

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Visual Cultures of Socialism

Abstracts

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Tito – Ikone der jugoslawischen Staatengemeinschaft

Der jugoslawische Staat besaß eine Vielzahl an visuellen Symboliken, wobei keine das nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg geeinte Land treffender repräsentierte als die Gestalt des Staatspräsidenten Josip Broz Tito. Er war der Begründer des zweiten jugoslawischen Staates und später bis auf Lebenszeit amtierender Staatspräsident (1953–1980). Für den Osteuropaexperten Holm Sundhausen war Tito jedoch mehr als nur das politische Oberhaupt des vormals jugoslawischen Staates, er war die Personifizierung dessen. In seinem Essay „Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten“ macht er mit der treffenden Schlussfolgerung: „Tito war Jugoslawien. Jugoslawien war Tito“ die enge Verbindung zwischen der Führerpersönlichkeit und der jugoslawischen Staatsideologie deutlich.¹

So verwundern die Vielzahl an fotografischen Abbildungen sowie die beachtlichen künstlerischen Produktionen nicht, die sich im Raum des ehemaligen Jugoslawiens sowohl während der Herrschaft des Staatspräsidenten Tito als auch nach seinem Tod wiederfinden ließen. Nach Rastko Močnik ist eine solch große Popularität, wie sie Tito zu Lebzeiten und noch nach seinem Tode erfuhr, nicht nur zurückführbar auf die Mittel der Politik. Notwendig war nach Močnik für solch ein gesamtpsychologisches Phänomen die Imagination der Kunst.²

Geht man davon aus, dass vor allem das Portrait und im weiteren Sinne das Abbild als entscheidendes Mittel in der Konstruktion einer semantischen sowie ikonischen Landschaft des jugoslawischen Kommunismus verstanden werden kann, so ist es maßgeblich, bei der Analyse die Frage nach der engen Verbindung zwischen dem Bild und der Etablierung sowie der Aufrechterhaltung des Personenkults in unterschiedlichen künstlerischen Produktionen aufzuwerfen.² Dabei soll in dem Vortrag nicht nur den Hergang der Erschaffung einer visuellen Hegemonie im beleuchtet, sondern auch dem vermeintliche (Um)Bruch vor und nach der Desintegration Jugoslawiens anhand der bildhaften Repräsentation Titos innerhalb bewegter und statischer visueller Quellen angesprochen werden.

¹ Holm Sundhausen: Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten: Konstruktion, Dekonstruktion und Rekonstruktion von „Erinnerungen“ und Mythen, - in: Mythen der Nationen: 1945 - Arena der Erinnerungen. Hg. von Monika Flacke. Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum 2004. Bd. 1, S. 373-426, hier S. 384. 2 Vgl. Rastko Močnik, Tito, Pop-Romantic Mastery, in: Radonja Leposavić, VlasTITO iskustvo / Past Present, Belgrad 2004. S 207 -214, hier S. 207.

² Vgl. Bojana Pejić, On Iconicity and Mourning: After Tito – Tito! In: Gisela Ecker, u.a. (Hrsg.), Trauer tragen – Trauer zeigen. Inszenierung der Geschlechter, München 1999, S. 237-258, hier S. 245.

Sabine Stach, University of Leipzig

Personae non gratae or How to stage hidden heroes. Visual representations of Jan Palach

One main feature of the visual representation of socialism was the widespread installing of “socialist heroes” as propaganda figures in the public sphere. They were meant to supply the socialist parties with legitimation and mobilize society for the socialist project.¹ However, in late socialism these ideological charged symbols more and more lost their integrative ability due to general de-ideologization processes in state socialist societies. The proposed paper therefor focusses on the “counterpart” of socialist heroes in East-Central Europe – on “forbidden” or “hidden heroes”.

Three prominent cases will be in the center of my presentation: The 1956 Hungarian revolution leader *Imre Nagy*, who was executed in 1958, the “priest of the *Solidarność*” *Jerzy Popiełuszko*, who was murdered 1984 in Poland by State Security officers and the student Jan Palach, who burned himself in January 1969 in protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion into Czechoslovakia. In the years following these – different – “martyrdoms”, the deaths served western and eastern actors to delegitimize the socialist party rule. The most visible places were the (empty, unknown) graves. As centers of martyrization they turned out to be the biggest provocation for the party rulers, who tried to expel Palach, Popiel-uszko and Nagy as personae non gratae from any public memory by acts of *damatio memoriae*, defamation and criminalization. However, the more they were made a taboo by the state the more the “(anticommunist) sacrifices” were honored by opposition and the western world. In my paper I am going to argue that these political martyrs, propagated beyond the socialist ideology, gained more and more relevance in late state socialist visual cultures precisely because of their forced invisibility. Just because the socialist parties tried to expel the symbols of resistance from the master narratives of national history they did finally promote them. Following the logics of every martyr construction, the suppression of memory could be transferred into an independent moral value weakening also the consensus of what was “showable” in public.

Well known and covered by press reporting and NGO interest in the West all three symbols can be very much described as “products” of transnational cold war discourses that influenced the late socialist visual culture in a very special way. As icons of resistance their affective impact today is seen as an important step to the regime collapses of 1989. The political change therefor led to canonization processes in all mentioned cases.²

¹ Rainer Gries / Silke Satjukow (ed.): *Sozialistische Helden. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Propagandafiguren in Osteuropa und der DDR*, Berlin 2002.

² Imre Nagy was rehabilitated already in 1989: On June 16th 1989 a big ceremonial reburial in Budapest took place. Jerzy Popiełuszko's canonization is part of catholic beatification processes since 1997.

Beata Hock, GWZO - Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur
Ostmitteleuropas e.V. an der Universität Leipzig

Casualties of remembering communism: Women and their visual representation

An enduring image of life under state-socialism is that of a de-sexualized woman; emphatically a woman worker, and even more emphatically, an industrial (or at times agricultural) worker. Post-socialist memory cultures take this image as proof for how the party-state inscribed its revolution on women's bodies. Representations of the icon of socialist transformation, the working woman, are invariably referred to as de-feminized, asexual and undesirable. In my talk I wish to complicate this conventional reading through the following operations:

Confronting this formulaic view with the diversity of the material at hand. Artistic portrayals of (working) women impress with their stylistic, thematic and tonal variety already in the early years of socialism. Other branches of visual culture such as films and illustrated weeklies further variegated the repertoire supplying both affirmative and counter-images as they also adapt to changes and ruptures characterizing the socialist decades. The motifs on these representations range from the militant femininity of Chinese women in the Mao Era to romancing comrades and brigade leaders, to East-German female Balaton-visitors' sexual licentiousness.

Removing socialist countries from being isolated in their "Bloc". I will instead look beyond the Iron Curtain and insert the question in more inclusive analytical frameworks which, as I will argue, impact on the assessment of state-socialist image politics. These frameworks are, on the one hand, the emerging Western feminist cultural criticism of the 1970s and its ramifications on comparably androgynous and austere physical appearances and lifestyle choices. Another interpretive backdrop is post-feminism's more recent take on issues of sexuality, often over- accentuating glamour and sex-appeal. How does each of these lenses shape the evaluation of images of socialist women—and what do they have to say about how women in socialist societies experienced their own embodied, and arguably emancipated, selves? How did they fashion themselves; how did they flirt or love? Both in terms of the pool of visual examples and the methodology to unpack them, the proposed talk follows a cross-cultural and comparative line of inquiry.

Kateryna Malaia, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Animating modernism: The affective history of the Soviet monumental 1960s

In his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin explains the phenomenon of Fascism via the alienation of a beholder from an aesthetic subject. The aestheticization of politics or politicization of art - the inability of a viewer to emotionally experience art, in Benjamin's view, inevitably leads to war. But what happens after this war is over? The modernism of post-WWII mixes up the cards of Benjamin's dichotomy. The paradox, however, only emphasizes the importance of Benjamin's discovery - the connection between politics of aesthetics and a contingent emotional response produced by a beholder.

The Soviet, post-Stalinist era architects and artists were involved in the arguably greatest project of urban reproduction - the attempt to construct public housing in face of a chronic housing shortage. Because of a ban on aesthetic excesses, the new buildings turned out to be identical and devoid of architectural personality. The institutional response was to implement facade decorations. The murals, occasionally used in the past, became omnipresent. Yet the fundamental change in 1960s aesthetics demands that the murals should be analyzed as a separate phenomenon characteristic of their time.

My take on the topic suggests, that the frameworks of affect theory and visual culture studies redefine the knowledge about Soviet monumental murals; I also claim that the shift in perspective can help us better understand the era in general. The questions to answer are: what is the role of the murals in the urban fabric then and now? What is the affective value of the art pieces when the state of dominant engaging aesthetics is so drastically changed? And, finally, what is the relationship between individual affective reaction and the state machine that throws a political regime on art and, over against, pulls affect out of the politics of aesthetics?

Sylvia Wölfel, Technical University, Dresden

Technical Aesthetics: On the aspiration for designing a Socialist material culture

Against the backdrop of the East-West conflict, socialist countries faced the challenge of establishing an own – socialist – material culture, which included the promotion and development of industrial design as a profession concerned with objects, their appearance, experience and use. How should things be and what is “good design”?

The GDR as the frontier state during the Cold War needed to distance itself from a thriving capitalist economy associated with a throwaway mentality, waste and excess. At the same time a credible alternative to an attractive western lifestyle and its technical artifacts had to be developed, in particular given the ideological claims of socialism being the more advanced and superior social system. Since the mid-1960s, changing user needs on the internal market surprised planning authorities. At the same time the growing export orientation forced state-owned companies even more to produce technical goods according to western standards and user needs. To master all of these tasks, new degree courses, faculties or universities for industrial design were founded, state owned companies set up design departments and the influential Board for Industrial Design (Amt für industrielle Formgestaltung, AiF) was established in 1972 to supervise and control all design activities in the GDR.

We will look at the formation and development of industrial design institutions since the 1950s with a focus on the Amt für Industrielle Formgestaltung as an important institution within a network of Eastern European design institutions. The AiF served as a role model for state funded design and the implementation of design in the industrial value chain in the Comecon area and played a central role in determining the criteria for socialist “good design”. After briefly discussing the history of the AiF we will focus on controversial discourses on the formation of a distinctive socialist design in national and transnational contexts. The latter refers to the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, to Comecon cooperative research programs as well as national and international design fairs, seminars and exhibitions, which we will present as platforms of EastWest exchange.

This talk builds on an ongoing research and publication project about industrial design in the GDR and its state funded institutional structures. We will give an insight into our broad range of sources, based on several interviews with East and West German industrial designers, amongst others with Martin Kelm, head of the AiF, historical records from several archives and relevant periodicals such as the East German “form + zweck”, “Kultur im Heim” or the West German design magazine “form”.

Elena Huber, University of Salzburg

Mode, Medien und Alltag: Zur Visualisierung des sowjetischen Stils in der Kleidungspraxis in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren und ihren nationalen Einflüssen

Betrachtet man die Kleidungsherstellung über die reine Mindestversorgung hinaus, deren Schwierigkeit während der ganzen sowjetischen Epoche in allen sozialistischen Ländern einen festen Bestandteil der Alltagskultur bildet, so stellt sich die Frage, welche Aufgabe der Mode und dem Geschmack unter diesen Bedingungen zukam. Der Begriff Mode im klassischen westeuropäischen Verständnis, wie es sich über mehrere hundert Jahre herausgebildet hat, hat ja in der Sowjetunion einen tiefgehenden Bedeutungswandel erfahren. Es ging anfangs um die Akzeptanz und danach um die Definition, besser: die Suche danach, etwas als allgemeingültig und dem neuen Menschenbild entsprechend – und daher für alle Zeiten festzulegen – des Aussehens, des ideal gedachten Erscheinungsbildes.

Die Verbreitung der westlichen Kultur, sowie die vom Staat ausgehende zunehmende Legitimierung von materiellen Dingen während der gesamten Tauwetter-Periode machten die Fragen rund um Mode und Stil zum Dauerthema in der Innenpolitik und können als kulturelle Indikatoren der ideologischen Entwicklung bis in die 1980er Jahre betrachtet werden. Für die Übernahme oder Ablehnung westlicher Modeprinzipien wurden deswegen die „eigene“ und die „fremde“ Kultur genau getrennt und die Regeln für die Entlehnung einzelner Elemente des Fremden klar definiert. Verstärkt konzentrierte man sich stattdessen auf die aktive Nutzung der Volkskultur, die zum wichtigen Anhaltspunkt für die sowjetischen Künstler und Modeschaffenden wurde. Die eigentliche Erforschung der traditionellen Werte und die Rückkehr zu den eigenen Quellen im Bereich der materiellen Kultur erlebten in den 1960er Jahren ihren Aufschwung, als zahlreiche Arbeiten der Künstler und Kulturschaffender, Kunstwissenschaftler oder Soziologen in der Fachliteratur und in den Mode- und Frauenzeitschriften dieses Thema aufgreifen.

Der Beitrag zeigt auf, wie im offiziellen Diskurs der 1950er- bis 1960er-Jahre die Definition der Mode und Stils in den Vordergrund gestellt und über die Medien in den Alltag transformiert wird. Da die sowjetische Konsumkultur ähnlich wie die im Westen weiblich dominiert war, wird hierfür das Konsumgut Kleidung als Beispiel genommen und anhand einiger Mode- und Frauenzeitschriften, sowie anhand von Ratgeberliteratur analysiert. Die ideologisch geprägten Definitionen von Mode und Geschmack, der Rückgriff auf eigene Quellen bei der Erschaffung des sowjetischen Stils und letztendlich die Strategien bei deren Umsetzung in der sozialistischen Alltagskultur der Tauwetterperiode stehen im Zentrum dieses Beitrags. Mit der Fokussierung auf Frauenzeitschriften und Ratgeberliteratur wird dabei ein begrenzter gesellschaftlicher Ausschnitt gewählt, der Aufschluss gibt über die in diesen Medien verbreiteten bzw. wiedergespiegelten gesellschaftlichen Bilder, Normen und Werte, wie sie sich in den allgemeinen Ratschlägen zu allen Lebensbereichen finden. Letztendlich kann man die darin enthaltenen Richtlinien nicht nur als Wirkungen, sondern auch als Auswirkungen soziokultureller Entwicklungen betrachten¹, die wiederum deren Entstehung zugrunde liegen.

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Heimerdinger, T.: „Alltagsanleitungen? Ratgeberliteratur als Quelle für die volkskundliche Forschung“, *Rheinisch- westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 51, 2006, S. 57-71.

Paweł Miedziński, The Institute of National Remembrance, Szczecin

Color photo in black&white: The history of the Central Photographic Agency

The aim of this article is to discuss rules of creating iconic image of socialist Poland. Photography – one of most powerful weapon of mass propaganda was in Polish People's Republic under state (and naturally – communist Party) control. During my presentation I'll explain how, where and how many pictures could be taken. My historical background includes current analysis of changes in 'photo-politic'. Different pictures were taken in early sixties and other in late eighties. Question is, which regulations were permanent and which of them were changed. I'd like to show the process of photo's creation – from the "decisive moment" when were they were taken, editorial story behind CAF's office doors, till publication.

This study is based on current analysis of my research in Central Photographic Agency (Centralna Agencja Fotograficzna – CAF), which was the most important polish photo agency during socialist era. Agency was established in the middle of Stalinism period – in 1951 and existed till 1991 – even longer than the communist rule in Poland. It was state owned company which main goal was to bring pictures for central and local press, including titles like "Trybuna Ludu" ("People's Tribune" - Party's official daily newspaper) or "Żołnierz Wolności" ("Soldier of Freedom"). Pictures signed "CAF" were absolutely official. Censorship was permanent and multilevel. Photographers from this agency had exclusive permission to take pictures during state visits of foreign VIP's in Poland and polish politicians abroad. One example – Nikita Khrushchev during hunting in Poland in winter 1964...

CAF was part the of "family" of eastern block photo agencies – like Soviet "TASS", East German "ADN – Zentralbild, Czechoslovak "CTK" and others. But there is also another face of CAF – at the same time it was connected to one of the biggest and most significant world photo-agencies – Associated Press – as the only one agency from Eastern Europe till the '70. CAF's photographers gained gold medals on World Press Photo contest as well as they were awarded on socialist contest – "Interpress Photo".

Carmen Scheide, University of St. Gallen/University of Konstanz

The visual construction of Soviet Ukraine

In my paper I am interested in how Ukraine was conceptualized in the official Soviet discourse. Which mental maps were drawn in pictures and texts and how was the Ukraine characterized? And did regions matter in the official discourse, and if so in which way and function? Therefore I analyze some illustrated books about Soviet Ukraine.

My hypothesis is that regions did play a minor role in the Soviet mental mapping of Ukraine. Ukraine itself was created as a Soviet sub-region, a small part of a supranational state, and depicted in highly gendered ways. Typical Ukrainian lifestyle was described using female allegories. Both perceptions were inherited from the Czarist Empire. What was new was an emphasis on the Soviet modern, featuring technical achievements. Other cultural heritages of Ukraine were not mentioned in order to avoid conflict. In the visual and textual representations central discourses like the modernization of the Soviet Union or the unity of the *sovetskiy narod* were important, but popular publications still did create a knowledge base with official norms and values. They influenced the perception of space directly or indirectly. Alternative mental maps and definitions or perceptions of regions were arcane and implied from the perspective of the central power a negative separatism or lacking loyalty.

Matteo Bertelé, Ca' Foscari University, Venice

The Soviet illustrated postcard as an object of mass culture and ideological practices

The object of the proposed paper is the analysis of a selection of illustrated postcards from Alberto Sandretti collection of Russian Art. All the items have been printed in the Soviet Union from the 50's through the late 80's, show colour reproductions of Soviet paintings on the recto and no stamps, timber marks or hand-written inscriptions on the verso. Within Soviet culture, postcards embody ideological and social meanings, more than a useful medium for communication. The efficacy of an artwork consisted more of an *informative potential* through copies, than of a *direct fruition* of the autographed and authorial original artefact, which often fell into oblivion. Its memory was thus preserved by reproductions like postcards, which, thanks to their pocket format, affordability, and adaptability, suited any public and private space very easily. Printed in tens or hundreds of thousands items, postcards were distributed all over the country as a strategic visual tool for the development of a collective State-controlled memory. In my propose paper I intend to focus on two relevant pictorial genres within the Socialist visual discourse.

1) Official portraiture responds perfectly to the demands of Socialist Realism, whose purpose is the annihilation of individual artistic practice and a serial and anonymous production of images. These features make socialist-realist portraits close to Russian icons, like the 'acheiropoieton', miraculous images not created by human hands. That is why effigies of Socialist leaders in postcard format were often placed in the 'icon corner' devoted to the worship of Orthodox images, often co-existing with them, in a synchronic cohabitation of old and new.

2) Historical painting depicts events of the Soviet past through pathetic master plots in order to create an 'entertaining story' (Evgeny Dobrenko), so captivating that it results to be re-experienced and assimilated in the present 'as a text of the now'. I will investigate whether and how such a process of assessing and re-enacting the past is put into effect through postcards, whose peculiarities allowed to collect and randomly associate a cluster of historical facts, hence, to create a sort of personal (hi)story via a visual digest.

The main issue of the proposed abstract is the study of the reception and fruition of illustrated postcards in Soviet everyday life (*byt*) and their function as objects of mass culture (as souvenirs or cheap artefacts) and objects of ideological practices. I therefore intend to underscore their relevance as channels of visual memory through tangible reproductions of canonized - but easily adaptable to any use and place - personalities and facts of the Soviet past.

Christoph Lorke, University of Münster

Thinking the Social: Social images of "poverty" and the construction of "self" and "otherness" in GDR society

In the GDR phenomena like social inequality were officially classified as completely bore down: The communist ideal of an equality-shaped society has been persistently and enthusiastically pronounced in the GDR's official political culture and therefore there was no space for social grievances in its ideological conception. Nevertheless, social problems have been constantly present in the context of state socialism as well. Therefore, following the sociologists Petra Buhr, Stephan Leibfried and Lutz Leisering et al., it is only possible to uncover the prevalent, implicit conceptions of poverty in an indirect way. The presentation aims to discuss the processing of social distress and its public respectively media relevance and analyzing the specific way of social reality construction. In the center of my methodological approach rests the concept of social images, which could be deconstructed by using contemporary material (mass media, newspapers, and movies, sociological and political comments on the social reality). Being inspired by social psychological and art historical models they can be defined as a mental conception, which includes perceived, imagined and supposed features of persons or social phenomena. Social images can act as micro structures of production and reproduction of social inequality. Through their performativity, they represent the result of struggles for interpretations concerning the "appropriate" or socially accepted classification, presentation and performance of social inequality. In this sense, we can understand social images of "poverty" as mirror and manifestation of public effective attention and perception of social problems. Hence, they may help to deconstruct con- temporary constructions of social and symbolic order. In order to fulfill their communicative purpose, they need to be repeated permanently in the public sphere, transported by influential "opinion leaders".

The result has been specific social images of "poverty", which transported desired patterns of conduct and behavior and acted as socially authoritative guidelines for instructions. In this sense, certain images of "the poor" could act as "social cement", which stabilized and harmonized the process of collectivization within an imagined socialist community. Social images make it possible to deconstruct not only the perception of underprivileged social conditions but also the process of creating "self" and "other".

Moreover, they show how social order was negotiated in state socialism – by transporting heroically narrated positive and deviant negative model biographies full of disrepute. The aim was, to establish socially accepted, canonized models of live planning, in order to regulate, discipline and control the society. Did the individual encounter that offer of loyalty with good conduct, he or she was rewarded with social security. Parts of the population, who did forfeit this symbolic up-valuation due to "incorrect" manner, had to bear the consequences, what meant at least verbal-symbolic exclusion, or stigmatization, marginalization and criminalization. To that effect, the aim of social and symbolic policies was on the one side to create positive images of the "deserved poor", to offer – in a sense of moral engineering – biographical ideals to lean on and, on the other side, to deter inappropriate deviant life models. To determine whether these ways of communicating the social were "specific" for the GDR, it is fruitful to provide German-German and transnational perspectives, comparing ways of imaging deviations from the social norm and its expression via symbolic forms.

Christine Gölz, GWZO - Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur
Ostmitteleuropas e.V. an der Universität Leipzig

**Merry pictures of the little folk: The cartoon magazine
"Veselye kartinki", or what's left from the socialist
"Children's World"**

My paper deals with "Veselye kartinki" (Merry Pictures), a children's monthly cartoon magazine, launched by the Komsomol in 1956 and dedicated to the youngest generations (age 4-8) of the "new socialist man". In its heydays in the early 1980s the magazine reached a circulation of 9,5 million, which indicates that "Veselye kartinki" had become an essential part of post-Stalinist childhood. Generations of small readers found it attractive for several reasons. The journal was indeed comparatively "merry" und funny—not least because it was exempt from censorship, and so it was the only publication of that kind in the Soviet Union. Moreover, among its illustrators there were a number of artists who are today well known for their participation in the nonconformist art scene (for example Ilya Kabakov and Victor Pivovarov), which gave the merry pictures their specific visual quality. Although the picture stories in "Veselye kartinki" have been regarded as the only Soviet comics, they did not have text bubbles at all and the protagonists were far from possessing any superhero-attitude either in the Soviet or USA-style.

The characters of Soviet childhood from the Thaw until Perestroika started their life as cultural icons on the pages of this journal, where they acted as protagonists of adventures, riddles and games. Originating from children's books from all over Europe, they joined the magazine then were turned into animated films or to design motives decorating children products or into new stories of innumerable sequels. These little "cultural heroes" became a signature feature of a "merry" childhood in the times of socialism. But the merry folk (called veselye chelovechki) of these merry pictures are more than affective icons that motivate the nostalgia for good old (socialist) times (which have actually been widely exploited for retromaniac branding in the post-socialist era.) The "veselye chelovechki" have become a visual token for the Soviet Union or the *homo sovieticus* as such—from their early years on and with a wide range of connotations.

Children in the Warsaw Pact countries learned Russian at school using the "Veselye kartinki"; Russian conceptualist artists often ironically incorporated the characters in their work giving them a second or even third level of meaning; urban folklore retold their stories in a various and often subversive ways.

My paper introduces these different derivatives of a generic iconic representation of socialism on the one hand and, on the other, interrogates one specific aspect: internationalism, which got totally lost in reminiscences of the visual world of Soviet childhood.

Micha Braun, University of Leipzig

Surrealistic mimicry: Practices of repetition and imitation in Eastern European performative arts of the 1970s and 80s

Two young men develop a catalogue of gestures and exercises. Based on slogans like “Functioning in Culture” and “Mimicry in Social Surroundings” they executed the following actions: “The Treatment of the Iconography of Soviet Gestures. The Soviet Health Complex. Visit to the Lenin Museum. Deposit of Flowers at the Eternal Flame. Patrolling the Moskva. Sweeping the Streets. Planting Trees. Teaching Basic Knowledge of Civil Defense to Children. Correspondence with the Newspaper ‘Komsomolskaya Pravda.’” (Zakharov 1995:90)

Within this description and a respective photo documentation of some repetitive action pieces from 1978 by Igor Lutz und Vadim Zakharov, two younger members of the nonconformist conceptual art movement in the Soviet Union, some aspects occur of a so-to-call ‘tradition’ of performative actions in Russian and, more generally, Eastern European art history of the 20th Century. This tradition – after some experiments of the expressionist avant-garde of the 1910s and ‘20s – principally grounds in the 1960s and ‘70s, when artists and the public got a first chance to get to know the Western neo-avant-garde scenes. At the same time though, official as well as unofficial artists in the so-called Eastern Bloc still lived and worked in specific economic, social and aesthetic circumstances that of course led to a particular understanding of visual representation and the usage of images and body gestures.

Peculiarly, many artistic projects of the 1970s and ‘80s from the Soviet Union and other Central and Eastern European countries consider different possibilities of encountering with the visual culture of their respecting everyday reality as a strategy of appropriating and re-defining private and public spaces. From our more recent perspective, one may state that in their practices of restaging, re-framing and re-reading significant images and communication strategies of the public sphere the mediality and contingency of these visual icons and gestures of progress, ideologically coded history as well as of mere daily life comes into focus.

In my paper I would like to get into a selection of pictorial actions and performances of the early 1980s by younger Moscow artist groups like Lutz-Zakharov, *SZ group*, and *Mukhomory* as well as of the Polish Alter-native Movement of the ‘70s and ‘80s (i.e. *Akademia Ruchu*, *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*, *Łódź Kaliska*, *Grupa LUXUS*). Their neo-avantgarde and neo-surrealist strategies for coping with the particular conditions of production, critique and reception of art and/in the public sphere often deal immediately with ‘official’ imagery and body concepts in the mode of (mock) *imitation* and *repetition*. Whilst the whole idea of Action or Performance Art came into being almost simultaneously in America as well as in Western and Eastern Europe, there were quite different approaches with regard to the scope and the political impact of these artistic strategies. With Tadeusz Kantor I would like to ask for the potentiality of a ‘metaphysical’ or ‘ritual’ repetition of reality – that by itself can only be present in images and objects that we ascribe to it.

Nadine Siegert, University of Bayreuth, Iwalewahaus

Images of nostalgic and utopian Socialism: Visuality and counter-visuality in Angola & Mozambique

Socialism in Africa – in particular the aesthetic practices linked to it – has not yet been properly investigated within the academia. During the struggle for independence, the liberation movements were part of the socialist internationalism and foremost western leftist intellectuals projected their utopian hopes to Africa. After the independence from Portugal in 1975, both countries followed a socialist political and cultural ideology. During the first years after independence, not only the programmatic formulation of national identity was part of the ideological project, but also the construction of a framework of national art embedded in the authoritarian socialist one party regime of the MPLA (Angola) and the FREELIMO (Mozambique). In Angola and Mozambique, the cultural policies of newly-independent states embraced socialist and utopian visions of an African modernity. These two tendencies – of nostalgia and socialist utopia – are not oppositional. To understand aesthetic practice in Angola and Mozambique, it is insightful to relate it to the aesthetic discourse developed by anti-colonial movements, as well as the one by theorists who have framed socialist aesthetic theory and its relation to politics. In my paper, I explore four different questions: 1) How was socialist realism embedded in the discourse and practices of the revolutionary and postrevolutionary nations and 2) What are the traces of the iconography of revolution in recent contemporary art and popular culture? 3) What was the visuality (Mirzoeff) of socialism in Angola and Mozambique? 4) How could a counter-visuality of this iconography look like?

Based on my research in the context of my PhD on contemporary art in Angola and research in Mozambique I would like to foster the knowledge by connecting it to discourses and images from the archive and aesthetics of Russia and other Eastern European countries as well as China, North Korea and Cuba both in historical perspective and on recent cultural production. I hereby aim to investigate legacies on the visual level, both as critical and nostalgic relationship to the socialist past.

Odetta Mikstaite, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University Greifswald, IRTG "Baltic Borderlands"

Performing the village: "Authenticity" and rural aesthetics in the Soviet Lithuanian folklore revival

Understood as a "poetic creation of the wide masses" folklore became an instrument of the Soviet state already in the second half of the 1930s. But the establishment of the Stalinist folklore industry not only meant a general support of this cultural field in favor of the "national form" of Soviet republics but also transformed it into a professional art on the one hand and into a phenomenon of mass participation on the other. Furthermore, since also the Stalin cult and the current Soviet achievements were propagated in "Soviet folklore", it also became a part of the canon of socialist realism.

After 1953 this treatment of folklore caused an intense discussion and strong criticism among folklorists, condemning the "pseudo-folklore" which very fast found an echo in Soviet Lithuania as well. But this open rejection of the sanctioned folk music was only the starting point on the way to an intellectual re-interpretation and re-evaluation of the folklore in Soviet Lithuania especially intensively proceeding in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The new impulses came from several directions. Very significant role played the appearance of the "village prose" popularizing the idea of the village as an idyllic space. Not less important was the institution of the touristic and local history and geography clubs, within which the youth explored this space. But during the time when the youth discovered the country side from the city, the city itself underwent a process of ruralization since the former peasants overrun Lithuania's cities during the rapid urbanization in Lithuanian SSR during the 1950s and 1960s. These processes articulated two related developments: the disappointment of the Soviet modernity on the one hand and the trauma of the displacement on the other. The answer to these developments was the rise of folklore ensemble movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s practicing already an alternative, "authentic" form of the folklore and rejecting any stylized and modified components on the stage.

Anna G. Piotrowska, Jagiellonian University, Cracow

Embodying 'socialist emotions' via image and music: The case of Polish state folk groups "Mazowsze" and "Śląsk"

While the problematic of visual aesthetics is usually connected with static objects (architecture, photos, pictures, design, fashion) I would like to suggest a different perspective, i. e. the one that could be called *aesthetics of musical folklore* as propagated in socialistic times. Hence I propose to take a look at how musical ensembles established in communistic Poland to promote the beauty of Polish folklore pictured 'socialist emotions' relying on cultures of memory including nostalgia affecting the combination of musical and visual components. Widely distributed in mass media those predefined images of colorfully dressed youth dancing and singing coupled with characteristic sounds aimed at canonizing and epitomizing the socialistic potential of young people – potential harnessed by ideological positions and political factions. Hence appears the question of the role of imaginary in promoting such folkloristic ensembles supposed to express uncompromising socialistic idealism.

From a methodological point of view the initial assumption of this presentation is that musical culture has always been considered an integral part of artistic life actively exploited in social, and political dimensions; activities connected with music making are carrying their own history and also play an important role in the processes taking place outside purely musical reality. In this understanding of music the structures of the sound alone do not stand for the multitude of meanings attributed to music – the significance of music is related to a number of factors including (but not confined to) financial constraints, aesthetic values, social interest and, finally, political regulations.

Indeed, politics can greatly influence music by promoting certain styles and fostering new musical events, organizations and institutions. In post – war Poland artistic activities, including musical ones were generously supported. While musical life was quickly recovering and normalizing it was, however, Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov cultural policy that influenced the development of many artistic enterprises. For Zhdanov real music had to be made for people and consequently "music for the masses" was favoured with vocal forms rather than purely instrumental. Music was supposed to promote the vision of a happy communistic future, and hail beautiful folklore traditions. In that situation already in 1948 the state ensemble "Mazowsze" was established by a decree of the Ministry of Culture and Art. Not only was the group supposed to dance and sing regional repertoire from Masovian region, but also aimed at preserving other aspects of that folklore including costumes, hairstyle, etc. Because "Mazowsze" became especially popular outside Poland heavily touring in Soviet Union, USA etc., their performances – as featured in photos, TV snapshots, etc. – became emblematic for Polish communistic artistic life. The success of "Mazowsze" prompted establishing in 1953 yet another similar ensemble, this time called "Śląsk" that originally was supposed to promote folklore of Silesia region. The performances of both ensembles – as I claim – have been based not only on oral component but also deeply indebted in visuality which soon became the trade mark of these groups. Their popularity (present on TV, radio, even featured in films) as well as their survival after 1989 turn attest that the combination of various elements have enabled to create a unique quality which can be referred to as a part and parcel of (not only) visual culture of socialism.