



Antje Kempe, Beáta Hock, Marina Dmitrieva (Eds.)

# Universal – International – Global

Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe



# Das östliche Europa: Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte

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and Ada Raev  
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Antje Kempe/Beata Hock (Hg.): Universal – International – Global

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# UNIVERSAL – INTERNATIONAL – GLOBAL

Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe

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ANTJE KEMPE / MARINA DMITRIEVA

## Introduction

### Global or International? Reconsidering Socialist Art Histories

“If we embark on the global study of art, we have to give up any privileged point of reference. The pure play of exchanges, connections, and influences will hardly give us answers we would need”, wrote Jan Białostocki in his article *A Comparative History of World Art, Is It Possible?*<sup>1</sup> Białostocki’s text reviews new methodological approaches discussed some three years before at the 1979 congress of the International Committee of Art History (Comité International d’Histoire de l’Art / CIHA) in Bologna. The author proposed that art history should tackle art from non-European regions in relevant ways and within the framework of existing art history.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, Białostocki also contemplated what changes are possible in art history related to fostering novel topics and the very meaning of notions such as ‘art’ and ‘history’. He thus posed the following questions: “To what degree can we actually assume universality of art history? Do we mean the same discipline, do we formulate identical or similar premises related to its geographic and chronological content when we use the term ‘art history’ in San Francisco, London, Sofia, or New Delhi?”<sup>3</sup> Here, Białostocki virtually addresses the same methodological dilemmas and objectives that came to shape art historical writing since a global turn in the 2000s that has emphasized non-European cultures, engagement of various regions, and asymmetries in the writing, framing, and exhibiting of non-Western artifacts. In this, scholars have discussed the phenomena of mobility, migration, and circulations of artists and objects.<sup>4</sup>

The 1990s are often regarded in this context as an important watershed for the examination, evaluation, and reworking of relevant disciplinary concepts and objectives; at the same time, the decade also marked the collapse of Soviet rule over East-Central Europe. The exhibitions such as *Les Magiciens de la Terre* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989), *The Other Story* (Hayward Gallery, London, 1989/1990) and the *3rd Havana Biennial* (1989),

1 BIAŁOSTOCKI 1982, 210.

2 Białostocki refers to the common practice of non-Western art being addressed by separate university department(s), or being compartmentalized in separate volumes in survey books such as the *Pelican History of Art* (1953–1958) or Mikhail Alpatov’s *Vseobshchaya istoriya iskusstva* [General History of the Arts] (1949–1955).

3 BIAŁOSTOCKI 1982, 207.

4 A host of publications addressed these crucial questions from the mid-2000s on: ELKINS 2007. – ZIJLMANS / DAMME 2008. – JUNEJA 2011. – KAUFMANN / DOSSIN / JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2015. – MATTOS AVOLESE / CONDURN 2017. – BACHMANN / KLEIN / MAMINE / VASOLD 2017.

which had just become topical, set out to counteract ethnocentric practices within the contemporary art world, opening it up to a more global scale. Nevertheless, this focus on the 1990s can and has been questioned by remembering earlier phases of global interaction and the discipline's historiography. In one of the initial outcomes of a global opening process, the 2008 volume *World Art Studies*, edited by Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, Ulrich Pfisterer refers to the very "beginnings" of 'global' art history outlined in *Weltkunstgeschichte*, as coined by prominent representatives of the Vienna School of Art History, including Julius von Schlosser and Alois Riegl, or later the German art historian Oskar Beyer. Pfisterer – as well as Birgit Mersmann and Joseph Imorde in their remarks on the museum and on institutional and conceptual orientations of a world art history in the process of emerging – indicates that a turn to non-European artifacts as parameters for comparison questions the tenacity of essential disciplinary tools such as period style, historical canon, or the conceptualization of artworks as heritage.<sup>5</sup> The attention of scholars like Beyer in his book *Welt-Kunst. Von der Umwertung der Kunstgeschichte* has been placed less on the order of cultural-geographical structures and more on an opening up to other methodological approaches to understanding social and cultural conditions of creation and production of artistic works.<sup>6</sup> In this ongoing historiographical and disciplinary inquiry, the legacy of Josef Strzygowski as an early critic of a strong Eurocentric orientation of art history has been widely discussed. While Strzygowski proposed a polyphonic, cyclical art history encompassing artistic phenomena from Arabian and Asian contexts, he also connected his approaches with a paradigm of racial determination.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, scholars trained in Graz and Vienna adapted his approach of a polyphonic art history, in which each element of this polyphony was based on an original, singular and essential core trait, in the new Eastern European states that emerged after World War I as a way of defining and legitimizing their unique art histories.

Therefore, the initial questioning of universally understood patterns through the inclusion of non-European cultures has been rather dispersed and complex in questioning universalism as a legacy of the Enlightenment. However, it has led to a productive methodological opening and a preliminary negotiation of artistic developments and productions. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a departure from basic collectivities such as 'art' and 'history'. The discipline thus fell into a crisis accompanied by a still ongoing process of reflection and exploring disciplinary approaches/boundaries to overcome

5 PFISTERER 2008. – On the concept and orientation of *Weltkunstgeschichte*, see also MERSMANN 2014, 329–344. – IMORDE 2017.

6 BEYER 1923.

7 This was essential to the book *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften* in 1923. STRZYGOWSKI 1923. On Strzygowski and his approach, see PFISTERER 2008. – REES 2012, particularly 37 f., 46. – VASOLD 2017. On the concept and orientation of *Weltkunstgeschichte* see also MERSMANN 2014, 329–344. – IMORDE 2017.

Western and hegemonic manifestations in art history. An increasingly pluralistic particularity displaced the universal.

## QUESTIONING COLD WAR BIPOLARITY

Taking 1989 too readily as a threshold, however, might insinuate that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the bipolar world order, the way for globalization was suddenly paved. Such a perception tends to foreground a new dominant division between the global South and the global North, replacing the earlier East/West geopolitical binary. This view reduces the Cold War to a bipolar confrontation that ignores other actors, primarily cultural interdependencies. The text by Białostocki quoted at the beginning of this introduction shows that there were efforts, calling for more global dimensions on an international stage, to overcome Western domination and a national framing of art history. James Mark, Arting Kalinovsky and Steffi Marung have already pointed out that “the histories of Socialism in Europe rarely take into consideration how the trajectories in other world regions and transregional connections are part of their histories, too.”<sup>8</sup>

The assumption that a preoccupation with the former colonial world was a new post-1989 phenomenon overlooks and neglects former endeavors in the Eastern and Western hemispheres that had moved in the same direction, among them the exceptional presentation of the African collection at the Völkerkunde Museum in Leipzig, today the Grassi Museum. Perhaps for the very first time in museological history, the artifacts on display were not divided according to ethnological criteria. Instead, European modern art and works from non-European areas stood side by side.<sup>9</sup> Also, journals such as the Czechoslovakian *Nový Orient* (since 1945) and its corresponding English-language version, *New Orient Bimonthly*, exhibited and published art from around the world, displaying an example of the assumed universal language of art. At around the same time, a wave of biennials, including the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (founded in 1955) and the first Biennale for Mediterranean Countries (first held in 1955), organized by Spain, Syria, and non-aligned states, were held and promoted as instruments of cultural policy. Such events can be interpreted as a calculated cosmopolite exhibition policy looking beyond

8 MARK / KALINOVSKY / MARUNG 2020, 3. Also other authors have briefly pointed out this dimension of entanglement. See RAMPLEY et al. 2012. – JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2017.

9 On the politically-ideologically driven yet peculiarly pioneering mission of the Museum for Ethnology in Leipzig (Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, today the Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig), see also SCHORCH 2018. In discussing the exhibition *Völker Australiens und Ozeaniens* (1970), Schorch comments on how this “Marxist museology” was unique in Europe in that it addressed the colonial past and current anti-colonial struggles. See also TCHIBOZO 2017.

the binary of the First and Second World.<sup>10</sup> Also, contemporary museum practices that collected modern art from India or Latin America took the challenge of exhibiting art from non-European regions while framing their shows with the topical issues of anti-colonialism and fights for independence.<sup>11</sup> Of particular interest is how it became evident that the mentioned museums and collections became places to come into contact with contemporary art for instance from India or the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> A first glimpse of this dynamic was provided by a study by Olga Nefedova. She drew attention to exhibitions of modern art from Iraq that were held in Moscow, Baku, and Odessa in the late 1950s based on a bilateral agreement of the Soviet Union and Iraq to foster cultural exchange. While the exhibitions received great interest, the author showed there was a range of opposing opinions on them, as evidenced on entries in the exhibition guest books. As Nefedova points out, national traditions and Socialist Realism were the main points of reference for the reception of this modern Iraqi art.<sup>13</sup> Further contact points were the mentioned Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts and the Intergrafik Triennale in Berlin, which was founded in 1965 by the Association of [East] German Artists and strongly dominated by the political and aesthetic dimensions of Socialist Realism to show alternative formations of art. As Jérôme Bazin highlighted in his study on the art geography of Communist Europe, realist art was equipped with references to local space and to an assumed universal art that produced “a special kind of internationalism” through the traveling of images.<sup>14</sup>

This presents the question of how far these achievements were reflected and adapted in study, writing, and narratives of art history in the Socialist Bloc. Are the relationships shown here to be understood as a process largely of imagined communities connected by a universal language of Socialist Realism, as mentioned by Bazin? In this respect, we can ask whether Socialist Realism, which even in Socialist countries was often not the main and determining style of art, was really the core of a universal language or was rather supposed to still convey the ideal of Graeco-Roman antiquity and 19<sup>th</sup>-century art of Realism as common for all European art. Art historical and aesthetic borders thus would not be changed and the search for and claim of universality can be understood as fig leaves for a manifestation of Eurocentric patterns.

Wanting to embrace the cultures of the so-called Third World and the decolonizing world has had its specific dilemmas. One of these is the crucial question of whether the

10 Keynote lecture by Anthony Gardner at the conference *Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary: Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe* (Leipzig, 23–25 November 2017).

11 WILLE 2019. – NEFEDOVA 2019.

12 See WILLE 2019.

13 NEFEDOVA 2019.

14 BAZIN 2014, 42, 43–48. For further insights see: BAZIN / DUBOURG GLATIGNY / PIOTROWSKI 2016.

above-listed exhibitions and other comparable projects simply aestheticized and displayed the work of distant cultures or made conscious attempts to subvert the illusion of Eurocentric superiority in the field of artistic representation. A possible and frequent error totalizes the superpower rivalry between the First and Second Worlds by adopting a simplified scheme of Americanization versus Sovietization. The Third World becomes reduced to a mere field of conflicting claims for political and economic influence and not as diverse groups of actors. Translated into the realm of the high arts, this binary model suggests an equally simplistic view of the Cold War as a rivalry between two universalizing myths: one governed by Modernism and the other by Socialist Realism – a concept that has been critically negotiated in recent years.<sup>15</sup> However, the slowly emerging connections, the cultural and artistic relationships – for instance between Cuba and Angola, or India and Eastern European states, as expressed in architecture, graphics, and exhibitions – erode this ‘bipolar’ logic.<sup>16</sup>

### QUESTIONING ‘SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM’

While we can note a comprehensive discussion about the artistic production of Socialist Europe and its framing in narratives, art historiography was until recently only partly visible in this discourse. A series of conferences going back to the initiative of Krista Kodres and Marina Dmitrieva and organized by the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, the Chair of Art History of Eastern Europe at the Humboldt University of Berlin, and the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) shifted scholarly attention from art practice to the writing of art history by pointing to its theoretical underpinnings, methodologies, and legacies. The first event, *Art History and Socialism(s) after World War II: The 1940s until the 1960s*, was hosted by the Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, in October 2016.<sup>17</sup> This opening scholarly meeting focused on the first postwar decades. It examined the heritage left behind by ‘Socialist’ art historians and the institutions they worked at, the exhibitions they organized, the academic texts they produced, and the local discourses they derived from the Marxist-Leninist aesthetics handed down by Moscow. The second event, *Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary*, from which the present volume emerges, took place a year later, at the GWZO in Leipzig.<sup>18</sup> A third conference,

15 SEGAL / SCOTT-SMITH / ROMIJN 2012. – LANGE / HILDEBRANDT / PIETRASIK 2020.

16 Nadine Sieger at the congress *Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary: Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe* (Leipzig, 23–25 November 2017).

17 KODRES / JÕEKALDA / MAREK 2019.

18 *Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary: Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe* (Leipzig, 23–25 November 2017) <https://artist.net/archive/16708>.

organized by Katja Bernhardt, took place in January 2020 at the Humboldt University of Berlin, with the title *Marxism(s) in Art Historiography*.<sup>19</sup> With the present publication, we are thus contributing to exploring the historiography of Eastern European art history as a research field that has developed in the last decades.<sup>20</sup>

The Leipzig conference called for revisiting ‘universal art history’ (*Всеобщая история искусств*) and *Weltkunstgeschichte* as they were introduced in the countries of the Socialist Bloc under the aegis of Socialist Internationalism. It explored the possibility of identifying alternative starting points of global art history and world art studies: branches that have broadened our discipline’s geographical and methodological scope in recent years. Rossen Djagalov’s book *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds* was published literally while we were writing this introduction, and we were glad to discover that the author took a similar approach in narrating the story of cultural relations between the Second and the Third Worlds. In Djagalov’s view, Soviet Internationalism profoundly shaped Cold War-era cultural alliances between these world regions aspiring for a degree of independence from Western formations and, thereby, permitted the drawing up of an alternate genealogy of contemporary post-colonial studies.<sup>21</sup>

It is well known that being part of the Soviet sphere of influence demanded a great degree of uniformity across different countries regarding the administration of artistic life and the general nature of art-critical and historical discourses. However, belonging to the Bloc also involved an enforced allegiance between ‘friendly states’ across continents in the name of ideological solidarity between peoples struggling for common goals. The transfers and exchanges resulting from this kind of Socialist Internationalism have only started to receive scholarly attention, although they significantly shaped both the Socialist world and beyond during the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> The Leipzig conference suggested a tentative link between internationalism as a political and cultural diplomatic principle and the frameworks for writing and teaching art history that were promoted in Socialist times.

19 *Marxism(s) in Art Historiography* (Berlin, 31 January–02 February 2020) <https://arthist.net/archive/20793>.

20 Related publications include BORN / JANATKOVA / LABUDA 2004. – AZATYAN 2009. – BAKOŠ 2010. – RAMPLEY et al. 2012. – BORN 2013. – BERNHARDT / KEMPE 2015. – DMITRIEVA / KEMPE 2015. – BARTLOVÁ 2016. – MAREK / PLUCHAŘOVÁ-GRIGIENĖ 2016.

21 DJAGALOV 2020, esp. 3–31. Noteworthy in this context is also the volume *Socialism Goes Global. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization*, edited by James Mark and Paul Betts, Oxford University Press 2022, which appeared during the edition of our book. In that volume one of the chapters is dedicated to the cultural entanglements between the Soviet Union and the Third World. Also Kerstin Schenkweiler and Lena Geuer started to research the topic of global GDR in recent time.

22 See for instance BABIRACKI / JERSILD 2016.

A question emerged and gained importance in this correlation: How did art historians develop and practice art history within the frame of national art histories under Soviet hegemony and beyond? Does the Socialist idea of solidarity and internationalism as overarching shared ideologies interfere with the allegedly universal notion of nationally framed art history?

The present collection of essays is based on the Leipzig conference and seeks to call into question the perception that the Cold War was a conflict-ridden relationship between only two major protagonists. With this intention, we agree with Noemi De Haro García, Patricia Mayayo, and Jesús Carrillo, the editors of *Making Art History in Europe after 1945*, who point out in the introduction of their book an urgent need to overcome the East/West dyad even within European art history itself and give space to multiple authorial voices.<sup>23</sup> It is necessary to add that the Eastern Bloc, or Second World, cannot be examined as a single homogenous entity. Here, too, the approach by Steffi Marung, Uwe Müller, and Stefan Troebst interprets the Eastern Bloc as a historical formation – an experiment, even – determined by entangled national, transregional, and international dimensions of competition.<sup>24</sup> While working on this book, the editors asked themselves again and again: Is it worth critically questioning such concepts as Universalism or Socialist Internationalism, which have suffered from the dust of time and propagandistic misuse, in order to discuss them as the premonition discourse of global art history? What is hidden behind the central product of Socialist art historiography – the universal (general) art history: only the hegemonic claim? Or, at the same time, a non-hierarchical inclusion of non-European cultures within the spectrum of disciplinary interests? In this book, we aim to shed light on the complexities of the Socialist world, which is bound up in a national/domestic and hemispheric framework. Picking up on the term ‘internationalism’, we ask if Socialist globalization was more than a state-initiated project, as Mark, Kalinovsky, and Marung argued in their book concerning alternative globalization as seen from a more political-historical perspective. In this respect, we do not position ‘universal’, ‘international’, or ‘global’ as successive paradigms or opposites; however, we are interested in examining them as interwoven trajectories that shape art history after World War II. We aim to interrogate whether internationalism as an ideological, cultural-political buzzword provides a conventionally considered opposite to a national paradigm. Did it help to develop translocal and transregional approaches to art history as a ‘common plural’ in the Socialist countries? How far has this orientation changed and negotiated the understanding of universalism as a shared art historical knowledge system during that time? We thus must reflect on the complexity, diversity, and disparity of art histories in Eastern and Central Europe and their entanglements in and beyond the region.

23 DE HARO GARCÍA / MAYAYO / CARRILLO 2020.

24 MARUNG / MÜLLER / TROEBST 2019.



Taking notions of universalism, internationalism, and the global as a point of departure in the examination and comparison of practices, ideas, and processes of institutionalization in Socialist art historiography, we recognize possible pitfalls which might occur with the use of such terms. For instance: How far can we analyze Socialist art historiographies through the lens of our current understanding and conceptualization of a global art history, which is shaped mostly by post-colonial studies? In the aftermath of 1989 and in the context of the broad reception of Edward Said's study on Orientalism, the terms 'Other' and 'Otherness' were applied to Eastern Europe in order to highlight the inequalities of perception, distribution, and recognition of cultural phenomena and knowledge production.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Piotr Piotrowski, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, and many others pointed out that it is challenging to adapt post-colonial theories to this particular historical context.<sup>26</sup> While Joyeux-Prunel suggested that post-socialist art history requires a reading aware of the cultural and mental gap created by decades of totalitarian regimes,<sup>27</sup> Piotrowski criticized the reproduction of a simplification and homogenization of European conditions by these post-colonial perspectives, as they consider Europe as an entity and do not take into account heterogeneities and intercontinental differentiations. He also argued that Russians and Poles, despite their cultural and historical differences, move in a similar episteme and possess some form of kinship. Therefore, that relationship is marked by political hegemony but no internal 'Otherness.' Instead, he proposed the need to expand and integrate art from Eastern Europe into alter-globalistic art history by referring to the art historical hierarchical term of the periphery as a driving force to rethink and rewrite artistic production beyond Westernness.<sup>28</sup> In this context, he ironically re-used one of the most influential phrases of the Communist Manifesto that called for international response: "Peripheries of the World, Unite!"<sup>29</sup>

When we focus on internationalism, we also have to ask ourselves how far we can use this notion for critical readings of Socialist art history. The *Lexikon der Kunst*, an ambitious publication project in five volumes produced by East German art historians, contains an entry on *Internationalismus und Kunst (Internationalism and Art)*. The brief passage is divided into two parts: The first section, drawing on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, presents internationalism as the fundamental ideological principle governing the

25 KIOSSEV 1995. In regard to this paradigm see also TODOROVA 2005. – ȚICHINDELEANU 2011. – TŁOS-TANOVA 2017. – ANNUS 2016. – ANDRÁS 2004. – HORNYIK 2017. – KOŁODZIEJCZYK / ŚANDRU 2017. – PIOTROWSKI 2018.

26 On Eastern Europe critique in a global world, see ANDRÁS 2017. – JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2017, 434. – HOCK 2018.

27 JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2017, 434.

28 PIOTROWSKI 2018, 35–38.

29 PIOTROWSKI 2018, 9–30.

revolutionary working class. The second relates internationalism to the notion of the nation as a dialectical unity of national and international, characterized by alternating processes of appropriation and demarcation, competition and cooperation. It describes how in the process of bourgeois exploitation of the world market, national one-sidedness in cultural production is becoming more and more impossible. The economy is thus declared the primary field or, better, the engine of exchange. However, the closing sentences of the entry stress: “This tendency toward internationalization is, however, not synonymous with the disappearance of unique natural features or regional peculiarities consciously expressed in the arts.”<sup>30</sup>

This sentence is remarkable, as it slightly changes Marx’s approach from a national to a regional orientation. Originally, Marx’s internationalism was determined by a national framing because, he argued, proletarians had to win the class struggle in their countries before fighting global inequalities caused by capitalist exploitation. We might say that Marx oversaw the global dimension of capitalism and limited his approach to the proletariat of industrial societies. Under Stalin, the term internationalism changed from having a proletarian connotation, based on the idea of egalitarian cooperation between working classes of various countries, to a more political orientation which, in practice, meant Soviet domination.<sup>31</sup> The new national orientation became manifest when Stalin disbanded the Third International (1919–1943) in order to enforce ‘Socialism in one country’, underlining the necessity to fulfil the revolution in Russia first. Interpretation of the term was not stable and involved a dichotomy between a more ‘national,’ state-oriented alignment and an ‘international’ one under the umbrella of Soviet-dominated ideology.<sup>32</sup> The publication history of the *Lexikon der Kunst* may be an example of those interwoven spatial dimensions, as its individual volumes were first published between 1969 and 1978 and were strongly oriented toward a ‘German national culture’ (*deutsche Nationalkultur*) as it was formulated and outlined in various papers of historians and art historians, wherein ‘national’ is taken to mean related to the art located within the borders of both German states. However, a second edition was equipped with a more global direction, encompassing other regions and their artistic productions.<sup>33</sup>

However, the question of shared national traditions in the context of a Marxist Socialist world art was reflected in GDR research also in other fields. For example, Harald Olbrich, who taught at Humboldt University in Berlin, asked in an essay in the leading journal *Bildende Kunst* about the relationship between the national and the international. In

30 INTERNATIONALISMUS UND KUNST 1970, 447 f. (Translation by the authors.)

31 GLEB 2012, 85–119.

32 For Hungary, see for instance: LITKEI 2017, 249–283.

33 BAIER 2010, 382 f.

this context he also brought up *Volkskunst* – a term that can be understood more in the sense of Popular Art than Folk Art – in relation to the national and the international dialectic.<sup>34</sup> Olbrich's arguments thus fit the tendency towards the internationalization of the leftist movements in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the name of a post-imperialist culture that used to merge popular traditions in order to create a new world art.<sup>35</sup> If one follows his further argumentation, it becomes clear, though, that he understood Folk/Popular Art in the sense of historical materialism, which also saw Socialist Realism as embodying a new stage of social development. Our point here is that non-European artistic phenomena are still seen in relationship to a Socialist materialistic world art remaining in the center of its own knowledge practices. Therefore, Folk/Popular Art was not further elaborated as a potential term that would encompass new perspectives of European and non-European art, and, instead, it remained affiliated with the notion and the program of Socialist Realism.

To conclude, the term internationalism implies the nation-state is literally a setting that determines transregional, intercontinental relations and exchange. Remarkably, it was Białostocki who, in the context of the Seventh Congress of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art (AICA) in Cracow and Warsaw in 1960 – the first to be held in Eastern Europe – contrasted internationalism not with the nation but with individualism. In this way, as Mathilde Arnoux stated in her study about the relationship between East and West in the era of the Cold War, beyond the schema of confrontation, national tendencies in forming an international contemporary art can be highlighted. She points out that the Polish organizers of the congress introduced national aspects into the debate on contemporary art in order to make a double volte-face. On the one hand, this move was about undermining the Soviet conception of 'international' under the doctrine of Socialist Realism; on the other hand, it was about stating that contemporary art encompassed more than Western abstraction.<sup>36</sup>

A few years later, in 1971, Mikhail Alpatov argued in a special issue of *American Art Journal* dedicated to the state of art history that there was still a difference between "art centers" of global importance and those which developed "national schools", usually located in relatively small countries.<sup>37</sup> In some way, Alpatov's explanation refers, intentionally or not, to Marx's elaboration on "world literature," which Marx assumed emerges when national or local literary traditions later become common property.<sup>38</sup> Alpatov also suggested that each national art history will "sing" its part and thus help shape the art historical canon

34 OLBRICH 1975, 476–479. – OLBRICH 1976, 563–565.

35 This dimension is already elaborated in the field of literary studies. CLARK 2021.

36 ARNOUX 2021, 96–104.

37 ALPATOV 1971, 90.

38 MARX / ENGELS 1990, 466.

and contribute to the harmony of the “choir of nations”.<sup>39</sup> Referring to Alpatov’s survey *Vseobshchaya istoriya iskusstv* (General History of the Arts), which attempted to demonstrate Russia’s artistic and national merits within the frame of a universal history of art, Vardan Azatyan called such an approach “nationalist universalism”.<sup>40</sup> It was a path also followed by other Russian art historians, such as Dmitri V. Sarabianov, and institutionally manifested by the division of art history departments into those dealing with Russian art and those devoted to Western art. There was a course in African art sporadically conducted by Vil Mirimanov at the Lomonosov University in Moscow; it was labelled as Western art. But there were no courses in the art of Socialist Bloc countries or Socialist Baltic republics. The Soviet curriculum reflected the multidimensionality of ideological premises: The art and culture of the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union were seen as an integral part of an imaginary unitarian Soviet-Russian tradition. The Socialist countries that emerged after World War II as national republics and passed through the period of being bourgeois nation-states were evaluated in this system as ‘fraternal people’s republics’; this produced a poorly defined phenomenon between the USSR and the rest of Europe.

Thus, the label Soviet Internationalism was applied above all to the Socialist countries and post-colonial states (of most remote status) – but not to the Soviet republics. This separation is related to the question of how relationships and entanglements in the arts have been described beyond notions of influence and spatial asymmetries of center and periphery. Interestingly enough, it was a ‘Western’ Marxist, Nikos Hadjinicolau, who had earlier pointed out that the idea of “center and periphery” – an art historical schema dominating artistic entanglement in Europe as well as other parts of the world – was indebted to political claims for power also in the Soviet Union. For Hadjinicolau, the dissemination of the European vision of the ‘Orient’ in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union exemplarily revealed how the related claims to power were carved out, substantiated, and promoted: “Wir müssen aufhören, Machtverhältnisse als Qualitätsverhältnisse zu betrachten” (We need to stop thinking of power relations as quality relations).<sup>41</sup> The self-identification with the periphery is called by Azatyan an ‘inferiority complex,’ and what sometimes used to be described in terms of backwardness in relation to Western Europe can also be interpreted – according to Alexander Kiossev – as a kind of self-colonizing narrative of national identity.<sup>42</sup> In this respect, the universal framework emerged also from a competition of national art histories. The notion of universality occurs as a hidden hierarchy.

39 ALPATOV 1971, 91. Ernst Gombrich, Jan Białostocki, and Victor Lazarev also contributed to this issue.

40 AZATYAN 2009, 291.

41 HADJINICOLOAU 1983, 45 f., 51.

42 AZATYAN 2009, 291. – KIOSSEV 1995. About the concept of internal colonization, see also ETKIND 2011, 61–71. About the broader context of imagining Europe mirroring the position of Russia, see RAEV 2010.

Lajos Vayer had questioned the legitimacy of a universal art historical concept of style as an expression of artistic development and had criticized its connection to the center-periphery model in his opening speech at the 1965 CIHA congress in Budapest.<sup>43</sup> Organized by Vayer himself, the congress shed light on the art history of Central and Eastern Europe, presenting it as a topic at an international level. Going beyond the center-periphery model, Vayer proposed a model of microhistory, a history focusing on a regional stage as applicable for establishing new art historical geographies.<sup>44</sup> Thus, he shifted focus from the dominant art historical approach of comparison to an art historical approach dedicated to a history of relationships. This approach replaced the art historical universalism hitherto cultivated in terms of style and inevitable progress with a new awareness of the plurality and heterogeneity of regions. Their interconnectivity in terms of cultural crossroads was elaborated later by Ján Bakoš.<sup>45</sup> It may now surprise us that in 1986, at the CIHA session titled *Centre and Periphery: Dissemination and Assimilation of Style*, Jan Białostocki referred to the center-periphery concept and titled his paper *What Is Bad About Periphery?* He quoted regionally diverse examples to elucidate how a permanent flux of spaces and places have been narrativized in art history as centers. However, he omitted the very questions we would ask today: How is such a center created? How much does its status rely on the historical relations of power? To what extent can we reposition the issue of the center by questioning the discursive standards of normative marginalization? In this respect, it is remarkable that the 1986 CIHA congress, *Themes of Unity in Diversity*, held in Washington and intended to be the first ‘global’ event within the discipline, upon a closer look, reveals that art history in the Western and Socialist worlds shared a common understanding of universal art history.<sup>46</sup> In fact, approaches and themes taken from European and North American traditions still dominated this congress. Apart from Białostocki’s questioning of the still-dominant center-periphery concept, André Chastel, one of the plenary speakers, alongside George Kubler and Hermann Fillitz, turned to an art geographical approach. He focused on “Les relations asymétriques: Nord/Sud”, as mentioned in his paper *L’art du monde: le problème des ‘universaux’*.<sup>47</sup> However, what appeared to be a potential acknowledgement of the present global division, an ostensible step away from the geopolitical East/West thinking by pointing to the real power relations, turned out to be a Eurocentric perspective.

43 VAYER 1972, see also the translation and commentary in this book.

44 See the commentary by Robert Born in this book.

45 BAKOŠ 2002.

46 It was the 26th Congress, 10–15 August 1986. – LAVIN 1989. – About the role of CIHA as a promoter of global art history, see DUFRÈNE 2007. – ANDERSON 2012. – GAEHTGENS 2012, 1472–1473. – COOKE 2018. About the relation of CIHA to Soviet art history see SARAPIK 2019.

47 CHASTEL 1986, 15–18.

However, Vayer, as well as Białostocki, implicitly pointed to the fact that art history has to break away from predetermined ideas of hegemony connected to methods and concepts like center-periphery model, canon and style. As to CIHA, Białostocki stressed how necessary a global expansion of art history was.<sup>48</sup> With that in mind, he used the example of art historical comparison to point out that this not only involves the inclusion of non-European countries and themes but also calls into question the approaches and premises of a Western art history: A mere comparison of artistic phenomena can lead to false unities, as can be seen in the numbering and categories in museums that standardize all European artistic phenomena. He therefore asked: Are phenomena in different cultural areas that we summarize under the term ‘art’ comparable at all? Although Białostocki adhered to the idea of a possible universal perspective, he concluded that the path from a Eurocentric to a global world art history, while not an easy one, is a necessary one.<sup>49</sup> The international cooperation of art historians through CIHA introduces new dimensions. Here, we point to the CIHA congress in Bologna in 1979, where Vayer chaired the session on new methodological approaches. From that session, which also included Białostocki’s above-mentioned paper, *Comparative Art History*, the paper given by Zdenka Volavka, a Czech art historian who had emigrated to Canada in 1968 and then became a professor at York University, entitled *The Study of African Art as an Art Historical Discipline*, should be mentioned here, as well as Beatriz de La Fuente’s contribution, *Problemas de historia del arte en culturas prehispánicas de México*.<sup>50</sup> Such studies demonstrate that art history should be acknowledged as a complex fabric of diachronic and synchronic processes of development in entangled regions.

In this context, we can pose the question whether these are channeled circulations of approaches and models or to what extent there was feedback on the respective art histories in the Socialist countries. A survey of the GDR journal *Bildende Kunst* reveals several articles on the topic of African art. Apart from exhibition reviews of African art in Berlin galleries<sup>51</sup>, the approach of Karla Bilanz, who worked at the Grassi Museum in the 1970s, is particularly noteworthy.<sup>52</sup> In her articles, she dealt with the formal principles of African art beyond Western terminology. In particular, she was critical in respect to the relationship of the discovery of African tribal art by Avant-garde artists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and labelling it as primitivism. Instead, she saw African art as a counterimage of Western modern art and pointed out its origins, instead of seeing it as

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48 BIAŁOSTOCKI 1979.

49 IBIDEM.

50 VAYER 1982, 225–235.

51 HARTMANN 1986. Luise Hartmann wrote about an exhibition of Shona sculptures in the Gallery am Weidendamm, East Berlin.

52 BILANG 1985. – BILANG 1986.

reflected through modern art.<sup>53</sup> In this respect, it can be stated that beyond the established art historical narrative of periphery, canon, style, and Modernity, a consciousness also developed that independent terminology should be used for non-European art to give them an independent place in art history.

Furthermore, something else is remarkable in this context (although these are only very selective findings): what Georg Vasold already formulated concerning Joseph Strzygowski's students, that it was primarily women who were investigating on non-European art.<sup>54</sup> It might be speculative to say if it was coincidental, or at least, that due to its status as a new research field in becoming, this range of topics still avoided being dominated by male researchers.

The contributions from Vayer and Białostocki to the CIHA congresses show clearly enough that theoretical framings of the geopolitical map and novel approaches to art history were not the only relevant subjects during those meetings; striving for equality and partnership in dialogue was apparently also an important issue. The plea for internationalization – as Vayer and Białostocki called it – was motivated by a wish expressed on both sides of the Iron Curtain to participate in discussions and thus contributed to a higher degree of visibility.<sup>55</sup> CIHA can be considered a stage for institutionalized international collaborations. This internationalization can be understood in a dual sense: as occurring on the subjective level (concerning the contact between scholars) and the objective level (concerning the subjects of study), as already pointed out by Białostocki.<sup>56</sup> Finally, if we follow this thread, we cannot help but see the topical relevance of these somewhat forgotten chapters of art history, since they actually match the present aims and challenges of global art history. In this context, we can quote Christian Kravagna's study on cultural contacts outside of European art centers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: He postulates that the investigation of cultural contact zones must lead to an art history that examines contacts and cooperation within the discipline, both institutional and personal – an art history which would enable holistic transcultural thinking and, at the same time, animate diversifying narratives.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> BILANG 1989.

<sup>54</sup> VASOLD 2017, 129. He mentioned, for instance, Olga Schwanenfeld who wrote her dissertation about the Asian influence on Pisanello, Melanie Stiaßny become very influential as curator of Asian collection at the Naturhistorisches Museum (sic!) in Vienna. The first art historical chair dealing with South Asian Art was founded 1954 at the University of Pennsylvania, going back to efforts of Austrian-Czech scholar Stella Kramisch, a specialist in Indian Art.

<sup>55</sup> See the article by BIAŁOSTOCKI 1978. For the situation of art history (*Kunstwissenschaft*) in the GDR, mainly art history at the Humboldt University, see BAIER 2009, 384f, 388f.

<sup>56</sup> BIAŁOSTOCKI 1982, 208.

<sup>57</sup> KRAVAGNA 2017.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The book's chapters are organized around three themes, each tackling conceptions of exchange and connectivity in national, transnational, and international dimensions. Based on this panorama, we aim to present a comparative approach to the history of art history under the aegis of Socialism.

The first section addresses the topic *Platforms of Exchange and Knowledge Transfer*. Its chapters focus on different concepts of translation and transfer and detail how ideas travel. In their paper on Pop Art and related art historical narratives, *Maja and Reuben Fowkes* demonstrate how this art movement can be perceived as a global phenomenon. Writing about Pop Art solely in genealogical terms by constantly pointing to its American origins reveals a still-persistent hierarchy of discourse. In this view, American art functions as a center predestined to define any equivalent translocations and regional variations as mere derivatives. *Krista Kodres* highlights the issue of how art histories circulate, providing an overview of art historical books in translation, with a focus on titles that were available in the Soviet Union but originally published abroad (both in Socialist and non-Socialist countries), as well as of Soviet books translated for foreign readers. Kodres connects her essential study with Yuri Lotman's cultural-semiotic concept of the *semiosphere*, a complex system of related language systems and their various references and non-hierarchical relationships. Although for Lotman center and periphery are the core of the internal organization of each semiosphere, it is not of interest here to determine what is central and what is peripheral, but to capture the transition from one to another as a gradual change. Thus, semiospheres and their related groups are both participants in dialogue as well as spaces for dialogue. This is particularly true when considering the construct of Socialist Internationalism in terms of exchange and hierarchies. In her contribution, *Mária Orišková* examines specific features of Czech exhibition policy in an internationalized exhibition market: She details how such policies interfered with the cultural diplomacy conducted by the state and how they were oriented toward the broader audiences of the West. This strategy aimed at a convergence between the ideal of Socialist Internationalism under communist ideology and a 'communist geography of art.' The section concludes with a translation of a book chapter written by *Peter H. Feist*, which can be considered the first analysis of East German art history after the collapse of the Soviet Union written by an East German art historian. Feist describes the difficulties of an exchange between the individual Socialist states as well as between professional networks within Eastern Europe.

The second section, entitled *Integration and Adaptation*, touches upon how the emergence of universal versus national discourses of art history was not free from the potential for conflict. Concerning the publications of the Czechoslovakian art historian Karel Stejskal, *Ivan Gerát* shows the competition between shifting understandings of the



‘universal’ within particular approaches and thus demonstrates the persistence of art historical methods. On the one hand, Stejskal’s use of a ‘universal’ approach, partly oriented around Aby Warburg’s iconology, appeared inappropriate for broader international audiences at the time Stejskal’s works were published. This was not least due to the attempt to develop a Marxist iconology – promoted by Stejskal and other art historians such as Jaromír Neumann – set against the traditional religious understanding of Christian iconography.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, both Czech and Western art history still tended to refer to the paradigm of style in its assumed ‘universality.’ An opposite understanding of the ‘universal’ – namely as ‘international’ – is the topic examined by *Éva Forgács*, who looks at the formation of the European Avant-garde network after World War II. As she shows, artists linked to the Avant-garde and scholars in Hungary shared the same interest in cultural archetypes, assumed to be forming a ‘collective unconscious.’ Interpreted as timelessly relevant, these archetypes were perceived as undetermined by any national or *völkisch* commitment and, as such, were systematically equipped with an international, i. e. ‘universal’ character. *Elena Sharnova* questions another kind of international universalism dominated by Western paradigms. She details the history of the integration of the works of the ‘Russian school’ in exhibitions at the A. S. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and points to the issue of how Soviet art historians such as Mikhail Alpatov or Dmitri Sarabianov attempted to broaden the geographical scope of the Western canon of art history for the sake of a postulated ‘universality’ without questioning its basic assumptions. A translation of a chapter from *Dmitri Sarabianov’s* book *Russian Nineteenth-Century Painting among the European Schools: A Comparative Approach* completes the section.

The third section shifts away from a European perspective to *Intercontinental Encounters – Creating ‘New Geographies.’* Besides CIHA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also promoted a more global view of art in order to demonstrate art’s contribution to fostering universal exchangeability and connectivity. An example of this is the *World Art* book series published by UNESCO and the New York Graphic Society in 1954. However, as those high-quality books were written mainly by US and European art historians, we have to wonder to what extent these international organizations intended to collaborate with scholars from non-Western or non-European countries. With this context in mind, *Corinne Geering* draws attention to scholarly exchange via the Cultural Studies Program launched by UNESCO in 1966. By highlighting the position and involvement of Soviet scholars within the field of international cooperation and cultural politics, she elaborates on a regional reorientation both in the Soviet Union’s multinational context as well as in the global context.

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58 GERÁT 2019.

There is a similar positioning of the regional against the global in the above-mentioned introduction by *Lajos Vayer* at the 1965 CIHA congress in Budapest that we present here in an English translation. The 1960s thus appear, in sum, as a decade in which comprehensive approaches and structures emerged in order to reflect on regionality as providing foundations for the universal expression of diversity in the development of art history in general.

*Douglas Gabriel* and *Adri Kácsor* focus on spatial issues by analyzing the phenomenon of European architecture translated into a Korean context. The authors describe the nature of intercontinental architectural translocation, accompanied by the adaptation of particular cultural patterns and living conditions, and elaborate on the local afterlife of the implemented building types. Finally, *Piotr Juskiewicz* concentrates on the fascination for Mexican culture that developed in 1950s Socialist Poland and details how Mexican style elements became used there. The related issue of the sovereignty of historically and geographically distant art forms gives rise to coordinates for a non-judgmental comparison based on the principle of aesthetic equality. A sort of pre-definition of the shape of global art history is presented with the closing translation of selected excerpts from the book *On Art of Ancient America: Mexico and Peru* by *Jan Białostocki*, initially published in Poland in 1972.

In this volume, we bring together the perspectives of art historians from different generations – those who have witnessed Socialist rhetoric and others who might see Socialist Internationalism as an antediluvian globalization and a vehicle of transnational networking. With reference to the above quotation by Jan Białostocki: Do we mean the same discipline when we use the term ‘art history’ in San Francisco, London, Sofia or New Delhi? We should ask: Through what instruments, methods, and broader consideration of objects have artists from non-Western parts of the world been introduced to art history? How can the exchanges and interconnections in the arts be conceived beyond the notions of power and hierarchy? And were the questions art historians in the Socialist states posed to art history the same or similar to those that were at the core of the discipline in the Western hemisphere?

We observe that international congresses have a lasting impact on art historical practice, both today and in the past. Thus, large exhibitions or art history congresses, such as those organized by CIHA, can be seen as platforms of international exchange directed at a specific community. With this in mind, we do not have to see such initiatives as ‘only’ the result of state cultural policy or ideological framing. Instead, we need to consider the issue of to what extent debates and discourses were developed within a one-sided cultural transfer from the West to the East (today, also from the North to the South) and who had and still has the possibility to participate in such discourse. Furthermore, we have to examine the influence and impact of institutionalized international art historical practices on local environments or communities of art history and art critique.