

**State exam 2025/2026 – Art in Context**  
questions on art history

**1. World and Central European art during the war and immediate post-war period.**

Official fascist art, the "Degenerate Art" exhibition. Art and the Holocaust. The wartime and post-war situation and contemporary art groups. Yugoslav partisan art. Anti-fascist art. Wartime and post-war Civilism, Surrealism, and Explosionalism (Vladimír Boudník).

**2. American abstract expressionism and gestural abstraction.**

New art centers after World War II. Abstract expressionism and Color Field Painting (Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning). Critic Clement Greenberg and his concept of modernism.

**3. Postwar European abstract and figurative art, the influence of existentialism, informel**

Postwar trends in Europe, Lettrism, COBRA, Art brut, Tachism, Lyrical abstraction and Informel, Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore. Existentialism (theory and influence). Post-surrealist trends and Central European Informel (origins and history, main representatives).

**4. Socialist realism and socialist modernism**

The situation of Eastern European art after 1948, the development of art in the 1950s in the former Eastern Bloc. Theory and practice of socialist realism (Vera Mukhina, Aleksandr Deineka, Alexander Gerasimov, Otto Nagel, Willi Sitte, Wojciech Fangor, Jan Čumpelík). The relationship between the official and unofficial scenes, developments after the exposure of the cult of Stalinism in 1956, return to modernism.

**5. Art and society in European neo-avant-garde movements of the 1950s and 1960s**

Contemporary theoretical context of the relationship between art and mass culture (art and kitsch, cultural industry, spectacle). The concept of the neo-avant-garde. Selected figures and movements (Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, New Realism, ZERO, Situationist International, Arte povera, utopian architecture, kinetic and light art).

## **6. Action and performance art**

The emergence and development of action art (main representatives), forms of action art: happening, performance, body art. The Fluxus movement (Robert Filliou, Milan Knížák, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono), forms of Eastern European action art in the 1960s and 1970s.

## **7. American minimalism, constructive tendencies, Op Art**

Minimalism (theory and history, main representatives). Post-minimalism, Land art, Op art and geometric abstraction (development and main representatives). Eastern European forms of neo-constructivism, new tendencies, new sensitivity, visual poetry.

## **8. Pop art, new figuration, hyperrealism**

Personalities of European figurative painting and sculpture after 1950. Representatives of Pop Art in the USA and other countries. European new figuration, hyperrealism, new figuration in Czechoslovakia, Leipzig School.

## **9. Conceptual art in the USA and Central Europe**

Genesis and definition of the term, means of expression in conceptual art: object, text, photography. The situation in Eastern Europe, conceptual and concrete art behind the Iron Curtain. The situation of art in totalitarian regimes, official art and the unofficial scene, the concept of underground.

## **10. Postmodern art, art of the 1980s behind the Iron Curtain**

Theories of postmodernism, themes: "high x low," simulacrum, identity, multiculturalism, activism, institutional criticism. International art, design, and architectural projects. Eastern European postmodernism and its emergence in the 1980s (main representatives and forms). Perestroika and its influence on the development of visual culture in the former Eastern Bloc.

## **11. Video art, the art of the moving image, and new media**

Media theory (Marshall McLuhan, Vilém Flusser, Lev Manovich). The genesis of new media and its technical conditions. Relationship with film tradition, expanded cinema (Nam June Paik, Michael Snow, Valie Export). The concept of new media. Science, technology, and art (Donna Haraway). The advent of digitization and the distribution possibilities of the internet.

## **12. Art and (its) space – the gallery as art vs. art beyond the gallery.**

Institutional critique (Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser), land art, post-minimalism, site-specific art. Environment and installation.

## **13. Art at the turn of the millennium and after**

Art and transformation after 1989, changes in the art world and the role of art in society. East versus West, center and periphery. YBA, post-production, relational aesthetics, collaborative art, globalization, discursive turn, archival turn, post-internet art, accelerationism (Nick Srnicek, Alex Williams). Object-oriented ontology, new materialism, speculative realism (Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, Suhail Malik).

## **14. Anthropocene: art, man, nature.**

The term Anthropocene – meaning, authors (Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and others). The image of nature in postwar art (biomorphism, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth's, organic abstraction), Land Art in Western, Eastern, and non-European art. Bio-art, environmental art. New materialism (Jane Bennett, Karen Barad), posthumanism (Rosi Braidotti), Xenofeminism (Helen Hester 2018, Laboria Cuboniks).

## **15. Representations of bodies and identities in post-war art.**

Representations of bodies and identities in post-war art, gender studies terminology (sex, gender, gender identity, etc.). Artists responding to themes of gender identity internationally (Judy Chicago, Tracey Emin, Nan Goldin, Félix González-Torres, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ana Mendieta, Carolee Schneemann, Cindy Sherman, VALIE EXPORT, Jana Želibská, Eva Partum). Waves of feminism. Queer studies (Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Paul B. Preciado).

Recommended literature:

- BADOVINAC, Zdenka, ed. *2000+ Arteast Collection: The Art of Eastern Europe in Dialogue with the West*. Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2000.
- BALADRÁN, Zbyněk – HAVRÁNEK, Vít. *Atlas of Transformation*. Prague: JRP Ringier, 2000.
- BELTING, Hans; Andrea BUDDENSIEG; Peter WEIBEL (eds.). *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*. Karlsruhe / Cambridge, MA: ZKM / MIT Press, 2013.
- BISHOP, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. London: Tate Publishing, 2005.
- BISHOP, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.
- BISHOP, Claire. *Radical Museology: Or, What's "Contemporary" in Museums of Contemporary Art?* London: Koenig Books, 2013.
- BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002.
- BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay—How Art Reprograms the World*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005.
- BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. *The Radicant*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009.
- BRYZGEL, Amy. *Performance Art in Eastern Europe since 1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- BUCHLOH, Benjamin H. D. *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- DUMBADZE, Alexander; Suzanne HUDSON (eds.). *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- ELKINS, James (ed.). *Is Art History Global?* London: Routledge, 2007.
- FILIPOVIC, Elena; Marieke VAN HAL; Solveig ØVSTEBØ (eds.). *The Biennial Reader: Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*. Bergen / Ostfildern: Bergen Kunsthall / Hatje Cantz, 2010.
- FOSTER, Hal. *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
- FOSTER, Hal (ed.). "Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary'." *October*, no. 130, 2009.
- FOSTER, Hal; Rosalind E. KRAUSS; Yve-Alain BOIS; Benjamin H. D. BUCHLOH. *Art Since 1900: 1945 to the Present*. 3rd ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 2016.
- FOSTER, Hal. *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*. London: Verso, 2015.
- FOWKES, Maja. *The Green Bloc. Neo-avant-garde Art and Ecology under Socialism*, Budapest – New York: CEU Press, 2015.**
- FOWKES, Maja and Reuben. *Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2020.**
- GROYS, Boris. *Art Power*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.
- GROYS, Boris. *Going Public*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010.
- GROYS, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- HLAVAJOVA Maria – SHEIKH Simon, eds. *Former West: Art and Contemporary After 1989*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017.
- HOPTMAN, Laura – POSPISZYL, Tomáš, eds. *Primary Documents. A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*. Cambridge – London: The MIT Press, 2002.**
- Ana Janevski – Roxana Marcoci – Ksenia Nouril (eds.), *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*, MoMA – Duke University Press, New York 2018.

- JOSELIT, David. *After Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- JONES, Amelia (ed.). *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- KEMP-WELCH, Klara. *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989*. London – New York: I.B.Tauris, 2014.**
- KEMP-WELCH, Klara. *Networking the Bloc. Experimental Art in Eastern Europe 1965–1981*. London – Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018.**
- KOCUR, Zoya; Simon LEUNG (eds.). *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*. 2nd ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- KRAUSS, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.
- KRAUSS, Rosalind E. *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.
- OSBORNE, Peter. *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London: Verso, 2013.
- OSBORNE, Peter. *The Postconceptual Condition: Critical Essays*. London: Verso, 2018.
- PEJIĆ, Bojana, ed. *Gender Check: a Reader. Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*. Köln: Walter König, 2010.
- PIOTROWSKI, Piotr. *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.**
- PIOTROWSKI, Piotr. *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. London: Reaktion, 2012.
- POSPISZYL, Tomáš. *An Associative Art History. Comparative Studies of Neo-Avant-Gardes in a Bipolar World*. Prague: JPR Ringier – Les Presses du Réel, 2017.**
- RANDA, Julieta; Brian Kuan WOOD; Anton VIDOKLE (eds.). *What Is Contemporary Art?* Berlin: e-flux journal / Sternberg Press, 2010.
- SMITH, Terry. *What Is Contemporary Art?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- SMITH, Terry. *Contemporary Art: World Currents*. London: Laurence King, 2011.
- SMITH, Terry. *Art to Come: Histories of Contemporary Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.
- STALLABRASS, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- STALLABRASS, Julian. *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- STEGMANN Petra, ed. *Fluxus East. Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*. Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2007.