Concerning Socialist Realism: Recent Publications on Russian Art. - Review - book review

*Art Journal*, Winter, 1999 by Marek Bartelik


When socialist realism was imposed on Russian artists and writers in the early 1930s, a special committee headed by Joseph Stalin carefully crafted its definition. It was then headlined in the Literaturnaya Gazeta (Literary Newspaper) on May 25, 1932, as "honesty and truthfulness of revolutionary, socialist realism." Key figures within the Stalinist cultural establishment officially endorsed the new aesthetic program during the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, where Isaac Babel delivered his famous speech, "Our Great Enemy--Trite Vulgarity." Babel was reported to say: "I think
that, as [Maxim] Gorky said yesterday, Sobolev's words, 'we have every-thing,' should be written on our flag. The Party and the government have given us everything, depriving us only of one privilege--that of writing badly." [1] Then, as if predicting his own fate, Babel declared himself a "past master of that [silent] art." He soon perished during the Stalinist purges, while socialist realism became the Soviet Union's sole official aesthetic.

Until recently, standard Western accounts of Russian art have presented socialist realism in art as a cultural coup d'etat that reversed the tide of Russian modernism by forcefully imposing on Russian artists a politically motivated, aesthetically stale, and totalitarian-minded art that went against progressive artistic currents in the West. [2] As such, it was marginalized from the very first years of its institutionalization until the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. But today, as Russia struggles to define its new and old identities, socialist realism has reemerged, this time not as a vital artistic program, but as an historic formation to be critically reevaluated. As Thomas Lahusen has observed, with the emergence of a new Russia, socialist realism has often been perceived as a Russian heritage that "truthfully represents the Soviet past," [3] with a dual stress on pradivost (truthfulness) in political and artistic terms.

Matthew Cullerne Bown's Socialist Realist Painting traces the origins of Soviet socialist realism back to the mid-nineteenth century, focusing first on artistic, then political truthfulness. [4] The author discusses nine-teenth-century realism, with its premise that art should be popular, accessible, and socially obligated, as it was prescribed by such writers and critics as Vissarion Belienski and Nicolai Chernyshevski and practiced mainly by the Comradeship of Itinerant Art Exhibitions, who were better known by their later Russian name Peredvizhaiki. Ilya Repin, a great master of "Russian reality" was the group's most famous member and the sole artist Stalin truly admired.
Bown credits Anatoli Lunacharski and Aleksandr Bogdanov for playing crucial roles in laying the groundwork for socialist realism through their influential publications from before and after the October Revolution, viewing them as integrated "organically and seamlessly into the discourse around Soviet art" (46). Reexamining the influence of key political figures on the development of socialist realism, and on the demise of other styles in Russia, Bown also stresses the importance of Leon Trotsky, Georgi Plekhanov, Aleksandr Bogdanov, and Nikolai Bakhurin in helping to revive realist painting. By contrast, Lenin and Stalin had a crucial impact on the politicization of Russian art, though their interest in painting was negligible. Bown also refutes Boris Groys's recent interpretation of socialist realism as an extension of the artistic practices of the Russian avant-garde, arguing that "it is simply wrong to claim that the Bolshevik 'aestheticisation of politics,' or any tendency to evaluate political decisions in terms of 'aesthetic consequences' originated with the avant-garde artists" (xiii).

Furthermore, he stresses that the term socialist realism, dialectical itself, exposes a contradiction in its ambitions: art that records the present with historically determined language while inspiring to envisage (and create) a Communist future. As other scholars have argued, socialist realism is hard to define as an artistic style, doctrine, or method, as it was declared in 1932, which further complicates its reading. Bown leans toward the broader definition of socialist realism provided by the painter Aleksandr Gerasimov in a 1939 speech: "an art 'realistic in form and socialist in content'" (141), which has its strength in being concise, but opens room for all kinds of generalizations. He moves away from reading socialist realism as politically charged "totalitarian art" and presents it as above all a form of technically proficient, occasionally even virtuoso, government-commissioned academic art with strong roots in social, political, and national contexts. He presents artists such as Aleksandr Deineka, Yuri I. Pimenov, Boris V. Ioganson, Geli M. Korzhev, and Kukrynisy (Porfiri N. Krylov, Mikhail V. Kupriyanov, and Nikolai A. Socolov) as unappreciated masters of twentieth-century realism. He also
devotes a significant part of the book to artists from former Soviet republics, which has rarely been done in other books on Soviet art. (The ethnic aspect of Russian art needs further examination; it needs to be connected both to the issue of Russianness and to the Russian avant-garde practices of creating art with a universal appeal.)

Like the word constructivism, realism acquired multiple meanings in relation to Russian and Soviet art, depending on the individual, the context, and the purpose it served. In Russia, realism was often referred to as a new realism or "revolutionary contemporaneity," [5] for it implied addressing current life while taking the Revolution as a departure point for improvements for the masses. In fact, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Russians provided an array of "realisms": "heroic realism, compositional realism, naive realism, proletarian realism, synthetic realism, industrial-technical realism, dynamic realism, constructivist realism, political realism and dialectical realism" (141). Realism was equated with Truth. Such a fusion ultimately led to "dialectical-materialist realism," a term that was never clearly defined in relationship to art, which in the late 1920s began standing for artistic expression in Soviet Russia. When Stalin advised Soviet writers to "Write the truth!" in the mid-1930s, the word truth no longer required a capital T, for the current "hyper-sensibility," to use Evgeny Dobrenko's expression, became synchronized with the Party's expectations. Stalinism had extended beyond the realm of politics, becoming a state of mind and a way of life that in a mercurial fashion blurred ad absurdum the boundaries between reality and spectacle, between artistic practices and the surrounding discourse.

Socialist Realist Painting convincingly argues that the artistic transformations occurring around the October Revolution were politically determined along the axis of avant-garde artists versus "traditionalists." The Soviet government welcomed the polarization of artists throughout the 1920s. for it allowed the bureaucracy to test party loyalty while determining the nature of "proper" artistic representation for the future. When in the early stages of the
formulation of a realist program, the "red" Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AkhRR) collided with the Society of Easel Painters (Ost), it was over a disagreement on the nature of the visual language appropriate for the masses. AkhRR lobbied for a return to Russian tradition of the Peredvizhniki and academics, while Ost wanted to embrace the European neo-classicism of the 1920s. Rapidly growing support for realism in the 1920s followed labyrinthine paths, which Bown traces with patience. New "proletarian" groups proliferated, including Oktyabr (October), formed in 1928, which rejected easel painting for murals. OMAKhR, the young activists' section of the Association of Artists of the Revolution (AKhR, formerly AKhRR), stood for ideological purity and party membership. Oktyabr and OMAKhR joined several other groups to formulate a manifesto of an Association of Proletarian Artists in early 1931, only to engage in further fights with different artistic factions. All of these groups were finally dissolved in 1932 by the decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations" and replaced by the Party-controlled artists' union. By the mid-1930s, artists who continued to embrace modernist principles were officially criticized, castigated as "formalists," and some of them were eliminated.

Questioning the reading of socialist realism as "totalitarian expressions" Bown demonstrates that the doctrine resulted from the combination of internally and externally conditioned aesthetic transformations, Party politics, and changes in Russian life. By the 1930s, the new Russian intelligentsia consisted of over 80 percent working-class men and women with peasant backgrounds. As the masses improved their economic and social status, they grew more confident in their own artistic taste(s), which were mostly traditional and conservative. Thus, the growing monopoly of socialist realism was "not purely and simply an art conditioned by politics, but, equally and perhaps more profoundly, an art conditioned by conservative common tastes--tastes shared in some measure by Stalin and the politburo, Russian painters, and the population as a whole" (134). The new program required the reshuffling of earlier writings.
Chernyshevski, Plekhanov, and Lenin were pushed to the forefront; Lunacharski and Bogdanov were officially made obsolete and silenced; and Trotsky erased. Omnipresent Stalin took on a central role and was credited for numerous texts on art and philosophical works on Marxism, which set standards for the years to come.

The book is organized as a continuous, six-part narrative, but the section devoted to post-World War II painting is shorter than the previous chapters, with its final chapter, "The Decline of Socialist Realism 1964-1991," covering almost thirty years. The postwar years witnessed a brief period of relative freedom, which allowed a revival of modernism at the expense of socialist realism. But in 1947, the so-called Zhdanov period, or Zhdanovshchina (named after the politician Andrel Zhdanov) began, during which strict cultural politics were implemented. The "improved" doctrine of socialist realism fostered the total subjugation of art to political instrumentation and made it a goal to extend its influences abroad. The new foreign policies found early manifestation during the international Congress of Intellectuals for the Defense of Peace in Wroclaw, Poland, in 1948, attended by some five hundred delegates from forty-six countries; delegates included Pablo Picasso, Fernand Leger, Max Pechstein, and Irene Juliøt-Curie. The Soviet contingent included the writers Aleksandr Fadeyev and Ilys Ehrenburg and the painter Aleksandr Gerasimov. The Congress was the arena for one of the first major cultural dashes between the Soviet Union and its allies and the Western world. The New York Times reported that in his speech Fadeyev "denounced not only 'American imperialism' but the 'reactionary aggressive' elements of U.S. culture as well." Attacking schools of writing that 'bred aggressive propaganda,' he explicitly mentioned T. S. Eliot, Eugene O'Neill, John Dos Passos, Henry Miller, Jean-Paul Sartre and Andre Malraux and declared 'if hyenas could type and jackals could use fountain pens, they would write such things' as these men produced." [7] Reacting to Fadeyev's speech, several Western delegations threatened to leave the Congress.
Despite the official attempts to homogenize socialist realism further, it continued to evolve, proving to be a far from stable formation. The often cited Theory of Reflection, attributed to Lenin, sprang from the notion that consciousness not only reflects the world but also creates it and served to justify the blend of idealism and materialism. In the 1940s, the rhetoric changed from stressing the necessity of building a Communist tomorrow to asserting the moral and ideological superiority of Soviet men and women. It resulted in the Theory of Conflictlessness (Bezkonfliktnost), first formulated in 1946. As the Cold War became a reality, the Theory of Conflictlessness insisted on eliminating the depiction of conflicts in Soviet society and working toward the goal of a Communist state. Bown writes: "Anyone who dared point to an imperfection or area of conflict in Stalinist society was putting his head over the parapet, and the experiences of the 1930s had demonstrated how dangerous that could be" (228).

The officially mandated optimistic approach to Soviet life demanded new types of painting. Returning to old Russian yearnings for Russian themes, intensified by the experience of World War II, landscape became a favored subject for painting, as did works with peace motifs, such as the collective propagandistic work, with the suggestive title, A Song of Peace (Paul Robeson's Performance in the Peekskills, USA (1950).

Stalin's seventieth birthday in 1949 resulted in endless portraits subjected to strict and often absurd rules that, for example, dictated the distance between other people and the leader in a crowd. Stressing the individual heroism of ordinary Soviet people replaced an earlier image of the heroic superman Stakanovite--by now everybody was supposed to be and was becoming a Stakanovite in the new Soviet Union. As socialist realism was unavoidably bound up with the fate of Soviet political leaders, the Theory of Conflictlessness was criticized after Stalin's death in March 1953. An austere mood was fostered and the need for an overt drama questioned. However, the government allowed artists to use some humor in their images of contemporary Russian people. Interest in
everyday genre scenes faded after 1957, and the so-called Severe Style (Surovyi stil) was born from the liberalization and utopianism of the late 1950s that followed Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's atrocities during the Twentieth Congress of the Communist party. Gradually, new subjects gained popularity, such as the development of virgin land, used as romanticized propaganda for a program to populate uninhabited areas of the Soviet Union. A new Soviet hero emerged in the art of the time as friendlier, more relaxed, and in a sense less puritanical, but more bourgeois in his or her material view of the world. The new hero's psychology was examined and even revealed in a more overt way than before. At the same time, visually he or she was more schematized, stereotyped, and static. Sketchiness was, in fact, approved, and high finish ceased to be a prerequisite. Art officials encouraged artists to paint from life and to use natural light.

According to Bown, the increasing conservatism of Soviet society that re-occurred in the 1950s had perhaps as much to do with the artistic taste of the new society as it did with the new political and cultural elite's change of attitude toward life and culture. (This new elite was composed of the sons and grandsons of the first generation of revolutionaries). Following the Thaw, yet another phenomenon took place. As their numbers increased, artists began to view themselves as part of larger Soviet society, rather than as Party members or even as members of narod. They also became the judges of their work. Internationalist tendencies re-occurred in Russian art as form of Contemporary Style, connected to works by Picasso, as well as to contemporary Mexican, Italian, and Polish artists. Still, the climax, or rather anticlimax, of the Krushchev era was marked by the clash at the Manezh exhibition in 1962 over the nature of the changes in Soviet art, which provoked one of Khrushchev's infamous outbursts of rage.

Once permitted, changes continued. Landscape with a particular Soviet Stimmung was popular during Leonid Brezhnev's rule, while
interest in the traditional thematic kartina faded. Photography and strong miseen-scene gained visibility in the 1970s, reflecting the New Realism (hyperrealism) popular in the West. Sporadic exhibitions of Western art and access to foreign art magazines illegally smuggled to the country allowed artists to further enlarge their knowledge of contemporary art. Many Soviet artists, however, began to revert to their national heritage—to icons, religious murals, and lubki (popular prints)—while attempting to re-invigorate academic tradition. At this point, Bown, departing from Gerasimov's definition of "realist in form and socialist in content," uses as examples of social realism works that are in many ways close to unofficial art. Walking a thin dividing line between official and unofficial art, he has included reproductions of works by Eric V. Bulatov and Oleg V. Vasilev. By doing so, he points out the important fact that a similar blurring of the boundaries between different artistic tendencies that reached below political divisions occurred both after the October Revolution and during the 1970s. At the end, when the Soviet Union was dissolving, Grisha Bruskin (the financial success story of the famous 1988 Sotheby's auction in Moscow) explored Jewish themes in a fashion similar to the ritualistic and symbolist socialist realism, with covert religious imagery popular in Russia in the 1970s. Thus, socialist realism appeared to make a full circle, returning to its initial "experimental" multistylistic stage—one that had more to do with realism than with socialist realism.

A reproduction of Geli M. Korzev's Mutants (Tyurliks) (1980s–1992)—an image of a crowd of disfigured ghostly creatures listening to a grotesque speaker with chicken feet and a red ribbon crossing his chest—ends the book on a witty note. About it Bown writes, "Lunacharski had imagined a Soviet Superman; the Tyurliks might well be the embodiment of his saddest dream" (466). Such a finale suggests that socialist realism—like Russian/Soviet society—was already cracked and deformed from within before it ultimately collapsed under its own weight, rather than being destroyed by any external challenge, political pressure, or the non-conformist artistic alternative.
Bown's reading of socialist realism emphasizes artistic practice. Socialist Realism without Shores, edited by Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, places it within contemporary theoretical discourse. This collection of essays, which derives its title from Roger Guraudy's D'une realisme sans rivages (1966) focuses mainly on literary practices, but it also explores a larger context beyond the former Soviet Union, including former Socialist states in Eastern Europe, China, and the United States. [8] Most of the authors agree with Bown about the populist character of socialist realism.

Dobrenko writes in "The Disaster of the Middlebrow Taste; or, Who 'Invented' Socialist Realism?" that "Socialist realism was a contact point and a cultural compromise between two currents, the masses and state power" (160). In "A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories," Leonid Heller defines socialist realism in terms of aesthetics "considered (following Blanche) predicates of aesthetic evaluations, or, in Kantian terms, 'predicates of judgement of taste' (e.g. the beautiful, the sublime, the charming, the comic, etc.)" (51-52) and provides a detailed account of aesthetic discourse in the Soviet Union. Alain Boudin's "Why Is Soviet Painting Hidden From Us?" Zhdanov Art and Its International Relations and Fallout, 1947-53," the only essay in the collection devoted entirely to socialist realist painting, places the subject in a broader international context absent from Bown's book. Boudin argues that "Soviet socialist realism appeared to be intrinsically unexportable and impracticable outside of 'Soviet reality'" (230). [9]

In "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," Boris Groys further advances his claims about the political nature of socialist realism. He asserts: "The specificity of socialist realism ... lay not at a level susceptible to formal aesthetic analysis, but rather at the level of its contextual work with form" (78) without elaborating what the "contextual work with form" is. Groys argues that socialist realist "proto-postmodernism [my emphasis] strategy of appropriation continued to serve the modernist ideal of
historical exclusiveness, internal purity, and autonomy from everything external" (79). Myriad contradictory statements make the text elliptical and confusing. Groys first says: "It is significant, moreover, that the Russian criticism which has taken up the traditions of socialist realism has inherited the modernist blindness and also confuses postmodernism with mass culture. He continues by stating that postmodernism is a vague term and adds, "It is nevertheless possible ... to outline the main strategy of postmodernism, namely its shift of emphasis to the very mass-cultural context from which modernist ideology had tried to separate itself" (79-81).

Other contributors to the volume question this cumbersome discussion of socialist realism. Svetlana Boym argues that "Socialist realism is postmodern in one sense only: historically, it comes after modernism; ideologically, it discards its heritage" (133), while Lahusen's rebuttal of Groys's theoretical output is harsher yet. "On the New York Stock Exchange of culture, sots art, for example, 'did well'--and, for that matter, so did [Groys's] The Total Art of Stalinism" (23), he writes, pointing to broader issues surrounding the politics of the West's reception of artworks and ideas on Soviet art and culture. In fact, one thing these essays have in common is a tendency to rebut Groys's ideas, which recently have received major attention without being closely evaluated.

Teamed since the early 1970s, Vitaly Komar and Aleksander Melamid have for almost three decades exposed hidden aspects of Soviet popular culture by appropriating and subverting its visual emblems, not the least of which has been their subversion of various socialist realist conventions. The result has been an original style of mass media culture, which, mimicking the term Pop Art, they named Sots Art. They predicated their highly sarcastic art on visual cliches, exposing them not only as ciphers of cultural amnesia but also of political manipulation. Since moving to the United States in 1978, Komar and Melamid have continued probing popular tropes, this time also through explorations of "unexpected" similarities between
Soviet/Russian and American popular tastes. "Having destroyed communism's utopian illusion," Komar said in an interview published in Painting by Numbers: Komar end Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art, "we collided with democracy's virtual reality" (8). Lately, the team's performative skills have become more sophisticated. But as their artistic production expanded, critics have been raising questions about the work's dual nature. By exposing visual cliches packaged as high art and presenting them in a carnivalesque fashion, did their work not lose its critical edge even as it became more entertaining?

In late 1993, Komar and Melamid launched their project The People's Choice--a survey of the "most wanted" and "least wanted" paintings in the United States, followed by similar polls conducted in a number of countries all over the world, from Finland to Kenya to China. Melamid said: "It's a very clumsy tool, this poll, but there is no other" (10). Komar added: "Under Brezhnev, we founded Sots Art, a nostalgic grotesque of socialist realism; now, along with Yeltsin, we are creating a grotesque of democracy, and, in this case, its central tool, statistics" (18).

Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art extensively documents the project with illustrations, charts, and tables. Included are an interview with the artists, a report on public meetings and a transcription of a panel discussion by JoAnn Wypijewski (also the book's editor), and Arthur C. Danto's essay "Can It Be the "Most Wanted Painting' Even If Nobody Wants It?"

[10] Danto describes America's Most Wanted painting as "executed in what one might term a modified Hudson River Biedemeier style--with perhaps something more than 44 percent blue--and shows figures 'at leisure' in a landscape" (137). He argues that the painting has a place in the art world only as a part of a performance that also includes the opinion polls and publicity. As such, Komar and Melamid's work is "about people's art without itself being people's art" (138). Contrasting the team's painting to official academic works from the Stalinist era, Danto provides his own description of socialist realism: "muscled proletarian man and kerchiefed proletarian
woman, flourishing their hammers and tickles, standing firm and unshakable beneath a red sky" (125).

Defining Russian Graphic Arts: From Diaghilev to Stalin, 1898-1934, at the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, provided a rare opportunity to experience the richness of Russian and Soviet graphic arts from the period bracketed by the founding of Diaghilev's Mir iskusstva (World of Art) journal and the official imposition of socialist realism by Stalin's bureaucracy and to trace its complexity across ideological alliances. The exhibition and the accompanying catalogue shared a declamatory title, but they sensitively profiled Russian graphic arts without trying restrictively to "define" their developments at the turn of the last century and during the early decades of the twentieth. Alla Rosenfeld, curator of the exhibition and editor of the catalogue, skillfully presented various stylistic formations in Russian art as parallel, rather than successive and overtly antagonistic, movements and showed them united in the artists' universal desires to reach high levels of individuality.

Defining Russian Graphic Arts demonstrated that Russian artists began modestly by relying on Western European models while searching for their own signature styles. But respect for artistic hierarchy, reinforced by Russians' attachment to the Romantic tradition, required separating art from its utilitarian functions. Commissioning art for a specific market other than the one provided by and geared toward aristocratic circles and the Church was still new in Russia at the turn of the century, and it met with resistance. In their search for original artistic expression, Russian artists followed diverse stylistic directions, from Art Nouveau and Secession to lubki, enameled icon frames, and Japanese ukiyo-e prints. All the while they debated how much Russia should accept foreign influences (a theme that resonates throughout Russian history) and how much it should embrace local sources. Such a visual melange resulted in a number of graphic works. While only a few of them possess major artistic significance beyond a local context, all were historically important for the future development of Russian and Soviet art.
Before World War I, artists such as Alexandre Benois, Leon Bakst, and Ivan Bilibin achieved excellence in fusing Russian motifs with Western styles in their graphic works. But it was the period of the October Revolution that brought a new level of sophistication to Russian design. Benefiting from the enthusiasm generated by social and political changes, as well as from earlier artistic experiences, Russian artists produced highly innovative works. Dramatic changes in the bureaucratic structure of cultural and artistic institutions and the belief in making art for the masses brought by the October Revolution encouraged or forced many artists to move from one mode of representation to another and to switch media. The Zimmerli Museum exhibition effectively corrected some commonly held views about the importance of Russian art from the period and proved that avant-garde artists were not alone in producing innovative works. The show confirmed the high quality of the graphic works of Aleksandr Rodchenko, Gustav Klutsis, and El Lissitzky, as well as the quality of more traditional works by Vladimir Lebedev, Vladimir Ikonnikov, and Mikhail Tsekhanovsky. But not all artists were equally successful in their transition from fine artists to graphic designers. Rodchenko moved easily from painting to photomontage, while major figurative painters, such as Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin and Alexandr Deneka, struggled to make a similar transition and produced insipid graphic works. Vladimir Lebedev first applied the Suprematist idiom to graphic posters for the ROSTA Windows in Petrograd, awkwardly but charmingly combining geometry with simplified figuration derived from Cubism, before his cartoonish graphic style fully flowered in his wonderful children's books.

The section devoted to children's book design was, in fact, the most engaging part of the entire exhibition. Rosenfeld's essay "Figuration versus Abstraction in Soviet Illustrated Children's Books, 1920--1930" provides an insightful theoretical background for these works. The publication, which contains ten essays written by Russian and U.S. scholars, is a significant addition to the existing literature, although it could have benefited from better quality black-and-white
reproductions, more color, and more thorough editing. Like the exhibition, the catalogue celebrates the plurality of Russian and Soviet art prior to 1934 while occasionally asking specific questions about the broader meaning of the development of the graphic tradition in Russia for its art and culture.

Marek Bartelik teaches Russian art at Cooper Union in New York. His upcoming book To Invent the Garden: The Life and Art of Adja, will be published in conjunction with the Adja Yunkers retrospective he has curated for the Bayly Art Museum at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, scheduled to open in April 2000.


(2.) Socialist realism's negative, monolithic reading has often been traced back to Clement Greenberg's essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," published in the Fall 1939 issue of Partisan Review. Greenberg himself repudiated the essay in an interview delivered in 1989, by saying that "Its Marxism was too simplistic and maybe too Bolshevistic. I was going along with the times, being trendy. Most of my friends were Trotskyites, or nearly. The piece was smug and badly written: sophomoric": see Saul Ostrow, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch, Fifty Years Later: A Conversation with Clement Greenberg," Arts Magazine 64 (December 1989): 56.


(4.) Recent books on socialist realism written in English include Igor Golomstock, Totolitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China (New York: IconEditions, 1990): Matthew Cullerne Bown, Art under Stalin (New


(6.) As Andreas Huyssen reminds us in After the Great Divide: Modernism, Moss Culture, Postmodernism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 8, "And yet, the failure of the avantgarde to recognize a new life praxis through art and politics resulted in precisely those historical phenomena which make any revival of the avantgarde's projects today highly problematic, if not impossible: namely, the false sublations of the art/life dichotomy in fascism with its aesthetization of politics, in Western mass culture with its fictionalization of reality, and in socialist realism with its claims of reality status for its fiction."


(8.) The book is an enlarged version of South Atlantic Quarterly 94, no. 3 (Summer 1995).

(9.) Boudin is the author of Le realisme socialiste soviétique de la periode jdanovienne. The first volume, Les arts plastiques et leurs institutions, was published by Editions Peter Lang in Bern in 1997; the second volume, co-authored with L. Heller and devoted to socialist realist literature, was published in 1998.

COPYRIGHT 1999 College Art Association
COPYRIGHT 2000 Gale Group