Archaeologies of the Communist Avant-Gardes (Weimar, 25-26 Jun 26)

Weimar, Bauhaus Universität Weimar, Jun 25–26, 2026

Tobias Ertl

Archaeologies of the Communist Avant-Gardes: Ephemerality and Leftist Visual Production in Central and Eastern Europe between the World Wars.

This two-day international conference brings together scholars to grapple with the very absence of objects that could tell us about the aesthetic and political strategies of leftist collective desires from the past. Much of the politically and socially engaged leftist art produced between the World Wars in Central and Eastern Europe has been long "destroyed-disappeared-lost-never were," to use the provocative theoretical and methodological framework developed by Beate Fricke and Aden Kumler (2022). The majority of communist visual and artistic practices in Central and Eastern Europe were quintessentially ephemeral or have become so. Therefore studying communist and antifascist propaganda, anonymous leftist printmaking, street and festive decoration and agit-prop objects, monuments, Proletkul't, worker's photography and worker-correspondence movements, textile and applied arts, and didactic and scientific filmmaking among other aesthetic forms, calls for new and innovative research methods across disciplines.

The conference is organized by the Chair for Art and Cultural History at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the Bauhaus University, with additional funding from the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.

Programm

Thursday, June 25, 2026

9:00 – 9:30: Welcome by Jan von Brevern (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar) and Introduction by Adrienn Kácsor (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar) and Tobias Ertl (University of Fribourg)

09:30 – 10:45: Section 1: The Communist Avant-Garde Between Legality and Illegality (Moderation: Masha Chlenova, The New School, New York City)

Molly Pucci (Trinity College Dublin): "Visualizing Justice: International Red Aid, Political Prisoners, and the Transatlantic Aesthetics of Solidarity, 1922–1939"

Ivana Hanaček (University of Zadar): "Image, Class, and the Continuities of the Interwar Avant-Gardes: The Case of the Zemlja Artists' Association"

10:45 – 12:00: Section 2: Radicalizing Information: From Visual Statistics to Workers' Education (Moderation: Manuela Klaut, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Stefanie Kitzberger (Universität für angewandte Kunst, Wien): “Reconstructing Friedl Dicker’s Communist Art Practice”

Richard Anderson (Edinburgh College of Art): “Statistics and Class Struggle: Exhibiting the Housing Question in Europe, 1931”

12:00 – 13:30: Lunch

13:30 – 14:45: Section 3: Marxist Strategies from Central Europe: Theories of De-Commodification and Disappearance (Moderation: Tobias Ertl, University of Fribourg)

Jana Ndiaye Berankova (Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague): “Death to Art!: The Inner Model and the Realm of Freedom in Karel Teige’s The Phenomenology of Art”

Maria Chehonadskih (Queen Mary University of London): “Whose Perspective? Béla Uitz and his Luddites”

14:45 – 15:15: Coffee Break

15:15 – 16:30: Section 4: Precarious Infrastructures: Avant-Garde Networks and Magazines (Moderation: Aleksandra Selivanova, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Merse Szeredi (Kassák Museum, Budapest): “Fragile Infrastructures of the Revolution: Communist Avant-Garde Magazines and Proletkult Networks in Vienna”

Sniedze Kāle (Art Academy of Latvia, Riga): “Magazine Kreisā Fronte (Left Front; 1928–1930) as the Central Platform for the Latvian Communist Avant-Garde Episode”

16:30 – 17:45: Section 5: From Ephemeral Practices to Fragile Histories of Soviet Art and Visual Culture (Moderation: Magdalena Nieslony, Universität Innsbruck)

Maria Silina (Université du Québec à Montréal / Ruhr-Universität Bochum): “Creativity in Socialist Public Spaces in Interwar Russia: From Ephemeral Practices to Visual Legacy”

Christina Kiaer (Northwestern University, Evanston): “The Ephemeral Researcher of Ephemeral Objects”

17:45 – 18:30: Break

18:30 – 20:00: Film Screening: Jokinen (2016) by Laura Horelli

Screening organized in collaboration with the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Thüringen
Followed by a discussion with the filmmaker
Maurice-Halbwachs-Auditorium
Universitätsbibliothek

Friday, June 26, 2026

9:00 – 10:15: Section 6: Conditions of (In)visibility (Moderation: Elena Vogman, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Kamila Kociałkowska (University of Warwick): “Reading Between the Lines: Invisible Ink and the Chemical Texts of Caucasian Modernism”

Sanja Horvatinčić (Institute of Art History, Zagreb / Durham University) & Lujo Parežanin (Independent Scholar, Zagreb): “The Printing House That Moved: Materiality and Cultural Production in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle”

10:15–10:45: Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:30: Section 7: Ephemeral Historiographies: Shifting Histories of the Communist Avant-Gardes (Moderation: Adrienn Kácsor, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Kateryna Denysova (Universität Tübingen): “Revolutionary Posters and Ideas of National Communism in 1920s Ukraine”

Magdolna Gucsa (KEMKI Central European Research Institute for Art History, Budapest): “(In)visibilities of Communist Visual Production in Post-Socialist Institutions – The Case of Gyula Derkovits’s 1930 Placard”

Nikos Pegioudis (Technical University of Crete, Chania): “Kunstgewerbe and Communism: Excavating the Roots of the Weimar Radical Avant-Garde”

12:30: Closing Remarks

Organized by Adrienn Kácsor (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar) and Tobias Ertl (University of Fribourg)

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
Lounge - Seminarraum K01
Steubenstraße 6, Haus G
Universitätsbibliothek Weimar

This is an in-person event only. Participation is free and open to all. To register, please email Adrienn Kácsor (adrienn.kacsor@uni-weimar.de) and Tobias Ertl (tobias.ertl@unifr.ch).

Reference:

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