Cahiers d’histoire russe, est-européenne, caucasienne et centrasiatique (2026)

Deadline: Feb 17, 2025

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A special issue of Cahiers d’histoire russe, est-européenne, caucasienne et centrasiatique.

Over the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in research on visual art in socialist countries spanning different regions and employing various approaches, including stylistic, political or institutional analysis. The economic aspect, however, has not been the main focus of scholarly attention. Although comprehensive works exploring the art economies of particular countries exist, they remain exceptions (Bacon, Sandal, 2002; Reid, 2006; Bazin, 2015). Moreover, such works often study each region in isolation, without placing them within a broader context of global socialist art economies.

In this issue, we aim to bring various national cases together to explore the differences and similarities between the economic models of art across the socialist world. In doing so, we adopt a transnational approach to bring a variety of cases, including Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Baltic States, Central Asia, and the 'Global South', which encompasses countries in South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Such an approach allows us to decentralise the dominant vision of the socialist economy as reproducing the Soviet model. Exploring the differences and similarities between socialist art economies leads us to question their modus operandi and understand what was so socialist in the socialist art world?

In this issue, we suggest to cover three large thematic blocks:

1. Art Production and Prices Under State Regulation: Commissions and Institutions
In this block, we examine official models of fine art production. How influential were artists and art institutions in shaping the pricing policy and aesthetic criteria of state commissions for art? How were prices for art works decided and negotiated in a planned economy and how were artworks bought and sold in the absence of a free market? How did the official prices fluctuate and correlate with the symbolic value of art works?

2. Shadow Economies and Informal Practices within Socialist Countries
This section examines the practices that operated beneath the official facade of socialist art economies yet served as their driving force, mitigating the weaknesses of the planned economy and the absence of an independent art market. These practices encompassed both official and unofficial artists, engaged private collectors and foreign buyers, and significantly influenced the internal dynamics of artistic communities — shaping their structures, identities, hierarchies, and modes of communication.

3. International Art Trade and Official Foreign Policies
This section reflects on the international art trade beyond the Iron curtain during the Cold War when the export of artistic works functioned as a source of enrichment for state budgets, a tool of cultural diplomacy, and a means of promoting a positive image of socialist art abroad. We aim to examine the conditions underpinning these transactions and the motivations of Western buyers, the fluctuation of the values of art objects and roles of intermediaries (state, institutional, or independent) in forging connections between East and West. Furthermore, by considering actors from the Middle East, India, Africa and South America, we suggest revising the conventions on center and periphery and to see the socialist art and its economies in the global perspective.

Titles and abstracts submission deadline: February 17, 2025
Short project abstracts (500 words maximum) should be sent to ecovisualart_chreecc[at]ehess.fr
Please include name, institutional affiliation and e-mail address in all correspondence.
Authors of selected proposals will be notified by March 18, 2025.
Languages: French, English, Russian
Manuscripts submission deadline: October 15, 2025
Maximum article length: up to approximately 70,000 characters (space characters and notes included)
Evaluation: In accordance with the policies of Cahiers d'histoire russe, est-européenne, caucasienne et
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