RVULI: Independent Art Spaces and the Critique of "Art Criticism" in Georgia

Online, Sep 14–23, 2026
Deadline: Oct 15, 2026

Jeannette Brabenetz

Open Call for Articles and webinar participation on September 14 and 23 [more information below].

In Georgia's rapid cycle of political change, art ideologies and institutions struggle to take root. These institutions—artist-run spaces, site-and timespecific projects, online and offline spaces, NGOs, and other forms that generate temporary or lasting artistic experiences—often exist only in people's memories. Independent art spaces and their exhibitions often go unnoticed and unarchived. Few exhibitions or events receive pre- or posttextual discussion; dedicated art publications and platforms are lacking. Within art circles, partisan critiques—both "leftist" and "rightist"—and critiques of "art criticism" circulate orally, but they are rarely recorded in writing.

AICA Georgia's inaugural bilingual online publication (Georgian/English) invites in cooperation with AICA Germany art critics, curators, writers, and anyone interested in critical writing to reflect on attitudes toward independent art institutions and art criticism in Georgia.

Submissions may take diverse forms and positions: case studies of individuals or institutions, reviews, journalistic reports, essays, interviews or dialogues, and theoretical texts. The contributions should circulate around independent institutions, artist-run spaces, informal art education initiatives and institutions, community initiatives, art activism, social space and place making, etc.

The collected texts will be published in AICA Georgia's publication Rvuli. The publication aims to document the nature and significance of Georgia's art spaces and to foster a sustained discussion about art criticism.

The contributions should not be less than 1800 characters (incl.) and come along with a short biography of the author/s (max. 200 words).

Eight articles by authors from Georgia and Germany will be selected. Each selected author will receive an honorarium of €120.

Interested authors, organizations and institutions are warmly invited to participate in two cost-free webinars, which will provide and discuss partially particular topics in the actual cultural-political situation in Georgia.

Contact:

Lali Perteneva (Aica Georgia) info@aicageorgia.org
Jeannette Brabenetz (Aica Germany) vorstand@aica.de
www.aica.de

Submission deadline: October 15, 2026

We cordially invite you to also participate in two webinars for RVULI:

Webinars will be held on September 14 and 23 to facilitate a joint discussion of the relevant contexts.

Webinar I: Censorship, Art Criticism, and Freedom of Expression Lessons from Georgia and Germany

Monday, September 14, 2026 | 19:00–20.30 (CET, Tbilisi time 21:00-22:30), registration required: vorstand@aica.de

An essential prerequisite for independent art, criticism and cultural discourse is freedom of expression. However, constraints on speech and censorship can come from a variety of sources, such as political institutions and cultural institutions, ideological movements, societal pressures, and digital platforms.

This webinar will bring together perspectives from Georgia and Germany to examine these different forms of pressure and their impact on art criticism and cultural production. It will take into account the growing influence of political pressure and censorship in the Georgia, as well as the larger backsliding of democracy and the rise of authoritarian tendencies. In addition to direct political censorship, polarisation, social pressure, self-censorship, and social media dynamics will all be discussed as strategies to further limit the space for critical cultural expression. The historical experience of Georgia also calls into question the ways in which political power has influenced intellectual and creative production, as well as the potential relevance of older forms of cultural control in the contemporary conditions.

A different viewpoint is provided by the German background. Germany, a democratic country with institutional protections for free speech, yet has its own discussions about what constitutes acceptable speech. Cultural and critical discourse can be influenced by a variety of factors, including social expectations, institutional practices, political left and right ideological influences, public disputes, and internet platform content-moderation rules. Even though these methods would not be considered political censorship in the same way, they might nevertheless provide forces that promote self-censorship or conformity. Rather than presenting a simple opposition between a democratic and an authoritarian system, the webinar aims to examine the different ways in which freedom of expression can be constrained, negotiated, or defended. Particular attention will be given to the position of art critics and cultural professionals, whose work depends on the ability to question established narratives, challenge institutions, and express unpopular or uncomfortable perspectives.

Zaal Andronikashvili is a literary and cultural scholar, Professor at Ilia State University in Tbilisi and a research fellow at the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary Literature and Cultural Research

(ZfL) in Berlin. His research focuses on cultural history, political theology, literature, and the history of Georgia, the Caucasus, and the Soviet and post-Soviet world. He has written extensively on Georgian culture and politics and on the relationship between literature, society, and political power.

Carsten Probst is a Berlin-based art critic, writer, and art theorist. He has published widely on contemporary art in German and international art publications and has contributed to Deutschlandfunk and other media for more than two decades. He also teaches academic writing at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar and has organised and participated in numerous discussions and conferences on art criticism and art theory. Since January 2026, he has been President of AICA Germany.

Webinar 2 - Representation of Contemporary Georgian Art outside of Georgia, State Influence, and International Reception

With Sophia Tabatadze (Halfsister Berlin) and Natia Bukia (Bukia-Vkhania Gallery Berlin, previously known as Artbeat, Tbilisi, Georgia)

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 I 17:00–18:30 (CET, Tbilisi time 19:00-20:30), registration required: vorstand@aica.de

Over the past decade, Georgia has experienced significant political and social transformations that have increasingly affected the country's cultural environment. Political polarization, debates around Georgia's European integration, civic mobilization, changes in cultural policy, and growing tensions between state institutions and parts of civil society have created a complex environment for cultural production and international cultural representation.

These developments have also influenced the position of contemporary art and the ways in which Georgian artists and cultural institutions are represented both within Georgia and internationally.

Contemporary Georgian art has frequently been presented to international audiences through the lens of the country's political transition, post-Soviet experience, democratic aspirations, European orientation, and regional geopolitical position. While these contexts are important for understanding many artistic practices, they can also create particular expectations about what Georgian art should represent and how it should be interpreted.

At the same time, questions have emerged concerning the relationship between cultural institutions and the state, the role of public funding, institutional autonomy, cultural diplomacy, and the ability of artists and cultural professionals to maintain independent voices.

Recent political developments therefore raise important questions about who represents Georgian contemporary art internationally, which narratives become visible, and how political and institutional interests influence its reception abroad. The webinar will explore these questions through a conversation between Georgian and international artists, curators, researchers, and cultural professionals.

Sophia Tabatadze graduated from Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam in 2002 and completed

the CuratorLab curatorial program at Konstfack, Stockholm in 2018. Tabatadze's drawings blend imaginary and real worlds, embracing the unpredictability of their outcomes. In 2007, she represented Georgia at the Venice Biennale and was also part of the Istanbul Biennale. Her work has been exhibited at the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum in Ludwigshafen; Tartu Kunstimuuseum; Musée des BeauxArts, Nantes; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; and Tbilisi History Museum. Halfsister primarily organizes exhibitions and film screenings, but has also accommodated readings, stand-up performances, book launches, and pop-up markets. With two of the studios being used by artists from Georgia, Halfsister has established a network of Georgian cultural professionals and uses the space to showcase Georgian art while raising awareness of the ongoing democratic struggles in Georgia.

Reference:
CFP: RVULI: Independent Art Spaces and the Critique of "Art Criticism" in Georgia. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 14, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54249>.