

Modernism in Georgia: Redrawing the Boundaries

Saturday, 10 April 2010, 10:00am – 7:00pm

1512 International Affairs Building, Columbia University

This conference aims to cover multiple aspects of Georgian Modernism, including the birth of Modernist and avant-garde art in Georgia; the relationship between politics, art, architecture and culture in the beginning of the 20th century; Georgian Modernism and the avant-garde in relation to European discourse; Modernist artists and avant-garde groups in Tbilisi; the introduction of a new artistic language in all spheres of culture – art, theatre, cinema, and poetry among them; and the relationship of Soviet ideology to art and cultural practice. All presentations will be unified thematically and contextually under the theme: Georgian Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Modernity.

The conference will be accompanied by an exhibition of Georgian Modernist and avant-garde art at the Harriman Institute of Columbia University, April 1- May 15, 2010. (These exhibition materials were previously presented at the highly successful show “The Fantastic Tavern: The Tbilisi Avant-garde” at Casey Kaplan Gallery NY in July 2009. That exhibition was curated by Daniel Baumann and AIRL.) The exhibition will be organized by the Harriman Institute in association with AIRL (Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory, Georgia) and Daniel Baumann (freelance curator, Switzerland).

The turn of the 20th century was marked by technological and scientific advances, dramatic political change and cultural transformation. The modern era demanded new language for art and architecture. After a century as part of the Russian Empire, Georgia became an independent country in 1917-1921 (a period followed by Bolshevik and incorporation into the USSR). That period saw the birth of Modernism and the avant-garde in Georgian art. It was characterized by the interconnectedness of various art fields, such as literature/poetry, painting, architecture, theater, film and music. Cultural innovators from Russia and the entire Caucasus region gathered in Tbilisi during the late teens and early 1920s. Tbilisi, which was rich in art nouveau architecture and modern art, became a cultural center for the region and a point of interconnection between the Russian and European avant-garde movements.

The conference and exhibition on Georgian Modernism will endeavor to demonstrate the role of Georgian Modernist art and culture in the history of modern European art.

Panels will include: Tbilisi Avant-Garde Art and its Cultural Milieu; Georgian Modernism and its Development.

Presenters: Catharine Nepomnyashchy (Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Russian and Department Chair, Barnard College, Columbia University), Lauren Ninoshvili (PhD student, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University; Georgian Studies Coordinator, Harriman Institute, Columbia University), Harsha Ram (Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley), Francoise Le-Gris (Associate Professor of Art History, University of Quebec, Montreal), Pamela Renner (Arts Journalist; Adjunct Instructor in English, Empire State College, Harry Van Arsdale Center for Labor Studies), Nana Kipiani (Senior Research Fellow, G. Chubinashvili National Research Center for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation; Associate Professor, Ilia Chavchavadze State University; Director, Arts Interdisciplinary Research Lab - AIRL), Levan Chogoshvili (Artist; Program Manager, Arts Interdisciplinary Research Lab – AIRL)), Giorgi Gvakharia (Professor, Shota Rustaveli State University of Theatre and Cinema; Radio Freedom Culture Critic), Ketevan Shavgulidze (Associate Professor, Grigol Robakidze Art University; Professor, Tbilisi State Academy of Fine Arts; Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University), Tea Tabatadze (Research Fellow, Chubinashvili National Research Center for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation; Professor, Tbilisi State Academy of Fine Arts), Nestan Tatarashvili (Architect; Head of the Art Nouveau Preservation Group in Georgia; Architect at the Society with Limited Responsibility GROSSO), and Mzia Chikhradze (Senior Research Fellow, Chubinashvili National Research Center for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation; Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Harriman Institute of Columbia University).

For more information, please contact the conference organizer, Dr. Mzia Chikhradze, at mc3015@columbia.edu.