

14:40 – 14:55

Discussion

14:55 – 15:10

Coffee Break

15:10

Panel 8

Craft and ‘Primitivism’ Materialities

Chair: Katia Denysova, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen

Orly Nezer, David Yellin College of Education and Levinsky-Wingate College
Borderland Modernism in Clay: Viennese Ceramics between Vienna and Mandatory Palestine, 1933–1948

Günter Berghaus, University of Bristol
The ‘borderland’ within Europe: Prehistory, Primitivism and Provincialism

15:55 – 16:10

Discussion

16:10 – 16:25

Coffee Break

16:25

Keynote Lecture

Chair: Ana-Maria Milčić

Katia Pizzi, University of London
At the Frontiers of Futurismo

17:10 – 17:25

Discussion

17:25 – 17:35

Closing Remarks

18:30

Conference Dinner

This conference explores the relationship between avant-garde art and the notion of the borderland, focusing primarily on the period from the turn of the twentieth century to the Second World War, while also considering its continuation after 1945 in what is sometimes termed the neo-avant-garde. While the borderland is understood here in the geographical sense of a territory surrounding the line separating two countries, the symposium also welcomes proposals that approach the borderland as a more conceptual space: a dynamic, shifting, and negotiated zone between two self-differentiating entities, whether political, cultural, or ideological. Borderlands can thus serve as spaces of encounter, mixing, possibility, hybridity, and conflict, not only in terms of how communities and individuals relate to themselves and to one another, but also as a conceptual framework through which knowledge production and dialectical tensions may be examined.

The title, *Sitting on the Fence*, points directly to moments of artistic, discursive, or historiographical uncertainty, doubt, ambiguity, mixture, conflict, inconclusiveness, impasse, friction, and epistemic indeterminacy. The conference seeks to explore the avant-garde in such moments, asking how art from borderlands either fails to register the complexity of these spaces or actively engages with their tensions. It examines how art from borderland contexts denies, overlooks, registers, responds to, manifests, navigates, expresses, embodies, illustrates, reveals, or indeed generates moments of indecisiveness, ambiguity, hybridity, fluidity, conflict, or friction, whether between communities, narratives, identities, or political imaginaries. The symposium therefore treats the failure of art to represent such phenomena as equally important to examine as its capacity to render them visible.

ORGANIZERS

Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences

REGISTRATION AND CONTACT

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Photo: © Hormazd Narielwalla, *Expanding Universe*, 2024, 1 of 15 panel acrylic paint and gilding on canvas print painting, 220 x 550 cm. © Hormazd Narielwalla

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Conference

Sitting on the Fence: Avant-garde Art out of the Borderlands



1–2 October 2026

Austrian Academy of Sciences
PSK-Building, 3rd floor
Georg-Coch-Platz 2
1010 Vienna

Program

Thursday, 1 October 2026

09:30 – 10:00

Registration and Coffee

10:00 – 10:10

Opening Remarks

10:10

Panel 1
Georgian and Romanian Avant-garde
Chair: Dimitra Grigoriou, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Tamar Barbakadze, independent scholar
Negotiating Modernity: Avant-garde Art from Georgia as a Borderland Practice

Katharina Tchelidze, Leuphana University
Corrosive Borders: The H₂SO₄ Group and the Georgian Avant-Garde (1921-26)

Ioana-Cristina Ciocoiu, University of Bucharest
Restless “Muses”. Travel, Gender and the Romanian Avant-Garde

11:15 – 11:30

Discussion

11:30 – 11:45

Coffee Break

11:45

Panel 2
Architecture and Design
Chair: Richard Kurdiovsky, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Jana Ndiaye Berankova, Czech Academy of Sciences
Objects of Design and Objects of Desire: Psychoanalysis and Architecture in the Thinking of Karel Teige

Jan Galeta, Masaryk University
Cohabitation of Architectural Ideas in the Borderlands of Interwar Czechoslovakia

12:30 – 12:45

Discussion

12:45 – 13:45

Lunch Break

13:45

Panel 3
Exile, Migration and Diasporic Identities
Chair: Viola Rühse, Danube University Krems

Sonia Arribas, Pompeu Fabra University
Irene Valle Corpas, University of Granada
Crossing Limits: Fences, Exile, and Movement in Charlotte Salomon’s Work

Chiara Harrison Lambe, Humboldt University of Berlin
Identity in the Margins: Stella Steyn Between Cultures and Modernisms

14:25 – 14:30

Short Break

Adrián Rioja Herrero, Spanish National Research Council
Out of Place and Out of Time? Debates on Surrealism and the Avant-Garde from the Spanish Exile in Mexico

Nicol Maria Mocchi, University of Salerno
Borderland Bodies in Marino Marini’s Wartime Exile (1943-46)

15:15 – 15:30

Discussion

15:30 – 15:45

Coffee Break

15:45

Panel 4
Spirituality, Modernism and Avant-garde
Chair: Julia Secklehner, Masaryk University

Justyna Balisz-Schmelz, University of Warsaw
Borderlands as a Laboratory of Spiritual Seekership: The Case of Urszula Broll

Maria Valentina Palmisano, University of Bologna
Between Periphery and Modernism: The Transcendental Painting Group and Spiritual Abstraction in New Mexico, Then and Now

16:30 – 16:45

Discussion

16:45 – 17:00

Coffee Break

17:00

Keynote Lecture
Chair: Ana-Maria Milčić

Sebastián Pineda Buitrago, University of Veracruz
From America Tropical to The Birth of Fascism: Siqueiros’s Manhattan Workshop, Industrial Technique, and the Geopolitics of Abstraction (1932-1936)

17:45 – 18:00

Discussion

18:00

Drinks Reception

Friday, 2 October 2026

09:30 – 10:00

Coffee

10:00

Panel 5
Yugoslav and Post-Habsburg Borderlands I
Chair: Christian Huemer, Belvedere Research Centre

Ana-Maria Milčić, Austrian Academy of Sciences
At the Edge of Empire: Avant-Garde Art in Fiume from the Habsburgs to Fascism

Kristina Pranjić, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Borderland Infrastructures of the Gorizia-Trieste Avant-Garde: A Contact Zone of Futurists, Zenitists, and Constructivists

Sanja Sekelj and Petar Prelog, Institute of Art History, Zagreb
Borderland as a Zone of Friction: Ljubomir Micić’s Avant-Garde Strategies and His Egocentric Network

11:05 – 11:20

Discussion

11:20 – 11:35

Coffee Break

11:35

Panel 6
Yugoslav and Post-Habsburg Borderlands II
Chair: Daniel Grůň, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Miha Colner, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Kostanjevica na Krki
Subversive Narratives: Progressive Artistic Practices in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s

Jane Schmidt-Boddy, Saarland Museum, Modern Gallery, Saarbrücken
Existential Borderlands: Zoran Mušič’s Abstract Landscapes, c. 1960

12:20 – 12:35

Discussion

12:35 – 13:35

Lunch Break

13:35

Panel 7
Performance, Intermedia and Post-war Avant-Garde Practices
Chair: Mia Gonan, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna

Erchen Wang, Leipzig University
Intermedial Performance in the Nonconformist Art Scene of the German Democratic Republic, 1970–1990

Nicola Baird, independent scholar
Paul Neagu’s Palpable Art Practice: Toward the Dissolution of the Borderlands between Self and Object and Self and World

Anja Segmüller, University of Oxford
Sitting on the Fence: Black Market International (BMI) and the Performance of the Borderland in the 1980s and 1990s