Official and Non-Official in the Late Soviet Epoch (Rome/online, 18 Mar 24)

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rom/ Online, Mar 18, 2024

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In-Between: the Scylla and Charybdis of Official and Non-Official in the Late Soviet Epoch.

The Bibliotheca Hertziana is inviting you to the first seminar in the series of events “The Politics of Images.”

Speakers: Alex Bykov (Brno University of Technology), David Crowley (National College of Art and Design), Agnė Narušytė (Vilnius Academy of Art)

The discussion of Soviet culture often revolves around triggering division into the official and the non-official, which simplifies our knowledge about the distribution of images at that period, omitting their existence in-between the extremities of allowed and forbidden. The research seminar will address these problematic dichotomies on the materials of different realms across the former Soviet space — from architecture to photography.

This research seminar is the first in the series of events “The Politics of Images” that will cover several aspects of the imagery’s circulation in, but not limited to, Ukraine. We seek the parallels within and beyond the former Soviet space that would help to have a better comprehension of the images’ social power and dispositifs. Organized within the ScienceForUkraine programme.

Programme:

11.00–11.40, David Crowley, Art as Dissent?
Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, the period which saw a revival of modern art in the People’s Republics of Central/Eastern Europe, David Crowley will reflect on the ways that dissenting and official culture in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia have been understood. The image of the artist as a dissenting nonconformist was particularly attractive to Western European intellectuals during this phase of the Cold War. The Biennale del dissenso culturale, in Venice in 1977, for instance, featured an exhibition titled ‘La nuova arte sovietica. Una prospettiva non ufficiale'. Ten years earlier, in 1967 Czech film-maker/artist living in West Germany, Petr Sadecký, invented a fictitious artistic group - Progressive Political Pornography (PPP), a network with cells in Soviet cities - to tap Western enthusiasm for the image of the political rebel. But few artists - in the region - accepted the mantle of ‘the dissident’. And, compared to other branches of culture, very few visual artists were targeted as ‘enemies’ by the authorities. Drawing on the work for his 2017 exhibition 'Notes from the Underground', Crowley will examine the ways in which ‘official’ and ‘independent’ artistic practices were entangled.

11.40–12.20, Alex Bykov, “Liquidation Recommended”. Creation and destruction of the Wall of Remembrance in Kyiv.
The “Park of Memory” at the Kyiv Crematorium, created by the artistic couple Ada Rybachuk and Volodymyr Melnychenko was probably one of the most significant constructions of the second half of the 20th century in Ukrainian architecture. Rybachuk and Melnichenko’s work belongs to the utopian practices of a total work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk). They developed a complex idea of the Memory Park from a landscape design, to the monumental Wall of Remembrance and unique Halls of Farewell. A monumental Wall of Remembrance was supposed to be the central element of this park: more than two hundred square meters of artistic reliefs, which would be passed by funeral processions. Creation of the Wall of Remembrance lasted for more than 10 years, but in early 1982, when its reliefs were almost finished, the Party leadership gave the order to eliminate them. In no time The Wall of Remembrance was filled with concrete. This grievous outcome was due to the fundamental differences between the views of artists and the views of the leaders of the Communist Party of Ukraine. The presentation will reveal artistic and personal struggles of Ada Rybachuk and Volodymyr Melnychenko living and working under the Soviet stipulations.

12.35–13.15, Agnė Narušytė, Lithuanian Photographers’ Association: Managing Creative Freedom, Collaboration, and Resistance.
Establishing the independent Lithuanian Photographers’ Association in Vilnius in 1969 was, in itself, an act of resistance to the Soviet occupation because all organisations had to be founded in Moscow and only then would form their branches in the ‘republics’. Even before that, the so-called School of Lithuanian Photography became a positive example discussed by the most prominent Soviet photography historians and theorists and revered by photographic communities all over the Soviet Union. By discussing the photo album by Antanas Sutkus and Romualdas Rakauskas, Weekdays in Vilnius (1965), and the ‘aesthetics of boredom’ practiced by young rebels in the 1980s, Agnė Narušytė will show how the organisation balanced between allowing creative freedom and satisfying ideological requirements.

It will possible to follow the event also ONLINE on VIMEO CHANNEL of the Bibliotheca Hertziana: https://vimeo.com/event/4117645

Scientific Organization: Kateryna Filyuk (PhD Candidate, University of Palermo) and Oleksandra Osadcha (PhD, Bibliotheca Hertziana / Museum of the Kharkiv School of Photography)

https://www.biblhertz.it/events/36843/2206

Reference:

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