Marxism(s) in Art Historiography (Berlin, 31 Jan–1 Feb 20)

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Main Building, Senatssaal, Berlin, Jan 31–Feb 2, 2020
Registration deadline: Jan 15, 2020

Katja Bernhardt

The historical and dialectical materialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels provided a complex means of approaching the analysis of social processes that encouraged one to understand and analyse art as a moment integral to these processes. This approach presented an alternative worth taking seriously to art-historical models that had previously dominated discussion; models based on the idea of art as something that developed intrinsically. Nevertheless, it has always been a challenge to adapt Marxist theory for use in art-historical analysis and to link that theory to existing approaches to the subject. For art history, grappling with Marxism meant more than just a need for constant methodological reflection and updating. It was also necessary, and remains necessary, to define the Marxist conception of art itself within the various historical contexts in which it arose. Since Marxist theory aims at achieving social change, applying Marxism has demanded not only that art be set in relation to the social conditions that apply to it, but also to making a critical revision of the history of art and to revealing its social role in the relevant context in each case.

The conference sets out from these starting points. It aims to reflect on the history of Marxist approaches to Art History, hoping to reveal new insights for the wider discipline. It forms the third part in a series of conferences whose task was set as to investigate the history of art history in Eastern European countries formerly under socialist rule. In the wake of the first two conferences, “Art History and Socialism(s) after World War II” (2016, Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn) and “Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary. Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe” (2017, GWZO Leipzig), this third conference will make a programmatic break from the geopolitical framework set out up until now. It will thus bring together considerations on Marxist art history that have up until generally been treated separately in accordance with the political systems within which they arose. We believe that the potentials of and the variations between the various different Marxist approaches to art history – both in relation to the concepts that they contribute to art history methodology and in terms of their socio-political functions – can be elaborated using a comparative approach and can thus be subjected to a differentiated critique. The period for our observations starts roughly around 1945 and extends up until the present day.

Programm

31. Jan. 2020
2.00 p.m.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTION

2.30-3.30 p.m.
KEYNOTE I
Krista Kodres: Committed Writing. Making Sense of Albrecht Dürer’s Art on the Both Sides of the Berlin Wall

4.00-6.00 p.m.
SEARCHING FOR NEW PERSPECTIVES
Milena Bartlova: Construction of Marxist Humanism in Czech Art History
Piotr Juszkiewicz: From Plekhanov to ‘Young Marx’ and the Frankfurt School. Marxist Impulses in Polish Art History (1949–1990)
Karla Lebhaft: Parallels and Differences in Art Theory and Marxist-Humanist Thought in Post-Stalinist Yugoslavia

7.00-9.00 p.m.
EVENING LECTURE
Horst Bredekamp: The German Escalation: Emigration, Resistance, Division. Image Science from the Spirit of 1970

1. Feb. 2020
9.00-10.00 a.m.
KEYNOTE II
Warren Carter: Different Marxist Histories of Art Post-1968. O.K. Werckmeister and T.J. Clark

10.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.
CONCEPTUALIZING ART
Dominic Rahtz: Marx’s 1857 ‘Introduction’ and the Social History of Art
Boris Röhrl: Sympathy with Modern Art. Marxist Art Theory and Art History in Post-War Italy
Antje Kempe: Working on the Past. The Reorientation of the Socialist Theory of Heritage in the 1970s
Marina Dmitrieva: In Search of Collective Consciousness. Folk Art Studies in the Soviet Union in the 1970s

2.30-5.00 p.m.
CRITICIZING MODERNISM
Marica Antonucci: Towards a Historiography of Italian Marxist Art. The Case of Renato Guttuso
Kirill Chunikhin: Criticizing the Unseen. Soviet Marxism and American Art during the Cold War
Luiz Renato Martins: Notes on Modernisation, From the Periphery. On David Craven's ‘Alternative Modernism’
Mathilde Arnoux: On the Shift of Relevance from Product to Method of Production. Eugen Blume’s Engagement with Action Art in GDR

5.30-7.30 p.m.
BOOK PRESENTATION
Venue: Medientheater, Georgenstr. 47

Krista Kodres and Kristina Jõekalda: A Socialist Realist History? Writing Art History in the Post-War Decades (2019)
Hilde Heynen and Sebastiaan Loosen: Marxism and Architectural Theory across the East-West Divide: A Reflection (Special Collection in: Architectural Histories 2019)

2. Feb. 2020
9.00-11.00 a.m.
ENTANGLING WITH POLITICS
Stanislaw Welbel: Marxist Art Theory as an Art History Research Method in Post-War Poland
Katarzyna Cytlak: In Defense of Marxism. José Carlos Mariátegui's Concept of Art and Its Contemporary Translations in Latin American Artistic Production, Art Theory, and Criticism
Noemi de Haro Garcia: Marxist Infiltration, Art Criticism and Art History during Francoism and the Transition to Democracy in Spain

11.30 a.m.-1.30 p.m.
OVERCOMING DIVISON
Agata Pietrasik: The People's Museum. Marxist Art History and Institutional Practice in Communist Poland
Nikolas Drosos: Against the Division of Artistic Labour. The Trope of the Synthesis of the Arts in Soviet Art Histories
Marina Gerber: Art as Free Time in the Soviet Art Theory after 1956

2.00-3.00 p.m.
CLOSING DISCUSSION

To register for the conference, please send an email with your official affiliation to: marxisms.art.history@hu-berlin.de
The deadline for the registration is January 15th.

The conference is a cooperation of:
Chair for Art History of Eastern Europe, Humboldt-University Berlin
Institute of Art History and Visual Culture, Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn
Department Culture and Imagination, Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Leipzig

Organisers:
Katja Bernhardt (Berlin), Krista Kodres (Tallinn), Marina Dmitrieva (Leipzig), Kristina Jõekalda (Tallinn), Antje Kempe (Greifswald), Beata Hock (Leipzig), Eva Pluharova-Grigiene (Flensburg)

Reference:
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