

# THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS ART IN MODERNITY

## USES AND ABUSES OF THE ICON IN RUSSIA

8<sup>th</sup> Graduate Workshop of the Russian Art & Culture Group



in collaboration with the "Eurasia in Global Dialogue" Program  
at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

October 14-16, 2020 | 14.00-17.00 (UTC + 2h) | Zoom



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen  
Institute for Human Sciences



FAMILY TRUST



Cover: Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1915; overlaid with: *Our Lady of Vladimir*, about 1131; both State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS ART IN MODERNITY

### USES AND ABUSES OF THE ICON IN RUSSIA

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche wrote: “that species of art can never flourish again which—like the *Divine Comedy*, the paintings by Raphael, the frescoes of Michelangelo, Gothic cathedrals—presupposes not only a cosmic but a metaphysical significance in the objects of art.” In his usual provocative manner, Nietzsche attracted attention to the problem of religious art in a secular modernity. This issue was already implicit in Kant’s notion of the viewer of the work of art as “indifferent to the real existence of the object of representation.”

The eighth graduate workshop of the Russian Art and Culture Group, in collaboration with the “Eurasia in Global Dialogue” Program at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, will consider the deep implications posed by the problem of religious art by examining the various ways in which the icon was adapted in modern Russia to serve different artistic, philosophical, and political agendas.

**8<sup>th</sup> Graduate Workshop of the Russian Art & Culture Group,**  
in collaboration with the “Eurasia in Global Dialogue” Program  
at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

**ONLINE** via ZOOM. | UTC + 2 hours (Bremen and Vienna time)

## **PROGRAM**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14**

**13.30**    **Opening: Welcome Address**

Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen

**13.45**    **Some Inquiries Concerning the Understanding of Icons**

Thomas Mark Németh, University of Vienna

### **Panel I: RUSSIAN ICON-PAINTING**

Chair: Clemena Antonova

**14.00**    **The Icon-Painter's Pattern-Book and the End of Byzantine Iconicity  
in Post-Medieval Russia**

Alexei Lidov, Lomonosov Moscow State University

**14.30**    **The Icon within the Icon: The Rhetoric of Composition and the  
Peculiarities of Icon Veneration in Russia**

Oleg Tarasov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow;

Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

**15.00**    *Break*

### **Panel II: FIN DE SIECLE RUSSIAN ART**

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

**15.30**    **Uniting Opposites: Orthodox Script and Imagery in Russian Folklore  
Depictions**

Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs-University Bremen

- 16.00 From Sacrilegious Monstrosities to Modernist Masterpieces:  
The Changing Reception of Mikhail Vrubel's Religious Murals at  
the Fin de Siècle**  
Maria Taroutina, Yale-NUS College Singapore

## **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15**

### **Panel III: THE MOTHER OF GOD AND HER PORTRAYALS**

Chair: Clemena Antonova

- 14.00 Marian Iconology and Women's Agency**  
Viktoria Lavriniuk, University of Ottawa
- 14.30 Liubov Popova and Reality as a Site of Construction**  
Petra Carlsson Redell, Stockholm School of Theology
- 15.00 *Break***
- 15.30 GUEST LECTURE**  
**Presence and Power: Reflections on the Politics and Theology of  
Icons**  
George Pattison, University of Glasgow

## **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16**

### **Panel IV: PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS ON ICONS**

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

- 14.00 The Power of Images and the Failure of Aesthetics: The Russian  
Position**  
Clemena Antonova, Eurasia in Global Dialogue (IWM), Vienna
- 14.30 Divine Darkness and Uncreated Light: Byzantine Meanings of  
Avant-garde Icons**  
Tatiana Levina, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

**15.00** *Break*

**Panel V: TWENTIETH CENTURY RUSSIAN ART**

Chair: Ludmila Piters-Hofmann

**15.30** **The Dimension of Faith in Wassily Kandinsky's Painting**

Lilia Sokolova, University of Cologne

**16.00** **Stalin Christ as a Tsar: On "Anachronic" (Socialist) Realism**

Nikita Balagurov, independent scholar, St. Petersburg

**16.30** **Concluding Discussion**

**Initial idea and organization:** Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Dr. Clemena Antonova, and Ludmila Piters-Hofmann.

The event is organized in collaboration with the "Eurasia in Global Dialogue" Program at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, and generously supported by the Kroll Family Trust, Switzerland.

The Russian Art & Culture Group is based at Jacobs University Bremen. Headed by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, it brings together scholars and young researchers from Eastern and Western Europe.

Contact: [workshop@russian-art.net](mailto:workshop@russian-art.net)

<https://russian-art.net>

<https://www.iwm.at/events/event/the-problem-of-religious-art-in-modernity-uses-and-abuses-of-the-icon-in-russia/>

## ABSTRACTS

### Some Inquiries Concerning the Understanding of Icons

Thomas Mark Németh, University of Vienna

In light of the current critical reevaluation of the dominant metanarratives of Orthodox theology during the twentieth century, it is relevant to question again the methodology and role of theology for interpreting icons. There is a need to consider in what way icons can be regarded as mediators of presence or absence and to examine critically the importance of stylistic criteria in defining icons as well as the understanding of realism. The impact of tradition as an interplay between constant and variable elements as well as the reception by the community of the church play an important role for what constitutes an icon.

### Panel I: RUSSIAN ICON-PAINTING

#### The Icon-Painter's Pattern-Book and the End of Byzantine Iconicity in Post-Medieval Russia

Alexei Lidov, Lomonosov Moscow State University

In this paper, I argue that the appearance of the icon-painter's pattern-book (*litsevoi ikonopysnyi podlinnik*) in the late sixteenth century was one of the crucial factors in the development of Russian art after 1453. It considerably changed the basic Byzantine concept of icons as spatial images mediating between the earthly and heavenly realms. Moreover, the pattern-book transformed the whole process of the icon painting technology, which was reduced to the reproduction of fixed schemes, then painted with conventional colors. The common modern perception of icons as flat and decorative pictures charged with particular religious messages

goes back to this unofficial reform, which declared the following to Byzantine models, but in practice destroyed the principles of Eastern Christian iconicity.

## **The Icon within the Icon: The Rhetoric of Composition and the Peculiarities of Icon Veneration in Russia**

**Oleg Tarasov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow; Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna**

Only in Imperial Russia of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can one find such a broad dissemination of icons for the common people. Nowhere else were small icons for prayer and images with depictions of the lives of saints so widespread and popular, and nowhere else did the people venerate icons with depictions of saints in prayer before the image of the Mother of God or with the monasteries they founded. Moreover, the Russian icon could itself be transformed into the framing of a reliquary, an ancient kind of sacred object. We know that in the Old Believers' devotion the significance of Byzantine (Greek) and Old Russian icons grew greater in the process of meditation. This is reflected in the appearance of a special artistic practice in the production of Old Believer icons, in which the ancient image was inserted into a new icon and became a component of the new composition. This preference for incorporating an icon into the sacred space of another icon reflected the special significance of the image in the economy of salvation. My paper demonstrates that all of these iconographic and stylistic features of later Russian icon painting were peculiarities of Russian piety, the expression of a special popular reverence towards the image and an important aspect of the popular cult of saints.



## Panel II: **FIN DE SIÈCLE RUSSIAN ART**

### **Uniting Opposites: Orthodox Script and Imagery in Russian Folklore Depictions**

**Ludmila Piters-Hofmann, Jacobs University Bremen**

In late Imperial Russia, script accompanying folklore-themed depictions often originated from Orthodox scripture such as biblical and religious texts or scripture on icons. In contrast, the depicted topics were mostly derived from Russia's pagan past and folklore, including folk tales, sayings, and superstitions. Nonetheless, some mainly folkloric paintings also include Orthodox imagery. The amalgamation of Orthodoxy and folklore shows that the educated artists understood both as native and universal, representing cultural identity. This combination of two familiar traditions supported the spread of images of a rediscovered past in illustrated albums. This development is intertwined with the history of Cyrillic script itself, the growing literacy of the Russian people, and the artists' manifold interests. This paper demonstrates how Orthodox and folklore traditions coexist in illustrations and even paintings, not as opposites but as a union, arguing that this intertwining supported the acceptability and the distribution of a new interpretation of national heritage.

### **From Sacrilegious Monstrosities to Modernist Masterpieces: The Changing Reception of Mikhail Vrubel's Religious Murals at the Fin de Siècle**

**Maria Taroutina, Yale-NUS College Singapore**

In his 1911 biography of Mikhail Vrubel, the artist Stepan Iaremich recounted a telling episode. In the spring of 1901, Iaremich had accompanied Vrubel to the twelfth-century Church of St. Cyril in Kiev,

where the latter had both restored and recreated a large number of frescos in 1884. Standing in front of his *Angels' Lamentation* mural, Vrubel observed that "in essence, this is the kind of work to which I should return." Indeed, by the opening decade of the twentieth century, these frescos were celebrated by a new generation of artists and critics as some of Vrubel's most fundamental and significant works. However, at the time of their creation in the 1880s, Vrubel's works were vehemently criticized by period commentators as anatomically incorrect, poorly executed, and borderline blasphemous. Accordingly, this paper examines the production and reception both of Vrubel's fresco cycle in the Church of St. Cyril and his unrealized sketches for the St. Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, demonstrating how the changing discourse around these religious works marked the gradual aesthetic, political, philosophical, and theological shifts in the understanding and theorization of the iconic image at the turn of the century in Russia.

## Panel III: **THE MOTHER OF GOD AND HER PORTRAYALS**

### **Marian Iconology and Women's Agency**

**Viktoria Lavriniuk, University of Ottawa**

Western modernity has established the religious-secular binary, and the treatment of women within it has been highly problematic. The assessments of whether women have agency or not is linked to their association with religion or not. Secular women are seen as liberated, having freedom of will, choice, and autonomy, while women who fall under the "false consciousness" of religion are seen as oppressed, subjugated, submissive, and without agency. Furthermore, Western democracy, built upon Christian traditions as a part of the European cultural heritage, considers Orthodox Christianity along with Islam as "other," and women in

this context appear as “othered.” Although a growing body of scholarship on Muslim women’s practices of veiling and wearing headscarves has begun positing it as a liberation and manifestation of women’s agency, Orthodox Christian women’s religious practices are still considered to be oppressive. Generally, gendered topics in Orthodox Christianity are often not in the focus of the social sciences, religious studies, women’s studies, and feminist theology. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, this paper explores how, in Orthodox piety, Marian iconology serves to construct an active religious women’s agency. The Mother of God, through her icons, acquires an agency on her own, initiating action and shaping the lives of religious women in an empowering way. Thus, the icons of the Mother of God challenge the patriarchal authority of the Orthodox Church.

## **Liubov Popova and Reality as a Site of Construction**

**Petra Carlsson Redell, Stockholm School of Theology**

Along with other constructivists, Russian artist Liubov Popova (1889–1924) rejected easel painting in 1921. Her works as well as her writings from that year onwards demonstrate the artist’s determination to let art partake actively in the ongoing construction of society, rather than to play an analytical or reflective role. However, Popova’s earlier works, while carrying traits of a Suprematist influence on the one hand, reveal, on the other hand, an already present conviction of construction as a key characteristic of reality as such. This paper discusses Popova’s understanding of reality and her *Painterly Architectonics* as a site of construction, and how these works relate to the iconography that inspired her earlier paintings.

## **GUEST LECTURE**

### **Presence and Power: Reflections on the Politics and Theology of Icons**

**George Pattison, University of Glasgow**

The paper begins by considering the veneration of the icon of Our Lady of Smolensk by the Russian Army on the eve of the Battle of Borodino, as portrayed by Tolstoy and filmically by Sergei Bondarchuk. Is this turning the icon into a battle-flag? The use of icons in a series of military conflicts, including the icon-within-an-icon of the Novgorodians defending their city from the Suzdalians with the help of Our Lady of the Sign, indicates an overlap between the uses of icons and relics. This is explored with the help of Peter Brown's study of the cult of relics in the early church. Brown shows that this was closely associated with the sacralization of the burial site and dead body of the saint. The dismemberment of the saints' bodies and the use of physical items associated with them (e.g., Mary's veil) is seen to have enabled a democratization of the cult, a process that icons take still further, allowing every church and individual to have an abiding means of making present the person and power of the saint. In the case of the icon too, the countenance of the saint in death has a special place in representation, underwriting the twofold presence of the icon as heavenly and this-worldly. While opening the horizon of heavenly life, the icon thus also recalls human beings to their own finitude and mortality. This, I argue, is what we see in Tolstoy's image of Kutuzov kneeling before the icon. As expressive of human beings' individual and collective incapacity in the face of the last things, this understanding of icons provides a defense against the misuse of the icon as a battle-flag or its instrumentalization as a means of political domination and manipulation.

## Panel IV: **PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS ON ICONS**

### **The Power of Images and the Failure of Aesthetics: The Russian Position**

**Clemina Antonova, Eurasia in Global Dialogue (IWM), Vienna**

Much of postmodern aesthetics and the philosophy of art have been motivated by the realization that the mainstream of Western aesthetics, deriving from Kant and dominant at least till the 1960s, simply fails to explain religious art. The wider implications of this failure are connected to the idea of the interconnectedness between aesthetics and the project of Western modernity. As Hal Foster wrote, "the adventures of the aesthetic make up one of the great narratives of modernity." In other words, any serious critique of aesthetics is bound up with a critique of modernity.

In my talk, I draw attention to Russian philosophical writings on the icon from the beginning of the twentieth century, which were part of a self-consciously antimodern discourse, which, at the same time, anticipated at least several of the ideas of postmodern philosophy. This is the broad context, in which we need to understand statements, such as Pavel Florensky's in an essay of 1918, that the "problem of religious art" was the most significant problem of our time.

### **Divine Darkness and Uncreated Light: Byzantine Meanings of Avant-garde Icons**

**Tatiana Levina, Higher School of Economics, Moscow**

Avant-garde painters were amazed by icons, particularly fifteenth- to sixteenth-century "old style" Russian icons, which saw the light of the day in the early twentieth century after two centuries of prohibition. Icons had

a massive impact on Mikhail Larionov, the founder of Rayonism, who wrote that “Russian icon painters [...] were strongly drawn towards abstraction.” In 1913, he organized two exhibitions, including in one of them his own Rayonist paintings that depict the rays of light reflected from the objects. Kazimir Malevich, also strongly influenced by icons, referred in his theoretical writings to the Gospels. Launching his Suprematism at the O,10 Exhibition in 1915, Malevich placed his masterpiece, *The Black Square*, just like an icon in the “beautiful corner.”

In my paper, I trace the influence of Byzantine theology on the avant-garde, paying particular attention to the Palaeologus and Russian icons. Alexandre Benois characterized the *Black Square* as a “cult of emptiness, darkness, ‘nothing.’” Following the discussions of Andrew Spira, Oleg Tarasov, Miroslava Mudrak, and Nina Gurianova, I argue that indeed it was darkness, but of another type. I draw its connection to the concepts of “uncreated light” and “dazzling darkness” in the texts of Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory Palamas’ theology, and I demonstrate how an application of Palamas’ theory, hesychasm, was reflected in fifteenth- to sixteenth-century icon painting and later in avant-garde theory and paintings, in particular those of Larionov and Malevich. Finally, I will have a closer look at Pavel Florensky’s philosophy of art.

## Panel V: **TWENTIETH CENTURY RUSSIAN ART**

### **The Dimension of Faith in Wassily Kandinsky’s Painting**

**Lilia Sokolova, University of Cologne**

Wassily Kandinsky’s life-long adherence to Orthodox Christianity was a driving force in his exploration of non-objective painting. Under the influence of the Russian neo-Christian thinkers who aimed at revitalizing Orthodox theology at the turn of the twentieth century, Kandinsky sought

to imbue new vigor into art that could be simultaneously modern and Christian. While Kandinsky's early works with overtly Christian themes of 1908-14 have received ample scholarly attention, this study explores religiosity inherent in Kandinsky's art and writing produced after the First World War. By juxtaposing Kandinsky's painting *Fröhliche Struktur* (Merry Structure) and the Eastern Orthodox icon *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, this paper proposes that the kinship between his images and the Orthodox tradition of icon painting is in spiritual revelations that they are purposed to communicate. To gain a better understanding of Kandinsky's non-objective oeuvre, it therefore helps to recognize the religious truths that the artist strove to impart in his works.

## Stalin Christ as a Tsar: On "Anachronic" (Socialist) Realism

Nikita Balagurov, independent scholar, St. Petersburg

In 1884, the Ministry of the Imperial Court commissioned Ilya Repin to paint one of the key scenes in the triumphal celebrations of the coronation of the new tsar, *Alexander III receives Peasant Elders in the Courtyard of the Petrovskii Palace in Moscow*. It has been noted that the authorities insisted that Repin present Alexander III as Christ preaching to the people. We have no evidence of "the authorities" actually altering the initial request or Repin rejecting their demands, which makes this commission an interesting case of negotiations between the realist artist and the not so realistically oriented Imperial Court. The result of these negotiations was first presented to the audience in 1886 and received mixed responses from the critics.

Paradoxically enough, the painting made an even more conspicuous appearance in the 1946 film by Mikhail Chiaureli, *The Vow*. The film portrayed Stalin as Lenin's successor and became a pathbreaking representation of the emerging cult of personality. As Lavrentiy Beria

instructed the director, returning the script with Stalin's remarks on his own character, "*The Vow* must be a sublime film in which Lenin is John the Baptist and Stalin the Messiah." My paper analyses the role that Repin's painting played in Chiaureli's film. In doing so, I will revisit the discussion on the nature of socialist realist cult images to suggest that the concept of "anachronic picture" might be useful for their interpretation.



## BIOGRAPHIES

**Clemena Antonova** is an art historian with a specialization in the art of the icon and Russian critiques of the medieval image with a particular focus on Pavel Florensky. Her doctoral thesis at Oxford University was published as a book, entitled [\*Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God\*](#) (Ashgate, UK, 2010); it was followed by her second book, [\*Visual Thought in Russian Religious Philosophy: Pavel Florensky's Theory of the Icon\*](#) (Routledge, 2019). Her articles appeared in journals such as *Leonardo*, *Sobornost*, *Slavonica*, etc. She recently completed a research fellowship at the Morphomata Centre at the University of Cologne. At present, she is the Research Director of the "Eurasia in Global Dialogue" Program at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna.

**Nikita Balagurov** is an independent scholar specializing in nineteenth-century Russian art and the history of collecting. He taught history and art history at the Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg and was a visiting lecturer at the University of Eastern Finland. He is a member of the Getty sponsored research project "Periodization in the History of Art and its Conundrums" at the New Europe College in Bucharest. His current research focuses on the art collecting of Alexander III of Russia.

**Petra Carlsson Redell** is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and fellow at the Stockholm School of Theology. She is the author of [\*Foucault, Art, and Radical Theology\*](#) (Routledge, 2018) and [\*Avant-garde Art and Radical Material Theology\*](#) (Routledge, 2020).

**Viktoria Lavriniuk** is a second-year PhD student in the Feminist and Gender Studies Program at the University of Ottawa, Canada. She holds a master's degree in economics and management from the Belarusian State Economics University. Before entering academia, she was a member of the United Nations Population Fund team on promoting a gender-sensitive agenda and gender mainstreaming practices in policies and programs in Belarus. Her research focuses on the intersection of gender and religion from a postcolonial perspective; specifically, she is interested in the ways in which women's religiosity can be translated into liberatory practices and how this challenges the hierarchical structure of the Church.

**Tatiana Levina** is a senior researcher in the Laboratory of Transcendental Philosophy at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. She graduated from Moscow State University with a dissertation on philosophy of art. Her research interests are philosophical theology, aesthetics, metaphysics, and the history of science. Currently she is writing a book on *Abstract Revolution: Platonism in the Avant-garde Epoch*, and several papers, including "The Revolution of Nothingness: Kazimir Malevich and Russian Philosophy," "The Radiation of Divine Light: Byzantine Meanings of Larionov's Abstractionism," and "Grasping Absolute Infinity: The Symbol in Georg Cantor and Pavel Florensky."

**Alexei Lidov** is a well-known art historian and Byzantinist, a specialist in Byzantine iconography, Christian sacred images, and theory of art. He founded and directed since 1991 the Research Centre for Eastern Christian Culture in Moscow and also serves as department head at the Institute for World Culture of Lomonosov Moscow State University and is a full member (academician) of the Russian Academy of Arts as well as a member and fellow of St. Catherine's College at Oxford University. Lidov is the author of more than 100 research publications in many languages, among them 30 monographs, catalogues, and collections of articles. He coined the term "[hierotopy](#)" and established the new field of studies in the creation of sacred spaces.

**Thomas Mark Németh** is Professor of Theology of the Eastern Churches at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna since October 2019. He holds doctoral degrees in theology and law from this university and completed his habilitation there in theology and history of the Christian east. His areas of research and interest include the history of eastern churches in Middle-/ Eastern Europe (specifically the Ukraine and the Habsburg Empire), the notion of tradition, church law, Byzantine liturgy and art. He is an editorial board member of the journal *Ostkirchliche Studien*, consultant of the foundation Pro Oriente, co-chairman of the Orthodox-Eastern Catholic Dialogue Group (OEC), and priest of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church.

**George Pattison** is Professor of Theology and Modern European Thought at the University of Glasgow. Prior to coming to Glasgow in 2013, he held posts in Cambridge, Aarhus (Denmark), and Oxford universities, and he is also a visiting professor at the Faculty of Theology in the University of Copenhagen. He has published extensively on the philosophy of religion, with particular

interests in the history of ideas from Hegel to the present and in the relationship between theology and the visual arts. He also has a strong interest in Russian religious thought. His books include [\*Art, Modernity and Faith\*](#) (1991), [\*Crucifixions and Resurrections of the Image\*](#) (2009) and, most recently, [\*A Rhetoric of the Word\*](#) (2019)—the second part of a trilogy entitled [\*A Philosophy of Christian Life\*](#). With Randall Poole and Caryl Emerson, he is co-editor of the [\*Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought\*](#) (2020).

**Ludmila Piters-Hofmann** is writing her PhD thesis at Jacobs University Bremen, supervised by Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche. Her research focuses on folk and fairy tales as subject matter in the work of the Russian painter Viktor Vasnetsov in the context of cultural transfer and Russian nationalism. Together with Louise Hardiman and Maria Taroutina, she is the editor of the 2019 issue of *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture* on "[\*Abramtsevo and Its Legacies: Neo-National Art, Craft, and Design\*](#)." Besides organizing this graduate workshop, she is engaged in various editorial projects of the Russian Art & Culture Group, among them the special issue of *Russian History* on "[\*Artistic Communities and Educational Approaches in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Russia\*](#)," (46, no. 4, 2019).

**Lilia Sokolova** is an art historian with a specialization in Russian and European Modernism as well as contemporary art exhibitions. In 2015, she received her Master of Arts degree in art history from Savannah College of Art and Design, where her MA thesis on the "Sacred Image in a New Form: Eastern Orthodoxy in Wassily Kandinsky's Art and Theory" received the university's Best Thesis Award. From 2016 to 2019, she worked on a doctoral research project at the University of Cologne under the supervision of Professor Dr. Norbert Nußbaum and in consultation with Friedhelm Mennekes. Her PhD thesis examines the phenomenon of contemporary non-religious art exhibitions in active churches in Germany and offers a first comprehensive English-language study of the Kunst-Station Sankt Peter Köln.

**Oleg Tarasov** is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Slavic Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He received an MA in History and a PhD in History and Theory of Arts from Moscow State University and a PhD in History from the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is the author of [\*Icon and Devotion: Sacred Spaces in Imperial Russia\*](#) (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), [\*Framing Russian Art: From Early Icons to Malevich\*](#) (London: Reaktion Books,

2011), and *Modern i drevnie ikony: Ot sviatyni k shedevru* (Art Nouveau and Ancient Icons: From Sacred Object to Masterpiece) (Moscow: Indrik, 2016). He is also a consultant and catalogue contributor for many exhibitions including *Picture and Frame* (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 2014).

**Maria Taroutina** is Associate Professor of Art History at Yale-NUS College in Singapore and specializes in the art of Imperial and early Soviet Russia. She is the author of [\*The Icon and the Square: Russian Modernism and the Russo-Byzantine Revival\*](#), which was awarded the 2019 USC Book Prize in Literary and Cultural Studies. She has also co-edited two volumes, [\*Byzantium/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity\*](#) and [\*New Narratives of Russian and East European Art: Between Traditions and Revolutions\*](#). Currently, she is working on two book projects: a monograph on Mikhail Vrubel and a study of Russian Orientalist painting, tentatively titled *Looking East: Russian Orientalism in the Age of Empire*.

**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).



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