Transnational Artistic Relations in the Cold War Era (Prague, 25 Nov 26)

Prague, Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Art History, Nov 25, 2026

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The international doctoral and early-career researcher conference "Transnational Artistic Relations in the Cold War Era" aims to explore how international artistic connections developed across the geopolitical and ideological divisions of the Cold War between 1945 and 1989. While the metaphor of the Iron Curtain has profoundly shaped our understanding of the period, artistic relations often followed complex networks that crossed or circumvented these boundaries. Informal diplomacy, personal contacts, cultural exchange, and acts of solidarity created spaces of interaction that challenged rigid distinctions between East and West, official and unofficial.

The conference will thus examine the ways in which these crossings shaped artistic practices, curatorial approaches, exhibition-making, and the circulation and reception of art. It will consider both official and informal forms of exchange, as well as the alternative networks and channels through which transnational relations developed. Particular attention will be given to Eastern, Central and South Eastern Europe and its borderlands, while also addressing broader geographical and methodological perspectives.

THE CONFERENCE WILL EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:
Artistic mobility and travel across the Iron Curtain
Exhibitions, biennials, and festivals as sites of transnational exchange
Cultural diplomacy and institutional frameworks
Artistic relations within the socialist bloc and with countries of the Global South
The role of curators, critics, collectors, cultural attachés, and other “agents” or intermediaries
Methodological reflections on writing transnational Cold War art histories today

Prague, 25 November 2026
Academic Centre at the Institute of Art History, Husova 4, Prague

Panel blocks:

8.30 – 9.00 Registrations
9.00 Welcome speech and Introduction

9.15 – 10.30

I. Institutions and Their Influence.

9.15–10.30

Erchen Wang, Leipzig University
Crossing the Iron Curtain: Private Galleries in the GDR as Nodes of Transnational Artistic Exchange During the Cold War – The Case of Jurgen Schweinebraden's EP Gallery in East Berlin

9.40–10.05
Freda Fiala, University of Arts Linz
Exhibiting the People's Republic: Austrian Museums and China during the Cold War

10.05–10.30
Charlotte Zimová, Charles University
Joseph Sima and the Strategies of Mediation: Friendship Networks, Diplomatic Channels, and Gallery Representation in Cold War Era Paris

Panel discussion

10.45 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 12.40
II. Making a Canon. Or not.

11.00–11.25
Olga Olkheft, Bielefeld University
Establishing a Transnational 'Russian Avant-Garde' Knowledge Network: The Genesis of the Great Experiment

11.25–11.50
Anastasia Kurlyandtseva, Independent scholar
Beyond the Soviet Route: American Artists Looking at Socialist Art Worlds after Moscow

11.50–12.15
Constanze Fritsch, Postdoctoral researcher, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut
Marxist Poetics in Divided Germany

12.15–12.40
Jan Zachariáš, Independent scholar
Explaining the East to the West: Jindřich Chalupecký, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, and the Transnational Construction of "Eastern" Modernity

Panel discussion

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch break

14.00 – 14.40
Keynote lecture, Katalin Cseh-Varga, University of Vienna
Towards an Operational Art History: Approaches to Understanding Relations and Their Impact

15.00 – 16.40
III. Beyond the Binary

15.00–16.40
Anna Nolte, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Exhibiting Diplomacy. Art Exchange Between the GDR and Latin America: The Case of the Centre for Art Exhibitions, 1970–1990

15.25–15.50
Anna Majola, Masaryk University
Building Post-Independence Ghana: Czechoslovak architects in the 1960s as Agents of Cultural Diplomacy

15.50–16.15
Anna-Marie Kroupová, University of Vienna
Lost in Translation? Vietnamese Art Students' Education and Careers Between Prague and Vietnam, 1969–1989

16.15–16.40
Rea Zupin, University of Ljubljana
Exchange of Art Exhibitions Between Austria and Socialist Slovenia

Panel discussion

17.00 Conclusion and Final Remarks

Reference:
CONF: Transnational Artistic Relations in the Cold War Era (Prague, 25 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 20, 2026 (accessed Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/57161>.