

Between Desert and Sea (York/online, 19 May 23)

University of York, UK/online, May 19, 2023

Dr Alexandru Bar

Between Desert and Sea: The 20th-Century Avant-Gardes at the Meeting Point of Continents International Conference.

Friday 19 May 2023, 10.00am to 5pm.

This one-day hybrid conference brings together a group of international scholars to present cutting-edge work on avant-garde activities at the meeting point of Africa, Asia, and Europe in the twentieth century. Our aim is to draw a clearer picture of the avant-gardist resonance in this region and thereby bringing its contribution to the history of the avant-garde as a global, transnational affair. Since time immemorial, the region has linked East and West, played a significant part in the cross-fertilization of civilizations, and facilitated exchange between cultures, religions, and philosophies. We therefore aim to debate the dynamics between avant-garde movements and local traditions, the use of the arts for purposes of social action, and the integration of avant-garde practices within national building process. In general terms, this conference seeks to foster critical dialogues regarding the transnationalism of the avant-garde with its multifarious manifestations, its intercontinental collaborative potential, and the way this phenomenon was specifically received by the peoples of the region in connection to its particular cultural, religious and ethnic identities.

At the end of the First World War, the region found itself with a significant number of contested borders making the concept of belonging ever more ambiguous for the peoples and diasporas living within a number of new states. We are interested in exploring how the experiences of diaspora, exodus, and multiculturalism were (re)theorized by artists moving to or from this space and how local artists correspondingly integrated avant-gardist practices into their artistic production. More specifically, in our search for understanding how identity, dislocation and migration were manifested in art, we seek to debate how the concept of avant-garde, inextricability linked to the ideas of innovation, experimentation, and antagonism to authority, could be understood as something both external and internal to the region.

Our two topographical markers for the conference are intended to resonate with the geographical particularity of the region, the themes of the conference and some of the key metaphors of avant-gardism itself. The desert as a frontier, a limit, an absence, an ungovernable space, a place of isolation and nomadism. The sea as a shared resource, a link between peoples, a space for encounter and adventure. To what extent was the avant-gardist imagination only ever constructed on such hopes and fantasies? To what extent does analysing the avant-garde from this viewpoint help us rethink the spatial and temporal concepts at its very heart?

Organisers: Professor Michael White: michael.white@york.ac.uk |

Dr Alexandru Bar: alex.bar@york.ac.uk

Berrick Saul Building, BS/005 (Bowland Auditorium) and online

Location: Department of Art History, University of York

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

10:00 – 10:15 - Welcome by Professor Michael White

10:15 - 11:00 - Professor Hubert van den Berg (Palacký University Olomouc) - Exploring avant-garde beyond Europe. Some reflections.

11:00 – 12:00

Panel 1: Transcultural experiments of modernism Panel Chair: Dr Nabila Abdel Nabi (Tate Modern)

Dr Amina Diab (Barker Langham): Lee Miller: A Portrait in Egypt

Dr Ambra D'Antone (The Warburg Institute): "Art needs the long haul": Group D and the Turkish Avant-Garde

12:00 – 12:45 - Lunch Break

12:45-13:30 - Keynote: Raya Zommer Tal (Dada-Janco Museum, Ein Hod, Israel): The spirit of Dada in Israeli contemporary art. (*Presentation includes profanity and some sexual content)

13:30 – 14:30 Panel 2:

Reimagining the material world to reflect the unity of all the arts. Panel Chair: TBA

Professor Michael White (University of York): Arie Sharon: Brno, Haifa, Dessau.

Dr Alexandru Bar (University of York): Marcel Janco: Suffering, Destruction and Disillusion in Art

14:30 – 15:30 Panel 3:

Modern contemporary art in Saudi Arabia Panel Chair: Dr Ana Bilbao Yarto (University of York)

Haifa Alkthiri (University of York): The representation of identity in the life and career of Mohammed Al-Saleem (1967-1997)

Dareen Alorfilly (University of York): The transformations in the characteristics of Saudi Conceptual Art from 1999-2014

15:30 – 16:00 - Tea/Coffee Break

16:00-16:45 - Keynote: Professor Eva-Maria Troelenberg (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf): Searching for Language, finding Objects. Reading the biographies of Etel Adnan and Ahmed Mater

16:45 - CLOSING REMARKS

Reference:

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