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RUSSIAN
ART:
GRADUATE
WORKSHOP

И. КАКОВ.

RUSSIAN ART: GRADUATE WORKSHOP

Russian Art and Culture Group, First Graduate Workshop
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany
Conference Room, Research IV, March 13th, 2015

Thursday, March 13, 2014

- 15:00 **Opening** Isabel Wünsche
- 15:30 **Color Theories in the Manuscripts of Russian Avant-Garde Artist Ivan Kliun**
Viktoria Schindler
- 16:30 **The Reception of Wassily Kandinsky in 1920s Germany** Sebastian Borkhardt
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:00 **“Poetry and Painting”: Around the OBERIOU, the Last Movement in the
History of the Russian Avant-garde (Leningrad, 1928-1932)** Michael Meylac
- 21:00 Reception

Friday, March 14th, 2014

- 9:30 **Cosmopolitanism as the Driving Force in the Artistic Development of Valentin Serov** Tanja Malycheva
- 10:30 **The 1922 First Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin and its Consequences**
Miriam Häßler
- 11:30 **Space Exploration's Impact on the Aesthetics of the Russian Avant-Garde**
Rebecca Wichmann
- 12:30 **At Home Amongst Strangers, or the Soviet Promotion of American Art during the Cold War: The Case of Rockwell Kent** Kirill Chunikhin
- 13:30 Lunch
- 15:00 Visit to the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum

Color Theories in the Manuscripts of Russian Avant-Garde Artist Ivan Kliun | Viktoria Schindler, Berlin

My talk will focus on manuscripts and excerpts from various handbooks on color by the lesser known Russian artist Ivan Kliun (1873-1943), who in the early 20th century worked in the cultural centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg together with avant-garde Russian artists, including Kazimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Lyubov Popova, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Olga Rozanova, and Michail Matjushin, and made a significant contribution to the development of abstract art.

Based on cubism and the color geometry in Malevich's Suprematism, Kliun concluded that a painting is composed of individual elements like color, form, light phenomena and texture. Around 1916 he began to empirically examine the interaction of these elements and their principles. To visualize his observations Kliun designed diagrams of the corresponding colors and forms.

In Kliun's written estate there are numerous still unpublished handwritten notebooks containing his own ideas as well as extracts from scientific handbooks on color that were widely used in mid-1920s Russia. Kliun's still unpublished manuscript „Farbenkunde“ (“Theory of Color,” ca. 1928) offers a summary of relevant insights into physical properties of color, tenets of contrast, and the sensual effects of color in these extracts from works by W. Ostwald, H. von Helmholtz, F. Shestakov, L. Richtera und W. Goethe.

My talk aims to clarify that the artists in mid-1920s Russia used the same scientific sources on color theories as the artists in West-Europe and answer the following questions: what moved Kliun to this investigation into the elements of painting? What was the purpose of the color handbooks for Kliun's examination?

The Reception of Wassily Kandinsky in 1920s Germany | Sebastian Borkhardt, Tübingen

In the 1910s, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was considered by the German public not only as one of the leading figures of Expressionism, but also as the representative par excellence of new Russian art. His groundbreaking treatise “Über das Geistige in der Kunst” (On the Spiritual in Art; 1912) along with his spectacularly new way of painting gave him a prominent, albeit not undisputed, position in German art life. Both Kandinsky’s abstraction and his striving for the ‘spiritual’ were perceived as the epitome of Russianness. The situation changed around 1920 when Soviet Russia sought to reestablish the artistic connections with the West that had been cut off owing to World War I (1914-18). As a result of becoming acquainted with artistic developments such as Suprematism and Constructivism, German critics changed, at least to some extent, their view of Kandinsky as being the most significant exponent of Russian art.

Beginning with Konstantin Umanskij’s account on “Neue Kunst in Rußland” (New Art in Russia; 1920) and the “Erste Russische Kunstausstellung” in Berlin (First Russian Art Exhibition; 1922), I will discuss the role that Kandinsky’s Russian context(s) played in the reception of his work in 1920s Germany. The focus of my paper is on the year of 1926 when Kandinsky celebrated his 60th birthday. Kandinsky’s jubilee was accompanied not only by a large retrospective show that toured several German cities, but also by the publication of his seminal writing *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* (Point and Line to Plane).

“Poetry and Painting”: around the OBERIOU, the Last Movement in the History of the Russian Avant-garde (Leningrad, 1928-1932) | Michael Meylac, Strasbourg

The motif of poetry being related to the visual arts goes back to antiquity. Plutarch quotes Simonides who claimed that “Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting that speaks,” Lucian calls Homer “best of all painters,” and Horace’s poem “Ut pictura poesis” (Poetry as a Picture) remained popular from the Renaissance up to Ezra Pound. As it is often the case with various avant-garde movements actualizing their most archaic roots, the origins of Russian Futurism reveal their connection to painting and drawing.

Works of the members of the OBERIOU, Russia's last post-futurist movement, also demonstrate various liaisons with the visual arts. Poets belonging to this movement had both a biographical and a creative relationship with the great avant-garde masters, especially with Kazimir Malevich, Pavel Filonov, and their students. The major OBERIOU poet Alexander Vvedensky started by collaborating with a group of young artists guided by Terent'ev, a "transmental futurist" from the older generation. This was at the Phonological Laboratory of the GINHUK (State Institute of Artistic Culture presided by Malevich), and the poet was charged to find verbal correspondences (ekphraseis) to artists' abstract paintings, and elements of "picturesqueness," or "pictorialism" remained proper to his poetics. Kharms, one of the founders of the OBERIOU, had full mastership in drawing and, in the best tradition of Russian Futurism, indulged himself in experimenting with print fonts and calligraphy.

Stalin's "great breakthrough" proclaimed in 1930 marked the beginning of an era of total intolerance to any avant-gardism and was accompanied by severe censorship. Any artists and authors not accepting the sterile methods of what was soon named "Socialist Realism" were persecuted. The OBERIOU was officially banned and its participants arrested, then sent into exile. Their poetic legacy was only discovered in the mid-1960s.

Cosmopolitanism as the Driving Force in the Artistic Development of Valentin Serov | Tanja Malycheva, Bremen

As someone who was allowed to ride Richard Wagner's dog at the age of four and had spent most of his life between Saint Petersburg, Munich, Paris, and Kiev by the age of fourteen, Valentin Serov was naturally inclined to neglect geographical borders. Early experiences such as sketching en plein air with Max Liebermann's friend Karl Koepping and visits to the Louvre with Ilya Repin made him consider the artistic dialogue with Europe not only self-evident but also necessary for an artistic development. However, during the Soviet era any analysis of Serov's cosmopolitan educational background was avoided and a profound discussion about possible artistic influences from abroad unwanted and virtually not pursued.

In my paper, I will discuss Serov's early works, among them *Amazon* (1884), *At the Window* (1886), and *Girl with Peaches* (1887), which show him thinking along the same lines as his European counterparts. In this context, I will particularly focus on his two early visits to Europe – Germany, Holland, and Belgium in 1885 and Italy in 1887. I will take a closer look at the Exposition Universelle in Antwerp and Esposizione nazionale artistica in Venice, where Serov encountered, inter alia, works by Munch, Segantini, Favretto, and Sargent. His later paintings, including portraits of the patron Henriette Hirschman (1907) and the Ballets Russes dancer Ida Rubinstein (1910), prove that Serov never lost his awareness of the modernist developments in other countries and his courage to challenge those he appreciated most. Thus, his oeuvre presents one of the most striking examples of artistic interrelations between Russia and Western Europe before the Revolution.

The 1922 First Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin and its Consequences | Miriam Häbler, Hamburg

In October 1922, a sensation took place in Berlin: For the first time, a broad western audience got the chance to see a comprehensive excerpt from the Russian art of the last two decades. The show featured non-objective art, Suprematism and Constructivism – presented through paintings and sculptures by Kasimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, Alexander Rodchenko or Vladimir Tatlin – as well as rather traditional, academic art and applied arts. The First Russian Art Exhibition (Первая Русская Художественная Выставка) at the Galerie van Diemen, nowadays a modern myth, is believed to have had a remarkable impact on the development of abstract art in Western Europe, such as De Stijl-Group in the Netherlands and the German Bauhaus. Around 15,000 visitors made the First Russian Art Exhibition a huge success, which was accompanied by a broad press feedback.

The exhibition, which was later shown in the Stedelijk-Museum in Amsterdam, had been organized by David Sterenberg on behalf of the Russian People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros). With the help of the artists Naum Gabo and Natan Altman, he set up a show consisting of around 1,000 objects. In Germany, the international committee of the Workers' International Relief, an aid organization for those starving in

Russia, was responsible for its realization. Having taken place in the year of the Treaty of Rapallo, the event must be seen as a political statement as well. The focus of this doctoral thesis is on the diverse relations between political and governmental actors of the Russian Soviet Federation and the Weimar Republic, the artistic exchanges between the key players of the western and eastern Avantgardes, as well as the exhibition's historical background and aftermath.

Space Exploration's Impact on Aesthetics: The Russian Avant-Garde | Rebecca Wichmann, St. Petersburg/Potsdam

One of the most dynamic narratives of the 20th century is the relationship with how artists depicted the sky—a transitional space of war and peace. My research examines the history of artist's work involving space exploration during the early U.S.S.R., bewitching the Avantgarde movement. It is a narrative of how the relationship between militarization and space conflicted with artists's visions of space, utopia, ecology, and globalization.

Early work from the Russian avant-garde satisfied governmental pressures visualizing their own dreams for "new men" who would inhabit the new frontier. Although their works had underlying tones of war, and spoke about space as they would another continent to conquer, the sense of wonder towards the sky and search for a pure utopia was the essence which led their aesthetics.

At Home Amongst Strangers, or the Soviet Promotion of American Art during the Cold War: The Case of Rockwell Kent | Kirill Chunikhin, Bremen

When speaking about the cultural exchange between the US and the USSR during the Cold War, particularly about art exhibitions, the American National Exhibition in Sokolniki comes first to mind. This 1959 exhibition is one of the best-examined episodes of the cultural Cold War and its significance is widely recognized. What is much lesser known is that the American National Exhibition had been preceded by several shows of American

art displayed in the USSR in 1957-58. Considering the US cultural policy of advancing American art, it is rather surprising to see that the first exhibitions of American art in the USSR were organized by the Soviets who bypassed the USIA and MoMA—the official and semi-official US institutions involved in the cultural warfare.

In my paper, I will focus on the case of Rockwell Kent—the first American artist to be exhibited in Soviet museums. Discussing the history of Rockwell Kent’s exhibitions and framing his shows in the broader context of the history of American-Soviet cultural relations during the Cold War, I will show how a number of various political and aesthetic factors predetermined and prompted the positive reception of Kent’s art in the USSR.

Sebastian Borkhardt studied History of Art, East Slavonic Philology and Religious Studies in Tübingen and Saint Petersburg. After completing his M.A. in 2011, he started his doctoral research at the University of Tübingen. His dissertation examines the role of the Russian roots of Vasily Kandinsky in the reception of the artist's work in Germany and is supervised by Professor Dr. Eva Mazur-Keblowski (Tübingen) and Professor Dr. Ada Raev (Bamberg). Sebastian received a scholarship from the State Graduate Funding (Landesgraduiertenförderung) of Baden-Württemberg and from the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). His interests include modernism, with particular focus on Russian art, as well as reception history, human-animal studies, and contemporary museum practice. Sebastian is currently preparing an article for publication in a collected volume entitled *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art*, ed. by Louise Hardiman and Nicola Kozicharow, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.

Miriam Häbler studied art history and history at the universities of Münster and Hamburg; final thesis (Magister) in 2011 at the university of Hamburg on the political and aesthetic mechanism of the ROSTA windows, a special kind of political poster made by avant-garde artists, which appeared during the Russian Civil War; currently working as an assistant

curator at the Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg, where she participated in several exhibition projects, such as *Rodchenko. A new era (2013)*; her doctoral thesis on the 1922 First Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin and its artistic and political consequences is in progress.

Kirill Chunikhin graduated with a degree in English Philology from Kemerovo State University in 2009. He entered the Department of Art History at the European University at St. Petersburg in 2010 and defended his M.A. thesis "Clement Greenberg: A Historical Apology of Modernism" in 2012. Since 2013, he is a Ph.D. student at Jacobs University. His current research project focuses on the representation and reception of American visual art in the USSR during the Cold War.

Tanja Malycheva studied Art History, English Philology, Classical Archeology, and Economic Policy at the University of Münster, Germany, where she completed her M. A. in Art History, and is now working as a free-lance curator and art lecturer. She assisted the *Me. Myself. Naked.* exhibition at the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum Bremen (2013), the first exhibition on nude self-portraits by women artists. There she also co-curated the exhibition *Marianne Werefkin. From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear (2014, Bietigheim-Bissingen/Bremen)* and co-organized an international conference *Marianne Werefkin and the Cosmopolitan Women Artists* together with Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche (Jacobs University). As a doctoral candidate at the University of Münster, Tanja Malycheva is writing her PhD thesis

Studies on Serov's Portraiture (ger. Studien zu Serovs Porträtschaffen), being supervised by Prof. Dr. Jürg Meyer zur Capellen from the University of Münster as well as Prof. Dr. Mikhail Allenov and Prof. Dr. Stepan Vaneyan from the 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. Together with Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche Tanja Malychewa is currently editing the publication *Networks of the Early Avant-Garde: Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in her Circle*.

Viktoria Schindler (née Prokopovic) was born in Lithuania. From 1998 until 2002, Viktoria studied German philology at Vilnius University. She continued her studies by earning a Master of Public Management at Mykolo Roemerio University (Lithuania) and performing research at the Verbandsmanagement Institute at University of Fribourg (Switzerland). During the same period, she worked as a production coordinator for the international movie "Wellen" with Ziegler Film and producer Vivian Naefe. In 2004, Viktoria chose to devote her energy to her passion for arts and began studying Art History at the Free University of Berlin. There, she focused her research on Neoclassicism, the Movement of Nazarener, Cubism, color theory in art from the 18th to the 20th century, and the American Abstract Expressionism. At the end of her master studies in

2011, she completed an internship at the Hamburger Kunsthalle in the Kupferstichkabinett, where she catalogued the graphical work of Paul Wunderlich.

Since 2011, Viktoria has been writing her PhD thesis on the „Examination of the Manuscripts of Wassily Kandinsky and Iwan Kliun on the Primary Elements of Painting as a Premise for the Establishment of the Science of Art,“ supervised by Prof. Werner Busch at the Free University of Berlin. To fund her doctoral research, Viktoria was granted an Elsa Neumann PhD Scholarship from the State of Berlin. Since 2012 she has been supported by a scholarship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

Rebecca Lilianne Wichmann was born in Jackson, Mississippi. She is a doctorate student in Art History and Theory at Jacobs University in Bremen. Her dissertation is on the history of governmental artist initiatives in the area of space and rocketry in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. during the Cold War. She got her M.A. in Art History and Russian Culture at European Univeristiy at St. Petersburg, Russia where she studied Russian Avant-garde work on the subject of cosmos. She received her B.F.A. in Drawing at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in Minnesota. She previously worked at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington D.C.

Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche is Professor of Art and Art History at Jacobs University Bremen. Previously, she taught modern art at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena; Scripps College, Claremont;

and the University of California, Los Angeles. She also worked on museum projects at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, and The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino. Dr. Wünsche studied Art History and Classical and Christian Archaeology in Berlin, Moscow, Heidelberg, and Los Angeles and received her Ph.D. from Heidelberg University. She held research fellowships at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino (2003-2004), the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Museum of Art at Rutgers University (2003-2004 and 2007), the National Humanities Center, North Carolina (2007-2008), the Collegium Budapest (2008-2009), and from the German Science Foundation (DFG, 2011-2012) and the German Academic Exchange Board (DAAD, 2012-2013).

THE RUSSIAN ART AND CULTURE GROUP

unites scholars and young researchers from Eastern and Western Europe. It is based at Jacobs University in Bremen.

The project is designed as a platform for discussing various aspects of Russian and Soviet visual arts, music and literature.