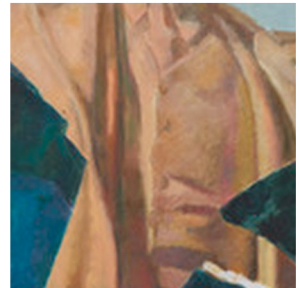
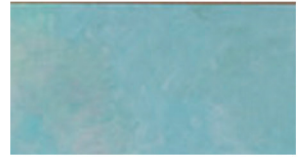


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RUSSIAN  
ART:  
CHANGING  
PERCEPTIONS



# RUSSIAN ART: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Russian Art and Culture Group, Second Graduate Workshop  
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany  
Conference Room, Research IV, June 4–5, 2015

Thursday, June 4th

- 10.00 **Opening**  
Welcome Address, Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche
- Russian Art of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Tradition and Modernism** Chair: Rebecca Wichmann
- 10.30 **Between the Frontiers: Valentin Serov by Russian, Soviet and Western Critics** Tanja Malycheva, Westfälische Wilhelms Universität/MSU, Moscow
- 11.00 **“You are the only hope...”: Changing the Perception of Russian Printmaking in the Late Nineteenth Century** Dr. Galina Mardilovich, independent researcher, Cambridge
- 11.30 **Fairy Tales in Russian Painting of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries** Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Humboldt University Berlin

12.00 **The Discourse on Pictorial Photography in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century** Nadezhda Stanulevich, Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St.Petersburg

12.30 Discussion

13.00 Lunch

**Russian Art Exhibitions: Intentions and Interpretations** Chair: Tanja Malycheva

14.30 **The Russian Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Rome in 1911: Some Aspects of the Internal Discourse** Svetlana Babadzhan, State Institute for Art Studies, Moscow

15.00 **Political Aspects of the Perception and Reception of the Russian Avant-Garde: Exhibitions in Germany in 1921 and 1922** Natalia Kroll, AbyWarburg Stiftung/Universität Hamburg

15.30 Discussion

16.00 Coffee Break

16.30 **The Soviet Art Exhibition at the Institute of Art Propaganda in Warsaw in 1933: The Reception of Soviet Artistic and Political Ideas by Polish Avant-Garde Groups (1933–1937)** Agnieszka Dulęba, Institute of Art History, Warsaw University

17.00 **Exhibiting Russia: Revising, Reframing and Reinterpreting the Russian Avant-Garde** Dr. Roann Barris, Chair and Professor, Art Department, Radford University

17.30 Discussion

19.00 Dinner (not included)

Friday, June 5th

**Contemporary Russia I** Chair: Rebecca Wichmann

- 10.00 **Perceptions of (Soviet) Russian Art in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: Ilya Kabakov as an Exceptional and Epitome Phenomenon**  
Olga Keller, JustusLiebigUniversität Gießen
- 10.30 **Chto Delat? Art Activism in Russia from the Perspective of its Transnational Perception** Sebastian Mühl, University of Art and Design Offenbach/Main
- 11.00 **The Perception of Russian Art Brut in Western Europe** Dina Filatova,  
Department of Art History, European University, St. Petersburg
- 11.30 Discussion
- 12.30 Lunch
- Contemporary Russia II** Chair: Tanja Malycheva
- 14.30 **The Accidental Nature of Independent Art: A Look at Contemporary Russian Artists From the CubeShaped Luda Gallery** Roberta Sala, University of Torino
- 15.00 **Ostalgia as a Special Artistic Development in Contemporary Art** Natalia Drobot, Hasselt University and PLXMAD, Hasselt
- 15.30 **To Cannes with Love: Russian Movies and Russian Critics at the International Film Festival** Dr. Marina Toropygina, Russian State University of Cinematography, Moscow
- 16.00 Discussion and Closing Notes

**Between the Frontiers: Valentin Serov by Russian, Soviet and Western Critics |**

**Tanja Malycheva**

It is not a coincidence that Valentin Serov's contemporaries considered him to be one of the major renovators of Russian art. He exhibited abroad at Munich Secession, Biennale in Venice and Salon d'Automne in Paris and became an acclaimed stage designer with Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. As a professor at Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture he tutored Petrov-Vodkin, Saryan, Larionov, and Tatlin, thus, truly playing a key role in the development of Russian modernism. In fact, Serov's body of work is one of the most striking examples of artistic links between Russia and Western Europe before the Revolution.

There is large number of publications on Serov by Russian and Soviet authors whereas only few researchers have taken notice of this artist so far outside the Russian-speaking world. However, it is quite striking that in Russia as well as in the West the respective assessments of Serov's role in modernistic developments and realistic tradition turn out to depend heavily on when the study was published: before or after 1917. Like a barometer, these changing perceptions show the changes in the political and societal weather and fundamentally question the objectivity of art interpretations

**'You are the only hope...': Changing the Perception of Russian Printmaking in the Late Nineteenth Century | Dr. Galina Mardilovich**

In 1875, when Ivan Pozhalostin was studying in Paris on a stipend from the Russian Academy of Arts, his mentor Fedor Jordan, cautiously wrote to him that printmaking was increasingly seen as a medium 'more tolerated, rather than necessary' within academic walls. Jordan, then Professor of Printmaking at the Academy, urged Pozhalostin to seek every opportunity in Paris to improve his skills and to learn everything the Academy advised him, so that upon his return to Russia he could help elevate the prestige of printmaking as an art form yet again. Only a few years later, in 1880, another printmaker, Vasilii Mate, was sent to study in Paris with similar, resounding words: 'You are the only hope for wood engraving not only in our Academy, but in the whole of Russia...'

This paper takes as its focus the artistic training abroad of two prominent late-nineteenth century Russian printmakers: Ivan Pozhalostin (1837-1909) and Vasilii Mate

(1856-1917). Both artists were sent to Paris as ‘academic pensioners’, a privilege awarded by the Imperial Academy of Arts to outstanding students with the right to travel and study abroad for several years. But upon their returns, their professional trajectories diverged significantly: whereas Pozhalostin was being referred to as the last practitioner of the dying medium of engraving, Mate was being heralded for breathing new life into Russian printmaking. And even though both artists remained reproductive printmakers throughout their careers, Pozhalostin was soon forced from his teaching post at the Academy, while Mate was hired by the institution in 1893 to instil novel practices into its printmaking curriculum.

This paper will address the two artists’ specific experiences abroad and analyse the extent of western artistic training on the development of their individual methodology, and ultimately their careers. In examining the confluence of factors – social background, teachers, critical support, commercial success – that contributed to personal transformations of both Pozhalostin and Mathe during their sojourns in Paris, this paper aims to expose the nuances of what was at stake for the printmakers as a result of their positions as academic pensioners. Did this status inhibit or enable them to develop innovative practices in their techniques? How did being in Paris allow these printmakers to participate in international developments and those back in Russia? How did they navigate the constraints placed on them by their status, and what did it mean when they broke those rules? Most importantly, what role, if any, did the artistic training abroad play in the appreciation of Pozhalostin’s and Mate’s art back in Russia?

Using the two different printmakers, Pozhalostin and Mate, with their extensive experiences in Paris as case studies, this paper will present new research on the shifting meaning of studying abroad for Russian artists in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, it will scrutinize the larger theoretical issues of transnational influence on the changes in the domestic perception of Russian printmaking and its practicing artists.

### **Fairy Tales in Russian Painting of the 19th and Early 20th Century | Ludmila Piters-Hofmann**

Since the second half of the 19th century fairy tales appear on large-sized canvases of Russian painters. Amongst others Ilya Y. Repin (1844–1930), Mikhail A. Vrubel (1856–1910) and Viktor M. Vasnetsov (1848–1926) found different ways to depict this subject in oil. It is remarkable that Vasnetsov dedicates a great part of his oeuvre to myths and

fairy tales and that the other artists working on this topic are as well members of the Abramtsevo Colony of artists under the patronage of Savva I. Mamontov (1841–1918). The increased reception of fairy tales in Russian 19th century literature starts with the literary fairy tales of Alexander S. Pushkin (1799–1837) and the collection of Russian Fairy Tales published by Alexander N. Afanasyev (1826–1871). The previously orally transmitted stories get a new level of distribution and act as a source of inspiration for illustrators and authors. The popularity of fairy tales in ballet and opera at that time might be another reason for fairy tales becoming worth to be painted on canvas.

There are several ways to look at the fairy tales in Russian painting.

Most importantly, it is a completely new subject to be painted on canvas. Do the artists create new compositions and new image conceptions or do they use established patterns? Why do they decide to paint in oil and how do they portray fairy tales? Are they geared to illustrations or *lubki*? As fairy tales predominantly take place “once upon a time” most of the illustrators and painters use folkloristic and medieval environments as a setting. Is this an expression of national identity?

The reasons for the choice of a concrete fairy tale or a special character are not yet adequately explored, either. The connection between Afanasyev’s collection and the following individual publications may explain the first interest in fairy tales. But at a closer look only about 20 out of the nearly 450 distinct stories were chosen by the artists. With regard to literary studies it is noticeable that most of the painted fairy tales had been reinterpreted by contemporary or recently deceased authors first. One example is the fairy tale of the Snow Maiden. The playwright Alexander N. Ostrovsky (1823–1886) created a play in 1873 based on this fairy tale. Later his play was made into the opera *The Snow Maiden* (*Snegurochka*) by Nikolai A. Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908). It was Vasnetsov who worked on the scenic design and who completed his painting<sup>1</sup> of the same name later in 1899.

The influence of Abramtsevo Colony and especially of Mamontov is another interesting aspect. The idyllic environment and Mamontov’s wish to create a new national art might as well be part of the work’s genesis. fairy tales and that the other artists working on this topic are as well members of the Abramtsevo Colony of artists under the patronage of Savva I. Mamontov (1841–1918).

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### **The Discourse on Pictorial Photography in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century | Nadezhda Stanulevich**

Technical progress created a lot of photographic processes and practices at the end of the 1880s. One of them was a pictorial photography.

Discourse about realistic and pictorial photography was a part of discussion between two Russian photographers. S.M. Prokudin-Gorskii and N.A. Petrov both of them were famous photographers, editors in chief, chairmen of photographic societies.

An active photographer and scientist, Sergey Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944) undertook most of his famous colour documentary project from 1909 to 1915. He was



an editor in chief of FotografLiubitel [Photographer amateur] since 1906 and a chairman of the Photographic Department on the Russian Technical Society from 1907 to 1912. The Library of Congress purchased ProkudinGorskii's photography collection from the his sons in 1948.

Nickolay Alexandrovich Petrov (1876-1940) was one of the founder of the photographic society Daguerre in Kiev in 1894. Also he was an editor in chief of Vestnik Fotografii [Bulletin of Photography] since 1911. Petrov told about pictorial photography at his articles. In his opinion it is not the purpose of photography to copying of reality. Artistic photography as any art have a purpose to reproduce subjective sense of reality. ProkudinGorskii polemicized with Petrov in the pages of FotografLiubitel. He published the letter from Petrov and his own answer in April 1909.

Petrov wrote that readers of FotografLiubitel had to refine their aesthetic taste on vulgar and banal works of professional photographers. He asked ProkudinGorskii why editorial staff could not publish photographs by Russian and foreign photographers. Although Petrov considered that FotografLiubitel had excellent illustrations from the technical and printing point.

ProkudinGorskii answered that works of professional photographers were examples of correct photographs. He didn't want to publish spreaded images that hadn't subject in the opinion of normal people. ProkudinGorskii picked out three groups of opinion. Some people considered that new branch of photographic practice wasn't a photography. Other small group of people shared the pictorialism view. And the third group told lies about their opinion for goals of artistic photography.

Forty years later the famous Soviet historian of photography Sergey Morozov described ProkudinGorskii as true realism fighter.

Today we acknowledge mastery of ProkudinGorskii and Petrov in different type of photographic practices. Early twentieth century photographic journals can be a source of information about art discourse. Research of these materials can help us to understand deeply opinions of opponents.

### **The Russian Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Rome in 1911: Some Aspects of the Internal Discourse | Svetlana Babadzhan**

In 1911, for the first time since participation in World Fair in Paris in 1867, Russia presented the national pavilion not in wooden folk style but in neoclassical style. This

was the result of growing interest in own classical heritage of the second half of 18 and beginning of 19 centuries. The neoclassical revival was aimed to overcome eclectic diversity and «levity» of art Nouveau architecture. But more important in choosing the neoclassical style was the exhibition location – Rome! The homeland of classical samples, where «any imitation became noticeable against an original architecture». The ambition of Russian pavilion was to show that Russia is able to create a peculiar classical style based on the common with Rome heritage. Internal critics were proud of the newness of pavilion style on the background of expected pavilions of other countries. But in the same time it seemed absolutely retrospective because of deliberate choice of Russian architecture to turn to the «the best of the inevitable - albeit imperfect» style, while iron architecture has not yet found its final forms.

For neoclassical discourse this turn actualized again the problem of Europeanism: Russia should stop to present themselves for all world as an Asian country and recognized the European side of its life. Empire style, in which the pavilion was designed, was associated with Empire epoch, when Russia had a great weight in the political and artistic life of Europe. This reference to the former greatness of the country symbolized the possibilities for unification and grandeur of the nation – and surprisingly coincided with the theme of the Exhibition, dedicated to the unification of Italy.

### **Political Aspects of the Perception and Reception of the Russian Avant-Garde: Exhibitions in Germany in 1921 and 1922 | Natalia Kroll**

Art exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde were well received in Germany during the 1920ies. Russian art and the October Revolution of 1917 had been a major topic with quite a number of German journalists, art historians, and artists. Discussion was fuelled furthermore by the art exhibitions, which were staged during the first years following the revolution.

While the political aspect of art production and presentation had been important in the 1920es informed discussion, it has been disregarded ever since and up to date by art historians.

My paper will cover the reception of Russian art exhibitions in Germany from a political point of view. I shall focus firstly on Iwan Puni's exhibition, staged in Herwarth Walden's gallery "Der Sturm" in 1921, and secondly on the First Russian Art Exhibition 1922, which was staged in the gallery van Diemen.

I shall remark on a relationship between the political orientation of the print media commenting on the Puni exhibition, illustrating this by the choice of drawings, which were reproduced in a Berlin newspaper.

Next I shall point to the difference of opinion held by German journalists and A. Lunatscharskiy with regard to the exhibition of 1922. In those days, Lunatscharskiy had been Head of the People's Commissariat for Education (russ.: Narkompros), being in charge of all cultural affairs in Soviet Russia until 1929.

I'll conclude discussing the difference between German and Russian views on the exhibitions as well as the different opinions of politicians and artists.

### **The Soviet Art Exhibition at the Institute of Art Propaganda in Warsaw in 1933: The Reception of Soviet Artistic and Political Ideas by Polish Avant-Garde Groups (1933–1937) | Agnieszka Dulęba**

In my presentation I would like to consider an issue of reception of the exhibition as well as to reconstruct the discussion which took place in the artistic and critical polish press afterwards. I would also like to draw attention to the discussion held by polish avant-garde in the context of Soviet new realism (Wallis, 1936).

Avant-garde art societies in interwar Poland were in no doubt strongly influenced by Russian political and artistic ideas. Relationship between Lazar Lissitzky and Polish – Jewish avant-group 'The Muse' is well known and acknowledged by polish researchers. They pointed out Lissitzky's and Malevich's influenced change in artist's search from 'national art' into 'international art' (Styrna, Malinowski, 2008). One of the most influential publication of Lissitzky - his article on Russian avant-garde in Polish - Yddish paper 'Ringer' (1922) – made a lasting impression on one of the most powerful avant-garde group "Blok" (Malinowski, 2008). In this context it's inevitable to mention communism oriented avant-garde group "Grupa Krakowska" (1930-1937) and its politically active members who tried to implement international Marxist demands in their art, performances and actions. It is justified to say that almost every avant-garde group in interwar Poland was at least flirting with leftist orientation.

In this political and artistic context Soviet Art Exhibition in Institute of Art Propaganda in Warsaw in 1933 was inevitable. Artists and visitors were interested both in artistic realizations and political system of USSR (Skoczylas, 1933). Organization committee gathered 54 artists from Russia and Ukraine - some of them, such as Issak Brodsky, were still re-

representatives of pre – revolution art, but some of them, such as Alexander Dejneka, Jurij Pienekow were representatives of “young soviet art” (Skoczylas, 1933). The idea behind the exhibition was to show the viewers new, post-revolutionary art, devoted to, as one can read in the catalogue of the exhibition, ‘billions of working class members’ who are ‘one and only host of USRR’ (Catalogue of the Exhibition, 1933). Regarding to Wladyslaw Skoczylas, who was not only one of the professors at Warsaw Academy of Fine Art but also one of the organizer of the exhibition, for polish viewer the most crucial question was the difference between pre– and post–revolution Russian art and it’s relations (Skoczylas, 1933). The attendance on the exhibition was high, Skoczylas claimed it oscillated on the level of 20 000 visitors. Such an important event could not have gone unnoted. It raised a lot of discussions (Sztuki Piękne 1933, Wiadomości Literackie, 1933), and even contributed to establishment of ‘Czapka Frygijska’, artistic group associated with Communist Party of Poland.

The exhibition raised the discussion of realism, artist and regime relations and artistic independence – discussion that was viral among the members of ‘Grupa Krakowska’ i ‘Czapka Frygijska’ - both groups were politically active and both tried to express similar international and Marxist ideas through their artistic propositions. The main difference lies in their artistic expression – realistic in ‘Czapka Frygijska’s’ propositions, and abstract in ‘Grupa Krakowska’s’ realizations. Sources of that difference can be found in the exhibition reception, different approaches to socialism and different influence of Russian current artistic and ideological events on both groups.

To conclude, in my presentation I would like to trace a connection between Soviet Art Exhibition and the discussions on the condition of modern art held by polish avant-garde art communities. I would also like to point out the consequences of the event such as the creation of new art group and an event of Exhibition of Polish Art in Moscow in November 1933, that perhaps can be considered as a Polish response to the previous event.

### **Exhibiting Russia: Revising, Reframing and Reinterpreting the Russian Avant-Garde | Dr. Roann Barris**

My research begins with two questions: how did American artists reconfigure Russian constructivism and how did exhibitions contribute to this reinterpretation. The Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition (Museum of Modern Art in 1988) is a particularly

interesting event since unlike the surprisingly numerous exhibitions of Russian art in the U.S. spanning the years from 1924 until 1993, this exhibition did not include Russian art. Its reconfiguration came almost entirely in the form of the catalogue narrative and the name of the show. Although I began my research expecting to focus on the MOMA exhibition, I was surprised to find the rather extensive history of exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde in the United States, before this had actually become an acceptable art historical topic. I was also surprised to find that each exhibition provided its own definition of the avant-garde and ultimately who those artists were. Thus, although I have been studying constructivist theater since graduate school, my recent research addresses the question of how exhibitions and catalogues have reframed the nature of the Russian avant-garde and to what purposes these exhibitions have been used.

In the last century, there has probably never been a time when Americans were uninterested in Russia or the Soviet Union, but the form of that interest has never been constant. From exhibitions of Russian art, staged largely for the purpose of raising money to “succor and sustain” needy Russian artists,<sup>1</sup> and blockbuster exhibitions such as the Guggenheim Museum’s *Great Utopia* of 1992, to an increasing number of recent workshops and books on the topic of the American response to Russia, there is considerable evidence of the longevity and multiplicity of the forms of this interest. My current research explores this interest through a focus on the ways in which the meaning of a variety of forms of Russian art was reframed through exhibitions, its influence on practicing artists, and literature dedicated to the interpretation of Russian visual culture. Although I anticipate that the *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition will be the centerpiece of my presentation, the history of these exhibitions of Russian art is too fascinating to omit since it includes such luminaries as Katherine Dreier, Louis Lozowick, Alfred Barr, Philip Johnson and Frederick Kiesler. In some respects a Rorschach test of the American response to Russia, exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde have been infused as much by politics as by aesthetics, and as much by the collector’s reception of Russian art as by the public’s. Indeed, an even more telling Rorschach lies in those cases where an artist, critic or curator claims that a Russian influence on a particular American artist can be identified. As it turns out, some of these claims of influence are valid and supportable, but many are not. In either case, however, the issue is the same: to what use did the artist or curator put the purported claim of Russian influence?

## **Perceptions of (Soviet) Russian Art in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: Ilya Kabakov as an Exceptional and Epitome Phenomenon | Olga Keller**

My paper aims to understand the regulating discourse mechanisms concerning Russian and Western perceptions of Ilya Kabakov in order to explore the legitimization of an outstanding position he occupies within today's international art world as Russian artist.

My central hypothesis is that perceptions of Kabakov have been and still are kept in tension by diametrically opposed forces: on the one hand, there is the (Russian) formulation of his image as an exception of Russian contemporary art in the West, on the other hand there is a (Western) tendency to consider Kabakov's art as a kind of stereotype, an epitome of Russian contemporary art.

Today he is representative of both, Moscow Conceptualism and Russian postmodernism (as a critical response to utopian modernism as well as to Soviet official culture) in Russia and in the West – but for different reasons.

However, his artistic work which is deeply rooted in Soviet-Russian cultural and visual context paradoxically has first to become integral part of Western art history, before Russian art institutions have initiated a revision of former “unofficial” art practices.

From a historical retrospective some tendencies in the perception can be attested: During the 1970s the so called Soviet “nonconformist” and “dissident” art dominated the Western issues, political implications dominated a perception which has ignored any differentiation of that heterogeneous phenomenon. Kabakov has never been associated with political art, but it marks the beginnings of exchange with international scene. In the 1980s Kabakov was “discovered” by Western influential curators who enabled his first exhibitions in Bern, Paris and New York. At the same time Russian émigré art theorists, who are today's most quoted references concerning Russian contemporary art, participated actively in the initial discourse by exploring the relevance of as well as applying Western theories to Russian postmodern art.

In the 1990s, after the “Russian wave” in the West former Soviet “unofficial” art, including Moscow Conceptualism, was ultimately confirmed by Russian critics as autonomous language that brought Russia back to the international art scene and capable of being understood within the context of Western art as well as attempting to integrate itself into a broader global context. But nonetheless, Western professional interest in Russian art as well as in “Russian exotic” was limited: neither formal comparability with Western artistic practices – which has dominated the methodology of Western theorists, nor the peculiar and idiosyncratic “Sovietness” – which has offered Russian critics

to invest their insider-knowledge, seemed to guarantee discursive inclusion that lies beyond visual representation.

Kabakov's sophisticated answer to this dilemma, as he himself admits, is built on "modern vocabulary", "new message" and an "individual accent". The very core of his success, so the assumption of my dissertation project, is based on his profound understanding of international expectations of Soviet art, Soviet identity as well as Soviet experience. To focus solely on one's own communist past, on one's own "Otherness" would be superficial and inefficient in global context. Kabakov's narrative of rise and fall of communism, including utopian ambitions as well as violent loss of individuality, does not attempt to radically alter the art historical framework and discursive practices of the Western narrative. His images of Russia-in-deficit function also as a metaphor, as a set of formal devices which he masters perfectly, but they are in no way realistic representations.

### **Chto Delat? Art Activism in Russia from the Perspective of its Transnational Perception | Sebastian Mühl**

In recent years, Russian art collective Chto Delat? has become one of the most controversially discussed art activist groups on the international art scene. Founded in St. Petersburg in 2003, Chto Delat? comprises of a number of artists, critics, philosophers and writers. By now, the group has become quite popular in the western world, especially in Germany, not at least after their big retrospective at the Secession, Vienna, in 2014. In 2015 followed their first institutional gallery exhibition at KOW Berlin after having different shows at venues such as Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, or the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. By now, it seems that Chto Delat?, having been known mainly for their activist strategies of anticapitalist and anti-governmental protest in Russia, have finally made their inscription in the institutional structures of a market-based western art world.

Even though the beginnings of Chto Delat? were in fact to be seen as a reaction to the miserable political situation in Russia at the beginning of the 21st. century and even though the group still operates as a political agent in Russia, their perception as an artistic phenomenon mainly happened in Western Europe. Following my assumption, their high profile in these countries is mainly based on their referencing on specific artistic and political traditions (or mythologies) that have structured and still continue to

structure perceptions and expectations towards russian art in a more general way. Chto Delat? activates different sets of narratives about russian culture, its artistic traditions and present-day politics with the goal to popularize their radical artistic and political agenda within a transnational context. Examples are the formal and topical references on the russian historic avant-garde (such as Constructivism and Productivism), but also the political radicality which is expressed in their artistic practice as well as in theoretical arguments laid down in their writings. Here, for example, the group alludes to contemporary discourses about a renewed idea of Communism as it is promoted by Alain Badiou or Slavoj Žižek.

In my talk I will present some of the aesthetic and political dimensions of Chto Delat?'s work which constitutes one of the main themes I focus on in my current PhD project at HfG Offenbach. I will discuss some examples of their work which lead to the following questions: How is their practice constituted and differentiated in respect to a heterogeneous and quite oppositional public in Russia and in Western Europe? How do their addresses and topics split in respect to these different publics? Which are the differences in their political and aesthetic strategies and in their choosing for institutional partners or infrastructures in the cultural and political contexts of Russia and Western Europe? In which ways Chto Delat? affirms or subverts standard narratives about russian dissident art? How does the group relate to the history of russian avant-garde movements and for what reasons? What are the problems for the overall perception and a theoretical approach towards their work, as it is inscribed in the different cultural and political contexts, addresses, and forms of reception that are played out by the collective?

### **The Perception of Russian Art Brut in Western Europe | Dina Filatova**

The concept of "Art Brut" was invented in 1945 by French artist Jean Dubuffet and referred to the art produced by the different kinds of marginal (as psychiatric patients, prisoners etc.), working outside of aesthetic norms. Russian Art Brut was discovered by the world and became widely known only in late 2000-s. In Russia the first translation of the book about Art Brut was published in 1995 (it was the "Art Brut" by Michel Thevoz, first published in Europe in 1975). It is only after Russian curators, gallerists and researchers had discovered the world of Art Brut, the necessity of promotion Russian Art Brut artists in the international space became evident. For many years everything that was connected with marginal art was researched in Russia only in medical context, and the



debate was closed from the wide public. Still, the perception of Art Brut in the frame of medical approach persists among most Russian specialists who attempt to promote Russian Art Brut abroad. It's important to take into account that Art Brut artists do not usually participate in the promotion of their artwork themselves. Thus, the question is how the specialists promoting Art Brut want it to be seen in the international context. I will examine in my presentation aspects of perception Russian Art Brut artists and their works in international context. The most popular and well-known Russian Art Brut artist in Western Europe is Aleksander Lobanov. The Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne (which started from the collection of Jean Dubuffet who invented the concept of Art Brut) keeps Lobanov's works. Lobanov's creations are a vivid example of pure visual translation of Soviet propaganda. Most of his works look like propagandistic posters, there are a lot of pictures of Stalin. Also the militarist specificity of Lobanov's works makes his person really attractive for the international public – it illustrates some kinds of cultural and national stereotypes related to Russia. Except Aleksander Lobanov, there are also known such Russian Art Brut artists as Nikolaj Almazov, Pavel Leonov, Vasilij Romanenkov. The artists are usually positioned not as "Russian artists", but as artists from the post-soviet space. In general, even in short biographical essays with few examples of artists' creations and in announcements on Art Brut exhibitions there would always be a mention of the Soviet era.

### **The Accidental Nature of Independent Art: A Look at Contemporary Russian Artists From the CubeShaped Luda Gallery | Roberta Sala**

«The nonconformist Russian artists who started to work during the perestroika period experienced a real tragedy, since the system of Soviet values they were used to oppose suddenly fell, plunging them in an uncertain limbo of void and asphyxiation». With these words Petr Belyj, a Russian independent artist dealing with installations, as well as the innovative curator of Luda Gallery in Saint Petersburg, tries to explain the nature of Russian contemporary underground art. The main points of his view are concerned with the idea that contemporary independent art and state art never intersect, but the rebellion attitude typical of the period from the '60es to the '90es is now completely extinguished within the underground sphere. Actually, even if in the international context Russian nonconformist art tends to be still considered as an act of revolt against the political system, the artistic patterns related to the Soviet past nowadays play a merely aesthetic

and formal role. So having lost most of its critic attitude, contemporary independent art is mainly focused on the research of effectiveness raising from minimalism, according to the display of the intense puzzlement experienced by the artist, who tends to explore the models used from the beginning of last century adapting their meaning to our days. As a matter of fact starting from Malevič's Black Square a new way of making art has risen, and, according to this model, the present-day experimentations on materials, shapes and space aim at merely showing the contemporary man's stagnant disillusion. Therefore, the work of art itself has lost its strong intentionality, acquiring a deep connotation of fortuitousness.

In order to explore this idea, I will examine, in my speech, the interrelation between the installations exhibited at Luda Gallery and the space of the gallery itself. Actually, the main purpose of Petr Belyj as a curator is to re-create the intimate and informal atmosphere characterizing the small underground exhibitions of the '90es which took place in private flats. Similarly, when entering Luda Gallery visitors experience an odd feeling of alienation, resulting from the sensation of the inappropriateness of the space in connection with the concept of art exhibition. As Petr's assistant Elizaveta Matveeva explains, before the unconventionality of the cube-shaped room, with its high white walls, its stained floor and its musty smell, where the works of art seem to originate silently from the space itself, some visitors do not even cross the threshold. But this is part of the performance, too, since the contemporary artist's task implies registering the many-sided expressions of reality, according to an international idea of art crossing the boundaries of Russian specificity. In connection with this, Luda Gallery often displays works by foreign authors unknown in Saint Petersburg and, at the same time, Petr Belyj has realized many installations abroad, in the attempt of going beyond the slight inferiority complex usually felt by Russian artists in comparison with the Western context.

### **Ostalgia as a Special Artistic Development in Contemporary Art | Natalia Drobot**

Much attention has recently been given to the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union. For some, this collapse gave rise to a post-communist nostalgia, Ostalgia. Originally this term was limited to so-called "Ossis", former GDR citizens. However, today this phenomenon is also recognized under the former Soviet citizens and especially under the immigrants from former Soviet countries.

Ostalgia has been studied by philosophers, sociologists as well as psychologists. In art,

Ostalgia mainly concerns art that makes use of Soviet symbolism, which is rooted in the visual language of its consumer products, objects, photographs, uniforms... in short, everything what people are keeping from “the good old times” which are evoking memories and have an emotional value.

Ostalgia is the starting point of my own artistic research. I define it as any emotional bond with the Soviet past and reflecting a specific selection of autobiographical memory, on the basis of current memories of ‘witnesses’ from the Soviet period, literature and visual material about the Soviet era. I investigated the nature of this phenomenon in art and through my own artworks. I will also pay attention to the work of immigrant artists from the former Soviet countries who now live and work in Belgium or the Netherlands. Thus, my research aims to investigate Ostalgia in an artistic way, to provide an image of how Ostalgia is present in the contemporary arts, and develop a proper body of artworks handling this phenomenon.

### **To Cannes with Love: Russian Movies and Russian Critics at the International Film Festival | Dr. Marina Toropygina**

Although only one Russian film ever got the Golden Palm award, Russian movies were present at the Cannes film festival almost from the very beginning and up to this year. Dealing with the Russian participation, we would try to analyze the reasons for selection and history of the awards, expectations and missing awards, as well as the critics’ response to these events, especially concerning the recent Russian films in Cannes.



**Dr. Roann Barris** is the Chair of the Art Department at Radford University, and a Professor in Art History and Theory. She is an established academic in Russian art, with a specific focus on the role of constructivism in the theater in the 1920s. More recently, her work has included the exhibition history of Russian art in the United States.

**Svetlana Babadzhan** was born in Russia. She is a Graduate student of the State Institute for Arts Studies, Moscow in the department of Architectural monuments and Monumental Art. Her dissertation theme is «Neoclassical Architecture in St.Petersburg and Moscow». Previously she graduated from the Moscow State University for Commerce from the department of Economics and also from Russian State University for Humanities, Moscow, from the department of History of Art. Her thesis was on the «Neoclassical architecture in Russia in the early 20th century: the artistic features.»

**Natalia Drobot** (\*1984) is a visual artist and PhD researcher in the arts originating from Belarus. She was born in Minsk, in the former Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Living during the Perestroika, the time of changing and new dreams, she stopped her study at the University in Minsk and did a sabbatical to travel through Europe. After 5 years being an au-pair in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, she started her study in the arts at the Provincial University College of Limburg, Hasselt, Belgium in 2008, and graduated as a Bachelor and Master of

Fine Art. In 2013 she started her PhD research in the arts, driven by her fascination for the Soviet topic in Modern Art – Ostalgia, creating a body of work concerning this matter.

**Agnieszka Dulęba** is PhD student at the Institute of Art History, Warsaw University. Previously she completed her M.A. at the Institute of Art History at Warsaw University, where she graduated cum Laude, her B.A. in Cultural Studies at the College of Inter-area Individual Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences Department at Warsaw University, and also studies at the Collegium Invisible academic society.

**Dina Filatova** was born in Petrazavodsk, Russia. She received her M.A. from European University at St. Petersburg in History of Arts. Her dissertation was on the connection of national anthems to regional identity in national republics of Russia. She is active in academic choirs, also founded and directed the choir at European University at St. Petersburg. She received her B.A. in Political Science from Petrozavodsk State University from the department of Political and Social Sciences. She currently works at the charitable organization „Perspektiviy” in St. Petersburg.

**Olga Keller** (from the the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) received her Masters in Art History and Slavic Studies in 2012; during the studies active as Tutor and Student Assistant at Institute of Art History in Gießen. In 2011, she participated in the exhibition project “Surreal Objects” by Kunsthalle Schirn Frankfurt and Justus-Liebig-University. Since 2013 doctoral

candidate with a dissertation project of: “Reception and revision of Soviet-Russian art: Ilya Kabakov an exceptional phenomenon?”.

**Natalia Kroll**, née Grebennikova, studied history of art in Saint-Petersburg, Greifswald, Hamburg. She initiated and coordinated the Student Science Community for history of art in Saint-Petersburg State University. The All-Russian Student’s conference „The artist and his time“ was organized by this Community in April 2008.

At present, Natalia Kroll receives a scholarship by Aby Warburg Foundation in Hamburg and works on her Ph.D. about exhibitions of the Russian avant-gardists in Germany during the 1920ies in the context of Soviet art policy.

**Tanja Malychева** 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 Malychева 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 Malychева is currently editing the publication *Networks of the Early Avant-Garde: Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in her Circle*.

**Dr. Galina Mardilovich** is an independent art historian. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge (2013), and is currently developing a book that focuses on the agency of prints in Russian art. Her work has been supported by research fellowships and grants from the Gates Cambridge Trust, Metropolitan Museum of Art, American Philosophical Society, Getty Research Institute, and Francis Haskell Memorial Fund among others. In 2014, she was awarded the Mary Zirin Prize for independent scholarship by the Association of Women in Slavic Studies.

**Sebastian Mühl** studied philosophy at Munich School of Philosophy and Media Arts / Fine Arts at Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. He graduated from the master class of Prof. Astrid Klein. Various exhibitions and screenings, including *Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig, Kunstverein Tiergarten – Galerie Nord,*

Berlin, and Centre d'art contemporain Passerelle, Brest. Since 2013 Sebastian Mühl works on a PhD research about »concepts of utopia in contemporary arts« based in the interdisciplinary PhD program at University of Art and Design Offenbach / Main. He is the research assistant of Prof. Dr. Juliane Rebentisch at the faculty of Visual Communication / Theory, HfG Offenbach.

**Ludmila Piters-Hofmann** was born in 1986 and studied art history, classical literature and classical archaeology at the University of Cologne, from 2006 to 2011. My master thesis was about "Lunar Photography in the 19th Century and its Meaning for Science and Art" (German title: „Mondphotographie im 19. Jahrhundert und ihre Bedeutung für Wissenschaft und Kunst“). I helped curating the special exhibition "The Moon" in 2009 and curated "Panopticon – The Secret Treasures of the Wallraf" in 2011 at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Fondation Corboud in Cologne. Since 2014 the research for my doctoral thesis at the Humboldt University of Berlin focuses on the Russian painting of fairy tales in the 19th and the early 20th century.

**Nadezhda Stanulevich** is the Curator of Photographic Collection at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum (since 2012), and previously, a Junior research officer, at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum.

She received her degree in Diplôme de langue et civilisation françaises at the Collège universitaire français Université d'Etat de Saint-Petersbourg in 2011. Previously she had studied Aerospace

systems of orientation, navigation and stabilization engineering at the St. Petersburg State University of Aerospace Instrumentation in 2010 following her Candidate of science degree in the History of Science and Technology at the Bonch-Bruевич St. Petersburg State University of Telecommunications on "S.M. Prokudin-Gorskii and his contribution to the development of color photography" She is professionally certified as in the preservation of photography from the The State Russian Museum and Exhibition Centre ROSPHOTO.

**Roberta Sala** was born in Voghera (Italy) in 1987, and she graduated in Translation at the University of Torino in 2012, writing a thesis about the contemporary Russian poet Nina Iskrenko. In 2013 she worked in the editorial office of the Milanese publisher Marcos y Marcos, while at present she is a PhD student at the University of Torino. Her research project is about the idea of vacuum in Russian visual poetry from the 1970s to our days, with a special focus on poets such as Ry Nikonova, Sergej Sigej, Boris Konstriktor, Dmitri Prigov, Lev Rubinštein, Vladimir Druk, Gennadij Ajgi, Valerij Zemskich. Last year she did some research at the samizdat Archive of the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa in Bremen, while now she is carrying on her work in Saint Petersburg. Among her last publications, we mention an article on the role of the manifestos and improvisation in Russian neo-avantgardes, and an essay about the interaction between words and photographs in the samizdat journal «M.A.N.I.». She works also as a translator of poems, fiction and non-fiction from English and from Russian.

**Marina Toropygina** is an art historian, film critic, and interpreter. She graduated from the Moscow Linguistic University (1986) and the Moscow State University's Art History department (2004). Her doctoral thesis was on Aby Warburg, his concept of symbol, and strides of iconology in 2013. She is a lecturer at the State University for Cinematography, and a festival programmer for the Moscow International Film Festival.

**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 University 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.