Webinar series - From Tallinn to Tbilisi: Art across boundaries in the age of empire

Discussion published by Ekaterina Heath on Thursday, December 15, 2022

Event series: January to July 2023

Through the long 19th century until the eventual collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, artists in territories under imperial control, such as Poland, Finland, Ukraine, the Baltics, the Caucasus, Central Asia and others, increasingly began to explore questions of national identity in response to hegemonic and Russo-centric narratives advanced by the tsarist regime.

In this seminar series, speakers examine art production in key centres of activity beyond St Petersburg and Moscow to present perspectives from across the Empire. Exploring a range of topics, such as art education, travel, national revivals, and women’s advancement, they consider the ways in which artists negotiated ethnic and territorial identities, advanced their professional careers, and recalibrated their art-making in response to imperial rule.

- Mondays
- 5-6.30pm (GMT) / 6-7.30pm (CET) / 12 noon-1.30pm (EST)
- Teams, Free
- Recording available after each event

Organised by:

Lauren Warner-Treloar (Kingston University, Visual and Material Culture Research Centre)

Lauren Warner-Treloar is an AHRC Techne Doctoral Researcher at Kingston School of Art and her research project is entitled ‘Sound Art and Visual Culture: The Anti-Book Experiment in the Romanov Empire and the USSR, 1881-1932’.

Dr Louise Hardiman (Independent Scholar)

Dr Louise Hardiman is an independent scholar specialising in Russian, Soviet and Ukrainian art and the history of British-Russian cultural exchange.

Read more about the organisers.

Hosted by: Kingston School of Arts Visual and Material Culture Research Centre

Without affiliation: Iliazd and avant-garde identity politics
Speaker: Johanna Drucker, University of California, Los Angeles

Born in Tiflis [Tbilisi], Georgia in 1894, while the area was part of the Russian Empire, poet Ilia Zdanevich (“Iliazd”), seems to have felt little identification with the region. If he spoke Georgian (his mother’s native tongue), he gave no indication of this in his writings. After 1912, he moved into Russian avant-garde circles in Moscow and St. Petersburg. But he also “discovered” the self-taught Georgian painter, Nikos Pirosmani. He was passionate about ancient Armenian and Georgian church architecture. He loved the mountains of the Caucasus region. However, he did not express any affiliation as a “Georgian” or mention the politics of the region in his work, only noting that after the Revolution in October 1917 he was prevented from returning to Russia. His early experimental plays, composed between 1916-20, identify Tiflis as their publication site. But he never mentions the interlude from May 1918 through February 1921, when Georgia was briefly an independent republic before being annexed by the Soviet Union, or the name change of his birthplace to Tbilisi in 1936. Iliazd travelled to Paris in 1921 and spent the rest of his life there as a publisher and poet. Linked to international art circles, Iliazd's career raises interesting questions about the combination of local culture(s) (Georgian, Russian, Parisian) and national identity politics in the modern avant-garde.

Johanna Drucker is Distinguished Professor and Breslauer Professor in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA. She is internationally known for her work in the history of graphic design, typography, experimental poetry, art, and digital humanities. Recent work includes Inventing the Alphabet (University of Chicago, 2022), Visualisation L’Interprétation modélisante (B42, 2020), and Iliazd: Meta-Biography of a Modernist (Johns Hopkins University Press 2020). Her artist’s books are widely represented in museum and library collections. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2014. In 2021 she received the AIGA’s Steven Heller Award for Cultural Criticism.

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Cherchez les femmes: Women artists from Ukraine in Paris (late 19th and early 20th centuries)
Date: 20 February 2023

Speaker: Vita Susak, Independent Scholar, Basel

Booking available soon.
Incising the future in early colonial Alaska

Date: 20 March 2023

Speaker: Bart Pushaw, University of Copenhagen

Booking available soon.

Nomadic art as cultural and political capital
Date: 24 April 2023

Speaker: Petya Andreeva, Parsons School of Design, The New School

Booking available soon.

Image: Early Golden Horde, gold belt fitting with deer amid foliage, 13th c. Discovered in Gashun-Ust (near modern-day Stavropol, south Russia).

Architecture and empire in the Grand Duchy of Finland under Alexander I and Nicholas II

Date: 15 May 2023

Speaker: Markus Lähteenmäki, University College London (Jan 2023)

Booking available soon.
Image: C.L. Engel, Design for the main building of the Imperial Alexander University (later University of Helsinki), 1828, National Archives of Finland, Helsinki.

**Armenian painterly modernity and the Union of Armenian Artists (1916-21)**
Date: 12 June 2023

Speaker: Sato Moughalian, City University of New York Graduate Center

Booking available soon.

Image: Martiros Sarian, *Constantinople Street at Midday*, 1910, oil on panel, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

**Beauty as a weapon of political resistance:**

**Karol Kłosowski and his studio at Silent Villa**
Date: 3 July 2023

Speaker: Julia Griffin, Art Historian, Curator and Author

Booking available soon.

Karol Klosowski, selection of paper cuttings and lace designs, private collection. By descent from the...
artist and the Tatra Museum in Zakopane.

**About the organisers**

Lauren Warner-Treloar, AHRC Techne Doctoral Researcher, Kingston University

Dr Louise Hardiman, MA PhD