Gothic, Baroque, Modern: Arts in Bohemia
Instructor: Dr. Tomáš Hříbek
Mon 10:00-11:30am Wed 10:00-11:30am
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Course Description
The course will survey the visual arts and architecture in the Czech Lands since the Middle Ages to the present, with an emphasis on the last century. The highlights will include the impact of the Gothic on the Czech Decadence; the Bohemian Baroque tradition and its influence on the Czech Cubism; varieties of the Czech abstract and Surrealist art; the local roots of modernist architecture; and the fate of modern art under Communism. A lot of the artifacts that we shall discuss are located in Prague, so we shall see them for ourselves during several class trips. We shall cover not only the Czech artists, but also other nationals—French, German, or Italian—who were active in the region since the Middle Ages. We shall also situate the development of the local art scene within the context of the Western art in general. And finally, we shall pay attention to connections between art and intellectual and social history, seeing, in particular, how nationalism, religion and ideology influenced the development of Czech art and architecture.

Course Objectives
To provide the students with a good understanding of the history of art and architecture in the Czech Lands, within a wider context of social and intellectual history.

Structure
The course consists of lectures, slide presentations, discussions of readings, and museum trips.

Requirements
Students are required to attend all classes, do required readings and participate in the museum trips. Required readings consist of primary sources, usually quite short but dense. Optional readings are essential for the final paper which should not exceed 10 pages (illustrations should take up no more than 30 per cent). The style of formatting is optional but should be followed consistently. Two in-class multiple-choice exams are based on lectures and required readings. Make-up exams will be allowed only in the case of medical or family emergencies. The same applies to late papers.

Academic Honesty
Although the students are encouraged to exchange ideas in and outside class, everybody must submit their own work. Copying the work of other students or published materials is strictly prohibited.

Grading System
Class participation/attendance 10%
Mid-term 25%
Final exam 25%
Final paper 40%
Course Schedule
Primary sources: Required readings throughout the semester. Available online.
Secondary sources: Optional but highly recommended for the final paper projects. Available at the CERGE Library. For the full bibliographical information about the books, see the list at the end of this syllabus.

Week 1
UPCES Orientation and Lecture Series

Week 2
Introduction

Glorious Visions: The Bohemian Gothic in Context

HAVE READ:
Beneš Krabice of Veitmile, “Chronicle of the Prague Church” (late 1300s)
Eco, “Theories of Art” and “Inspiration and the Status of Art” (1959)
Camille, “New Ways of Seeing Gothic Art” (1996)

OPTIONAL:

Week 3
Paint It Black: The Echoes of Gothic in the Czech Decadence

HAVE READ:
Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic” (1853)
Huysmans, from Against the Grain (1884)
Hlaváček, “Late Towards Morning” (1896)

OPTIONAL:
Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1902-3), in Harrison and Wood (1992)

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The St. Agnes Monastery

Week 4

Kunst and the Kunstkammer: Art at the Court of Rudolf II

HAVE READ:
DaCosta Kaufmann, “Princely Patronage of the Later Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries: The Example and Impact of Art at the Court of Rudolf II” (1995)
Bergeron, “Description of Prague during the Time of Rudolph II” (1603)

OPTIONAL:
The Glory of Baroque Bohemia

HAVE READ:
Báblín, “Jan of Nepomuk” (1680)

OPTIONAL:
Stolárová and Vlnas, Karel Škréta 1610-1674 (2010)

The Prism and the Pyramid: Cubist Design

HAVE READ:
Worringer, from Abstraction and Empathy (1908)
Janák, “The Prism and the Pyramid” (1911)

OPTIONAL:

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The Schwarzenberg Palace

Week 6

What is Modern Art? The Western Narrative

HAVE READ:
Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863)
Fry, “An Essay in Aesthetics” (1909)
Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis” (1914)
Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960)

OPTIONAL:
Brettell, Modern Art 1851-1929 (1999)

What is Modern Art? The Eastern Narrative

HAVE READ:
Kubišta, “The Intellectual Basis of Modern Time” (1912-13)
Čapek, “The Beauty of Modern Visual Form” (1913-14)
Lisitzky, “Overcoming Art” (1922)
Teige, “Constructivism and the Liquidation of Art” (1925)

OPTIONAL:
Mansbach, Modern Art in Eastern Europe (2001)
Belting, Europe: East and West at the Watershed of Art History” (1993)
Week 7

MID-TERM EXAM

Art Nouveau, Avant-Garde and Nationalism

HAVE READ:
Clegg, “Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism in Moravia and Bohemia” (2006)
Jiránek, “The Czechness of our Art” (1900)
Kubišta, “Josef Mánes Exhibition at the Topič Salon” (1911)

OPTIONAL:

Week 8

Cubism, Expressionism, Cubo-Expressionism

HAVE READ:
Apollinaire, “The Cubists” (1911)
Gutfreund, “Surface and Space” (1912)
Balázs, “The Futurists” (1912)
Kramář, from Cubism (1921)
Kállai, “Vision and the Law of Form” (1930)
Benson, “Exchange and Transformation: The Internationalization of the Avant-Garde(s) in Central Europe” (2002)

OPTIONAL:

After the Demise of Naturalism: Abstract Art in Central Europe and Beyond

HAVE READ:
Kandinsky, from Concerning the Spiritual in Art (1911)
Malevich, “Non-Objective Art and Suprematism” (1919)
Kállai, “Painting and Photography” (1927)

OPTIONAL:
Anděl and Kosinski, from Painting the Universe (1994)

Week 9

Architecture in the Service of Revolution: Constructivism, Functionalism, International Style

HAVE READ:
Loos, “Ornament and Crime” (1908)
Le Corbusier, “Towards a New Architecture: Guiding Principles” (1920)
Teige, “Mundaneum” (1929)
Le Corbusier, “In Defense of Architecture” (1933)
Gropius, “Principles of Bauhaus Production (Dessau)” (1926)
Meyer, “Building” (1928)
OPTIONAL:
Colomina, Privacy and Publicity (1994)
Le Corbusier, Toward an Architecture (2007)

Class Trip – The Villa Müller

Week 10
The Language of Construction: Geometrical Abstraction between Berlin and Moscow

HAVE READ:
Tzara, “Dada Manifesto” (1918)
Hausmann, Huelsenbeck, Gollysheff, “What Is Dadaism and What Does it Want in
Germany” (1919)
Jakobson, “Dada” (1921)
Teige, “Painting and Poetry” (1923)

OPTIONAL:

The Last Offshoot of Romanticism: Surrealism of the 1930s

HAVE READ:
Breton, from The First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)
Teige, “Poetism” (1924)
Breton, from Surrealism and Painting (1928)
Nezval, from Valerie and Her Week of Wonders (1945)

OPTIONAL:
Lomas, “The Omnipotence of Desire: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis and Hysteria,” in Gille
(2001)
Bydžovská, “Against the Current: The Story of the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia”
(2005)
Wittkovsky, “The Spread of Surrealism”, from Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-
1945 (2007)

Socialist Realism amidst Other Realisms

Week 11

HAVE READ:
Groys, “The Stalinist Art of Living” (1992)
Zhdanov, “Speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers” (1934)
Hitler, Speech Inaugurating the “Great Exhibition of German Art” (1937)
Chalupecký, “The Intellectual under Socialism” (1949)

OPTIONAL:
Gilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or, from
Trotskysm to the New Liberalism of the “Vital Center”” (1980)
Groys, from The Total Art of Stalinism (1992)

Avant-Garde in the Underground: the Cold War

Jan Švankmajer’s film The End of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia
HAVE READ:
Sartre, from *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946)
Dubuffet, “Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art” (1949)
Atlan, “Abstraction and Adventure in Contemporary Art” (1950)

OPTIONAL:

New Art Forms of the 1960s and Beyond

Week 12

HAVE READ:
Rezek, “Encounters with Action Artists” (1977)

OPTIONAL:

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The Fair Trade Palace

Week 13

FINAL PAPER DUE, FINAL EXAM

Annotated Bibliography in English
Asterisked books are available at the CERGE Library.


Cohen, Jean-Louis (2012). *The Future of Architecture Since 1889*. London: Phaidon Press. The first history of modern architecture to include information not just on the interwar East European avant-garde, but also examples of modern architecture in the region from the Cold War period.


