

# Juan Alberto Kurz Muñoz and his academic contribution to the study of the history of Russian art

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'As a matter of fact, everything is clear. World history is a world court of judgement'.  
N.I. Bukharin.

These pages are dedicated to Professor Juan Alberto Kurz, teacher at the Department of History of Art of the University of Valencia. This article recounts his pioneering contribution to the field of art studies and, more specifically to Russian-Soviet art, as well as his educational work in that area.

His academic career began with his bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Arts in the University of Valencia (1971), where he also obtained a PhD degree *cum laude*, under the direction of Drs Felipe M. Garín and Ortiz de Taranco. His doctoral thesis, *Arte, aparat e inteligentzia en la URSS. Estudio de los sesenta*, started a prolific academic career which led him to establish connections with the main academic institutions of the former USSR. Bukharin's words are included as a foreword to this *encomium* because Dr. Juan Alberto Kurz himself quoted them in his monograph *El arte en Rusia: la era soviética*, published in 1991 by the Institute of History of the Soviet and Russian Art. This text was a compilation of both his PhD thesis' main conclusions as well as his research work from the 1980s.

The publication of Kurz's monograph *El arte en Rusia* would have entailed a significant risk. In Spain during the 1960s and 1970s few publications approached the realities of Soviet Russian and focused mainly on political and economical concerns. Thus, when Professor Kurz commenced his research on Soviet art in the 1970s he worked alone, from the shores of a vast and fathomless ocean. First as an undergraduate, then as a PhD student and later as a professor, his field of research focused mainly on Russian culture, and, more specifically, on the artistic culture created by Soviet Russia. In the prologue to his monograph, he pointed out that this lack of familiarity concerning Russian art, and, especially Soviet art, needed to be broken. Proof of this concern can be demobstrated in the immense amount of books — today kept in the Library of the University of Valencia — that came to enrich the department's library; books and studies from the museums and institutions of Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Vilnius, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Tbilisi and more.

Today no-one would argue about the influential role played by Russian art and culture in the evolution, nature, and dynamics of modern culture. Nevertheless, this had not always been the case. In 1929 Cenit, a Madrid-based publishing company released *Arte y vida social*, the Spanish translation of Plekhanov's famous book *Art and Social Life*. Later, in 1974, this work was republished in Barcelona, at a time when Spanish universities were undergoing a profound transformation along with the Spanish transition to democracy. Bringing Plekhanov's text back to life was a symbol of

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a new era that was to exhume material from the past, and was the starting point of research into other cultural fields.

In the 1970s, new horizons emerged and new realities were explored. In this context, the contribution made by Professor Kurz in his PhD thesis gains prominence. Spanish universities were opening up new fields of study and unearthing others long forgotten. In Professor Kurz's own words: 'It was Carlos Herrera Esteban, the minister of Tourism and Information in 1972, who promoted this change. He himself asked to send whole lots of books about Spanish art and culture to Soviet libraries in exchange for the books received by the library of the Department of History of Art [of the University of Valencia]'.

An initial study of the academic resume of Professor Kurz gives a sense of his organisation and perseverance. In his youth he showed a growing interest in art research. Consequently, after obtaining his bachelor's degree in the history of art at the then School of Philosophy and Literature, he decided to undertake a PhD in this field, under the direction of Felipe M. Garín y Ortiz de Taranco. Prior to the completion of his bachelor's degree he had investigated Russian subjects with great tenacity. Proof of this early interest was the publication of 'Llengües esclaves i eslovac' (Slavic Languages and Slovak), an entry to the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* (Barcelona, 1970); as well as his first approach 'La creación en el arte soviético' (Creation in Soviet Art), in *Estudios dedicados a Juan Peset Aleixandre* (Valencia, 1972).

In these early years, along with his Russian research, he focused part of his studies on specific aspects relating to the local history of El Rincón de Ademuz: specifically religious architecture. Some of his findings were published in *Revista de la Universidad Complutense* (Madrid, 1975), and he further expanded these and lectured on them at the I Congreso de Historia del País Valenciano organised by the University of Valencia in 1974. A year later, in 1975, he published a brief essay on Mariology in Islam as part of an occasion paying tribute to Dr. Juan Reglá Campistol, who had been a disciple of Jaume Vicens Vives. Kurz's approach to this subject was related to Juan Reglá Campistol's specialty: the consequences of the expulsion of the Moriscos in the Reign of Valencia.

These initial steps into the study of local Valencian art — a field that, by then, was being revitalised among the academics — concurred with the beginning of a growing interest to promote local studies at the department of History of Art of the University of Valencia. As Lacomba stated in his essay 'Sobre historia local y microhistoria: una aproximación' (*Isla de Arriarán: revista cultural y científica*, 1995), local history enjoyed a sound tradition in Spain throughout the nineteenth century but it was not until the 1970s that it received a definitive boost, as well as a complete restoration. This momentum was due to the convergence of several factors, which determined the development of local history. Those factors included the greater availability of archives, the support given by local and regional governments to these kinds of research projects, and, especially, the university's encouragement towards local studies. As a result, academic research on local studies developed, gaining an analytical refinement issued from an enrichment of its methodological and documental proceedings. History of Art was not alien to this transformation affecting the core of Spanish universities. It was at that moment that the necessity of recovering regional history flourished, stemming from the understanding of Valencian regional art and

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architecture. The Department of History of Art participated in this regenerating trend and Dr. Juan Alberto Kurz took part as a young researcher. Firstly, as a hired researcher, along with other young colleagues, he was involved in completing the inventory of Valencian art between 1970 and 1976, a project that was subsidized by the National Service of Artistic Information, Archaeology and Ethnology of the Dirección General de Bellas Artes de Madrid and which was published in 1983. Later, he collaborated in cataloguing the monuments of Valencia and the Valencian region during the years 1976-80. This catalogue would be published by Felipe M. Garín and Ortiz de Taranco in 1983: *Catálogo monumental de la ciudad de Valencia* and in 1986: *Catálogo monumental de la provincial de Valencia* (Caja de Ahorros de Valencia).

In this branch of his studies, the publication in 1978 of the monograph dedicated to the painter Salvador Tuset, edited by the Provincial Council of Valencia, should be highlighted. *Salvador Tuset (1883-1975). Arte, vida, pensamiento* was part of a book series published by the Institución Alfonso el Magnánimo. At that time it was the only complete publication dedicated to the famous disciple of Joaquín Sorolla – aside from several articles in *Revista Ribalta Bellas Artes o Valencia Atracción* and the exhibition produced by the Valencia Town Hall. With the publication of this study, a new interest arose in Tuset; his artistic personality was recovered and he was included among the painters whose work renovated Valencian painting during the early years of the twentieth century. The special role attributed to his career in the context of the Valencian realistic painting was confirmed by the exhibition organised by the Centro Cultural de la Caja de Ahorros de Valencia in 1991 and by his inclusion in the study *La pintura valenciana del siglo XX* (Manuel Muñoz Ibáñez, 1998). More recently, his work was revisited by Carmen Chinchilla Mata in a study published by the Valencia Town Hall. Mata's study was based on the initial research of Professor Kurz, and the retrospective organised by the Consorci de Museus de la Comunitat Valenciana.

It was during those years that Professor Kurz's teaching ethos started to develop. After his bachelor's degree, in October 1971, he began his training as a professor of General Art History, History of Ancient and Medieval Art, and History of Modern and Contemporary Art in the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree of 1973. That year he began working as an assistant professor in the department of History of Art of the School of Philosophy and Arts at the University of Valencia, an academic position that he kept until January 1977. From October 1972 to 13<sup>th</sup> September 1973 he worked as an assistant professor at the Department of History of Art at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Carlos of Valencia. Soon after obtaining his PhD, he began working as a lecturer and head of the Department of Art Theory at the School of Architecture of the Polytechnical University of Valencia. From July 1973 until 1977, Kurz also worked as a teacher in the Spanish Studies courses at the University of San Francisco (California, USA). From that moment onwards, he always showed an inclination to teaching courses orientated towards foreign students that took place at the university, in the context of exchange agreements made with American universities. Thus, between 1984 and 1986, he was a lecturer in the Spanish Studies courses given by the University of Valencia as part of the Academic Cooperation Program with the University of Virginia, and between 1995 and 1997 he took part in the International Studies Program with the University of Rutgers (New Jersey). Perhaps his most noteworthy experience in this field was when he was appointed

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professor in the Faculty of Literature of the University of Rabat (Morocco), a position that he never had the chance to assume, given the political circumstances between Spain and Morocco after 1974.

Before becoming a professor in the Department of History of Art of the University of Valencia in 1985, he undertook a number of different contractual posts within the department. During the 1980s, his life and academic career took a new and crucial direction and his teaching activities began to settle. In that time, his interest for Russian and Soviet art had a double aspect: as a researcher and as a teacher. In this second aspect, special mention should be given to his leadership in the fight for making Russian art a subject on the university's curriculum. Indeed, he managed to establish optional subjects such as Medieval Russian Art, Russian Art in the Modern Period, and Contemporary Russian Art in the History of Art curriculum, which proved popular with the student body. He also developed this academic field in the doctoral curriculum where he taught courses such as 'Relationships between Russian Art and Western European Art (XVIII-XX)', 'Soviet Art I and II', 'Art and Architecture in the USSR (XVI-XVIII)', 'Art and Architecture in the USSR (XVIII-XIX)' and 'Russian Art in the Soviet Era'.

His role in disseminating Russian art and culture was not confined to university curricula. Dr. Kurz also enthusiastically encouraged students to develop their interests in research into Russian art. He founded the Seminar on Russian and Soviet Art (University of Valencia) and he organised courses and conferences aimed at offering a revised approach towards the history of Russian art. In 1987, he organised the *Conferences on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution* together with the Asociación España-URSS and the Vicerrectorado de Extensión Universitaria. In 1990 he organised and directed the International Encounter *The Presence of Russian Culture* in the University of Valencia, sponsored by the Valencian Regional Government and the Provincial Government. These activities allowed him to work on an exhibition project, commissioned by Kurz himself, *Realisme Rus Contemporani*, which took place in the Museu de la Ciutat de Valencia and which was organised along with the Moskvoreshie Association from Moscow. All these experiences culminated in 1999 with a series of lectures on Russian art held in the School of History and Geography. His devotion transcended all of this and his connection with Russia led him to create the *Instituto de Arte Ruso y Soviético* (Institute of Russian and Soviet Art History), today *Instituto de Historia y Arte en Rusia* (Institute of History and Art in Russia), which he still directs. Furthermore, he is now also the president of the *Sociedad Cultural Hispano Letona* (Hispano-Latvian Cultural Society) in its Spanish section and a member of the *Asociación Española de Orientalistas* (Spanish Association of Orientalism), whose Valencian section he served as a secretary.

During those years, his relationships with the Russian academic world became closer as he showed a strong determination to establish links between universities and institutions from both countries. Thus, in 2006, Professor Kurz represented the department at the signing of several agreements of cooperation and exchange of research fellows and students with the School of History of Lomonosov Moscow State University and the department of Russian History of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.

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In those years he graced several institutions with his presence, and the recognition he gained in Russia as a researcher led to the honour of his appointment as a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences of Saint Petersburg in 2002. In 1988 the University of Puerto Rico and the University of Havana invited him to lecture on Russian and Soviet Art, and in 1989 he received an offer to develop his investigations on Soviet art as a visiting researcher at the Institute of History of Art of the Academy of the Arts of Moscow and at the Institute of Theory and History of the Arts of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR. In 1990 he was invited as a visiting researcher to expand his studies on Latvian painting and architecture at the University and Academy of Arts in Latvia, in the context of the Cultural Cooperation Agreement and Scientific Exchange between Spain and the USSR. Between 1991 and 1995 he obtained scholarships from the University of Valencia to carry out several research trips to the Union of Artists of the Russian Federation – the ‘*Realist*’ Association, the Russian Academy of Arts in Moscow, and to San Petersburg. Thanks to these trips he developed his studies on Russian painting and architecture on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in the genre of Art Nouveau. He was considered highly as a researcher, proven by the fact that he was repeatedly invited to investigate Art Nouveau in Latvia by the University of Latvia, the University of Saint Petersburg and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia in the years 1992, 1994 and 1997.

This brief enumeration gives a perspective of Kurz’s biography that remains little known: his permanent connection with institutions. He sometimes showed an almost prophetic approach to the university, an institution open to the future and connected with the rest of the world. This is a belief that he kept when he occupied the difficult position of Secretary of the Department of Art History during long periods, between 1986 and 1988 and from 1995 to 1999.

Among the research projects that he directed, a research contract in 1980 in the context of the Support Programme to Promote Research should be highlighted. It was sponsored by the Dirección General de Política Científica de la Secretaría de Estado para las Universidades e Investigación – which led him to produce the *Estudio Comparado entre el arte del realismo socialista soviético y el arte regionalista y nacionalista* (1980). Later he directed the research project *La Pervivencia de Símbolos del inmediato pasado histórico cubano en el cartel histórico político y cultural posterior a la revolución de 1958* in the context of a programme of cultural cooperation between Spain and the Republic of Cuba, financed by the Ministry of Higher Education of Cuba and the Ministry of Education and Science of Spain in 1988, and a research project dedicated to realistic painting in the USSR *Pintura del realismo socialista en la URSS*, financed by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and the Ministry of Education of Spain in the context of the programme of cultural and educational cooperation between both countries (1989); as well as *Arquitectura monumental funeraria en España, Rusia y Letonia. Investigación comparada de la tipología arquitectónica monumental desarrollada en España y la Unión Soviética tras la II Guerra Mundial*, financed by the Ministry of Education and Science (1997-2000). These investigations have made a real impact as publications, where Dr. Kurz explored different perspectives of Russian art. Later, in 1991, this research bore fruit with the publication of *El Arte en Rusia. La era soviética*, published by the Institute of Soviet and Russian Art of Valencia, a book where he collected his most

important contributions to the study of art in the Soviet age, focusing on the analysis of Socialist realism's creative process and proceedings.

An in-depth analysis of his career reveals that his publications were the result of his early interest in Russian artistic reality. As previously mentioned, his first steps as a researcher began with the study of Socialist realism, which then became the subject of his PhD thesis (a short version of which was published by the University of Valencia in 1973). This early approach, along with an article dedicated to 'the creative process in Soviet art' (in *Estudios dedicados a Juan Peset Aleixandre*, 1972), was the starting point of his subsequent research. His work made an early contribution to the study of Socialist Realism, as a part of an official aesthetic that demanded absolute – even utopian – optimism, whose flawless heroes were willing to sacrifice themselves for the common good with the unbreakable conviction that only Lenin and Stalin could lead their people towards happiness; possibly a paradigm of the eternal dream: a perfect human race. The work of Professor Kurz appears as a pioneer analysis of this artistic reality, but focussed on the post-Stalinist artists. After the death of Stalin in 1953, during Khrushchev's Thaw, artists had the possibility to develop a certain artistic freedom. Nikita Khrushchev gave a secret speech to the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, now widely known, in which he recognised the tragedy caused by Stalinism.

A survey of Spanish artistic historiography during the 1970s and 1980s would demonstrate the innovative nature of Kurz's studies. It was a moment when the discussion of Russian art was a barren field, aside from the studies on the Russian avant-garde. Internationally, there were many examples of a similar trend of new interest in Soviet Art, with studies from a variety of perspectives: James C. Vaughan, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973; Oleg Sopontsinsky, *Art in the Soviet Union: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Arts*, Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1978 and Tobia Frankel, *The Russian Artist*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1972. And we should not forget the essential work of Sjeklocha and Igor Mead, *Unofficial Art in the Soviet Union*, University of California Press, 1967.

Kurz's historiographical revision stemmed from his thoughtful reading of the scarce bibliography available at that time: M.V. Alpatov, *Russian Impact on Art*, New York, 1950; N. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, London, 1947; the classic *L'Art Russe* by Louis Réau, 1922, or *The Russian School of Painting* by Benois (N. York, 1916); Klara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (N. York, 1934); or Tertz (Sinyavsky), *On Socialist Realism* (N. York, 1961), as well as specific works on architecture: Louis Lozowick, *Soviet Painting and Architecture*, and *Voices of October: Art and Literature in Soviet Russia* (N. York, 1923); C.G.E. Bunt, *Russian Art: from Scythians to Soviets* (London, 1946). This is a brief sampling of the bibliography behind one of the first Spanish approaches on Soviet Art (aside from *La función social del cartel* by José Renau, which entails a rather different field of study).

It is true that the Russian avant-garde, as an artistic movement that emerged at the end of the 1900s, has been studied in much detail and has been the subject of huge interest in regard to contemporary art. That innovative, creative bloom became a source of inspiration in Europe. Emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century, the historic specificities that accompanied the Russian avant-garde movement were the end of a collapsing Russian empire and a climate of constant revolutions that followed one after the other. If at first the movement kept pace with the European avant-garde,

it soon acquired a new personality, that was a reaction to the formalism that pervaded the work of those artists-inventors whose interest was pure artistic experimentation.

Professor Kurz dedicated three articles to that process: 'La vanguardia rusa 1920 -transformación en el arte ruso (CEIBA, 1985), 'La diversidad del Arte Soviético' (Goya, 1976) and 'La evolución del arte ruso hacia el realismo socialista' (Saitabi, 1986). They offered a synthesis of the rich phenomenon of the Russian avant-garde: the nonfigurative art created by artists such as Natalya Goncharova, Wassily Kandinsky, Mikhail Larionov, Kazimir Malevich, Mikhail Matyushin, Vladimir Tatlin, Marc Chagall, and Pavel Filonov, Varvara Stepanova and El Lissitzky — these last three coming from totally different styles. Kurz analysed Goncharova and Larionov's Neo-Primitivism, which later evolved into Rayism, the spiritual abstract art of Kansinsky, Malevich's Cubo-Futurism and Suprematism, as well as Tatlin's Constructivism and El Lisztzki's volumetric Suprematism. With this series of articles, Kurz provided an overview of the plurality of aesthetic waves that converged into the Soviet art panorama from the 1900s to the 1920s, until 23 April 1932, when the Central Committee promulgated the dissolution of all artistic movements, imposing Socialist realism as the only style officially recognised that could be utilised by soviet artists, thereafter organised into creative unions.

Professor Kurz devoted his research to this art movement, Socialist realism. He analysed the sociological and cultural reasons for a style that was intended to be a unified method for all Soviet artists, even for those working in different fields such as literature, visual arts, theatre, and cinema, and the variety and multidisciplinary of the bibliography he uses in his articles on this art movement is good proof of it. His monographs on Alexander Deyneka, Iuri Ivanovich Pimenov or Konstantin Iuon stand out among his numerous articles. These were artists who worked in a moment when the Soviet State apparatus was the sole consumer of art, and there was only one kind of art that interested Soviet authorities: the socially useful art that attracted inspired, and led the masses. Therefore, Dr. Kurz was also interested in researching the art of Soviet posters, for their role in reproducing and distributing state propaganda. The works of the major Socialist realism artists — Aleksander Deyneka, Aleksander Gerasimov, or even Isaak Brodsky — constantly referenced poster painting aesthetics, photography and film art, and they were often reproduced in posters and books, gaining true 'popular success'. Soviet culture relied on a wide diffusion among the masses, and on a hybridisation of painting, sculpture, printmaking and photography, that, in the Western world, can only be compared with film and photography.

Kurz also devoted part of his research to the analysis of architecture from this period and it is worth highlighting his contribution to the subject with his monograph on the *Monument to the Third International* (1920), made by constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin. In the late 1980s, a gradual shift in his research can be seen. As a result of his last research trips on Russian land, he became interested in late nineteenth century architecture and, more precisely, in Art Nouveau architecture and the artistic expressions of symbolism in the Russian art milieu. The outcome of those research trips was a number of highly significant contributions to the study of the *Mir Iskusstva* movement. In these studies, Dr. Kurz delved into this art movement not only from the point of view of an art historian, but also turning to the history of theatre, to literature, and to the influence of Acmeism, a very influential poetic school among Russian

circles. This line of research began in 1989, with an essay on Russian painting during the last third of the nineteenth century, originally published in *Plástica*, a Puerto Rican academic journal, and consolidated during the 1990s. In 1991, he published several articles about Russian literary magazines at the turn of the century, such as *Mir Iskusstva*, and the role they played in the art milieu, when a group formed by young Petersburg aesthetes — the *miriskusniki* — became one of the most influential phenomena in the Russian artistic scene.

In 1989, Kurz witnessed the birth of the journal *El Mundo del Arte* and the first exhibitions organised under this title. Artists, writers and philosophers contributed to this journal which was an artistic and literary almanac. It was abundantly illustrated and it came to be one of the earliest models of book art, a new medium in which the members of the group became real innovators. The typography, the pagination, the frontispiece, the chapters endings, the vignettes and every element in the book was designed to create a coherent whole. The journal intended to make the most recent art tendencies in Russia and Western Europe known to the public. Concurrently, *El Mundo del Arte* began a series of collaborative exhibitions between Russian and Western artists. From the beginning, *El Mundo del Arte* proclaimed individualism as its motto, with the purpose of championing the free game of creation.

Dr. Kurz's studies on Russian art have not ceased but instead have broadened out and, in recent years, he has turned to the origins of Russian art: miniatures and icons.

Returning to Yuri Lotman's axiom: 'Russian culture has been a culture of recurring revolutions', the first being the Russian people's will to accept Orthodox Christianity, instead of Western Christianity or Islam, their independent temperament against the Tatar yoke — as seen in the Kulikovo miniatures, studied by Professor Kurz and depicting the liberation from Tatar oppression after the famous battle led by Dmitry Donskoy. The second was the process of the secularisation of art that Russia endured under Peter the Great, when Russia opened up to Europe. Finally, the last of artistic revolutions — which occurred in the nineteenth century — was Russian realism and *fin de siècle* art, movements which paved the way for the Russian avant-garde, a sort of mirror for the rest of Europe.

As a result of his long years of research, Professor Kurz acquired a vast knowledge of Russian art which, at the time of his retirement, we hope is not the end, but the beginning, of new possibilities. Unfortunately for the Department of History of Art, his retirement has meant the loss of its only Russian art expert and the end of the courses on Russian art that he supervised - a loss which is also due to changes undertaken by the university in its obligation to adapt to the framework of European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In contrast with the growing interest that Russian art has sparked in European society — and particularly, in Spanish society — in 2010 Russian art disappeared from the University of Valencia's curriculum.

In conclusion, the contributions made by Professor Juan Alberto Kurz to the study of Russian art and its national and international historiography stand out as innovative and ground-breaking works. It is true that, in more recent times, there has been a profuse amount of contributions to Russian art studies, but there is also a significant lack of bibliography translated into Spanish, saving *Arte ruso*, the essay from Mikhaïl Allenov, Nina Dimitrieva and Olga Medvekova included in *Summa Artis*:



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*Historia general del arte*, vol. XLIV (Madrid), one of the few works dedicated to Russian art that has been published in Spain. Regarding Soviet art, the most updated international reference books are *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), edited by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, and *Russian Revolutionary Art* by John Mulner (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1987).

It should be noted that, in the last years, interest in Russian-Soviet art has been strongly revitalised. In particular, we owe the last contributions on Socialist Realism during the Thaw to Boris Groys, in *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship* (Princeton University Press, 1992) and in *Dream Factory of Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era* (2003), a book which collects ideas from the aforementioned M. C. Bown, and from Miranda Banks and her peculiar *The Aesthetic Arsenal: Socialist Realism under Stalin* (New York: The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1993).

The collapse of the USSR, followed by the democratisation of the different states of the former Soviet Union — with all its light and shadows — was reflected in a new openness towards the Western world. Russia opened up to Western Europe, as it did during the time of Peter the Great, but also Europe again took an interest in Russian matters, such as Russian history and art. This is evidenced by the many exhibitions that in recent years have aimed to offer a revision of the art and artistic creation in Russia. For instance, the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao has dedicated several exhibitions to Russian art. One of which was the show, curated by Valerie Hillings, that, with the title *Russia!*, intended to satisfy the American and Spanish interest in over nine hundred years of Russian art — and which was preceded by an enormous success in New York. The catalogue of the show included specialised articles from experts such as Mikhail Shwydkoi, James Billington, Eugenia Petrova, Gerold Vzdornov, Mikhail Allenov, Lidia Iovleva, Robert Roseblun, D. Sarabianov, Boris Groys, V. Hillings and Alexander Borovsky. No less significant was the exhibition dedicated to the women artists of the Russian avant-garde in 2000, *Amazons of the Avant-garde: Exter, Goncharova, Popova, Rozanova, Stepanova, and Udaltsova*, curated by John E. Bowlt (University of Southern California, Los Angeles), Matthew Drutt (curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum) and Zelfira Tregulova (independent curator).

From that moment, one exhibition after another has addressed similar proposals. One good example is the exhibition *Amazonas del arte Nuevo* organised by Fundación MAPFRE. Although the show also encompassed American and European women artists that were fundamental during the first steps of the avant-garde movements, this exhibition highlighted Natalya Goncharova, Alexandra Exter, Nadia Khodossievitch, Katarzyna Kobro, Käthe Kollwitz, Marie Vorobieff, Chana Orloff, Lyubov Popova, Olga Rozanova and Marianne von Werefkins. In France, there has been a similar interest. In 1998, the Musée d'Orsay exhibited *A Quest for Identity: Russian Art in the Second Half of the 19th Century* and more recently, the Louvre inaugurated their season with *Holy Russia: Russian Art from the Beginnings to Peter the Great*. From a more specific perspective, the revisionist aspect of the exhibition: *The Cosmos of the Russian Avant-garde. Art and Space Exploration* could be noted, showing representations of the universe in the oeuvre of Tatlin, Kandinsky and Malevich (Fundación Botín, 2010). Other important exhibitions include: *From Russia. French and*

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*Russian master paintings 1870-1925 from Moscow and St Petersburg* (Royal Academy of Arts of London, 2008), an analytical display of the artistic relationships between France and Russia in the early years of the twentieth century; *That Obscure Object of Art*, (Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna), including artists from the Sots Art Movement as well as works from the Moscow Conceptualists; *Under the Snow* (CAC Málaga-Unión FENOSA, 2009), which exhibited previously unseen works by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov; and *Searching the Origins of the Russian Avant-garde* (Fundación Caixa Galicia, 2009) which showed works by Kandinsky, Malevich, Grabar, Larionov, Brodsky and Goncharova, from the Saint Petersburg Museum.

It is not my intention to offer a detailed study of the attention devoted to Russian art in recent years, merely to provide evidence of a reality. Russian art has experienced a revitalised interest in the last years and Russian artists are being considered as leaders in the history of global art. Nevertheless, as Luis Merino highlighted in his review of the exhibition *RUSSIA!* (Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao): 'The great exhibition on Russian art is yet to happen; one that would join together Russian artists from the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century'. And it could be added: as well as the artists from the Soviet realism of subsequent decades.

Thus, paraphrasing Bukharin, it is hoped that the end of the teaching experience will not be its culmination, but a new beginning. It is expected that, from that contemplative maturity, Professor Kurz's teaching and researching activity will continue to provide new considerations on the creativity of Soviet Russian art.

Professor Juan Alberto Kurz's selected essays

'Llengües esclaves i eslovac'. In: *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana*, Barcelona, 1970.

'Algunos aspectos de la arquitectura religiosa en el Rincón de Ademuz'. *Revista de la Universidad Complutense*, Madrid, 1972.

'La creación en el arte soviético'. In: *Estudios dedicados a Juan Peset Aleixandre*, University of Valencia, Valencia, 1972.

'Arte, aparat e inteligentzia en la URSS. Estudio de la década de los sesenta' (Extracto de tesis doctoral). Valencia: Departament of History of Art of the University of Valencia, 1973.

'Arquitectura religiosa en el Rincón de Ademuz'. In: *Actas del I Congreso de Historia del País Valenciano*. Valencia: 1974.

'La mariología en el Islam'. In: *Homenaje al Doctor Juan Reglá Campistol*. Valencia: University of Valencia, 1975.

'La diversidad del arte soviético', *Goya* 130, January-February 1976 (Madrid).

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