

XLVI AICA Congress

White Places – Black Holes, Košice and Bratislava, Slovakia, September 2013



Photo: Marek Bartelik

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Dear AICA Members,

We are pleased to email to you this AICA International Newsletter devoted to the XLVI AICA Congress in Košice and Bratislava, Slovakia, and the post-Congress in Krakow, Poland. The theme of this year's Congress was "White Places – Black Holes."

This special issue of the newsletter is intended to give a report on this event, during which AICA elected several new International Members and Vice Presidents and awarded two annual awards for art criticism. You will also find the program of the Congress illustrated with photographs, a report on the launch of AICA's inaugural publication for its Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Art Criticism, as well as Congress commentary from Getty Fellowship recipients.

AICA International would also like to sincerely thank the AICA Slovakia Section on the success of this Congress.

We hope you'll enjoy the Newsletter and thank all of its contributors.

Editors

Letter from the President



Dear AICA member:

This issue of our Newsletter is devoted to the XLVI AICA Congress in Košice and Bratislava, Slovakia, and our post-Congress in Krakow, Poland, which took place between 23 September and 1 October 2013. I am proud to let you know that, in the opinion of many participants and attendees, both events were among the best we organized in the recent years.

We returned to Central Europe eight years after our congress in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2005. AICA's last congress in Slovakia took place in 1966 when the country was still part of Czechoslovakia. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall over two decades ago, the region has been rapidly developing in all aspects of life, including its singular cultures and arts. With the changes have come challenges: Many countries in the region have struggled to preserve their unique artistic identity in the age of globalization. As we know well, those changes have also made a visible impact on the practice of art criticism.

The title of this year's Congress, "White Places – Black Holes," as enigmatic as it was, conveyed the essence of our discussions: "to analyze the strategies by which lesser-known regions have been and are reflected in the global history of art" while focusing on "Central Europe," a geo-cultural construct that has replaced the geo-political "Eastern Europe." This distinction reflected the specificity of the region by putting it in the context of a long view of history while simultaneously stressing its cultural diversity, and we extended this approach to other parts of the world. We were delighted to have the distinguished critics László Beke, Iara Boubnova, James Elkins, and Piotr Piotrowski, among others, as the keynote speakers for the symposium. Talented art critics from around the



French artist ORLAN presents her work at the Getty Reception on the first night of the Congress. Photo: Daša Barteková

world joined them, most of whom we were able to invite because of a generous grant from the Getty Foundation, for which we are very grateful. Our special guest this year was the renowned French artist ORLAN, who presented a highly engaging lecture on her work.

The post-Congress panel discussion in Krakow, titled "The Return of Art Criticism," directed our conversations toward broader issues concerning the practice of art criticism while grounding them in the context of art and art criticism in Central Europe. One of the panel's goals, its organizers stated, was to view a return of art criticism as an alternative "to the present position of the art world and curatorial practice that more and more often play the role of entertainment." In a packed auditorium of Krakow's International Culture Centre, the panellists (who included Adriana Almada, Juraj Čarný, James Elkins, Richard Gregor, Henry Meyric Hughes, myself, and Andrzej

Szczerski as moderator) passionately discussed the current state of art criticism, arguing against any attempts of treating it as dated while looking for different ways to attune it to the current situation in the art world. A lively and occasionally heated discussion followed their presentations.

While in Slovakia, we presented two of our annual awards: the 2013 Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Art Criticism and AICA's 2013 Incentive Prize for Young Critics. It is my great pleasure to announce that those

honours were given to, respectively, the Slovak critic Tomáš Štrauss, for his many decades of remarkable writings on modern and contemporary art from both Slovak and international perspectives, and Sebastian Baden, for his highly engaging text written in response to the last year's dOCUMENTA (13). I must report with great sadness that Dr. Strauss recently passed away, and therefore we presented our prize posthumously. We will endeavour with our Slovak colleagues on a collection of Dr. Strauss' essays to be published by AICA Press in collaboration with AICA Slovakia and an international publisher.

Meanwhile, I am delighted to inform you that the publication devoted to the writings of Dr. Ticio Escobar, winner of our inaugural Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Art Criticism, is available to purchase through our office in Paris. I strongly believe this beautiful, bilingual book, titled *La invención de la distancia / The Invention of Distance* (co-published with Fausto Ediciones and AICA Paraguay), which features four of Ticio's seminal texts, constitutes an important contribution to our discussions about art criticism on the international scale and is indispensable reading for anyone interested in contemporary art.

One more time, I would like to thank AICA Slovakia President Juraj Čarný and AICA Poland President Andrzej Szczerski, as well as their respective teams, for preparing our Congress and post-Congress in such an effective manner. I would also like to thank Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton, Chair of the 2013 AICA Congress Commission, for her contribution to the organization of the Congress, and Adriana Amada and other members of the Fellowship Commission for their work on selecting the winner of the Incentive Prize for Young Critics. My gratitude again goes to Adriana and the rest of the Publication Commission, headed by Jean-Marc Poinot, for their total devotion to publishing Dr. Escobar's extraordinary book. Finally, I am extremely grateful to the Getty Foundation and UNESCO for their continuous support of our Congresses, as well as the Slovak and Polish authorities and cultural institutions for their support of our XLVI Congress.

Happy Holidays and a peaceful end of the year!

Dr. Marek Bartelik
President, AICA International



AICA Awards Commission President Adriana Almada presents the Incentive Prize for Young Critics to Sebastian Baden.
Photo: Daša Barteková

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Letter from the Congress Organizers



Dear colleagues and friends,

Dear participants of the XLVI. AICA International Congress, pre-congress, and post-congress!

In the name of all XLVI. AICA International Congress Slovakia 2013 organizers. I would like to thank you very much for your active participation at the congress.

Our wish was to organize meaningful, incentive, and memorable congress and to anticipate future possible discussions, cooperations, and exchange.

All official photo documentation from the Congress is available on the [AICA Slovakia Facebook page](#), and all recorded lectures and discussions are available on the [website of AICA Slovakia](#).

It was my pleasure to meet you in Bratislava and Košice thank you very much for coming. I am looking forward to seeing you again!

Sincerely yours,

Juraj Čarný

President
AICA Slovakia

New Members and Appointies

AICA International congratulates the newly elected and appointed officers in leadership roles within the organization and the national sections of Israel and Mexico.

National Presidents

Rachel Sukman (Israel)
Argelia Castillo (Mexico)

Vice-Presidents (2013 - 2016)

Sophie Algardh (Sweden)
Niilofur Farrukh (Pakistan)
Andrzej Szczerski (Poland)

International Members (2013 - 2015)

Klara Kemp-Welch (United Kingdom)
Elaine A. King (USA)
Marja-Terttu Kivirinta (Finland)
Min Ling (China)
Jesús-Pedro Lorente (Spain)
Danièle Perrier (France)
Edward Rubin (USA)
Patrick Schaeffer (Switzerland)

Rachel Sukman (Israel)
Raylin Tsai (Taiwan)

AICA International Executive Bureau:
Deputy Secretary General
Raphael Cuir (France)



The AICA Bureau. From left to right: Treasurer Efi Strousa, President Marek Bartelik, and Secretary General Brane Kovič. Photo: Edward Rubin
Inset: Newly appointed Deputy Secretary General Raphael Cuir.

Congress Program

A video of each presentation may be viewed on [AICA Slovakia's website](#).

Day 1: Tuesday, 24 September

- Welcome speeches by Juraj Čarný, Marek Bartelik, Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton, and a letter from UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, as read by Brane Kovič.
- Piotr Piotrowski (Poland)
Peripheries of the World Unite
- László Beke (Hungary)
In which sense art can be a black hole (on white place)?
- Tomáš Pospiszył (Czech Republic)
The Great Return and the Therapy of Insufficient Self-reflection
- Richard Gregor (Slovakia)
The Homonymic Curtain
- Beata Jablonská (Slovakia)
White Space in White Space.
- Igor Spanjol (Slovenia)
Eastern Boys and Western Girls
- Andrzej Szczerski (Poland)
"White hole" or how to escape from a black hole in three easy lessons
- Katarzyna Jagodzińska (Poland)
Go global or remain local – strategies for Central European contemporary art institutions
- Sebastian Baden (Germany)
Musée Igor Balut: "Black Hole" - Installations blast into "White Places"

Day 2: Wednesday, 25 September

- Round Table – Honour to Pierre Restany: Zuzana Bartošová (Slovakia), Rebollo Goncalves Lisbeth (Brazil), Raphael Cuir (France), Henry Meyric Hughes (UK), Alex Mlynárčik (Slovakia), Henry Perier (France), Jean-Marc Poinot (France)
- Noemi Smolik (Czech Republic)
Are We Ready to Hear Voices
- Karen von Veh (South Africa)
White/Black/ Grey Areas: Reflections on Transition in South African Art
- Trinidad Pérez (Ecuador)
From Art Criticism To Contemporary Critical Practices in Latin America and Ecuador
- Verlle Poupeye (Jamaica)
Beyond the mimic men: Contemporary Jamaica Art and its place in the global art world
- Elaine A. King (USA)
A Cultural Capital Quagmire
- Nini Palavandishvili (Georgia)
Black Holes. When the history is not written.
- Lena Prents (Belarus)
Making the territories of nowhere visible
- Belinda Grace Gardner (Germany)



Marek Bartelik, Juraj Čarný, and Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton on the first day of the Congress. Photo: Edward Rubin



Piotr Piotrowski László Beke Tomáš Pospiszył Richard Gregor



Beata Jablonská Igor Spanjol Andrzej Szczerski Katarzyna Jagodzińska



Sebastian Baden Noemi Smolik Karen von Veh Trinidad Pérez



Verlle Poupeye Elaine King Nini Palavandishvili Lena Prents

Learning from Bucharest. Rethinking ‘white spots’ of art production in Central and Southeastern Europe

- Nadja Zgonik (Slovenia)

Hybrid Identities of Cultures in Small Nations: The Example of Slovenia

- Censorship Panel Discussion: Raphael Cuir (France) and Liam Kelly (UK)

Day 3: Wednesday, 26 September

- James Elkins (USA)

Untitled talk on art criticism (Note: Sections of Dr. Elkins’ talk can be read online [here](#) and [here](#).)

- María Luz Cárdenas (Venezuela)

Contemporary Art and Art Criticism in the Social Networks: How to live with the loss of “aura”

- Olena Chervonik (Ukraine)

A Tug of War: Pulling “Ukrainian” into the History of Ukrainian Art

- Maja & Reuben Fowkes (Hungary)

Sidelined, Under-represented and Snubbed: The New Unofficial in East European Art

- Iara Boubnova (Bulgaria)

What Might Save an Opinionated Art Critic in the Minefield of Alienation from Her Subject?

- Valeria Ibraeva (Kazakhstan)

Rape of Europa (without titles)

- Ling Min (China)

The Dialogue of Chinese Ink Painting Between ‘White Places’ and ‘Black Holes’

- Tsai Raylin (Taiwan)

Need We Some Surplus Plots in the Cloud?

- AICA Award for Criticism 2013:

Prof. Tomáš Štrauss (1931-2013)

- Closing speeches by Marek Bartelik, Juraj Čarný, and Richard Gregor



Belinda Grace Gardner Nadja Zgonik Raphael Cuir Liam Kelly



James Elkins María Luz Cárdenas Olena Chervonik Maja Fowkes



Reuben Fowkes Iara Boubnova Valeria Ibraeva Ling Min



Tsai Raylin

All photos courtesy of Daša Barteková unless otherwise noted.



La invención de la distancia / The Invention of Distance

Ticio Escobar’s book launched at the XLVI AICA Congress

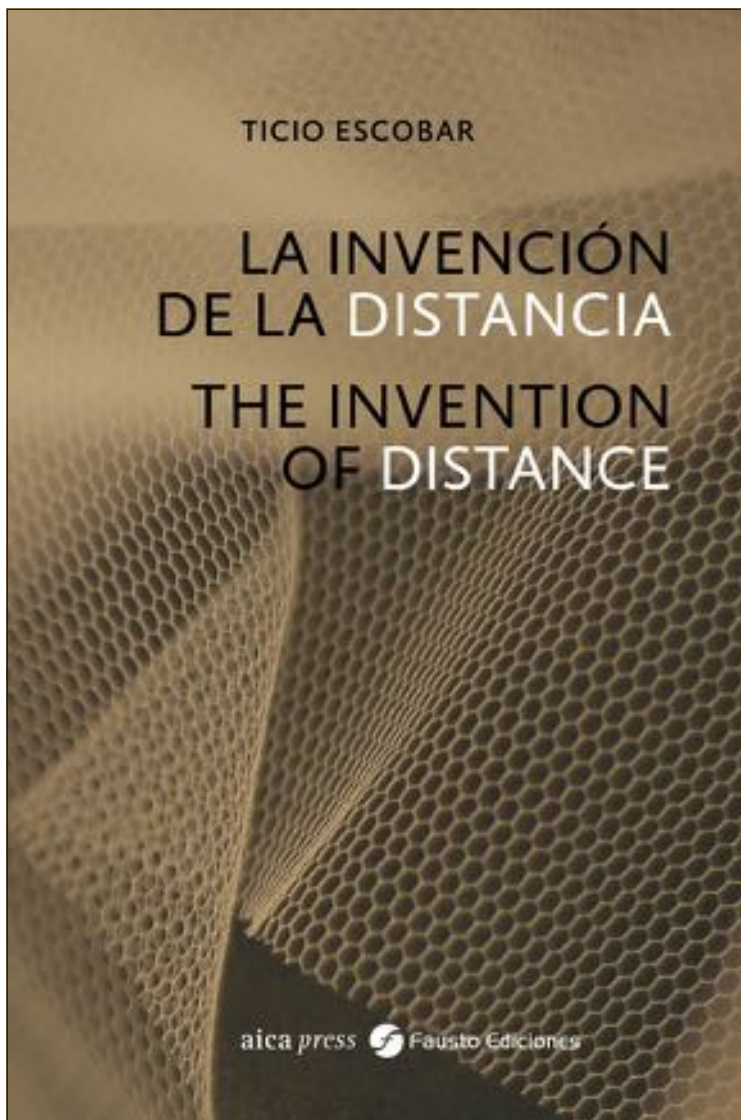
AICA is proud to have launched *La invención de la distancia / The Invention of Distance*, the new book by Paraguayan art critic Ticio Escobar, at the organization’s 44th Congress in Slovakia. The work is a bilingual volume of Spanish and English that gathers four incisive essays on key contemporary art issues. Christina MacSweeney translated the English version.

Ticio Escobar is a prominent figure in Latin-American cultural criticism. His thinking abounds in philosophical reflections, ethnographic observations, multicultural

studies, art theory and criticism, and curatorial practice. The title of the book enunciates one of the crucial points that the author tackles in the four essays of which it is composed: distance, as a necessary condition for confronting the work of art. He not only addresses the specific cultural processes in his own country and the region of South America, but attempts to develop valid criteria for evaluating artistic phenomena in their multiple guises and possibilities. He does this within the framework of Western thought and on the basis of his own personal profound knowledge of a number of native peoples of Paraguay, whose social, everyday, aesthetic, and shamanic practices he has studied and



Ticio Escobar



written about in a number of books.

In the book's preface, AICA International President Marek Bartelik notes the relevance of this edition, the first of a new series by AICA that aims to diffuse the scholarship of art critics whose writings are known mostly in their mother tongue. The publication is a result of the AICA Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Art Criticism, which was presented to Ticio Escobar during the 44th AICA Congress in Asunción, Paraguay, in October 2011.

The book is a co-edition by AICA International, AICA Paraguay, and the Paraguayan publisher Fausto Ediciones, and has had an enthusiastic reception among art critics, curators, and media attending the AICA Congress and post-Congress in Poland.

Adriana Almada
President, AICA Awards Commission

Commentary from Congress Participants

Comments from Getty Fellows

Although in the globalized world of contemporary culture, regional differences seem to disappear, but the congress showed exactly the opposite – the value and importance of regional differences, which in fact are the key stimulus to develop cultural life.

Andrzej Szczerski (Poland)

The list of speakers at the symposium, without a doubt, surfaced as the most interesting point of the event. I especially appreciated organizers' effort to bring representatives from other post-Soviet places such as Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan, as we all voiced very similar concerns of post-colonial nations struggling to define their national identities.

Olena Chervonik (Ukraine)

The papers and lectures were outstanding. It is not usual to listen such brilliant speeches from different places of the world.

María Luz Cárdenas (Venezuela)

The conference theme was not only very relevant to the location but presented me with an welcome opportunity to experience a broad range of reflections on the "centre and periphery" dynamics that are also crucial to art and criticism in the Caribbean and, indeed, the entire postcolonial world, so I took home a lot of useful ideas...

Verlle Poupeye (Jamaica)

[P]articularly controversial and ambitious reports demonstrated various approaches which we have long been deprived of in the post-Soviet Union realm. The most interesting to me were the reports reflecting global issues of art-criticism, [such as those by] Elaine King... and James Elkins.

Valeria Ibraeva (Kazakhstan)

The conference had an intense programme, packed with events and activity from early morning until sometimes late at night, but everything was so interesting (and everyone was so inclusive) that I didn't want to miss a moment and was running on adrenaline by the end of the congress. The level of organization arranged by the Slovakian team was also exceptional.

Karen von Veh (South Africa)

It was a great atmosphere, and the organizers could not be more knowledgeable. All administrative arrangements before the congress started like travel

and accommodation were excellent prepared.

Lena Prents (Belarus)

I cannot resist but to mention wonderful organization and attention paid to each participant. The wonderful team of AICA organizers made our work and stay greatly comfortable.

Nini Palavandishvili (Georgia)

All of the papers had very good presentations of the theme ["White Places – Black Holes"] within a local experience, which offered Congress participants the opportunity to share different practices under the same theme.

Ling Min (China)

I found the topic of the congress to be very stimulating in many ways. I think it was a suggestive way of approaching the problem of dominance and circuits in the art world both in the international arena as well as in the different local art scenes.

Trinidad Pérez (Ecuador)

AICA in the News

The Berlin-based philosopher and writer Lisa Paul Streitfeld also covered the XLVI AICA Congress for *The Huffington Post*. She wrote about the Congress and post-Congress in two articles titled, respectively, "(R)evolution in Central Europe: AICA's Resurrection of Art Criticism" and "(R)evolution in Krakow: Matta (& His Polish Catalysts) for the 21st Century."



Lisa Paul Streitfeld
Photo: Edward Rubin

She began "(R)evolution in Central Europe" with plaudits for AICA's 46th annual Congress: "Hosted by the Slovakian chapter of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), "White Places - Black Holes" was proclaimed both publicly and privately as the best congress in recent memory, reflecting both in structure and content, the death and rebirth of art criticism in the 21st century. "

Follow the links to read Lisa's articles the *Post*:

- [\(R\)evolution in Central Europe: AICA's Resurrection of Art Criticism](#)
- [\(R\)evolution in Krakow: Matta \(& His Polish Catalysts\) for the 21st Century](#)



Round table discussion honouring French art critic Pierre Restany (in projection)



AICA Award for Criticism 2013: Slovak art critic Prof. Tomáš Štrauss (1931-2013) (pictured left)



The pre-Congress group's tour of wooden architecture in eastern Slovakia.

To view more photographs from the pre-Congress tour of eastern Slovakia, Congress itself, and other related events, [click here](#) for a gallery of images by Daša Barteková on the AICA Slovakia website.

General Parnters



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Post-Congress Panel Discussion: The Return of Art Criticism”

Andrzej Szczerski, President of AICA Poland

The post-Congress’ panel discussion “The Return of Art Criticism,” considered the contemporary changes in the practice of art criticism. In the conference hall of Krakow’s International Culture Centre, Krakow Vice-Mayor Magdalena Sroka opened and I moderated a vigorous discussion. The panel, comprised of Marek Bartelik, James Elkins, Adriana Almada, Henry Meyric Hughes, Juraj Čarný, and Richard Gregor, debated the importance of art criticism as a specific practice of engaging with the contemporary art scene and looked at its engagement with local/global narratives and its diverse methods of production. In so doing, they considered criticism vis-à-vis the influence of internet publications and social media, the impact of art market, and curatorial practice.

Panellist James Elkins stated in his introductory remarks that art criticism today treats artists very carefully, avoiding negative judgements. At the same time, art critics are not interested in a clear definition of their profession and tend to concentrate on their own reactions to objects they encounter. This apparent identity of lack-of-discipline was valued positively by Henry Meyric Hughes, who saw art criticism as domain of exemplary freedom of expression that is able to accommodate individual and very diverse modes of writing about art.

Then the panellists looked at diverse forms of writing about art, from short texts to essays defined as creative non-fiction. The panellists also considered other forms of critical statements such as performative criticism or visual criticism. However, James Elkins expressed reservations at visual criticism, an approach in which critics comment on art with examples of other works.

Another issue was the existence of “global art criticism,” which sets globally accepted standards, and its opposite, local criticism, which draws inspiration from local artistic traditions. Adriana Almada, Juraj Čarný, and Richard

Gregor strongly agreed that most criticism is local. While there is a tendency to globally unify the argument about art, there are still differences such as predilections to particular intellectual traditions or the specific institutional practices – a point made by James Elkins.

Finally, the panellists considered the necessity of “the return of art criticism” that works not only as a superficial commentary, but as a field for valuable and open discussion. Marek Bartelik emphasized that the idea of “the return” implies that there is a clear definition of what we return to, a concept which might be difficult to formulate. Rather, he saw it as the call to revise the current situation in the art critical practice, and not necessarily an implication to revive historical modes of writing.

The final question considered art criticism as becoming an alternative to the present position of curatorial practice and art world networks. More and more often, these play the role of entertainment and representation in answer to the exigencies of the current cultural policy. Consequently, after the hegemony of curatorial theory since the 1990s, the time is ripe for the “the return of art criticism.”



The post-Congress began in the first purpose-built museum of contemporary art in Poland after 1945: Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow (MOCAK), which opened only in 2011. The museum’s director, former AICA Poland former President Masza Potocka, introduced AICA members to the museum’s short history, permanent collection, and current exhibition “Economics in Art.” The case of MOCAK illustrates the newly won recognition of contemporary art in the public sphere in Poland and, at the same time, the dynamism of the local art scene. - Andrzej Szczerski



Architecture tour in Krakow



Opening party at MOCAK



Post-Congress opening in MOCAK (from left: Andrzej Szczerski, Marek Bartelik, and MOCAK Director Maria Anna Potocka)



Panel discussion: “The Return of Art Criticism” at the International Cultural Center (Photo: Michal Ramus)



Public at the panel discussion (Photo: Michal Ramus)



Visit to MOCAK

AICA International's New Website

aicainternational.org



AICA plans to launch its new website, aicainternational.org in early January 2014. The new site features an interface that enables visitors to browse international sections with a world map.

The site replaces aica-int.org and offers an increased interactivity for AICA members and more opportunities for the organization to engage with the public.



Website Commission Chairman Christian Chambert presents AICA's new website at the 46th Congress in Slovakia.

Upcoming Congress in South Korea

The South Korea Section of AICA will host the XLVII Congress, which will be held in Seoul and the nearby city of Suwon-Si , Gyeonggi-do, the location of Hwaseong Fortress , a Unesco World Heritage site. AICA International and AICA South Korea are planning for the Congress to take place in late September to coincide with the Gwangju Biennale. The Congress' theme and Call for Papers are scheduled to be announced shortly. Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton (United Kingdom) will serve as Chair of the 2014 AICA Congress Commission.



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