

INTRODUCTION

AVANT-GARDE AND AVANT-GARDES

The term “avant-garde” in the singular is usually employed in reference to the Great Avant-garde from the beginning of the twentieth century. The plural form draws attention to other innovatory artistic currents originating later in the twentieth century and still appearing today. This use of the term is sometimes regarded as too broad or even misguided, but it is still encountered so often that it cannot be ignored. In the Year of the Avant-garde we propose to explore this phenomenon and discuss its complexities.

The term “avant-garde” did not actually appear in the manifestos and other theoretical texts from the early twentieth century, where the artists would rather use the phrase „new art”. It became popular and gained positive connotations only in the 1960s and 1970s, with the development of the theory of the avant-garde, and the writings of such classics as Theodor W. Adorno, Renato Poggioli, Peter Bürger, or Stefan Morawski. Looking from the current perspective, do the characteristics of the avant-garde distinguished by those scholars point to the historical character of this phenomenon, or can it be assumed that avant-garde is evolving with time? What is the status of such concepts as neo-avantgarde, arrière-garde etc.? Is post-modernism an opposite of the avant-garde, or is it rather a perverse fulfilment of its postulates?

Authors usually emphasize the temporal aspect of the avant-garde, noting how it has been ahead of its time in its understanding of art. Does that mean that the spatial (geographical) contexts of vanguard undertakings should be viewed as less essential? Does the avant-garde inevitably assume a division into center and peripheries? Did New York steal the idea of the avant-garde? What role is played by the avant-garde in central and eastern Europe or in Latin America? What is the relation between avant-garde universalism and globalization? Does the concept of transculturality put an end to the idea of the avant-garde?

What roles are played by different art disciplines within the avant-garde project? Was the dominance of painting in the period of the first avant-garde only an artistic *signum temporis*? What have been the roles of architecture, industrial design and fashion in the formation of vanguard ideas? Is avant-garde intermedial? What is the nature of the relation between the avant-garde and virtual reality?

We invite you to reflect on the avant-garde in the Year of the Avant-Garde.

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