



WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

DISCUSSIONS IN RUSSIAN ART THEORY AND CRITICISM I

6th Graduate Workshop of the RUSSIAN ART & CULTURE GROUP

September 20th, 2018 | Jacobs University Bremen

Cover: Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *Manuscript of his novel “Что делать?”* [*What Is to be Done?*] (detail), 1863; and Ivan Kramskoi, *Христос в пустыне* [*Christ in the Desert*] (detail), 1872, Tretyakov Gallery Moscow.

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The sixth graduate workshop of the *Russian Art & Culture Group* will focus on main tendencies in Russian art theory of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. Therefore, responses to the question *What Is to Be Done?* (*Что делать?*) in academic circles as well as by art critics, writers, impresarios, and other members of the Russian intelligentsia shall be explored.

6th Graduate Workshop of the Russian Art & Culture Group
Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Lab 3.

PROGRAM

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH

10.30 **Opening: Welcome Address**
Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen

Panel I: The Academy and Its Opponents
Chair: Tanja Malycheva

11.00 **Russian *Pensionnaires* of the Imperial Academy of Arts in Venice in the Second Half of the 18th Century**
Iana Sokolova, University of Padua

11.30 **Escape from the Academy: Why Russian Artists Left St. Petersburg and Moved to Munich at the End of the 19th Century**
Nadezhda Voronina, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich

12.00 **A Critic's Tale by Vladimir Stasov**
Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs University Bremen

12.30 *Lunch Break (not included)*

Panel II: New Approaches and Aesthetic Norms
Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

14.00 **The Discussion of the Protection of the Russian Cultural Heritage in Russian Art Journals at the End of the 19th / Beginning of the 20th Century**
Anna Kharkina, Södertörn University

14.30 **Pre-Raphaelites and Peredvizhniki: *Pathosformel* and Prefiguration in the 20th Century**
Marina Toropygina, Russian State Institute for Cinematography (VGIK)

15.00 **“Colors, Colors ... Don't Be a Know-it-all, Try to Master Black First”**
Tanja Malycheva, Independent Scholar

15.30 *Coffee Break*

Panel III: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Avant-Garde
Chair: Tanja Malycheva

16.00 **Is Kazimir Malevich a Transcendentalist?**
Tatiana Levina, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

16.30 **Dance of a Figure who Enters at Some Doors and Exits at Others: Rhythm, Movement and Experience of Poetry and Architecture**
Markus Lähtenmäki, ETH Zürich

17.00 **Concluding Discussion**
Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

18.00 *Dinner (not included)*

19.00 **Guest Lecture**
What Is to Be Done with Art History? An Answer from Russia
Stepan S. Vaneyan, Moscow State University

20.30 *Evening Reception*

Initial idea and organization: Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen; Tanja Malycheva and Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

The event is generously **supported by the Kroll Family Trust**, Switzerland.

The *Russian Art & Culture Group* is a platform for discussing various aspects of Russian and Soviet visual arts, music and literature. Based at Jacobs University Bremen and headed by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, it brings together scholars and young researchers from East and West.

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ABSTRACTS

PANEL I: THE ACADEMY AND ITS OPPONENTS

Russian *Pensionnaires* of the Imperial Academy of Arts in Venice in the Second Half of the 18th Century

Iana Sokolova, University of Padua

The paper expands on the cultural and artistic relationships between Venice and St. Petersburg in the second half of the 18th century. A lot has been already written about Russian *pensionnaires* in Rome whereas the theme of pensionership in Venice remains understudied, and this is the unique focus of my paper. Two graduates from the Imperial Academy of Arts – the "Russian Canaletto" Fyodor Alekseev and the famous architect Fyodor Volkov – were sent to study in Venice in the 1780s. If in Rome the role of supervisor of the Russian *pensionnaires* was performed by Iohann-Friderich Reifenstein, in Venice the *pensionnaires* were supervised by Pano Maruzzi, whose biography and activities are not well studied up to these days. This workshop offers the possibility to introduce some new documents about Maruzzi's activities, which were found in Venetian and Russian archives. The paper will be based on Alekseev and Volkov's academic reports of their sojourn to Venice as well as reports by Maruzzi and some documents on the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice.

Escape from the Academy: Why Russian Artists Left St. Petersburg and Moved to Munich at the End of the 19th Century

Nadezhda Voronina, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich

In 1894, Ivan Tolstoy carried out an educational reform in St. Petersburg's Academy of Arts. Instead of academic painters, the realist artists Ilya Repin, Aleksandr Makovsky, and Ivan Shishkin began to teach. However, the

students' hopes for new approaches were quickly frustrated by the lack of a teaching system and general methodology. Repin's teaching method was to demonstrate his finished pieces of art. Students imitating him were focusing on visual effects without understanding the fundamental principles. By this means, individual abilities of pupils were ignored and neglected. The *Peredvizhniki* movement was non-homogenous, focused on the provincial market, and followed national tendencies. Hostility, and even denial could be detected in their judgments of Western European art. Their indifference to formal questions of art became an impenetrable obstacle for any reform of the Academy.

This situation provoked young artists to search for a new educational system of painting. Two Russian students of Repin, Igor Grabar and Dmitry Kardovsky, came to Munich in 1896 and entered the school of Anton Ažbe. In his letters, Grabar encouraged Marianne Werefkin and Alexei Jawlensky to come to Munich and ensured them that they could develop their artistic abilities there. Ažbe set artists free from any prejudiced views of creativity and taught them some primary principles based on objective laws of visual perception. In my paper, I will examine these testimonies in order to reconstruct academic life and its antipodal community of Russian artists in Munich.

A Critic's Tale by Vladimir Stasov

Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs University Bremen

Vladimir V. Stasov (1824–1906) was probably the most respected and influential Russian critic of his time. His published works, articles, and correspondence with leading personalities of Russian artistic and cultural life are invaluable to current scholars. For Stasov, a supporter of a national art derived from native traditions, Viktor M. Vasnetsov (1848–1926) was one of the major artists in his focus. Interestingly, Stasov's opinion about

Vasnetsov, who is now considered one of Russia's most national artists, changed dramatically over the years. When Vasnetsov first addressed Russian folklore in the 1880s, Stasov was disappointed that such "a talented [...] artist as Vasnetsov became unrecognizable when he began to busy himself with Russian antiquity."

In my presentation, I will relate the Russian artistic discourse of the time to Stasov's reaction to Vasnetsov's work. In the process, I will demonstrate how Stasov completely changed his negative opinion about Vasnetsov until finally praising him for his Russianness, his nationality and national Russian originality.

PANEL II: **NEW APPROACHES AND AESTHETIC NORMS**

The Discussion of the Protection of the Russian Cultural Heritage in Russian Art Journals at the End of the 19th/ Beginning of the 20th Century *Anna Kharkina, Södertörn University*

My paper will discuss the role of the art journals *Mir Iskusstva*, *Starye Gody*, and *Iskusstvo: Zhurnal Khudizhestvennyi i Khudozhestvenno-kriticheskii*, published in Russia before the Revolution, in the formation of ideas on Russian cultural heritage preservation. From the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century, the journals functioned as a platform for public discussion and thus were crucial for public opinion-making in Russia. One of the questions under discussion was the preservation of Russian cultural monuments – a reaction on the limited interest in heritage preservation by the authorities. These three journals shared similar views on the necessity to preserve cultural heritage and had a broad interest in Russian cultural history, promoting not only the protection of Russian antiquities but also more modern items (such as, for example, buildings and

architectural ensembles of St. Petersburg). It was Alexandre Benois, one of the founders of *Mir Iskusstva*, who first started to write on protecting the material history of St. Petersburg. The ideas of *Mir Iskusstva* were well received by liberal cultural intellectuals and further developed in *Starye Gody* and *Iskusstvo: Zhurnal Khudizhestvennyi i Khudozhestvenno-kriticheskii*. In my presentation, I will talk about how cultural heritage was defined in these journals and what kind of rhetoric was used to make the reader conscious of heritage preservation problems. Furthermore, I will take a look at how Russian debates corresponded to the general European discourse on heritage preservation, referring to the established European theories on restoration (Viollet-le-Duc, John Ruskin, Gilbert Scott, William Morris).

Pre-Raphaelites and *Peredvizhniki*: Pathosformel and Prefiguration in the 20th Century

Marina Toropygina, Russian State Institute for Cinematography (VGIK)

My paper deals with similarities between the Pre-Raphaelites and the *Peredvizhniki* concerning their theoretical declarations as well as the artistic and thematic specifics of their works. Viktor Vasnetsov's *Alyonushka* (1881) and J. E. Milles *Ophelia* (1851) both show the motifs of a lonely woman, water, and sadness, and they are also alike in color and symbolic detail, thus producing what Jan Bialostocki called a *Rahmenthema*: a sad woman in a sad landscape. The Pre-Raphaelites and the *Peredvizhniki* were in opposition to the official art scene, searching for new aesthetic norms and appreciating the ethical meaning of art. And both movements were very influential in respect to the new art emerging at the end of the 19th century – the art of cinema.

“Colors, Colors ... Don't Be a Know-it-all, Try to Master Black First”

Tanja Malycheva, Independent Scholar

With regard to color, the Russian avant-garde features two main tendencies: The first one is a high-contrast polychrome palette, which can be seen in the works by Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Vasily Kandinsky, Marianne Werefkin, and Vladimir Tatlin. The other tendency concerns the autonomous coexistence of a few non-objective, plain color surfaces (often black, red, and white) or even presence of only one non-objective color surface. Kazimir Malevich and Aleksandr Rodchenko created the most famous works of this kind.

Among the painters of the preceding generation, there was essentially only one artist who consistently occupied himself with tonal and monochromic color compositions: Valentin Serov. As a leading representative of early modernism, he strongly influenced younger artists. Between 1899 and 1909, he taught portraiture and landscape painting at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. As if he wanted to answer the question “What is to be done?,” he once exclaimed in his class: “Colors, colors ... don’t be a know-it-all, try to master black first.”

In my paper, I will present some of Serov’s dark tonal works, which he created in various stages of his career. The question, whether these tonal pictures might be considered a preliminary stage of the abstract avant-garde compositions, I will leave open for discussion.

Is Kazimir Malevich a Transcendentalist?

Tatiana Levina, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Alain Besançon identifies the Kantian *noumenon* in metaphorical form in the following statement by Kazimir Malevich: "...reality is infinity without weight, measure, time or space... It can be neither conceived nor comprehended." In the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant asserts that our cognition with its *a priori* forms of time and space constructs a real world. Generally, Malevich could be said to follow Kant, as things are the products of perception in his view. However, Malevich goes a step further: every existing thing is not the thing in its being, as we perceive only the accidental form of it. The visible world is only reasoning about being.

In his 1922 manifesto, "God is Not Cast Down," Malevich proclaims the comprehension of God as his prime goal. Here, he departs from Kant. For Kant, we cannot know things in themselves because all possible knowledge is limited to knowledge of appearances. By eliminating God and soul from the realm of knowable objects, Kant preserves a place for faith. In contrast, Malevich endeavors to speak about unknowable being, as it is absolutely useless for him to investigate the knowable world, as Kant suggests.

Dance of a Figure who Enters at Some Doors and Exits at Others: Rhythm, Movement and Experience of Poetry and Architecture

Markus Lähteenmäki, ETH Zürich

The paper will address the idea of performance and performativity in art and art theory of the Russian avant-garde, seeking to draw parallels between the different fields of art, in particular poetry and architecture, and to trace the genealogies of the concepts. It will look at the ways in which avant-garde architecture took the animation of material and form as one of

its formal strategies, including kinetics of designs as well as taking circulation as guiding principle. By revisiting certain architectural projects by Konstantin Melnikov and relating them to visual and bodily presentation of poetry of the Russian futurists along with linguistic theory and writings of critics such as Viktor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson, my aim is to investigate the role of the concepts and representations of rhythm, act, and performance from speech to bodily action, to art and architecture while also tracing the roots of these thoughts.

Guest Lecture

What Is to Be Done with Art History? An Answer from Russia

Stepan S. Vaneyan, Moscow State University

Although we owe this question to Hans Belting, it actually already arose with the formation of *Kunstwissenschaft* [science of art], when *Kunstgeschichte* [history of art] extended beyond *Weltgeschichte* [world history] and developed into an independent academic discipline, focusing on the immanent laws of *Formbildung* [morphogenesis]. The tradition of Russian art history, which originated and developed almost simultaneously with the German science about art, was part of this process.

After 1917, Soviet science about art became increasingly limited. In the 1920s, Mikhail Alpatov and Nikolai Brunov were still able to visit German universities, and Aleksandr Gabrichevskiy developed his ideas. In the 1930s, translations were published from what seemed most significant in contemporary art history, e.g. Erwin Panofsky, Joseph Gantner, and Hans Sedlmayr, but this were only short reviews of the newly-shaped science about art; a thorough reflection was impossible in art history in the Soviet Union.

The formal method in art history received the status of “our sacred heritage,” it became a symbol of “the true tradition,” connecting us with the classics. Almost everything else was left out: the new epistemology of science, new semiotics, new sociology and psychology, not to mention new theories of visibility and mediality. The current state of Russian theories about art can be compared to a partly ruined and partly redecorated *mnemotop* structure, in which the word “*Kunstwissenschaft*” on the façade is almost illegible. For us, this offers the unique opportunity to skip hopeless attempts at catching up with the international scholarly tradition and begin

“from scratch.” The destruction of the Russian art about science could be a starting point. Here is what we might see:

1. A tradition isolated from international academic communication falls into anabiosis.
2. Paradoxically, external stimuli and impressions remain its main food. In order to function normally, it needs access to them so it can make borrowings.
3. Its main concern becomes representation, imitation, and maintaining an “aura” having a retrospective and quasi-sacral character.

We would regain self-esteem and confidence, recognizing that the Russian case is just a specific example of what happens to a discipline and discourse dreaming about purity, autonomy, and specificity. We would see that not only have we lost both the center (Sedlmayr) and the framing (Belting) but also the “picture” itself has evaporated. So, we could leave point A (disciplinary and discursive identity) and head for point B, realizing our needs and wants in a situation where there are no borders because there is no topos.

In other words, productive post-colonial and regional thinking would suggest not just meta-textual studies but first of all – meta- and para-cognitive investigations. The main temptation here would be reviving epistemological and ideological cargo cults and mummifying retro-communications. Let us reject the method in favor of the truth (Gadamer).

BIOGRAPHIES

Anna Kharkina has a Ph.D. in history and philosophy. Previously an archivist at the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (ArkDes), she is currently involved in the research project *Transnational Art and Heritage Transfer and the Formation of Value: Objects, Agents, and Institutions* at Södertörn University, Sweden. Kharkina's main academic interests are cultural policy and theory, cultural cooperation, and cultural heritage preservation. She previously worked in various cultural institutions in Russia and as a freelance curator and writer, with a focus on contemporary art and design.

Markus Lähteenmäki is a Finnish art historian, curator, and a fellow of the gta doctoral program at ETH Zurich since October 2017. After first studying at the Universities of Helsinki and Moscow, he received a MA in history of art from London's Courtauld Institute in 2013. His latest curatorial project was *101st km – Further Everywhere* with Alexander Brodsky for London's Pushkin House in October 2017. He previously worked as the curator of the Drawing Matter Trust in which role he developed numerous activities and co-curated the exhibitions *Land Marks: Structures for a Poetic Universe* at Hauser & Wirth Somerset (2015) and *This Was Tomorrow: Reinventing Architecture 1953–1978* at the Swiss Architecture Museum (2016). He continues to co-organize public and educational programs at the New Academy in Helsinki. His writings have been published among others by *The Burlington Magazine*, *The Architectural Review*, and *Harvard Design Magazine*, and his curatorial work has been featured in *The Financial Times*, *Art Forum*, and *London Review of Books*.

Tatiana Levina is an assistant professor at the School of Philosophy at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. In her research, she works on aesthetics and philosophical theology, and often also their interconnections. She is also interested in metaphysics and Russian philosophy and became engaged in the history and philosophy of mathematics last year. She is currently working on the book *Aesthetics of Transcendent: Metaphysical Realism in Art* and several papers, among them: "Malevich on Nothingness," "Symbol in Cantor and Florensky," and "Abstractionism in Hesychast Icon."

Tanja Malycheva studied Art History, English Philology, Classical Archeology, and Economic Policy at the University of Münster, Germany, where she completed her MA in Art History. She is currently working as a free-lance curator, editor, and art lecturer. In 2013, she served as assistant curator for *Me. Myself. Naked*, the first exhibition on nude self-portraits by women artists. In 2014, she co-curated the exhibition *Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear* (Bietigheim-Bissingen/Bremen) and co-organized the international conference *Crossing Borders: Marianne Werefkin and the Cosmopolitan Women Artists in Her Circle* (Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum/Jacobs University). In summer 2018, Malycheva completed her Ph.D. on Valentin Serov's portraiture under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Jürg Meyer zur Capellen (Münster), Prof. Dr. Mikhail Allenov, and Prof. Dr. Stepan Vaneyan (both Moscow). In her research, she concentrates on transculturalism, cosmopolitanism, early modernism, text and context discourse, and pan-European developments. She co-edited the special issue of *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture*, "In Memoriam: Dmitry Vladimirovich Sarabyanov," (2017, with Isabel Wünsche and Sebastian Borkhardt) and the volume *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists of Her Circle* (2016, with Isabel Wünsche) and published numerous articles on Valentin Serov as well as on modern and contemporary art.

Ludmila Piters-Hofmann is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at Jacobs University Bremen, Germany. Her thesis, supervised by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, focuses on fairy tales and folk tales as subjects in the work of the Russian painter Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926) in the context of cultural transfer and Russian nationalism during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Together with Louise Hardiman and Maria Taroutina, she is currently editing the 2019 issue of *Experiment: A Journal of Russian* on the subject of "Abramtsevo and Its Legacies: Neo-National Art, Craft and Design." Furthermore, Piters-Hofmann, together with Isabel Wünsche and Tanja Malycheva, is working on an edited volume by the Russian Art & Culture Group, entitled *What Is to Be Done? – Art Practice, Theory and Criticism in Russia during the Long Nineteenth Century*.

In 2015, **Iana Sokolova** graduated in Cultural Studies from St. Petersburg State University with a specialization in Italian Culture. Since 2016, she has been a Ph.D. researcher in the program "History, Criticism and Preservation of

Cultural Heritage” at the University of Padua, where her research focuses on the activities of Venetian painters in St. Petersburg at the time of Elizabeth and Catherine II (1741–1796).

Marina Toropygina studied German and English at the Moscow State Linguistic High School, graduating in 1986, and also art history at Moscow Lomonosov State University, graduating in 2004. Her thesis was on *Aby Warburg, His Concept of Symbol and the Strides of Iconology* (2013). She published books on *European Portrait Painting* (2005), *Renoir* (2006), and *Velazquez* (2007). Toropygina is editor and author for the *New Russian Encyclopedia* and author of many articles on art history. Currently, she is a lecturer at the Moscow University for Cinematography (VGIK).

Stepan Sergeevich Vaneyan studied art history at Moscow Lomonosov State University, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1999 and his habilitation in 2007. He has been working as a professor of art history and theory in the Department of History at Moscow Lomonosov State University since 2011. In 2014, he also received a professorship in art history and theory at the Department of Theology at the National Research Nuclear University (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute). In his research, Vaneyan focuses on art theory, methodologies of art history (including *The Vienna School of Art History*), iconography, iconology, and the hermeneutics of architecture (especially sacral architecture). He published numerous books and articles, including *Gombrich or Science and Illusion: Studies on Textual Pragmatics* (2015), *Architecture. Meaning, Language, Interpretation: Texts and Commentaries* (2014), *Architecture and Iconography. “The Body of Symbol” In the Classical Tradition of Methodologies of Art* (2010), and *The Empty Throne. Critical Art History of Hans Sedlmayr* (2004). Vaneyan also translated into Russian the works of Heinrich Wölfflin, August Schmarsow, Hans Jantzen, Dagobert Frey, Wilhelm Worringer, Hans Sedlmayr, Joseph Gantner, Günter Bandmann, Christian Norberg-Schulz, and Hans Belting.

Nadezhda Voronina defended her candidate thesis at the Russian Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg in September 2017 and obtained her candidate degree in the history of arts with her thesis *József Rippl-Rónai (1861–1927) in the Context of*

Hungarian Symbolism. Her research interests include aspects of migration and life of Russian and East European artists in Munich in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Voronina is currently working on her Ph.D. thesis *Russian artists at the International Exhibitions in Munich's Glaspalast 1888–1931*, supervised by Dr. Christian Fuhrmeister at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

Isabel Wünsche is Professor of Art and Art History at Jacobs University Bremen since 2001. She specializes in European modernism, the avant-garde movements, and abstract art. Her recent book publications include *Kunst & Leben. Michail Matjuschin und die russischen Avantgarde in St. Petersburg* (2012), *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory* (2012), *The Organic School of the Russian Avant-Garde: Nature's Creative Principles* (2015), *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle* (2016), *Practices of Abstract Art: Between Anarchism and Appropriation* (2016), and most recently *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context* (2018).