

Call for papers for a workshop-videoconference at the Centre for French Civilization and Francophone Studies (CCFEF) - University of Warsaw, which will take place June 1, 2021.

Artistic Neighbourhoods between Tension and Cooperation: The Artistic Space of Central and Eastern Europe in its Interactions with the USSR in the Interwar Period.

After the October Revolution, artists from Soviet Russia actively regained contact with the art scene in Western European countries. Thereafter, the Soviet administration conceived a new type of cultural diplomacy with the aim of attaining political, diplomatic and propagandist ends. The "pilgrimage" of Western intellectuals and artists to the USSR in the interwar period has been well studied, especially from the perspective of back-and-forth experiences in social and cultural policy. Historians have been mainly interested in cultural experiences and exchanges with Western Europe or/and with the United States, while neighbouring countries are often excluded from studies of these circulations. Under the term of direct neighbours of the USSR it is possible to refer to Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania, but also Hungary or Bulgaria, countries that are geographically or linguistically close. The goal of this workshop is to bring together young specialists (doctoral students and early-career researchers) around this complex, rich and little-studied topic.

Conflicting bilateral diplomatic relations largely affected the development of artistic exchanges, while the first real interlocutors of artists in Soviet Russia were their peers from neighbouring countries with whom they shared a common past (education, teaching and exhibitions). Throughout the 1920s, the movements of artists from the Soviet Republics in these countries were based on their familiarity with local artistic circles. Even if a trip to these countries was often perceived by these artists as a point of passage to the great nebula of the Western art scene, it would be useful to study their presence in these countries from a perspective of aesthetic exchanges and cultural interconnections.

The artists who came to Soviet Russia in 1920 pursued various objectives: to learn about new communist experiences, to deepen their artistic and / or political skills. They came without waiting for the establishment of diplomatic relations, and their journey often followed transnational trajectories. Through their rich experiences and language skills, they offered a new opening for the development of artistic production and art history on the Soviet art scene. In particular, these artists were very active in the creation and the functioning of the International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists in 1930, the objective of which was to bring together all the artists close to the communist networks and all the militant artists for social and political causes. This office became a place of reception and integration of mainly German-speaking artists from Central and Eastern Europe.

The period of establishment of bilateral relations between the USSR and its neighbouring countries was marked by the signing of non-aggression agreements with Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Finland in 1932, then by the diplomatic recognition of the USSR by Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania in 1934. This diplomatic evolution allowed a new impetus in the development of artistic exchanges, above all through the organization of official exhibitions and several trips by artists from these countries to the USSR to prepare these exhibitions. These exchanges could also be motivated by aesthetic, cultural curiosity and / or by political affinities. Through the study of the organization and reception of these exhibitions, it is possible to analyse the political and cultural issues of this art in circulation: the question of minorities, national demands, geopolitical tensions and changes in political regimes. Thus, the organization of the Czechoslovak art exhibition in Moscow in September 1937 was very representative in this context, since it spelt the end for artistic exchanges between the USSR and the countries of Europe in the "age of extremes".

The workshop aims to revisit the artistic and cultural history of the interwar period from the perspective of relations between the USSR and Central and Eastern Europe, through the study of the international career of artists and works of art in the broad sense of the term (painting, sculpture and specifically graphic art productions). The goal would be to create a space for reflection and discussion on the following themes:

- **Rethinking the centre / periphery perspective through an aesthetic, political and social prism and the place of artists in this space:** What role did the passage through the USSR of an artist or a work at regional and international level play and vice versa? In what form was it possible to integrate these regional exchanges into a broader international perspective on an East-West axis? What would be the legacies of these circulations?
- **The revolutionary aesthetic avant-garde of the 1920s gave way to a revolutionary social avant-garde with a political/moral duty for the artist to engage in the class struggle:** What was the circulation of aesthetic ideas across borders? What were the influences and echoes of the October Revolution on artistic movements in Central and Eastern Europe, throughout these connections and interactions? We propose to rethink this already well-studied question through the opening of new archives and specific case studies. What were the subsequent receptions and returns after the emergence of the concept of "socialist realism" in the 1930s?
- **Individual trajectories of artists between local, regional and international level. Artists as mediators between different artistic / political scenes:** What role did political convictions, economic interests or aesthetic inspirations play in these circulations? What are the conclusions and consequences of these trips? What place was given to women artists and / or Jewish artists in these exchanges? How did emigrant artists positioned themselves and participated in these exchanges?
- **“An aesthetic obsession with national particularity” in its staging and reception with a variety of art objects in circulation:** How did the traditional / avant-garde art and modernism / anti-modernism dichotomies reflected in these circulations and especially in the organized exhibitions? Would it be possible to study the artistic object as a means of pressure or political negotiation, notably through acquisitions of works of art by Soviet authorities?

The purpose of the workshop is to create a transversal research space between history of art, cultural and political history and visual studies.

We invite those interested to send their paper proposals (300 words), a short bibliography (3-4 references) and a short biography (5-10 lines) to the address artistic.neighborhoods@gmail.com before **May 16th, 2021**.

The workshop will take place on **June 1st, 2021** in a videoconferences' format. It is planned to publish the contributions in a special issue of the *Pluralités européennes* editorial series (Warsaw University Press). Therefore, it is desirable that the proposals have not been the subject of a text published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

Scientific committee:

Jérôme Bazin, Paris-East Créteil University, Paris.

Luba Jurgenson, Sorbonne University, Paris.

Daria A. Kostina, Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg

Nicolas Maslowski, University of Warsaw, Warsaw.

Workshop organisation: **Marija Podzorova**, University of Warsaw (CCFEF).

The Centre for French Civilization and Francophone Studies (CCFEF) is a unit for Social and Human Sciences at the University of Warsaw, created in 1958 by Michel Foucault, who was its first director.

Selected bibliography:

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CLARK, Katerina. *Moscow, the Fourth Rome. Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941*. Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press Cambridge, 2011.

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KEN, Oleg, RUPASOV, Alexader. *Zapadnoe prigranič'e: politbûro CK VKP (b) i otnošeníâ SSSR s zapadnymi sosednimi gosudarstvami, 1928-1934*. Moskva: Algoritm 2014.

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LUCENTO, Angelina. "Painting against Empire: Béla Uitz and the Birth and Fate of Internationalist Socialist Realism". *The Russian Review* October 2020, Volume 79, Issue 4, pp. 578–605.

PASSUTH, Krisztina. *Les avant-gardes de l'Europe centrale : 1907-1927*. Traduit par Dominique Moyen, Paris : Flammarion, 1988.