

Coming to the Surface or Going Underground?

Art Practices, Actors,
and Lifestyles
in the Soviet Union
of the 1950s-1970s

Conference

**November 13-14,
2025**

The Research Centre for East
European Studies (FSO),

Klagenfurter Str. 8, 28359
Bremen | Room 3790

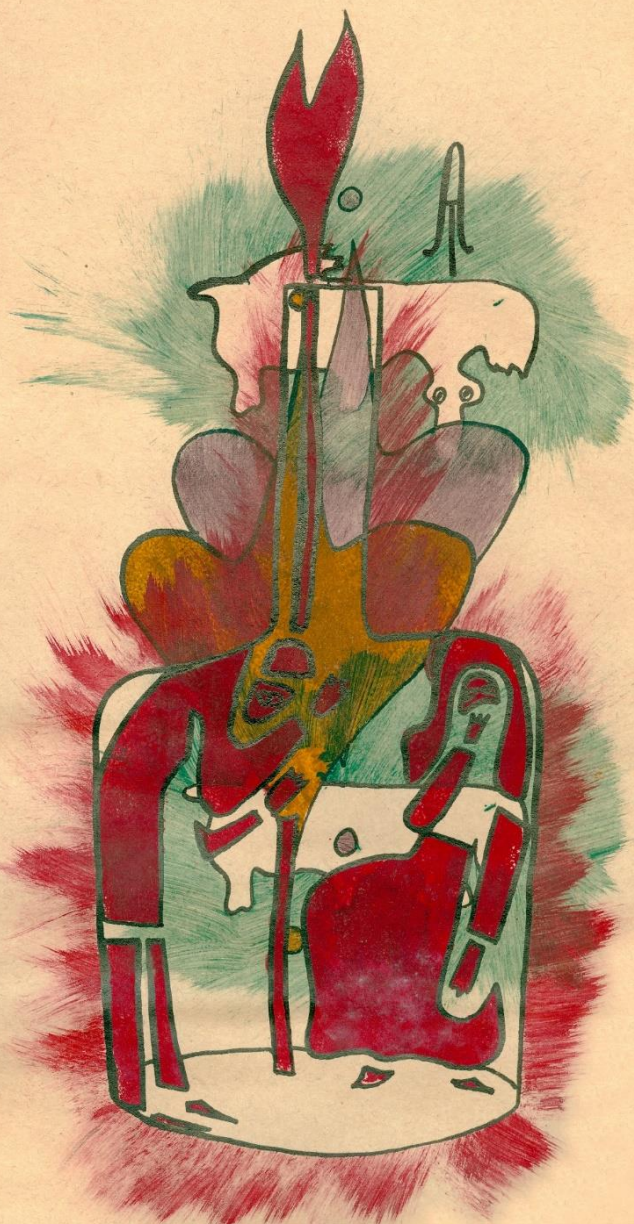



Forschungsstelle
Osteuropa



Funded by
DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

CONSTRUCTOR
UNIVERSITY



Cover: Ry Nikonova, “Life in a Vessel,” *NAM* No. 2-3. 1978. FSO Archiv 01-097/W-91

All texts and information were provided by the authors and included with their approval.

**COMING TO THE SURFACE OR GOING UNDERGROUND?
ART PRACTICES, ACTORS, AND LIFESTYLES
IN THE SOVIET UNION OF THE 1950s-1970s**

Stalin's death and the subsequent "thaw" under Khrushchev fundamentally shook the Soviet Union: previously believed truths, self-images, and ways of life were called into question, as were Soviet institutions and the party itself. The search for new forms of expression led to the emergence of a variety of alternative artistic milieus in numerous locations within the Soviet Union. To use Mark Lipovetsky's metaphor, these multiple alternative local communities formed an "underground archipelago" that produced distinct norms, values, hierarchies, rituals, lifestyles, and patterns of self-conceptualization. Our conference will explore these alternative scenes, particularly examining the various sources of intellectual dissent and artistic divergence, the media used for self-expression, and the artists' channels of communication. We are specifically interested in early unofficial artistic practices developed outside the well-established centers of Moscow and Leningrad.

The conference is a part of the DFG-funded research project "Between Avant-Garde and Nonconformism: Soviet Artists and Their Alternative Practice Between Thaw and Stagnation," jointly conducted by the Research Centre for East European Studies (FSO) at the University of Bremen and the Russian Art & Culture Reconsidered Group (RACR) at Constructor University, Bremen.

The Research Centre for East European Studies (FSO)

Klagenfurter Str. 8, 28359 Bremen

Room 3790

Program of the Conference

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13

9:30 **Registration**, coffee/tea

10:00 **Welcome** (Susanne Schattenberg & Isabel Wünsche) and
Introduction (Natasha Fedorenko, Irina Riznychok, Georg Sokolov)

**10:30 Panel 1: Reconsidering Art History: Philosophical Frameworks and
Alternative Institutions**

Chair: Susanne Schattenberg (The Research Centre for East European Studies at
the University of Bremen)

10:30 Aleksandr Kochekovskii (Bochum University / Deutsche Sacharow
Gesellschaft): **Art Criticism as an Underground Institution on
Visuality: Sinyavsky and Golomstock from an Anthropology of
Socrealism to a Clandestine Aesthetic Enlightenment**

10:50 Nare Sahakyan (Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in the
Humanities, Yerevan): **The Late Soviet Charm of Kantianism:
Wilhelm Matevosyan's Art History**

11:10 Discussion

11:40 Coffee Break

12:10 Panel 2: Corporeality in Soviet Underground Art

Chair: Irina Riznychok (Constructor University Bremen)

12:10 Georg Sokolov (Constructor University Bremen): ***Pathosformeln* of Aleksandr Arefiev**

12:30 Mane Mkrtchyan (Institute of Arts, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia): **Nudity and the Margins of Freedom in Armenian Art of the Soviet Era**

12:50 Discussion

13:20 Lunch Break

15:00 Archive Tour

16.30 Panel 3: Transcending the Border Between Official and Unofficial Cultures

Chair: Natasha Fedorenko (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen)

16:30 Stephanie R. Dvareckas (Rutgers University): **The Space Between: Kazakh and Kyrgyz Art from the Late Soviet Period to Independence**

16:50 Ala Pihalskaya (Institute of European Studies, University of Bremen): **Photography as a Toggle Switch: Belarusian Official and Uncensored Publishing of the Late 1960s-1970s**

17:10 Discussion

17:40 Coffee Break

18:15 Keynote lecture: A Culture of Renunciation: Unofficial Poetic Practices in the Late Soviet Union

Lecturer: **Ilja Kukuj** (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich)

19:30 Dinner for invited speakers and organizers

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

9:30 **Registration**, coffee/tea

10:00 Panel 4, Part 1: (Inter)subjectivity of the Soviet Underground

Chair: Georg Sokolov (Constructor University Bremen)

10:00 Simone Guidetti (University of Bamberg): **Conversing for Its Own Sake: Aleksandr Piatigorsky's Buddhist-Philosophical "Razgovor" between Ulan-Ude, Tartu, and the Emigration**

10:20 Natasha Fedorenko (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen): **Between Nostalgia and Soviet Contemporaneity: Temporality of the Underground Subject**

10:40 Discussion

11:10 Coffee Break

11:40 Panel 4, Part 2: (Inter)subjectivity of the Soviet Underground

Chair: Manuela Putz (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen)

11:40 Daria Baryshnikova (Independent, Bochum): **Unframed Consciousness, Embodied Texts: Pavel Ulitin and the Soviet Literary Underground of the 1960s**

12:00 Ieva Kalniņa (Art Academy of Latvia): **Spiritual Resilience and Aesthetic Dissent: Zenta Logina and Elīze Atāre's Alternative Artistic Identities during the Soviet Occupation of Latvia**

12:20 Discussion

12:50 Lunch Break

14:30 Panel 5, Part 1: Global (Dis)connections

Chair: Ilja Kujuk (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich)

14:30 Hasmik Khechikyan (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich): **(Unofficial) Russian and Armenian Poetry of the Stagnation Period: Between Modernism and Postmodernism**

14:50 Stanislav Savitski (Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen): **Alexei Khvostenko's "The Poem of Epigraphs" and Edward Estlin Cummings**

15:10 Discussion

15:40 Coffee Break

16:10 Panel 5, Part 1: Global (Dis)connections

Chair: Isabel Wünsche (Constructor University Bremen)

16:10 Alexander Jakobidze-Gitman (University of Witten/Herdecke): **The Georgian Musical Avant-Garde and its Underground Networks**

16:30 Irina Riznychok (Constructor University Bremen): **Beyond Moscow: Neo-Avant-Garde Practices of the Uktus School in the 1960s-1970s**

16:50 Discussion

17:20 Coffee Break

17:30 Roundtable & Concluding Discussion

Chair: Georg Sokolov (Constructor University Bremen)

Roundtable discussants: **Jane A. Sharp** (Rutgers University & Zimmerli Art Museum), **Susanne Schattenberg** (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen), **Klavdia Smola** (Dresden University of Technology)

19:00 End of conference

19:30 Dinner for invited speakers and organizers

Initial idea and organization of the conference:

Susanne Schattenberg, Isabel Wünsche, Manuela Putz, Natasha Fedorenko, Irina Riznychok, and Georg Sokolov.

“Between Avant-Garde and Nonconformism: Soviet Artists and Their Alternative Practice Between Thaw and Stagnation” is a joint research training group of the Russian Art & Culture Reconsidered Group at Constructor University and the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

ABSTRACTS

Panel I: **RECONSIDERING ART HISTORY: PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORKS AND ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONS**

Chair: Susanne Schattenberg

Art Criticism as an Underground Institution on Visuality: Sinyavsky and Golomstock from an Anthropology of Socrealism to a Clandestine Aesthetic Enlightenment

Aleksandr Kochekovskii, Bochum University / Deutsche Sacharow Gesellschaft

I intend to consider Andrey Sinyavsky's and Igor Golomstock's topics and projects related to art criticism as forms of social reflection. These two authors had begun their collaboration in the USSR, starting with a book on Picasso, and continued this collaboration as emigrants after Sinyavsky's imprisonment and liberation, preparing broadcast content for Radio Free Europe and the BBC.

Considering this collaboration, I will attempt to describe how Sinyavsky and Golomstock employ judgment on style and aesthetics as means to illuminate the social implications of Soviet history, marked by dramatic social transformations and political repressions. The very superficiality, philistinism, and xenophobic homogenization of the official Soviet art, or socialist realism in Sinyavsky's terms, or totalitarian art in Golomstock's terms, turned out to be the essence of cultural scarcity and social animosity in post-Stalinist Soviet history, culture, and society.

My idea is to demonstrate how Sinyavsky's and Golomstock's art criticism was understood and practiced by them as a way to formulate a social principle and a direction of cultural enlightenment, as consisting in the revival of the Modernist tradition in the Soviet circumstances, including traumatization, atomization, and ignorance resulting from the prison culture ("blantaya kultura") in the history of this tradition. I will concentrate on the elements common to both authors, where

it is the very ability of being subtle and reflective in perception of visual form, which appears to be both a crucial and historically deficient social trait, and the principle that the small circle of artists and intellectuals in emigration could gather around.

Last but not least, I will analyze the different ways of argumentation used in Golomstock's and Sinyavsky's art criticism, considering that the former drew this criticism from the history of the avant-garde, while the latter derived it from quests for style and structure in folk art and from the problem of relationships between literature and visibility. In my paper, I rely, among other sources, on the archive materials from the FSO archive related to Golomstock's and Sinyavsky's work on radio broadcasts.

The Late Soviet Charm of Kantianism: Wilhelm Matevosyan's Art History **Nare Sahakyan, Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in the Humanities, Yerevan**

The wide range of political and cultural reforms launched in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in the 1950s affected every aspect of life in the country. As a result of the reformatory policies of this period, known as Khrushchev's Thaw, a broad and complex anti-Soviet discourse emerged in Soviet Armenia, which was retrospectively conceptualized as National Modernism. Art historian Wilhelm Matevosyan (1931-2001) was at the forefront of the academic and art historical discourse.

Drawing on the cultural policies of the Thaw as a backdrop, this talk examines the appeal of Kant and neo-Kantian aesthetics for the National Modernist art historiography of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the scholarship of Wilhelm Matevosyan. It argues that a vague Kantian horizon is discernible in the scholarship of the art historian, formed in opposition to the late Soviet official art history. This horizon emerges through the ideal of art autonomy and the

defense of the artist's individuality in Matevosyan's works, as well as the formalist method of art history he develops in his scholarship.

Panel II: **CORPOREALITY IN SOVIET UNDERGROUND ART**

Chair: Irina Riznychok

***Pathosformeln* of Aleksandr Arefiev**

Georg Sokolov, Constructor University Bremen

Nonconformist art in Leningrad emerged at the intersection of several major sources of influence that were used by artists in the postwar decades to shape their artistic identities. One of these sources of influence was classical art, richly represented through the Hermitage Museum's extensive collection. While many artists who wished to part ways with socialist realist norms relied for motifs and forms on the works of the Old Masters, some used the material in more conceptual ways.

A remarkable example is the work of Aleksandr Arefiev (1931–1978), an artist who belonged to the earliest nonconformist group in the Soviet Union. Having experienced the atrocities of the Second World War and thereafter, he focused on brutal subjects and the mechanics of the human body in his art. He was particularly interested in the correlation between a human being's ultimate emotional states and their corporeal embodiment and actively studied human gestures in relation to radical emotions.

Throughout this work, Arefiev explored figures from classical paintings, using them to convey extreme emotions. Thus, he translated iconographical schemes of the Old Masters into scenes of everyday life, turning, for example, Rubens and Rembrandt's images of the Descent from the Cross into a mundane scene featuring a drunken man, or creating his "Antiquity series," full of radical emotions.

Using Aby Warburg's concept of *Pathosformeln*, or “formulas of pathos,” I argue that Arefiev, although independent of the German scholar, concluded that extreme emotions lead to specific bodily expressions. This prompted him to develop his own *Pathosformeln*, which became not only a crucial part of his artistic identity but also served him in his quest to create an artistic language capable of capturing the brutality of postwar realities.

Nudity and the Margins of Freedom in Armenian Art of the Soviet Era

Mane Mkrtchyan, Institute of Arts, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia

This paper examines representations of nudity in Armenian art during the Soviet era, with a particular emphasis on the cultural shifts of the 1960s. While earlier decades saw the strict enforcement of socialist realist ideals, the Khrushchev Thaw brought a partial loosening of ideological control, allowing for more personal and formally diverse approaches to the human body. In this context, the nude became not only an aesthetic choice but also a subtle expression of subjectivity, inner life, and artistic independence.

Soviet ideology imposed strict thematic constraints on artists across the USSR, including Armenia, prescribing loyalty to political ideals and collective narratives. Artists who diverged from this framework – such as Yervand Kochar and Gevorg Grigoryan (Giotto) – faced censorship, marginalization, or worse, as in the tragic case of Petros Konturajyan. However, in contrast to the rigid cultural oversight of Moscow or Leningrad, Armenia afforded its artists a degree of relative latitude. This enabled them to search for and develop distinctive, creative languages beyond Socialist Realism, a shift that was especially evident in the art of the 1960s to 1980s.

Focusing on representations of the nude by artists of different generations – such as Mher Abeghyan, Yervand Kochar, Gevorg Grigoryan, Minas Avetisyan,

Rudolph Khachatryan, Nikolay Nikoghosyan, and others – this paper traces how the nude could serve as a site where formal discipline, emotional depth, and quiet dissent coexisted. Whether through mythological framing, psychological insight, or sensual form, these works created alternative spaces of meaning outside official discourse. By situating these practices within the broader context of cultural production in the Soviet periphery, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions of artistic self-expression, public visibility, and alternative identities in the non-official art scenes of the USSR.

Panel III: **TRANSCENDING THE BORDER BETWEEN OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL CULTURES KEYNOTE LECTURE**

Chair: Natasha Fedorenko

The Space Between: Kazakh and Kyrgyz Art from the Late Soviet Period to Independence

Stephanie R. Dvareckas, Rutgers University

My project aims to elucidate what constitutes ethno-national representation in the visual arts in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, exploring how artists adapted the party doctrine of socialist realism while simultaneously subverting it. Socialist realism was the official party mandate for all Soviet republics beginning in the 1930s. Under Stalin, it was decided that art should be ‘socialist in content, national in form.’ Although this statement and, arguably, socialist realism in general were never clearly defined, an ambiguity that led to labeling works as ‘formalist’ or ‘naturalist’, allowing for the imprisonment and murder of artists for political reasons under the guise of justice. In a Central Asian context, this broadly meant disavowing Islam in the form of unveiling women, for instance, as well as reconfiguring gender roles by, for example, promoting women’s roles as workers. However, much of the artwork from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the 1960s and

onwards departs from these constraints of socialist realism. In another sense, the work connects to the state's new aims of achieving international solidarity, including strategies such as those art historian Susan Reid has called "new" or "socialist humanism." How, then, can we understand the artists and their work in this context? To what extent were they working alongside state goals and against them?

In my study of specific groups and their artworks, I have noted several common themes that are shared between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. One such theme is the shared experience of social life, often depicted in an aul or village setting. The second is nature, mountains, and the steppe in particular. The third is an interest in still life, especially compositions featuring melons and watermelons, as well as rugs and other textiles. This dimension of my research directly addresses these images, both in terms of their formal qualities and in highlighting the importance of iconography. Official guidance and institutions all encouraged a focus on the local, which acts as evidence of the transnational relevance of certain subjects. Reading the work iconographically allows for the slippages between policy and subversive meaning to be made visible. In discussing how these artists operated within certain constraints, I will also demonstrate how they challenged those parameters by pushing boundaries to the extent possible. This contributes to the ongoing debate on the degree of autonomy artists had in the Soviet Union. It also identifies new artists who have not been written about beyond a survey-level text, making their visual materials available to other researchers.

Photography as a Toggle Switch: Belarusian Official and Uncensored Publishing of the Late 1960s-1970s

Ala Pihalskaya, Institute of European Studies, University of Bremen

A deficit of machine typefaces for publishing since the 1930s was due to the policy of developing and using exclusively ‘Soviet’ typefaces. The Thaw period coincided with the period when photographic techniques became accessible and gained popularity, contributing to the reproduction of uncensored literature and enriching the methods of creating typefaces for book covers of official publishing houses.

Photography as a medium significantly altered the time-consuming practices of copying a modest set of samples for book cover design developed by the Department of New Typefaces at the All-Union Research Institute of Heavy Engineering. Instead of following the imposed samples as they were developed during the 1950s, artists, with the help of photography, created Cyrillic inscriptions based on typefaces from GDR and PPR (now Poland) magazines. Moreover, the use of photography by artists in their works created informal contacts and collaborations – not all artists owned sufficient photo equipment, and photo paper and other components had to be bought on the black market.

In my paper, I will examine routine artistic practices of lettering production for official and uncensored publishing in the context of the advancing institutionalization of artistic activities in Belarus (then the BSSR) during the Thaw and Stagnation periods. Based on interviews and analyses of book covers as visual representation (Hall), I will reconstruct the artistic practices of typeface production and juxtapose them with the official regulations and restrictions from that period. This will reveal the shifts in strategies and tactics of autonomy (de Certeau, Scott) gained in everyday life in the political context of Belarus during the 1960s-1970s. I will furthermore show how underground editions, often somewhat ascetic in visual and artistic means, contributed to changes in book cover design issued by official

publishing houses. This confirms that artists active in official and uncensored publishing were not only in touch, but sometimes also active in underground publishing.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

A Culture of Renunciation: Unofficial Poetic Practices in the Late Soviet Union

Ilja Kukuj, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

The phenomenon of Soviet underground literature has until now been examined primarily from historical, (literary) sociological, and anthropological perspectives. A philological approach has been limited mainly to the study of texts by individual authors or specific questions of poetics. The current state of research necessitates operational concepts for a comprehensive representation of artistic nonconformity, which can be gained by analyzing literary production and self-fashioning in everyday life. In this lecture, the concept of “renunciation” (Russian: “otkaz”) will be employed as an attempt to develop approaches for a synthetic representation of the Soviet underground from its inception in the post-Stalin era to its dissolution at the end of the 1980s, using the example of unofficial Russian-language poetry. From the system’s perspective, “otkaz” refers to restrictive and repressive mechanisms that exclude non-conformist authors from the official system of publishing, distributing, and discussing literary works. From the artists’ point of view, despite the diversity of non-conformist poetic languages, renunciation reveals a specific common cultural code: practices defined not so much in open protest as in active and conscious failure to meet systemic expectations. Such renunciation, the essence of which lies in not having to renounce something more valuable, not only describes all phenomena of turning away from conformity but also allows artistic and socio-political self-restraint to

be viewed as a practice of personal freedom in all its ambivalence. The lecture uses concrete examples to illustrate how renunciation, situated within the broad spectrum between the prototypical extreme positions of escapism and dissidence, embodies the essence of unofficial poetry as part of the Soviet underground culture.

Panel IV: **(INTER)SUBJECTIVITY OF THE SOVIET UNDERGROUND**

Chairs: Georg Sokolov and Manuela Putz

Conversing for Its Own Sake: Aleksandr Piatigorsky's Buddhist-Philosophical "Razgovor" between Ulan-Ude, Tartu, and the Emigration

Simone Guidetti, *University of Bamberg*

The proposed contribution examines the relevance of conversations as a model of dissidence and emancipation in the life and work of Soviet philosopher and novelist Alexander Piatigorsky (1929-2009). The concept of 'conversation' as a philosophical idea played a central role in Piatigorsky's literary-philosophical work and lifestyle, forming the basis of his philosophy of consciousness and his notion of emancipation from all constraints that threaten the independence of thought (whether linguistic, cultural, or political).

In 1971, Piatigorsky's and Merab Mamardashvili's speculative "Three Conversations on a Metatheory of Consciousness" [Три беседы о метатеории сознания], published in Lotman's semiotics journal *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* in Tartu, represented a provocative intellectual gesture towards the Soviet academic community, deliberately questioning the foundations of structuralism and semiotics. Piatigorsky's ideas about consciousness were the product of both his professional study of Buddhism and his private involvement with the community of the Buryat Buddhist teacher Bidia Dandaron (1914-1974) in Ulan-

Ude, which began in 1964. Following the pressure of the authorities and Dandaron's arrest in 1972, Piatigorsky emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1974.

Circulating also in samizdat under different forms, Piatigorsky's ideas impacted on the Soviet unofficial cultural scene from the very beginning (e.g., Jakov Druskin's famous study on Aleksandr Vvedenskii's poetry "Zvezda Bessmyslicy" [1973], applying Piatigorsky's and Mamardashvili's notions on Vvedenskii's absurdist text "A Certain Quantity of Conversations."

Piatigorsky's involvement with Radio Liberty since the 1970s, his philosophical work on consciousness, and his protracted novelistic projects (the first of which, years later, would result in his semi-autobiographical novel *The Philosophy of an Alley* [Философия одного переулка, 1989]) all manifested an existential need for a 'ceaseless conversation' [Непрекращаемый разговор, 2004] as an emancipatory exercise in conscious reflection that does not know single actors or subjective positions, but only reflexive thoughts.

Between Nostalgia and Soviet Contemporaneity: Temporality of the Underground Subject

Natasha Fedorenko, Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen (FSO)

In the 1970s, Anna Tarshis and Sergei Sigov, a couple from the peripheral Soviet underground, engaged in projects that combined artistic activity and research practices, inspired by the legacy of the historical avant-garde and Russian Futurism in particular. For instance, from 1969 to 1974, Tarshis worked on the Russian language textbook "Luboyaz." In 1978, Sigov compiled materials for a brochure about the ego-futurist poet Vasilisk Gnedov and published the samizdat newspaper *Listok*, in which Sigov contextualized his own poetry within the literary tradition of his Futurist predecessors. In my talk, I will situate the couple's interest

in research, dedicated to and inspired by the historical avant-garde and characterized by a revolutionary transformational impulse, within the broader historical context of the Stagnation period, famously marked by a lack of utopian aspirations. By exploring this contradiction, I wish to reveal how ideas and discourses that emerged in the 1910s were transformed in the 1970s and why they retained their relevance and subversive potential under completely different historical circumstances.

Unframed Consciousness, Embodied Texts: Pavel Ulitin and the Soviet Literary Underground of the 1960s

Daria Baryshnikova, Independent Researcher, Bochum

This paper examines the experimental prose of Pavel Ulitin (1918–1986), whose writings challenged the dominant cultural norms of the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Situated outside both the institutional centers of official and unofficial literary life, Ulitin’s work subverted conventions of realism through associative composition, blurred temporalities, and the dissolution of stable subjectivity – features that align his practice with international experimental movements of the 1950s–70s. Ulitin’s hand-bound books shared through intimate readings turned storytelling into a collaborative event shaped by voice, gesture, and memory. His practice offered an alternative mode of cultural production, distinct from both official publication channels and the circulation of samizdat.

Employing cognitive narratology, this paper examines how Ulitin’s texts employ a phenomenological mode of literary writing, aiming to represent consciousness as it is experienced. Ulitin’s fragmentary writing – similar to the cut-up technique of Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs – functions not merely as formal experimentation or subversion, but as a strategy to articulate lived experience fractured by censorship, ideological pressure, and personal trauma. His

narrative structures, organized by omissions and logical disruptions, reflect a rejection of plot-driven realism and its implicit ideological coherence. Through documentary fragments, overheard conversations, and recursive memory loops, Ulitin constructed immersive textual environments that express both individual cognitive states and collective longings for expressive freedom.

While Ulitin shares affinities with the broader Russian nonconformist search for avant-garde forms, his work resists easy categorization. Situated at the margins of literary culture, his writings forge links between the Soviet underground and global artistic experiments. By situating and simultaneously recontextualizing Ulitin's practice within the history of unofficial Soviet culture and transnational avant-garde movements, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of the "underground archipelago" of the period.

Spiritual Resilience and Aesthetic Dissent: Zenta Logina and Elīze Atāre's Alternative Artistic Identities During the Soviet Occupation of Latvia

Ieva Kalniņa, Art Academy of Latvia

This paper examines the alternative artistic strategies and spiritual approaches to life created by Latvian artists and sisters Zenta Logina (1908–1983) and Elīze Atāre (1915–1989) during the Soviet occupation, with a particular focus on the period from the late 1950s to the 1970s. Operating far from the Soviet Union's official art centers, Logina and Atāre constructed a distinct form of dissent rooted not in overt political confrontation, but in the cultivation of interiority, spiritual autonomy, and aesthetic resistance.

Rather than aligning themselves with sanctioned Soviet art institutions, both artists maintained a shared studio in two rooms of a communal flat, which became a site of quiet resilience and intellectual withdrawal. Their practices navigated a unique path between pre-war Latvian modernism and the repressed

currents of the historical avant-garde, while also engaging with contemporary unofficial ideas circulating through officially purchasable art magazines (from across the wider Soviet bloc) and samizdat materials. The latter included texts on yoga, esotericism, and alternative religious movements – sources that were unofficial, often prohibited, and culturally coded as marginal or dangerous by the Soviet authorities.

Through this lens, the paper examines how Logina and Atāre constructed alternative identities rooted in deliberately chosen isolation, sisterhood, and transcendent creative labor. Their mode of life represents a localized and gendered response to the broader Soviet everyday life, wherein resistance was enacted through self-discipline, silence, and the preservation of spiritual and artistic continuity. Drawing from their private archive and surviving artworks, I investigate how these women constructed an alternative worldview that challenged official hierarchies and reimagined the role of the artist in society, drawing on recent scholarship in feminist cultural theory and underground studies. Ultimately, the paper contributes to an understanding of peripheral underground patterns and demonstrates how unofficial art practices in Soviet Latvia operated in tension with, yet in creative dialogue with, both local traditions and global aesthetic currents.

Chairs: Ilja Kukuĵ and Isabel Wünsche

**(Unofficial) Russian and Armenian Poetry of the Stagnation Period:
Between Modernism and Postmodernism**

Hasmik Khechikyan, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

This paper examines the cultural parallels and divergences between Russia and Armenia during the 1970s by juxtaposing the literary environments of Leningrad and Yerevan through the lens of center–periphery dynamics. It offers an overview of the Leningrad underground scene and compares it to a group of Armenian poets who—while not identifying as underground—were nonetheless marginalized in various ways. Notably, this Armenian generation has since become central to the country’s contemporary literary canon.

Through a comparative analysis of Viktor Krivulin’s and Hovhannes Grigoryan’s poetry, I argue that Russian and Armenian literatures of the period independently developed postmodern tendencies despite the poets’ lack of direct engagement with postmodernist theory. Yet their strategies differ markedly. In Grigoryan’s *Slow Hours*, linear time becomes dysfunctional as the present continually bifurcates into past and future—a process that can be elucidated through Ursula Heise’s and Gilles Deleuze’s concepts of time. Krivulin, by contrast, transforms Mandelstam’s dialogic conception of time and culture into a rhizomatic poetic network, creating a textual space unbound by temporal or spatial limits. Typologically, Krivulin’s thought resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome, yet it emerges independently through his engagement with the Russian metaphysical tradition of Tyutchev, Mandelstam, Zabolotsky, and Trifonov. In this sense, his poetics represent not a theoretical imitation but a native response to the dictatorship and stagnation of late Soviet reality.

Alexei Khvostenko's "The Poem of Epigraphs" and Edward Estlin Cummings

Stanislav Savitski, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen

The art and literature of the Soviet underground cannot be reduced to the experience of the foreign neo-avant-garde or avant-garde movements. While nonconformists had a genuine interest in Western art and literature from the late nineteenth to the twentieth century, they existed in a distinct socio-cultural context. Most underground artists and writers were primarily focused on self-definition within their local context, rarely attempting to establish themselves in the London or New York art scenes. The intensity with which they, drawing on the traditions of the avant-garde and modernism, sought to develop their own artistic and literary experiences is only now being fully recognized through a detailed examination of the artistic life of the 1960s. In this regard, it is essential to describe more precisely how Soviet neo-avant-gardists assimilated the experience of the Western avant-garde while constructing their own artistic approach. A valuable case study in this process is Alexei Khvostenko's *The Poem of Epigraphs* (1965), in which he transforms the ideas of the American avant-garde classic Edward Estlin Cummings into a neo-avant-garde poetic form. Cummings was a significant influence on Khvostenko. He was regarded as a kindred spirit, on par with Velimir Khlebnikov, Henri Volokhonsky, Vsevolod Nekrasov, Igor Kholin, Jan Satunovsky, and other poets important to Khvostenko in the 1960s. However, Khvostenko did not merely follow Cummings' ideas – he also diverged from them in fundamental ways. His engagement with Cummings' work, his debates with the poet's ideas, and his reinterpretations of them played a crucial role in shaping his neo-avant-garde experiments and in inspiring his peers.

The Georgian Musical Avant-Garde and its Underground Networks

Alexander Jakobidze-Gitman, Universität Witten/Herdecke

This paper outlines the distinctive dynamics that shaped Georgian nonconformist music in the mid-twentieth century, arising from the interplay of political (Cold War), social (totalitarian society), and aesthetic (socialist realism) forces. It takes as its case study Mikheil Shugliashvili (1941–1996), the first Georgian composer to engage intensively with serial compositional techniques.

The infamous Zhdanov Decree of 1948, which accused leading Soviet Russian composers of idolizing contemporary Western “decadent” music and its bourgeois ideology, spurred local campaigns against “formalism in music” in all Soviet republics. With the official withdrawal of some of the themes of the 1948 decree, music in Soviet Russia – despite official adherence to the doctrine of socialist realism – was no longer required to embody any ethnic folk spirit. However, this was not the case with music production in the Soviet republics. In Georgia, for example, until almost the collapse of the Soviet Union, cultural authorities promoted works and composers who adhered to an Orientalist style modeled on nineteenth-century Russian music. Unofficial Georgian music emerged in opposition to these constraints.

Shugliashvili sought individual expression through engagement with contemporary Western music. While not overtly ideological, their music stands as a protest against the imposed artistic limitations – local extensions of central Soviet authority. His explorations represent a form of resistance expressed through unconventional, often provocatively nonconformist compositions. This paper examines the rare underground performances of Shugliashvili’s works in the 1970s and juxtaposes them with contemporary modes of promoting avant-garde music in Soviet Russia.

Beyond Moscow: Neo-Avant-Garde Practices of the Uktus School in the 1960s-1970s

Irina Riznychok, Constructor University Bremen

The paper examines the artistic practices of the Uktus School (1965–1974), a circle of artists and poets active in Sverdlovsk and Yeisk – peripheral Soviet cities isolated from major cultural centers and largely closed to foreigners between the Thaw and Stagnation periods. Members of the group experimented with conceptual visual art, poetry, art theory, and samizdat publishing, drawing inspiration from both the Russian avant-garde and Western modernism. Their engagement with these sources developed gradually through Eastern European journals, available Western books, and correspondence with collectors and avant-garde poets. Despite their innovative approach, the Uktus School remains on the margins of the established canon of Soviet unofficial art, due to unequal access to representation, entrenched hierarchies, and the loss of early issues of their samizdat journal *Number* (Nomer), the group's key project. In the 1990s, Anna Tarshis (1942–2014) and Sergei Sigov (1947–2014) sought to reconstruct the group's legacy, framing it as an early instance of conceptual art that predated Moscow Romantic Conceptualism.

I argue that such a comparison reinforces the problematic center–periphery model of Soviet unofficial culture, where Moscow is viewed as the dominant paradigm. Instead, the Uktus School should be understood as an independent phenomenon that combined local and Western influences. Drawing on early works by Tarshis, Sigov, and other members of the Uktus School, the paper moves beyond Moscow-centered comparisons to position the Uktus School within the context of unofficial art in the Urals and Eastern European neo-avant-garde practices – the context that was historically most closely aligned with the artists' own experiences and intellectual environment.

ROUNDTABLE & CONCLUDING DISCUSSION:

Moderation: Georg Sokolov

STATEMENTS

Jane A. Sharp, Rutgers University & Zimmerli Art Museum

We generally assume that the conditions for creating art in the Soviet Union, without a reliable market or a receptive audience, led to the isolation of the unofficial artist. Cold War narratives have, for the most part, dramatized the conflict and contrast between East and West, as well as the politics of cultural exclusion or capitulation. The underlying historical assumptions and biases of such narratives have distorted the complex interdependencies between visual form and institutional authority that emerged during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s. By contrast, I emphasize the interaction of artists and official action/policy/rhetoric. Many artists sought to engage with the wider public sphere, projecting their personal visions despite the threat of censorial reprisal; yet, their diverse strategies have never been fully incorporated into histories of modernism, in the USSR as in Europe and the US.

I raise questions regarding the coherence of form, particularly in abstract art (primarily painting), as a challenge to the limited, overdetermined view advanced internally (by Soviet critics) and espoused often by artists who sought to align themselves with what they may have assumed to be shared values with imagined audiences in the West. This question of coherence is dramatized in public presentations, especially by the Movement Group (Dvizhenie), whose strategies in the public sphere may have come close to what literary scholars have long understood as “Aesopian” speech. My presentation examines how, and to what extent, such duplicitous postures shape the distinctive visual culture of this group,

distinguishing it in remarkable yet unacknowledged ways from similar projects in Western Europe during the same decades (1960s-1970s).

Susanne Schattenberg, Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen (FSO)

1. Soviet dissent evolved from poetry. Poetry was the only (literary) genre that was (nearly) not contaminated by Stalinism that needed epic forms like novels, which were structured by the pattern of socialist realism. Poetry seemed to be more immune to the strict requirements of the Writers' Union.

2. From 1953 on, young poets, mainly students, rediscovered forgotten and prohibited pre-revolutionary poets like Velimir Khlebnikov. They were fascinated by the absurd or surrealistic form of using words to produce soundscapes. They “excavated” his work and other “forbidden fruits” in the repositories of the Lenin library in Moscow, where they began to copy them by hand. They also discovered Pasternak's and Mandelstam's poems; they re-read Mayakovsky and celebrated Pushkin's fairy tales.

3. Everywhere, poetry circles, official and unofficial ones, emerged. In Moscow, a group gathered around Leonid Tchertkov in the cocktail hall and in the “mansarde” of Galina Andreyeva, where they read first forgotten, then their own lyrics to each other. They began compiling the first booklets or “journals” of their works, which later came to be called “samizdat”. In Leningrad, young poets gathered around Anna Akhmatova, who taught them how to live and how to write.

4. Since “with politics,” everything was clear, the young poets neither wrote about nor discussed party or state matters. To “protest” meant to refrain from all official discourses and focus on the self as well as on emotions. As Vladimir Pomerantsev and Ilja Ehrenburg expressed it, they wanted sincerity and the expression of genuine romantic love, not love for machines and pleasure. They

replaced heroism with expressions of sadness, suffering, illness, and death, all banned as bourgeois and degenerated under Stalin. As Natalya Gorbanevskaya said: “Today’s politics – that is poetry”.

5. The inauguration of the Mayakovsky statue in 1958 led to spontaneous readings first of Mayakovsky’s poems, then of people’s own creations. This “Soviet Hyde Park” was reactivated in 1960, when, on Sundays and holidays, up to 15,000 people gathered to listen to poetry readings, only to be dispersed by October 1961. In 1965, the SMOGists attempted a revival, becoming even bolder and more absurd in their implementation of Khlebnikov, as evidenced by their claims: “Let us go barefoot and hot” or “Rus, you are kissed by frost.” However, they were also soon beaten up, arrested, and sentenced.

Klavdia Smola, Dresden University of Technology

Putin’s authoritarian regime led not only to public acts of artistic activism in Russia that have become famous worldwide – such as the performances by Pussy Riot – but also to an unprecedented growth of nonconformist art communities and cultural activities beyond large public spaces: in private apartments, courtyards of residential buildings, in the countryside, and in virtual spaces of the internet. In many of these initiatives, Soviet-era countercultural practices became a multifaceted resource for soft resistance to state power, serving as mnemonic allusion, a memory of alternative public spaces, and an experience of living and creating outside the mainstream. The reinvention of unofficial cultural practices from the 1950s to the 1980s under new political and technological conditions served as a medium of deterritorialization and an activity autonomous from the increasingly authoritarian regime between the 2000s and 2022. Through reflection on the (semi-)underground activities of the Soviet past, as well as, in many cases, their politicization, these non-conformist artistic productions constituted a form

of mnemonic dissidence. Moreover, by embedding this memory in the global art context, engaged artists made the Soviet underground a part of the transnational art community – with all its ambiguities – that has transcended geopolitical boundaries both within the post-Soviet space and beyond.

BIOGRAPHIES

Daria Baryshnikova is an independent researcher, based in Bochum. She defended her PhD dissertation on the representation of mind and mental processes in cut-up narratives across different cultural contexts at RWTH Aachen University in 2024. Her research interests include cognitive narratology, experimental literary forms, and intersections between visual art and literature. She has published on cut-ups in the works of W. S. Burroughs, B. S. Johnson, and Pavel Ulitin. Her current research explores unofficial Soviet literature and the performative, embodied dimensions of underground art practices, situating them within both Soviet and transnational avant-garde traditions.

Stephanie R. Dvareckas is a PhD candidate in Art History at Rutgers University and a Dodge Avenir Fellow at the Zimmerli Art Museum, where she works with the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union. There, she curated *The Bodied Implied: The Vanishing Figure in Soviet Art*, which presents over 130 works from 1970 to the present. Her research interests center on policy, cultural memory, and defense testing during the Soviet period, focusing on the relationships between the Global South, Central Asia, Latin America, and Africa from the 1960s to the present. Her work is supported by a Fulbright Scholars Program Fellowship (Kazakhstan, 2022-23), a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship from Harvard University's Davis Center (2019), and a Graduate Dean's Professional Development Award (2018). She holds an MA in Art History, Theory, and Criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she wrote her master's thesis, "Dialectics of the Soviet Avant-Garde in the First Exhibition of Ukrainian Nonconformist Art," and a BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, where she studied in the Studio for Interrelated Media (SIM) department.

Natasha Fedorenko is a PhD student at the University of Bremen and a research fellow at the Research Center for Eastern European Studies at the University of Bremen (FSO). Her upcoming dissertation is dedicated to the self-fashioning practices and artistic strategies of Anna Tarshis and Sergei Sigov, a Soviet unofficial artistic couple. She earned her BA in Journalism and MA in Cultural Studies at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, followed by an MA in Nationalism Studies at the Central European University in Vienna. Her research interests include Soviet subjectivities, discourse studies, and cultural history.

Simone Guidetti has been a research assistant at the University of Bamberg, Germany, since 2024. In 2022-2024, he was a graduate student at the graduate school Language & Literature, Munich, Class of Literature. He is also a doctoral candidate in Slavic studies (Munich, Bamberg, since 2022). His dissertation is titled “Arkadii Dragomoshchenko’s Poetic Reflexivity and the Leningrad Cultural Underground.” In 2021, he earned an MA in Slavic Studies from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany.

Alexander Jakobidze-Gitman is a research fellow and academic administrator at the University of Witten/Herdecke since 2013. His book *The Rising Phantasms: The Stalin Era in Post-Soviet Cinema* [Восстание фантазмов: сталинская эпоха в постсоветском кино] was published in 2015. His articles have appeared, or are about to be published, in journals such as *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, *Studies in East European Thought*, *Musica&Figura*, *History of Education*, and *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*. His main research areas include the influence of scientific thought on music during the Baroque and Romantic periods, and Soviet musical culture under the Cold War. His particular interests engage with the mechanism–vitalism debate, tacit knowledge, and the formation of collective

memory and identity. An accomplished pianist, he regularly gives lecture-recitals. In 2017, he was a research fellow at the University of Sheffield.

Ieva Kalniņa is an art historian presently engaged in her doctoral research on Diphthong: Zenta Logina and Elīze Atāre at the Art Academy of Latvia. Notably, she has authored the book *Movement: Višvaldis Ziedīns*, available in both Latvian and English editions. She holds a master's degree from the Department of Art History at the Art Academy of Latvia, where she conducted an in-depth study on "Non-traditional Expressions of Art in Latvia (1972–1984)." Her scholarly pursuits examine the intersections of art, culture, and politics during the Cold War.

Hasmik Khechikyan is in the final phase of her PhD studies, working under the supervision of Prof. Raoul Eshelman at the Institute of Slavic Studies at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. The working title of her dissertation is "Between Modernism and Postmodernism: The Poetry of the Soviet Stagnation Era in Russia and Armenia of the 1970s." She obtained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Armenian Philology from Yerevan State University in Armenia. She then pursued doctoral studies at the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences. She earned her first PhD in modern Armenian literature in 2010 with a dissertation focusing on Armenian modernism in the early twentieth century. Subsequently, she conducted, for three semesters, a research project on Armenian revolutionary futurism at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, the findings of which were published as part of a book she co-authored with Hrachya Saribekyan: *Some Aspects of Modernism in 20th Century Armenian Literature* (Yerevan, Edit Print - Actual Art, 2019. – 204 pp., in Armenian).

Aleksandr Kochevskii is an MA in Cultural Studies, a scholarship holder at Deutsche Sacharow Gesellschaft, and prepares his PhD project for Ruhr

University Bochum. His main research interests are historical reflections in the Soviet unofficial intellectual culture, with such special topics as the shaping identities within Third Wave emigrant circles, the use of Aesopian language as a stylistic device and a survival strategy, and gothic elements in the Soviet unofficial aesthetics. He also examines how Soviet intellectuals, scholars, and artists from the 1920s to the 1980s received Western European art history and theories of visuality. The principal authors whose legacy Kochekovskii studies are Leonid Batkin, Alexey Nekrasov, Igor Golomstock, Andrey Sinyavsky, and Vadim Sidur.

Ilja Kukuj is the Coordinator for Russian Language Studies at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany). He is the author of numerous publications on Soviet unofficial culture and the editor of several volumes on underground poetry, including Leonid Aronzon, Oleg Prokofiev, Anri Volokhonsky, and Pavel Zaltsman. He is a co-editor of *Wiener Slavistischer Almanach* and a member of the Editorial Board of the Project for the Study of Dissidence and Samizdat (Toronto).

Mane Mkrtchyan is a senior researcher at the Institute of Arts of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences and Deputy Director of the National Theatre of Armenia. She holds MA and PhD degrees in Art History, and previously served as Deputy Director of the Folk Art Museum and the Hamazgayin Theatre. She has taught at the Armenian State Pedagogical University and has participated in numerous national and international conferences. Mkrtchyan is the author of over 20 scientific articles and the monograph *Symbolism: Echoes in Armenian Art (Late 19th Century – Early 20th Century)*.

Ala Pihalskaya is a research fellow at the Institute of European Studies, University of Bremen. Between 2006 and 2019, she worked as a lecturer in visual communication, visual anthropology, and graphic design history at the European

Humanities University (Vilnius) and conducted workshops on participatory research and design. In 2013, she earned her PhD degree from the Vilnius Academy of Arts with a dissertation titled “Forms of Everyday Representation in Belarusian Posters of 1966-1980.” She left Belarus in 2022 for political reasons and has held fellowships at the University of Bremen, the University of Warsaw, and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Manuela Putz is an academic administrator at the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen. Her research and archival projects focus on the history of dissent, alternative literature, and unofficial art in the Soviet Union after Stalin. She is the author of *Kulturraum Lager* (2019), which analyzes the camp experiences of Soviet dissidents, and is currently working on an edition of correspondence between the Ukrainian poet Vasyl Stus and the Western human rights activist Christa Bremer.

Irina Riznychok is an adjunct researcher at Constructor University Bremen. She received her Master’s degree in History of Art from Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg, Russia, and worked as a curator at the Ekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts from 2010 to 2023. In 2023, she was awarded a Hans Koschnick Special Scholarship at the Research Centre for East European Studies (FSO) at the University of Bremen to complete her PhD thesis “The Third Wave of Russian Artistic Emigration to New York: Strategies, Exhibitions and Reception” (submitted in 2024). Her current postdoc project seeks to re-situate the legacy of artists from the Ural within the history of Russian/Soviet art and the neo-avant-garde histories.

Nare Sahakyan is an art historian, curator, and researcher at the Ashot Johannisyan Research Institute in the Humanities in Yerevan, Armenia. She

received her MA degree from the American University of Beirut, where she defended her thesis, “The Late Soviet Charm of Kantianism: Wilhelm Matevosyan’s Art History.” Since 2021, she has taught several art history courses at the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts. For the past five years, she has conducted research at the Johannissyan Institute as part of the Culture and Modernization project. Her research interests include the history of the discipline of art history and the formation of Armenian studies in Eastern Armenia.

Stanislav Savitski works in the research fields of intellectual history of Russian/Soviet Modernism and Post-Modernism, Soviet Nonconformism, Contemporary Art, and the intellectual history of garden culture. His books include *Malevich’s Roly-Poly: View from Saint Petersburg on Contemporary Art of 2010s* [Колобок Малевича: взгляд из Петербурга на современное искусство 2010-х гг.] (2021); *A Private Person: Lidya Ginsburg in the Late 1920s & Early 1930s* [Частный человек: Лидия Гинзбург в конце 1920-х и начале 1930-х гг.] (2014); *The Walker’s Self-Help* [Самоучитель прогулок] (2012); *The Underground: History & Cultural Mythologies of Leningrad’s Unofficial Literature* [Андерграунд: история и мифы ленинградской неофициальной литературы] (2002) and others. He was a visiting professor and a research fellow at Ca’ Foscari University, Venice; University of Freiburg; Grinnell College; Ruhr University of Bochum; University of Helsinki; University of Milano; University Paris 3 – La Sorbonne Nouvelle.

Susanne Schattenberg is Director of the Research Centre for East European Studies and teaches Russian and Soviet history at the University of Bremen. She is the author of *Brezhnev: The Making of a Statesman* (2022) and is currently finishing her book on Natalya Gorbanevskaya, poet and human rights activist.

Jane A. Sharp is Professor in the Department of Art History at Rutgers University and also Research Curator of the Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union at the Zimmerli Art Museum, where she has curated over 20 exhibitions. She has published widely on the historical avant-garde within the Russian empire and now focuses on the unofficial art of the late Soviet period. Her first book, *Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde, 1905-14*, won the Robert Motherwell Prize from the Dedalus Art Foundation. *Thinking Pictures: The Visual Field of Moscow Conceptualism* acted as a catalogue for her exhibition, drawn from the Dodge Collection held at the Zimmerli Art Museum (September 6-December 31, 2016). This exhibition served as a departure point for a re-curated show held at the National Museum of Estonian Art in 2022. Dr. Sharp is currently completing a book on Thaw-era abstraction in the former USSR while in residence at the Institute for Advanced Study (2025-26).

Klavdia Smola is Professor of Slavic Literatures at Dresden University of Technology. She was a visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, at the University of Constance, and an Assistant Professor at the University of Greifswald. She authored *Types and Patterns of Intertextuality in the Prose of Anton Chekhov* (2004, Otto Sagner, in German) and *Reinvention of Tradition: Contemporary Russian-Jewish Literature* (2023, Academic Studies Press). She (co-)edited, among others, *The Oxford Handbook of Soviet Underground Culture* (OUP, 2024, with Mark Lipovetsky, Tomáš Glanc, Maria Engström, and Ilja Kukuj); *(Counter-)Archive: Memorial Practices of the Soviet Underground* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024; with Ilya Kukulin and Annelie Bachmaier); “(Multi)national Faces of Socialist Realism: Beyond the Russian Literary Canon” (special issue of the journal *Slavic Review*, CUP, 2022, with Evgeny Dobrenko); “Jewish Underground Culture

in the late Soviet Union” (special issue of the journal *East European Jewish Affairs*, Francis&Taylor, 2018); “Russia – Culture of (Non-)Conformity: From the Late Soviet Era to the Present” (special issue of the journal *Russian Literature*, Elsevier, 2018, with Mark Lipovetsky); *Postcolonial Slavic Literatures after Communism* (Peter Lang, 2016, with Dirk Uffelmann); *Jewish Spaces and Topographies in East-Central Europe: Constructions in Literature and Culture* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014, in German, with Olaf Terpitz), and *Eastern European Jewish Literatures of the 20th and 21st Centuries: Identity and Poetics* (Peter Lang, 2013). Her forthcoming book, *The Art of Soft Resistance: Reinventing the Soviet Underground in Putin's Russia*, is published by Cambridge University Press.

Georg Sokolov is a research associate and PhD candidate at Constructor University Bremen. Since 2023, he has been working on his doctoral thesis, “A Field of Tension: The Genesis of Leningrad Nonconformist Art,” as a member of the joint research training group “Between Avant-Garde and Nonconformism: Soviet Artists and Their Alternative Practice between the Thaw and Stagnation,” which includes researchers from Constructor University and Bremen University. He graduated from St. Petersburg State University with a specialist degree in 2013 and worked as a curator of the Russian drawing collection at the Hermitage Museum (2013–22). His publications include the books *The Unofficial Art of Leningrad: A Circle of Freedom* [Неофициальное искусство Ленинграда. Круг свободы] (2021) and *The Painterly Collection of Alexander Andruschenko* [Живописная коллекция Александра Андрущенко] (2022). He is organizing the independent research initiative, “Soviet Art Seminar” (established in 2019), and is a member of the Russian Art & Culture Reconsidered Group. He was a finalist for the Andrey Bely Prize (2024) and the Zverev Art Prize (2024).

Isabel Wünsche is Professor of Art and Art History at Constructor University Bremen since 2001. She specializes in European modernism, the avant-garde movements, and abstract art. Her book publications include *Biocentrism and Modernism* (Ashgate 2011/Routledge 2016), *Kunst & Leben. Michail Matjuschin und die russischen Avantgarde in St. Petersburg* (Böhlau 2012), *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory* (Routledge 2012, with Paul Crowther), *The Organic School of the Russian Avant-Garde: Nature's Creative Principles* (Ashgate 2015/Routledge 2018), *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle* (Brill 2016, with Tanja Malycheva), *Practices of Abstract Art: Between Anarchism and Appropriation* (Cambridge Scholar 2016, with Wiebke Gronemeyer), *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context* (Routledge 2018), *Bauhaus Diaspora and beyond: Transforming Education through Art, Design and Architecture* (Melbourne University Press, Sydney Power Publications 2019, with Philip Goad, Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Harriet Equist), and *100 Years On: Revisiting the First Russian Art Exhibition of 1922* (Böhlau 2022, with Miriam Leimer).

CONTACT INFORMATION

In alphabetical order.

Daria Baryshnikova <i>Independent Researcher, Bochum</i>	
Stephanie R. Dvareckas <i>Rutgers University</i>	
Natasha Fedorenko <i>Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen</i>	
Simone Guidetti <i>University of Bamberg</i>	
Alexander Jakobidze-Gitman <i>University of Witten/Herdecke</i>	
Ieva Kalniņa <i>Art Academy of Latvia</i>	
Hasmik Khechikyan <i>Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich</i>	
Aleksandr Kochekovskii <i>Bochum University / Deutsche Sacharow Gesellschaft</i>	
Ilja Kukuļ <i>Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich</i>	
Mane Mkrtchyan <i>Institute of Arts, Armenian National Academy of Sciences</i>	
Ala Pihalskaya	

<i>Institute of European Studies, University of Bremen</i>	
Manuela Putz <i>Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen</i>	
Irina Riznychok <i>Constructor University Bremen</i>	
Nare Sahakyan <i>Asbot Johannissyan Research Institute in the Humanities, Yerevan</i>	
Stanislav Savitski <i>Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen</i>	
Susanne Schattenberg <i>Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen</i>	
Jane A. Sharp <i>Rutgers University & Zimmerli Art Museum</i>	
Klavdia Smola <i>Dresden University of Technology</i>	
Georg Sokolov <i>Constructor University Bremen</i>	
Isabel Wünsche <i>Constructor University Bremen</i>	

