



POLISH
INSTITUTE
OF WORLD
ART
STUDIES



NICOLAUS COPERNICUS
UNIVERSITY
IN TORUŃ

100 LAT
AWAN
GARDY
W POLSCE

VII CONFERENCE OF MODERN ART IN TORUN

FORMISTS – BUNT / ZDRÓJ – YUNG YIDISH.
THE 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLISH
AVANT-GARDE



Fryderyk Kleinman

Centre of Contemporary Art „Znaki Czasu” in Torun
Wały gen. Sikorskiego 13

7-9.11.2017

The Polish Institute of World Art Studies, the Department of the History of Modern Art at the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Department of Literature of the Young Poland Movement and Interwar Period at the Faculty of Philology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, in connection with 100 year anniversary of independence, have decided to devote the VII Conference of Modern Art to the issue of the Polish avant-garde between 1917-1923, in particular to three of the most important, yet stylistically and thematically very diverse artistic groups. The conference, which will take place at the Centre of Contemporary Art “Znaki Czasu” in Torun, should cover a broad range of issues encompassed by the agenda, artistic, literary and theatrical work, as well as the political and social activities of these groups.

The Formists in their broadest form comprised an association aimed at the younger generation of artists, divided into various streams: expressionist-cubist (cubo-expressionist) and classicist (under the influence of Elie Nadelman), whose program and work evolved in the direction of national art and state-building, modernised by the avant-garde. Bunt (Revolt) – a closer-knit group of expressionist artists associated with Berlin, with a radically left-wing political agenda, clubbing together, however, with the support of Jozef Pilsudski – evolved in the direction of abstract art for the first time in Poland through the geometrisation of their works. Significantly, they collaborated with writers centred around the Poznan magazine named „Zdrój” (“Source”). Finally, Yung Yidish (Jung Idysz) – a group of artists who departed from the ideology of a Jewish „national revival” towards leftist political involvement – created a different metaphorical art called Jewish expressionism, expressing a mystical, Hasidic vision of the world.

The artistic movement, which peaked around 1920, began in 1905 within the circle of the Krakow „Group of Five” and, above all, out of the impressive oeuvre of Polish painters and sculptors working in the Paris colony, who represented a broad cross-section of the trends and attitudes of post-impressionism (Ślewiński, Peskè, Muter), Fauvism (Stückgold, Gwozdecki), classicism, often evolving into Art Deco (Nadelman, Zak, Merkel), Cubism (Marcoussis, Hayden, Lambert Rucki) and the École de Paris (Kisling). It is important to explore the fascinating German-Russian cultural borderland on Polish territory – in the fields of art, literature, theatre and film, from Kovno (Kaunas) to Katowice – that produced many prominent Polish, German and Jewish artists. The conference program will be divided into sections: national (Polish) and international, for the purpose of comparative studies. This raises a number of historical, socio-cultural and ideological issues that coincided with the war-time collapse of the old order, pushing forward the culture of the new country at full steam. What was the attitude of the young generation of the avant-garde towards the previous generation, focused on the „Sztuka” (“Art”) or „Wiener Sezession” associations? How did the young writers and playwrights look upon the achievements of their Young Poland predecessors? Was this a generation clash (as in Germany) or a continuation (Malczewski, Wyspianski, Pautsch)?

How did the group members (and other artists) relate to the horrors of the war that was supposed to be followed by a liberation of humanity, but in fact was superseded by fresh wars and revolutions? Thus, in the work of „activist” groups (like Bunt and Zdrój) appeared interpretations of Jesus Christ as the New Man revolutionary using iconography from the New Testament to express a hope for change. This same Jesus/New Man became a prophet in the work of Jewish artists, connecting the Old and New Testament, leading the Jews into a new Judeo-Christian Europe.

How to define the concept of the artistic groups, of which Bunt was the first to be established after the fall of the German Reich. From Vienna to Riga, from Hamburg to Bucharest, artistic groups formed with various programs, constructs and forms of action, often preceded by a movement of „independent exhibitions” and a generation clash. How did they receive news about art (with the astonishing „channel” in Yiddish that connected Moscow and Kiev via Warsaw and Berlin and onwards to Paris and New York)? What features were characterised by these groups? What relations prevailed within multinational groups? In what environments did they exist, communicating (or not) with the public via their own theorists and press critics. What role was fulfilled by their publications? How did they make contact with the world, by sending their own members to exhibit their works in Paris or Berlin or representatives to the Congress of Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf? What was the role and position of women in the groups? What were the relations between the visual artists, writers and critics in the groups? How did they correspond with each other to make art and literature? How did artists interact with literature, theatre, film and was this a two-way process? How did the theoretical assumptions of one art form overlap with another? How did the artists function when combining different fields (Wyspianski, Czyżewski, Hulewicz)?

We would like a reflection on these topics to be conducted on many levels, taking into account the perspectives of different disciplines of knowledge. Therefore, to this conference we would like to invite historians and theorists of art, theatre and film scholars, historians of literature, experts on journalism, sociologists, historians and cultural theorists.

The conference languages are Polish and English.

Materials from the conference will be published in English only and will be included in the series „Studies on modern art,” vol. 7.

The Organising Committee consists of:

Dr. Małgorzata Geron

Prof. Jerzy Malinowski (President)

Prof. Rafał Moczko

COST OF PARTICIPATION:

150 zł ; for PhD students - 70 zł

Applications for participation in the conference via the attached form are to be submitted by **30 June 2017** to Dr. Małgorzata Geron: ✉ m.geron@poczta.fm