

## SYMPOSIUM AT THE BELVEDERE 21 ON MODERNISMS IN AN EXTENDED TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

### *Storms and Networks. In the Eye of the Storm*

#### WHAT

Modernism is not a compact phenomenon of art history. By the end of the 19th century, the art scenes in the established cultural centres were becoming increasingly diverse, but the paradigm shift did not take place only in Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna. From 1900 onwards, very intense impulses for the entire modern art movement came from the various regions of Central and South-Eastern Europe. But how can the territory of networked and exchanged modernity be delimited? Where are the geopolitical boundaries of what we call “modernity” in the broad cultural sense?

How far has the notion of a new art that breaks its formal norms and deconstructs social conventions penetrated? Rather than drawing alternative maps that, with a diachronic approach, re-establish the boundaries of the modernist world again and in a different way, we are also moved to examine this question critically in the light of current revisions of concepts such as nation, border, identity, history, myth, etc. On the occasion of the exhibition *In the Eye of the Storm*, the Austrian Gallery Belvedere is organising a scientific symposium with the aim of discussing with experts on this period of art the question of the situation of Modernism in the peripheral centres of art history. Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, as well as Kosice, Krakow, Brno, Miskolc, and many other places, but also small regions outside the mainstream of international galleries, have an exciting scene, or simply solitaires of art, without which Modernism could not achieve the global impact it did.

#### WHEN

Tuesday, May 7th 2024  
9 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

#### WHERE

Belvedere 21  
Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna  
Blickle Kino

#### HOW

Get your free online ticket at:



[www.belvedere.at/event/  
symposium-storms-and-networks](http://www.belvedere.at/event/symposium-storms-and-networks)

**PROGRAM****📍 LOWER BELVEDERE****9:00*****In the Eye of the Storm. Modernism in Ukraine*****Exhibition tour with the curators**

Konstantin Akinsha, Katia Denysova, Maryna Drobotiuk, Miroslav Hařák

**📍 BLICKLE KINO AT BELVEDERE 21****10:30****Greetings & Introduction**

Stella Rollig (Belvedere, Vienna)

**11:00****PANEL I: Preconditions / Situation / Continuity / Discontinuity ...**

Moderation: Konstantin Akinsha

**Brno Modernism and the Formation of Regional / Transnational Identity, 1900–1939**

Matthew Rampley (Masaryk University, Brno)

**ANNOTATION:**

In 2018, the National Gallery of Art in Prague opened a new permanent exhibition, *The First Republic, 1918–1938*, which explored the modernist art world of interwar Czechoslovakia. It marked a departure from traditional narratives of Czechoslovak Modernism by drawing attention to the many centres of modern art in the Republic, such as Bratislava, Kořice, Uzhhorod and Brno. A year later, the Moravian Gallery in Brno installed a new exhibition, *Brno: A Suburb of Vienna (Brno, předměstí Vídně)*. It highlighted the many cultural and social links that existed between Brno and the Austrian capital in the decades before the First World War. Taken together, these two exhibitions began to dismantle established Prague-centric narratives of Czechoslovak art, pointing instead to the polycentric nature of the republic's artistic and cultural landscape.

This paper examines the complex cultural legacies of Brno as a useful case study for exploring this phenomenon. It suggests that in questioning the traditional centre-periphery relationship, we must not only to recognise that a city like Brno was an important cultural site in its own right (and not merely subordinate to Prague), but also that its history placed it in a cultural and artistic landscape that did not necessarily conform to the political boundaries of the state.

**11:30**

**Vsevolod Maksymovych: from Secession to Futurism**

Maryna Drobotiuk (National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv)

**ANNOTATION:**

Vsevolod Maksymovych (1894, Poltava – 1914, Moscow) was a renowned Ukrainian artist-modernist, a representative of the contemporary bohemian scene, who ended his life by suicide at the age of 20, leaving a note stating that he was tired of living.

He studied with Ivan Myasoyedov (Poltava) and was a member of his artistic-philosophical association "Garden of the Gods", attended classes at the studio of Fedor Rerberg (Moscow), while simultaneously working as an illustrator for local magazines. He joined the circle of Futurist artists and poets, interacting with David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, the Sinyakov sisters, and others. Shortly before his death, Vsevolod Maksymovych played one of the main roles in the avant-garde silent film "Drama at Cabaret No. 13" (1914, dir. Volodymyr Kasyanov).

Despite his short life, he managed to reach certain heights and create a significant number of artistic works in various techniques, genres, and trends.

Vsevolod Maksymovych lived a short but eventful life, leaving behind over 200 paintings and graphic works, most of which are preserved in the National Art Museum of Ukraine (Kyiv).

**12:00**

**How to get to a common art history of European Modernism.**

**A somewhat naive proposal**

Dorota Kudelska (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)

**ANNOTATION:**

The starting point for this article is Matthew Rampley's (2021) critique of Piotr Piotrowski's (2008) research proposal. Both seek a way to bring the art of Central and Eastern Europe into the academic circulation of Western art history. Rampley aptly points out the weaknesses of Piotrowski's theory. But Rampley's new proposal to look for themes attractive to the West (e.g., the reception of Oriental exoticism through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Polish textiles) also has its limitations, especially in relation to modernism. The basis of the "Younger Europe" offer cannot be the exoticism of the West alone. This way of thinking about the years 1900-1939 limits the subject of modernity research to the analysis of the reception of folk art and, in a broader sense, to folk art.

First, it proposes a return to thinking about the problem of high culture without the dominant focus on ethnic and nationalist themes (the point is not to exclude them, but to explicitly broaden perspectives). Second, the focus is on Viennese connotations, and not just because

they fit the location and theme of the conference. As Arnheim wrote, significant changes are caused not only by conscious decisions and predictable events, but also by the entropy of artists' encounters and their works.

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**12:30**

**Discussion and lunch break**

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**14:00**

**PANEL II: The fetishism of folk art and the crime of ornament**

Moderation: Alexander Klee (Belvedere, Vienna)

**From Folk to Abstract: Ukrainian Embroidery as a Medium for Modernist Experimentation**

Katia Denysova (The University of Tübingen)

ANNOTATION:

This paper examines the correlation between the stylistic iconography of traditional Ukrainian embroidery and the experiments in modernist painting that led to the emergence of abstraction. It focuses on the artistic output of the embroidery workshop in the village of Verbivka, Ukraine, in the early 1910s. Under the direction of Natalia Davydova and Alexandra Exter, this studio engaged 'leftist' artists and local artisans to produce a new type of embroidery, moving away from the mere stylisation characteristic of other kustar studios in the Russian Empire.

While scholars in Ukraine have undertaken extensive research to highlight the centrality of the Ukrainian context in progressive artists' engagement with folk embroidery on the territory of the Russian Empire, internationally this phenomenon is still largely viewed under the generalised imperialist term of the 'Russian avant-garde'. Based on existing scholarship, this paper seeks to correct this misconception. It also recognises the long overdue need to situate the craft revival movement in Ukraine within the broader framework of nationally minded intelligentsia's work with vernacular culture in East-Central Europe.

**14:30**

**Ornament and Avant-garde**

Konstantin Akinsha (Freelance curator and researcher)

**ANNOTATION:**

Adolf Loos' famous lecture in 1910 was entitled "Ornament and Crime." At the time, the excessive reliance on national/historical ornament in the leading styles of the period, such as Art Nouveau, Secession, Jugendstil, Liberty, and Modernism, necessitated a purification of both painting and the applied arts from overwhelming ornateness. However, the radical trends of modernism that replaced international Art Nouveau did not necessarily bring about such a liberation.

For many "new nations," the task of creating a national style/visual language remained relevant for the next generation of artists, who succeeded the Symbolists. This passion for national ornamentation and folk art was manifested itself in a variety of ways – sometimes visual folklore served as a convenient substitute for the "art of Negroes," found not in distant Africa, but in one's own backyard; other times, it was utilised as kitsch, necessary to create a charged contrast between high and low culture. In other cases, the cult of folk art, interpreted as the visual expression of the "wisdom of the nation," became the foundation of artistic fetishism.

The relationship between ornament and folk art delineated two opposing trends in the development of modernism in Central and Eastern Europe – one cosmopolitan, the other nationalist. However, the escape from ornamentation proved to be a challenging task. Adherents of Suprematism and Constructivism, and even practitioners of photomontage, also fell into the "crime" of ornament, translating it into new visual forms and sometimes pushing the task to the brink of absurdity.

This presentation will explore the problem of the reinterpretation of ornament by representatives of radical modernist movements.

**15:00**

**Slovak Modernity in Search of Identity. Between Folklore and Industrialization**

Miroslav Haľák (Belvedere, Vienna)

**ANNOTATION:**

The interface between rural traditionalism and petty-bourgeois conservatism is the most prominent territory on the map of artistic modernism in Slovakia. The formal, stylistic, and ideological development of the visual arts in the Slovak cultural area took place almost exclusively there. It is interesting to note that this territory can be defined not only geographically, but also in terms of meaning, by the coordinates Bratislava - Košice. This environment indicates specific socio-cultural parameters that also intensify the work of Janko Alexy.

Like his contemporaries Martin Benka, Zoltán Palugyay, and Miloš Alexander Bazovský, Alexy cannot escape cultural provincialism and ethnographic monothematism. The absence of a significant and competitive cultural centre in Slovakia contributed to programmes that idealised the village and rural life in the countryside. Instead of these motifs becoming part of a more complex spectrum of cultural identity of the emerging state formation, the periphery in Slovakia became a value reference. What explains the almost obsessive reproduction of clogs, shirkas, drops, scarves, crosses and chapels, rakes, hay, fences, rolls, bows and wallahs? It is always a search for unique motifs, capable of visualising alternative, "ideal" worlds, unencumbered by the necessity of progress in time and space. In the environment of the Slovak countryside, this idealisation includes another essential identifying component.

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**15:30**

**Discussion and coffee break**

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**16:00**

**PANEL III: Peripheral centres**

Moderation: Miroslav Haňák

**Bridging Borders: Abstract Artistic Dialogue between Paris and Central European Peripheries**

Flóra Mészáros (Metropolitan University of Budapest)

ANNOTATION:

In the 1920s and 1930s, many abstract artists were attracted to or settled in Paris for political and social reasons, but they were also influenced by the art of the peripheral cities of Central Europe, where they had lived or studied. Even their achievements in non-figurative art were inherited from Central European abstraction. The Parisian art scene was thus shaped by them and their origins. After their years in Paris, many of these painters and sculptors returned to their home countries and joined these particular Central European art capitals or maintained a permanent relationship with them. In addition, the pre-existing peripheral centres were influenced by the presence of these migrating artists and their global knowledge.

The lecture aims to explore this cultural transfer. It will attempt to use art historical and art geographical perspectives to highlight these bridges and the role of these Central European art centres and their exceptionally accepting attitude towards non-figuration, such as Pécs in Hungary, Łódź in Poland, or Brno in the Czech Republic, and so on.

**16:30****Czech modernisms as pioneers and not epigones? Networks between Prague, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest and Lviv**

Marie Rakušanová (Charles University Prague)

## ANNOTATION:

"Czech Cubism" is a term that has entered the Czech national canon of modern art history. Since the 1960s, Czech art historians and cultural workers have also tried to establish it as a phenomenon in an international context. However, the name Cubism, which was originally coined to refer to the Parisian modernist movement, tends to exclude the idea of local specificity and originality. The works of the "Czech Cubists" included in Douglas Cooper's 1970 exhibition *The Cubist Epoch in Los Angeles* were described by the American art historian Rosalind Krauss as the result of the orgy of academicism that the new style unleashed throughout Europe.

This paper will not deal with Modernism within the boundaries defined by the names of the movements, and will avoid the context of influences transmitted unidirectionally from the "centre" to the "periphery". Using literary historian Laura Doyle's concept of Inter-imperiality, the paper will explore how the co-creation of artistic "empires" and their stratified artistic economies shaped inter-imperiality and extra-imperial rivalries, and ask what role minor cultural centres on the margins of Europe played in challenging this world order. Through a series of case studies, it will outline the entangled nature of artistic and cultural exchange before 1918 within the network of relationships between Prague, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and Lviv.

**17:00****Lemberg / Lwów / Lviv on the map of European Modernism**

Andrij Bojarov (media artist, freelance researcher, independent curator)

## ANNOTATION:

The presentation will focus on early episodes of modernist and avant-garde art in Austro-Hungarian city of Lemberg which became a part of the Polish Republic after the First World War. Looking across different artistic fields—visual arts, architecture, photography—the presentation will first outline key moments of the city's artistic richness and complex artistic explorations, and then will ask how these stories challenge the ways in which national art histories are constructed and how the European can be reimagined. It will begin with the 1913 exhibition of *Der Sturm* gallery and the first architectural object built in the city in the spirit of the emerging International Style. From 1918, after the end of the First World War and the Ukrainian-Polish military conflict, several exhibitions of the Formists (Polish Expressionists) took place in what was then Lwów. The change in aesthetic ideas and, to some extent, the post-war change of state—from the Habsburg Empire to the Polish nation state—diverted the established paths of artistic study to Berlin and Paris instead of Vienna.

The city's artistic landscape was enriched as well by the group of Ukrainian artists who settled in Lviv after the fall of the Ukrainian National Republic in Kyiv. The presentation will also show how the city became an important centre of artistic photography in the first half of the XX century. The success of this development can be seen in the fact that in the early 1920s photography was taught at two universities – the Polytechnic and Jan Kazimierz University – by two renowned visual artists, Henryk Mikolasch and Józef Świtkowski. This presentation will offer some suggestions on how the perspective of place and people connected to and through place can be helpful in rethinking both national and European frameworks of art history.

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**17:45**

**Final Discussion and break**

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**18:30**

**KEYNOTE LECTURE**

Myroslava Mudrak (The Ohio State University)

**ANNOTATION:**

Situated between two great empires, Ukraine's artistic heritage before the First World War had drawn on many influences. Apart from the long-established Kyivan Cave Monastery School which had been training artists in iconography and graphic arts since the 17th century, the imperial designs on Ukraine did not allow for the establishment of an academic tradition within the country. Sandwiched between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, aspiring artists had to seek for training outside the country to pursue their vocation. Under the Habsburgs, West Ukrainian artists benefited from studying in the capitals of Europe; under the Romanovs, they were restricted to either St. Petersburg or Moscow. With no institutional constraints to bind its wings, Ukrainian modernism evolved from a savoir-faire that blended tendencies from both the West and the East, while also drawing on indigenous roots. In the 1920s, Ukrainian artists succeeded in creating new centres of modern art. Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Lviv became the crucibles of a new global, if not, ethnic modernism. They absorbed the national modernist aspirations not only of such major art centres as Paris, Munich, and Moscow, but also those of Central Europe, which were closer in aspiration and mentality, and similar in the geopolitical circumstances that gave rise to modernism in the region. From metaphoric symbolist tropes to Cubo-Futurist formalism, from renegade Secessionism to reformatist Neo-Byzantinism, the synthesis of diverse sources in early twentieth-century Ukrainian art blended with local folk traditions to define the true character of its modernity.