

The Courtauld

Modernism in Ukraine:

**Local Contexts, Intercultural Encounters,
Transnational Exchanges**

International Two-Day Conference

**The Courtauld Institute of Art
4-5 October 2024**



Image: Oleksandr Bohomazov, *Experimental Still Life*, 1927-28, watercolour on paper, 34 x 24 cm. Private collection, Image courtesy of James Butterwick Gallery, London

Introduction

Coinciding with the final stop of the touring exhibition *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900-1930s* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (29 June – 13 October 2024), this international conference brings together established and early career scholars for a first-ever discussion dedicated exclusively to Ukraine's visual culture of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to be held outside Ukraine.

For decades the modernist art production of Ukraine has been viewed through the imperialist lens of the so-called 'Russian avant-garde', with scholarship dedicated specifically to the local Ukrainian context remaining marginal and mostly a purview of home-produced historiography. The Russian Federation's brutal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has finally prompted a reassessment of the existing art historical canon, posing uncomfortable questions regarding the complicity of western academia and institutions in overlooking the Kremlin's neo-imperialist pretensions. The current conference seeks to harness this unprecedented moment to redress historical injustices, invest in epistemic reparations and reclaim names, events and institutions for Ukraine's cultural space. At the same time, by recognising and celebrating the country's multicultural dimension and pluralism of local artistic practices, the conference will go beyond the established national paradigm to investigate cultural transfers and intercultural exchanges.

With a programme of academic papers and panel discussions dedicated to visual arts in various media, the conference addresses the following questions: How did artists engage with indigenous pictorial traditions to construct Ukraine's modern cultural identity? How did this engagement evolve under the changing political and ideological regimes? What intercultural and transnational encounters had informed the development of modern art in Ukraine? What is the legacy of Ukraine's artistic modernism and what vision of the future can it offer?

Conference ticket holders will have access to an exclusive preview of the exhibition at the Royal Academy on Friday 4 October.

Organised by Dr Maria Mileeva, Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art, The Courtauld Institute of Art, and Dr Katia Denysova, co-curator of *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900-1930s*.

This event is part of Migrations: People, Politics, Objects, made possible by The Courtauld Research Forum.

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Programme

Friday 4 October

- 8.00-10.00** Exhibition Preview of *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900-1930s* for conference participants and ticket-holders
The Royal Academy of Arts, London
- 10.30-11.00** Registration
The Courtauld Institute of Art, Vernon Square
- 11.00-11.15** Opening Remarks
- 11.15-12.15** **Keynote I** 'Like Marco in Hell' - How an Age-Old Ukrainian Idiom Laid Bare an Entire Modernist Movement
Professor Myroslava M. Mudrak, Emerita Professor of the History of Art, The Ohio State University
- 12.15-13.30** Lunch Break

Panel I

Ukraine's Modernism Across Borders: Imperial, Émigré and Institutional Entanglements

Chair: Dr Maria Mileeva, The Courtauld Institute of Art

- 13.30-13.40** Introduction
- 13.40-14.00** Kindred Spirits? On Correlations Between Young Poland (Młoda Polska) and Young Ukraine (Moloda Muza and Beyond)
Dr Michał Burdziński, Silesian Museum in Katowice
- 14.05-14.25** Modernist Stained Glass in Ukraine: From Western to Ukrainian Tradition
Dr Oksana Kondratyeva, Independent Scholar and Artist
- 14.30-14.50** The Presidential Portrait that Never Came to Be: Archipenko, Prague and the Ukrainian Émigré Community
Dr Jakub Hauser, Museum of Czech Literature, Prague
- 14.50-15.20** Joint Discussion
- 15.20-15.40** Refreshments

Panel II

Modernisms in Ukraine: Continuities, Ruptures, Legacies

Chair: Dr Klara Kemp-Welch, The Courtauld Institute of Art

- 15.40-15.50** Introduction
- 15.50-16.10** Directions of Modernist Pedagogy: The 1920s at the Kyiv Art Institute
Lada Nakonechna, documenta Institute and University of Kassel
- 16.15-16.35** Suspensions in Island Time: ARWM and the Nenets' Encounters on the Arctic Circle
Polina Baitsym, Central European University, Budapest/Vienna
- 16.40-17.00** Tracing Avant-Garde Legacies in Contemporary Ukrainian Painting: Oleksandr Roytburd, Vlada Ralko, and Tiberiy Szilvashi
Dr Svitlana Biedarieva, Independent Art Historian, Artist and Curator [online]
- 17.00-17.30** Joint Discussion
- 17.30-18.00** Refreshments

Panel Discussion

The Multicultural Dimension of Ukraine's Modernism

- 18.00-19.30** *Dr Uilleam Blacker, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL*
Andrij Bojarov, Visual Artist, Independent Curator and Researcher
Dr Katia Denysova, Co-curator of 'In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine'
- 19.30-20.15** Drinks Reception

Programme

Saturday 5 October

- 9.45-10.00** Day 2 Introduction
- 10.00-11.00** **Keynote II** Modernism Regained: The Necessity of a Revisionist Approach in Ukrainian Art History
Dr Konstantin Akinsha, Independent Art Historian, Curator and Journalist
- 11.00-11.30** Refreshments

Panel III

Imagining the City: Fusing Ukrainian, Urban and Transnational

Chair: Dr Michał Murawski, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL

- 11.30-11.40** Introduction
- 11.40-12.00** Ukrainian Modernist Cinema and the Discovery of the City
Dr Yuri Shevchuk, Senior Lecturer in Ukrainian, the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University
- 12.05-12.25** An Instrument of Perpetual Revolution for Kharkiv, 1930
Dr Dan Dubowitz, Manchester School of Architecture, Manchester Metropolitan University
- 12.30-12.50** Transnational Entanglements: Modernist Industrial Architecture in Eastern Ukraine
Dr Christina E. Crawford, Emory University
- 12.50-13.20** Joint Discussion
- 13.25-13.45** Closing Remarks

Abstracts

Keynote I | ‘Like Marco in Hell’ – How an Age-Old Ukrainian Idiom Laid Bare an Entire Modernist Movement

Professor Myroslava Maria Mudrak is Emerita Professor of the History of Art at the Ohio State University, specialising in the field of modernist art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her scholarly interests focus on Eastern Europe, Ukraine, Russia, and the former Soviet Union in relation to the philosophical and stylistic developments of the West. For more than three decades, she taught at Ohio State University and lectured on the ideological discourses, socio-political influences, and artistic practices within East European cultures that use modernity to signify national identity. Mudrak’s seminal work, *New Generation and Artistic Modernism in Ukraine* (1986) was awarded the Kovaliw Prize for Ukrainian Studies and was published in a Ukrainian translation by Rodovid Press in 2018. Other publications include essays on Ukrainian Dada and Dissidence, Propaganda Pavilions, the Ukrainian Studio of Plastic Arts in Prague, Panfuturism, Constructivism, and Neue Slowenische Kunst and the Semiotics of Suprematism. She has contributed essays for exhibition catalogues on collections of Russian and Ukrainian avant-garde art, including *Red Horizon* (2018); *David Burliuk 1882-1967: Futurism and After* (2008); *From the Lotus to the Sickie: the Art of Borys Kosarev* (2012). Mudrak curated the exhibition, *Staging the Ukrainian Avant-Garde of the 1910s and 1920s*, a catalogue recognised by the 2016 Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Award of the College Art Association. Her latest publications include the monographs: *Nikifor: The Ultimate Outsider* (2023) and *The Imaginative World of Heorhii Narbut and the Making of a Ukrainian Brand* (2020) translated into Ukrainian and French (2021) as well as catalogue essays to the exhibitions of *Oleksandr Bohomazov: Tvorcha Laboratoriia [Creative Laboratory]* (2019), *Futuromarennia: A Multidisciplinary Project* (2021–23), and *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900–1930s* (2022–24). In 2020, Mudrak was elected as a Foreign Member of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine.

Panel I | Ukraine’s Modernism Across Borders: Imperial, Émigré and Institutional Entanglements

Chaired by Dr Maria Mileeva, Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

Dr Maria Mileeva is a Lecturer at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London. Her research and teaching centre around postcolonial and decolonial narratives of the Russo-Soviet imperial projects and Soviet multinationalism. Her current book project interrogates the linkages between the cultural policies of socialist realism and socialist internationalism in the post-war period. An aspect of this research was published as ‘Imagined Solidarities: Cairo-Moscow and the Struggle for Realist Art’, in a special issue of *Art History* entitled ‘Red Networks: Postwar Art Exchange’, ed. Vivian Li, 45:5 (Nov 2022). She is the co-convenor of PPV (Perverting the Power Vertical: Politics and Aesthetics), UCL.

Dr Michał Burdziński, Curator of Modern Art and Design, Silesian Museum in Katowice

Kindred Spirits? On Correlations Between Young Poland (Młoda Polska) and Young Ukraine (Moloda Muza and Beyond)

This paper deals with the development of Ukrainian and Polish cultures within the borders of Habsburg Galicia at the turn of the twentieth century. Firstly, it brings to the fore the work of the alumni of the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts – mainly Oleksa Novakivskyi, Ivan Trush and Mykhailo Zhuk, often linked with the patronage of archbishop Andrey Sheptytskyi. Their legacy will be discussed in relation to the artistic outputs of Jacek Malczewski and Stanisław Wyspiański, as well as native sources of inspiration (sometimes identical, like Vernyhora or Hutsul folklore, important for both circles). Secondly, the study seeks to emphasise points of contact and convergence between the Lviv modernist group Young Muse (Moloda Muza) and the formation of Young Poland (Młoda Polska) via direct personal relations of Bohdan Lepky and Stanisław Przybyszewski, as well as Władysław Orkan, who published Ukrainian poetry and prose in translation. It will also highlight Lepky's career as a professor at Jagiellonian University and later as a deputy to the Polish Parliament.

This analysis challenges the stereotypes about the two nations that had lived in the same area for ages. The portrait of Jan Stanisławski, a brilliant landscapist and teacher of some of the aforementioned graduates, painted by Oleksandr Murashko, a prominent member of Young Ukraine, can serve as a symbolic act for this comparative examination.

Dr Michał Burdziński has been the Curator of Modern Art and Design at the Silesian Museum in Katowice since 2019. He obtained a degree in Comparative Studies in Literature and Art at Jagiellonian University in Kraków (2010) and completed his doctoral thesis at the University of Warsaw (2016) on the visions of Paris in the works of Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak modernists. He received, among others, the Stanisław Lam scholarship from the Historic-Literary Society of the Polish Library in Paris (2012) and the Etiuda grant from the National Science Centre in Kraków (2014). He is a member of the Polish Association of Art Historians, the Polish-Slovak Commission of Historians, and the American Association of Art Museum Curators, as focused on the cultural phenomena of 19th-21st century Central Europe.

Dr Oksana Kondratyeva, independent scholar and artist, London

Modernist Stained Glass in Ukraine: From Western to Ukrainian Tradition

The history of stained glass in Ukraine, a complex and multifaceted cultural phenomenon, has been terra incognita for years, mainly due to its manifold historical basis, which followed a distorted, zigzag path. Despite Ukraine's rich heritage of stained glass production, it is rarely viewed as coherent. In the context of shifting borders and the rise and fall of multiple empires and states, stained glass, an integral part of twentieth-century architecture across Ukraine, has channelled the country's cultural diversity and international relations alongside national traditions. The paper attempts to synthesise this diverse landscape and create a more nuanced understanding of Ukraine's visual culture, focusing on modernist stained glass.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Ukraine's territorial division inevitably influenced the cultural scene. Stained glass witnessed numerous interactions with the broader European tradition, particularly in the technology of stained glass production. The Revolution of 1905 was a turning point for the movement towards Ukraine's independence, briefly established in 1917-21. The awakening of national consciousness formed Ukrainian architectural Art Nouveau, encompassing a great interest in all things folkloric in various media. This paper will discuss architects and artists who sought inspiration in vernacular buildings and folk art in their design for stained glass via ornamental Ukrainian patterns, as featured in the Poltava Province Council Building (1903-08) and the Chamber of Commerce in Lviv (1907-11). The ethnic and religious polyphony of the region brought a distinctive richness in subject matter and themes. This culminated in a series of windows designed by the artist Petro Kholodnyi and produced by Krakowski Zakład Witrażów, Oszkleń Artystycznych i Fabryka Mozaiki S. G. Żeleński for the Dormition Churches in Lviv and Mrazhnytsya. The resulting design schemes fused the Byzantine iconographic tradition with the expressiveness of folk art derived from the artist's encounter with Ukrainian folklore.

Dr Oksana Kondratyeva holds an MSc from the University of Bonn and a PhD in Theory of Architecture and Restoration of Architectural Landmarks from Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture. Her research interests include the history of Ukraine's stained glass and dalle-de-verre. She studied Glass and Architecture at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, and is a practising artist based in London. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally and held in the collection of the National Museum of Ukrainian Decorative Arts, Kyiv, among others. In 2016, she was awarded the Arthur and Helen David Travelling Fellowship from the Worshipful Company of Glaziers (London) to research stained glass in Kharkiv and Lviv. She has published papers for leading peer-reviewed journals such as *The Journal of Stained Glass*.

Dr Jakub Hauser, Curator of Art Collections, Museum of Czech Literature, Prague

The Presidential Portrait that Never Came to Be: Archipenko, Prague and the Ukrainian Émigré Community

In 1923, Alexander Archipenko visited Czechoslovakia to mark his solo exhibition at the Artists' House in Prague, organised by the Devětsil association. A short monographic book by Karel Teige accompanied the show; it remains one of the most important publications of the Devětsil avant-garde movement of the 1920s. During Archipenko's visit to Prague, the Ukrainian Citizens' Committee in Czechoslovakia proposed to the Presidential Office for the artist to create a portrait of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. After some negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, the idea was rejected.

This ostensibly marginal affair illustrates not only the somewhat restrained attitude of Czechoslovakia's leadership towards contemporary art but also, to some extent, the limits of the state's relationship with the Ukrainian émigré community, for which Czechoslovakia was a principal centre in the interwar period. With this episode as a starting point, the paper investigates the Ukrainian artistic institutions in Prague in the 1920s–30s, while considering a broader question of delineating Ukrainian modernism. Despite the exhibition of Archipenko in 1923 and Alexandra Exter a couple of years later at the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague, and notwithstanding the liberal atmosphere at the Ukrainian Studio of Plastic Arts, founded by Dmytro Antonovych in 1923, Czechoslovakia remains on the periphery of Ukrainian modernism.

Dr Jakub Hauser is an art historian and curator of art collections at the Museum of Czech Literature in Prague. One of the focuses of his research is the subject of exiled artists from the former Russian Empire in interwar Czechoslovakia. He studied Art History and East-European studies at Charles University in Prague, where he defended his doctoral thesis in 2020. He is the author of the monograph *Sans retour: výtvarníci ruské emigrace v meziválečné Praze* (Památník národního písemnictví, 2020) and co-editor with Eva Janáčková of the volume *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe. Imagery of Hatred* (De Gruyter, 2020). He recently co-curated an online exhibition about Ukrainian artists represented in the collection of the Museum of Czech Literature.

Panel II | Modernisms in Ukraine: Continuities, Ruptures, Legacies

Chaired by Dr Klara Kemp-Welch, Reader in 20th Century Modernism, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

Dr Klara Kemp-Welch works on intersections between modern and contemporary art and politics. She was educated at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies and University College London, where her doctorate (2008) was supervised by Professor Briony Fer. She is the author of *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian*

Rule 1956-1989 (IB Tauris, 2014), *Networking the Bloc. Experimental Art in Eastern Europe 1965-1989* (MIT Press, 2019) and co-editor of *A Reader in East-Central European Modernism 1918-1956* with Beata Hock and Jonathan Owen (Courtauld Books Online, 2019). She is now writing a monograph on contemporary art, migration and mobility in the European Union.

Lada Nakonechna, Research Fellow, documenta Institute, and PhD Candidate, University of Kassel

Directions of Modernist Pedagogy: The 1920s at the Kyiv Art Institute

In the mid-1920s, the Kyiv Art Institute (KAI) inherited the modernist approach of the recently established Ukrainian Academy of Art, hosting a wide range of art movements under one roof. Mykhailo Boichuk came up with the idea of a workshop on composition while developing an objective teaching method. The objectivity of formal principles and the study of basic elements related to plane, volume and space laid the foundation for the innovative Fortech (formal and technical) Faculty, introduced at the KAI in 1925. Oleksandr Bohomazov, another artist who practised a unique pedagogical method, taught at Fortech from its inception.

Boichuk sought to develop Ukrainian art based on universal rules that artists had to extract from a wide range of historical examples through careful study of their compositional principles. The ideal composition learned through the disciplined reproduction of certain forms, was to help an artist reflect contemporaneity through a representational form. Bohomazov, on the other hand, introduced all existing art movements into his teaching programme as analytical tools to study artistic material, emphasising its main elements and the synthetic nature of art. Committed to dynamism, which he believed to be the basis of art, the artist contested the dominance of a single artistic direction and its decisive role in shaping pedagogical methods.

Although both artists propagated formal research and analytical approaches premised on objective principles in the study of art, their teaching methodologies were opposed. While Boichuk proposed a normative approach, seeking to extract universal compositional standards that could be filled with different content, Bohomazov purported that these universal artistic means should support individual responses to external conditions. The paper focuses on the visions of art and society in Ukraine as reflected by these two pedagogical approaches practised at the Institute.

Lada Nakonechna is an artist and researcher involved in several collective artistic and curatorial projects. She is the co-curator of the educational programmes for the Method Fund, an organisation for the development of contemporary art in Ukraine. In 2022, she was a guest lecturer at the HFBK Hamburg, and in 2023 joined the documenta Institut. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Kassel, researching the paradigms of Modernism and Socialist Realism at the Kyiv Art Institute. As an artist, she uses the approach of institutional critique to investigate the connection between art and the practices of power production.

Polina Baitsym, PhD Candidate, Central European University, Budapest / Vienna

Suspensions in Island Time: ARWM and the Nenets' Encounters on the Arctic Circle

On 27 September 1959, two young artists from the Kyiv Art Institute, Ada Rybachuk and Wolodymyr Melnichenko, gifted approximately 116 artworks to the remote Nenets settlement of Naryan-Mar. This extraordinary and heartfelt gesture by the duo known in Ukraine as ARWM allegedly inaugurated the first fine arts museum in the Soviet Arctic.

This paper outlines the event's antecedents and consequences, weaving together the history of

the Soviet Union's colonisation of the North Pole areas, the burgeoning fascination with the so-called North expeditions in the post-war period, and the praxis of Ukrainian artists within the Soviet art institutions. From the mid-1950s until 2003, ARWM journeyed through the White, the Kara, and the Barents Seas, forging a lasting bond with the Nenets. Their time spent on Kolguev Island – where the Soviet government had relocated the Nenets to accommodate the Arctic areas for nuclear testing – profoundly altered their art and writing. ARWM transposed this experience into Kyiv's public art, architecture, sculptures, linocuts, paintings and children's book illustrations.

The paper interrogates modernist borrowings of Indigenous imagery by approaching ARWM's enduring engagement with the Nenets as both an offshoot of Soviet settler colonialism and an instance of its subversion. Beyond ARWM's public art, the presentation attends to the portraits of the Nenets, especially in the series *People of Kolguev Island* (1962–63), exploring the collisions of ethnographical and modernist vernaculars. The paper also positions the borrowings of the Nenets symbols in the context of Ukrainian socialist realism and contours the estrangement of ARWM's work from it. Ultimately, the paper offers several conceptual meditations on tackling the Ukrainian artists' legacies of the Soviet times.

Polina Baitsym is an art historian and curator, specialising in the history of Ukrainian Soviet visual arts. Currently, she is a PhD Candidate in Comparative History at Central European University (Budapest, Hungary/Vienna, Austria) and a curator of the Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art (UMCA) Library, Kyiv, Ukraine. She has co-authored two books on Ukrainian Soviet Mosaics – *Art for Architecture. Ukraine. Soviet Modernist Mosaics from 1960 to 1990* (DOM Publishers, 2020) and *The Chips: Ukrainian Naïve Mosaics, 1950-1990* (ist publishing, 2024). Recently, she has co-curated a Ukrainian contribution to the exhibition *Retrotopia. Design for Socialist Spaces* (2023) at Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, Germany.

Dr Svitlana Biedarieva, independent art historian, artist and curator

Tracing Avant-Garde Legacies in Contemporary Ukrainian Painting: Oleksandr Roytburd, Vlada Ralko, and Tiberiy Szilvashi

The paper focuses on contemporary Ukrainian art's rediscovery and reinterpretation of the legacy of artistic modernism in Ukraine. It examines how visual elements formative for the Ukrainian avant-garde, and seen through its lens, re-emerged in contemporary art after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The presentation takes a close look at how this continuity reflected post-1991 postcolonial transformation and the recent post-2014 decolonial turn set against the context of Ukraine's resistance to the Russian invasion.

Russia's appropriation of Ukrainian culture for long overshadowed Ukrainian artists' agency in belonging to the world's avant-garde currents while being deeply rooted in the local context. Similar to how early twentieth-century Ukrainian art absorbed peripheral narratives of naïve icon and folklore art alongside the latest European trends, late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century art in Ukraine incorporated elements of modernism that came to light after decades of oblivion.

The paper examines three case studies of artists having profoundly different approaches to the modernist legacy. In discussing the paintings of Oleksandr Roytburd, Tiberiy Szilvashi, and Vlada Ralko, it traces the different impacts modernism has had on their work and explores formal and thematic shifts in their art practice throughout the last three decades.

The works of Ralko are largely based on the genre of a diary, in which she reflected on the traumatic events of Euromaidan and the beginning of the Russian war in Ukraine in 2014, as well as the onset of the full-scale invasion in 2022, referring to the symbolism of the early twentieth-century revolutionary utopia. Roytburd's work incorporated elements from the

contested history of the Ukrainian avant-garde (such as reflecting on the legacy of Kazimir Malevich) and critically dismantled them to re-assemble into a new, ironic narrative of the so-called 'Ukrainian Transavantgarde'. Szilvashi, one of the founders of the abstract direction within the 'Ukrainian New Wave', undertook a different path in his artistic explorations, turning to the close examination of plastic and spatial qualities of painting, which were also one of the principal avant-garde concerns.

Dr Svitlana Biedarieva is an art historian, artist, and curator. She received her PhD from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. In 2022-23, she was the George F. Kennan Fellow at the Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Non-Resident Visiting Fellow at the George Washington University, and the CEC ArtsLink International Fellow. She published texts in academic journals and media outlets such as *October*, *post at MoMA*, *Revue Critique d'Art*, *Financial Times*, *Burlington Contemporary*, and *The Art Newspaper*, among others. She is the editor of the book *Contemporary Ukrainian and Baltic Art: Political and Social Perspectives, 1991-2021* (ibidem Press, 2021) and co-editor of *At the Front Line. Ukrainian Art, 2013-2019* (Editorial 17, 2020). Her monograph *Ambicoloniality and War: The Ukrainian-Russian Case* is forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan in early 2025. Her new edited volume *Art in Ukraine Between Identity Construction and Anti-Colonial Resistance* is forthcoming from Routledge in November 2024.

Panel Discussion | The Multicultural Dimension of Ukraine's Modernism | With Uilleam Blacker, Andrij Bojarov and Katia Denysova

Ukraine's historical position at the crossroads of the geographical and psychological west-east divide and the marginalisation of the Ukrainian language and culture by various imperial powers controlling its territories resulted in a high level of cultural syncretism and the multifaceted identities of its population. Focusing on such figures from Ukraine's modernism as the writer and art critic Debora Vogel (1900-1942), as well as other practitioners connected to the *artes* group in interwar Lviv, the multidisciplinary artist Alexandra Exter (1882-1949), and the art section of the Jewish cultural organisation *Kultur Lige* active in Kyiv in 1918-21, the panel will discuss the diverse and often hyphenated identities of Ukraine's cultural actors, and the crossing between cultures, languages and expressive means in their practices. The panellists will also explore the often-contested nature of such multicultural heritage and the presented challenges for researchers and cultural workers.

Dr Uilleam Blacker is Associate Professor in Ukrainian and East European Culture at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. He is the author of *Memory, the City, and the Legacy of World War II in East Central Europe* (Routledge, 2019), co-author of *Remembering Katyn* (Polity, 2012), and co-editor of *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012). He has written for *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, among others; his translations of Ukrainian authors have been published in *The Guardian*, *The White Review*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Words Without Borders*, and more. He has been the recipient of fellowships from the British Academy, the Leverhulme Foundation, and the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.

Andrij Bojarov is a visual artist, independent curator and researcher. He trained as an architect and has been active as an artist since the late 1980s/early 1990s, initially having worked in large-format painting. At that time, he pioneered video art in the post-soviet states and turned to conceptual photography, taking part in various group and individual exhibitions in Tallinn, Lviv, Warsaw, Łódź, Poznań, Kyiv, Berlin, Amsterdam, and many other locations. Starting in the 2000s, he focused on exploring the largely neglected local histories of avant-garde art in the Central European context, expanding and blending his artistic and curatorial work with research practices.

Dr Katia Denysova is an art historian and curator, specialising in Ukraine's modern art. She completed her PhD at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London in 2024 and is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Tübingen in Germany. She is the co-curator of the travelling exhibition *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine* (winner of the 2023 Apollo Exhibition of the Year Award for the show at Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid) and co-editor of the accompanying catalogue (Thames & Hudson, 2022).

Keynote II | Modernism Regained: The Necessity of a Revisionist Approach in Ukrainian Art History

Dr Konstantin Akinsha is an independent art historian, curator and journalist. He received his PhD from the University of Edinburgh and served as the deputy director of the Art section in the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the US from 1998 to 2000. He was a contributing editor at *ARTnews* magazine and received the George Polk Award for cultural reporting in 1991, among numerous other journalistic awards. His curatorial projects include *Russian Modernism: Cross-Currents of German and Russian Art, 1907-1917* (Neue Galerie, New York, 2015), *Permanent Revolution: Ukrainian Art Today* (Ludwig Museum, Budapest, 2018), *Between Fire and Fire: Ukrainian Art Now* (Semperdepot, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna, 2019) and *In the Eye of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900-1930s* (Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2022; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2023; the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 2023-24; the Belvedere, Vienna, 2024; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2024). He is the founding director of the Avant-Garde Art Research Project (UK) and is the author of several books, including *Beautiful Loot: The Soviet Plunder of Europe's Art Treasures* (1995).

Panel III | Imagining the City: Fusing Ukrainian, Urban and Transnational

Chaired by Dr Michał Murawski, Associate Professor in Critical Area Studies, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL

Dr Michał Murawski is an anthropologist of architecture and cities. He is an Associate Professor of Critical Area Studies at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. He is the author of *only to hell: architecture, nature and violence in re-colonial russia* (MIT Press 2026, forthcoming); *A Form of Friendship: The Museum on the Square* (Museum of Modern Art Warsaw/Chicago UP, 2024); and *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw and a City Transfixed* (Indiana UP, 2019). He has edited several books and special issues, including *Anti-Atlas: Critical Area Studies from the East of the West* (with Wendy Bracewell and Tim Beasley-Murray, UCL Press, 2024) and *Re-Centring the City: Global Mutations of Socialist Modernity* (with Jonathan Bach, UCL Press, 2020).

Dr Yuri Shevchuk, Senior Lecturer in Ukrainian, the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University

Ukrainian Modernist Cinema and the Discovery of the City

A central aspect of Ukrainian modernism of the 1920s was to move away from the populist tradition obsessed with the village culture and peasantry as the carrier of the 'true spirit and essence' of the nation to discover instead modernity and the city. The modern city emerges as an important theme in fiction, poetry, theatre, painting, and film. The paper discusses how early Soviet Ukrainian cinema affected the reorientation of the tradition-bound Ukrainian culture towards modernity and how filmmakers like Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Dziga Vertov, Arkadii

Tiurin, Heorhii Stabovoy, Heorhii Tasin, and Mikhail Kaufman populated the cinematic urban space with Ukrainian characters and stories in various film genres, including political detective, psychological drama, comedy, social and industrial dramas, action and spy films. It also looks at how films created the image of Ukrainians united by values of social progress and the desire to build a new society, the image that embraced within the new socialist Ukraine not only Ukrainians, but also Jews, Crimean Tatars, and other minorities.

Starting with the first Ukrainian 'talking' film *Ivan* (1932) by Dovzhenko, Ukrainian becomes the language of cinema. The director ruptures the colonial association of Ukrainian identity exclusively with rural culture and expands the use of the Ukrainian language to include all walks of life. Dovzhenko does the unthinkable by transforming Ukrainian into a means of interethnic communication and solidarity, associating it with modernity and social progress while turning the Russian language into a symbol of bourgeois narrow-mindedness. The paper also discusses how the Ukrainian Soviet film of the period as a matter of programme facilitated the modernisation of the Ukrainian language and identity, how a new modernist vision of Ukraine was created on screen, presenting Ukrainian identity and culture as fully independent from imperial Russian influence, as self-sufficient.

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Dr Dan Dubowitz, Reader in Architecture, Manchester School of Architecture, Manchester Metropolitan University

An Instrument of Perpetual Revolution for Kharkiv, 1930

In 1930, Hungarian architect Stefan Sebök submitted a design to the Soviet authorities for a monument to Taras Shevchenko. It proposed a platform in the heart of Kharkiv city centre for citizens to devise and perform new work inspired by the poet. Sebök also proposed that the monument should be demolished within 10 years, as it would be obsolete as a concept by then. This proposal for a temporal memorial with three back projection screens for live broadcast (before the invention of television), offered a radical challenge to the Soviet Union on the eve of its pivot from constructivism to Socialist Realism

The international competition for a monument to honour the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko was launched by the Soviet Union in 1930. The soviet propaganda apparatus sought to establish Shevchenko as a soviet hero and retrospectively claim his writing as a forefather to communism. The brief, to design a fitting national memorial to the nation's poet, asked for a 'contemporary and up-to-date monument'. The winning design by sculptor Matvey Manizer and architect Iosif Langbard, built in 1935, introduced a megalomaniacal Shevchenko to a park in Kharkiv, creating a theatre for totalitarian rallies to consolidate the regime's power. This was in stark contrast to the human scale instrument proposed by Sebök to be activated daily by Kharkiv citizens to establish a state of cultural and political change.

The design was lost for 50 years, but it survived as a tiny Leporello book, 4cm x 7cm, containing photos of the competition entry that Sebök gifted to Walter Gropius in 1931. This paper offers a visual presentation and in-depth analysis of the proposed intervention to Kharkiv at the height of the European avant-garde by a little-known Hungarian protagonist.

Dr Dan Dubowitz is a Reader in Architecture and director of FLUX Atelier at Manchester School of Architecture. He has developed cultural masterplans for five UK city-regions (1999–2015) and is currently an AHRC ‘Innovation Scholar’ investigating ‘Cultural Masterplanning: New Methods for Developer-Led Urban Regeneration’ (2023–26). He is the author of four monographs: *Wastelands* (Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2009), *Fascismo Abbandonato: the Children’s Holiday Camps of Mussolini’s Italy* (Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2010), *Peeps* (Manchester University Press, 2011), *Citizen Manchester* (Manchester University Press, 2014). His next book will be *Instruments of Perpetual Revolution* (forthcoming, 2027), a survey of Stefan Sebök’s works. He is currently investigating delusions of grandeur in city-making for an ‘Atlas of Megalomania’.

Dr Christina E. Crawford, Masse-Martin NEH Professor of Art History & Associate Professor of Architectural History, Emory University

Transnational Entanglements: Modernist Industrial Architecture in Eastern Ukraine

This paper lays the foundation for a historiographical re-centring of Eastern Ukraine as a key international site of architectural and engineering experimentation. In the 1920s and ‘30s—during the first Five-Year Plan for industrialisation—Soviet authorities invested heavily in capital projects throughout Eastern Ukraine, a territory rich in the natural commodities of iron ore, coal, grain, and water. The region’s massive industrial construction projects like DniproHES and the Kharkiv Tractor Factory became busy sites of transnational design exchange, drawing experts from the US, Germany, the Czech Republic and other nations to assist Soviet specialists in harnessing Ukraine’s economic potential. Close examination of one such influential project, the Kharkiv Tractor Factory and its socialist city, reveals the region’s central role in modernist architectural exchange and innovation. A late-breaking decision to construct a tractor factory on Kharkiv’s outskirts pushed Soviet industrial planners and the project’s architects to engage in design standardisation. The rapidly constructed factory was a co-designed American and Soviet project that was based on a previous factory but cleverly adjusted to the context. New Kharkiv, the residential sector for tractor factory workers, was designed solely by Ukrainian architect Pavlo Aleshin and a young local team who gleaned modernist architectural precepts from foreign travel and research, but who again adjusted, melded, and then exceeded these models. The combination of international precedents, industrial tempo, socialist spatial theory, and local material and labour supplies resulted in an innovative socialist city (*sotsmisto*) design responsive to the Soviet state’s desire for cultural and economic transformation on the site. Projects like KhTZ and DniproHES, well known internationally at the time, were not avant-garde one-offs; they became repeatable models disseminated to sites within the USSR and beyond to cement Eastern Ukraine’s role as a vector for modernist architectural production.

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