

Ksenia Golovko

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Vladimir Tatlin's Social Art and the Reception of His Works in Soviet Russia

Key words: contemporary aesthetics, constructivism and avant-garde, art and politics, Soviet ideology and art critiques.

As a researcher I am generally interested in contemporary aesthetics and Russian avant garde. The goal of the PhD project is to analyse Vladimir Tatlin's utopian ideas in the new Soviet reality and reception on this art in USSR press. Phenomenon of the study concentrates on the relationship between Russian avant garde art, utopia, and social Revolution in the Soviet Union and will focus on the “aesthetics of politics” the correlation between political and aesthetical discourses, primarily in the early history of the Soviet state. The additional objective of the project is to examine the evolution of Soviet critical art theory in the first decades of the 20th century.

Preliminary review showed the quite broad panorama of researches dedicated Tatin's art. However, the most undiscovered fields concern Tatlin's social utopian ideas and most of all Tatlin's image in Soviet press.

My research questions are as follows:

Whether Tatlin's social ideas can be compatible with a concept of new sensitivity based on contemporary approach aesthetic?

What was the function of art critic in this transformation and in the rise of totalitarian tendencies in the Soviet art?

One aim of the project is to represent political and theoretical overtones of Tatlin's art in in the context of Revolution. Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), one of the founders of constructivism passed through several avant-garde styles, from primitivism to Cubism before First Works War; works from 1918-1930 were identified under "constructivism". The idea of "counter-relief" (1914), III International Tower (1919) made him being recognized as a revolution artist. Tower was more a monument to the Soviet Utopia of the beginning Russian Revolution. His sculptural flying

machine, the Letatlin, is also a utopian product of mythology of individual flight and freedom.

His most famous slogan was 'Not to the left, not to the right, but to the necessary. Not the old, not the new, but the necessary'. Tatlin's work was needed with a new idea of a new man and building new life as socialism. As a left artist he was grasped that the social revolution was the central creative act of his time.

The other aim of the project is to represent a critical overview of the various Soviet interpretations of Tatlin's creativity from the perspective of their influence on Soviet art in general.

Methodologically, the proposed research based on approaches from multiply branches of knowledge. The themes of the research – politics, aesthetic, utopia of avant garde, Soviet critique, and intellectual tradition – require a multidisciplinary approach and a combination of theories from fields including Cultural Theory, Avant garde Studies, as well as Empire and Imperial Structures Studies. The approach will be on the basis of analysis works of such authors like Susan Buck-Morss and Brandon Taylor (theoretical and methodological perspectives), Christina Kiaer and Christina Lodder (interpretation of constructivism), John Roberts and David Walsh (political and ideological perspectives).

Theoretical framework is the most important question in current stage of work as well as deepening my studies by engaging with different theories of art history and contemporary aesthetics. Jacques Ranciere's view could be the most helpful theoretical base because of problematisation new aesthetic (and new sensitivity) through conceptual questions regarding the notion of revolution and community, aesthetic and sensitivity. Generally, there is a need to take the discussion around Russian avant garde further and find new approaches (Peter Burger's classical work about avant garde was published 30 years ago).

Empirically, the research will be based on an extensive coverage of Tatlin's creativity in various Soviet publications (including newspapers and journals) of the respective period.

The main results of the research were shown in projects such as "Alternative Cultures Beyond Borders"; Research and Curriculum Development Project (OSA/Stanford/McMaster University, 2008), "Tatlin International Symposium" (Tinguely museum, Basel, Switzerland), workshop for a PhD's and PostDocs from Eastern European Studies, (Kloster Kappel, Switzerland, 2014).