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EDITORS HELENA GOSCILO AND MICHAEL BREWER

COEDITOR JOLANTA LAPOT

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT SHERRY ZEGER

CORRESPONDENCE AND SUBMISSIONS HELENA GOSCILO
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
CL 1417
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
PITTSBURGH, PA 15260
SISC+@PITT.EDU

WORLD-WIDE WEB URL: [HTTP://WWW.PITT.EDU/~SLAVIC/SISC/](http://www.pitt.edu/~slavic/sisc/)

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES AND
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Editors' Preface

Conceived in broad terms, the first issue of *SISC*, coinciding with the new century, analyzes Slavic visual culture from the early twentieth century to the present day. Although the contents privilege Russian culture, one of the entries examines the use of color in a film by Krzysztof Kieślowski, widely considered Poland's premier contemporary director: Lisa Di Bartolomeo's "No Other Gods" maintains that *Dekalog I*, part of Kieślowski's *Decalog* series, relies on contrastive colors to convey its drama of incompatible faiths in technological and religious ideologies, years before Kieślowski's signally titled, internationally acclaimed box-office hits, *Red*, *White*, and *Blue*.

Of the other two articles treating film, Alexander Prokhorov's "'I Need Some Life-Assertive Character' or How to Die in the Most Inspiring Pose" investigates Russian director Sergei Livnev's sophisticated dialogue with the body politics of Stalinism in his idiosyncratically original *Hammer and Sickle* (1994), while Seth Graham's "*Chernukha* and Russian Film" surveys the persistent engagement with "grime and slime" elements in Russian cinema of the perestroika and postsoviet periods. Both articles offer close readings of complex films that immediately upon their release sparked controversy in Russia and, subsequently, abroad.

Within the context of Slavic Studies, Elena Prokhorova's "Material(ized) Desire" represents a rare foray into the near-virgin territory of postsoviet advertising. Leaning on the theories of Lacan and Žižek, Prokhorova pinpoints the strategies deployed by ad specialists to shore up and propagate images of self-identity via a form of visual culture only recently rediscovered by a market-conscious Russia.

Whereas the four articles noted above address contemporary culture, both Derek Maus and Oksana Sarkisova focus on Russian art forms of the early twentieth century. In "Space, Time and Things Made 'Strange,'" Maus explores the conceptual and material symbiosis among music, verbal language, and painting in the works of Formalist critics, the Symbolist writer Andrei Belyi, and the long-anathemized painter Pavel Filonov. Sarkisova's "Present Perfect or Present Progressive?" concentrates on the early postrevolutionary efforts of avant-gardists to conceptualize and build a new future, her ambitious purview including theorists, architects, and film directors whose initial passion for wholesale active transformation of society and aesthetic forms eventually dwindled into passive expectation.

All six articles incorporate visuals to illustrate their points. We can only regret that financial considerations force us to reproduce in black and white

the colors that are so crucial to the various analyses, especially those of Di Bartolomeo, Prokhorova, and Maus.

We happily express thanks to Jolanta Łapot for her expert help with submissions on Polish film; to REES for its institutional and financial support of the journal; and to Sherry Zeger for her capable contribution to its technical production.

Envoi: The Slavic Department at the University of Pittsburgh and I in my capacity as general editor of *SISC* bid a grateful and affectionate farewell to Michael Brewer, without whose generosity, resourcefulness, and skill as managing editor of both *Graduate Essays* (with Mark Altshuller) and this inaugural issue of *SISC* publication would have remained a perpetual pipe dream. Our collaboration has been an all too brief but genuine treat. Gracias, amigo!

The second issue of *SISC* will be devoted to Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* on page and screen. It welcomes Petre Petrov on board as managing editor. Submissions should be sent in hard copy to Helena Goscilo at 1417 CL, Slavic Department, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh PA 15206 and, simultaneously, via e-mail to Petre Petrov at sisc+@pitt.edu. For formatting requirements on submissions to *SISC*, see our web page at <http://www.pitt.edu/~slavic/sisc/>

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