbivka, Ukraine, in the early 1910s. Led by Natalia Davydova and Alexandra Exter, this studio engaged „leftist“ artists and local artisans to produce a new type of embroidery that eschewed the mere stylization characteristic of other kustar studios in the Russian Empire. While scholars in Ukraine have done extensive research to highlight the centrality of the Ukrainian context in progressive artists' engagement with folk embroidery on the territory of the Russian Empire, internationally this phenomenon is still largely viewed under the generalized imperialist rubric of the ‚Russian avant-garde‘. Based on existing scholarship, this paper seeks to correct this misunderstanding. It also recognizes the long overdue need to situate the craft revival movement in Ukraine within the broader framework of the nationalist intelligentsia's engagement with vernacular culture in East-Central Europe.

14:30**Ornament and Avant-garde**

Konstantin Akinsha (Freelance curator and researcher)

ANNOTATION:

The famous lecture delivered by Adolf Loos in 1910 was titled „Ornament and Crime.“ At that juncture, the excessive reliance on national/historical ornaments in leading styles of the period such as Art Nouveau, Secession, Jugendstil, Liberty, and Modern necessitated a purification of both painting and applied arts from overwhelming ornateness. However, the radical trends of modernism that supplanted international Art Nouveau did not necessarily bring about such liberation.

For many „new nations,“ the task of creating a national style/visual language remained pertinent for the next generation of artists, succeeding the symbolists. This passion for national ornamentation and folk art was manifested in diverse ways – at times, visual folklore served as a convenient substitute for the „art of Negroes,“ found not in distant Africa, but in the own backyard; other times, it was utilized as kitsch, necessary for creating a charged contrast between high and low culture. In other cases, the cult of folk art, interpreted as the visual expression of the „wisdom of the nation,“ became the foundation of artistic fetishism.

The relationship to ornament/folk art delineated two opposing trends in the development of modernism in Central and Eastern Europe – one cosmopolitan and the other national-minded. However, the escape from ornamentation proved to be a challenging task. Followers of Suprematism and Constructivism, and even practitioners of photomontage, also fell into the „crime“ of ornament, translating it into new visual forms and sometimes pushing this task to the brink of absurdity.

This presentation will explore the problem of reinterpreting ornamentation by representatives of radical modernist movements.

15:00**Slovak Modernity in Search of Identity. Between Folklore and Industrialization**

Miroslav Hal'ák (Belvedere, Vienna)

ANNOTATION:

The interface between rural traditionalism and petty bourgeois conservatism is the most prominent territory on the map of artistic modernism in Slovakia. The formal, stylistic, and ideological development of the visual arts of the Slovak cultural area took place almost exclusively there. It is interesting to note that this territory can be defined not only geographically, but also in terms of meaning, by the coordinates Bratislava - Košice. This environment indicates specific socio-cultural parameters that also intensify the work of Janko Alexy.

Like his contemporaries Martin Benka, Zoltán Palugyay, and Miloš Alexander Bazovský, Alexy cannot escape cultural provincialism and ethnographic monothematism. The absence of a significant and competitive cultural center in Slovakia contributed to programs that idealized the village and rural life in the countryside. Instead of these motifs becoming part of a more complex spectrum of cultural identity of the emerging state formation, the periphery in Slovakia became a value reference. What is the explanation for the almost obsessive reproduction of clogs, shirkas, drops, scarves, crosses and chapels, rakes, hay, fences, rolls and bows, wallahs and clogs? It is always a search for unique motifs, capable of visualizing alternative, „ideal" worlds, unencumbered by the necessity of progress in time and space. In the environment of the Slovak countryside, this idealization includes another essential identifying component.

15:30

Discussion and coffee break

16:00

PANEL III: Peripheral centres

Moderation: Miroslav Hal'ák

Lemberg / Lwów / Lviv on the map of European modernism

Andrii Boyarov (Media artist, researcher of Lviv and Ukrainian avant-garde, independent curator, architect)

ANNOTATION:

This presentation will focus on early episodes of modernist and avant-garde art in first Austro-Hungarian city of Lemberg which became a part of the Polish Republic after WWI. Looking across different artistic areas—visual arts, architecture, photography—the presentation will first sketch key moments of the city's artistic rich and complex artistic explorations and then will ask how these stories challenge the ways national art histories are constructed and how European can be reimaged. It will begin by focusing on the 1913 exhibition of the Sturm gallery and the first architectural object built in the city in the spirit of the emerging so-called „International Style. Furthermore, the presentation will explore how the city became an important center of artistic photography in the first years of the XX century. The success of such development is manifested by the fact that in the early 1920s photography was taught at two universities—the Polytechnic and Jan Kazimierz University—by two renowned pictorial artists—Henryk Mikolasch and Jozef Świtkowski. From 1918 several exhibitions of the Formists (Polish Expressionists) took place in the then Polish Lwów. The changes in aesthetic ideas

and, to some extent, the post-war change of state—from the Habsburg Empire to the Polish nation-state—diverted the established paths of artistic studies to Berlin and Paris instead of Vienna. This presentation will offer some suggestions on how the perspective of place and people connected to and through place can be helpful in rethinking both national and European frameworks of art history.

16:30

Czech modernisms as pioneers and not epigones? Networks between Prague, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest and L'viv

Marie Rakušanová (Charles University Prague)

ANNOTATION:

„Czech Cubism“ is a term that has entered the Czech national canon of modern art history. Since the 1960s, Czech art historians and cultural figures have also tried to establish it as a unique phenomenon in the international context. However, the name Cubism, which was originally coined to refer to the Parisian modernist movement, tends to exclude the idea of local specificity and originality. The works of the „Czech Cubists“ included in Douglas Cooper's 1970 exhibition *The Cubist Epoch* in Los Angeles were described by the American art historian Rosalind Krauss as the result of the orgy of academicism that the new style unleashed throughout Europe.

This paper will not deal with modernism within the boundaries defined by the names of the movements, and will avoid the context of influences transmitted unidirectionally from the „center“ to the „periphery. Rather than focusing on the direct influence of Parisian Cubism on Czech artists Emil Filla, Vincenc Beneš, and other members of the Group of Fine Artists who openly declared their admiration for Pablo Picasso, it will examine the works of Czech modernists who were open to artistic diversity and resonated in a broader European context. Through several case studies, it will outline the entangled nature of artistic and cultural exchange before 1918 within the network of relationships between Prague, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and L'viv.

17:00

Bridging Borders: Abstract Artistic Dialogue between Paris and Central European Peripheries

Flóra Mészáros (Metropolitan University of Budapest)

ANNOTATION:

In the 1920s and 1930s, many abstract artists were attracted to or settled in Paris for political and social reasons, but they were also influenced by the art of the peripheral cities of Central Europe, where they had lived or studied. Even their achievements in non-figurative art were

inherited from Central European abstraction. Thus, the Parisian art scene was shaped by them and their origins. After the Parisian years, many of these painters and sculptors returned to their home countries and joined these special Central European art capitals or maintained a permanent relationship with these cities. In addition, the already existing peripheral centers were influenced by the presence of these relocating artists and their global knowledge. The lecture aims to explore this cultural transfer. It will attempt to use art historical and art geographical perspectives to highlight these bridges and the role of these Central European art centers and their exceptionally accepting attitude towards non-figuration, such as Pécs in Hungary, Łódź in Poland, or Brno in the Czech Republic, and so on.

17:30

Final Discussion and break

18:30

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Myroslava Mudrak (The Ohio State University)

ANNOTATION:

Positioned between two great empires, Ukraine's artistic legacy prior to World War I had drawn on many influences. Aside from the long-established Kyivan Cave Monastery school which trained artists in iconography and the graphic arts since the 17th century, the imperial designs on Ukraine did not allow for the establishment of an academic tradition within the country. Couched between the empires of Austro-Hungary and Russia, aspiring artists had to look for training outside the homeland to follow their avocation. Under the Habsburgs Western Ukrainian artists benefitted from studying in the capitals of Europe; those subjected to Romanov rule were limited by either St. Petersburg or Moscow. With no institutional constraints to bind their wings, Ukrainian modernism evolved out of a savoir-faire that blended tendencies from both the west and the east, while also drawing on native roots. By the 1920s Ukrainian artists managed to create new centers of modern art. Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and L'viv became the crucibles of a new global, if not, ethnic modernism. They absorbed the national modernist aspirations not only of such major art centers as Paris, Munich, and Moscow, but also those of Central Europe, which were closer in aspiration and mentality, and similar in the geo-political circumstances that gave rise to modernism in the region. From metaphoric Symbolist tropes through Cubo-Futurist formalism, from renegade Secessionism to reformative Neo-Byzantinism, the synthesis of variegated sources in Ukrainian art of the early 20th century blended with local folk traditions to mark the true character of its modernity.