

Iurii Andropov pushed the film through multiple levels of censorship. Not the first exploration of fascism on the Soviet screen, this film is definitely the most powerful. But even when showing the documentary footage of Auschwitz or talking about the Nazi anthropology of skulls, the film does not use the word *Jews*. It shows universal victims, explains Gershenson; still, its message is unmistakable.

Discovering the Holocaust in Soviet film, Gershenson transforms two large fields of inquiry, Holocaust studies and Soviet film studies. It will be good to teach this book together with Harriet Murav's *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia* (2011), which explores the Soviet representation of the Holocaust in different cultural genres (poetry, novels, journalism) and also in Yiddish. Many of the films and books that these two studies have recovered remained unscreened, unpublished, banned, or shelved for a very long period of time. They are phantoms, as Gershenson calls them, and many show the Holocaust without Jews and Jews without the Holocaust. However, both studies demonstrate an early, deep confrontation between Soviet culture and the Holocaust and the sophisticated, worldly cultural activity of Soviet Jews.

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Transition in Post-Soviet Art: The Collective Actions Group before and after 1989.

By Octavian Eșanu. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013. xvii, 357 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$60.00, hard bound.

This rigorously researched and articulately written work provides a close reading of the Russian art group Collective Actions ([Kollektivnye deistvia], hereafter KD) through the lens of *transition*, tracing the group's development from its origins in the 1970s through to the post-Soviet period. A laudatory introduction by Boris Groys supports Octavian Eșanu's methods of analysis, noting that KD's reduction of artistic gesture directed the public's attention to everything surrounding that gesture and therefore warrants an examination through the lens of the social.

Eșanu's text has a solid analytical structure, which he lays out in his preface. In the first part of the book, he provides a literature review and examination of key terms. This is not just a traditional literature review, however, and one this section's strengths is that the discussion of significant texts also provides insight into the distinctive nature of writing and materials on contemporary art from eastern Europe and Russia. As the author notes, the literature regarding KD prior to 1989 is "fortuitous and fragmentary" (21), much of it written by the artists themselves or their inner circle and circulated as samizdat. Other texts about the group appeared in the west in a more haphazard fashion. The key terms the author focuses on are essential to understanding the wider context of KD, namely the *romantic* in Moscow romantic conceptualism, of which KD is a part, as well as *emptiness*. Here, Eșanu also advances the discourse by eschewing the tendency to see Moscow conceptualism only in relation to the historical avant-garde, specifically Kazimir Malevich. He proposes other sources for the term and concept of emptiness—namely, in eastern religious traditions, specifically Ch'an Buddhism, which he suggests came to members of KD through western artists' engagement with these concepts; for example, J. D. Salinger, John Cage, and Allan Kaprow are all discussed in a 1977 book that was known to KD artists, *Kultura Vostoka v sovremennom zapadnom mire* (Eastern Culture in the Western World), by Evgeniia Zavadskaia.

The heart of Eșanu's monograph is part 2, in which he examines KD's pre-1989

phase, the transition to capitalism (c. 1989–95), and its post-Soviet phase (1989–present). In this sequence of chapters he demonstrates how KD developed and changed not only as a result of external forces—namely, the dissolution of the Soviet Union—but also due to internal growth, as the artists shifted their focus from action in the 1970s to documentation and text in the 1980s. Another contribution of Eşanu's study is in his close scrutiny of the time of transition, including an examination of the role that the network of Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, established throughout the region in the 1990s, played in the transition from communism to capitalism. He draws a parallel between the changes they implemented on a cultural level and those of, for example, the IMF in the financial sphere.

In chapter 5 the author identifies the major shifts that one can notice in the group's work and approach, which parallel those taking place in post-Soviet Russian society at the time—for example, a change in name (from *Kollektivnye deistvia* to [Kollektivnye deistvia]), as well as external changes (the development of Kievogorskoe Field, on which the artists had staged most of their actions)—and to which the artists reacted and adapted in order to maintain their activity. Eşanu presents KD almost as a business model, demonstrating the manner in which the artists adjusted to the changes surrounding them in order to survive. That said, his conclusion is bittersweet, stating that because of their victory on the aesthetic battlefield, they no longer needed to “act . . . instead its members *perform* themselves as acting or reenacting collective actions in order to maintain the old myth as well as their new status” (284; emphasis in the original).

Indeed, what Eşanu's text has traced and described is the story of the gradual institutionalization of art, the co-opting of the avant-garde, which has been rehearsed time and again throughout the twentieth century. In his detailed and thoroughly supported analysis, Eşanu demonstrates how this played out in the Soviet and post-Soviet space in the work of one artistic group in particular—KD. This text is essential reading for those who wish to understand the dramatic changes that took place in the Soviet Union in the latter half of the twentieth century, providing a focused look at how these changes had a concrete and profound effect on artistic production, reception, and dissemination in Russia.

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