361. **Russian and Soviet-Avant-Gardes** Index: 54872 CAC

Prof. Jane Sharp (jasharp@arthist.rutgers.edu)

Fall 2021 Tuesdays/Thursdays: 3:10-4:20

HH 5 and Zimmerli Art Museum/ Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4 pm

How and under what circumstances can art be revolutionary—what does it mean to be “avant-garde”? This course is a selective survey of art practices that defined those terms; it focuses on artists who, critics often argued, precipitated the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. We will study the art and architecture created during the course of the 20th century through the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union with the aim of discovering and questioning the impact of the revolutionary era on work both enfranchised and rejected by official institutions in the USSR.

In the early 20th century Russia was an autocratic, multi-ethnic imperial state; after the revolutions of 1917 a “dictatorship” of the proletariat was organized through the monopoly of the Bolshevik Party. A wide range of artistic practices will be considered, from the cosmopolitan centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg to the outlying republics of the Baltics, Caucasus, and Central Asia. Themes to be explored are redefinitions of the role of the artist and the social uses of art and architecture, the dialogue between art and politics, and the framing of national identity through the visual arts. Multiple sessions will be taught in the Zimmerli Art Museum’s Dodge Collection.

Learning objectives: Students master concepts, and associate specific visual media and approaches to form with critical issues in Russian and Soviet art and architecture, identifying aspects of avant-garde practice such as: appropriation of popular art forms, strategies for national and ethnic self-representation, direct challenges to gendered identities, the roles played by new media (including photography and photomontage).

We will use Canvas for announcements, assignments, and readings; I will post powerpoint visual presentations at the end of each week or topic. **All readings are in English**

Assessment: 2 Short writing assignments/quizzes (submitted on Canvas), a final 10 page paper (close analysis of artworks/objects informed by your readings), a final take home exam (3rd quiz); active in class participation in discussion is required (and graded): 30% paper; 50% short assignments/quizzes including final, 20% participation

Recommended texts:


Schedule of lectures and readings (subject to minor revisions):

**Week 1** 9/2  Introduction, Origins of the terminology (avant-gardes), historical precedents in the 19th Century; the expansion and crisis of empire circa 1905

  **Canvas Module: Rebellions: Performed Identities before 1917**

**Week 2** 9/7-9  Moscow and Petersburg, Art as Social Disruption: radical rhetoric and street protest. The Donkey’s Tail and Target; Futurism, Neoprimitivism, Everythingism. (Larionov and Goncharova)


**Week 3** 9/14-16—Early 20th C Georgian avant-garde; Latvia; Kandinsky (Where is Asia?)

Readings: Ram/ Kunichika; Documents (Matveijs; Kandinsky)

9/16 View works at ZAM (Goncharova, Broadsheets, World of Art Prints; Benois)

  **Module: Revolutionary Time: Suprematism and Utopian Abstraction**

**Week 4** 9/21-23  Malevich and Suprematism, Tatlin’s Culture of Materials;

Readings: Malevich, Tatlin Texts; Shklovsky, “Art as Device”

**Week 5** 9/28-30  Revolutions of 1917: War Communism art in the Free Studios (Vkhutemas), Vitebsk Suprematism (Unovis), Lissitzky and Architecture for a World Revolution; Tatlin's Monument; street art

Readings: Kiaer, “Looking at Tatlin’s Stove”; Documents: Unovis, Lissitzky; Tatlin’s Monument;

9/30 Zam; Dyshits-Tolstaya; porcelain; book covers?

10/1 Friday; Erika Wolfe Lecture on Soviet Photography (Zoom with the Zimmerli)

  **Module: New Worlds/New Media: Film, Photography, Montage**

**Week 6** 10/5-7  Photography and and Photomontage: Klutsis/Kulagina; Rodchenko; Stepanova, Ignatoviches, Zelma

Readings: Wolfe/Glebova debate, Documents: Tarabukin, Rodchenko, October Group
10/7 Zimmerli Gallery

**Week 7 10/12-14** Constructivisms/Productivism (Arts) other worlds: **Cosmism** (Protozanov, dir. film: *Aelita*, 1924)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoROo4Ur49c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoROo4Ur49c)

Readings: Groys (Cosmism documents)

**10/18 QUIZ/Paper#1 due**

**Module: Post-Revolutionary Reconstruction**

**Week 8 10/19-21** Constructivism in Architecture; Exhibition Architecture; Competitions

Readings: Castillo, “Peoples at an Exhibition”; Documents: OSA, ASNOVA

**Week 9 10/26-28** Filmic Montage: The USSR as post-colonial empire

View: Vertov Documentary; One Sixth Part of the World

Readings: McKay; Kunichika

**Module: Realisms and Collective Identities**

**Week 10 11/2-4** The First 5 Year Plan: Stalin’s Consolidation of Groups, Revolutionary Realism, Socialist Realism

Readings: Kiaer, “Lyrical Socialist Realism”; Bassin, “Morning of our Motherland”

Documents: Akhrr, OST, Gorky, Zhdanov

**Proposal for Paper Topic Due (synopsis and outline)**

**Module: Thaw: A Return to Lenin? Accommodation and Dissent in the 60s**

**Week 11 11/9-11** Abstraction; Movement Collective and Architecture in the 60s (synthesis; technology; audiences)

Readings: Sharp (Movement Group), Manifestos (Masterkova, Movement Group; Koleichuk) **11/11 Zam Galleries**

**Week 12 11/16-18** Austere Style; Public spaces and monuments; Imagined monuments; Paper Architecture **11/18 Zam Galleries**
Readings: Neizvestnyi; Avvakumov

11/22 Quiz/Paper #2 due

**Module: Confrontation: Public and Personal Spaces in the 1970s-80s; Challenges to the State from the Borderlands**

**Week 13  11/23** Bulldozer exhibition artists; Sots Art; Trips to the Country
Readings: Jackson; Komar and Melamid; Documents: Monastyrsky, Novikov

**Week 14  11/30-12/2** Self-Identification in The “New” East: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan; Baltics, Ukraine, and Caucasus

**12/2 Zimmerli (Ukraine Exhibition)**
Readings: Almaty (Ibraeva); *Bread and Roses*: Women Artists in Kazakhstan catalogue
TBD Allas, Kajlulla

**Week 15 12/7-9** Performance (Moscow Installations; Interpol exhibition)
Readings: Bryzgel, Documents: Kulik, Kabakov; Nakhova

**Turn in papers**

**Final Exam (Take home; last readings quiz)**