



RUSSIAN ART ON THE RISE

RUSSISCHE KUNST IM AUFBRUCH

September 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 | Freie Universität Berlin



Cover: Viktor Vasnetsov, *The Bogatyrs* (detail), 1898, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; and Ivan Kliun, *wooden relief* (detail), around 1915, Kroll Family Trust, Luzern.  
(For full images, see pages 18 and 23.)

## RUSSIAN ART ON THE RISE |

## RUSSISCHE KUNST IM AUFBRUCH

The fifth graduate workshop of the *Russian Art and Culture Group* will focus on the theorization and contextualization of Russian art of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by its contemporaries, positioning it in the cultural discourses of the period that ranged from national appreciation to scientific approaches.

Der fünfte Graduiertenworkshop der *Russian Art and Culture Group* widmet sich der Theoretisierung und Kontextualisierung der russischen Kunst durch die Künstler des späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert selbst im kulturellen Spannungsfeld zwischen nationaler Abgrenzung und sich entwickelnder Kunstwissenschaft.

## Fifth Graduate Workshop | Fünfter Graduiertenworkshop

Freie Universität Berlin, Kunsthistorisches Institut, Koserstr. 20, 14195 Berlin

Room | Raum A 127, September 21<sup>st</sup>–22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

### PROGRAM | PROGRAMM

Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> | Donnerstag, 21. September

10.15 **Opening | Eröffnung**

Welcome Address | Begrüßung

Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen

**Panel 1: National Tendencies | Nationale Tendenzen**

Chair: Viktoria Schindler

10.30 **The Artistic Identities of Henryk Siemiradzki**

Dr. Maria Nitka, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata, Warsaw

11.00 **Christ in the Art of 19th-Century Russia: Aspects of Moral, Religion and Nationalism | Jan Zachariáš, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München**

11.30 **Behind the Green Veil: The Russian Forest in Viktor Vasnetsov's Folk Tale Paintings | Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs University Bremen**

12.00 Discussion | Diskussion

12.30 Lunch (not included) | Mittagessen (nicht enthalten)

**Panel 2: Intergenerational Tensions and Commonalities |**

**Generationsübergreifende Spannungen und Gemeinsamkeiten**

Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

14.00 **Martiros Saryan and Russian Symbolism | Dr. Mane Mkrtchyan, Institute of Arts, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia**

14.30 **Enough Blood! Artistic Generations in Late Imperial Russia, 1890–1914**  
Isabel Stokholm, University of Cambridge

15.00 Discussion | Diskussion

15.30 Coffee Break | Kaffeepause

**Panel 3: Artistic Developments in Russia | Künstlerische Entwicklungen in Russland** | Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

- 16.00 **Italy's Role in the Artistic Development of Valentin Serov and his Russian and Western Contemporaries** | Tanja Malycheva, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster/Moscow State University
- 16.30 **Vom Himmelreich zum Kosmos: Vorzeichen der Avantgarde in den Schriften N. F. Fedorovs** | Anna Brinkmann, Independent Scholar, Berlin
- 17.00 Discussion | Diskussion
- 17.30 Coffee Break | Kaffeepause
- 18.00 **Guest Lecture | Gastvortrag**  
**Ad Reinhardts Antwort auf Malewitschs Schwarzes Quadrat**  
Prof. Dr. Werner Busch, Freie Universität Berlin
- 19.15 **Evening Reception | Empfang**
- 20.00 Dinner (not included) | Abendessen (nicht enthalten)

Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> | Freitag, 22. September

**Panel 4: Constructions by the Russian Avant-Garde | Konstruktionen der russischen Avantgarde** | Chair: Viktoria Schindler

- 10.30 **The Influence of El Lissitzky's *Projects for the Affirmation of the New* on the Architectural Culture of the 1920s in Central Europe: The Case of Mies van der Rohe** | Dr. Andrea Contursi, Freelance Architect, Cologne
- 11.00 **Die Museen für Moderne Kunst an den Kunsthochschulen der frühen 1920er Jahre** | PD Dr. Christiane Post, Bergische Universität Wuppertal
- 11.30 Discussion | Diskussion
- 12.00 Lunch (not included) | Mittagessen (nicht enthalten)

**Panel 5: Theoretical Approaches of the Russian Avant-Garde | Theoretische Ansätze der russischen Avantgarde** | Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

- 13.30 **Before and Beyond the Avant-Garde: The Forgotten Art Histories of Nikolai Punin and Nikolai Tarabukin** | Prof. Dr. Maria Taroutina, Yale-NUS College Singapore
- 14.00 **Wassily Kandinskys kunsttheoretische Schriften und ihre Rezeption in den Kreisen der russischen Avantgarde**  
Viktoria Schindler, Freie Universität Berlin
- 14.30 Discussion | Diskussion
- 15.00 **Closing Note | Abschluss**

**Initial idea and organization | Initiative und Organisation:**

Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen; Prof. Dr. Werner Busch, Freie Universität Berlin; Ludmila Piters-Hofmann and | und Viktoria Schindler

**The organizers would like to thank** the Kroll Family Trust for financial support.

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The *Russian Art and Culture Group* is based at Jacobs University, Bremen. Headed by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, it unites scholars and young researchers from Eastern and Western Europe. This project is designed as a platform for discussing various aspects of Russian and Soviet visual arts, music and literature.

Die *Russian Art and Culture Group* ist an der Jacobs University in Bremen beheimatet. Unter der Leitung von Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche vereint sie junge und erfahrene Wissenschaftler aus Ost- und West-Europa. Dieses Projekt bietet eine Diskussionsplattform für verschiedene Aspekte russischer und sowjetischer bildender Kunst, Musik und Literatur.

<http://russian-art.user.jacobs-university.de/>

## ABSTRACTS

### Panel 1: National Tendencies | Nationale Tendenzen

#### The Artistic Identities of Henryk Siemiradzki

Dr. Maria Nitka, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata, Warsaw

Henryk Siemiradzki (1843–1902), a professor at the Art Academy in St. Petersburg and a pillar of the Russian and Polish art colonies in Rome, was an artist of multiple identities. He was a Pole and also the son of a general in the Russian army but also a graduate of the Art Academy in St. Petersburg and one of Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich’s favorites. Furthermore, he was the founder of the National Museum in Kraków, which owes its existence to the monumental painting *Nero’s Torches* that was donated by him. Likewise, Siemiradzki’s artistic identity is also multifaceted: he was an academic and an opponent of the *Peredvizhniki* (The Wanderers), but he was also trained as a biologist. During his time in St. Petersburg, he was a cotenant of Ilya Repin, a friend and a reader of Vladimir Stasov’s books. In his historical paintings, Siemiradzki showed realistic traits in a grandeur style. His figure of Phryne in the painting *Phryne at the Poseidonia in Eleusis* was, for example, criticized for excessive naturalism. Though he was an acclaimed painter of the “ancient world,” he also took up the issue of Slavonic history, by order of the government. In his works, he referred to the latest archaeological discoveries and utilized Russian folklore, cooperating with promoters of folklore.

Examining Siemiradzki’s paintings, it is possible to determine the nodal points of the Russian discourse on art: the understanding of the “Russian painter,” a term which he, a Pole by birth and by choice, used to describe himself. Siemiradzki’s approach to the concept of realism shows the discord between him and the *Peredvizhniki*, despite him being more inclined towards naturalism than Repin’s academism. Painting therefore can form a basis for understanding the key elements of the narrative of art history of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically the emergence of terms such as “development” and “modernism” in Russian art. For Russian modernists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Léon Bakst, the academic Siemiradzki seemed to be closer than the realist *Peredvizhniki*. As a painter, Siemiradzki is akin to a lens, converging many of the problems of Russian art at the turn of the century, while at the same time his artistic creations are interesting in as much as they represent the “other side” of the ongoing debate on modernization in Russian art.

## **Christ in the Art of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia: Aspects of Moral, Religion and Nationalism**

Jan Zachariáš, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

My paper presents a selected topic from my PhD thesis, “The Image of Christ in Russia and the West;” it specifically focuses on the formation and imagination of the figure of Christ in the art of the *Peredvizhniki* from 1860 until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The scenes from the Bible hold an important position within Russian art of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The thematization of scenes from the life of Christ belongs to the most celebrated art works produced in Russia at that time. Prominent painters of Russian realism, among them Ivan Kramskoi, Vasily Polenov, Nikolai Ge and Mikhail Nesterov, dedicated much of their time to huge canvases – intended for exhibitions and not for churches – depicting crucial moments from the life of Jesus. Thus, Christ is depicted not as the Son of God but rather in a historical way as a human, who is able to display his extraordinary role not by some innate character but rather through his deeds, postures and even expressions which bear meaning. Although the artists were inspired by writings like Ernest Renan’s “*Vie de Jésus*” in depicting the archeological and ethnographical circumstances, the main task was to express their own statements concerning moral, religion, atheism or national identity. One can say that those canvases, which form a certain backbone of the canon of Russian art until today, mirror these attitudes in the figure of Christ. Kramskoi depicted Jesus as “the greatest atheist” who, just like the Russian intelligentsia, must trust in himself in order to find his role. Ge concentrated on the representation of moral dilemmas of human existence expressed through Christ. Nesterov was rather interested in seeking the ideal Christianity of the Russian people, to whom Christ appeared in his paintings.

While my thesis is structured as a series of brief monographs of particular art works, exemplifying expressions of specific ideas in the Russian discourse, in my paper I discuss examples of these art works and show the different ideas which the figure of Christ is able to carry and which it actually carried in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia.

## **Behind the Green Veil: The Russian Forest in Viktor Vasnetsov’s Folk Tale Paintings**

Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs University Bremen

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the need of defining a national identity was a pan-European phenomenon, but it was especially prominent in Russia, where the opposing intellectual movements of the Slavophiles and the Westerners contemplated Russian identity and the future of the country in relation to western Europe. In the fine arts,

this resulted in the development of a Russian style, affected by national topics and folkloric design. Therein, fairy tales and folk tales were used to illustrate “enchanted” interpretations of national identity.

Dedicating a great part of his work to the depiction of legends and folk tales, Viktor M. Vasnetsov (1848–1926) was a central figure in this context. In his large-scale folk tale paintings, he represented the national origin of the depicted folk tales through the costumes of the characters as well as through the landscapes surrounding them. Vasnetsov often chose forests as background sceneries not only because they correspond to the folk tale settings but also to emphasize the genuinely national origin of the depicted tales. When compared to fairy tale paintings by international artists of the same time, Vasnetsov’s paintings show indigenous Russian flora like birch trees or conifers, quite in contrast to the backgrounds of earlier Russian paintings that drew on the prevailing European archetypes. This further underlines Vasnetsov’s intention to create a genuine national imagery.

When examining Vasnetsov’s paintings, the depiction of the Russian forest reveals a variety of appearances depending on the function the artist wants the forest to have. For one, it is used to emphasize character traits such as strength and reliability as in *Ivan Tsarevich Riding the Grey Wolf* (1889) or deviousness and dangerousness as in *Baba Yaga* (1900–17). Secondly, the forest acts as stage setting, like the enchanted forest surrounding the *Sleeping Tsarevna* (1900–26). And finally, the forest can be a means to further indicate the placement of the portrayed tale in Russia as realized in the second version of *The Flying Carpet* (1919–1926). Therefore, Vasnetsov combines the versatility of the forest to define additional narrative planes with its use to introduce a national reference to his paintings.

## Panel 2: **Intergenerational Tensions and Commonalities** | **Generationsübergreifende Spannungen und Gemeinsamkeiten**

### **Martiros Saryan and Russian Symbolism**

Dr. Mane Mkrtchyan, Institute of Arts, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia

Symbolism, one of the major artistic movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, had its origin in France in the 1880s and quickly spread throughout Europe. In the 1890s, the movement found its way into Russian art and literature. In its first stage, Symbolism in Russian art was very diverse. The “ancestors” of Russian Symbolism were Mikhail



Vrubel and Viktor Borisov-Musatov; their artistic methods were quite different, with Vrubel's paintings being full of anxiety and Borisov-Musatov's works being poetic. 1904 was a notable year in the history of Russian Symbolism, Symbolist poets Alexander Blok and Vyacheslav Ivanov published their first books, the Symbolist magazine *Vesi* was established and, finally, the exhibition *Alaya Rosa* (Crimson Rose) was held in Saratov. Crimson Rose was the first joint exhibition of the second generation of Russian Symbolists, including Pavel Kuznetsov, Petr Utkin, Anatolii Arapov, Alexander Matveev and Martiros Saryan.

Armenian artist Martiros Saryan (1880–1972) was born in Nakhichevan-on-Don, Russia. From 1897 to 1903, he studied with famous Russian artists Valentin Serov and Konstantin Korovin at the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Moscow. After his graduation, Saryan began searching for his own style using new methods. The series *Fairy-Tales and Dreams* (1903–1907) reveals his new artistic language. These works were presented in the exhibition *Golubaya Rosa* (Blue Rose), which was held in Moscow in 1907. This show, the most outstanding event in the history of Russian Symbolism, brought together again the Symbolists of the second generation – Anatolii Arapov, Pavel Kuznetsov, Alexander Matveev, Nikolai Milioti, Vasilii Milioti, Nikolai Ryabushinsky, Nikolai Sapunov, Sergei Sudeikin and others. The new generation developed its unique style of a common artistic language. Nature and water, birth and death, sun and Satan were among the beloved themes of the Blue Rose members. Most of the paintings are characterized by unusual smoky colors and figures that seemed to be driven away from reality. Saryan exhibited 15 paintings from the *Fairy-Tales and Dreams* series in the Blue Rose show. Reflecting a dreamy, pensive and almost unreal world, all of these works were created in the manner of the second generation of the Russian Symbolists.

After the Blue Rose exhibition, Russian Symbolism experienced a kind of deadlock although, in 1908, 1909, 1909–10, the symbolist-oriented magazine *Zolotoe Runo* (The Golden Fleece) organized several exhibitions of works by French artists along with paintings of Russian artists. Nevertheless, the highpoint of Russian Symbolism had passed. The year 1909 marked significant changes in Saryan's artistic language. In his oeuvre of the early 1910s, he moved away from the Symbolism of the Blue Rose period. Instead of uncertain dreams, the artist now depicted another ideal reality that had not been spoiled by humankind yet. Saryan's later Symbolism is much closer to that of Vincent van Gogh's.

## Enough Blood! Artistic Generations in Late Imperial Russia, 1890–1914

Isabel Stokholm, University of Cambridge

On 16 January 1913, Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery witnessed a startling act of vandalism. Shortly after opening time, a young man was found plunging a knife into a painting while screaming "Enough blood!" His target was Ilya Repin's *Ivan the Terrible and His Son* (1885), a treasured work by Russia's foremost living painter and figurehead of the *Peredvizhniki*.

The gallery soon identified the vandal as a disturbed icon painter; but instead of treating this as a freak incident, many viewed the assault as a symptom of greater sickness in Russian art – that of *dekadentstvo*. Repin himself blamed the influence of the futurists, who had published their manifesto "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" but a month before. In the wake of the event, the Tretyakov's chairman immediately resigned and the curator committed suicide. Vicious discussions engulfed Moscow's cultural sphere, culminating in an organized debate during which radical young talents condemned the art of their predecessors, while the 68-year-old Repin sat among the audience. That the painting in question depicts an act of betrayal between father and son is a great historical irony.

This was the most notorious event in an uneasy state of affairs that has come to characterize our view of generational relations between Russian artists from the late 1880s to the 1920s. Long before a knife was mugged into the Tretyakov, it is thought that the art world had witnessed a dramatic polarization between young experimentalists and older, established artists. Art-world dynamics were, however, much more complicated.

This paper reconsiders the nature of these relationships, questioning how intergenerational bonds influenced artistic evolution. It challenges the idea of linearity in Russian art history – in which one avant-garde replaces an established order and young artists supplant the old – by breaking down contrived social and professional boundaries between age cohorts and uncovering previously unknown (or censored) connections and exchanges.

The letters and memoirs of artists both young and old reveal frequent and warm intermingling. Senior *Peredvizhniki* not only trained and mentored young artists, but also socialized with them at salons, drawing sessions and exhibitions – including those thought beyond the realm of the *Peredvizhniki*, such as *Mir iskusstva* shows, the Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10 and viewings of Sergei Shchukin's collection. They travelled

together, visited one another's homes and studios, lived in the same neighborhoods and married into each other's families.

That these ties remain concealed owes much to the intervention of Stalin, whose cult of the *Peredvizhniki* left no room for any acknowledgement of association between them and young "dangerous" modernists. Steering away from this idea of generational rupture offers a fresh, de-Sovietized reading of Russia's celebrated Silver Age; one that shifts our focus from the youthful avant-garde to multi-generational circles (*kruzhki*). By better understanding the nature of intergenerational tensions and commonalities, we can place the artist's experience within wider debates in Russia, where a deeply patriarchal society headed by an autocratic "father" in the form of the tsar, or *batiushka* ("little father"), was asking searching questions about the role of father figures.

### Panel 3: **Artistic Developments in Russia | Künstlerische Entwicklungen in Russland**

#### **Italy's Role in the Artistic Development of Valentin Serov and his Russian and Western Contemporaries**

Tanja Malycheva, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster/Moscow State University

For centuries Italy served as a source of inspiration for foreign artists. Its once overwhelming influence weakened in the early second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Paris became Europe's new artistic capital; young anti-academic national schools were emerging in many countries whereas contemporary Italians lacked the prestige of their predecessors. Yet many Russian artists who paved the road to modernity – like, for example, Nikolai Ge (1831–94) – still chose Italy to be their most important destination. Vasily Polenov, Ilya Repin, Vasily Surikov, Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Vrubel visited Italy on a regular basis seeking fresh ideas and southern sunshine. Their leading Western colleagues – William Turner, James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent, Édouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet – did the very same. Serov's first Italian journey (1887) triggered major enduring changes in his style in regard to palette and brushstroke.

## Vom Himmelreich zum Kosmos: Vorzeichen der Avantgarde in den Schriften N. F. Fedorovs

Anna Brinkmann, Independent Scholar, Berlin

Bruch, Umbruch und Aufbruch formulieren Tendenzen eines Leitgedankens in Positionen der Kunst der Avantgarde. Es war die Überzeugung von der Gestaltbarkeit der Welt und von der Notwendigkeit in der künstlerischen Tätigkeit, aber auch in der Forschung, technischen Entwicklung und Politik über die, bis dahin als natürlich betrachteten Grenzen, hinausgehen zu müssen. Die Spezifik der russischen Avantgarde war die Integration der Vergangenheit in den Aufbruch zum Neuen. Ein Neuanfang bei gleichzeitiger Beschäftigung mit den Vorfahren als moralische Verpflichtung und unumgehbare Wissensquelle findet sich bei dem Religionsphilosophen Nikolaj F. Fedorov (1829-1903). In Artikeln und Aufsätzen, die systematisch erst 1906 und 1913 in zwei Sammelbänden unter dem Titel *Philosophie der gemeinsamen Sache* veröffentlicht wurden, ist die reale Überschreitung natürlicher Grenzen als eine Aufgabe aller Menschen formuliert. Fedorovs Konzept soll im Vortrag als Vorläufer zu Theorien der russischen Avantgarde vorgestellt werden.

Fedorov war Begründer einer Denkrichtung, die heute unter dem Namen Kosmismus zusammengefasst wird. Sein Ansatz lag darin, die auf das Jenseits projizierten Hoffnungen der Menschen auf das Diesseits zu übertragen. Die Überwindung des Todes, die Wiederauferstehung aller bisher Gestorbenen und das gleichzeitige Zusammenleben durch die Besiedelung des Kosmos postulierte er als zu realisierende Ziele – als anzugehende Ingenieursprojekte. Das zu erreichen, schien ihm möglich zu sein, wenn das Wissen Aller und aller Zeiten – das der Verstorbenen und der Lebenden – kumuliert und allen zur Verfügung gestellt werden könnte.

Das Museum in seiner bewahrenden und erforschenden Funktion diene in Fedorovs Konzept als wichtigste Institution zur Lebenserhaltung. In dem Aufsatz „Das Museum, sein Sinn und seine Bestimmung“ beschrieb er es als eine totalitäre Biomacht, in der Menschen mit Exponaten gleichgesetzt wären, denen das Museum Leben gebe und deren Tod es verhindere. Bis es jedoch soweit war, schlug er vor, in regional organisierten Museen, Daten, Bilder und Gegenstände aller Verstorbenen zu archivieren, damit die Nachfahren deren Leben erforschen und auf diese Weise präsent halten könnten. Neben dem Menschen und seiner Lebenssphäre sollte im Museum auch der Kosmos erforscht werden. So hatte er vorgeschlagen, Observatorien in allen Museen einzurichten, wie es dann mancherorts, z.B. 1923 in Perm, tatsächlich geschah.

Fedorovs Projekt „der gemeinsamen Sache“ kannten Zeitgenossen, wie Fedor Dostoevsky und Leo Tolstoi. Sein Schüler Konstantin Tsiolkovsky gilt in Russland als Begründer der zivilen Raumfahrtforschung. Beruhend auf Annahmen des Kosmismus wurde in Moskau ein Institut zur Erforschung der Gehirne herausragender Persönlichkeiten gegründet. Neben diesen wissenschaftlich-technischem Einflüssen sind bei Fedorov Überlegungen zu finden, die die Künstler der russischen Avantgarde in der nächsten Generation beschäftigten. Dazu gehört die Problematik der direkten Überwindung des Todes in der Realität und der indirekten in Museumsausstellungen. Außerdem war es für Fedorovs Fortschrittsprojekt der Menschheit entscheidend, dass die Trennung der Disziplinen aufgelöst werde und die gemeinsame Arbeit alle Lebensbereiche durchdringen würde. Er schlug einen Wissenstransfer zwischen Stadt und Land mittels Wanderausstellungen vor und beschrieb eine neue Ausstellungsweise, die heute unter dem Fachbegriff Dialektischer Materialismus (Zhylaev) verstanden wird. Alle diese Ansätze finden wir in späteren künstlerischen Positionen bzw. Pamphleten wieder. Fedorovs Projekt zeigt ihre gemeinsame innere Logik.

#### **Guest Lecture | Gastvortrag**

#### **Ad Reinhardt's Answer to Malevich's *Black Square* | Ad Reinhardts Antwort auf Malewitschs *Schwarzes Quadrat* (The talk is held in German.)**

Prof. Dr. Werner Busch, Freie Universität Berlin

Ad Reinhardt's *Last Paintings*, painted totally in black and inscribed with a barely visible Greek cross, done from 1954 until his death in 1967, are a highly complex answer to Malevich's *Black Square*. In a way, Reinhardt brought it to fulfilment and to an end, the end of painting as such. In his self-biography, Reinhardt constructed his whole life and activities with this aim in mind. He changed dates and historical events with an ironical purpose. His theoretical writings also function as a means of a witty contradictory explanation of his artistic activities. With Reinhardt's argument in mind, it seems possible to reach a deeper understanding of Malevich's *Black Square*, too.

## Panel 4: **Constructions by the Russian Avant-Garde** | **Konstruktionen der russischen Avantgarde**

### **The influence of El Lissitzky's *Projects for the Affirmation of the New* on the Architectural Culture of the 1920s in Central Europe: The Case of Mies van der Rohe**

Dr. Andrea Contursi, Freelance Architect, Cologne

Lissitzky's *Projects for the Affirmation of the New* – in short, Prouns – are among the most prominent and enigmatic products of the constructivist avant-garde around 1920. These artifacts can be viewed as hybrids between painting, sculpture, architectural models and theoretical formal research. His author, however, described them as “intermediate stations” on the path that leads from painting to architecture. This may be taken as evidence that the aim of these artifacts was basically to explore problems concerning architectural space.

At approximately the same time in which the central perspective as the only objective depiction of reality was questioned by Erwin Panofsky and other scholars, the Russian architect, through these artifacts, aimed at overcoming the spatial representation methods established in western culture in order to express the “infinite extensibility of irrational space” on the two-dimensional canvas, as well as in three-dimensional, space-staged reliefs (the so-called “PROUN spaces”).

Because of the influence that these works had on the development of *Neues Bauen* in Germany between 1923 and 1933 and of the renewed public interest in Lissitzky's work (see, for example, the 2014 exhibition *El Lissitzky: The Experience of Totality*) – a new investigation into the Prouns could still be of interest.

In particular, I examine in detail the relationship between the theoretical and artistic work of Lissitzky between 1919 and 1924 and the creative turn in Mies van der Rohe's design activity after 1923. I already dealt with this topic theoretically as well as graphically in my 2006 diploma thesis on Mies van der Rohe's *Revolutionsdenkmal* (also known as *Monument to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg*), which provided the foundation for further research.

### **Die Museen für Moderne Kunst an den Kunsthochschulen der frühen 1920er Jahre**

PD Dr. Christiane Post, Bergische Universität Wuppertal

In meinem Vortrag wird die Geschichte der russischen Museologie der 1910er bis 1930er Jahre ausschnitthaft beleuchtet und der Umfang und die Bedeutung des Anteils der Avantgarde an ihrer Entwicklung thematisiert. Im Mittelpunkt stehen die Konzepte

der russischen Avantgardenkünstlerinnen und -künstler für die von ihnen zwischen 1918 und 1921 gegründeten Museen für Moderne Kunst und der Umgang mit ihren Werken im musealen Kontext bis zur Magazinierung 1936. Verankert wird dieser Vortrag in der Museums- und Hochschulgeschichte des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts und diskutiert vor dem Hintergrund der künstlerischen Museums- und Institutionskritik.

Die russische Avantgarde, die mit einer radikal-anarchistischen Geste die traditionellen Museen abzuschaffen und die Museumskunst symbolisch zu „verbrennen“ gedachte, um Platz für das Neue zu schaffen, Fehlendes wie die Museen für Moderne Kunst einzuklagen und institutionell die eigene Geschichtsschreibung vorzunehmen, entwickelte vor dem Hintergrund der Forderung nach einer neuen Ästhetik für eine neue Gesellschaft differente Museumskonzepte: Während Kazimir S. Malevič die Vernichtung der Kunsttradition andachte, vehement für den Suprematismus und die Gegenstandslose Kunst eintrat und ein auf Malerei spezialisiertes Museum anstrebte, das laut Vasilij V. Kandinskij international, laut Aleksandr M. Rodčenko national und auf künstlerische „Erfindungen“ ausgerichtet sein sollte, schlug Marc Chagall ein Museum vor, das die Geschichte der jüdischen Kunst und Kultur widerspiegeln sollte.

Verwirklicht wurden ab 1918/19 mehr als 30 professionell ausgerichtete Museen für Malerische und Künstlerische Kultur, die von den russischen Avantgardenkünstlerinnen und -künstlern geleitet und vornehmlich den neu gegründeten Kunsthochschulen, aber auch den bereits bestehenden Kunstmuseen in der Provinz angegliedert wurden. Nicht nur wurde das Museum einer institutionskritischen Hinterfragung und dem Versuch einer Neudefinition unterzogen, sondern auch radikal neue Museumskonzepte aufgestellt: In den professionell ausgerichteten Museen sollten nur zentrale Referenzwerke der russischen Gegenwartskunst ausgestellt werden, das hieß einerseits „Entwürfe, in denen der Grundstock neuer Formen“ angelegt ist (Malevič) und andererseits Arbeiten, „die neue Methoden eingeführt“ und „die Mittel des malerischen Ausdrucks bereichert haben“ (Kandinskij). Indem die russische Avantgarde spezifische Auswahlkriterien festlegte, definierte sie, was die zeitgenössische (nationale) Kunst beinhalten und wie die neueste russische Kunstgeschichte, die institutionell in einen historischen und einen modernen Zweig geteilt wurde, festgeschrieben werden sollte. 1920 wurde eine Erweiterung der Funktionen des Kunstmuseums vorgenommen und den neuen Museen ein künstlerisch-wissenschaftliches Forschungsinstitut für experimentelle

Ästhetik angegliedert. Beispielhaft könnte die Kunstschule in Vitebsk (1919–1922) thematisiert werden.

Panel 5: **Theoretical Approaches of the Russian Avant-Garde** | **Theoretische Ansätze der russischen Avantgarde**

**Before and Beyond the Avant-Garde: The Forgotten Art Histories of Nikolai Punin and Nikolai Tarabukin**

Prof. Dr. Maria Taroutina, Yale-NUS College Singapore

As two of the “staunchest defenders of the avant-garde,” Punin and Tarabukin are best known for their writings on non-objective, Constructivist and Productivist art and are often credited with developing a modern analytical approach to art history that replaced the narrative, literary tradition of nineteenth-century art criticism in favor of a formal, medium-specific methodology. [Maria Gough, “Faktura: The Making of the Russian Avant-Garde,” *Res* 36 (Autumn 1999), 38]. Both men participated in the new revolutionary formations of Proletkult, VKhUTEMAS and INKhUK and zealously promoted an impersonal, mechanistic and future-oriented aesthetic, as exemplified by their canonical essays “Monument to the Third International” and “From the Easel to the Machine.” [Nikolai Tarabukin, *Ot Mol'berta k Mashine* (Moscow: Izd-vo “Rabotnik prosveshcheniia”, 1923); Nikolai Punin, *Pamiatnik III Internatsionala* (St. Petersburg: Izddatelstvo Otdela Izobrazitelnyh iskusstv Nar. Kom. Prosveshenia, 1920)]. And yet, what often tends to be forgotten or overlooked is the fact that both Punin and Tarabukin began their careers as medievalists, who fervently advocated a return to Russo-Byzantine representational traditions and a more spiritual worldview. Thus, for example, while Punin was participating in the radical avant-garde activities of Apartment No. 5 alongside Vladimir Tatlin, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebnikov, he was simultaneously an active member of the Department of Monuments of Russian Icon-Painting and Church Relics in the Russian Museum of His Imperial Majesty Alexander III and published a lengthy monograph on Andrei Rublev in 1916. Similarly, Tarabukin wrote the *Philosophy of the Icon* and *The Genesis and Development of the Iconostasis* in the late 1910s, both of which demonstrate a keen familiarity with and admiration of the writings of Father Pavel Florensky, a mystic and steadfast opponent of the leftist avant-garde. In addition to medieval art, Punin and Tarabukin also continued to write and publish extensively on nineteenth-century



Russian painting, paying homage to artists as diverse as Pavel Fedotov, Vasilii Surikov, Mikhail Vrubel and Valentin Serov throughout the 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s.

Accordingly, this paper proposes to challenge the perceived strict dichotomies between the “new” and the “old,” the “vanguard” and the “rearguard,” the “innovative” and the “traditional” in the writings of Punin and Tarabukin by examining the circular – rather than linear – nature of their art historical narratives. In their desire to construct a specifically native origin or mythical starting point for the Soviet avant-garde, these theorists re-appropriated and reinterpreted nineteenth-century art in startling, insightful and often enlightening ways, demonstrating both the complexity and symbiotic nature of the relationship between the last two decades of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries in Russian artistic culture.

## **Wassily Kandinskys kunsttheoretische Schriften und ihre Rezeption in den Kreisen der russischen Avantgarde**

Viktoria Schindler, Freie Universität Berlin

Den Schwerpunkt meines Vortrages bilden Wassily Kandinskys (1866-1944) kunsttheoretische Schriften zu den Grundelementen der Malerei und ihr Einfluss auf die Herausbildung der ungegenständlichen Kunst in Russland sowie ihre Rezeption in den Schriften anderer russischer Avantgardisten.

In seiner Abhandlung „Über das Geistige in der Kunst“ (1911) ergründete Kandinsky die Gesetzmäßigkeiten der bildnerischen Mittel und ihre Wirkung auf die menschliche Psyche um daraus eine Malgrammatik und eine abstrakte Bildsprache zu erarbeiten. Kandinskys antimaterialistische Haltung und sein Interesse für esoterisches Wissen beeinflussten anfangs sein künstlerisches Werk. Er verband das Medium Farbe mit vielfältigen Assoziationen, Symbolik und übersinnlichen Phänomenen.

Ab 1919 bezeugen Kandinskys theoretische Schriften einen radikalen Wendepunkt. Nüchterne und objektive Analyse beherrschen nun seinen Stil, ohne dass er auf assoziative Wahrnehmung der Farben eingeht. Kandinskys wissenschaftliche Herangehensweise an die Grundelemente der Malerei wird nicht nur in seinen für das *Institut für Künstlerische Kultur* (INCHUK) und die *Russische Akademie der Kunstwissenschaften* (RACHN) erarbeitete Programme evident.

Anfang der 1920er Jahre setzte sich die Konstruktivistin Ljubow Popowa (1889–1924) mit den von Kandinsky festgelegten Farb-Form-Zusammenstellungen

auseinander und fertigte ihre eigenen Entsprechungen an. Vergleichbare Untersuchungen findet man bei Iwan Kljun (1873–1943), der sich mit der Wirkung der Farbe auf die Form auseinandersetzte und Tabellen erstellte, die seine Überlegungen untermauern sollten. Diese Tatsachen belegen, dass die von Kandinsky vorgeschlagene Methode, die malerischen Mittel wissenschaftlich zu untersuchen, von einigen seiner Kollegen aufgegriffen und weiterentwickelt wurde, mit dem Ziel einen Grundstein zur Etablierung der Kunstwissenschaft in Russland zu legen.



Viktor Vasnetsov, *The Bogatyrs*, 1898  
oil on canvas, 295,3 x 446 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**Anna Brinkmann** studied history and history of art at Freie Universität and TU Berlin. Her interests of research are historic social changes and the part artists play in them. In her MA thesis, she analyzed Jürgen Böttcher's / Strawwalde's group of overpainted postcards and their processing in a trilogy of experimental films which originated in the German Democratic Republic. She has also worked on the political impetus in the works of Russian avant-garde artist Vladimir Tatlin and the European artists' group Situationist International, dealing with their strategies of generating experiments of movement to indicate inventive processes in the social space. From 2014 to 2016 she worked for Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt art IT – a postgraduate program for women artists in Berlin. Since 2015 she has been assisting the artist Wolfgang Tillmans.

**Werner Busch** was born in Prague in 1944. After his studies of art history in Tübingen, Freiburg, Vienna and London, he completed his doctorate on William Hogarth in 1973. From 1974 to 1981, he worked as assistant professor at the University of Bonn, receiving his habilitation on German art of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in 1980. He held his first professorship at Bochum University from 1981 to 1988 and headed the radio program "Funkkolleg Kunst" from 1983 to 1985. From 1988 until 2010, he held the chair of art history at Freie Universität Berlin, and he has been a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of

Sciences and Humanities since 1998. From 2003 to 2008, he was head of the Collaborative Research Centre "Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits" at Freie Universität Berlin. Busch's recently authored books include: *Das unklassische Bild. Von Tizian bis Constable und Turner* (Munich 2009), *Englishness: Beiträge zur englischen Kunst des 18. Jahrhunderts von Hogarth bis Romney* (Berlin–Munich 2010), *Great wits jump. Laurence Sterne und die bildende Kunst* (Munich 2011), *Verwandlung der Welt. Die romantische Arabeske*, exh. cat. (St. Petersburg 2013), *Adolph Menzel. Auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit* (Munich 2015, in French 2016, in English 2017), *Füssli. Traum und Wahnsinn*, exh. cat. (St. Petersburg 2017).

Born in Salerno, Italy in 1973, **Andrea Contursi** studied architecture at Università degli studi Federico II in Naples from 1995 to 2000 and at the Bauhaus Universität in Weimar from 2000 to 2006. From 2007 to 2011, he was a PhD student at the Bauhaus Universität, completing his doctoral thesis on city planning in Berlin after 1945 under the supervision of Prof. Max W. Guerra. Since about 2010, he has been working as a freelance architect taking part in several projects and competitions. At the same time, he has conducted further research in urbanism and architectural theory, especially focusing on the heritage of modernism and the avant-garde movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Tanja Malycheva** studied Art History, English Philology, Classical Archeology and Economic Policy at the University of Münster, where she completed her MA in Art History. She is currently working as a free-lance curator and art lecturer. In 2013, she assisted in organizing the show “Me. Myself. Naked.” (Bremen), the first exhibition on nude self-portraits by women artists. In 2014, she co-curated the exhibition “Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear” (Bietigheim-Bissingen/Bremen) and co-organized the international conference “Crossing Borders: Marianne Werefkin and the Cosmopolitan Women Artists in Her Circle” (Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum/Jacobs University). As a doctoral candidate at the University of Münster, she is completing her PhD thesis on Valentin Serov’s portraits under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Jürg Meyer zur Capellen (Münster) as well as Prof. Dr. Mikhail Allenov and Prof. Dr. Stepan Vaneyan (Moscow State University). In her research, she concentrates on transculturalism, cosmopolitanism, early modernism, text and context discourse and pan-European developments. Her further interests include critical whiteness studies, early Netherlandish painting, Renaissance, women artists, conceptual and contemporary art.

**Mane Mkrtychyan** was born in Yerevan, Armenia in 1984. In 2000, she entered the Art Department of Yerevan State University. In 2004, she received her Bachelor’s degree in art history (Diploma of Honor). Her bachelor’s thesis, she wrote on “Stylistic Peculiarities of Russian Portrait (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries).” In

2006, she graduated from the university with a MA in art history. Her master’s thesis was devoted to surrealism and its reflection in Armenian art. From 2006 to 2009, she took post-graduate courses in the Institute of Arts of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences; she defended her PhD thesis “Symbolism and its Expression in Armenian Art” in 2013, receiving a PhD in art history. From 2014 to 2016, she was deputy director of science at the Centre of Popular Creation after Hovhannes Sharambeyan. From 2009 until now, she has been working as a senior researcher at the Institute of Arts of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences. She is author of numerous scholarly articles and has participated in national and international conferences. Her book *Symbolism: Echoes in Armenian Art (Late XIX Century – Early XX Century)* was published in 2015.

**Maria Nitka** completed her PhD in art history at the University of Wrocław. In 2015, she participated in the postdoctoral project “Künstlertmobilität” at TU Berlin. She has held lectures at the University of Wrocław and the University of Zielona Góra. As a part of her work at the Institute of World Art Studies, she is currently compiling Henryk Siemiradzki’s catalogue raisonné. Her research focuses on Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian artists in Rome from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her most important publications include the monograph *Twórczość malarzy polskich w papieskim Rzymie w XIX wieku* [Works of Polish Painters in Papal Rome in the 19<sup>th</sup> century] and several articles.

**Ludmila Piters-Hofmann** is a PhD candidate in Art History at Jacobs University Bremen. Her thesis, supervised by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, focuses on fairy tales and folk tales as subjects of the Russian paintings of Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926) in the context of cultural transfer and Russian nationalism during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She additionally works as a guide and interpreter in Berlin. Previously, she studied Art History, Classical Literature and Classical Archeology at the University of Cologne, where she graduated with a master's thesis on early lunar photography in 2011. She assisted with the 2009 exhibition *The Moon* at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Fondation Corboud in Cologne, which showed the impact of Galileo Galilei's *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610) and other scientific developments – like telescopes, photography, satellites and spacecraft – on the depiction of the moon from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until now. In 2011, she curated *Panopticon – The Secret Treasures of the Wallraf* at the same museum, an exhibition showcasing seldom seen art works from the museum's storage in a salon hang. Her current research concentrates on cosmopolitanism and nationalism in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century painting with an emphasis on Russian art.

**Christiane Post** is an art historian, currently teaching contemporary art and museum studies at art academies and universities. She studied Fine Arts and Art Education at the art academies in Münster and Düsseldorf and received a doctor's degree in Art History at Bergische Universität Wuppertal. She was a

postdoctoral research associate at TU Berlin and completed her habilitation at Bergische Universität Wuppertal with a thesis on museums by artists. Between 2012 and 2016, she was visiting professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg and the Institut für Kunst im Kontext at the Universität der Künste Berlin. Her research focuses on 20<sup>th</sup>-century art and theory, the Russian avant-garde and museum studies. Her book publications include *Künstlermuseen – Die russische Avantgarde und ihre Museen für Moderne Kunst* (Berlin 2012), *Arbeiterklubs als neue Bauaufgabe der sowjetischen Avantgarde* (Berlin 2004), *Städtebau im Schatten Stalins. Die internationale Suche nach der sozialistischen Stadt in der Sowjetunion 1929–1935* (with Harald Bodenschatz, Berlin 2003; St. Petersburg 2015).

**Viktorija Schindler**, née Prokopovič, was born in Lithuania in 1978. She moved to Germany after having successfully completed her studies of German philology at Vilnius University and of public administration and law at Mykolas Romeris University. In 2004, she began studying art history at Freie Universität Berlin and received her Magister of Art History in 2011. During her studies of art history, she completed an internship at the Kupferstichkabinett of the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Since 2012, she has been writing her PhD thesis titled “Examination of the Manuscripts of Wassily Kandinsky and Ivan Kliun on the Primary Elements of Painting as a Premise for the Establishment of the Science of Art,” which is supervised by Prof. Werner

Busch and supported by a scholarship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

**Isabel Stokholm** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Cambridge, supervised by Dr Rosalind Polly Blakesley. Having studied Russian at the State Pushkin Institute in Moscow, she went on to receive her BA from the University of Oxford (History, 2013) and MA from the Courtauld Institute of Art (History of Art, 2015), where her dissertation on Ilya Repin won the Director's Prize. Since 2016, she has been based in Moscow to conduct long-term archival research. Her PhD research, entitled *Fathers & Sons? Uncovering Cross-Generational Relations in the Russian Art World, 1880–1923*, reassesses the relationship between artistic generations in late Imperial Russia. Her work focuses on two prominent members of the Peredvizhniki, Vasily Surikov and Ilya Repin, reflecting on personal and professional exchange between these “old-guard” proponents of realist painting and youthful members of modernist and avant-garde groups. She explores themes such as artistic training, salons and socializing, generational theory, the role of youth and aging in the art world, and the divide between artists' public and private lives. Her research employs Digital Humanities methods to study artistic networks using Social Network Analysis (SNA) and map Russian artistic life in Moscow, St. Petersburg and abroad using Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

**Maria Taroutina** is Assistant Professor of Art History at Yale–NUS College in Singapore. She received her PhD in 2013 from Yale University

and has published a number of articles and essays on the architecture, painting and sculpture of Imperial and early Soviet Russia. Her first book, *From the Tessera to the Square: Russian Modernism and the Russo-Byzantine Revival*, is forthcoming with Pennsylvania State University Press and charts the rediscovery and rigorous reassessment of medieval Russian and Byzantine art in Russia in the years 1860–1920. She is also co-editor, with Roland Betancourt, of *Byzantium/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity* (Brill, 2015). In her research, she is primarily interested in rethinking the opposing binary categories of avant-gardism and revivalism, historicism and innovation, secular modernity and religion, and regionalism and internationalization as they have been applied to the trajectory of Russian and Eastern European art more broadly.

**Isabel Wünsche** is Professor of Art and Art History at Jacobs University Bremen since 2001. Her recent book publications include *Kunst & Leben. Michail Matjuschin und die russischen Avantgarde in St. Petersburg* (2012), *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory* (2012), *The Organic School of the Russian Avant-Garde: Nature's Creative Principles* (2015), *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle* (2016), and *Practices of Abstract Art: Between Anarchism and Appropriation* (2016).

**Jan Zachariáš** was born in Pilsen, Czech Republic in 1988. He studied history of art at Charles University in Prague where he

received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees with a thesis on Vincent van Gogh's painting *The Pair of Shoes* and to the related discussion among Heidegger, Schapiro and Derrida. He participated in study and research trips to Madrid, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Konstanz and Berlin as well as conferences and workshops. Since 2016, he has been a PhD candidate and fellow of the International Research Training Group "Religious Cultures in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe" at Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in Munich. His PhD thesis focuses on the transformation of Christ in Russian art from 1830 to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His research interests include 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian painting, Vincent van Gogh, theories of art history and philosophical interpretations of art.



Ivan Kliun, *wooden relief*, around 1915, collage of oil and wood elements, in original frame  
90,6 x 44,5 cm,  
Kroll Family Trust, Luzern

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