RACR Online Discussions (online, 22 Oct–15 Dec 26)

Online, Oct 22–Dec 15, 2026

Georg Sokolov, Bremen

Russian Art & Culture Reconsidered (RACR) announces its Fall online discussions program. We warmly invite everyone to join us for our talks.

To join us as a guest/discussant, please register via the following link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSelwCj9WmjMpOIFOb4ym2XGf9UTNlUz0ol070nXyn-_9ohFAQ/viewform?usp=dialog

We kindly ask you to register in advance to receive an invitation with a ZOOM link.

October 22, 2026, 16.00 (CET)
Roberta Sala: Landscapes as Peripheral Aesthetic Spaces in the Soviet Actions of Kollektivnye Deistviia: A Combined Ecocritical-Ecosemiotic Approach

The talk examines the landscape as a peripheral space of artistic experimentation in the Soviet-era Moscow Conceptualist group Kollektivnye Deistviia [Collective Actions]. From the mid-1970s, the group staged minimalist performances, often in outdoor spaces on Moscow's outskirts, particularly at Kievogorskoe pole, an untilled field bordered by woods. The groups' aim was to explore art beyond socio-political conditioning, creating what Boris Groys termed a "clearing" within the claustrophobic aesthetics of Soviet official culture. Since 1980, documentation of these performances has been preserved in the samizdat project Poezdki za gorod [Trips out of Town]. While scholarship has primarily interpreted these works as attempts to establish a parallel sphere to Soviet official art, this talk proposes an ecocritical and ecosemiotic approach. Roberta argues that natural environments actively participate in meaning-making through interactions with human actors. Focusing on the forest ecosystem, she examines how these encounters expand semiotic freedom and foster de-ideologized perspectives on cultural and natural environments.

Roberta Sala is an Adjunct Professor of Russian Literature and Russian Civilization at the University of Pavia. Currently, she holds a research scholarship in the project Ecocriticism and Literature: Values and Cultural Representations in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia. Her publications include the 2019 monograph Lo spazio senza il verso. Mute liriche del bianco nella poesia russa contemporanea (Guerini e Associati, Milan) and the 2023 special issue "Framing Environments in Russia: Critical Reflections on Ecology, Culture, and Power" of Lagoonscapes (co-edited with Nadia Caprioglio, Ca' Foscari University Press, Venice). She is also a co-founder and co-organizer of the international conference Renovating Narratives at the University of Turin.

November 5, 2026, 16.00 (CET)
Discussion of the book Soviet Museums Between the Two World Wars: Art History on Display by

Maria Silina

The discussion will focus on Maria Silina's new book Soviet Museums Between the Two World Wars: Art History on Display (Routledge, 2026). Silina examines how Soviet museums presented art history from the 1917 Revolution through the Second World War, situating these practices within broader interwar debates shaped by the crisis of the museum, modernist approaches to display, and changing exhibition techniques. Among the topics covered in the book: the history of the nationalization of private property and its far-reaching, decades-long implications for museum collections; the development of Marxist art history and its interpenetration with museum display; and the formation of the Socialist Realist canon, including Moscow-led approaches to national and multiethnic art histories. The conversation will take up the book's wider implications for museology and Central and Eastern European studies, touching on the spread and adaptation of museum models throughout the socialist bloc, along with current debates surrounding provenance, restitution, and the political uses of heritage.

Author:
Maria Silina (they/them), Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)
Speakers:
Magdolna Gucsa, Research Fellow at the Central European Research Institute for Art History (KEMKI), Budapest
Katarina Lopatkina, Researcher at Nootti, The Museum of Finnish-Russian Relations, Tampere, Finland
Ewa Manikowska, Head of the Heritage and Provenance Research Centre and Associate Professor at The Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw
Isabel Wünsche, Professor of Art and Art History at Constructor University Bremen
Moderators: Irina Riznychok and Georg Sokolov, Research Associates at Constructor University Bremen

November 24, 2026, 16.00 (CET)
Elizaveta Grishechkina: Gender and Sexuality during Perestroika: New Freedoms, New Inequalities

This talk explores gender and sexuality during Perestroika, a time when new freedoms of expression coexisted with emerging inequalities and conservative backlash. Grishechkina asks: Who benefited from these new freedoms, and who faced new forms of precarity? In what ways did the discrediting of communist ideology make room both for feminist and queer agendas and for religious revival and nationalist conservatism? What kinds of identities and communities became possible, and which remained marginalized or invisible? In her presentation, she examines how gender and sexual subjectivities were reimagined in late Soviet underground culture through the pages of Mitin Zhurnal and the archive of Dmitrii Volchek. Drawing on texts by Iuliia Kisina, Olga Komarova, Iaroslav Mogutin, and Dmitrii Volchek, she explores the emergence of new identities, communities, and languages of desire at the end of the Soviet era, while tracing the tensions between liberation, precarity, and the competing visions of the post-Soviet future.

Elizaveta Grishechkina is a PhD student in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research focuses on gender studies in Soviet culture, with particular attention to underground women's writing of the 1970s–1980s, the poetic and affective dimen-

sions of late Soviet literature, as well as Christian and feminist samizdat. She holds a BA in Philology and an MA in Intermedial Studies of Russian Literature from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Russia.

December 15, 2026, 16.00 (CET)
Daria Speshneva: History Painting and Its Protagonists: Emotional Language of National Identity

The presentation examines the role of emotions in mediating the relationship between art and history in Russian history painting during its formation and rapid development at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The demand to recover the past and construct a national genealogy, together with the growing emphasis on individual experience and the democratization of emotions, shaped new ways of imagining and representing historical figures. Focusing on works by Dmitry Ivanov and Orest Kiprensky, the presentation explores how emotion, character, and morality shaped the pictorial construction of historical subjects and the visual interpretation of the past.

Daria Speshneva is a doctoral candidate at Freie Universität (FU) Berlin. Her dissertation project examines how affective dimensions of Russian history painting—particularly the representation of emotions and character traits—were integrated into the intellectual and aesthetic discourses of the Russian Enlightenment. She is affiliated with the Global Sentimentality Project (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg), where she previously held a research fellowship. At FU, she co-organized the international workshop In Search of Expressiveness: Exploring the Notion within the Realms of Literature and Theatre in the 18th–19th Centuries and currently teaches courses on Eastern European visual culture.

Reference:
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