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### **Marxist art theory as an art history research method in post war Poland**

I am PhD candidate at the Institute of Art at the Polish Academy of Science. My research and thesis focus on Marxist art theory in post war Poland and East Germany. I would like to present a paper on how Marxist methodology was introduced to academic art history and to describe institutional and political situation in the late forties and fifties. The paper will take as its starting point one chapter of my thesis focused on a project for a new version of history of art started in the late forties. It was one the largest in scale project (never accomplished) to prepare a set of new art history books and textbooks for students. Those publications were conceived to be informed by marxist art theory and were supposed to be radically different from the main, outdated as it was perceived at that time, concept of the history of art. The main part of the project was a new study and monography of Polish art history, in which first of all art from the regions connected to Poland after the world war II will be included. The main idea behind this approach was to present material culture from the territories included into borders of the new state as an integral part of the newly constructed Polish identity. In the same time equally important was an attempt to root the art historical discourse in what was at that time perceived as a methodology inspired by marxism. In its rather simplified perspective the history of art was presented as a constant struggle between abstract and realist tendencies. Such a perspective served as a historical legitimization of social realism. The project of a new art history was ongoing for almost three decades and was a recurring topic of conferences and symposiums. In this approach certain epochs such as Renaissance for example were perceived as progressive and more worth to study. The whole project was rooted in the same time in an undercurrent nationalistic discourse in which the national categories were treated as conservative as in the art history methodology from the interwar period. In the framework of the research inspired by the need of a new, radical look on the Polish art history one could however find extremely interesting works, mostly relating to marxism as an inspiration to study social and economic conditions of art production and the reception of art. This in my opinion was actually very encouraging for the art history research. The whole project was mostly initiated and animated from State Institute of Art which later on

became the Institute of Art at the Polish Academy of Science. Tracing the ideas behind the project for new art history chronology and new periodization as well as the process of selecting new highlights of art for the new summary could serve today as research material to understand how the art history was involved in the larger political and methodological processes.