

Conference: «Art, Money and Socialism. The Economies of East-European Visual Art During the Cold War»

Date: 4 November 2024, 9.30-18.30

Place: *Campus Condorcet. Centre de colloques. Salle 100. Place du Front Populaire, 93300 Aubervilliers*

General argument

Since the 2000s, when Piotr Piotrowski published his groundbreaking research, the study of fine art of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe has changed dramatically. An important thread was the research of the social and institutional impact on art: in their works, Susan E.Reid, Beata Hock, Klara Kemp-Welch, Jérôme Bazin, Caterina Preda, Maja and Reuben Fowkes questioned the clichés about the dominance of socialist realism, the impenetrability of the Iron Curtain and the artists' subservience to party regulations.

We invite you to discuss economic aspects of visual art in socialist countries during the Cold War. We are eager to examine official models of fine art production, its economic and political aspects. How influential were artists and art institutions (artists' unions) in shaping the pricing policy and aesthetic criteria of state commissions for art? How were prices for art works decided and negotiated in a planned economy and how were artworks bought and sold in the absence of a free market? How did the price correlate with the symbolic value of art works and what were the criteria for valorization?

In addition to discussing the local art economy, we encourage you to reflect on the international art trade between Eastern European and Western countries during the Cold War. This trade took place both at the official level and as a result of unofficial (shadow) transactions between independent dealers and artists. It is thought that in the first instance, the export of artistic works served as a source of enrichment for the state budget, an instrument of cultural diplomacy, and a way of promoting a positive image of socialist art abroad. Shadow transactions mainly took place between unofficial artists and foreign buyers (diplomats, correspondents, tourists), and influenced the internal life of artistic communities, their structures, identity, hierarchy and communications.

We would like to discuss the circumstances of these transactions and what exactly provoked the interest of Western buyers. How did the value of art objects change depending on their circulation? What role did the intermediaries (state, institutional, independent) play in creating connections between East and West? Did the international art trade influence the official art canons, or working methods and political positions of the artists? Having sketched out this range of questions as a starting point for discussion, and without being exhaustive, we propose to reflect on the material (and particularly economic) conditions of production and circulation of Eastern European visual art during the Cold War.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Registration 9.30 — 10.00

Greetings and Conference Opening 10.00 — 10.15

Vera Guseynova (EHESS, CEFRES) and Vera Otdelnova (University of Oxford),
organising committee

Masha Cerovic, Associate Professor EHESS Director of the Centre for Russian,
Caucasian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies (CERCEC, EHESS)

MORNING SESSION. ART AND ECONOMY WITHIN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

10.15 — 12.55

Panel 1. Art Production Under Regulation: State Commissions and Institutions

10.15 — 11.25

Ivana Hanaček (University of Zadar) *State Orders and Power Dynamics in the
Union of Croatian Artists 1946-1952*

Marcin Lewicki (University of Warsaw) *A Brief History of Desa or How to Sell Art in Socialist Poland*

Coffee break 11.25 — 11.45

Panel 2. Shadow Economies and Informal Practices

11.45 — 12.55

Olena Chervonik (University of Oxford) *“Luriki” as a Soviet Black Market Hacking and as an Artistic Method of the Kharkiv School of Photography*

Wiktoria Szczupacka (Institute of Art of Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) *Productive And Reproductive Women’s Work in Warsaw’s Art Institutions During the Gierek Era of the 1970s*

LUNCH

12.55 — 14.00

AFTERNOON SESSION. ART EXPORT AND EXCHANGE

14.00 — 17.00

Panel 3. International Art Trade and Official Foreign Policies

14.00 — 15.10

Anastassiya Filcheva (ENS, Paris) *Malevich in Cultural Diplomacy Between the Soviet Union and the Western World*

Sandra Imko (Catholic University, Lublin) *From Loom to Market: the Economic Journey of Polish Textile Art in the 1960s-70s*

Coffee break 15.10 — 15.30

Panel 4. Globalizing Art Market

15.30 — 16.40

Coline Perron (Sciences Po Strasbourg — University of Strasbourg, Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin) *“Art of Solidarity”, Art Without a Price? Extra-European Art in the GDR Museum Collections (1960s - 1980s)*

Claudia E. Friedrich (University of Cologne) *Representations of East-European Visual Art at the ART COLOGNE During the Cold War*

Concluding Comments 17.00 — 18.00

Jérôme Bazin, professor in contemporary history at the University of Paris-Est-Créteil-Val-de-Marne (UPEC)

What Was So Socialist About the Socialist Art World?

Final discussion 18.00 — 18.30

Wojciech Fangor, Figures, 1950, photo courtesy of the Art Museum in Łódź

