

**PICASSOEST: USES AND ABUSES OF PICASSO IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1945-1989**

**International Conference: Bucharest, Romania, 5 January 2024**

**Romanian Academy, Calea Victoriei 125 – Amphitheater “Ion Heliade Rădulescu”**

**Organizers: MARE/Museum of Recent Art, Bucharest, and  
Constantin Rădulescu-Motru Institute of Philosophy and  
Psychology of the Romanian Academy,  
Department of Western Philosophy**

**MORNING SESSION**

**10.00 – 10.20**

**Cécile Godefroy**

**“On the margins and beyond: a study of solitary figures in Pablo Picasso's work”.**

The presentation will focus on Picasso's study of and attachment to lonely, marginalized, and oppressed figures, which are all ways of questioning the condition of the art world and the societies surrounding the artist. An overview that offers a path to understanding Picasso's critical and artistic reception on a global scale.

**Cécile Godefroy** is an Art Historian, PhD, member of the International Association of Art Critics, and Head of the Centre d'Études Picasso (Musée national Picasso-Paris). Specialist in the historical avant-garde and in transdisciplinary issues in art, she has taught modern and contemporary art in French and American universities in Paris. Curator of several exhibitions devoted to original subjects in Picasso's work for the Musée national Picasso-Paris; BOZAR, Brussels; Philharmonie, Paris; Centro Botín Santander; Musée de l'Homme, Paris, she also curated exhibitions devoted to seminal women artists («Sonia Delaunay. The Colors of Abstraction», Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris ; Tate modern, London, in 2014-15 ; « Marcelle Cahn, En quête d'espace », Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg ; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Saint-Etienne, Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes, 2022-23), and in 2023 « A toi de faire, ma mignonne », an exhibition of Sophie Calle at the Musée national Picasso-Paris.

**10.40 – 11.00**

**Tomáš Pospiszyl**

**Picasso vs. Guttuso**

In the middle of the last century, modern art in former Czechoslovakia occupied a precarious position. Avant-garde tendencies were challenged and later banned in the years 1938-1945. Another anti-modernist campaign was related to the promotion of the doctrine of socialist realism in the 1950s. Nevertheless, many young artists in Czechoslovakia tried to come to terms with the legacy of modernism. Cubism and Pablo Picasso as its leading representative played a key role in this process. Picasso's work was known in Czechoslovakia and, thanks to his collector Vincenc Kramář, physically accessible. At the same time, Picasso was not the only role model for young artists of the fifties who felt the need to combine the ideals of socialism and modern art. The works of Renato Guttuso were well known throughout Eastern Europe. Guttuso, alongside Picasso, represented an alternative of a committed, at the same time modern artist. The paper will try to compare the roles of both artists, representing different paradigms of modernity.

**Tomáš Pospiszyl** (\*1967) is an art historian, educator, writer and curator based in Prague. He worked as a curator of The National Gallery in Prague (1997-2002) and was a research fellow at The Museum of Modern Art in New York (2000). Since 2016 he serves as a Chair of the Department of Art Theory and History at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. Projects authored by Tomas Pospiszyl range from period of early modernism, avant-garde, neo-avant-garde to contemporary art. His publications in English include, among others, an anthology *Primary Documents; A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s.*, which he edited together with Laura Hoptman, (MIT Press, MoMA, 2002), or selection of his essays *An Associative Art History; Comparative Studies of Neo-Avant-Gardes in a Bipolar World* (JRP Ringier & Les Presses du Réel, Zurich 2017). His current research involves official art in postwar Czechoslovakia or work of critic Jindřich Chaloupecký.

## 11.20 – 11.40

### Anna Manicka

#### **We'll change henceforth the old tradition, And spurn the dust to win the prize! Far reaching effects of Picasso's visit in Poland in 1948**

Pablo Picasso came to Poland in 1948 to take part in the Peace Congress in Warsaw. In this time he was heavily criticised by the French communists and it was social realist Fougeron, who was treated as a model for young French artists. Therefore for Picasso this visit was a kind of escape. For the people in Poland the same visit was a proof that Poland in not still the 17<sup>th</sup> republic of Soviet Union... So everyone had its purpose and both were satisfied. What is more the results of Picasso's visit in Poland were far-reaching. In Poland after Picasso had left, the phenomena of so called pikasy has appeared. Pikasy these are tissues and ceramics inspired by Picasso. In this time people wearing clothes with geometrical patterns, were playing games with authorities, because they could not say anything openly.

Just like design, the Polish art of those times has been inspired by Picasso's art. The little influence of Polish culture on Picasso's art can be observed too.

**Dr Anna Manicka** graduated from Warsaw University in 1989 (MA in History of Art), and in 1997 she finished postgraduate studies in Museology. She's got Ph.D. in 2009 at the Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw (in the History of Art). Since 1989 she works in National Museum in Warsaw, in the years 2019-2022 as a curator of the Collection of Modern Art. Her main research field are interwar and contemporary prints and catastrophism in fine arts in the XX cent.

Her most important exhibitions *Salvador Dali. The Illustrator. Works from the Hannelore Neumann and Helmut Rebmann Collection*, National Museum in Warsaw 2005 (cat.); *Párbeszéd fekete-fehérben. Lengyel és Magyar grafika 1918-1939, Dialogue in Black and White. Polish and Hungarian Prints 1918-1939* [with dr Katalin Bakos], National Museum in Warsaw-Hungarian National Gallery, 2009 (cat.); *Marc Chagall*, National Museum in Warsaw 2022.

**12.00 – 12.20**

**Yuning Teng**

**“Lenin in the Art Field” or a Formalist Bourgeois?**

**The Reception and Adaptation of Pablo Picasso in 20th Century China**

In the turbulent history of 20th-century China, there is arguably no foreign artist who has consistently remained a subject of discussion in the art scene as much as Pablo Picasso. Picasso's art works were introduced to China by artists who had studied abroad and his paintings began to appear in newspapers and publications as early as the 1920s. Assessments of Picasso have been a constant source of debate within the Chinese art world: In the 1930s, advocates of modernist arts celebrated his work for its revolutionary spirit, some even referred to him as the “Lenin in the art field”. On the other hand, the realist faction criticized Picasso, deeming his creations bourgeois formalism. The news of Picasso's affiliation with the French Communist Party in 1944 garnered significant attention in China, particularly as it evolved into a potent cultural propaganda tool for the Chinese Communist Party, which was still embroiled in a civil war. Following 1949, Picasso's “peace dove” images for the World Peace Congresses even transformed into a new iconic symbol in socialist China, inspiring numerous variations in the works of local artists. However, this did not change the fate of Picasso's works during China's “Cultural Revolution”, when they were fiercely criticized as a symbol of “bourgeois liberalization”. Only after 1979 were Picasso's achievements reevaluated, and they started contributing to the development of contemporary Chinese art. In China, Picasso's political influence arguably surpasses his artistic

impact. The process of his artwork being introduced, spread, interpreted and appropriated vividly illustrates the operation of “image vehicles” (Aby Warburg) within different political and cultural contexts, thereby generating a new political iconography in China.

**Yuning Teng** is a Chinese art historian based in Hamburg and Beijing. She currently serves as a Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin at the Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar of Universität Hamburg since 2023. Her primary research interests encompass political iconography, urban landscape, and contemporary art. She previously worked as the deputy director of the Center for Visual Studies at Peking University for twelve years, overseeing the Chinese Modern Art Archive (CMAA) and the *Annual of Contemporary Art of China*. She also held the position of Vice Secretary-General at the Wu Zuoren International Foundation of Fine Arts (WIFA) from 2013 to 2022 and is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA). Yuning Teng held a prominent role in the CIHA-China Secretariat from 2012 to 2021, including serving as the Junior Chair for the “Landscape and Spectacle” session at the 34th CIHA World Congress in Beijing in 2016, and she currently serves as Co-chair for the “Patrimonialisation(s)” session for the 36th CIHA World Congress in Lyon scheduled for 2024. In addition to her academic roles, Yuning Teng has curated more than twenty exhibitions, both in China and internationally, over the past decade. Notable exhibitions include the Guangzhou Image Triennale 2021 (as a co-curator) and the “Exhibition of the Annual of Contemporary Art of China” from 2015 to 2018 (with the 2017 exhibition winning the nomination award for the 13th Award of China Art). She also curated “30 Years’ Experience of Chinese Performance Art” (2016), “La Chine Ardente: Contemporary Art of China” (2015, Mons, Belgium), “Experimental Art Section of the Twelfth National Art Exhibition of China” (2014), “Ideology and Manifestation – Experimental Art in Contemporary China” (2013), and “Self-image – Female Art in China, 1920-2010” (2010).

**LUNCH BREAK 13.00 – 15.00**

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

**15.00 – 15.20**

**Jérôme Bazin**

**The cumbersome reference – in what way did Picasso not respond to artistic concerns in communist Europe?**

There is a lot of evidence of Picasso’s presence in Eastern Europe: the 1948 episode in Wrocław, the 1956 exhibition in Moscow, the reproductions of the dove, *Guernica* and *Massacre in Korea* in various formats, the direct borrowings from his work by the “European school”, by Willi Sitte,

by Sándor Bortnyik, and so on. Although the museums of communist Europe rarely bought his works, they were reproduced in a large number of publications. Picasso's own face was often visible, as shown by several busts from the period that we will present.

By becoming a member of the French Communist Party, he became an inevitable reference in post-war communist countries. With his art, which remained figurative and within the limits of traditional artistic mediums, he was the authorized embodiment of artistic modernism. Reviving the figure of the "great" artist, he became indispensable.

Today, Picasso's place in communist countries is often an opportunity to describe the degrees of freedom in each of these countries – his reception serves as a test of artistic freedoms, which were granted in variable and arbitrary ways, as we well know. In this talk, we would like to approach the Picasso question in a different way. Adopting the points of view of different artistic milieus in the East, we would like to present situations where Picasso was little help. If Picasso was cumbersome, it was not just because his art upset the most intransigent ideologists, it was also because his art has not met with the expectations of artistic circles.

**Jérôme Bazin** is associate professor at the university Paris-Est Créteil in France. He works on the social history of visual arts and architecture in different communist contexts. In 2021, he co-curates with Joanna Kordjak the exhibition at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw: *Cold Revolution. Central and Eastern European Societies in Times of Socialist Realism, 1948-1959*. He published *Réalisme et égalité. Une histoire sociale de l'art en République Démocratique Allemande, 1949-1990* (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2015) and co-edited *Art Beyond Borders. Artistic Exchanges in Communist Europe, 1945-1989* (Budapest : Central European University Press, 2016).

**15.40 – 16.00**

**Erwin Kessler**

### **The Beauty (w)as the Beast: Conflicting Appraisals of Picasso in Communist Romania**

The presentation distinguishes between various historical stages of what is generally called "the communist Romania", pairing them with the conflicting perceptions and usages made of the artistic work and of the public figure of Picasso in this context. In the presentation, the "communist Romania" is not restricted to the official communist regime starting in December 1947 and ending in December 1989. "Communist Romania" is generally referring to communism as a larger and deeper cultural feature, not directly related to an official, political form of government. Five main historical stages of the communist Romania are under survey. The first stage is immediately after WW1, when the Romanian Communist Party was grounded, in May 1921, and was subsequently dissolved and banished by the Romanian liberal government, in April 1924. The second stage is the illegal activity of the Communist Party, during the interwar period, until 1944. The third stage is the radical, mostly Stalinist

communism, until 1965. The fourth stage is the communist liberalization period, from around late-1964 until roughly 1971. The fifth stage is the late-period of the local communist regime, from 1972 to 1989.

Pablo Picasso was arguably the most visible and widely known artist at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mainly through his massive contribution to the emergence and definition of Cubism. In its turn, Cubism was instrumental in defining and refining the typical, Communist-bound Constructivism, the preferred style widely associated with the political, Communist option of certain artists during the 1920s and the 1930s, particularly in Romania, where the so-called historical avant-garde was grounded in autumn 1924, only few months after the banishment of the Romanian Communist Party, in spring 1924. Although the birth of the Romanian avant-garde happened in the context of the *First International Exhibition* of the magazine *Contimporanul*, neither Picasso nor any of the Paris School masters were exhibited. However, Picasso was significantly mentioned and heavily criticized by the chief commissar of the exhibition, M.H. Maxy, in one of his crucial, avant-garde manifestos published in October 1924.

Throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s, Picasso's stylistic implements were locally assimilated mostly by avant-garde artists, while various art historians, including front-figures like George Oprescu criticized Picasso's supposed de-humanization of the figures through resorting to conflicting geometric distortions of bodies and heads. By the end of the interwar period, the reception of Picasso's famous *Guernica* was split in Romania, a country with far-right leanings, whose Nazi-oriented movement, the Iron Legion, was proudly exhorting the implication in the Spanish Civil War, on the side of Franco, which heavily challenged Picasso's dedication to the other, Republican side.

Immediately after WW2, the figure and the work of Picasso became once again a significant topic for the local, cultural propaganda. The Communist regime tried to cope with the conflicting features of Picasso's complex public presence, as he (a member of the French Communist Party since 1944) was a key-figure of the international, communist movement for peace but, at the same time, a "formalist" whose work was unmasked in the official publications of the Romanian Communist Party as de-humanizing, abstract and regressive. At the same time, Picasso, especially through secretly circulating exhibition catalogs, posters and texts, was feeding the survival of a certain modernism in the atelier culture of mostly younger artists. His revival was nonetheless powerful after the October 1968 Picasso engravings exhibition at the National Museum of Art, when an entire re-appraisal movement was started, which lasted for a few years. Later on, after 1971, Picasso once again lapsed into semi-oblivion, his stylistic marks being diluted and assimilated as almost anonymous visual data of a re-modernizing language permitted by the authoritarian regime.

**Erwin Kessler** is the founding director of MARE/Museum of Recent Art Bucharest and a scientific researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Romanian Academy. His research and curatorship on modern and contemporary art, aesthetics and art history, focusses on the historical Romanian avant-garde, on its pre-war and post-war instrumentalization by totalitarian regimes, ranging from fascism to communism. Among his recent books: *The Picasso Effect* (Vellant,

2023), *Scared to Paint. Ecaterina Vrana* (catalogue raisonné, Vellant, 2022), *Ion Grigorescu. The Painted Work, 1963-2022* (Vellant, 2022, catalogue raisonné, revised edition). He recently contributed *War as Inverter in Romanian art between 1912 and 1924*, in *Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Avant-garde and Modernism* (Artefactum, 2022), and *Stylistic Diversities United*, in *Hot Art, Cold War – Southern and Eastern European Writing on American Art 1945-1990*, Iain Whyte, Claudia Hopkins, eds. (Routledge, 2020), and *Every Lead Evening*, in *Victor Man* (Walther Koenig, 2020). The emergence of various, reactionary anti-modernisms out of the depleted avant-gardes, from the 1930s until the 1980s, has frequently surfaced in his latest publications.

**16.20 – 17.20**

**Prof. Dr. Uwe Fleckner, keynote speaker**

**Education for a democratic gaze**

**Pablo Picasso's Munich exhibition from 1955**

The Haus der Kunst in Munich was inaugurated by the National Socialists in 1937 as the House of German Art and used as a presentation site for painters and sculptors loyal to the regime. In the post-war period it tried to “come to terms” with its own past through exhibitions of previously defamed art. But it was not until a retrospective of Pablo Picasso's works held in 1955 that more radical international art moved into the building. The lecture not only describes the history of this exhibition, at which works such as *Guernica* (1937) or the *Massacre in Korea* (1951) could be seen, but also looks back at the major German art exhibitions shown there during the »Third Reich« as well as at the contradictory reception of the artist in East and West Germany. Analyzing widely unknown visual documents of the time, the lecture can demonstrate how Picasso's art provoked a new democratic viewing behavior.

**Uwe Fleckner** is professor of art history at the University of Hamburg and at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, where he directs the Advanced School of Art and Humanities, He is one of the directors of the Warburg-Haus in Hamburg and co-editor of Carl Einstein's and Aby Warburg's complete works. Fleckner was vice-director of the Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art in Paris, worked as guest professor at Stanford University and at Peking University and was a fellow at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. He is founder and director of the Research Center on Degenerate Art at the University of Hamburg and author of numerous books and

articles on 18th to 21th century art history, with French and German art and art theory and political iconography as his main fields.