



INSIDE THE EXHIBITION

TEMPORALITÀ, DISPOSITIVO, NARRAZIONE

a cura di Gloria Antoni, Matteo Chirumbolo, Gianluca Petrone, Célia Zuber



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a cura di

GLORIA ANTONI, MATTEO CHIRUMBOLO, GIANLUCA PETRONE, CÉLIA ZUBER

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Via Angelo Bagnoni, 8 – 00153 Roma
Tel. 06.45493446 – Tel./Fax 06.45441995
editoriale.artemide@fastwebnet.it
www.artemide-edizioni.it

Direttore editoriale
Vincenzo Innocenti Furina

Segreteria di redazione
Antonella Iolandi

Impaginazione
Monica Savelli

Copertina
Lucio Barbazza

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Patterns of historiography: Russian avant-garde art in curatorial practice, 1979-1992

Alexandra Timonina

Criticism inspired by the works of Michel Foucault and informed by later arguments about the need for an 'archaeological' approach to museum studies¹ has been increasingly applied to temporary art exhibitions from the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries². In particular, the study of major post-war exhibitions that sought to validate the early twentieth-century avant-garde represents an expanding domain of art-historical research. These studies attempt to reassess the mechanisms through which the modernist canon was built and how it influenced later historiography³. During the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a widespread effort to redefine national modernist schools through tribute exhibitions⁴. However, these attempts to reclaim their lineages, as Douglas Crimp argues, had a hidden agenda of accommodating them to contemporary museum practice and art criticism, which were in turn informed by formal analysis as a fundamental epistemological tool. Indeed, formal analysis was inherent in both the Greenbergian dogma and, subsequently, in the 'demythologising criticism'⁵ that eventually emerged around the *October* journal, and its authority was rarely questioned in the 1970s and 1980s.

At the same time, retrospective exhibitions have until recently enjoyed limited scholarly attention despite their ability to reflect broad political conjunctures and intellectual shifts, often dealing with national artistic traditions whose definition is rooted in broader historiographical models⁶. Some of the key questions such exhibitions elicit – how do they shape knowledge about art movements? In which manner might their historicising schemes be driven by ideological bias? – are still left largely unanswered. Even less space is dedicated to topics that are not central to Western art-history.

This paper intends to readdress this imbalance by examining four exhibitions which had an immense impact on the historiography of the Russian avant-garde and fostered its canonisation: *Paris-Moscou* (Paris, 1979); *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930. New Perspectives* (Los Angeles, 1980); *Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection* (New York, 1981) and *The Great Utopia* (New York, 1992-1993). By noting recurring curatorial patterns in the organisation of these retrospective displays, this essay will demonstrate how the circulation of Russian avant-garde art in the postmodernist context was in-

formed by the emphasis, widespread in Western institutions in those years, on the evolution of expressive means and the formal qualities of artworks, favouring non-figurative artistic outputs and amplifying individual narratives of defiance and martyrdom. Moreover, the study will contextualise this circulation within broader cultural processes. The rise of Minimalism, for example, led American institutions and intellectuals to endorse the pioneers of geometrical abstraction active in Russia at the dawn of the century⁷. Meanwhile, Western art-historians in general tended to interpret modernist groups, such as World of Art, as forerunners of the avant-garde and, consequently, of the abstraction⁸.

With the resolution of 1932, art production in the USSR experienced a radical centralisation. All existing art groups were marginalised, and the state-sanctioned Union of Soviet Artists became the only organisation to which artists could legally belong⁹. In the following decades, the monopoly of Socialist Realism in exhibition spaces was rarely challenged and was presented as being in harmonious continuity with nineteenth-century Realist painting. Even those artworks that had been acquired by the state during the 1920s were debased¹⁰. Likewise, until the second half of the 1970s, the official line of Soviet historiography glided over the experimental art of the 1910s and early 1920s. Its importance and radicalism went largely unnoted, and numerous artists who had belonged to it were neglected or left the country¹¹. During this same period, the legacy of early-twentieth-century Russian art was enthusiastically explored in the collections of Western museums, such as the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Here, curators such as Alfred H. Barr Jr portrayed it within the history of modernism conceptualised as straightforward and *universal* process¹². Its rehabilitation in the USSR started only in the late 1950s with some modest exhibitions and research on fin-de-siècle artist groups, such as the World of Art¹³. In 1962, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1864-1922* by Camilla Gray, a British Russophile and protégée of Barr, was published in New York¹⁴. Although she helped lay the ground for later generations, Gray's book subscribed to an 'evolutionary' art-historical paradigm. She hardly addressed the phenomena that lay outside a teleological development of expressive means, such as an artist returning to figurative work after abstraction or the material dimension of Constructivism. This approach influenced many generations of studies in Europe and the US, which focused primarily on the birth of geometrical abstraction, while neglecting work by artists who embraced the propagandistic function of art and figuration as a whole.

Paris-Moscou, one of the Centre Pompidou's inaugural shows, was organised in 1979 in this cultural climate through a collaboration between French curators and Soviet museums and authorities¹⁵. The exhibition gained a tremendous response across media and academic platforms¹⁶, since many works provided by the

Soviet Union were displayed for the first time. From the beginning, the director of the Centre Pompidou, Pontus Hultén, wanted to make a series of cross-cultural exhibitions that would celebrate the interdisciplinarity of the museum as a place of encounter and research. This was also an attempt, in part, to alter apolitical, aestheticising displays within its space and to try to present a more complex history of modernism. Indeed, the series aimed to reframe the notion of modernism itself, with Paris as its main axis, bridging it first with the 'West' and then with the 'East', as was already clear from the preface to the exhibition *Paris-New York* from 1977¹⁷. In the early stages of the project, the museum planned *Paris-New York* to be followed by *Paris-Moscou-Berlin*, presenting the following blueprint to potential partners and collectors: "Paris-Moscou-Berlin aura pour but de mettre en évidence [...] les courants *supranationaux* et les influences axées autour de ces trois villes [...]. Elle sera la première exposition ayant pour objectif de révéler les parallèles profonds et les relations entre l'art est-européen et ouest-européen durant cette époque primordiale dans le développement du modernisme"¹⁸. This proposal was, however, rejected by the Soviet side¹⁹, and the project was split into two exhibitions (*Paris-Berlin* 1978, *Paris-Moscou* 1979).

During preparation for *Paris-Moscou*, both sides fought over displaying certain objects, and, as both the press feedback and curatorial correspondence indicate, the process was less about compromises, more an exchange of favours²⁰. The Soviet supervisors desired to have the exhibition dwell extensively on Socialist Realism and objects related to the visual culture of the Revolution, while the French were more interested in experimental art of the 1910s, similar to that which was eagerly collected and, to some extent, already presented in museums in the United States and Western Europe²¹. The curators sought to trace the origins of the avant-garde in the complicated network of fin-de-siècle groups, as well as in the collections of Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov, which fostered fauvist and cubist languages in Russian art. They also stressed the role of women painters who were later conceptualised as 'Amazons of the avant-garde'²².

As in other shows in Hultén's series, *Paris-Moscou* treated various historical exhibition sites as nodes of a broad net of intercultural communication²³. For example, it meant for *Le Salon des Indépendants* of 1914 to be a culmination of the integration of young Russian artists into the Parisian scene. It gave tribute to the Galerie Paul Guillaume for having introduced the French public to the Neo-primitivism of Mikhail Larionov and Natal'ia Goncharova and, after a section dedicated to the Revolution, it showed the stage design and costumes of Aleksandra Ekster, Georgii Iakulov and the Vesnin brothers²⁴. By doing so, it recognised the immense role that privately organised exhibitions played in the establishment of modernist art movements, following the reconstruction formula already applied in *Paris-New York*. The events of 1917 served as a



FIG. 1. Installation view: *Paris-Moscou. 1900-1930*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky. © RMN-Grand Palais / Jacques Faujour.

borderline marked by a selection of revolutionary posters hanging on the ceiling and forming a corridor of agitprop images. The eras before and after the Revolution were divided by the reconstruction of the *Monument to the Third International* by Vladimir Tatlin, which was surrounded by several stands with revolutionary and propaganda art²⁵ (FIG. 1). This borderline was well articulated in the Parisian show, while in the Moscow version in 1981 the effect was blurred as the Tower was placed at the bottom of the White Hall of the Pushkin Museum. There also was the reconstruction of the *Workers' Club*, created by Aleksandr Rodchenko for the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris, which emphasised the spirit of the new society and the influence of design and architecture. The display of realist art had an important role in the latter part of the exhibition, which was dedicated to the years from 1917 to 1930. A labyrinth-like set-up allowed comparison, unusual for that period, between *le retour à l'ordre* and the realism of the USSR through the vis-a-vis display of Picasso's neo-classicist pieces, the works of André Derain that show the artist's return to figuration, and the pictures of Iurii Pimenov and Aleksandr Deineka. There were other interesting juxtapositions, such as the subsection dedicated to Abstraction-Création next to Malevich's *Sportsmen*, 1930-1931 (FIG. 2).



FIG. 2. Installation view: *Paris-Moscou. 1900-1930*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky. © RMN-Grand Palais / Jacques Faujour.

Socialist Realism was well presented, culminating in the large canvas by Isaak Brodskii, *Lenin at Smolnyi*, from 1930.

Some contemporary sources reveal the disappointment provoked by the set-up²⁶. Suprematist and Constructivist works were shown next to other pieces and given as parts of broader artistic processes. The show did not emphasise the work of single masters nor did it present the evolution of any one of them. Journalists claimed that the abstract paintings were lost among the figurative ones, and attacked Soviet Realism, accusing it of misrepresenting the very idea of Realism and simply occupying too much wall space²⁷. Parallels between the figurative art of the two countries that were explored in the section *Réalismes des années vingt* were not read positively by audience and critics²⁸. It is noteworthy that a year later, a profound reflection on Realism in European painting was developed by Jean Clair in the exhibition *Les Réalismes: entre révolution et réaction 1919-1939*, held at the Centre Pompidou, which rehabilitated 'reactionary' painterly languages, from Otto Dix to Mario Sironi²⁹.

Yet the main accusations regarded the gaps in how the historical context was presented. Contrary to *Paris-Berlin*, "*Paris-Moscou* passe sous silence les famines, les révoltes, les collectivisations forcées, les déportations massives, oublie Staline,

pour mieux ignorer Trotsky”, one critic wrote³⁰. The museum was eager to reorient the attacks regarding the alleged sympathy with communism by defending its approach: “L’arrivée au réalisme socialiste a été, comme tous les processus soucieux, un processus dialectique, constatation qui n’a rien de déshonorant pour les organisateurs de l’exposition”³¹.

Paris-Moscou dramatically influenced the belated critical acclaim of the Russian avant-garde. Many hypotheses, expressed in the catalogue essays and through curatorial decisions, were subsequently developed in other shows and publications. However, it was followed by a number of projects dealing with this art in more conformist terms, dwelling less on its social scope, so as not to challenge the story of modern art culminating with abstraction. This tendency was aligned with a more general attitude in Western art criticism that was manifested in America, for example, in framing Constructivism mainly in terms of artworks’ formal qualities. On this note, Benjamin Buchloh has convincingly argued that it was almost exclusively framed within the perspective of reductivist geometrical abstraction, because it was metabolised mainly through the programmes of Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, Constructivist artists *par excellence* in the US at the time. Their work was strictly connected to the medium of sculpture, while tending “to erase its commitment to mass audience and ignore its utilitarian dimensions [and] to reorient it toward European and American concepts of artistic autonomy”³².

In 1980, another retrospective exhibition, *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930, New Perspectives*, was held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This project deliberately distanced itself from *Paris-Moscou*, underlining that it would present only avant-garde art³³. It was primarily concerned with experimental works that would testify to the teleological evolution of forms. As in *Paris-Moscou*, there were several reconstructions of historical pieces or situations, although with a different aim: to create a stylistic dialogue between the exhibits and the installation design. It also featured a model of Tatlin’s Tower (FIG. 3). This time, it was more as a nostalgic reminder of its unfulfilled ideal than a celebration, as it had been framed in *Paris-Moscou*. A special place was given to the interpretative re-enactment of the mythical display of Malevich’s Suprematism at the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0,10* (1915-1916). The set-up designed by Frank Gehry and Greg Walsh consisted of wooden structures that referred to Constructivist imagery, establishing a direct dialogue between historical pieces and the contemporary American cultural milieu. This motif represented the initial impulse behind the project, which intended to show them next to each other and, therefore, to illustrate the ancestry of Minimalism. However, the financing body supposedly refused to support the show if it went for such a direct analogy³⁴. Nevertheless, the reviews illustrate that, even without the works from



FIG. 3. Installation view: *The Avant-garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives*, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). © 2021. Digital Image Museum Associates/LACMA/Art Resource NY/Scala, Firenze.

living American artists, affinities were evident to the viewers³⁵. A similar attitude emerged in response to another show organised in New York a year later.

Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection opened at the Guggenheim Museum on October 16, 1981. Indeed, the life of Georgii Kostaki and the story of his visionary collection, as well as its first public displays, were milestones in the historiography on the subject. When Kostaki left the USSR in the late 1970s, he was able to take a part of his paintings with him but gave most of them to the State Tretyakov Gallery as a gift. After showing the remaining parts in Germany³⁶, he accepted the proposal for an exhibition at the Guggenheim. The show primarily followed the criteria of curators and deliberately prioritised abstract trends and such phases in single artists' careers, even though the collection was comprised of pieces ranging from technological utopianism to lyrical figurative compositions³⁷. The decay of non-objectiveness due to ideological pressure was a perceivable line in the show. The main aim was to introduce the New York public to what were regarded as the most important names of the abstract movement in Russia, who were lesser known in the US³⁸. Undoubtedly, the show gave a glimpse of some remarkable pieces and shed light



FIG. 4. Installation view: *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Photograph by David Heald © SRGF.

on new characters, such as Liubov' Popova or Ivan Kliun. However, Kostaki was disappointed with the way it was set up; he thought it misrepresented his taste by altering the classification he had developed within his collection³⁹.

Finally, *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* was the largest-scale exhibition dedicated to the subject to that date, opening in 1992 in the same venue⁴⁰. Preparation lasted almost four years, during which the Soviet Union ceased to exist⁴¹. A significant portion of the loans were taken from the regional museums in Russia to present a wide panorama of artistic creation, which was the main aim of the curators⁴². The show inherited some devices applied in *Paris-Moscou*, as it also tried to present all the complexity of the art of the period and included reconstructions of the historical shows (FIG. 4). Two halls of the Guggenheim Museum partly reproduced the *0,10* and the OBMOKhU (Obschestvo Molodykh Khudozhnikov) [Society of Young Artist] shows, from 1915-1916 and 1921 respectively. The former exhibition was chosen as the ideal starting point of the show, while the latest piece dated from 1932, a year marked by the competition for the project of the Palace of the Soviets. Although the exhibition presented a high number of abstract works, it did not discard other visual languages and instead sought to reconstruct the timeline of Russian and Soviet art within the given

period. Visitors to the Guggenheim edition of the project were, in fact, delighted by the Realist paintings which concluded the show⁴³.

The *Great Utopia* travelled between seven different locations, showing an astonishing number of objects, and generally making no distinction between the display of artworks and historical documents. The ambition and encyclopaedic character of the show were justified by the need to provide a summary of the subject. Though it had already become a well-articulated field of study, both in Russia and in the West, the immense amount of information and visual material on display helped to dispel significant stereotypes and ambiguities on the art of the period that had circulated in the previous years⁴⁴.

Curators in New York realised that the show would certainly be compared to *Paris-Moscou*. However, they argued that the *Great Utopia* differed in its attention to the diversity of art deriving from the non-figurative developments of the late 1910s. Undoubtedly, the two exhibitions invite comparison as attempts to connect early-twentieth-century Russian art to the global context of modernism. Yet, as Margarita Tupitsyna observed, the 1992 retrospective presented Russian art almost solely through a Western theoretical lens:

It was a “ratification” of global modernist trends, which could also emerge in different political conditions. [Curators] wanted to demonstrate Russian avant-garde within the lexicon of American critique, underlining the problems that interested the Western audience, such as the correlation between art and politics, and the oppositions between photography and painting, as well as figurativeness and abstraction⁴⁵.

Zaha Hadid was commissioned for the exhibition design in the New York version of the show. The architect’s contribution emphasised the desire of the museum to open a new page in its history. The project occupied the entire building, and the design followed a dynamic asymmetry. A large-scale spiral installation, inspired by Tatlin’s Tower, was meant to be installed in the central hall of the building, though it was never completed. The exhibition reassessed research on the Russian avant-garde, although without attempting to detach itself from an incrementalist standpoint. Nevertheless, it served as validation of a diverse range of modes of creative production, and both the curators and the audience were much less eager to dismiss Soviet art as mere propaganda than before⁴⁶.

Separated from *Paris-Moscou* by a little over ten years, the Guggenheim show and its reception reveal the change in attitudes towards both the avant-garde, which had been increasingly museified, and Soviet figurative art. This occurred not only because of the end of the Soviet Union, but also because of a general transition in the art world towards new contemporary figurative trends, as well as the academic re-evaluation of the artistic eclecticism that characterised the

interwar period. There also were attempts to dismantle the Greenbergian project that ascribed intrinsic qualities to artworks and aimed at defining modernist art through the sequence of its development⁴⁷, and the overall crisis of the ‘modernist idiom’⁴⁸. On the other hand, *Paris-Moscou* – with its mix of ‘period rooms’, its neutral displays for painting and sculpture, and the street-like setting for its poster displays – did not entirely meet the demands of the audience. It occurred because of its contextual political agenda, as can be noted in numerous contemporaneous reviews⁴⁹. Many of the curatorial suggestions of the Soviet team were criticized by reviewers as propagandistic. This criticism correlated with two other factors: the French curators’ reluctance to historicise Socialist Realism; and the inability of the observers to embrace the complexities of intellectual work and fragile structures of dissent in the USSR, where adherence to the ideological norms of the regime did not necessarily correspond to their uncritical acceptance. However, the preoccupation with the ‘international’ dimension of modernism, which the exhibition articulated by focusing on cultural transfers, contributed to the ever-growing globalising approach in art studies⁵⁰.

Three out of four exhibitions analysed here included re-enactments in their displays in an attempt to recall the original historical context in which the artworks were created, more or less taking a step away from traditional modernist museum display. All projects were characterised by a strong rhetoric of artistic ‘discovery’ or ‘re-discovery’. Nevertheless, reread today, they seem to confirm “the paradox of exalting the avant-garde to an undisputed tradition” which has come under the critical gaze of contemporary art historians⁵¹. The delayed historicization of the subject partly performed by these exhibitions, albeit crucial for research, meant that many episodes of this history were assessed according to the art-historical patterns dominant in the contexts where these projects were conceived. Rather than using a pluralistic approach, such processes of historicization mainly traced an organic, linear narrative of artistic development that forged ahead “through a series of formal and conceptual innovations, each responding to and/or building on the earlier ones”⁵².

These exhibitions are an eloquent illustration of the conflicts lying at the core of the retrospective exhibition as an epistemological tool. They show how reading a collection of items “as a narrative” and through a historiographic lens “makes us focus, precisely, on the non-obviousness of chronology”⁵³. In addition, approaching exhibitions through this critical perspective has the potential to frame them as devices, and so to expose the ways they conceptualise cultural and artistic phenomena. By delving into the intellectual trends that influenced art-historical research, we are reminded of the arbitrariness of its choices.

The establishment of the Russian avant-garde art canon was drastically influenced by curatorial decisions made in these exhibitions. Those decisions were

primarily driven by the concern of locating the art of early-twentieth-century Russia within a globalised, yet Eurocentric, context⁵⁴. They accentuated the analogies with the protagonists of Western art-historical narrative, preferring the tracing of broader stylistic progress to stressing the agency of artists, or to carefully exploring the social context in which they were working. At the same time, they also subordinated their subjects uncompromisingly to the rationale of the exhibition space as a realm of historic neutrality, influencing the interpretation of early-twentieth-century Russian art until the present day. As this essay has tried to show, to analyse these historiographical constructions may indeed bring fresh insight into both historical sources and partisan stances that inform art history, criticism, and curatorial practices.

NOTE

This article is in part based on a master's thesis defended in March 2018 at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. I am grateful to my supervisors for their support and guidance.

¹ Following Douglas Crimp's initial formulation of 'institutional critique' for art museums (see CRIMP 1980, p. 45), Tony Bennett expanded the critique to encompass all kinds of museums (see BENNETT 2004, pp. 59-60, 93-94). For a sweeping panorama of Foucault's legacy in cultural critique and recent museum studies, see HETHERINGTON 2015.

² See respectively the series published by the Afterall Research Centre; GILMORE HOLT 1988; ALTSHULER 2008; FILIPOVIC/VAN HAL/ØVSTEBØ 2010; ALTSHULER 2013.

³ For the recent developments of the debate on art-historical canon as a cultural construct

see BRZYSKI 2007a; LOCHER 2012; LANGFELD/BAUDUIN 2018.

⁴ Crimp in his essay *The Postmodern Museum*, see CRIMP 1995, p. 286. The presentation of Peggy Guggenheim's collection at the 1948 Venice Biennale or the inaugural shows of Centre Pompidou might serve as examples.

⁵ As Rosalind Krauss called her program in *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*: KRAUSS 1985, p. 170.

⁶ MATHUR 2019.

⁷ See MEYER 2001, p. 290 and FOSTER/KRAUSS/BOIS/BUCHLOH/JOSELIT 2016, p. 540.

⁸ As argued by KENNEDY 1976, p. 7 and KRIDL VALKENIER 2006, p. 53, this genealogy does not stand up to scrutiny, as such groups had mainly referred to the moderate aesthetic of the European secessionist realm.

⁹ This rupture was long judged to be a point of decay and ideological repression of the avant-garde project, but this narrative is now considered to be simplistic. For a reexamination that reflects these new perspectives, see, among others, GROYS 1990, DEGOT' 2000, pp. 139-145. See MANIN 2008 for a panorama of Soviet art in the 1920s and 1930s.

¹⁰ On the ambiguous status of early twentieth-century modernist and avant-garde movements in Soviet culture, see, for instance, the case of MARSHACK 1960 – a controversial publication in LIFE which contributed to one of the most long-lasting art-historical clichés, that of a sharp distinction between free expression in European and American art and the totalitarian art of the Communist Bloc. On the position of Soviet scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s see BOWLT 1979; AVTONOMOVA 2014.

¹¹ On Soviet scholarship in the post-war period, see MOROZOVA 2014, p. 128. On emigration of artists after the Revolution, see BOWLT 1981 and TOLSTOJ 2005.

¹² See KANTOR 2002. See BARRIS 2017 for a valuable examination of Constructivism's reception in America in the 1920s. This article also makes a substantive contribution to the examination of Russian avant-garde art's entry into the Western art-historical canon.

¹³ MOROZOVA 2014, p. 128.

¹⁴ GRAY 1962. Besides unprecedented research results, she also completed an important work that remains largely unknown. During her stay in the USSR, she visited many museums that stored but did not publicly display avant-garde artworks. She drafted a list of these items which she gave to Barr. The list was then handed to J. E. Bowlt and is currently part of his research library. It represents a useful testimony to the Soviet museum policies of the time.

¹⁵ *Paris-Moscou* 1979. Recently, there has been a notable rise of interest in this exhibition, although the existing published works are mainly descriptive, and a more analytical approach would be beneficial for an increased understanding of the cultural and political dynamics that shaped it. The 40th anniversary of the ex-

hibition that took place in May 2019 renewed interest in it, as the Centre Pompidou paid tribute to it with an important conference and a publication: LIUCCI-GOUTNIKOV/MILOVZOROVA 2019. Also see a review by PRIKHOD'KO 2019.

¹⁶ LIUCCI-GOUTNIKOV 2019, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Paris-New York* 1977, p. 1.

¹⁸ Emphasis added. From a loan request to the Paris collector Boris Tcherkinsky, Archives du Centre Pompidou, MNAM, Service des manifestations, Archives de l'exposition *Paris-Moscou, 1900-1930*, 1992W022 116, Correspondance 1977-1980, P. Hultén to B. Tcherkinsky, 18 November 1977.

¹⁹ LIUCCI-GOUTNIKOV/MILOVZOROVA 2019, pp. 18-19.

²⁰ It was denounced by the press of the time as concessions from the French side: HUSER 1979, p. 78. The complexity of the loan agreements, and to some extent the randomness of the Soviet vetoes, are reflected in the correspondence between the organizers. For example, in the letter from S. Fauchereau to the Soviet curator of the art section, A. Khalturin: "[...] Voici maintenant que vous me demandez de retirer cette petite silhouette dont nous n'avons jamais parlé car elle ne faisait aucun problème". Archives du Centre Pompidou, MNAM, Service des manifestations, Archives de l'exposition *Paris-Moscou, 1900-1930*, 1992W022 116, Correspondance 1977-1980, S. Fauchereau to A. Khalturin, 13 March 1979.

²¹ The testimonies of the members of the curatorial teams were recently published in LIUCCI-GOUTNIKOV/MILOVZOROVA 2019, pp. 18-37. One of the most influential institutions in setting up the priorities of the story of early twentieth-century Russian art was doubtlessly the MoMA, that had works by K. Malevich and A. Rodchenko in its collections from early on. The way these artists were inscribed in the formalist narrative developed by Barr that saw abstraction as a universal turning point in the history of civilization (the question which was brilliantly examined by STANISZEWSKI 1998 and KANTOR 2002) had paramount influence on

scholarship and was even more influential on exhibition projects that dealt with Russian art.

²² This term, although first coined in Soviet art criticism of the early 1930s, was only widely adopted after the exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum's venues in 1999-2001. *Amazons of the Avant-Garde* 2000.

²³ For a discussion on the reconstructions of historical exhibitions as part of the curatorial concept in *Paris-New York* see TEIXEIRA 2016, pp. 200-206.

²⁴ *Paris-Moscou* 1979, pp. 24-51.

²⁵ This was not the first time that Tatlin's Tower was recreated. It was, for example, featured in the monographic show *Vladimir Tatlin* (1968) at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, curated by Hultén.

²⁶ CABANE 1979.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ The effects of the stigma around Socialist realism on the discipline of art history were recently addressed by several authors, although there is still more work to be done. For some up-to-date appraisals see PIOTROWSKI 2009; BAZIN/DUBOURG GLATIGNY/PIOTROWSKI 2016, pp. 8-17.

²⁹ *Les Réalismes* 1980.

³⁰ FIEGELSON 1979, p. 278. A great part of the French press sought to find the proofs of this subjective interpretation of history due to the Soviet ideology in the exhibition. To sum up the debate *L'Express* published an article that pointed out the errors made by some critics DEROGY 1979. The debates culminated in a performance led by artist and editor of *A-YA* underground art review, Igor' Shelkovskii, staging a fake funeral procession with a 'constructivist' coffin, referencing the real funeral of Malevich; TOLSTOJ 2009. A group entered the museum bearing this replica, paired with a plate saying: "Here lies Russian avant-garde, killed by Soviet socialism". It was timed with the Sorbonne symposium, *Culture et pouvoir communiste*, which was run by French intellectuals and the émigré community who vigorously denounced the exhibition. DIODJEVA/WOLTON 1979.

³¹ Archives du Centre Pompidou, MNAM, Service des manifestations, Archives de l'exposition *Paris-Moscou, 1900-1930*, 1992W022 116, Correspondance 1977-1980, S. Zadora, a draft "Les agents du KGB au Centre Georges Pompidou", June 1979.

³² BUCHLOH 1990, pp. 87-89.

³³ *The avant-garde* 1981.

³⁴ HOELTERHOFF 1980, quoted in DULGUEROVA 2019, p. 70.

³⁵ DULGUEROVA 2019, pp. 70-71.

³⁶ *Werke aus der Sammlung Costakis* 1977.

³⁷ *Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia* 1981, p. 14.

³⁸ The show was warmly met overall. See KRAMER 1981. Interestingly, another protest took place in front of the museum in New York. This time, it was against the commodification of Russian avant-garde by the Western art market. A procession with an ironic replica of Malevich's coffin referred to the action in Paris. See TOLSTOJ 2009; FOWLE 2016.

³⁹ ROBERTS 1994, p. 178.

⁴⁰ *The Great Utopia* 1992.

⁴¹ The idea for the show was born during the Sotheby's auction held in Moscow in 1988 or during the visit of the Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs, E. Shevardnadze, to the Guggenheim Museum the same year. See TREGULOVA 2016, p. 190.

⁴² *The Great Utopia* 1992, p. X.

⁴³ KIMMELMAN 1992, quoted in FOWLE/ADDISON 2016, p. 194.

⁴⁴ One of the examples being the essays, such as the study of the reception of the *0,10* exhibit by J. A. Sharp or the examination of the decline of abstract art in the 1920s by C. Douglas. See *The Great Utopia* 1992, pp. 38-52, 450-465.

⁴⁵ Margarita Tupitsyna in FOWLE 2016.

⁴⁶ KRAMER 1992

⁴⁷ See DAVIS MACK 1994.

⁴⁸ BUCHLOH 1981, pp. 40-41. In the following two decades this crisis has been extensively theorized through the debate on a post-historical condition of art and art history led by authors such as Arthur Danto and Hans Belting.

⁴⁹ CABANE 1979; FIEGELSON 1979; HUSER 1979; MILLET 1979.

⁵⁰ JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2019, p. 428.

⁵¹ BELTING 2003, p. 135.

⁵² BRZYSKI 2007b, pp. 343-344.

⁵³ BAL 1997, p. 101.

⁵⁴ In many cases, this might be considered admissible due to the profound aspirations of

early-twentieth-century Russian artists to connect with their European peers. Other long-established parallels and comparisons, however, are mainly due to art-historical and curatorial speculation.