



WHAT REMAINS OF THE 'FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLES'?
1 June 2024, 11:00–20:00, Stadtwerkstatt

WAS BLEIBT VON DER VÖLKERFREUNDSCHAFT?
1. Juni 2024, 11:00–20:00, Stadtwerkstatt

JAHRE
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ARTISTENBALL

Since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, many media outlets in Germany have alluded to the past image of friendship between the two nations in contrast to today's enmity. Hardly a private conversation takes place between those who grew up under socialism – and with the ideology of friendship between nations – without reflecting on the former solidarity between the 'peoples of the Soviet Union.' Friendship is an important term with a complex history of relations. But what does it mean when applied to entire nations? What characterized these kinds of friendships, which involved emancipatory and conciliatory aspects on the one hand, but also hierarchical and even colonial gestures on the other?

After the Second World War, 'friendship between peoples' became a central propaganda tool in socialist countries beyond the Soviet Union. As ideological and dishonest as the term may be, it was also lived out to some extent. Under the slogan of 'friendship between peoples' or 'friendship and brotherhood', real encounters and friendships were fostered, not between peoples, but people. Cultural exchanges took place that were beneficial for both parties. However, this does not appear to have produced a stable friendship between peoples. When the era of socialism came to an end, a seemingly endless series of ethnic and national wars began, which continue today.

"What Remains of the 'Friendship between Peoples'?" is a symposium that focuses on the idea of friendship and brotherhood in (post-)socialist contexts. It focuses on the term itself and its real-life expression, seen from a historical, decolonial and art-historical perspective. It offers the chance to reflect on how artistic political imaginations, including feminist and queer visions, have expanded the idea of friendship to form new ties and communities, such as notions of sisterhood, communities of care or chosen families.

Program

11:00–11:15

Welcoming address by Lena Prents and Antonina Stebur

11:15–12:15

**Keynote lecture by Dr. Tereza Hendl:
Not Our Brothers: From Subjugation to Liberation**

The concept of 'friendship between peoples' has played a pivotal role in socialist imaginary. However, its perception differed, depending on membership of dominant or oppressed societies. This keynote lecture will take a closer look at the concept and its implications, through the socio-historical experiences and perspectives of the many different societies directly affected by the ongoing legacy of Russian imperialism. Through the exploration of the myth and lived realities, the question of what friendship does (not) entail becomes increasingly urgent, as do broader concerns of justice and solidarity.

Dr. Tereza Hendl is a philosopher and bioethicist affiliated with the University of Augsburg and Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. Her research focuses on issues of oppression, refusal, collective empowerment, solidarity, justice in general and also in bioethics – specifically on the ethics and epistemology of digital tech. Tereza Hendl is the founder of the Central and Eastern European Feminist Research Network and a member of the RUTA Association for Central, South-Eastern, Eastern European, Baltic, Caucasus, Central and Northern Asian Studies in Global Conversation.

12:15–12:30

Break

12:30–14:00

Panel 1, Looking back: The Socialist Friendship Project – an Imperial Construct or Attempt at Reconciliation?

After the Second World War, 'Friendship between Peoples' in various Soviet Republics, 'Fraternity and Unity' in Yugoslavia and the German-Soviet Friendship became central tenets of the Eastern Bloc. The first panel of speakers will provide a detailed historical insight into the nascence of these concepts, focusing on the power dynamic and taking the perspectives of different nations into consideration. They will elaborate on the extent to which the notions of 'friendship' and 'unity' remain relevant today after the collapse of socialism, how they give rise to new forms of solidarity, frustration or nostalgia and how they color the perceptions of military aggression to this day.

Prof. Felix Ackermann: Post-/National-/Socialist Rituals of Understanding

As a post-national-socialist society, the GDR clearly rejected the legacy of Germany's Nazi past. The state's ritualized forms of collective friendship turned the previous occupation of Europe on its head, emphasizing collective friendships between nations rather than individuals. The dominant hierarchy of these official friendships ensured that the Soviet Union was at the top, with the bottom place occupied by the USA and Israel. This past has an impact to this day, especially in the regions of the former GDR. The various reactions to 24 February 2022 reflect a special bond between many East Germans and Russia that dates back to the GDR era. From a post-Nazi perspective, however, it could also be interpreted as an after-effect reaction to the violence of the Nazi period: one way of dealing with the past is to glorify the former enemy. After 7 October 2023, a similar special relationship with the Palestinian state resurfaced, reflected in the rather tepid expressions of solidarity with Israelis after the Hamas terrorist attack. This can be traced back both to the official friendship with the Palestinian people and to post-national-socialist reservations about Jews and their state.

Felix Ackermann is professor for Public History at the University of Hagen. In his research, he examines the aftermath of violence in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Germany. Ackermann was a research fellow at the German Historical Institute Warsaw from 2016–2022. From 2011 to 2016 he held a DAAD visiting associate professorship for applied humanities at the EHU International in Vilnius. Between 2001 and 2011 he established the Institute for Applied History at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). Felix Ackermann has written for numerous publications, including newspapers like the FAZ, NZZ, Merkur and Geschichte der Gegenwart.

Dr. Beáta Hock: Communist Europe's Brotherly Nations across the Globe

The bloc-building, bloc-leading, and ruling political role of the 'big brother' Soviet Union has been profoundly condemned by many who lived through the decades of Eastern European state-run socialism and many who are subjected to, or witness contemporary Russia's great power ambitions. This talk aims to supplement these interpretive frameworks with further insights, incorporating the perspectives of those non-European peoples whose recent history had almost always been defined by (Western) colonization and imperialism. It utilizes visual arts and an artist documentary to explore these diverse viewpoints.

Dr. Beáta Hock is the acting chair of East European Art History at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Her areas of research and teaching encompass East-Central European art and art history from transnational perspectives, feminist cultural theory, and the global cultural dimensions of the Cold War. Her research output includes the works 'Gendered Artistic Positions and Social Voices', 'Doing Culture under Communism', among others. Since 2022 Beáta Hock has been the project lead for 'Linking Art Worlds: American Art and Eastern Europe in the Cold War and Since'.

14:00–15:00

Artistic Lunch-Performance 'Plates of Unity' by HakkaMoon

15:00–16:30

Panel 2: Construction of 'Friendship between Peoples' in Visual Culture and the Arts

The 'Days of National Culture', the 'World Youth Festivals for young adults and students' and the activities of bilateral friendship societies played an important role in the cultural diplomacy of the real-existing socialist bloc, serving as an extension of the classic propaganda of the countries involved (beyond national borders). The visual arts were particularly favored as a soft power in international and supra-regional cultural exchange. The dissemination of a universally valid socialist artistic approach was intended to counter the expansion of the modern art movement of the western world. However, within this prescribed system, the artists and cultural actors themselves often revealed discrepancies and highlighted intentional misunderstandings on the part of the state, subverting aesthetic and political principles and created a new visual language. When political systems switched and, in some cases, the much-vaunted friendship shifted into animosity, it was they that dealt with the marginalizations and history of violence, offering a more nuanced view of the past.

Dr. Katalin Krasznahorkai: Our Sister, Angela

During Angela Davis' 1970 trial and her subsequent release in 1972, leaders from the so-called Eastern Bloc publicly supported her, referring to her as 'one of us,' and 'our black sister Angela'. She was prominently featured in government-run media campaigns. She became a familiar face in East German homes, often appearing in youth and women's magazines as an icon to look up to. The political appropriation in the socialist camp was stylized as a familial relationship between the white population and the Black woman. Her own goal of gaining allies in the fight against racial discrimination and for equal rights for the Black population in the USA could not have been further removed from the interests of the GDR leadership or of other Soviet-influenced states.

Dr. Katalin Krasznahorkai is an art historian and curator. She is lead curator at the Brandenburgische Gesellschaft für Kultur und Geschichte and a lead expert advisor for the Council of Europe. In 2020 she curated the exhibition 'Artists&Agents Performance Art and the Secret Services' at HMKV Dortmund together with Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse. It was subsequently named 'Exhibition of the Year 2020' by the German AICA. From 2020 to 2022 she was a Gerda-Henkel Research Fellow working on a project about Angela Davis and Black Power in Eastern Europe. She is the author of the monograph 'Operative Art History or Who is Afraid of Artists?'

Olena Chervonik:

Photography against the Grain of the Soviet 'Friendship of the Peoples'

This presentation profiles a case of 'Soviet friendship backfiring' with the case history of an artists' community known as the Kharkiv School of Photography, which emerged in the mid-1960s. Kharkiv photographers utilized the officially sanctioned exchanges between amateur photo clubs in the USSR, swapping photographs and periodicals, collaborating on art projects and hosting exhibitions. This exposure to new ideas led to a rejection of Soviet aesthetics. Paradoxically, they saturated the Soviet 'friendship' infrastructure with dissident content. This gap between sanctioned infrastructure and the unsanctioned exchange of materials demonstrates a case of resistance to the repressive regime.

Olena Chervonik is a doctoral candidate in art history at the University of Oxford. Currently, Chervonik is cooperating with the Museum of Kharkiv School of Photography (MOKSOP) as a curator, academic editor, and translator of the series on the history and theory of photography. Chervonik worked as a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA), Izolyatsia (Ukraine), and for the Videonale. Festival of Video Art in the Kunstmuseum Bonn (Germany), among others.

Bojana Pejić : Sexualized Geographies: Forgetting or Remembering Wartime Rape?

This talk addresses wartime sexual violence against women, which includes rape, mass rape, forced impregnations and genocide. After WW II, these aspects of warfare have been obscured by decades of cultural and political amnesia. In the early 1990s, however, there was an exceptional awareness of gender-based sexual violence in war, initiated by feminist scholarship and activism. It was not until the 1990s that these crimes are recognized as such, prosecutable under international criminal law. The issue has also achieved unprecedented visibility in the political and public domains – including in the visual arts. The artworks and temporary public projects discussed here emerged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Poland and South Korea (and Berlin) as well as in Hungary.

Bojana Pejić is an art historian and a curator. She has been a vital figure in exploring the intersections of art, politics, and representation in post-Communist Europe. Pejić was curator of the “After the Wall” and “Gender Check” projects. Her research output includes publications and editorial work, among them, “Gender Check: Art and Theory in Eastern Europe – A Reader” (2010). In 2022, her contributions were honored with the Igor Zabel Award for Art and Culture.

16:30–17:00

Break

17.00–18.30

What’s Next for the ‘Friendship between Peoples’?

The idea of ‘friendship between peoples’ has a contradictory nature, with effects we can still observe today, as shown in the previous panel talks. In this panel, we invite you to think about what alternatives to the idea of ‘friendship’ and ‘peoples’ are already being practiced and developed today. What feminist, queer, decolonial lenses offer different options for coexistence? Can approaches be proposed today that respect and recognize the value of difference and give voice to oppressed communities and groups, while at the same time allowing joint dialogue, exchange and action? This panel brings together experts rooted in activist practice who work directly with disadvantaged people while at the same time experiencing marginalisation themselves – due to gender identity, experiences of migration, war and oppression.

The panel members are Yevgenia Belorusets, Taras Gembik and Iva Kovač, moderated by Vika Biran

Iva Kovač is the City of Women Association's program director in Ljubljana. Iva works at the intersection of feminist and decolonial curatorial and artistic research. She has curated the 'South in Us' program, focused on decolonizing SEE Europe in 2022, and 'Archeology of Resistance: Corrective for the Future', in 2023. She initiated and (co)edited the first three issues of GSG magazine for Contemporary Art and Social Questions.

Yevgenia Belorusets is a Ukrainian artist, writer, and photographer. With her photo-illustrated book 'Lucky Breaks' she was the recipient of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt International Literature Award in 2020; in 2023, she received the Women of Europe Award. She is a co-founder of the literary-artistic-political journal 'Prostory', member of the group 'Hudrada' and author of the photo series Victories of the Defeated. Her art projects have been presented in numerous international exhibitions and at the Venice Biennale.

Taras Gembik is a Ukrainian-Polish cultural worker, activist, and performer. He is an educator at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and co-founder of the Warsaw solidarity community 'Sunflower'. Since 2021 he has been running the Anti-Crisis Film Club for unhoused people. In October 2023, he joined the team of the 'Towards Dialogue Foundation', which supports people from the Roma community.

Vika Biran is a project manager, journalist, and researcher. In 2014 she launched MAKEOUT, a platform about the lives of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Belarus, which for several years was the largest Belarusian platform for queer voices. She is a graduate of cultural studies at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). Her autobiographical debut novel, 'I am Dancing' was published last year in Belarusian.

Program at nGbK event space

10:00-19:00

Film program 'Diaries of the Common', curated by Olexii Kuchanskyi

The past and present political events are experienced collectively through shared emotions that connect different social groups, geographical locations, and generations. What if the common sensory nexuses were perceived not as mere phantasmagoria of politics but as its constitutive force?

This program brings together feminist artistic explorations of the relationships between collective memory, communication, sensuality, and the body. The focus of 'Diaries of the Common' ranges from restoring the historical memory of deportation traumas to the bodily perception of a war-torn realm that is distant yet intimately connected. In this context, the artists politicize the moving image by treating it as paradoxically diaristic – neither private nor public, but as intimate as an encounter with another can be.

I

The Fog

Ilona Németh

2013

5:20 mins

The Fog is a video documentation of Ilona Németh's urban intervention involving artificial fog, which took place on Freedom Square in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. In the 20th century, this square was the site of numerous official events, manifestations, and celebrations, including nationalist rallies in the early decades and later pro-Nazi military parades. In 1979, the Fountain of Unity was ceremonially erected to represent the achievements of socialist Czechoslovakia, and remained there after the state's demise in 1992. "The square became a place where politics was ritualized and a vision of a better future was falsely declared," asserts art historian Bohunka Koklesová. Here, Németh presents an alternative vision of the square by focusing on its ephemeral presence.

Ilona Németh is a visual artist, activist, curator and professor. Her work is a quest to find equilibrium between her personal experience of growing up in a country marked by much political turmoil and the history of the Eastern Bloc countries during the transition period from 1990 to the present day. Since 2018, she has been working on the international exhibition and research project 'Eastern Sugar'. In 2022, she presented her work at the documenta fifteen in Kassel. In 2023, she exhibited at the 35th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, the Survival Kit 14 exhibition in Riga and the Jogja Biennale in Indonesia. This year, her public art works are being exhibited in Olomouc, Czech Republic, and in Paris in cooperation with the Cité Internationale des Arts.

II

Memory

Bain Sædyd

2022

10:05



II

In 1943, approximately 130 000 people from predominantly Buddhist Kalmykia, then a region of Soviet Russia, were deported to various regions of Siberia. This Stalinist policy, which brought the indigenous Oirat-Kalmyk community on the territory of the USSR (now the Russian Federation) under its control, led to the death of almost 5000 of the deported on their journey. **Memory** combines video documentation of the annual commemoration of Oirat-Kalmyk victims of Soviet deportation with an eyewitness interview of those events. By montaging images of the collective commemoration process with first-hand storytelling, Sædyd explores the potential of grieving as a mindscape for preserving the memories of the past that is neglected by colonial historical narratives.

Bain Sædyd is an interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker from the Kalmyk region. Her diverse interests include scriptwriting for feature films, crafting video art, and engaging in the visual arts. Through her works, Sædyd seeks to spark dialog, prompting individuals to introspectively explore their commonly shared identities. Her projects operate on both personal and collective historical levels, inviting the audience to contemplate their place within historical yet personal narratives.

III

Digging

Oksana Kazmina

2022

5:02 mins

Digging is a video documentation of Oksana Kazmina's public intervention in the city of Syracuse, USA, which took place at the beginning of May 2022. The landscapes of residential areas of numerous Ukrainian cities have undergone devastating changes: the playgrounds, commonly integrated into the public spaces, acquired a new functionality – one of burial sites. This was due to the staggering amount of fatalities from military violence and the mortal danger of moving through the city, even simply to visit a cemetery. By creating an artificial resting place in the remote North American city, Kazmina examines the potential for collective empathy, encapsulated in the gestural representation of war, producing intimate relations over vast distances.

Oksana Kazmina is a documentary filmmaker, media artist, and performer based in Ukraine and the USA. Her interests lie in the relations between the body and digital moving images, critical queer practice, and situated geographies. Between 2016 and 2017 Kazmina was assistant professor of film studies at Wesleyan University, Connecticut. Today she teaches video art at the college of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University, New York. She co-initiated the artistic collective Freefilmmers, a cinemovement and NGO that extends the decentralization of activism and independent filmmaking with a focus on Southern and Eastern Ukraine.

Curator's Bio

Olexii Kuchanskyi is a researcher and independent film programmer whose main interests concern experimental moving image and the increased influence of the media on environmental relations within Soviet and ex-Soviet contexts. S/he has (co-)curated film programs and shows for the Kyiv Biennial, the 'Sunflower' Solidarity Community Center (Warsaw), Coalmine – Raum Für Fotografie (Winterthur, Switzerland), e-flux Screening Room (New York), and BAK–basis voor actuele kunst (Utrecht, Netherlands), among others. S/he was a member of Occupy Kyiv Cinemas, a Kyiv-based activist network protecting community-owned cinemas at risk of privatization.

19:00-20:00

Screening of Henrike Naumann / SI_Process 'Breathe' with a subsequent conversation between Henrike Naumann and Vasyl Cherepanyn

Henrike Naumann is an artist, she lives and works in Berlin and London. Naumann reflects on socio-political problems on the level of design and interiors and explores the friction between opposing political opinions in dealing with taste and personal everyday aesthetics. In her immersive installations, she arranges furniture and objects creating scenographic spaces into which she integrates video and sound works. Growing up in East Germany, Henrike Naumann experienced Neo-Nazis as a dominant youth culture in the 1990s. Her practice reflects the mechanisms of radicalization and their connection to personal experience. Henrike Naumann is a fellow at the Berlin Artistic Research Program 2024/25. Artistic Research is commissioned by the Berlin Artistic Research Program.

Vasyl Cherepanyn is Head of the Visual Culture Research Center (VCRC), an institution he co-founded in Kyiv in 2008 as a platform for collaboration among academic, artistic, and activist communities. VCRC is the organizer of the Kyiv Biennial and a founding member of the East Europe Biennial Alliance. Cherepanyn holds a PhD in philosophy and has lectured at several universities, both in Kyiv and other cities in Europe, and is a curator, writer and editor. He is an artistic director of Kyiv Perennial 2024 in Berlin.

Symposium Curators and Organizers

Lena Prents is an art historian and curator. After her studies in German philology in Minsk and art history and German studies at Freie Universität Berlin, Prents worked in the international cultural sector. She is currently in charge of the municipal Prater Gallery and the visual arts department of the Pankow district office. In her work, Prents focuses on the interweaving of contemporary art and exhibition practice with socio-political discourses, art and culture in Eastern Europe during state socialism, and architectural history.

Antonina Stebur is a curator, art historian and art critic. She worked as a guest lecturer at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), where she teaches an art activism course. Antonina was a co-curator of the exhibitions 'Every Day. Art. Solidarity. Resistance' (Ukraine, 2021), 'Names' (Belarus, 2017), 'I Was Approaching the City I Had Not Known Yet' (Ukraine, 2021), 'If Disrupted It Becomes Tangible' (Lithuania, 2023), and others. She is a co-founder of the #damaudobnayavbytu – a project on gender discrimination in post-Soviet countries – and a co-founder and curator of antiwarcoalition.art – The International Coalition of Cultural Workers in Solidarity with Ukraine. In 2023 Antonina launched the decolonial research laboratory 'Mycelium'.

With thanks to

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The symposium of the Prater Galerie "What Remains of the 'Friendship between Peoples'?" takes place in the frame of Kyiv Perennial 2024 and in cooperation with the nGbK Berlin. Kyiv Perennial 2024 is a cooperation between the Visual Culture Research Center, neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst and the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), together with Between Bridges and the Prater Galerie. The Kulturstiftung des Bundes is funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media). Prater Galerie is a municipal organisation of the Berlin-Pankow District Council.

Cover 10th German-Soviet Artists' Ball in the Prater, 1987
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**Ein Symposium der Prater Galerie, kuratiert und organisiert
von Lena Prents und Antonina Stebur**
*A symposium of the Prater Gallery, curated and organized
by Lena Prents and Antonina Stebur*

1. Juni 2024 / 1 June 2024, 11:00–20:00

Stadtwerkstatt, Eingang neben der nGbK / entrance next to nGbK
Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 11, 10178 Berlin

1. Stock, barrierefreier Zugang über Rolltreppe und Fahrstuhl /
1st floor, barrier-free access via escalator and lift

Mit deutsch-englischer Simultanübersetzung und der
Artistic Lunch-Performance „Plates of Unity“ von HakkaMoon
*With German-English simultaneous translation and an
artistic lunch-performance 'Plates of Unity' by HakkaMoon*



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