

Antje Kempe – Beáta Hock – Marina Dmitrieva (eds.), *Unicursal – International – Global. Art Histories of Socialist Eastern Europe*, Göttingen: V&R 2023.

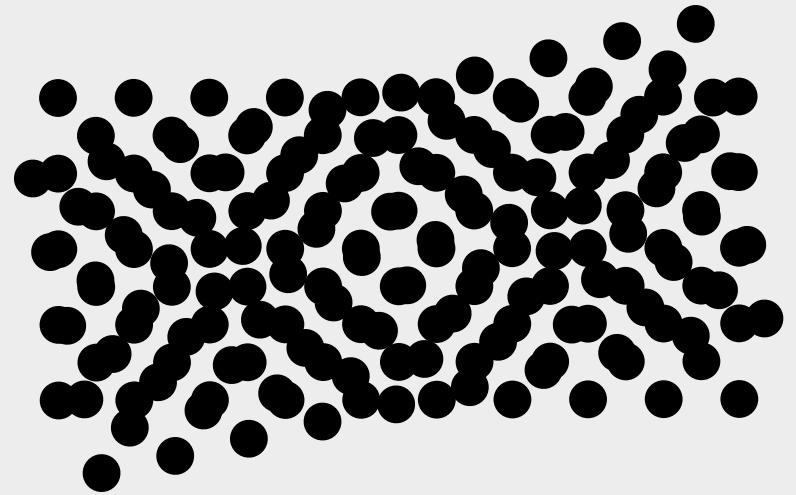
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## Book Review

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# Contributing to the Complexity of the Universe of Art History. A Reconsideration of Socialist Art<sup>(1)</sup>

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1 Translated from the Slovak by John Minahane.

Recent decades have seen the discipline of art history transformed in several fundamental ways. A breakthrough came with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the accelerating processes of change during the 1990s. These processes, however, had not just suddenly appeared, they were rooted in the 1980s. We are informed by the editors Antje Kempe, Beáta Hock and Marina Dmitrieva that their collective monograph takes its starting-point from views expressed by the Polish art historian Jan Białostocki in an article published in 1982, “A Comparative History of World Art, Is It Possible?” Białostocki questioned the universality of art history and suggested that the task of revising it should be undertaken by the non-European regions, within the framework of existing structures.<sup>(2)</sup> The editors are therefore associating themselves with the tendency to move away from the hegemony of methods and concepts such as the center-periphery model, canon, and style.<sup>(3)</sup> Art history ought to be, in their view, perceived and written as a complex material of diachronic and synchronic processes of development in connected regions.<sup>(4)</sup>

Transformations in the discipline of art history in post-socialist countries after 1989 are associated with the prefix “re-”: re-construction, re-vision, re-reading, re-formation, and re-configuration. This verbal construction alerts us to the fact that what is involved is a renewed transcription of something already existing, but under new conditions and within new coordinates of value. Essential contributions to the “new” history of the art of East-Central Europe have been made by several publications in recent years, and the book reviewed here has an honorable

2 Białostocki had earlier presented certain elements of his theory at the Congress of the International Committee of Art History in 1979 at Bologna (CIHA). In 1986, at the Congress of CIHA in Washington, he participated in the section “Center and Periphery: Dissemination and Assimilation of Style” with the paper “What is Bad about the Periphery?”

3 KEMPE – HOCK – DMITRIEVA, *Universal – International – Global*, p. 21.

4 *Ibid.*

place in that series. *Universal – International – Global. Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe* results from a conference on *Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary: Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe*, which was held in 2017 in Leipzig. In what follows, my aim is not to give a detailed description of the contents of individual chapters, but rather a critical reflection and consideration of its main themes. I focus my attention on placing this book in the context of the current discourse on art history, while seeking to communicate to readers the areas of concern to the individual contributors. Furthermore, I attempt to identify its importance for the current state of art history and its future course.

Jan Białostocki was not without kindred spirits in Europe of the 1980s. I may mention the discourse round the concepts of Ostkunst – Westkunst (“East art – West art”), from the same period. Today we think of these concepts above all as geopolitical categories, whose ideological charge was directly proportional to the condition in which Europe found itself during the Cold War; nevertheless, this thinking had vitality and resonance in the cultural sphere at the given time.<sup>(5)</sup> Regarding the ignorance, or at least the marginalization, of art from the former East Bloc by western art history pre-1989, the Slovak art historian Tomáš Štrauss actually gave a critical evaluation of this in the West German media. In a response to the “Westkunst” exhibition displayed in 1981, shortly after his emigration to West Germany, he pointed to the unequal and hegemonic approach to the writing of art history on the Western

5 Andrea BĀTOROVÁ, “Iné a predsa rovnaké umenie: Paradigma Ostkunst v diele Tomáša Štraussa,” in: Mária BĀTOROVÁ (ed.), *Slovenský a európsky kunsthistorik Tomáš Štrauss: idey a reflexie*, Bratislava: Veda, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied 2021, pp. 31–51; Andrea BĀTOROVÁ, “Ostkunst, a Different yet Similar Art: Some Notes on the Complexity of Tomáš Štrauss’s Thought,” *Art margins*, February 5, 2021, <https://artmargins.com/ostkunst-a-different-yet-similar-art-some-notes-on-the-complexity-of-tomas-strauss-thought/> (accessed November 7, 2023).

side.<sup>(6)</sup> He developed his critical opinions further in 1985,<sup>(7)</sup> and also later in his monograph *Zwischen Ostkunst und Westkunst. Von der Avantgarde zur Postmoderne* (Between East Art and West Art. From the Avantgarde to Postmodernism).<sup>(8)</sup>

During the first half of the 1980s the German art critic Hans Belting proclaimed “the end of art history.” What he had in mind was the end of one paradigm of looking at art as a unified, universally valid linear story.<sup>(9)</sup> Belting designated the universalism of art history as a presumption and a “Western error,” the end of which was for him a synonym of a change of paradigm. In the introduction to the first version of this book he mentions that he was influenced by a performance by Harvé Fischer at the Centre Pompidou (1979) and Fischer’s book *L’histoire de l’art est terminée* (Art History Has Ended; 1981). Fischer here criticizes the linear story of art history based on the idea of progress, which according to him can no longer be written in this way.<sup>(10)</sup> In a revised second edition after the fall of the Berlin Wall,

6 Thomas STRAUSS, “Westkunst? – Ostkunst? (Entwicklungsskizze einer anderen, und trotzdem derselben Kunst),” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 15, 1981. Strauss pointed critically, and continually, to the artificially constructed nature of the strict division of the European continent and artistic production into East and West. Cf. also László GLOZER, *Westkunst: zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, Köln: DuMont Buchverlag 1981. This was a broadly conceived exhibition, where roughly 1000 art works were presented. The curator-in-chief was Klaus Ruhrberg (director of the Ludwig Museum in Köln). Others who contributed to its production included Kasper König, founder of Skulptur Projekte Münster, and László Glozer, professor of art history.

7 Thomas STRAUSS, “‘Ostkunst’ nur mit Fragezeichen,” *Das Kunstwerk*, Vol. 37, 1985, No. 2.

8 Thomas STRAUSS, *Zwischen Ostkunst und Westkunst. Von der Avantgarde zur Postmoderne*, München: Scaneg Verlag 1995. In his introduction (written in 1991), Strauss stated that the art of the former Eastern Bloc found itself in “an alarming initial position.” He documented this from the contents of the newly-published *Lexicon of Contemporary Art*. This provided a survey of the most important artists after 1945; Strauss writes that in its 7,500 pages with roughly 8,000 illustrations, there were descriptions of roughly 500 artists. Eight of them came from Eastern Europe. This alarming state has prevailed, he goes on to say, for the last 30 years in the practical activity of publishing, museology, and also exhibiting.

9 Hans BELTING, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag 1983, pp. 11–61.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 12

Belting supplemented his own first version with chapters devoted to the art of the so-called Eastern Bloc.<sup>(11)</sup> “We have no idea (...) how patronizing we have been to the East with our West European picture of art, where old art is purely Western and where there is only one history of art, which excludes the East.”<sup>(12)</sup> Having regard to the new borders of Europe, “East” and “West” must be a theme for a still unwritten two-voiced history of art.<sup>(13)</sup> And he goes on to say that the art history of the neglected is crying out, that the official art history is “fabricated” and demands revision.<sup>(14)</sup> The German critic thus described the end of one paradigm of looking at art, because the current art of that time had already outgrown the existing paradigm. Belting also played a notable part in the exhibition and project *The Global Contemporary. Art Worlds after 1989* in ZKM in Karlsruhe.<sup>(15)</sup> In his view, the most powerful impulses towards questioning the modernist and post-modernist conception of art come from the periphery of the so-called Global South. The latter, until recently referred to as the “Third World,” demands a revision of the study of extra-European art, while it strictly separates world art / world art history from global (contemporary) art, and “world art studies” (weighted down by modernist universalism) from “global art history” (coming to terms with the results of art that is post-historical and post-ethnic, global and local simultaneously).

But let us return to 2023, to the book reviewed here. We take it as given that the processes of transformation

11 The new edition was supplemented with chapters on the topic of the binary division of Europe into West and East and the relation between world art and the art of minorities considering the emergence of a new geography of art, which were of crucial importance in the new situation in which art historiography found itself after 1989.

12 Hans BELTING, *Konec dějin umění* (The End of Art History), Prague: Mladá fronta 2000, p. 64.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

15 See [www.globalartmuseum.de](http://www.globalartmuseum.de). Cf. also: Hans BELTING – Andrea BUDDENSIEG – Peter WEIBEL (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of the New Art Worlds*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press 2013.

after 1989 are the direct continuation of the processes that led to the collapse of the state socialist regimes and the gradual weakening of the hegemony of the West within Europe. After 1989 one can follow several processes running in parallel in writing art history and about art history, where efforts are made to reduce the asymmetry and asynchronicity that had occurred. These developed as a result of the artificial division of Europe into two camps after the end of World War II. In a nutshell, in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc we may observe and follow: 1. A settling of accounts with the communist past, hence taking account of the imbalance and insufficiency of “objectivity” in one’s own art history; 2. Taking account of the Western “master narrative” of art history; 3. Taking account of Eastern Europe (as part of one interlinked Europe before colonization by the Soviet Union) in its current situation, where it belongs as the “close Other” to Western universalism and Euro-centrism, which is subjected to critical revision and deconstruction by post-colonial studies.

As the editors explain, their work undertakes to examine the concepts and practices of art history which were produced in the former “Eastern Bloc” and which were akin to global art studies and world art studies. One may acknowledge that in dealing with these complex and intricate connotations they had a difficult task. Each of the above-mentioned three processes of taking account of the past is, both in content and scope, an enormous heterogeneous terrain whose mapping presents no small challenge. The editors see their efforts as continuous with the process of the deconstruction of Eurocentrism, and they refer to (among other exhibitions) *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, *The Other Story*, and the 3rd Biennale in Havana.<sup>(16)</sup> In the introduction they set out the genesis of the ideas associated

16 *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, curator Jean-Hubert Martin, Paris: Centre Pompidou and La Villette 1989, *The Other Story*, curator Rasheed Araeen, London: Hayward Gallery 1989, *3rd Biennale in Havana*, curator Gerardo Mosquera, Havana 1989.

with the theme of “Weltkunstgeschichte,” which was developed in the 1920s. Most especially they recall, as relevant to their own concept, the work of Jozef Strzygowski and his early criticism of Eurocentrism in 1920s art history, featuring the concept of a polyphonic history of art. Likewise they call attention to the fact that existence in the so-called Eastern Bloc had its murky side, for example uniformity and regulation; on the other hand, “membership” of this bloc generated a certain type of socialist internationalism, comradeship and loyalty among “friendly” states even in different continents, in the name of ideological solidarity among people who were fighting for the same goals. Despite the fact that these processes had a fundamental shaping effect on what happened in the world during the Cold War, hitherto no attention has been devoted to them. In fact, the conference in Leipzig was a cautious attempt to examine socialist internationalism as a principle of political and cultural diplomacy, as well as a framework for writing and teaching art history in the period of socialism.<sup>(17)</sup>

The conception of socialist internationalism was developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the Soviet Union, and it became an instrument of Sovietization in the satellite states. A new cultural narrative was created, of Marxist-Leninism and art history, which was for the “friendly countries” collectively. Its aim was to educate the new human being who was on the road to socialism. In this connection the editors have posed two key questions: 1. How did art history develop, within the framework of national art history, during Soviet hegemony? 2. Is the idea of solidarity linked with internationalism, and if so, how does it relate to the universal national histories of art?

As they point out, the individual articles contribute to the research of socialist internationalism as a cultural-diplomatic principle, in conjunction with selected new approaches in the art history of the Soviet Union’s satellite

17 KEMPE – HOCK – DMITRIEVA, *Universal – International – Global*, p. 14.

states during the Cold War. The central question to which they seek answers is the relation between art history, which emerged within socialism as “universal,” and the theoretical conceptions and strategies of global art history today. Their thinking is associated with the research current (developing during the past decade) which studies socialist realism and its application in the cultural sphere. As they correctly state, even though socialist realism was universal, it took a different form in every country. A warped form, one might say, a “derivative form” that distinguished itself according to local tradition from its “Soviet model.” The fact is that socialist realism, where form is concerned, cannot be identified as a unified artistic style. The mode of formation of socialist realism in former Czechoslovakia may serve as a useful example: painters there were compelled either to submit to the doctrine or to remain on a “side track” from the state-supported official art.<sup>(18)</sup> However, in many cases the style they had painted in during the interwar period also marked the visual aspect and style of their versions of “socialist realism.” Furthermore, a number of factors played an important role: 1. To a great extent, what counted was not so much the formal side of the given work but its ideological content; hence content prevailed over form, even though form also had its importance. 2. As Štrauss observed in an acute analysis, what always counted primarily was the personal quality of the artist, hence how he behaved in his extra-artistic activity, to what extent he was conformist and obedient towards the communist regime.<sup>(19)</sup> Katalin Cseh-Varga gives a similar description of the situation in Hungary, pointing to the ambiguity of criteria

18 The system of purges served this purpose: people were controlled by first expelling them, so as afterwards to rehabilitate them (provided they deserved it) and admit them to the Communist Party as loyal members worthy of membership.

19 Tomáš ŠTRAUSS, *Tri otázky. Od päťdesiatych k osemdesiatym rokom*, Bratislava: Pallas 1993.

and flexibility in deciding what was and was not socialist realism.<sup>(20)</sup>

*Universal – International – Global. Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe* is divided into three thematic sections. The first is devoted to researching the platforms of exchange and transfer of knowledge. The second focuses on integration and adaptation of socialist theories about art history in the satellite countries of the Soviet Bloc. The third part contains analyses of intercontinental contacts and the emergence of a “new geography of art.” The final section also includes translations of important period texts by Lajos Vajer and Jan Białostocki. Maja and Reuben Fowkes address the theme of the influence of particular Western art currents in East-Central Europe during the Cold War.<sup>(21)</sup> They refer to the idea of a one-way flow of information and ideas from Western centers, and their automatic adaptation in the satellite states of the Soviet Union, as “the suitcase model.” What they have in mind is the frequently repeated notion that trends were diffused primarily by one person bringing a suitcase full of catalogs and information, which the artists at the other end accepted as passive recipients. The authors regard that idea as outmoded, and they seek to demonstrate this by taking several phenomena such as mass consumer culture and critically analyzing the pop art trend in various countries of the Eastern Bloc. Equally, they focus attention on the *World Goes Pop* and *International Pop*,<sup>(22)</sup> exhibitions that combined a Western narrative on pop art with related expressions from Eastern Europe, South America and Asia. They go on to question the strict division of national

20 Katalin CSEH-VARGA, *The Hungarian Avant-Garde and Socialism: The Art of the Second Public Sphere*, London: Bloomsbury, 2023, p. 10.

21 Maja FOWKES – Reuben FOWKES, “Art History in a Suitcase. The Itinerary of Art Trends in Socialist Art Criticism,” in: KEMPE – HOCK – DMITRIEVA, *Universal – International – Global*, pp. 35–51.

22 *World Goes Pop*, curator Alexander Glaver, London: Tate Modern 2015; *International Pop*, curators Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center 2015.

artistic tradition and international style, which has been and is applied in socialist and post-socialist art criticism.

The importance of translation in diffusing and forming socialist internationalism, as a principal instrument for the implementation of a “new world order” by the Soviet Union, is examined by Krista Kodres.<sup>(23)</sup> Her assumption is that the texts which were translated were carefully selected so as to construct a new type of “objective” art history. The selection concerned, above all, the discursive frameworks and themes. She compares this strategy to the similar mission of the CIA, which had the task of operating in Eastern Europe in the name of free democratic art and subsequently also penetrating the Soviet Union. The author says that while researching text materials in former East Germany, she found a constantly recurring opinion, expressed by politicians as well as academics, that domestic theory as well as art history was seriously inadequate, and hence there was a great need to turn to the Soviet model: “self-sovietization,” as she calls it. At the same time, Kodres emphasizes the fact that implementation of the desired ideological translations and thinking occurred in each country in different ways, taking account of local tradition and local “memory systems” of art history, both individual and communal, in the given country.

According to Mária Orišková, researching the history of exhibitions is one of the ways of reframing art history. In her paper she addresses the question of what exactly socialist internationalism represented and what importance it had for Czechoslovakia after World War II, in selected examples of exhibition practice.<sup>(24)</sup> We may follow three simultaneously proceeding narratives, according to

23 Krista KODRES, “Translations. The Dissemination of Socialist Art History in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1960s and 1970s,” in: KEMPE – HOCK – DMITRIEVA, *Universal – International – Global*, pp. 52–76.

24 Mária ORIŠKOVÁ, “Shifts and Gaps in the Paradigm of Socialist Internationalism,” in: *Ibid.*, pp. 77–97.

Orišková.<sup>(25)</sup> 1. The narrative of construction of the Eastern Bloc and a communist geography of art, using the formal paradigm of socialist internationalism and socialist realist art. 2. The narrative of official diplomatic exhibitions with a propagandist character, which appeared as a complementation of the state economy, as well as commercial and military activities. 3. The narrative of official exhibitions of older and modern art from state galleries, thanks to which a “national modernism” was crystallized, or a “return” to the world/universal history of art.

As Ivan Gerát writes, Kandinsky, when creating the cover for the famed expressionist almanac *Der Blaue Reiter*, used as his model medieval portrayals of St. George killing the dragon.<sup>(26)</sup> However, what he analyzes in his paper is not the reflection of medieval forms by avant-garde tendencies, but rather their reflection in the period of socialism in former Czechoslovakia. He has drawn attention to a work by Karel Stejskal, a specialist in medieval art, who worked for most of his life in a socialist system and focused his research on the archetype of the portrayal of St. George. Gerát states that the rigidity of Marxist-Leninism could be circumvented to a great extent by creative means. Indeed, some scholars were able to publish articles on religious iconology without referring in any way to the ruling ideology of the Communist Party.

Developments immediately following World War II, in the time-span 1945–1948, are the subject of Éva Forgács’s article.<sup>(27)</sup> She observes that the terminology used in this period in discourse on art in Eastern Europe is based on Western “-isms.” The conception of regionalism, in her view, comes from Western researchers of East European art, who have attempted to find common features

25 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

26 Ivan GERÁT, “Holy Warriors in Socialist Czechoslovakia. Modernists, Iconology and Traditions,” in: *Ibid.*, pp. 121–137.

27 Éva FORGÁCS, “Towards a European Integration of the Arts and the Arts Discourse, 1945–1948,” in: *Ibid.*, pp. 138–148.

in cultures that were very divergent in their history. They did have in common a period of Soviet occupation, but at the same time they had traditions going a long way further back. Forgács points to the fact that the concepts of “internationalism,” “supra-nationalism,” “proletarian” and “socialist internationalism” had different meanings for social organization in the 19th and 20th centuries. She takes as an example “internationalism,” which for the inter-war avant-garde meant the opposite of the ultra-nationalist politics that set in after World War I; also “proletarian internationalism,” which was used by Soviet propaganda for the suppression of minorities in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 30s, and was replaced by the expression “socialist internationalism” after the conference at Yalta.<sup>(28)</sup> She further analyzes and compares the phenomenon of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris, which had the ambition of supplanting the École de Paris, and the Hungarian European School grouping. Hence in the years from 1945 to 1948, in both the West and the East currents came into being that were attempting to establish “an international modernism.”

Soviet-Russian art history, according to Elena Sharnova, began to emerge in the 1970s after two decades of suppression of modern avantgarde art.<sup>(29)</sup> In her article she describes restrictive processes such as the campaign against cosmopolitanism in art between the years 1949 and 1953, and the exclusion of western art history from the curriculum at Moscow University, with the dismissal of Professors Viktor Lazarev and Mikhail Alpatov. She indicates how cultural politics, in the context of the “thaw,” gradually changed and opened up to Europe. Sharnova further examines and compares the exhibition *Portrait in European Painting from the 15th to the early 20th Century* (A. S. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts,

28 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

29 Elena SHARNOVA, “Russian Nineteenth-Century Painting Among European Schools: A Comparative Approach,” in: *Ibid.*, pp. 149–161.

1972) and Dmitri Sarabinov’s book *Russian Nineteenth-Century Painting Among the European Schools* (1980). She regards the exhibition *Moscow-Paris, 1900 to 1930* (Centre Pompidou, 1979 and A. S. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, 1981) as a breakthrough: here the focus was openly on relationships between Russian and European painting, and the curators adopted an attitude of dialogue.

Multidisciplinary and transnational exchange had taken shape, according to Corinne Geering, long before the critique of Eurocentrism after the fall of the Iron Curtain.<sup>(30)</sup> She argues that this was happening, for example, in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), specifically in the Cultural Studies program, which was established in 1966. Geering examines the mode of engagement of Soviet academics in the International Association for the Study of the Cultures of Central Asia (IASCCA) and the International Association for the Study and Dissemination of Slav Cultures (IASDSC). Like the socialist international, UNESCO had the aim of unity and friendship on the entire earth, enabling a perception of cultures in their diversity and above and beyond ideologies. In her article Geering analyzes the position that Russian scholars had in the above-mentioned cultural programs. She states that the multi-national composition of the Soviet Union offered a possibility of “liberation” both from Soviet and western ideologies, in the name of understanding world cultures in the UNESCO context, as compatible with a variety of political opinions.

An article by Douglas Gabriel and Adri Kácsor examines relationships between Hungary and North Korea, which were established in the early 1950s and represented not only a political connection but also a transfer of

30 Corinne GEERING, “Encompassing the World within Regions. Soviet Scholars and the Politics of Socialist Internationalism in UNESCO’s Cultural Studies,” in: *Ibid.*, pp. 195–220.

knowledge. In both countries, following World War II, sovietization was prevalent and the cultural sphere was subjected to dictation from Moscow. According to the authors, precisely because of the connections as part of the socialist international and the idea of friendship and brotherhood, works and ideas could circulate above and beyond geographical and cultural boundaries, while actually embodying hybridity and plurality.<sup>(31)</sup> Subsequently Gabriel and Kácsor offer a detailed analysis of an exhibition of North Korean art, “Korea for freedom,” which was held in Budapest in 1953, and where over 50 monumental paintings in the style of socialist realism were presented. The second pillar of the article is the participation of Hungarian architects in rebuilding Pyongyang, the capital city of North Korea, which had been almost completely destroyed by war. A year after the above-mentioned exhibition in Budapest, a team of 32 young architects and technical workers, led by Emil Zöldy, went to Korea. The authors state that the Hungarian team’s contribution to the rebuilding of the capital led to hybrid aesthetic solutions in architecture, which were not in conformity with established national traditions.

An important contribution on terminology is provided by Piotr Juszkiewicz, who points to the fact that in the 1950s the opposite of internationalism was the concept of cosmopolitanism. In the Soviet Union particularly this was associated with anti-Semitism, while in the satellite countries it meant especially the acceptance of western culture as regards lifestyle, intellectual trends, individualism and so, not forgetting music and fashion. In his paper Juszkiewicz addresses the question of why Mexican art was more popular in Poland than, for example, the art of Japan, India, or the Arab states. He mentions exhibitions and documents the catalogs, books and documentary

31 Douglas GABRIEL – Adri KÁCSOR, “Fraternal Encounters: Socialist Art and Architecture Between Budapest and Pyongyang in the 1950s,” in: *Ibid.*, p. 243.

films about Mexican art which were made in Poland. Juszkiewicz also analyses a book on Mexican art by Jan Białostocki, written after traveling in South America, where he designates pre-Columbian cultures with the epithet “otherness.”

As the editors note in their introduction, Białostocki, whose theories became one of their starting points, drew attention to the same methodological dilemmas that we have been following in art history since the “global turn” after the year 2000. One must, however, highlight the fact that in the regional context Białostocki’s ideas, and Vayer’s also, were developed earlier. There is also a useful example in the Slovak context: the work of Ján Bakoš, who was continually engaged in studying the center-and-periphery question from the mid-1980s.<sup>(32)</sup> Precisely Slovakia, which had been regarded as the periphery of the periphery, offered him opportunities to formulate a theoretical standpoint regarding art-historical development. The fruits of his research appeared in 2002 in the book *Periféria a symbolický skok* (The Periphery and the Symbolic Leap).<sup>(33)</sup> Bakoš proceeds from the assumption that the relationship of center and periphery is in principle variable. Peripheries, in his view, must be regarded as a valid category of art history, but on condition that they are described and characterized without hierarchization and without perceiving them as categorically inferior. Mária Orišková also stresses the importance of the views of Vayer and Białostocki.<sup>(34)</sup> Lajos Vayer criticized the concept of center and periphery in his opening speech at the CIHA Congress in Budapest and proposed the concept of micro-history, which he understood to mean focusing on the regional level. On this basis a new geography of art

32 Ján BAKOŠ, “Dejinná súvislosť umelckých diel,” *Umění*, Vol. 29, 1981, No. 2, pp. 97–125; Ján BAKOŠ, “Periféria alebo križovatka kultúr?,” *Slovenské pohľady*, 1988, issue 7, pp. 5–19.

33 Ján BAKOŠ, *Periféria a symbolický skok*, Bratislava: Kalligram 2002.

34 Mária ORIŠKOVÁ, *Dvojhlasné dejiny umenia*, Bratislava: Petrus 2002. This also appeared as Mária ORIŠKOVÁ, *Zweistimmige Kunstgeschichte*, Vienna: Praesens 2008.



would be established, prioritizing art history that is founded on relationships, and thus replacing the succession of styles and influences with a conception of the plurality and heterogeneity of regions.

The book *Universal – International – Global. Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe* is supplemented by translations of materials that the editors regard as essential, with commentaries on them. That gives readers an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the originals of central texts which are referred to, and we consider this an extremely apt combination.<sup>(35)</sup> The 1990s are typically regarded as breakthrough years, in terms of research, reevaluation and re-elaboration of relevant concepts and goals in art history. What the book under review shows us, however, is that these efforts had been present in the discipline long previously: it was simply that they were not sufficiently brought into context and followed through, and they did not become part of the broader consciousness of art historians. The reviewed publication advances the present-day state of the discipline, makes essential contributions to the current discourse with new perspectives on the development of art history, and opens up new opportunities in the methodology of research.

35 The following texts are included: Peter H. FEIST, "A Problematic Neighborhood. The Kunstwissenschaft in the GDR in Its Relation to the History of Art and Kunstwissenschaft in the Neighboring East-Central European Countries," pp. 98–112, with a commentary by Kempe (pp. 113–117); Dmitri V. SARABIANOV, "Introduction to the Book *Russian Nineteenth-Century Painting Among European Schools*," pp. 162–187, with a commentary by Dmitrieva (pp. 188–192); Lajos VAYER, "The General Development and Regional Developments in the History of Art. The Situation in 'Central Europe,'" pp. 221–230, with a commentary by Born (pp. 231–239); Jan BIAŁOSTOCKI, "On the Art of Early America, Mexico and Peru," pp. 275–290, with a commentary by Kempe (pp. 291–296).

