Global and Forgotten Connections (Warsaw, 5-6 Feb 26)

Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Małachowskiego 3, 00-916 Warsaw, Feb 5–06, 2026
Deadline: Sep 15, 2025

Wiktoria Szczupacka, 87-100

Global and forgotten connections: the circulation of the visual arts between socialist European countries and Asia, Latin America, and Africa during the Cold War.

Zachęta – National Gallery of Art invites contributions discussing the history and continuity of artistic relations between Eastern Bloc countries and Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The theme is inspired by the history of the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions, an institution based in the Zachęta building that operated from 1949 until the onset of the systemic transformation in the Eastern Bloc. The Central Bureau coordinated the circulation of the visual arts during the Cold War as part of the state cultural policy, with the contacts spanning Asia (China, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, India, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait), Latin America (including Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, and Panama) and Africa (e.g., Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria).

While the discourse around this theme appears to foreground the official forms of cultural diplomacy, we are interested in challenging the dichotomy between the 'official' and the 'independent'. We aim to explore how the visual arts circulated across political, ideological, and institutional boundaries, through both state-sponsored exhibitions and other less formal channels.

We invite papers that address the global circulation of the visual arts beyond the North Atlantic 'canon' of art history. Suggested thematic areas include:
• The global geography of art history during the Cold War
• The official cultural exchange and alternative global art networks
• Art exhibitions as platforms for global contact in the context of socialist internationalism
• Participation of artists from socialist European countries in the São Paulo Art Biennial, Asia-Europe Art Biennial, Havana Biennial, and other recurring international exhibitions outside Europe
• The visual arts in decolonisation and solidarity movements.

Please submit your proposal by 15 September 2025 to: konferencja@zacheta.art.pl
Submissions should include the following: full name, academic degree/title, institutional affiliation, email address, paper title, and an abstract (no more than 1800 characters including spaces). Selected speakers will be notified by 15 October 2025.

Concept and organization

Wiktoria Szczupacka, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art
Gabriela Świtek, Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw

The conference is organised in connection with the exhibition What Are Our Collective Dreams? (15 October 2025 – 28 February 2026, Zachęta), curated by Taras Gembik, Joanna Kordjak, and Antonina Stebur.

Reference:
CFP: Global and Forgotten Connections (Warsaw, 5-6 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 19, 2025 (accessed Nov 1, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/50432>.