

Call for papers.

What is to be Done? Methodological Challenges to Art Historical Research in Central and Eastern Europe

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Partners: The Academy of Fine Arts – AVU Prague; Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History (KEMKI), Budapest; and The University of Lodz

For the past decade, decolonial thinking, intersectional analysis, exhibition and curatorial histories and the transnational study of circulations, artistic exchanges and artists' networks generated a new wave of sustained research on art produced in Central and Eastern Europe from a dynamic perspective. In the wake of these preoccupations, “entangled”, “constellational”, “translocal”, “trans-peripheral” and “trans-cosmopolitan” proposals of study have therefore emerged, critically enriching and expanding the field of spatial history of art. Consequently, the place of the region has been interrogated and challenged not only in relation to the cultural production of the “former West”, but also to the art and politics made, performed, and exhibited in the Global South, framing art developed in socialism and post-socialism from a much wider perspective. The latter has also been challenged by the resurgent interest in social justice, social retribution, and racialization in Eastern Europe as understudied areas of research. Just as importantly, the distinction between the official and unofficial art has gradually eroded over the past decade, shifting the focus from “dissident”, “non-conformist” or “alternative”, experimental art practices of the neo-avant-garde, framed in opposition to state-supported local art institutions, towards the many ways in which these material spheres of cultural production were entangled. This prompted art historians to reevaluate socialist art and socialist internationalism.

At the same time, for many art historians activating in the region, questions related to the terminology used in art historical research, the relevance of Marxist and critical theory developed in the Western academia, and the dangers brought about by the resurgence of nationalism and neo-conservative politics gaining popularity in many Eastern European countries have come to fore.

New perspectives have also integrated the study of various affects in art practices develop across economically and culturally marginalized geographic spaces. Not least of all, the urgent planetary challenges brought along by the rampant climate crisis (including environmental justice and the politics of care), and the intensification of social violence, migration and the necropolitics of exclusion generated by the recent reactivation of hot conflict zones at the Eastern European borders as a result of the war in Ukraine force us to think and address artistic responses and art activism in contemporary art from the region in new frameworks and reshape our conceptual instruments.

The conference organized by the Institute for Multidisciplinary Research in the Arts of the National University of the Arts, Iasi, in collaboration with AVU Prague, KEMKI Budapest and the University of Lodz, proposes an open forum for art historians, curators and art theorists interested in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in wider topics such as art histories of the Global South. We welcome proposals which reevaluate art historical methodologies employed in the region so far and address urgent research topics, methodologies, and challenges to the discipline as a result of the transformations outlined above.

We welcome contributions for the following panel topics, covering the period from 1945 to the present:

- Revisiting socialist art: state-supported institutions, exhibitions, and global networks.
- Interconnectedness and mobility: artists' networks, circulation, transference, and exchange.
- Social art history in a socialist context: Marxism, anti-politics and artistic labor.
- Critical art history today: race, gender and decoloniality in Eastern Europe.
- Curating and other forms of collective art historical engagement.

If you are interested to participate in the conference please send a 300 words proposal (including a title and an abstract of your presentation) in relation to one of the panel topics proposed above, accompanied by a brief CV of no more than 200 words to: icma@unage.ro. To leave ample time for discussions, we encourage presentation proposals of no more than 20 minutes.

The deadline for submitting presentation proposals is **June 26, 2023**.

Coffee breaks, lunch and dinner are free for all participants.

Keynote speakers:

Jérôme Bazin, University of Paris-Est Créteil

Edit András, The Institute of Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences/Central European University, Budapest