

AIPH30

Shaping Public History in Russia: Forms, Places and Media

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TEMI

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ABSTRACT

Public History as a discipline and as a problem field covers a wide range of issues related to the existence of individual and collective ideas about the past, representations of the past in media and educational practices, its political instrumentalisation, and the role of professional historians in these processes. While Public History as a discipline appeared in Russia just a few years ago, its practices have existed obviously for a long time. In the 2010s, attention to historical subjects in Russian public space became extremely noticeable. Given the specifics of Soviet and modern Russian history, the past often becomes object of close scrutiny by the authorities and increased interest on the part of various media and the public, turning it into an instrument of political game, propaganda or protest. Suffice it to mention the discussions around the attempt to introduce a “single history textbook”, the installation of new monuments to significant historic figures in different cities (the first monument to Ivan the Terrible in Orel in 2016, the monuments to Prince Vladimir the Great in Moscow in 2016, the monument to Alexander III in Yalta in 2017, etc.), the historical films that were sponsored by the Cinema Foundation of Russia and actively advertised in the Russian box office (*Yaroslav. A Thousand Years Ago*, 2010; *1812: The Ballad of Uhlans*, 2012; *Viking*, 2016; *Salyut-7*, 2017, etc.).

At the same time, key actors are often not professional historians but politicians, journalists, or civic activists. In this situation, several educational programs on Public History have appeared in Russia over the past few years. Nevertheless, the lack of platforms for presenting expert opinions on various issues related to history and the past is being made up for in different ways: whether it is private initiatives to present military history, civil actions to create museums of Stalin’s terror and repression, or spontaneous civic actions to save memorial places. Our panel aims to understand the specifics of the forms and practices of Public History that can be seen in contemporary Russia.

“What is the Public History You Could Ask? We Have Yet to Figure It Out Ourselves!” Establishment of Educational Programs on Public History in Russia

IRINA SAVELIEVA, NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
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Profession of a public historian has existed in many countries already for decades. In Russia there is still no any institutionalized evidence for the existence of this profession (no association, no journal) even though Russian historians actively participate in all practices of the Public History such as museum exhibits and expositions, television documentaries, historical preservation planning, projects on collecting and organizing collections of records and converting traditional forms of representation of historical knowledge into modern digital databases. The first evidence of the emergence of the public historian as a profession in Russia were several MA programs on public and applied history (the first program was established in 2015). In the presentation we analyze the advent of educational programs on the Public History in Russia. The goal of these programs is to take history outside the universities' auditoriums and to prepare specialists that are able to introduce academic historical theories to the broad audience and to work with non-professionals.

Analyzing concepts and courses for these programs as well as related satellite events (conferences, seminars, publications proceedings) allows to uncover understanding of the goals and meaning of the Public History in the Russian universities, the demand for the professionals who are willing to challenge traditional views on the historical knowledge, museums, archives, libraries and to become a connection between the general public and academic science.

Private Military Museums in Today's Russia

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In my talk I would like to present three cases illustrating the forms in which private military museums exist in today's Russia.

Case #1 is the very successful Vadim Zadorozhny's Museum of Equipment. It faces certain difficulties but keeps developing and expanding on a big plot of very expensive land near Moscow thanks to Zadorozhny's ability to convince the local administration that his museum would promote 'military patriotic education of the youth', which is in keeping with the Putin regime's ideology.

Case #2 is a way smaller and way less successful private museum in the village of Pogoreloe Gorodische, about 200 km from Moscow, where a local activist has been collecting WW II military equipment found during illegal excavations and showing it in a two-room basement. Although he tried to persuade the authorities that this museum would be important for 'military patriotic education', he couldn't overcome legal issues about keeping real arms in a private collection and had to close his museum.

Case #3 is not a military museum proper. Memorial, an institution that primarily deals with the history of GULAG, tackles war-related topics in its work but under a different angle, showing in its exhibitions not military equipment but letters and photographs of soldiers, POW's, forced laborers, DP's, and their families. Never claiming to be promoting 'military patriotic education', this institution actually educates people and helps them develop their individual attitudes towards war and motherland.

“Be Kind Rewind”: Soviet Space Flights on the Post-Soviet Screen

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In 2010-s space race became one of the main topics for the Russian patriotic blockbusters which gained a huge governmental support. Recent jubilee of the sputnik launching was celebrated by releases of two movies – *Age of Pioneers* and *Salyut-7*, which represents two episodes from the history of Soviet space program.

In this paper the conditions of production, aesthetic qualities and modes of reception of these films will be examined. Such examination will give us an opportunity to make some observations on the ideological significance of contemporary Russian historical films, particularly, on the tensions between the goals of patriotic education, local conventions of the screening of the past, historical evidence and genre patterns borrowed from Hollywood space cinema.

Memorial Sites: Rethinking Soviet History of the 1980s through Musical Past

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In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the Soviet period in general and certain social, political, and cultural issues. In this context, Soviet rock music history of the 1980s (the so-called ‘Russian rock’) occupies a special place. Sharp criticism of social and political situation of the Perestroika period presented by rock musicians became interesting for a wider Russian audience, especially youth, in the past few years.

The presentation analyzes the case of the popular eighties rock band ‘Kino’ and its principal songwriter and singer Viktor Tsoi that were rethought in the 2010s prompting interest in various aspects of the Soviet Union history of the 1980s. After Tsoi’s death in 1990 memorial sites appeared in many Soviet and later post-Soviet cities. The most important among them are commemoration Tsoi Wall in Moscow and rock club ‘Kamchatka’ in St. Petersburg. These places have been carefully ‘protecting’ by the band fans for nearly 20 years and were largely closed to a wider audience. However in recent years, status and significance of these memorial sites have changed due to the massive interest in the history of ‘Kino’ and a spawned lively discussion about the band and Viktor Tsoi in Russian media.

The presentation explores how the Soviet past of the 1980s is being rethought along with the transformation of these places and the role of citizens in this process directly. The research presented is based on interviews and observations conducted in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2012–2017 years.