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### **Beyond “Paris-Moscou”: The magazine A-Ya and Soviet Unofficial Art, 1979-1986.**

A-Ya was a tri-lingual magazine published in Paris from 1979 to 1986. Published in Russian, French and English, it featured contemporary non-conformist Soviet art of the period and was edited by the unofficial sculptor Igor Chelkovski, who had emigrated to Paris in 1976. A-Ya featured some of the most important Russian artists of this period, including Ilya Kabakov, Eric Bulatov, Oleg Vassiliev and Komar and Melamid, and yet its importance has been understated.

The thesis narrates the history of the magazine’s production, particularly emphasizing its position as a point of contact between non-conformist artists who remained in Moscow and those who emigrated to Paris and New York. It also focuses on the Parisian intellectual context of the magazine’s reception and attempt to locate the magazine’s importance within the artistic, social and political developments of the pre-Glasnost period on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The revelations that followed the publication of the Gulag Archipelago, and the dissidents that flooded into the West from the USSR dominated headlines and had an absolutely ground-breaking impact on political thought in France – which, thanks to its active and popular Communist Party (Parti Communiste Francais, or PCF) had enjoyed a ‘special’ relationship with the USSR, and whose intelligentsia had throughout the 20th century had a deep and tempestuous relationship with both the USSR and Communist thought.

The principal aim of the project is to unite scholarship on the period from both Russia and the West. In particular, I have used the recent move towards an analysis of a post-1989 globalized condition to think about the international links that existed before 1989. The thesis also addresses the expanding of the conceptual paradigm to (retrospectively) include work produced by artists in the South and East into a so-called ‘global conceptualism’. The question of whether global conceptualism simply plays to a never-ending expansion of the canon to include previously overlooked conceptualisms that do not significantly alter the art historical framework is a pertinent one. I would argue that such studies do have the potential to alter the framework. Not just by insisting on different temporalities and local differences, but by necessarily bringing variant local art histories to bear, which in turn trigger a re-writing of previous canons.

Thus, this thesis follows volumes dealing more broadly with post-Socialism - archival collections such as East Art Map and Primary Documents, accounts such as Piotr Piotrowski's *In the Shadow of Yalta* and essay collections such as *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism*; but it also draws on the huge literature in Russian devoted to the topic of Moscow Conceptualism, most notably Ekaterina Bobrynkaya's *Conceptualism*, Ekaterina Degot's and Vadim Zakharov's *Golden Book of Moscow Conceptualism* as well as Degot's history of Russian art in the 20th century and documentary materials. Finally, it acknowledges a debt to scholarship on Moscow Conceptualism published in English, most notably Margarita Tupitsyn's work and the huge body of scholarship initiated by Norton Dodge and continued by the work of the research centre of the Nancy and Norton Dodge Collection at the Zimmerli Museum, Rutgers University.

My research draws on both archival research and oral history. This has meant looking at the extensive A-Ya archive, which contains letters and ephemera, as well as periodicals and books from the 1970s-80s. I have also conducted oral history interviews with numerous participants of the periodical. This process has meant engaging with the issue of how to record networks and their development over time. The results of this research will be presented in the form of an exhibition entitled 'Paper Museums : Moscow Conceptualism in Transit', which will take place at the John Hansard Gallery, Southampton in May-July 2014.