

The author has read exhaustively on the subject, and the bibliography is a treasure chest for any scholar or student interested in montage in principle. However, some important sources are missing. The author mentions Matthew Teitelbaum's volume *Montage and Modern Life 1919–1942*, but does not refer to its contents. Similarly not mentioned is P. Adams Sitney's *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature*. From among Russian scholars, the most important montage theorists are mentioned. However, the bibliography should include Iurii Levin, who was probably the first Tartu scholar to have paid serious attention to montage features and processes in poetic text, as well as Roman Timenchik's work on the montage processes in Acmeist poetry. The same relates to Boris Eikhenbaum's interest in verbless poetry in Akhmatova, also a significant feature in montage poetry (mentioned by Timenchik and Viacheslav V. Ivanov in their articles) and present in the Anglo-American Imagists' oeuvre, as well as Russian Imagists, of course. However, these details do not change the fact that Kukulin has produced a major opus dedicated to the montage principle in its broadest sense in 20th century Russian literature.

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Moskovskii kontseptualizm: Nachalo. By Yurii Al'bert. Privolzhskii filial Gosudarstvennogo tsentra sovremennogo iskusstva pri poderzhki Ministerstvo kul'tury Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2014. 272 pp. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Hard bound.

This fascinating volume of interviews with the earliest practitioners of “Moscow conceptualism” will intrigue anyone interested in contemporary Russian culture and politics. The volume, published in conjunction with the Russian Ministry of Culture to coincide with an exhibit of conceptual art in Nizhnii Novgorod in 2012, casts new light on the beginnings of this once-underground artistic movement that has finally come into its own. Ignored in the Soviet Union as the unsanctioned activity of dubious “underground” artists, Moscow conceptualism is currently enjoying a moment in the sun. The last several Russian pavilions at the Venice biennale, for example, have been devoted exclusively to representatives of Moscow conceptualism, and the movement is now generally recognized as the most significant development in Russian art of the late twentieth century. Indeed, not too many years ago, the term “Moscow conceptualism” was serving journalists as convenient shorthand to refer to any visual work done in late- and post-Soviet art whatsoever! Artists who were once overlooked or, worse, harassed for their creative work are now the subjects of scholarly monographs, the focus of expansive retrospective exhibits, and the winners of Russia's most prestigious artistic awards. Despite these obvious improvements, however, there is still much that we do not know about Moscow conceptualism, particularly about its earliest beginnings. That curious situation motivates this engrossing volume.

One of the many oddities of the early years of Moscow conceptualism is that the artists themselves—denied museum space, artistic supplies, and free access to information about developments in the rest of the art world—had to serve as spectators, curators, critics, and archivists on their own. Most of their earliest unsanctioned exhibits were short-lived, lasting just a day or two in private apartments or the odd amateur club space. Documented, if at all, in a few black-and-white snapshots, not all of the works survived. Artists storing their creative output in crowded urban apartments could only make room for so many masterpieces. This was especially true of the so-called second generation of Moscow conceptualists, who were generally younger and

less settled than the slightly older first generation and so had even more difficulty saving, cataloging, and archiving their own work. As a result, one of the most pressing tasks for interested scholars has been to sort out major characteristics of Moscow conceptualism and to identify watershed moments in its development, while pinpointing essential works that define the movement as a whole. That work of sorting, describing, and interpreting is still proceeding apace.

In such a context, Yurii Al'bert's volume on the beginnings of the movement could not be timelier. As Al'bert, a working artist and practicing second-generation conceptualist himself, says, "even though Moscow conceptualism has long been considered classic, the early period of its history is still unclear, unstudied, and our knowledge of it more the stuff of myth and legend" than established scholarly fact (7). This volume is a welcome attempt, then, to add concrete facts to the public record and, in doing so, stimulate a more enlightened discussion of the movement overall. It succeeds brilliantly in that goal. Al'bert's interviews are uniformly absorbing, as compelling in their moments of disagreement and departure from scholarly orthodoxy as they are when they confirm what we already thought we knew. As a long-time friend and colleague of everyone with whom he speaks, Al'bert is the perfect person to ask the artists simple but revelatory questions as to where they first heard the word "conceptualism," how they understand that term in connection to their own activities, what they identify as typically "conceptualist," and so on. His engaged manner lends life and vibrancy to the discussion, and Al'bert's readers will have the pleasant sense of participating in an animated debate over issues that still matter greatly.

Conducted from 2010 to 2012, the interviews with artists Nikita Alexeev, Erik Bulatov, Rimma and Valery Gerlovin, Vitalii Gribkov, Il'ia Kabakov, Vitaly Komar, Alexander Melamid, Andrei Monastyrsky, Viktor Pivovarov, Lev Rubinstein, Viktor Skersis, and Ivan Chuikov are essential reading. Al'bert is a skilled raconteur in his own right with pronounced views on art, politics, and Russia's position in the world today, but in this volume he serves primarily as an informed and sensitive interlocutor. He allows his colleagues to range widely over an absorbing mix of topics, while nevertheless enjoining them to explore the shape and sense of early Moscow conceptualism. The results can be surprising and contradictory. Kabakov, for example, seems to remember coming up with the word conceptualism between 1963 and 1965 (72), whereas Alexander Melamid claims to have forgotten it completely (108). This kind of incongruity is inevitable when people are asked to visit distant memories. But that is one reason this collection is so valuable. The artists' clashing recollections speak volumes and help reveal the inadequacy of a single approach to this complex and self-contradictory period. Artists once linked by their common opposition to a repressive regime are now free to reveal fault lines they ignored in the face of a shared oppressor.

As representatives of an artistic movement in which the idea often substitutes for the visual work itself, these artists are accomplished practitioners of talk for talk's sake, and the conversations here are stimulating portraits of the creative work they did and the milieu in which it was accomplished. Antithetical, argumentative, infuriating, and delightful by turns, the discussion never fails to interest, reminding readers of the diversity and passion of Moscow conceptualism itself. Interviews with art director Joseph Backstein, and critics Margarita Masterkova-Tupitsyna, Viktor Agamov-Tupitsyn, and Boris Groys round out this invaluable publication, which also includes a generous selection of colored plates from the 2012 Nizhii exhibit and early texts by Rimma Gerlovina, Komar and Melamid, Vsevolod Nekrasov, and Dmitrii Prigov. Reading here about the beginnings of Moscow conceptualism will leave us all wanting to know more.

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