Rethinking Centralization:
Innovation In Early Soviet Avant-Garde Museology

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Museology)

University of Washington

2018

Committee:

Wilson O'Donnell
James West

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Museology

University of Washington

Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis was to reconceptualize the organizational principle of centralization as innovative, using the early Soviet avant-garde museological experience as an historical case study (1917 to 1929). Centralization was not generally considered innovative or effective—its Soviet application especially, which had negative associations with stagnant bureaucracy and totalitarian ideology. By focusing on the centralizing agenda of the first Soviet museum administrators and their groundbreaking work in contemporary art museums, a counterfactual to the narrative that centralization was innovation-quashing was extrapolated. This research was conducted by analyzing documents pertaining to the centralized administration and agenda of the first Soviet contemporary art museums, which included: the first Soviet decrees on nationalization; proposals on the reorganization of arts administration; proposals for the inclusion of artists in museum administration; reports on the goals and achievements of the first Soviet contemporary art museums; and justifications for the creation of a unified museum fund and connecting museum network. The main innovative output of early Soviet avant-garde museology and its centralized organization was *cultural equity*—access to culture for all. Such output was innovative because of its national level of enforcement, which was enabled by the centralization of the Soviet system. State support, the incorporation of artistic thinking within cultural administration, and more mobile collections were three key factors that led to the Soviet Union's innovative museology. This thesis concluded that centralization could be reconceived as innovative by acknowledging that different types of centralization exist—concentration of authority *and* the central coordination and centrifugal flow of information, resources, services, and goods.

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I must say that I never imagined that you might have special museums for works of art. . . I thought that sculpture and picture galleries were peculiar to capitalism, with its ostentatious luxury and crass ambition to hoard treasures. I assumed that in a socialist order art would be disseminated throughout society so as to enrich life everywhere.

- Aleksandr Bogdanov, *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, 1908[1]

(Fig. 1) Cover of 1908 edition of Aleksandr Bogdanov's science fiction novel

[1] Aleksandr Bogdanov, Loren R. Graham, and Richard Stites, eds., *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, trans. Charles Rougle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 74.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Centralization was not a principle generally perceived as capable of innovative or avant-garde outputs. In "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths (1983)" Lena Kolarska described this negative perception as a 'myth' centered on the conviction that "centralization fosters conflict . . . [and that] poor flow of information [exists] in centralized systems."[2] This negative opinion of centralization was held by management theorists,[3] administrative scientists,[4] and historians.[5] Even Max Weber (1864-1920), the father of modern bureaucratic theory who advocated for a positive conception of bureaucracy as rational and efficient, had doubts about centralized authority.[6] However, the early 20th century saw the rise of centralizing 'movements' within technological, industrial, cultural, and political administration. Such movements included Taylorism, Fordism, and Communism and such a movement existed within early Soviet museology and the early Soviet administration of contemporary art.

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[2] Lena Kolarska, "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths", *International Studies of Management & Organization* 13, no. 3 (1983): 147.

[3] Ken Kollman, *Perils of Centralization: Lessons from Church, State, and Corporation*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[4] "The three studies considered here confirm the absence of any positive relationship between centralization and bureaucratization. In general, there is some evidence of a negative association between these variables." In Roger Mansfield, "Bureaucracy and Centralization: An Examination of Organizational Structure," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1973): 479. "The central authoritarianism of the Franco government not only eliminated regional autonomy in terms of administration and research, but also led to archaeological work being used to support the aspirations of the regime." A. José Farrujia de la Rosa, "Archaeology and Dictatorship: The Centralization of Archaeological Heritage Management (1939–1975)" in *An Archaeology of the Margins* (Springer: New York, 2014): 43.

[5] According to Soviet historian Martin Malia, "the overcentralization of the system as a whole, led to an incapacity for local initiative at all levels of the hierarchy." Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia*, (Simon and Schuster, 2008), 283.

[6] "Weber's second principle [of bureaucracy] stated that a strict hierarchical system of authority was a vital characteristic of a bureaucratic system of administration. [But] he did not make explicit the relationship between bureaucracy and centralization. The closest he came to such a description was in a statement which implied a negative relationship: *"Hierarchical subordination does not mean that the "higher" authority is simply authorized to take over the business of the "lower." Indeed the opposite is the rule."* from Roger Mansfield, "Bureaucracy and Centralization: An Examination of Organizational Structure," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1973): 478. Also see Max Weber, *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 196.

Although the general Soviet application of centralization had negative associations with stagnant, inefficient bureaucracy[7] and totalitarian ideology, the purpose of this thesis was to reconceptualize centralization as innovative. This reconceptualization was done by identifying and analyzing the centralizing 'movement' that operated within early Soviet avant-garde museology. By focusing on the first Soviet art museum administrators, their centralizing 'agenda,' and their groundbreaking work in contemporary art museums in the first decade of Soviet museology (from 1917 to 1929), a counterfactual to the narrative that centralization was innovation-quashing and ineffective was extrapolated. Centralization need not only be seen as an organizational weakness or disadvantage. It can be a strength. Innovation *can* spring from centralization, which does not necessarily equal the death of creativity or the birth of uniformity.

Rethinking Centralization, Innovation & Museums

Centrality is not a new notion—whether it be of a geographic, political, cultural, administrative, or technological kind. Notions of the 'center' and 'periphery' abound not just in history but in linguistics,[8] sociology,[9] anthropology,[10] and organizational theory[11] (to name but a few involved fields). Precedents for the establishment and maintenance of a *locus* (both literal

[7] Moshe Lewin wrote, "The Soviet regime was sometimes extremely dynamic, at other times less so, sluggish , often quite impotent, and its inability to handle its bureaucratic phenomenon is the best illustration of the latter. Relations and interactions between the growing and ever more complex administrative networks, and the leading central bodies was always a vexing problem but never so complex and dramatic as in "the age of Stalin." " Moshe Lewin, "Soviet Bureaucracy in Historical Perspective," *The National Council for Soviet and East European Research*, (May 1, 1996): 2, https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/1996-810-13-Lewin.pdf.

[8] Caleb Everett, "Locus Equation Analysis as a Tool for Linguistic Fieldwork," *Language Documentation & Conservation* Vol. 2:2 (December 2008): 185-211.

[9] T. Robert Harris, "Accountability and Centralization as Conceptual Tools for Understanding Community Power Structures," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 4:1 (2016): 49-66, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9906.1982.tb00052.x.

[10] John W. Fox, Garrett W. Cook, Arlen F. Chase, and Diane Z. Chase, "Questions of Political and Economic Integration: Segmentary versus Centralized States Among the Ancient Maya," *Current Anthropology* 37:5 (1996): 795-801. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/204563.

[11] George Huber, C. Chet Miller, and William H. Glick, "Developing More Encompassing Theories About Organizations: The Centralization-Effectiveness Relationship as an Example," *Organization Science* 1, no. 1 (1990): 11-40.

and figurative) from which all kinds of output can be directed and input received are many and diverse.[12] Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the victorious Bolshevik Party's extension of that notion of centrality—its adoption of centralization as its foundational principle of systems organization, dictating hierarchy and decision-making and leading to the unprecedented application of nationalization to economics, industry, and culture—was one of the most overt examples of this in history.[13]

In *Petersburg: The Crucible of Revolution* (1995), Katrina Clark posited two "models of revolution," arguing for a reconceptualization of the structure and form of revolutions, with the notions of center and periphery key to understanding. The first model stated that revolutions occur when the marginalized from the outer rims invade the center (the locus of the elites and privilege) while the second argued that revolutions are "explosions" which eliminate the center and whose blasts hurl the detritus out beyond the center's borders. This begged further questions. Are revolutions centripetal or centrifugal events?[14] Is centralization's chief function either centripetal or centrifugal distribution? Are museums, then, cultural agents of centripetal or centrifugal force and composition?

Depictions of museums as having centrifugal creative functions as well as structure were relatively long-standing, dating back to the turn of the 20th century. As art historian Louis Réau

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[12] See Gino Cattani and Simone Ferriani, "A Core/Periphery Perspective on Individual Creative Performance: Social Networks and Cinematic Achievements in the Hollywood Film Industry," *Organization Science* 19:6 (November-December 2008): 824-844, doi: 10.1287/orsc.1070.0350 and Zhenfeng Ma, Tripat Gill, and Annie Jiang, "Core Versus Peripheral Innovations: the Effect of Innovation Locus on Consumer Adoption of New Products," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 41, eds. Simona Botti and Aparna Labroo (Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 2013).

[13] For a primary source look at the Bolshevik Party and Soviet Union's heavy reliance on centralization, see "Centralization of the Communist Party - Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, On the Organizational Question. March 23, 1919," in *Kommunisticheskaia partiia sovetskogo soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow, 1954), Part 1, 441-444, http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1917-2/communist-party-building/communist-party-building-texts/centralization-of-the-communist-party/.

[14] Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambr., Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995): 27.

defined them in 1908; "We understand that museums are made for collections and that they must be built as it were from inside to outside, shaping the container according to the content."[15] Following this line of thinking, museums could also be understood to have a simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal distributive function. And so, as the direction of the force, influence, and structure of revolutions was open to new interpretations (imploding vs. exploding or top-down vs. bottom-up), so too were the museological applications of centralization. As with revolutions then, the organizational principle of centralization was open to a 'rethink', a revision of the 'traditional' conception of centralization, which claimed an adverse, oppositional relationship to innovation and creativity.

Museums were also not widely held to be sources of novelty or innovation. As 19th century French poet Alphonse de Lamartine once famously derided, "I am tired of museums—those cemeteries of the arts."[16] This strain of thought was not entirely absent from public opinion and it was also found within fields surrounding museology, as well as museology itself.[17] In a 2014 article on the future of archives, Director of Cataloging at the Library of Congress Beacher Wiggins said, "Our dilemma has always been, how do you corral content? And management of content really boils down to organization management. How do you sustain that? *Libraries don't want to become museums [italics mine]* but living institutions."[18] This spoke both to the conception of museums as decidedly *un*-innovative institutions (with the same

[15] Louis Réau, "L'organisation des musées," *Revue de synthèse historique*, no. 17, (1908): 146-170, 273-291. For more see André Desvallées and François Mairesse, eds., *Key Concepts of Museology*, ICOM (International Council of Museums) Report (Armand Colin, 2010).
[16] Alphonse de Lamartine, *De Lamartine's Visit to the Holy Land or Recollections of the East*, trans. Thomas Phipson (London: George Virtue, 1845), 77.
[17] Anna Leshchenko, "The Principle of the Indivisibility of Museum Collections as Part of Museological Theory and Russian Reality," *ICOFOM Study Series* 39 (2010): 63.
[18] Adrienne LaFrance, "What Will Yesterday's News Look Like Tomorrow?," *Medium,* April 4, 2014, https://medium.com/@adriennelaf/what-will-yesterdays-news-look-like-tomorrow-7f82290ab8d0.

preserving function as tombs) and to the fact that organization management had increasingly come to be understood, in the age of the Internet and digital media, as a key to innovation. Therefore, like organization management, centralization, and revolutions—museums too were open to a 'rethink.'

Museology (also known as museography or museum studies and generally understood to be the discipline of museum design, organization, management, and function[19]) was a well -positioned field, as museums were well-positioned institutions, not only for surviving and thriving amid revolution and change but also for innovation in organization as well as content. Soviet avant-garde museologists' development of the world's first contemporary art museums and "the notion of a network of such museums fed by a centralized Bureau handling all acquisition and distribution, with its underlying principle of centrifugal circulation"[20] was a prime example of such innovation in organization.

Research Goals

1. Analysis of centralization's innovative applications within early Soviet avant-garde museology.
2. The reconceptualization of centralization as potentially innovative.

[19] Defined by pioneering French museologist Georges-Henri Rivière as "an applied science, the science of the museum. Museology studies its [the museum's] history, its role in society, the specific forms of research and physical conservation, activities and dissemination, organisation and functioning, new or musealised architecture, sites that have been received or chosen, its typology and its deontology." G. H. Riviére, "Muséologie," (1981), repris dans G. H. Riviére, et al., *La muséologie selon Georges Henri Rivière* (Paris: Dunod, 1989). For the English translation see Desvallées and Mairesse, "Key Concepts of Museology," 54.

[20] Maria Gough, "Futurist Museology," *Modernism/modernity* 10, no. 2 (2003): 329.

Research Scope

Early Soviet museology was unprecedented in its treatment of contemporary art and its applications of centralization and nationalization. After the Bolsheviks' victory and succession to power following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the advent of Soviet nationalization, Soviet museology was the first national museology to promote the idea of cultural and artistic 'nationwide' centers and networks for the exhibition and distribution of cultural objects—years before the pioneering Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York[21] and influential French Minister of Cultural Affairs André Malraux's *maisons de la culture* (est. 1961).[22] The early Soviet contemporary art museums, whose first iterations were called the Museums of Painterly Culture, had a single precedent—the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris (est. 1818), which was called "the museum of living artists,"[23] thereby differentiating itself from the preeminent Musée du Louvre, "the so-called galleries of the dead."[24] As Piotr Piotrowski and Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius put it in their "Introduction" to *From Museum Critique to Critical Museum* (2015):

> The tectonic shift caused by the Russian. . . Revolution led to a fundamental revision of the function of art museums. . . .The *totally new, alternative model of the museum [italics mine]*, fully supported by the state, promoting the avant-garde and aiming to transform society by subverting cultural hegemony, was devised in Soviet Russia.[25]

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[21] MoMA's first president A. Conger Goodyear in 1931 declared that the museum "should be a feeder, primarily to the Metropolitan Museum, but also to museums generally throughout the country." A. Conger Goodyear in *Creative Art* (December 1931), as quoted in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture," in *Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 622.
[22] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.
[23] See Geneviève Lacambre, "Introduction" in *Le Musée du Luxembourg en 1874* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1974), 7-11.
[24] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.
[25] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski, eds., *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*. (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015), 9.

Emphasizing Soviet museological innovations counterbalanced what was described by one contemporary Russian museologist as "the dominating narrative of the museum as a Western modernist enterprise."[26] As Maria Gough noted in "Futurist Museology (2003)," "Until recently, the new Russian contemporary art museums [of the early Soviet period] were rather little known or studied beyond—or even by—specialists in the field."[27]

Therefore, this innovation and application of centralization within the museology and museums of contemporary art in the Soviet Union outlined the scope of this research thesis—in terms of time period, geography, and participants. The first decade within the Soviet Union was the period and region in which those in the field of contemporary art and museology (the 'participants' of this research: museum administrators, institutions, programs and oversight organizations as well as avant-garde artists and art critics) were at their most experimental.[28] The period was also bounded by the career of Anatoly Lunacharsky, who was appointed Commissar of Enlightenment and Education in late 1917 and resigned in 1929 and in whose purview as the first head of Narkompros (the Commissariat of Enlightenment and Education) was the cultural administration (this included art and museums) of the new Soviet Union. Vasily Kandinsky attributed the Soviets' early innovative museological achievements, in part, to the leadership of Lunacharsky:

> [T]he unparalleled attainments in the field of museum affairs have been achieved by . . . the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment. And . . . the practical opportunity of bringing these principles to life. . . is thanks to the Commissar of Enlightenment himself, A. V. Lunacharsky.[29]

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[26] Amanda Egbe, "(Review) Avant-Garde Museology," *Leonardo On-Line*, (May 1, 2016).
[27] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.
[28] Bowlt and Matich, *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*.
[29] Vasily Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)," in *Kandinsky Complete Writings on Art, Vol. 1 (1901-1921)*, Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, eds. (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 437-444.

The institutional participants of this study included the first Soviet contemporary art museums (the Museums of Painterly Culture) and their oversight organizations: Narkompros, the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund (whose administrative center was in Moscow), the Unified Museum Fund (following Lenin's nationalizing decrees), and the Department of Fine Arts (IZO—its Moscow and Petrograd branches). The administrative participants of this study included the first Soviet museum administrators and museum oversight organization members: Anatoly Lunacharsky (director of Narkompros), Aleksandr Rodchenko (director of the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund), David Shterenberg (first director of Petrograd IZO), Vladimir Tatlin (first director of Moscow IZO), Kazimir Malevich (member of Moscow IZO then second director of Petrograd IZO), Vasily Kandinsky (member then second director of Moscow IZO, first director of the Museums of Painterly Culture, and member of the Purchasing Fund), Osip Brik (member of Moscow IZO), and Nikolai Punin (member of Petrograd IZO).

Research Scope

1. Time period: 1917 to 1929
2. Geographical region: the Soviet Union
3. Participants: The first Soviet contemporary art museums (the Museums of Painterly Culture) and their administrators, museum oversight organizations and their members: Narkompros (the Commissariat of Enlightenment and Education), the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund, the Unified Museum Fund, the Department of Fine Art (IZO), Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vasily Kandinsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Kazimir Malevich, David Shterenberg, Nikolai Punin, Vladimir Tatlin, and Osip Brik

Definitions

In order for Soviet avant-garde museology and its centralized, centralizing innovations to be analyzed, its constituent parts first had to be defined and contextualized. This meant the terms and concepts of centralization, innovation, and the avant-garde had to be considered separately before considered together.

Centralization

As defined by Jon Lauglo, 'centralized' authority meant "concentrating in a central or top authority decision-making on a wide range of matters, leaving only tightly programmed routine implementation to lower levels in the organisation."[30] But centralization was not restricted to the description of hierarchical bureaucracy, administration, and the concentration of authority. It also indicated the centralized location, control, and flow of information, services, and goods. Lena Kolarska broke centralization down into three general types: "concentration, central coordination, and strong control from above."[31]

Innovation

Gail Anderson argued in *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift* (2012) that museums were continually evolving and reinventing themselves and "are not immune to local or world events, issues, and trends."[32] It was this reflective, adaptive institutional capability of museums that gave them their potential for innovation. As for innovation itself, at its most abstract it involved the inventive, new, and original. In terms of programmatic or institutional innovation, the definitional groundwork had been done by

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[30] Jon Lauglo, "Assessing the Present Importance of Different Forms of Decentralisation in Education", in K. Watson, C. Modgil and S. Modgil, eds., *Power and Responsibility in Education*, London: Cassell (1997): 3-4.
[31] Kolarska, "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths," 147.
[32] Gail Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift* (2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2012), 1.

administrative scientists and organizational theorists. According to Jerald Hage and Dewar Robert in "Elite Values Versus Organizational Structure in Predicting Innovation (1973)," in order to meet the definition of 'innovative' a program must involve a client or activity that was new to the organization.[33] Within museology this could mean: the establishment of a new kind of museum; the creation of new branches, departments, or positions (with new specializations); the development of new collections, distribution, or administrative/organizational policies; novel and creative exhibit design; or the acquisition of a new kind of collection. The 'innovative' program need not be new for *all* museological institutions, nor need it be an entirely new 'invention.'[34] It need only be new to the applying agent/institution.

Avant-Garde

'Avant-garde' was a term used in multiple ways. According to John Bowlt, in *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment* (1996), the term 'avant-garde' entered the common vernacular due to heightened awareness of military jargon following World War I.[35] On the other hand, in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (2002), Susan Buck-Morss argued that, within Russia, the term 'avant-garde' was being used as early as 1863 in a non-militaristic way, to describe cultural or political radicalism. [36] 'Avant-garde' originated in the West as a military descriptor of the front edge, the small leading force, of an army sent to scout and surprise the enemy. According to Bowlt, there was no

[33] Jerald Hage and Dewar Robert, "Elite Values Versus Organizational Structure in Predicting Innovation," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1973): 279-90.
[34] Ibid.
[35] John E. Bowlt and Olga Matich, eds., *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[36] Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, MIT Press, 2002.

single cultural avant-garde—it was a "multifarious phenomenon"[37] determined by discipline (art, literature, music etc.), region, and period (this determination was often done retroactively by academics[38]). It was Lenin who developed the concept of the 'political vanguard' in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), where the originally French term 'avant-garde' was co-opted to describe the new Bolshevik Party. Most notably, as used by Lenin's Bolshevik Party and the numerous artistic avant-garde movements[39] pioneered in early 20th century Russia, both the political and artistic uses of the term 'avant-garde' shared a fundamentally similar view of their role in the construction of a new world—"the elitist conception that a minority would be in "advance" of the rest of the population and hence would need to lead them."[40] When abstracted and removed from its military origins and artistic and political associations 'avant-garde' referred to those or that which pushed the boundaries of the status quo and took the first step needed to start a paradigm shift, be it scientific, social, or aesthetic.[41]

Definitions Glossary

1. Centralization: the centralized concentration of authority or the process of bringing information, services, and goods together in one place (for preservation or distribution).
2. Innovation: a program or process involving a new and original idea, activity, or method.
3. Avant-Garde: individuals, processes, groups, and movements that push the boundaries of the status quo and take the first step toward a paradigm shift within a specific field.

[37] Bowlt and Matich, *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*.
[38] What Buck-Morss calls "the periodization of the 'Russian' avant-garde. . . It was only in the 1960s that Western art historians constructed retroactively an international narrative of the artistic "avant-garde," in which the Russian modernists figured as a critically important moment." Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 60.
[39] Constructivism, Suprematism, Futurism, Cubism.
[40] Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*.
[41] For more on the etymological history of 'avant-garde' see Teofila Cruz-Uribe, "Following the Black Square: The Cosmic, The Nostalgic, & The Transformative in Russian Avant-Garde Museology," *Proquest Dissertations* (2017), 27-29.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This literature review sought to explore the existing resources that were available concerning the innovative and centralizing impact of early Soviet avant-garde museology. The first section of this literature review concerned centralization's perceived innovation and effectiveness, specifically among organizational theorists and administrative scientists and concerning Lenin's contribution to the field of management theory. The second section outlined contemporary, international museological opinion of centralization. The third section synthesized the research available on Bolshevik (i.e. early Soviet) bureaucracy and culture, especially regarding its centralized organization and achievements in equity. The final section looked at the literature covering the historical development of Russian museology and its intersection with early 20th century Russian artistic avant-garde movements, the Russian Revolution, and the new Soviet cultural administration.

The significance of research is determined by the finding and filling-in of 'gaps' in the relevant bodies of scholarly literature. The 'gap' this research thesis sought to partially fill, in terms of methods (principally primary source document analysis, institutional organization /trajectory analysis, and administrator identity analysis), period (the 1920s), region (the Soviet Union), and content (the intersection of Soviet centralization, the Russian artistic avant-garde, and Soviet museology) was at least partially outlined by historians of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde Svetlana Dzhafarova, Maria Gough, and Pamela Kachurin and by avant-garde Russian artist and museologist Arseniy Zhilyaev. Dzhafarova lamented in "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture (1992)" that, "It is not possible at this time to reconstruct step by step the brief but eventful life, from 1919 to 1929, of the Museum of Painterly Culture [an

individual institutional example of innovation in centralized administration, organization, and object and exhibit handling],"[42] while Gough pointed out in "Futurist Museology (2003)" that, "A fully diachronic history of [what she called Futurist museology and this study called Soviet avant-garde museology] between 1919 and 1929 would need to be written."[43] Kachurin explained in *Making Modernism Soviet* (2013) that "until now, neither the extent of [avant-garde artists like Malevich, Rodchenko, and Kandinsky's] involvement [as museum administrators] in the nascent Soviet cultural apparatus nor the effect of this involvement on their political and artistic identities has ever been fully analyzed."[44] Zhilyaev declared, in "Conceptual Realism: The Vulgar Freedom of Avant-Garde Museum Work (2014)," that "The avant-garde character of the art created by Soviet museologists must be reopened to the world."[45] The more general 'gap' that this historical research study of centralization sought to fill was outlined in "When Organization Studies Turns to Societal Problems (2015)," a defense of 'grand theories' and their usefulness, which argued that "organizational studies needs greater historical depth and interdisciplinarity."[46]

[42] Svetlana Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, Rizzoli International Publications, 1992): 474-480.
[43] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 327-348.
[44] Pamela Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), xvii.
[45] Arseniy Zhilyaev, "Conceptual Realism: The Vulgar Freedom of Avant-Garde Museum Work," *E-flux* 60, vol. 12, (2014).
[46] Matt Vidal, Paul Adler, and Rick Delbridge, "When Organization Studies Turns to Societal Problems: The Contribution of Marxist Grand Theory," *Organization Studies* 36, 4 (2015): 405-422.

Centralization's Innovation & Effectiveness

The 'traditional' conception of centralization as being averse to or even directly opposing innovation and creativity was an idea long-standing in economics, sociology, management theory, and organization studies. Pioneering management theorist Chester Barnard, in *The Functions of the Executive* (1938), and leading turn-of-the-century economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, in *The Vested Interests* (1947), contended that there was a negative, inverse relationship between centralization and innovation within formal structures like programs, institutions, and governments, due to the 'elites'' vetoing of less powerful members' innovative ideas out of fear of the loss of the status-quo and 'vested interests.'[47] This negative relationship between centralization and innovation was also expected in the literature because, to paraphrase Jerald Hage and Dewar Robert in "Elite Values Versus Organizational Structure in Predicting Innovation (1973)," there was less supposed possibility for initiative, creativity, and the circulation of ideas when power was concentrated in the hands of the few.[48] The aim of this thesis was to revise this negative perception, what Lena Kolarska calls a 'myth,' of centralization as fostering conflict and poor flow of information.[49]

There was a branch within organization studies and management theory that analyzed the effectiveness of various organizational structures, centralization included. "Developing More Encompassing Theories About Organizations: The Centralization-Effectiveness Relationship as

[47] Thorstein Veblen, *The Vested Interests* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1947). See also Chester Barnard, "Functions and Pathology of Status Systems in Formal Organizations," in William Foote Whyte, ed., *Industry and Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964): 46-83.
[48] Hage and Robert, "Elite Values Versus Organizational Structure in Predicting Innovation," 279-90.
[49] Kolarska, "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths," 147.

an Example (1990)"[50] provided an overview of this branch's development and conclusions. While innovation and effectiveness were not synonyms, a closer look at the consensus held by centralization effectiveness scholars showed a similar outlook: that centralization was negatively associated with effectiveness, especially "in turbulent (fast-changing and unpredictable) environments."[51] However, there were those who argued the opposite. C. Chet Miller, William H. Glick, D.C. Hambrick, and Henry Mintzberg linked effectiveness to the identification of an organization's elite (i.e. top-level managers) as "key boundary spanners"[52] who are able to identify and therefore avoid or take advantage of certain kinds of threats and opportunities.[53] An adjoining argument was provided by George Huber and R.R. McDaniel: that because up-to-date awareness and knowledge of an organization's policies and priorities are more available to the upper echelon of an organization, that echelon is better equipped than others in the organization to make effective decisions in combating the surrounding turbulent environment.[54] Additionally, Henri Fayol and R.B. Duncan, in "Multiple Decision-Making Structures in Adapting to Environmental Uncertainty: The Impact on Organizational Effectiveness (1973)," argued for the

[50] For a rough overview see George Huber, C. Chet Miller, and William H. Glick, "Developing More Encompassing Theories About Organizations: The Centralization-Effectiveness Relationship as an Example," *Organization Science* 1, no. 1 (1990): 11-40.

[51] Ibid. See also J. Child, *Organization: A Guide to Problems and Practice* (London: Harper & Row, 1984). W. A. Randolph and G. G. Dess, "The Congruence Perspective of Organization Design: A Conceptual Model and Multivariate Research Approach," *Academic Management Review* 9 (1984): 114-127. J.M. Pennings, "Structural Contingency Theory: A Multivariate Test," *Organization Studies* 8 (1987): 223-240. J.M. Pennings and R. C. Tiripathi, "The Organization-Environment Relationship: Dimensional versus Typological Viewpoints," in L. Karpik, ed., *Organization and Environment, Theory, Issues, and Reality*, (London: Sage Publications, 1978): 171-195.

[52] Huber, Miller, and Glick, "Developing More Encompassing Theories About Organizations: The Centralization-Effectiveness Relationship as an Example," 11-40.

[53] D.C. Hambrick, "Environmental Scanning and Organizational Strategy," *Strategic Management Journal* 3 (1982): 159-174. See also George Huber, "The Nature and Design of Post-Industrial Organizations," *Management Science* 30 (1984): 928-951. Henry Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

[54] George Huber and R. R. McDaniel, "The Decision-Making Paradigm of Organizational Design," *Management Science* 32 (1986): 572-589.

existence of a kind of situational, adaptive centralization within effective organizations, which reacts accordingly to different environmental input.[55] Finally, in "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths (1983)," Lena Kolarska argued that this negative opinion has an "emotional," qualitative, perception-based foundation:

> Centralization causes alienation at lower levels in the hierarchy. It limits people's autonomy and freedom, and they do not like it. It may therefore be assumed that they will perceive the system as more centralized than it really is. They will also attribute to centralization even a number of consequences for which it was not responsible.[56]

On the other hand, the potentially *productive* relationship between centralized organization and the more democratic notions of initiative, collaboration, and creativity was also an idea of long-standing—especially as it related to the first leader of the Soviet Union. Lenin believed that the very existence of Communism and the establishment of a truly Communist Russia was predicated on there being complete economic and industrial centralization —"Communism presupposes the maximum of centralization of large scale production throughout the country."[57] The founder of the Bolshevik Party (an organization noted for its stringently centralized hierarchy[58]) also recognized the need for combining centralizing principles with allowances for creative initiative. This led to Lenin's influential contribution to the theory of organization and management "under socialist conditions"[59]—the concept of 'democratic centralism':

> Centralism, understood in a truly democratic sense, presupposes the possibility. . . of a full and unhampered development not only of specific local features, but also of local

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[55] Henri Fayol and C. Storrs, trans., *General and Industrial Management* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1949). See also R.B. Duncan, "Multiple Decision-Making Structures in Adapting to Environmental Uncertainty: The Impact on Organizational Effectiveness," *Human Relations* 26 (1973): 273-291.
[56] Kolarska, "Centralization and Decentralization as Organizational Myths," 160.
[57] V.I. Lenin, "Notes on the draft for the nationalised industry management statute," in *Lenin Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVI: 47-48.
[58] See the 'Bolshevik Bureaucracy' section of this Literature Review.
[59] Basu, *Public Administration: Concepts and Theories*.

> inventiveness, local initiative, of diverse ways, methods and means of progress to the common goal.[60]

Lenin also advocated for a more flexible template of centralization, one that did not involve complete top-down authority: "stereotyped forms and uniformity imposed from above have nothing in common with democratic and socialist centralism."[61] This initiative- and creativity-based conception of the centralism at the very heart of the Bolshevik Party seemed at odds with the more standard understanding of the Party as an organization with revolutionary aims but conservative hierarchical principles.

Contemporary Museological Opinion Of Centralization

Contemporary opinion of centralization within the museology field did not provide an overwhelming consensus, although it was slightly skewed towards the negative. The case of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (BMFA) and its organizational 'shake up' served as a clear example of this. In 1999 then-new BMFA director Malcolm Rogers announced a "sweeping restructuring" of the museum. "[Rogers] merged several departments, eliminate[d] 18 positions and sen[t] two senior curators packing that [same] afternoon. He also created 20 positions, including those of photography curator and chief financial officer. He [went on to] add six curatorial planning and project managers and four slots in conservation and collection management, bringing the museum's staff to 1,043."[62] Rogers argued that the new departments were needed "to improve the care and display of the museum's collection," part of a 10-year plan

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[60] Lenin's speech "On the Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government, dictated March 28, 1918 and first published on April 14, 1929 in *Pravda* No. 86. V. I. Lenin, ed. Robert Daglish, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, trans. Clemens Dutt, 4th English Edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 209.

[61] Lenin's speech "How to Organize Competition?", written December 1917 and first published January 20, 1929 in *Pravda* No. 17. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, trans. Yuri Sdobnikov and George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 404-415.

[62] Judith H. Dobrzynski, "Boston Museum's Restructuring Sows Fear Among U.S. Curators," *Arts Section: The New York Times*, July 8, 1999.

to "enhance the visitor experience."[63] This centralized expansion did not receive a positive response. Some outside curators and art historians likened it to a corporate 'takeover' with a corporate vision and model of power and decision-making, viewing it as an unwanted transformation of the museum and as a "centralization of power that devalues curators, making them pawns to administrators who will stress bottom-line considerations rather than intellectual content when decisions are made on programming." Director Rogers said, "I'm not keen on centralizing power, but a museum needs a central vision" and he argued that such a restructuring would bring about more collaboration, "for example, among departments like contemporary art, prints and drawings, and photography, which are independent entities."[64] So on the one hand, a more centralized structure was expected to increase departmental and interdisciplinary collaboration while on the other hand, increased centralization was equated with a corporate takeover and hierarchy.

Silvia Bagdadli's "Museum and Theatre Networks in Italy: Determinants and Typology (2003)" developed an organizational definition for the mathematical term 'parithetic,' meaning "with a low degree of centralisation" or horizontal as opposed to vertical flows of communication and decision-making. The term's opposite was 'hierarchic', of "a high degree of centralisation."[65] The study focused on measuring and comparing the intensity of connectivity in centralized and parithetic museum networks, seeking to identify 'central agents' and "to understand if there is a relationship between the organisational form adopted and the type of activities that are jointly managed."[66] The study of Italian museums showed centralization had

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Silvia Bagdadli, "Museum and Theatre Networks in Italy: Determinants and Typology", *SDA Bocconi Research Division Working Paper* 03-86 (2003).
[66] Ibid.

strong associations with large dimensions, more structured program activities, and low connectivity. The study also associated innovation with non-structured activity and therefore argued that less centralized, more parithetic networks "stimulated cooperation in the artistic area . . .[of a] smaller, balanced, and more intensely connected [nature]."[67] As suggested by Bagdadli, this was a case of equating centralization with less connectivity, information flow, collaboration, and creativity.

The Italian museum typology study also indicated an understanding that the size of an individual museum or network often leads to higher degrees of centralization, in terms of administration and communication. As Bruno Frey put it in "Superstar Museums: An Economic Analysis (1998)":

> A crucial decision of museum policy concerns the degree of centralization appropriate for the problems at hand. In Europe especially, where most of the major museums formed part of the public administration, the organizational form was highly centralized as was government bureaucracy in general.[68]

This highlighted a direct link between governmental form and museum organization and administration. European museums tend to 'pattern after' the administrative form taken by the ruling government. Frey went on to say:

> A centralized bureaucracy organized along a functional division of tasks is ill suited to provide a "total experience" for the visitors. It is difficult or impossible to efficiently coordinate functions such as the classic curatorial activities, renovation of paintings, upkeep of the buildings or ticketing by a central directorate[69]

—reiterating the critical perception of centralization's relationship with innovation and effectiveness as an inverse negative.

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Bruno S. Frey, "Superstar Museums: An Economic Analysis," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 22, no. 2-3 (1998): 113-125.
[69] Ibid.

Bolshevik Bureaucracy, Equity & Culture

Not all historians made sweeping negative claims about Soviet centralization. While Martin Malia, in *The Soviet Tragedy* (2008), argued that "the overcentralization of the [Soviet] system as a whole, led to an incapacity for local initiative at all levels of the hierarchy,"[70] in *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organisational Change, 1917-1923* (1979), Robert Service emphasized the bottom-up flow of participation at the beginning of the Bolshevik Party's reign. There existed then the necessity of (as well as potential for) invention and innovation—what Service called the "*positive potentiality [italics mine]* of that chain of interdependence binding together all the links from the central executive bodies through the regional, provincial, town and suburb committees down to the basic party cells."[71] And Martin Malia did have some positive things to say about Bolshevik centralization, pointing out the strengths of the Bolsheviks' centralized communication: "There were structural reasons for the Bolsheviks' survival . . . they had the advantage of interior lines of communication radiating out from Moscow . . . [and a] superior capacity for organization."[72]

The advantages of a centralized system and the achievements it enabled within the Soviet Union was another subsection of the literature. The most positive commentary and interpretation in the literature seemed reserved for the Soviet Union and its Socialist ideology's platform of equality. For Lenin and his Soviet Socialism, just as Communism 'presupposed' centralization, it also presupposed equality—and more specifically, equity.[73] There exists within contemporary

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[70] Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia*, (Simon and Schuster, 2008), 283.
[71] Robert W. Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organisational Change, 1917-1923* (London; New York: Macmillan, 1979).
[72] Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia*, 122.
[73] S. Dobrin, "Lenin on Equality and the Webbs on Lenin," *Soviet Studies* 8, no. 4 (1957): 337-57. http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/149123.

literature (especially within the fields of education, economics, health, and law) an emphasis on the need to differentiate between equality and equity.[74] Put simply, equality is "the quality or state of being equal; the quality or state of having the same rights, social status, etc." Equity, on the other hand, is "fairness or justice in the way people are treated."[75] In the words of Amy Sun, "Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help."[76]

In 1914, Lenin asserted the Socialist platform of equality and equity when he pinpointed a central goal of the future revolution—the abolition of the class system:

> The abolition of classes means placing *all* citizens on an *equal* footing with regard to the *means of production* belonging to society as a whole. It means giving all citizens *equal* opportunities of working on the publicly-owned means of production, on the publicly-owned land, at the publicly-owned factories, and so forth.[77]

C. Asakwe, in *Constitutional Protection of Equality* (1975), reiterated the Soviet platform of equality and equity, asserting:

> Equality of all citizens before the law has always been a cornerstone of Soviet Socialist law. . . In order to properly speak of equality before the law all persons must operate from an equal platform. Equal status deserves equal treatment. But where certain persons, to start with, are unequally placed in the society (either because of a previous or current de facto inequality) they operate at a disadvantage vis-a-vis other citizens. To remedy this

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[74] Oscar Espinoza, "Solving the equity–equality conceptual dilemma: a new model for analysis of the educational process," *Educational Research* 49, no. 4 (2007): 343-363. George Alleyne, Juan Antonio Casas, and Carlos Castillo-Salgado, "Equality, equity: why bother?," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78, no. 1 (2000): 76-77. Paula Braveman and Sofia Gruskin, "Defining equity in health," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 57, no. 4 (2003): 254-258. Karen S. Cook and Karen A. Hegtvedt, "Distributive justice, equity, and equality," *Annual review of sociology* 9, no. 1 (1983): 217-241. Loukas Balafoutas, Martin G. Kocher, Louis Putterman, and Matthias Sutter, "Equality, equity and incentives: An experiment," *European Economic Review* 60 (2013): 32-51.

[75] Austin Darling, "The Difference Between Equality and Equity," *The Odyssey*, July 19, 2016, https://www.theodysseyonline.com/the-difference-between-equity-and-equality.

[76] Amy Sun, "Equality Is Not Enough: What the Classroom Has Taught Me About Justice," *Everyday Feminism*, September 16, 2014, https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/equality-is-not-enough/.

[77] V. I. Lenin, "A Liberal Professor on Equality," first published in *Put Pravdy* No. 33, March 11, 1914. In *Lenin's Collected Works* Vol. 20, translated by Bernard Isaacs and Jerome Fineberg, 144-147. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972.

> obvious disparity [Soviet] law creates certain compensatory privileges for members of under-privileged groups.[78]

Such underprivileged groups included minority ethnic nationalities within the Soviet Union, women, and the tsarist-era lower and working classes.[79] Compensatory privileges included the reservation of special places and quotas within higher education institutions, paid maternity leave, the right of divorce, and equitable wages for workers.[80] This system of equitable distribution of opportunity and previously denied resources and access (to higher education, employment, a living wage, etc.) was what led Terry Martin, in *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923-1939*, to call the Soviet Union the "affirmative action empire."[81] However, not all the literature viewed these achievements in equity as generally acknowledged, well-represented fact. For example, Mikaela Nhondo Erskog argued that the Bolshevik Party's Socialist platform of equality, specifically regarding women, was both revolutionary and still under-recognized:

> The Russian Revolution was intimately tied to the presupposition that all persons have an equal role to play in society based on their fundamental position as equals. Yet, the undeniable role of women and the explicit attempts to reconfigure a social order based on gender and sexual equality is continually denied when we remember the Russian Revolution.[82]

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[78] C. Asakwe, "Substantive Legal Guarantees of Equal Protection Under Soviet Law," in Thijmen Koopmans, ed. *Constitutional Protection of Equality*. Vol. 2. BRILL, 1975, 203-204

[79] Ibid. Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society Equality, Development, and Social Change,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. S. Dobrin, "Lenin on Equality and the Webbs on Lenin." James R. Millar,. *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[80] C. Asakwa, "Substantive Legal Guarantees of Equal Protection Under Soviet Law," 203-204. Aleksandra Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," first published as a pamphlet in 1908, Alix Holt, trans. and ed., in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, Allison & Busby, 1977.

[81] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Cornell University Press, 2001.

[82] Mikaela Nhondo Erskog, "Russian Revolution and its radical gains for gender and sexual equality," *Daily Maverick,* November 3, 2017, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-11-03-op-ed-russian-revolution-and-its-radical-gains-for-gender-and-sexual-equality/#.WxSukPZFz7N.

In terms of museums, art, and culture the Soviet platform and system of equitable treatment and access was viewed in the literature no differently than it was for education, law, nationality, and gender. It was seen as a positive, effective achievement. Just as the cornerstone of Soviet Socialist law was the equality of everyone before the law, in the words of Svetlana Dzhafarova in "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture (2012)," "the idea of making artistic treasures accessible to the masses, together with the belief in their educative value constituted the cornerstone of all [Soviet] museum creation."[83] Maria Gough also emphasized the Soviet system's provision of cultural access, what she described as the "underlying principle of centrifugal circulation [at the center of] . . . the [Soviet] notion of a network of [contemporary art] museums fed by a centralized Bureau handling all acquisition and distribution."[84]

The centralized system that provided this equitable access was contextualized by Yevgeny Fiks, who in "Nationalization of All Galleries and Museums (2014)" argued that such equity presupposed and required centralized organization (specifically nationalization, i.e. the transfer of authority to central, state control and the process of transforming private assets into public assets):

> The current faith in privatization is comparable, perhaps, only to the hopes placed on its opposite, nationalization, in the 1920s and 1930s (especially in the Soviet Union). . . [where] museums were modernized through nationalization: they were transformed from cabinets of curiosities into public institutions that attempted to consolidate society via education. . . "Art belongs to the people" was the ideology at work.[85]

Another avenue explored in the literature was the study of the process, the progressive development, of centralization and social/political movements like revolution. Ken Kollman, in

[83] Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," 476.
[84] Maria Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.
[85] Yevgeniy Fiks, "Nationalization of All Galleries and Museums," in Il′i͡a͡ Budraĭtskis and Arseniĭ Zhili͡a͡ev, *Pedagogical Poem: The Archive of the Future Museum of History* (First ed., Italy: Marsilio, 2014), 22.

Perils of Centralization: Lessons from Church, State, and Corporation (2013), posited that centralization can occur in five steps: assent, representative centralization, partisanship, executive centralization, and lock-in.[86] Max Weber and Neil Smelser's work on social movements laid out its stages in a roughly similar fashion: move-in, destructure, reconstitute, generalize, and respecify/restructure.[87] Specific to the Bolshevik case of institution and control 'building,' similar steps were traced by Jon Lauglo in "Soviet Education Policy 1917-1935: From Ideology to Bureaucratic Control (1988)."[88]

Thomas Remington, in "Institution Building in Bolshevik Russia: The Case of 'State Kontrol' (1982)," concluded that the Bolshevik Party had not created new controlling bodies so much as allowed the continuation of claims to control made by pre-existing, long-standing 'strong' institutions.[89] In "The Russian Revolution From A Provincial Perspective (2015)" Liudmila Novikova reframed the phenomenon as "the *re*centralization of the Soviet state."[90] Novikova argued that the Bolshevik centralizing impulse was a return to a prior state and not a newly developed implementation or innovation. Her 'reframing' argument raised the question of whether the institutions the Bolsheviks laid claim to 'creating' were either inheritances or innovations. Anne O'Donnell argued in "A Noah's Ark: Material Life and the Foundations of Soviet Governance, 1916-1922 (2014)" that the revolution did not just provide a field where pre-existing institutions, factions, and policies could duke it out but was in fact productive and

[86] Kollman, *Perils of Centralization: Lessons from Church, State, and Corporation*.
[87] H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1963).
[88] Jon Lauglo, "Soviet Education Policy 1917-1935: From Ideology to Bureaucratic Control," *Oxford Review of Education* Vol. 14, no. 3 (1988): 285-299.
[89] Thomas Remington, "Institution Building in Bolshevik Russia: The Case of "State Kontrol," *Slavic Review* 41, no. 1 (1982): 91-103.
[90] Liudmila Novikova, "The Russian Revolution from a Provincial Perspective," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015): 769-85.

creative in its own right.[91] Scholarship by E.A. Rees, in *State Control in Soviet Russia: The Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920-34* (1987), further emphasized both the problematic and unique nature of the initial Soviet goal to combine popular, party, and state control into a single, central 'umbrella' organization.[92]

Leon Trotsky sought to highlight "the negative aspect of Bolshevism's centripetal tendencies."[93] Trotsky looked for explanations of the Bolshevik Party's evolution in "the concrete conditions of Russia."[94] Historians Robert Service and Sheila Fitzpatrick followed this same path, looking at the specific contexts of the period in their works on the organizational development and innovation of the Bolshevik Party and its administrative departments and institutions.[95] Service, in *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organisational Change, 1917-1923* (1979), argued that Stalinist terror and authoritarianism, especially in the 1930s following the Cultural Revolution, was not a given, nor an inevitable, natural offshoot of the Bolshevik Party's growing emphasis on unification, centralization, control, and discipline in the 1920s.[96] Trotsky was arguably a founding member of this revisionist camp with his argument that the roots of Stalinism should be looked for not in the abstract principle of centralism or in the "underground hierarchy" of the professional revolutionaries, but in the concrete conditions of "Russia before and after 1917."[97] Service was joined in his break with traditional historical

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[91] Anne O'Donnell, "A Noah's Ark: Material Life and the Foundations of Soviet Governance, 1916-1922," ProQuest Dissertations (2014).
[92] E.A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: The Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920-34* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).
[93] Michael Löwy, *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx*, Vol. 2 (Brill, 2003).
[94] Ibid.
[95] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921,* Soviet and East European Studies (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1970).
[96] Robert W. Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organisational Change, 1917-1923* (London; New York: Macmillan, 1979).
[97] Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*. See also Michael Löwy, *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx*.

interpretation by Boris Groys, Katerina Clark, Susan Buck-Morss, Nina Gourianova, Masha Chlenova, and Stephen Kotkin.

These tradition-breaking scholars bridged over into the literature on 'Bolshevik' culture and its experimental nature. Boris Groys, in "Socialist Realism as Experiment" (an abbreviated form of a key argument in his longer pioneering work *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (1992[98]), argued that the ideologically sanctioned artistic movement of Socialist Realism was not the heir of traditional representational art (for example classical realism) but instead the heir of the Russian avant-garde, an argument resulting in the necessity of revising the traditional characterization of the 'end' of Russia's avant-garde movements.[99] Service and Groys were joined by Nina Gourianova, in *The Early Russian Avant-Garde, 1908-1918: The Aesthetics of Anarchy* (2001), who argued that the first decade of the Russian artistic avant-garde, like its second, was a unique period in its own right, of its own independent nature and aesthetic.[100] This reconceptualization of the 1920s was a common thread among the more recent 'revisionist' literature. Susan Buck-Morss and Masha Chlenova rounded off this revisionist literature with

(Fig. 2) Boris Kustodiev's *The Bolshevik*, 1920

[98] Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[99] Boris Groys, "The Birth of Socialist Realism from the Spirit of the Avant-Garde," in Bowlt and Matich, *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*, 193-218.
[100] Nina Gourianova, *The Early Russian Avant-Garde, 1908-1918: The Aesthetics of Anarchy*, ProQuest Dissertations (2001).

pieces seeking to further contribute to the revision of the traditional interpretation of the end of the Russian artistic avant-garde movements, characterizing it not as an abrupt or simple defeat, victimization, or coercion of art and artists by Soviet authorities and co-option by Socialist Realism but instead as a gradual, more internally motivated paradigm shift.[101]

As Stephen Kotkin put it in "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks (1998)":

> That the cacophony of styles seemed not to lead in a single direction was hailed as a sign of the (relative) openness of the 1920s. That in the 1930s the party (Stalin) made a series of binding pronouncements, combined with arrests, seemed to confirm the picture so dear to intellectuals inside and outside Russia of an intelligentsia martyred by Philistine functionaries. But in the late 1980s this framework was exploded.[102]

Kotkin wrote elsewhere, "We are, thankfully, beyond the avant-garde martyrology whereby uncomprehending apparatchiks and policemen are said to have killed off an inculpable avant-garde and its "pure" modernist culture, opening the way for a supposedly unrelated flotsam of petty bourgeois and national "kitsch." "[103] Pamela Kachurin, in *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928* (2013), joined Kotkin in repudiating the avant-garde martyrdom myth:

> [M]ost Russian modernists were not content to play the role of innocent martyrs. Both as artists and as administrators, they actively participated in the Soviet project, directly engaging with Bolshevism to realize their own creative visions of aesthetic and social transformation under the aegis of state patronage. Using their positions within the expanding Soviet arts bureaucracy to build up networks of like-minded colleagues, Russian modernists were able to survive and even thrive during a time of tremendous political upheaval and economic chaos. Along the way, individual members of the

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[101] Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Masha Chlenova, "On Display: Transformations of the Avant-Garde in Soviet Public Culture, 1928-1933," ProQuest Dissertations (2014).
[102] Stephen Kotkin, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 2 (1998): 384-425.
[103] Stephen Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (2001): 111-64.

> Russian avant-garde not only produced some of their most important works of art, but also contributed to the centralization and standardization of the Soviet art world[104]

Kotkin and Nancy van Norman Baer both acknowledged "that the avant-garde "existed for the most part outside a commercial enterprise system," so that its productions were dependent on the state budget and hence the political authorities."[105] Kotkin and van Norman Baer also introduced to the literature an emphasis on the symbiotic nature and mutual dependency of the governing agencies, institutions, and individuals and the subsequent Soviet patronage system that developed in the overlapping circles of early Soviet museology and contemporary art. Kachurin and Kotkin continued this emphasis, arguing that it had as much bearing on historical interpretation of Soviet innovators in art administration and museology as it did on a reconceptualization of centralization:

> Members of the Russian avant-garde . . . *contributed to the centralization [italics mine]*. . .of the Soviet art world. . . The patronage that [they] received under the new regime allowed them to move from the margins of the art world to its very center, . . [This lays] to rest *the myth of a one-way imposition of control from above [italics mine]*, and [reveals] the great extent to which there was a *dynamic* relationship between the power brokers and cultural institutions."[106]

Kachurin came to recognize that there are different *kinds* of centralization and that differentiating between them provided further insight into the relationships between the new Soviet state, its cultural institutions, and their administrators. Centralization wasn't always top-down and one-way, it was also bottom-up and collaborative—centripetal *and* centrifugal.

Bolshevism and the Soviet Union's heavy reliance on centralized organization was a long-standing focus of Soviet-specializing historians, dating back to Edward Carr and Richard

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[104] Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928*.
[105] Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," 111-64. Nancy van Norman Baer, "Design and Movement in the Theater of the Russian Avant-Garde," *Theater in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913–1935* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991): 34–59.
[106] Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928*. Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," 111-64.

Pipes in the 1950s.[107] It was also the source of a positive interpretation of early Soviet governmental and organizational development in terms of effectiveness, influence, and growth. [108] But there has been pushback by some, namely Susan Buck-Morss, Geoff Eley, Jonathan Smele, and Bruce Grant, who argued that the 'utopian' ambitions of its Soviet practitioners often exceeded their capability and resources.[109] The result, in Bruce Grant's words, was "paper architecture[:]. . . the circulation of images and a kind of collective wishful thinking"[110] but not much else. As Buck-Morss put it, "The fantastic constructions of the avant-garde could no more be a blueprint for socialist existence than a Five Year Plan . . . Both are utopian representations." [111] Soviet avant-garde museologist Osip Brik said as much in 1919 when he cautioned, "Simple rule by decree will never change anything."[112] Geoff Eley doubled down on this notion that such constructive aims were impossible to completely and accurately realize and were subject to transformative, sometimes dystopic effects:

> The coherence of the overall revolutionary experience was only fitfully imposed by the universalizing vision of a new European order, combined with the centralizing logic of the new state's efforts to survive during the civil war.[113]

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[107] Edward Hallett Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia* (New York: Macmillan, 1951). Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union, Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, Russian Research Center Studies: 13 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

[108] Service spoke of the "*positive potentiality* [italics mine] of [the Bolshevik Party and then the Soviet system's] chain of interdependence binding together all the links from the central executive bodies through the regional, provincial, town and suburb committees down to the basic party cells." Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organisational Change, 1917-1923*.

[109] Geoff Eley, "Remapping the Nation: War, Revolutionary Upheaval, and State Formation in Eastern Europe, 1914–1923," *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, (1988). Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Jonathan Smele, *The Russian Revolution and Civil War 1917-1921: An Annotated Bibliography* (A&C Black, 2006).

[110] Bruce Grant, "The Edifice Complex: Architecture and the Political Life of Surplus in the New Baku," *Public Culture* 26, no. 3 (2014): 501-528, doi: 10.1215/08992363-2683648.

[111] Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*.

[112] Osip Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 290-291.

[113] Eley, "Remapping the Nation: War, Revolutionary Upheaval, and State Formation in Eastern Europe, 1914–1923."

Avant-Garde Museology

> In the old days, you could drift off, sleep two years away, wake up, and pick up your life as if nothing had happened. Life moved along like a cart, but now it speeds by madly.
>
> - Anatoly Lunacharsky, 1929[114]

Early Soviet avant-garde museology was defined in the literature, in part, by time period—that of the Russian Civil War (1917-22), a period of upheaval and privation, individual and institutional, known as 'War Communism,' and the NEP (New Economic Policy) era (1922-28), a period of state-sponsored capitalism and economic and cultural experimentation, liberalism, and ideological laxity.[115] The most significant trend in recent literature on the Russian Revolution and its aftermath was putting 1917 in a wider chronological context.[116] Katerina Clark cast "aside the idea of 1917 as big bang, [instead] begin[ing] in 1913 and proceed[ing] at a level deeper than artistic movements."[117] As Stephen Kotkin put it, echoing Lunacharsky in 1929, "Anyone who fell asleep prior

(Fig. 3) Malevich's *Red Cavalry Riding*, 1928-1932

[114] Lunacharsky in an address to Komsomol members in 1929 at the first All-Union Conference on Artistic Work among Youth in Moscow titled 'Komsomol, to the art front! Art, Youth, and the Tasks of Artistic Work Among Youth' in Clark, Dobrenko, and Schwartz, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, 3.
[115] Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, eds., *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
[116] Donald J. Raleigh, "The Russian Revolution after All These 100 Years," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015): 787-97. S.A. Smith, "The Historiography of the Russian Revolution 100 Years On", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015): 733-49.
[117] Stephen Kotkin, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," 384-425 and Clark, Dobrenko, and Schwartz, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*.

to 1914 and awoke in the 1930s would have been astounded by the advances in national institution building and consciousness."[118]

Early Soviet avant-garde museology was defined chiefly by the influential intersection of post-revolution Soviet museology and cultural administration with leading figures of the Russian artistic avant-garde movements (Futurism, Constructivism, and Suprematism especially). This intersection stemmed from the fact that the first museum officials, bureaucrats, and administrators appointed by the new Bolshevik regime were not experienced museum professionals carried over from the tsarist era, as would have followed Lenin's preservationist policy regarding the remnants of the old regime retained to train the new.[119] Instead they were almost all avant-garde artists—a point emphasized in the literature looking at the parallels between the Russian artistic avant-garde movements and the 'vanguard' inspiration and foundational element of the Bolshevik Party[120] as well as in the limited literature focused on the avant-garde influence in early Soviet museology.[121] The most comprehensive of this literature was Maria Gough's "Futurist Museology (2003)." Gough argued for the existence of:

> [A]n earlier moment in the history of the acquisition and exhibition of contemporary art, wherein an alternative model of curatorial practice was advanced, and to a considerable extent realized—in Russia, in the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917. Involving as it does the interventions of artists such as Kazimir Malevich, Vasily Kandinsky,

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[118] Stephen Kotkin, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," 384-425.

[119] "[We must] build communism with non-communist hands" - Lenin defending this policy at the Eleventh Congress of the All-Union Communist Party in 1922 - a continuation of his 1919 sentiments; "We have bourgeois specialists, and no others. We have no other bricks to build with. Socialism must be victorious and we socialists and communists must prove that we are capable of building socialism from these bricks . . . one must take the culture left by capitalism and from that culture build socialism. . . Such is the problem in all domains. . . the extremely difficult but still solvable problem. . . We have to build not 20 years later, but now in two months, in order to withstand the bourgeoisie." in Robert F. Byrnes, "Creating the Soviet Historical Profession, 1917-1934," *Slavic Review* Vol. 50 (2): 1991.

[120] Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Bowlt and Matich, *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*.

[121] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 327-348. Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932*, 474-480. Jennifer Cahn, "Nikolai Punin and Russian Avant-Garde Museology, 1917-1932," ProQuest Dissertations (1999).

> Varvara Stepanova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, and David Shterenberg, and critics like Osip Brik and Nikolai Punin, this alternative model gives the lie to the standard assumption that Russian vanguard artists and critics—in their pursuit of the dissolution of the division of art and life—simply turned their backs on the museum.[122]

According to Konstantin Akinsha and Adam Jolles in "On the Third Front: The Soviet Museum and Its Public During the Cultural Revolution (2009)":

> During the years of War Communism (1918-21) and the New Economic Policy (1921-28), the Soviet museum would evolve from an experimental novelty into a full-blown federation of institutions under the liberal leadership of Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar of Enlightenment.[123]

They argued that 1930 marked the official end of the preservationist policy that had governed Soviet museum administration during the 1920s. They differentiated between the museological practices of the NEP era and that of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of Stalinism and noted how the phases of museum reform reflected the phases of the Cultural Revolution. This characterization of the trajectory of Russian museology at the end of the 1920s centered on the idea that the avant-garde movement and its members and advocates in all fields, museology included, suffered an inevitable defeat with the contraction of liberality and diversity that traditional historical scholarship maintained marked the shift between the 1920s and 30s.

This traditional characterization was disputed in the literature on individuals' museological career trajectories during this period. Such revisionist analysis was provided by Jennifer Cahn's "Nikolai Punin and Russian Avant-Garde Museology, 1917-1932 (1999)"[124] and Masha Chlenova's "On Display: Transformations of the Avant-Garde in Soviet Public Culture, 1928-1933 (2014),"[125] which both focused on the paths of individual members of the

[122] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 327-328.
[123] Konstantin Akinsha and Adam Jolles, "On the Third Front: The Soviet Museum and Its Public During the Cultural Revolution," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 43; 1-4 (2009): 195.
[124] Cahn, "Nikolai Punin and Russian Avant-Garde Museology, 1917-1932."
[125] Chlenova, "On Display: Transformations of the Avant-Garde in Soviet Public Culture, 1928-1933."

avant-garde. On the art side Chlenova focused on artists Vladimir Tatlin and Kazimir Malevich and on the professional side Cahn studied Nikolai Punin, an influential, experimental curator and administrator. The trajectory analysis path was popular in the literature on the Soviet avant-garde and their professional forays into museum administration as evidenced by its repeated use.

Pamela Kachurin shifted from the literature's focus on either the apparatus or the apparatchiks to the career paths that intertwined the two, highlighting "the symbiotic relationship between modernist artists and the Bolshevik state [and the need for] a new perspective on the political and professional careers of some of the most important figures of the Russian avant-garde."[126] Rounding off the institutional and individual trajectory path analysis approach favored by the scholars whose work touched on early Soviet avant-garde museology were Svetlana Dzhafarova's work on the artist-administered, contemporary art-focused Museums of Painterly Culture,[127] Julia Fein's dissertation "Cultural Curators and Provincial Publics: Local Museums and Social Change in Siberia, 1887-1941 (2012)" on the centralizing role of regional Siberian museums,[128] and Susan Smith's dissertation "Museum Practices and Notions of the Local in a Russian Provincial City, 1898-1935 (2005)" and its focus on a small museum in the city of Vladimir[129] which became the administrative center of a new region-wide museum network.

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[126] Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928*, 47.
[127] Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932*, 474-480 and Dzhafarova, "The Museums of Artistic Culture - A Policy of Disseminating Modern Art," *InCoRM Journal* Vol. 3 (Spring-Autumn 2012), 14-27.
[128] Julia Fein, "Cultural Curators and Provincial Publics: Local Museums and Social Change in Siberia, 1887-1941," ProQuest Dissertations (2012).
[129] Susan Smith, "Museum Practices and Notions of the Local in a Russian Provincial City, 1898-1935," ProQuest Dissertations (2005).

In 2015 the anthology *Avant-Garde Museology* was published by experimental artist and self-styled 'avant-garde museologist' Arseniy Zhilyaev. It was a compilation of primary source materials translated into English which centered on the speeches, articles, proposals, and conference proceedings first held in the 1920s by the Russian avant-garde artists who had become the first Soviet museologists. In her review of *Avant-Garde Museology* in the e-magazine *Art Review Asia*, Hanlu Zhang argued for the true 'innovativeness' of these first Soviet museologists, maintaining that their contributions to museology are still being felt and seen today and were, in fact, "the prototypes of some of the newest tendencies in recent museological and curatorial development, such as the museum-in-transit, the dematerialization of the exhibition, the increasing display of the bigger cultural environment (supplemental materials) and so forth."[130] Zhang went on to state, "The astonishing insight and foresight expressed by writers some eighty years ago are truly "avant-garde." "[131] And as Amanda Egbe asserted in her review of the *Avant-Garde Museology* anthology: "This book offers up a body of evidence that . . . suggests the notion of avant-garde museology and its history is a developing one."[132]

(Fig. 4) Zhilyaev with English edition of *Avant-Garde Museology*, 2015

[130] Hanlu Zhang, "(Review) Avant-Garde Museology, ed. Arseniy Zhilyaev," *ArtReview Asia* vol. 4, no. 1, 2015.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Amanda Egbe, "(Review) Avant-Garde Museology," *Leonardo On-Line*, (May 1, 2016).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this thesis was to reconceptualize the organizational principle of centralization as innovative, using the early Soviet avant-garde museological experience as an historical case study (1917 to 1929). The methodological approach was historiographical, involving archival primary source document analysis. 20 documents, produced between 1917 and 1929, were analyzed and included: the minutes of the first All-Russian (i.e. Soviet) museum conference; the first proposals and speeches made by the newly appointed Soviet museum administrators, curators, art critics, and artists (published in contemporary cultural/arts publications); official Soviet museum organization publications (exhibit catalogs for the Museums of Painterly Culture, a city museum guidebook); and department activity reports (on museum construction and contemporary artwork acquisition and distribution) from the Soviet cultural administrative organizations. For a complete list of the documents analyzed see Appendix A.

Document Analysis

The bounds of this study were determined by its time period, from 1917 to 1929, and all 'participants' (individuals, groups, and institutions) are long dead or defunct and exist now only in archival, primary source form. Any interviews done during this time period would have been done long before the advent of social science interviewing and ethnographic guidelines. Scholars in the field of early Soviet history have chosen historiography and its various methods over any other methodology for just this reason. Historiographical research and document analysis of deceased individuals' writings (their diaries, speeches, proposals, decrees, articles, books, etc.) could involve a kind of interrogative approach but without the direct, explicit responses that

structured interviews, surveys, or focus groups are ultimately able to get—only quantitative information, qualitative description, and inferred responses can be had in historical document analysis. Oisín Tansey's "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling (2007)" made a persuasive argument for the use of non-random elite sampling in the historical analysis of institutional innovation and change. Focus on 'elites,' in this case the first Soviet museum administrators and their organizations, allowed for analysis of early Soviet museology's trajectory as well as the development of its organizational structure. All 20 documents analyzed were produced by these 'elites,' who were either museum directors and administrators or directors and administrators of museum oversight organizations. For a complete list of all individual and institutional participants see Appendix A.

The time period in question revealed some of the limitations to historical document analysis. As mentioned earlier, historical testimonies could be found in archived writing (personal and official, published and not) but often must be inferred and 'interrogated' out of the written source as document analysis is *not* an interview equivalent. As Tansey put it, it does not have the advantage of direct contact with "first-hand participants of the process [being] investigated . . . [and] there is no substitute for talking directly with those involved."[133]

The process investigated in this study concerned the appearance and innovation of museological centralization—in the form of centralized museum administration and centralizing policies, procedures and proposals for the administration (acquisition, storage, distribution, and display) of contemporary art. Therefore, the document analysis began with a search for keywords and themes connected to 'centralization' and 'innovation.' The keywords 'centralization' and

[133] Oisín Tansey, "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40.04 (2007): 765-772.

'innovation' were expanded to include synonymous terms (e.g. center, central, centralized, centripetal, centrifugal, new, original, first, unprecedented, unparalleled, etc.). The document analysis also involved identifying and then categorizing recurring and emerging themes. For a complete list of identified recurring thematic categories and emerging themes see Appendix A.

Historiographical Approaches

This research thesis focused on the development, organization, and innovations of early Soviet contemporary art museum administration and programming. Because of this, historical institutionalism served as a useful approach,[134] as it used institutions (for the purpose of this study museums and museum administrative bodies) to find, track, and study sequences of social, political, or economic behavior and change over time.[135] This approach avoided determinism, instead identifying actors as products *and* producers of history. Historical institutionalism emphasized the conditions under which particular trajectories were followed as opposed to others. This approach had a precedent in the writings of the Bolshevik Party and their approach to their own history. Red Army founder Leon Trotsky sought to explain the Bolshevik Party's history through the context of "the *concrete conditions* of Russia before and after 1917."[136]

Path dependence, a key concept within historical institutionalism, also played a role in this research. According to Theda Skocpol and Paul Pierson in "Historical Institutionalism In Contemporary Political Science (2002)," path dependence expresses "the idea that [the] dynamics triggered by an event or process at one point in time reproduce themselves, even in the

[134] According to Sven Steinmo, "Historical institutionalism is neither a particular theory nor a specific method. It is best understood as an *approach* to studying politics. . . and the ways in institutions structure and shape political outcomes." Sven Steinmo, "What Is Historical Institutionalism?," in *Approaches in the Social Sciences*, eds. Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 118.
[135] Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, "Historical Institutionalism In Contemporary Political Science," In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002),700.
[136] Ramki Basu, *Public Administration: Concepts and Theories* (Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 2004).

absence of the recurrence of the original event or process."[137] This concept lined up with the agendas of the avant-garde artists who joined the Bolsheviks' cultural administration after the Russian Revolution and sought to trigger and continue 'revolutions' within in the new Soviet museology, art, and culture.[138]

Ethnography, being the analysis of a culture or society based on participant-observation, had much the same relevance and impracticability for this research study as did interviews. But insights were still gleaned from strategic application of ethnographic methods. This case study was defined not just by the region (the Soviet Union) and the field (museology) but also by the time period—the 1920s. And the 1920s were often characterized in the literature as a period with its own unique and intrinsic nature and qualities[139]—its own 'culture,' which ethnography was designed to study. While the participant-observation track of ethnography in this case could not be applied, the ethno-historical approach could be.

In "The Ethnography of Politics (2013)," Jan Kubik characterized ethnography as "indispensable to the study of collective action; no other method can better expose mechanisms of the important early stages of mobilization."[140] This was relevant to the analysis of the debates, proposals, decrees, and actions concerning centralized administration and policies that made up early Soviet museology—in other words, the 'mobilization' of a centralizing movement within

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[137] Pierson and Skocpol, "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science," 693-721.
[138] "Blow up, Smash to pieces, The Old World! In the heat of the Universal Struggle, By the glow of flames, Show No mercy - Strangle the body of destiny!", a decidedly revolution-minded poem by V.D. Aleksandrovsky in 1918. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, eds., *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
[139] "It [the 1920s in the Soviet Union] was drastically different not only from the pre-revolutionary era but also from the 1930s—in its political climate, its cultural development, and its aesthetic uniqueness." Katerina Clark, Evgeny Dobrenko, and Marian Schwartz. *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, Artizov Andrei and Naumov Oleg, eds., (Yale University Press, 2007): 3.
[140] Jan Kubik, "Ethnography of Politics: Foundations, Applications, Prospects," in Edward Schatz, ed., *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Soviet museology. Kubik outlined the ethno-historical approach, which spoke to the 'interrogation' of historical documents as a method of filling the 'interview' gap in historical research:

> Since Petersen studies past events, he cannot employ participant observation, but he collects and interrogates his data as if they were generated by such a method. The ethnographic tenor of his study does not come, therefore, from participant observation, but rather from an ethnographic problematization and framing of the work. He sets out to study the details of community organization and uses all available information not only to reconstruct actors' views and preferences, but also to map out their actions within the local structures that both empowered and constrained them.[141]

Also relevant was Kubik's discussion of 'voice' and its place in ethnography:

> Voices are not seen as products of [single] local structures . . . but rather as products of the complex sets of associations and experiences which compose them. . . today's increasingly mobile people need to be studied as members of (several) networks and participants in (several) flows, rather than as products and producers of [single] clearly identifiable structures.[142]

This was applicable to analysis of the early Soviet museologists and museum administrators, most of whom were also curators, artists, art critics, or writers with varying degrees of political participation and ideological identification—the conception of their identities in single, one-at-a-time labels was restrictive (in terms of identifying and analyzing motivations, decisions etc.) and it was useful to view these individuals in different (multiple) lights to catch the (conscious and unconscious) changes to their identities that the shifting, turbulent nature of the time necessitated.[143]

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Take as an example of the changeability and compromises wrought by the chaos and experimentation of the time, the avant-garde artist, founder of the Suprematist movement, painter of the famous *Black Square*, and early Soviet museum administrator Kazimir Malevich. His initial proposals centered on the idea of destroying all museums. He held that the removal of art and objects from the daily flow of life ossified them and restricted creativity. Malevich came to modify this hard-line thinking, granting that preservation of the old was occasionally necessary. By 1930 he had fallen out of favor completely.

Another historiographical approach useful to this study was process-tracing. According to Oisín Tansey, "the goal of process tracing is to obtain information about well-defined and specific events and processes [in the case of this study the early organizational, administrative choices of Soviet museology in the immediate aftermath of the revolution] . . . and to draw a sample that includes the most important political [in this case museological] players who have participated in the political [museological] events being studied."[144]

All of these historiographical approaches were applied throughout the document analysis process. These approaches were designed to provide an initial intellectual framework with which to approach an historical subject, phenomena, or experience and they all contributed to the identification of recurring and emerging thematic categories during document analysis.

Research Methods

1. Participant selection: non-random elite sampling
2. Documents: (20 documents in total) conference/meeting minutes, proposals, speeches, official museum publications (catalogs, guidebooks), contemporary artwork acquisition/distribution reports - produced between 1917 and 1929 by or on behalf of the Museums of Painterly Culture and their administrators, museum oversight organizations and their members: Narkompros, the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund, the Unified Museum Fund, the Department of Fine Art (IZO), Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vasily Kandinsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Kazimir Malevich, David Shterenberg, Nikolai Punin, Vladimir Tatlin, Osip Brik.
3. Document analysis: theme/key word ('centralization', 'innovation') recurrence, recurring and emerging theme identification and categorization, search for innovative centralized applications within early Soviet museology.
4. Historiographical approaches: Historical institutionalism, using institutions to trace changing cultural, political behavior across time; Path dependence, analyzing decisions as dependent on past or traditional practice, preference, or values; Historical ethnography, the exploration and study of cultural phenomenon observed from the historical subject's point of view; and Process tracing, tracing causal mechanisms.

[144] Tansey, "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling," 765-772.

Chapter 4 - Results & Discussion

> What occurred was an elemental storm amongst men . . . a storm beyond comparison with any natural element.
>
> - Kazimir Malevich on the Russian Revolution[145]

At the beginning of the 20th century, there existed centralizing 'movements' within industry, technology, and politics.[146] The first decades of the 20th century in Russia also saw the birth of revolutionary artistic and political movements.[147] Out of these movements and their intersection within the new Soviet Union came innovations. It was the purpose of this study to identify and analyze the innovations connected to centralized, centralizing early Soviet museum administration, programming, and treatment of contemporary art. This was done through archival primary source document analysis, keyword/theme search ('centralization,' 'innovation,' and synonyms), and recurring and emerging theme identification and categorization. Six recurring themes (centered on innovative and centralized applications within early Soviet museology) and one emerging theme (that connected all the documents and linked the recurring themes) were identified and categorized in the 20 documents analyzed. All 20 documents referenced at least one of the keywords/themes, either promoting centralized organization or involving an innovative proposal regarding contemporary art administration. Nine of the 20 referenced both.

The six centralized/innovative museological applications identified included: 1) Soviet nationalization (referenced in nine of the 20 documents); 2) the development of a fully state-sponsored museology and its concomitant administrative bodies (referenced in eight of the

[145] Paul Bond, "New Art for a New Era: Malevich's Vision of the Russian Avant-Garde", *WSW* (June 16, 1999).
[146] Frederick W. Taylor's Taylorism (circa 1911), Henry Ford's Fordism (circa 1918), and Marx (1848), then Lenin's Communism (circa 1917).
[147] Malevich's Suprematism (circa 1913), Russian Futurism (circa 1912), and Constructivism (circa 1913).

20 documents); 3) the proposal of a new 'hybrid' museum position, the artist-administrator (referenced in five of the 20 documents); 4) the establishment of the first modern contemporary art museums—the Museums of Painterly Culture (referenced in six of the 20 documents); 5) the proposal for a contemporary art museum network (referenced in seven of the 20 documents); and 6) the proposal for a unified State Museum Fund (or reserve) for all museum collections within the new Soviet Union (referenced in six of the 20 documents). These were innovations because they were historically and internationally unprecedented, original, and new to the fields of museology and arts administration.[148] The theme that emerged during document analysis (appearing in 18 of the 20 documents) connecting all the documents and linking the recurring themes and keywords together was cultural equity—the centralized provision of access for all Soviet citizens to cultural heritage, resources, and support previously denied under the tsarist rule due to class, education, gender, poverty, and location.

[148] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.

Soviet Nationalization

> By itself the preponderance of the tasks of collection and preservation during the first years of the revolution was natural and healthy. Life itself demanded it: we had to use all our forces for registering and gathering together abandoned and nationalized art.
>
> - Aleksey Federov-Davydov on the momentum of the nationalization policy[149]

The first centralized museological innovation identified was Soviet nationalization —which abolished private property and private art dealing and collecting and caused the government to become the country's sole patron of contemporary art.[150] The principle of nationalization as it pertained to the administration of contemporary art museums was referenced in nine of the 20 documents. All of the quotations from historical participants in this chapter came from those nine documents. For a complete list see Appendix A: Archival Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Thematic Category: 1. The following analysis and discussion utilized the historiographical approach of process-tracing, i.e. the tracing of causal mechanisms, as the first Soviet decrees on nationalization had an immediate and direct effect on the production, acquisition, and display of contemporary art.

The October Revolution of 1917 saw Lenin's Bolshevik Party successfully take control of Russia following the general February Revolution. This success was followed by the legislation necessary for not only political and economic administration but cultural administration as well. This legislation centered on the general Communist policy of nationalization. Specifically, this nationalizing policy began with Lenin's 1917 Decree on Land, which officially abolished private property and converted it to state property (by means of sequestration, confiscation, and requisition).[151] It was followed by decrees on banning classes

[149] Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, *Sovetskii khudozhestvennyi muzei* (Moscow: OGIZ-IZOGIZ, 1933): 23.
[150] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 328.
[151] F.J.M. Feldbrugge, *Encyclopedia of Soviet Law* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1973): 531.

and civil ranks, eradicating literacy, making education compulsory, the formation of the Supreme Economic Council of the National Economy, and the nationalization of the banks, international trade, industry, and transport. But most pertinent to the creation of a new 'Soviet' museology were: 1) the 1918 Decree on Registration and Protection of Monuments of Culture and Ancient Art, Owned by Private Persons, Societies and Institutions and 2) the 1919 Decree on Abolishing Private Property Rights on Archives of Russian Writers, Composers, Painters and Scientists, Preserved in Libraries and Museums.[152]

A byproduct of the abolition of private property was the abolition of the private art dealer system—what avant-garde art critic and new Soviet museologist Osip Brik called "nobleman's fancy,"[153] what Vasily Kandinsky described as "accidental, capricious and arbitrary support from the private sector,"[154] and what poet Aleksandr Griboedov warned against: "More than any sorrow/Let lordly wrath and lordly love/Pass us by."[155] Avant-garde artist and director (as of 1920) of the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund, Aleksandr Rodchenko, gave voice to the feelings of oppression, resentment, and anger such a system engendered—feelings that, in part, helped lead to the revolution: "The patrons have oppressed us, have forced us to carry out their whims."[156] Kazimir Malevich joined in this derision of the old art patronage system, but he also placed much of the blame on the traditional, pre-Soviet museologists and their influence on public artistic taste:

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[152] "Dekret SNK ob otmene prava chastnoi sobstvennosti na arkhivy russkih pisatelei, kompozitorov, khudozhnikov i uchenyh, khraniashiesia v bibliotekah i muzeiah (July 29, 1919)," http://opentextnn.ru/censorship/russia/sov/law/snk/1917/?id=566http://opentextnn.ru/censorship/russia/sov/law/snk/1917/?id=566.
[153] Osip Brik, "The Democratization of Art (July–August 1917)," *October* 134 (Fall 2010): 78.
[154] Vasily Kandinsky, "The Museum of the Culture of Painting" *Khudozhestvennaia Zhizn* Moscow, 1920, in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art, Vol. 1* (1901-1921) Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, eds. (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 437-444, http://www.incorm.eu/documents.html#d-1919.
[155] Aleksandr Griboedov, *Woe from Wit* (1823), in Brik, "The Democratization of Art (July–August 1917)," 78.
[156] Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Khudozhnikam-proletariiam [To Artist Proletarians]" (April 11, 1918), in *Opyty dlia Budushchego*, ed. O. V. Mel'nikov and V. I. Shchennikov (Moscow: Grant, 1996): 63.

> Until now, the old-style museology['s]. . . attitude was as pernicious as possible. . . its absence of professional (or "ideological") consciousness, and its cowardice prevented it from advancing. . . The czarist body of curators, as well as knowledgeable artistic museologists appointed to be directors, behaved in the same way. . . Due to conditions generated by refined connoisseurs, the creations of the innovators were shoved back into cold garrets and miserable studios. . . And if, at the cost of the greatest effort, one succeeded in bringing revolutionary works out onto the street, you were welcomed with insults, curses, jeers and scoffing. "Only old art is beautiful", they shouted from all sides of the camp, "only the czar is handsome."[157]

In June of 1921, in an official report Rodchenko made as Museum Bureau head, he outlined the great success the Bureau had met with in its work to replace the old imperial dealer/patron system and the unprecedented amount of access to and circulation of contemporary art the Bureau facilitated:

> For the past three years the best contemporary artists, both in Moscow and the provinces, have lived exclusively from the sale of their work to the Bureau, and the Bureau has supplied the provinces generously with contemporary art. [This level of support from the government] is unprecedented anywhere in the world [and] is an achievement for which the commune ought to be proud.[158]

The Museum Bureau had become the Soviet Union's sole patron of contemporary art. In addition to increased accessibility, characterized by Brik as "the democratization of art,"[159] another byproduct of nationalization was increased and no longer 'capricious' or 'arbitrary' support for the artists themselves. Kandinsky outlined this as:

> The definite principle of the Museum of [Painterly Culture], its complete freedom to establish *the right of every innovator in art to seek and to receive official recognition, encouragement and adequate reward [italics mine]*—these are the unparalleled attainments in the field of museum affairs that have been achieved by the Department [of Fine Arts, IZO] of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment.[160]

[157] Kazimir Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume," *Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo*, No. 1, (Petrograd, 1919).
[158] Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Report (June 7, 1921)" in Gough, "Futurist Museology," 328-329.
[159] "All art should be free." Brik, "The Democratization of Art (July–August 1917)," 75-76.
[160] Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)," 437-444.

The New Soviet Museology

> Let me add . . . my reminiscences of the way the first Council of People's Commissars was formed. It took place in a little room in Smolny, where the chairs were hidden under the hats and coats thrown on to them, and everybody crowded round a badly lit table. We were then choosing the leaders of regenerated Russia. It seemed to me that the selection was often too casual and I was afraid that the people chosen, whom I knew well and who did not seem to me to have the training for the various jobs, were not up to the gigantic tasks ahead. Lenin waved me aside with a gesture of annoyance but at the same time smiled.
> "That's for the time being," he said, "then we'll see. We need people of responsibility for all posts; if they prove unsuitable we'll change them."
> How right he was! Some, of course, were replaced, others retained their posts. And how many there were who, though they began timidly, later proved fully capable of their assignments! Some people, of course (even some of those who had taken part in the insurrection and had not been mere onlookers), grew dizzy in face of the tremendous prospects and of difficulties that seemed insurmountable.
>
> - Anatoly Lunacharsky, First Commissar of Enlightenment and Education, on the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in Smolny, October 25-27, 1917[161]

The second centralized museological innovation identified was the creation of a fully state-sponsored museology by the new Soviet Union and its concomitant administrative bodies. Demands, necessary features, proposals and opinions on this 'new' museology, especially as it pertained to the handling of contemporary art were referenced in eight of the 20 documents analyzed. All of the quotations from historical participants in this chapter came from those eight documents. For a full reference list see Appendix A: Archival Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Thematic Category: 2. The following analysis and discussion utilized the historiographical approach of historical institutionalism, which uses institutions to trace changing cultural or political behavior across time— in this case the development and agenda of the new Soviet cultural administration.

[161] Anatoly Lunacharsky, "Smolny on the Night of the Storm", in Lunacharsky, *On Literature and Art*, trans. Avril Pyman and Fainna Glagoleva, ed. K. M. Cook, compiled by A. Lebedev (Progress Publishers, Moscow; 1965), https://www.marxists.org/archive/lunachar/works/night-storm.htm.

The first decade of the Soviet Union saw a flurry of activity in the realm of institution-building and the establishment of 'purviews' and domains of influence and control overseen by centralized administrative agencies. Between 1918 and 1928 "the Soviet museum would evolve from an experimental novelty into a full-blown federation of institutions under the liberal leadership of Anatoly Lunacharsky."[162] The State Commissar on Museums and Preservation of Artistic Monuments and Antiquity G.S. Yatmanov came to the conclusion that there were "many shortcomings in contemporary museology. The spirit of artistic museology must usher an entirely new life into the mortified mausoleums that are our museums. . . A new breed of state museum must be created."[163] According to Malevich, the fundamental function of the new Soviet museology involved "addressing the organisation and reorganisation for the building of the general artistic machine of the State"[164]—a single, unified machine. Osip Brik restated this sense of opportunity for reorganization as revolutionary imperative for post-1917 Russia, the new Soviet culture, and the new Soviet museology: "The proletarian revolution demands a radical reorganization of all forms of cultural life."[165]

Such reorganization involved the creation of numerous state museums and their administrative oversight agencies, departments and 'feeder' institutions, either out of whole cloth or from the institutional, bureaucratic remnants of the tsarist regime. For the purpose of this

[162] Akinsha and Jolles, "On the Third Front: The Soviet Museum and Its Public During the Cultural Revolution," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 43: 1-4 (2009): 195.
[163] Moscow Department of Museum Affairs, "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)," trans. Bela Shayevich, in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 282-283.
[164] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."
[165] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 290-291.

study, the institutions analyzed were those predominantly concerned with contemporary art.

These were:

- The Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund (under the jurisdiction of Lunacharsky's Narkompros a.k.a. the Commissariat of Enlightenment and Education - which replaced the imperial Ministry of Culture) the Soviet Union's sole patron of contemporary art, organized in 1918.[166]
- The Department of Fine Arts (IZO) under Narkompros, established January 29, 1918 and approved by the State Commission on Education on May 22, 1918, with 2 branches, the Petrograd IZO and Moscow IZO, in charge of the organization and administration of the nation-wide contemporary art museum (Museums of Painterly Culture) network.[167]

(Fig. 5) Meeting of Petrograd IZO, 1918

- Vkhutemas (Higher Art and Technical Studios), established in 1920, Moscow, reorganized in 1928, and closed in 1930, directed to "prepare qualified master artists, professors, and directors to work in both industry and higher education,"[168] a center for students of the Russian avant-garde movements Constructivism and Suprematism, who produced much of the work acquired for the new contemporary art museums.
- The Museums of Painterly Culture: 30 contemporary art museums established in 1921 with the Moscow Museum as hub and the Moscow Museum Bureau acting as acquisition and distribution (of contemporary art) center for the Petrograd and provincial Museums, became a branch of the Tretyakov Gallery in 1928, disbanded in February 1929.[169]

These institutions were all interconnected by the new Soviet government according to the guiding principle of Soviet organization —centralization. As Brik put it in a speech given at the first All-Russian Museum Commission in 1919, "Under the new state system, [all museum

[166] Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau (November 29, 1920)," in Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Experiments for the Future. Diaries, Essays, Letters, and Other Writings*, Alexander N. Lavrentiev, ed., Jamey Gambrell, trans., (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005), 117-118.
[167] For overview see "IZO Narkompros, " https://monoskop.org/IZO_Narkompros.
[168] "VkhUTEMAS: About the School," *MoMA*, https://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/schools/15.html.
[169] Svetlana Dzhafarova, "The Museums of Artistic Culture - A Policy of Disseminating Modern Art," *InCoRM Journal* Vol. 3 (Spring-Autumn 2012), 14-27.

administration] is dealt with in accordance with *centralization [italics mine]*, to which museums must adapt."[170]

The overarching principle of centralization was not the only new 'reality' to which the Russian, now Soviet, museum field had to adapt. What Malevich called "the building of the general artistic machine of the State"[171] had to begin with specific proposals that would incorporate into the new museology the 'required' centralized structure, in addition to the revolutionary aesthetic, educational, and ideological aims of the new State. Such proposals were made at a meeting on the "problems and objectives of fine art museums" between the Moscow IZO and the Museum Bureau on January 16th, 1919. At the beginning of the meeting the State Commissar on Museums and the Preservation of Artistic Monuments and Antiquity G.S. Yatmanov proposed, on behalf of the Museum Bureau, the delineation and creation of two new types of museums:

> 1.) Central museums that strive after strictly scholarly aims as well as function for artistic purposes. This kind of museum must be created in collaboration with specialized scholarly and educational art institutions. These museums should include well-equipped: (a) laboratories for studying artworks. . . (b) special storage facilities for artistic artifacts; as well as archives that can guarantee objects' preservation and also be easily accessible for researchers; (c) be equipped with large auditoriums for holding lectures on art history and finally, (d) the collection on display must be a living thing, constantly changing in pursuit of exclusively artistic goals. The galleries must always be filled with examples of *new artistic achievement [italics mine]*.
> 2.) Regional . . . museums that function as exhibition spaces in places where there is large-scale artisan production. These museums must be centers uniting all artistic production in a [region] and must facilitate artistic mass production in the given area. These museums must house complete, and when possible, exhaustive collections demonstrating objects and related materials of a given sector of manufacturing for educational purposes. They must also have *permanent exhibitions of new art [italics*

[170] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," 290-291.
[171] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."

> *mine]*. Networks of such museums will further the development of the people's art in our country.[172]

This proposal revealed the underlying fundamental goal of these first Soviet art museums—the development of 'new artistic achievement' and official encouragement of its production, explication, and dissemination throughout the country. Between 1918 and 1921, 26 million rubles were spent by the Soviet government on the purchase of contemporary art.[173]

On November 29, 1920 Aleksandr Rodchenko, the first head of the Museum Bureau, gave a report on the Bureau's activities since its founding, outlining the great strides in museum construction, artist support, and art acquisition made possible by the concentrated, centralized power of the Bureau:

> The Museum Bureau was organised in 1918. In the first months of its existence, its activity consisted of developing theoretical questions of museum building and acquisition through materials purchased for the organisation of museums. Then it undertook the organisation of an experimental Museum of Painterly Culture in Moscow, which at present is located at 14, Volkhonka St., apt. 10.
>
> During the 1919-20 period, the Museum Bureau organised thirty museums in the following towns: Yelets, Vitebsk, Samara, Astrakhan, Slobodskoe, Penza, Simbirsk, Petrograd, Smolensk, Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Kazan, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Shuia, Ekaterinburg, Kosmodemiansk, Moscow, Lugarsk, Bakhmut, Kostroma, Tula, Ufa, Kishnym, Tsaritsyn, Barnaul, Tobolsk, and Perm.
>
> A total of 1,211 works have been distributed to the above-mentioned museums in the following types of art:
>
> Paintings – 952
> Sculpture and spatial forms – 29
> Prints and drawings – 230

[172] Moscow Department of Museum Affairs, "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)," trans. Bela Shayevich, in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 283-284.

[173] The Civil War period was also a period of rapid inflation. Between 1917 and 1921 prices rose 1,000% annually and prices only stabilized in 1924 so it is difficult to calculate a contemporary equivalent to this expenditure. *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let: Materialy i dokumentatsiia*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow and Leningrad: Ogiz-Izogiz, 1933), 102. Stanley Fischer, "Russia and the Soviet Union Then and Now," in *The Transition in Eastern Europe* Volume 1, eds. Olivier Jean Blanchard, Kenneth A. Froot, and Jeffrey D. Sachs (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 224-225.

> At the present time the Museum Bureau has sixteen requests from regions to organise museums, of which six are feasible.
>
> Between 1918 and 1920 the purchasing staff of the Museum Bureau acquired 1,907 works, which break down into the following types of art:
>
> Paintings – 1,315.
> Sculptures and spatial forms – 65.
> Drawings – 305.
> Prints – 122.
>
> The indicated works were acquired from 384 painters and printmakers, and twenty-nine sculptors.[174]

In the words of the second director of the Moscow IZO and the first director of the Museums of Painterly Culture Vasily Kandinsky, "Russia offers an unparalleled example of state organisation of museums"[175]—unparalleled in terms of state support, centralized organization, and the ensuing expanded 'reach' of museums regarding production, acquisition, and access to 'new artistic achievements' said support and organization facilitated.

[174] Rodchenko, "Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau (November 29, 1920)," 117-118.
[175] Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)," 437-444.

The New Artist-Administrator[176]

Proletarians
arrive at communism
from below-
by the low way of mines,
sickles,
and pitchforks-
but I,
from poetry's skies,
plunge into communism,
because
without it
I feel no love. . .
I want
the Gosplan to sweat
in debate,
assigning me
goals a year ahead.
I want
a commissar
with a decree
to lean over the thought of the age. . .

I want
the pen to be on par
with the bayonet;
and Stalin
to deliver his Politburo
reports
about verse in the making
as he would about pig iron
and the smelting of steel.
"That's how it is,
the way it goes. . .
We've attained
the topmost level,
climbing from the workers' bunks:
in the Union
of Republics
the understanding of verse
now tops
the prewar norm . . ."

- Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Back Home!* 1925[177]

The third centralized museological innovation identified was the proposal for a new 'hybrid' museum position—the artist-administrator—whose duties were not only to be the overall administration of contemporary art museums but also the selection of works for acquisition and display and educational museum programming. The necessity for such a position, especially as it pertained to the production and handling of contemporary art was referenced in five of the 20 documents analyzed. All of the quotations from historical participants in this chapter came from those five documents. For a full reference list see Appendix A: Archival

[176] For a look at current Russian artistic and museological thought on artist-administrators see Cruz-Uribe, "Following the Black Square: The Cosmic, The Nostalgic & The Transformative," 72-76.
[177] Vladimir Mayakovsky, *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry*, Patricia Blake, ed., Max Hayward and George Reavey, trans. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1975), 185-187.

Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Thematic Category: 3. The following analysis and discussion utilized the historiographic approaches of historical ethnography, the exploration and study of cultural phenomenon observed from an historical subject's point of view, and path dependence, which involves analyzing an individual's decisions as dependent on past practice, preference, or values. These approaches were relevant to the analysis of the avant-garde artists-turned-administrators who promoted individual but shared agendas focused on continuing and 'recreating' revolution within the fields of museology and contemporary art.

State support for 'new artistic achievement' did not stop with the 'subsidization' of contemporary art. Notable within the new Soviet museums and their 'oversight' organizations was the fact that leading figures within the Russian artistic avant-garde movements held some of the first key administrative positions. Key examples were:

- Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956): artist, sculptor, photographer, graphic designer, co-founder of Constructivism, appointed director of the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund in 1920, teacher at Vkhutemas from its founding in 1920, made second director of the Museums of Painterly Culture in October 1920.
- Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944): abstract painter, leader of Bauhaus art movement, member of Moscow IZO, made director in 1920, member of Purchasing Fund, first director of Museums of Painterly Culture beginning in February 1919.
- Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935): painter, founder of Suprematism, member of Moscow IZO, made director of Petrograd IZO in 1923, teacher at Vkhutemas in 1925
- David Shterenberg (1881-1948): painter, graphic artist, Futurist, Cubist, made director of Petrograd IZO in 1918, teacher at Vkhutemas from 1920 to 1930
- Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953): Constructivist painter and architect, made director of the Moscow IZO in 1919, teacher at Vkhutemas
- Osip Brik (1888-1945): Futurist writer, member of Moscow IZO

These avant-garde artists-turned-museum administrators recognized the opportunity the revolution and Bolshevik victory had provided them, in terms of not only reorganizing the Russian 'artistic machine' but also of injecting truly avant-garde aesthetics and creative thinking into the education, acquisition, and display of art. Artists were no longer beholden to the whims

and tastes of the private art collectors and dealers and additionally, they were no longer beholden to the rigid historical hierarchy and traditional presentation of art advocated by professional curators and museologists. Malevich warned against the inclusion of these pre-revolutionary 'types' within the new institutions, cautioning that these:

> "scientific-artistic" museologists [may now be] making their nests in the revolutionary institutions by stubbornly exhibiting the old as if it were a magnificent altar of truth before which the young should bow down and in which they must believe. The thunder of the canons of October have helped the innovators to rise up, to unscrew the old clamps and to re-establish a new spirit for the modern.[178]

Museology could now, in addition to art, be led by the avant-garde.

This museo-artistic revolution began with calls for the delegation to artists of the total administration of art museums. At the January 16, 1919 meeting between the Moscow IZO and Museum Bureau, State Commissar on Museums and the Preservation of Artistic Monuments and Antiquity G.S. Yatmanov declared, "The restructured art museums must be taken out of the hands of professional museum workers and handed over to artists. Professional museum workers have created fetishes of the artistic artifacts of the past; these must be disposed of, and it can only happen by transferring control over museums to artists."[179] David Shterenberg sought to justify this transfer, in IZO's "Declaration Concerning Principles of Museum Management Conducted at the Session of the Department's Petrograd Collegium (February 7th, 1919)," by arguing that artists' 'natural' right to such control stemmed from their artistic training, knowledge, and creativity. Shterenberg went on to describe artists as:

> the only ones competent in matters of contemporary art, as the force creating artistic values. . . Since an artist is a creative force in the sphere of arts, it is a part of his objective to be in charge of the artistic education of the country. Museum workers,

[178] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."
[179] Moscow Department of Museum Affairs, "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)," in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 282.

> however close their position may be to artistic circles owing to the fact [of] their professional qualities, cannot be sufficiently competent in the issues of artistic performance and education.[180]

The head of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and noted ethnographer Sergei Oldenburg added to this call for total administrative control by artists on February 11, 1919 at the first All-Russian Museum Conference, held at the new Palace of the Arts (formerly the tsar's Winter Palace):

> It is absolutely essential that the artist join in museum work alongside the scholar and not only in those activities of museums touching on the arts but in their activities in general; not only when it comes to displays where there can be no substitute for the creative and experienced eye of the artist, but in approaching every subject, whether a monument of nature or of culture.[181]

Three specific proposals stemmed from this overall administration by artists: 1) the delegation to artists of the selection and purchase of contemporary artwork, 2) the delegation to artists of the selection and curation of historical art, and, as previously outlined by Shterenberg, 3) the delegation to artists of the artistic instruction and education of the public. Shterenberg characterized the first proposal as a clear and natural right of artists; "artists, as the only ones competent in matters of contemporary art, as the force creating artistic values, should be solely in charge of purchasing objects of contemporary art."[182] He also characterized the issue as a battle between the old and the new:

> The specific professional feature of a museum worker is a striving to preserve all that has been created, whereas an artist aspires to create something new. . . The old anachronism whereby museums are replenished with contemporary works of art according to the museum workers' choice shall be abolished. Purchasing works of contemporary art shall be within the exclusive competence of artists.[183]

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[180] David Shterenberg, "Declaration of the Fine Arts and Artistic Industry Department Concerning Principles of Museum Management Adopted at the Session of the Department's Collegium of 7 February 1919," published as part of the "Report on the Activities of the Department of Plastic Arts of Narkompros, May 1919," *Izobrazitelonoe iskusstvo* No. 1, (Petrograd, 1919), http://www.incorm.eu/documents.html#c-1919.
[181] Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde 1915-1932*, 481
[182] David Shterenberg, "Declaration of the Fine Arts and Artistic Industry Department Concerning Principles of Museum Management Adopted at the Session of the Department's Collegium of 7 February 1919."
[183] Ibid.

Shterenberg argued similarly for the second proposal, the delegation of historical art curation to artists. Scholarly reverence for age and history would no longer be the criterion against which artwork of the past was judged. Their artistic training and creative force made artists keener 'spotters' of innovation—the only rubric to use in the new Soviet avant-garde museology, of past as well as contemporary art:

> The artist shall have the right to choose from the totality of monuments of the past those works of art that could characterise a culture specific for a given type of art. Unlike a civilisation of any kind, this culture is determined first of all by its creative and hence inventive aspect. *Only those works of art in the past that were to any extent professional or artistic inventions attract the artist's interest [italics mine]*.[184]

Osip Brik made the case for the third proposal, the delegation of artistic education to the artist, in his speech "The Museum and Proletarian Culture," at the first First All-Russian Museum Conference in 1919, wherein he argued that the masses needed cultural instruction and leadership, just as they had political and ideological instruction, in order to properly appreciate the current artistic revolution underway:

> We are convinced that contemporary art should dominate, but people must be prepared for it. . . Thus, control over all education and aesthetic impact must be transferred to the artists. The work of cultural enlightenment and artistic instruction should be removed from museum jurisdiction and entirely handed over to the creators of contemporary art.[185]

And for a period in the 1920s, under the experimental aegis of Lunacharsky's Narkompros, Rodchenko's Museum Bureau, and Malevich and Kandinsky's IZO, it was.

Soviet centralization, in terms of state control and coordination of all cultural administration, not only enabled the widespread institutional enforcement of artists into administrative roles (enforcement that would have been impossible to achieve in a less

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[184] Ibid.
[185] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," 290-291.

centralized, more 'democratic' country). By putting power into the hands of artists (formerly independent creative agents), Soviet centralization led to the conflation of two museological positions into one—the hybridization and creation of a new kind of producer, one of administrative, curatorial, *and* artistic work. This was the concentration and application of creative control not seen before in museology. An artist's role, historically, was to be the individual producer of independent creative work. Brik attempted to define the difficulties of 'democratic' art in a communist society in his 1917 essay "Democratization of Art":

> [T]he word "art" is a combination of two wholly different concepts: art as personal creativity and art as socio-cultural phenomenon. Confusion of these two ideas generates a widespread conviction that democracy in art is simply art in the People's service, that a painter, poet, or musician must create for them. And objectors to this view are correct in that a true artist creates solely for himself and for those who have need of him, and that creativity is possible only on this condition.[186]

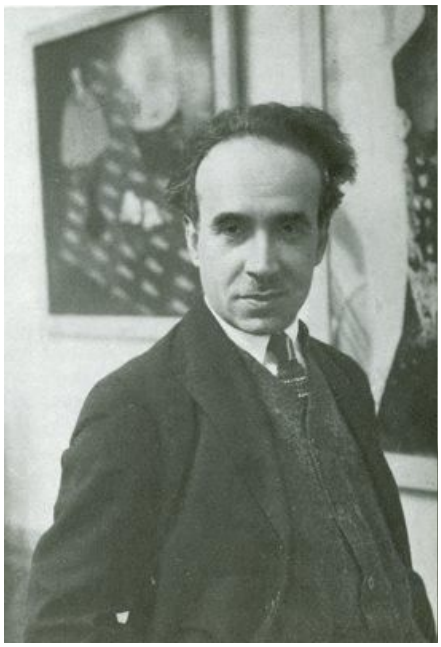
But these two conflicting 'definitions' of art became easier to reconcile when artists were put into the position of not only creating (for themselves or the people) but also administering art. The folding of creative, artistic production into administration was, in and of itself, a centralizing act—it is concentrating, coordinating, and enabling the transfer of artistic resources and knowledge—creative collaboration of a kind a strictly administrative department would previously have had little to no experience with or access to. Centralization not only enabled across-the-board enforcement of rules, policies, and procedures. It also served as the catalyst and inspiration for the very creation of the hybrid artist-administrator.

In Shterenberg's 1919 rallying cry to artists to join in museum work, he clearly referenced the centralizing tenet at the core of the new artist-administrator position—the

[186] Brik, "The Democratization of Art (July–August 1917)," *October* 134 (Fall 2010): 76.

universality of art and the centrifugal flow of knowledge and expertise artists could now direct from their new prime location at the center of cultural administration and education:

> Artists! Free the art of the past from dead historical pedantry.
> Artists! Show that your craft is the great craft of the whole of mankind.
> Artists! The cause of artistic education is your cause since you alone are responsible for artistic creative work.
> Artists! Unite in the struggle for your professional culture of the future against the fetishism of the past hanging over the arts.
> *Artists of all the world! All peoples understand your language [italics mine]*[187]



(Fig. 6) David Shterenberg, early 1920s

[187] Shterenberg, "Declaration of the Fine Arts and Artistic Industry Department Concerning Principles of Museum Management Adopted at the Session of the Department's Collegium of 7 February 1919."

The Museum of Painterly Culture

The fourth centralized museological innovation identified was the establishment of the first modern contemporary art museums—the Museums of Painterly Culture. The need for, structure, and features of these museums, specifically as it pertained to their focus on and promotion of contemporary avant-garde art was referenced in six of the 20 documents analyzed. All of the quotations from historical participants in this chapter came from those six documents. For a full reference list see Appendix A: Archival Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Thematic Category: 4. The following analysis and discussion utilized the historiographical approach of historical institutionalism as it involved tracing the development of the first modern contemporary art museums from the initial proposals to construction, agenda, and ultimate fate.

Early Soviet avant-garde museology provided a "totally new, alternative model of the museum, fully supported by the state, promoting the avant-garde, and aiming to transform society by subverting cultural hegemony"[188] and was unprecedented in its treatment of contemporary art. The early Soviet contemporary art museums, whose first iterations were called the Museums of Painterly Culture, had a single precedent—the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris, which was established in 1818 and called "the museum of living artists,"[189] thereby differentiating itself from the Musée du Louvre, "the so-called galleries of the dead."[190] As

[188] Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski, *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 9.
[189] See Geneviève Lacambre, "Introduction" in *Le Musée du Luxembourg en 1874* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1974), 7-11.
[190] Gough, "Futurist Museology," 329.

Aleksandr Grishchenko categorically declared, "The Museum of Painterly Culture is a *new* concept with *new* creative objectives and aspirations."[191]

Kazimir Malevich was instrumental in making the case for the creation of the Museums of Painterly Culture. In his 1919 "Our Tasks", a list of ten activities to which artists and the State could and should contribute, he demanded "(no. 5) the creation of stationary museums of contemporary art throughout the country" and "(no. 7) the establishment of a central Museum of contemporary art and creative work in Moscow."[192] He was also key in formulating the specifics of the Museum's 'avant-garde promoting' agenda:

> At the moment, the first stone has been laid for a museum of pictorial culture [what became the Museum of Painterly Culture] par excellence. Under this banner is collected everything that has something of the pictorial. . . I proposed that into the museum of pure pictorial culture *the most important of the new trends [italics mine]* should be admitted and that if anything of the past must be admitted that it should be in the smallest quantities. . .[193]

Grishchenko continued this thinking, declaring that the slogan of old museums, "art is endurable," should be rejected by the new museum. He elaborated on this point, proposing that "the Museum of Painterly Culture shall embrace the art of painting of individual artists and artistic groups for the sake of energy and *new blood [italics mine]*."[194]

After debate and discussion between Narkompros, the Museum Bureau, and IZO, thirty Museums of Painterly Culture[195] were established in 1921 with the Moscow Museum Bureau and

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[191] Aleksandr Grishchenko, "Thesis On The Museum of Painterly Culture Adopted by the Fine Arts Department (1919)," http://www.incorm.eu/documents.html#d-1919.
[192] Kazimir Malevich, "Our Tasks," *Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo*, No. 1 (Petrograd, 1919). For more see Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," 477-478.
[193] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."
[194] Grishchenko, "Thesis On The Museum of Painterly Culture Adopted by the Fine Arts Department (1919)."
[195] In the provincial towns of Yelets, Vitebsk, Samara, Astrakhan, Slobodskoe, Penza, Simbirsk, Petrograd, Smolensk, Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Kazan, Ivanovo, Voznesensk, Shuia, Ekaterinburg, Kosmodemiansk, Moscow, Lugarsk, Bakhmut, Kostroma, Tula, Ufa, Kishnym, Tsaritsyn, Barnaul, Tobolsk, and Perm. See Rodchenko, "Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau (November 29, 1920)," 117-118.

Purchasing Fund acting as the acquisition and distribution center for the shipment of contemporary art to Petrograd and the provinces. In a Moscow museums guide published in 1925, the Moscow Museum of Painterly Culture was listed and described as having a collection of Futurist and Cubist paintings, most notable for its promotion of access and challenging exhibit presentation style:

(Fig. 7) Moscow Museum Of Painterly Culture, January 1920

> The Museum has set itself not only the usual goal for a collection of paintings but also, in part, an educative and cultural one, seeking to bring the spectator inside contemporary artistic-and-technical investigations and to illuminate for him the complicated and, at times, still poorly elucidated paths by which they proceed. . . [This demands of the spectator] suitable preparation and knowledge of the history of the new art.[196]

This reiterated Osip Brik's point that the people 'must be prepared' for contemporary art.

In addition to the fundamental educational element necessary to the Soviet avant-garde museological treatment of contemporary art was the key principle of centralized and continuous art acquisition and distribution. As Grishchenko declared in 1919, "The Museum of Painterly Culture shall always be replenished by new contributions. . . according to the spirit and action of the living creative essence in the art of painting.[197] Between 1918 and 1922 approximately 40 contemporary art works were distributed to each of the 30 Museums of Painterly Culture.[198]

[196] Dzhafarova, "The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture," 475.
[197] Grishchenko, "Thesis On The Museum of Painterly Culture Adopted by the Fine Arts Department (1919)."
[198] "The average number of works per newly organised museum is between thirty and forty-five, not including drawings." Rodchenko, "Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau (November 29, 1920)," 117-118.

Unfortunately, as Brik said in 1919, "Simple rule by decree will never change anything."[199] The avant-garde aspirations of the Museum of Painterly Culture were dependent on the resources and interest available at the time. Not many documents exist on the Museum of Painterly Culture's activities from 1926 (when it lost its connection with the avant-garde teachers, students, and creative output of the art-technical school Vkhutemas) to its ultimate closure in 1929, which followed its loss of autonomy and folding into the Tretyakov Gallery.[200]

[199] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," 291.
[200] For more on the winding down of the Museums of Painterly Culture see Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928*, 33.

Highways of Art & The Unified State Museum Fund

> We must build a bridge as soon as possible from the world of the children of the sun to the world of moles, and show the masses that the museum is essential to them.
>
> - Anatoly Lunacharsky, 1919[201]

The fifth centralized museological innovation identified was the proposal for a contemporary art museum network, arterially linking the provincial Museums of Painterly Culture with the central Moscow Museum and the State Museum Fund and allowing for increased mobility in the exhibition of art. The sixth centralized museological innovation identified was the proposal for a unified State Museum Fund (or reserve) for all museum collections within the new Soviet Union. The need for and features of this network and fund, specifically as it pertained to the distribution of contemporary avant-garde art were referenced in 11 of the 20 documents (seven references to the network, six to the fund). All of the quotations from historical participants in this chapter came from those 11 documents. For a full reference list see Appendix A: Archival Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Thematic Categories: 5 & 6. The following analysis and discussion utilized the historiographical approaches of process-tracing, because a single museum reserve was the direct result of the nationalization of museum and private collections, historical institutionalism and path dependence because a network spreading art across the country involved the construction of governing bodies with ideological and organizational requirements, and historical ethnography because this network and reserve grew out of support from individual artists and avant-gardists,

[201] Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first head of Narkompros also known by the title Commissar of Enlightenment, in an address to the All-Russian Museum Conference in Petrograd, February 1919. Natalia Semenova, "A Soviet Museum Experiment," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 43, 1-4 (2009): 81-102, doi: 10.1163/221023909X00066.

individuals with a vested interest in the promotion, explication, and distribution of contemporary art and avant-garde creative thinking.

The centralization of Soviet avant-garde museology made partly true Aleksandr Bogdanov's prediction in his 1908 novel *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia* that "sculpture and picture galleries were peculiar to capitalism, with its ostentatious luxury and crass ambition to hoard treasures. [He] assumed that in a socialist order art would be disseminated throughout society so as to enrich life everywhere."[202] This 'dissemination of art' was realized when a state-supported network system was developed between the Moscow Museum Bureau, the Unified State Museum Fund, and the new far-flung Museums of Painterly Culture, realizing Malevich's sixth 'task' from his 1919 "Our Tasks"—to create "across the entire Russian Republic. . . a traffic-artery for living exhibitions of creative art."[203] This 'traffic-artery' or highway was the conduit by which the Museums of Painterly Culture could realize their aim of acquiring, distributing, and displaying "the most important of the new [artistic] trends."[204]

Malevich expanded on this 'task' in a later article, where he outlined the museological justification for such a 'highway of art':

> In addressing the organisation and reorganisation for the building of the general artistic machine of the State, attention has been given to the creation of a network of museums as centres of propaganda and education for the large popular masses. The [Museum of Painterly Culture] must be the central head of the development of the whole network of museums across the platform of the Federal Republic of Soviet Russia. It will distribute the works of artistic power of the country to all the far-reaching centres. Thus it will be the living cause of creative models and they will penetrate throughout the county and will flick the transfiguration of forms into life and artistic representations in industry.[205]

[202] Bogdanov, Graham, and Stites, eds., *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, 74.
[203] Malevich, "Our Tasks (1919)."
[204] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."
[205] Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume (1919)."

The source of this transformative artistic power was two-fold: 1) the fluidity and continuous 'replenishment' of new artworks to new museums, what Petrograd IZO member Il'in described as "the necessity of greater mobility in museum collections"[206] and what Nikolai Punin reiterated as "the necessity of all museums adjusting how works are displayed, and making their collections more fluid. . . Works should be arranged and rearranged continuously; the ideal museum would have all the works on moveable panels; the tendency toward immobile iconostasis must be rooted out"[207]; and 2) the more concrete establishment of a single state fund for all museum collections (acquired through nationalization or purchase), what Grishchenko called "the reservoir for the new museum[s]. . . [and] the fund of all Russian private and state museums."[208]

The main topic of Osip Brik's 1919 speech "The Museum and Proletarian Culture" was the centralizing justification for this single state fund of museum collections:

> I am going to talk about cultural issues related to museum activities. The main issue is that of a unified state fund. The value of any collection is determined by the organizing principle laid down at its starting point. It is necessary to ascertain what each collection presents itself as, and the extent to which its organizing idea has a right to exist. Announcing the principle of a unified fund, we place on each museum curator the obligation to prove that his collection should be preserved. . . Thus, the unified state fund must be decreed as a founding principle, and every individual collection must prove its right to preservation. The question of growing the collection is not the purview of the museum, but should be decided by the state. There is talk here of the museum's initiative about a loan for purchasing - these are old habits. *Under the new state system, the problem of allocation is dealt with in accordance with centralization [italics mine]*, to which museums must adapt, since they cannot conduct their own housekeeping within the larger state economy.[209]

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[206] Moscow Department of Museum Affairs, "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)," in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 285.
[207] Ibid, 285.
[208] Grishchenko, "Thesis on The Museum of Painterly Culture Adopted by the Department of Fine Arts of Moscow and Petersburg (1919)."
[209] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Commission (1919)," 290-291.

Vasily Kandinsky, then director of the Moscow IZO and the Museums of Painterly Culture, later remembered the development of the whole centralized system—the Museum Bureau and its Purchasing Fund, the Unified State Fund, the Museums of Painterly Culture, and the needs, demands, and interests that formed the network or 'highway' connecting them all together:

> Immediately after the [1919 First All-Russian Museum] conference, the college of the Moscow [Museum Bureau] selected from its midst a Purchasing [Fund] which proceeded to acquire for the general state reserve [the Unified State Fund] a whole series of works of painting and sculpture. Following upon which a special commission was selected from the college for the purpose of organising the Museum of [Painterly] Culture. This [Purchasing Fund], having established the general basis for setting up the museum, chose about a hundred pictures from the total number of works acquired for the state reserve, leaving the remaining works in the reserves for provincial museums to draw upon, in response to the provinces' continual demands for both the further development of existing museums and the foundation of new ones.[210]

(Fig. 8) Art teachers and students on their way to the Moscow All-Russian Conference 1920, Malevich in center

Malevich's ten-point list of tasks for new Soviet avant-garde museologists (see following page) was another clear example of 1) the centralizing agenda that the avant-garde artist-administrators and their institutions brought to early Soviet museology and 2) the opportunity they saw in the centralized Soviet system for the wider promotion of innovative administration, avant-garde aesthetics, and contemporary artwork and artists.

[210] Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)," 437-444.

"Our Tasks"

1.) A war on academism.

2.) An administration of innovators.

3.) The creation of a worldwide collective on artistic affairs.

4.) The establishment of embassies of the arts in other countries.

5.) The creation of stationary museums of contemporary art throughout the country.

6.) The creation across the entire Russian Republic of a traffic-artery for living exhibitions of creative art.

7.) The establishment of a central museum of contemporary art and creative work in Moscow.

8.) The appointment of commissars of artistic affairs in the provincial cities of Russia.

9.) Agitation among the people in support of creative work in Russia.

10.) The publication of a newspaper on artistic matters for the broad masses.

- **Kazimir Malevich, 1919**[211]

[211] Kazimir Malevich, "Our Tasks," *Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo*, No. 1 (Petrograd, 1919). http://www.incorm.eu/documents.html#e-1919.

Soviet Cultural Equity

In addition to the six identified thematic categories connected to specific centralized museological innovations related to the administration of Soviet contemporary art museums, the theme of equity emerged during document analysis (appearing in 18 of the 20 documents analyzed), linking the documents, recurring themes, and keywords together. For a complete list see Appendix A: Archival Document Analysis Rubric and the documents under the Equity keyword/theme. The subject of the Soviet Socialist platform of equity and its provision of access to resources like education for previously denied populations like ethnic minorities, women, and the working class had been previously raised in the literature review. But during document analysis this connective, overarching theme revealed the main innovative output of early Soviet avant-garde museology and its centralized organization and services—*cultural equity*—fair access to cultural resources for all.

The first Commissar of Enlightenment and Education Anatoly Lunacharsky indicated the imperative of Soviet cultural equity, as it pertained to museums, in his address to the first All-Russian Museum Conference in Petrograd, February of 1919, when he said, "We must build a bridge as soon as possible from the world of the children of the sun to the world of moles, and show the masses that the museum is essential to them."[212] Vasily Kandinsky also referred to the great strides made by early Soviet museology in providing increased cultural and artistic access and support to those previously denied:

> Russia offers an unparalleled example of state organisation of museums. The definite principle of the Museum of [Painterly Culture], its complete freedom to establish the right of every innovator in art to seek and to receive official recognition, encouragement and

[212] Semenova, "A Soviet Museum Experiment," 81.

> adequate reward – these are the unparalleled attainments in the field of museum affairs have been achieved by the . . . the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment."[213]

And Nikolai Punin advocated for a core institutional, museological belief in equity of access: "Collections in art museums are archives that can be freely used by anyone."[214] The Soviet Union led the way in terms of cultural equity and the centralized provision of access for all Soviet citizens to cultural, artistic resources and support previously denied due to class, education, gender, poverty, and location.

Analysis of the six recurring thematic categories and centralized Soviet museological innovations determined that there were three key factors (specifically connected to early Soviet avant-garde museology) which enabled the Soviet Union's provision of cultural equity: 1) the incorporation of artistic thinking, production, and creativity into museum administration (specifically, the creation of a museum administrator/artist hybrid); 2) making collections more mobile and fluid, by prioritizing contemporary production over preservation of the past and through the creation of networks for the exchange of objects and collections between museums (which led to increased levels of access to and circulation of contemporary art and culture); and 3) an unparalleled level of state support for the arts.

Three Factors Enabling Soviet Cultural Equity

1. The museum administrator/artist hybrid.
2. Networks for the exchange of objects and collections between museums.
3. Increased state support for museums and the arts.

[213] Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)," 437-444.
[214] "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)," in Zhilyaev, *Avant-Garde Museology*, 285.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions & Implications

The purpose of this thesis was to reconceptualize the organizational principle of centralization as innovative, using the early Soviet avant-garde museological experience as an historical case study (1917 to 1929). The first conclusion of this thesis stemmed from the three factors identified during document analysis as enabling the Soviet achievement of cultural equity in contemporary art museums during the Soviet Union's first decade: Artist-administrator positions, networks, and increased state support for museums can all help facilitate the centralized coordination and centrifugal flow of information, resources, services, and objects—which in turn can help achieve higher levels of cultural equity within a region. The second conclusion came from the review of the relevant literature *and* analysis of early Soviet avant-garde museology documents. Both showed a divergence in the use and the meaning of the term 'centralization.' The 'rethinking' of centralization, then, has become its reconceptualization as a term with at least two different definitions—1) the hierarchical concentration of control and authority and 2) the central coordination and the centripetal and centrifugal flow of information, services, and goods. This historical case study demonstrated that centralization *can* be reconceived as innovative, through awareness of the different types of centralization that exist.

State Support, Hybrid Positions & Networks

The three factors that enabled Soviet cultural equity and museological innovation could also be adapted to enable contemporary cultural equity and museological innovation. Centralization of cultural administration at the national level of course can facilitate vast increases in access to cultural resources and education. Centralization, in terms of state control and coordination of all cultural administration, also enables the widespread institutional

enforcement of policies, procedures, and technologies, making its effectiveness particularly strong. But centralization at the national level is not easily transferable or duplicable. It is not a state that can be applied or recommended to most institutions (nor is the nationalization of private property or the abolition of private art dealing). However, increased state support for museums and cultural arts administration can be encouraged.

Another source of early Soviet museological innovation was the creation of hybrid positions, specifically the folding of artistic production, design, and thinking into the administrative side of museums. Artists were put into the position of not only creating but also administering art. This hybridization of the artistic and the administrative is more easily encouraged within contemporary museology. Museums have already begun incorporating artists into more roles within museums than simply as the producers of art for museum collections.[215]

According to a 2017 editorial by the e-magazine *Artsy*, "The U.S. has lagged behind when it comes to the issue of cultural access . . . While a New York or Washington D.C. resident can choose from dozens of free museums and cultural institutions where they can interact with art from across the globe, residents of rural America might be hard-pressed to reach a single one."[216] This is why the encouragement of museum networks, integrated programming, and the centrifugal flow of information, services, and objects (e.g. Malevich's 'highways of art') is so significant today. *Americans for the Arts*, the largest think-tank and advocacy group for the arts and cultural research within the U.S., took note of this in 2016, when they released a "Statement of Cultural Equity" which argued that all Americans deserve "fair and equitable access to

[215] Especially and specifically curation. For an overview see Elena Filipovic, ed., *The Artist As Curator: An Anthology* (London: Koenig Books, 2017).
[216] Jing Cao, "The U.S. Should Learn from Taiwan's Commitment to Providing Museum Access to Rural Poor," *Artsy*, February 21, 2017, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-learn-taiwans-commitment-providing-museum-access-rural-poor.

cultural resources and support."[217] This echoed the international recognition of mankind's 'right to culture.' Article 27 of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community [and] to enjoy the arts"[218] is a right belonging to all people and Article 15 of the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights reserves the right "to take part in cultural life" for all.[219]

Differentiating Centralization(s)

Review of historical, international, and contemporary opinions of centralization seemed, on the whole, to indicate a lopsided, more negative perception of centralization's potential for innovation. The still prevalent low general museological opinion of centralization and its association with a lack in connectivity, initiative, and creativity all seemed to showcase an emphasis on (and imbalanced awareness of) the defects of centralized administration—as opposed to more nuanced reflection on centralization's other, non-concentrated authority-related applications—like the BMFA director's expectation of more interdisciplinary collaboration following a centralizing reorganization. However, review of the relevant literature also showed a divergence in the use of the term 'centralizing,' indicating that the perception of a negative relationship between centralization and innovation/effectiveness was linked to bureaucratic, hierarchical centralization, while this historical case study and document analysis indicated that centralizing policies and procedures regarding access, distribution, and flow of information, goods, and services had strong associations with effectiveness and innovation.

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[217] Americans for the Arts, "Statement on Cultural Equity." https://www.americansforthearts.org /about-americans-for-the-arts/statement-on-cultural-equity.
[218] United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* http://www.un.org/en/ universal-declaration-human-rights/.
[219] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.* http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx.

Therefore, it is important to distinguish and differentiate between the different types of centralization that can be applied within museums. Policies, procedures, technologies, and administration all take on different forms with very different functions once 'centralized' concerning museum programming, exhibit design, and object and collection handling (e.g. accessioning, cataloging, housing, design, and distribution). Even something as simple as applying the principle of centrality to an exhibit's spatial organization can have larger implications for a visitor's experience of the exhibit, as Andromache Gazi argued in "Exhibition Ethics: An Overview of Major Issues (2014)":

> An exhibition's layout and space organisation also contribute to the potential interpretation of an exhibition's subject matter, and not all interpretations are equally valued. For example, linear, sequential placement of objects may convey a sense of progression from simple to complex societies, whereas centralised placement may be employed to give objects significance.[220]

As previously established, the perception of centralization as innovative was not very widely held in organization studies and museology.[221] Historical associations were no better. Throw in nationalization and the Soviet Union and the negative associations of centralization with totalitarian control and stagnant bureaucracy abound. As historian Stephen Cohen put it in *Bolshevism and Stalinism*, "The party's growing centralization, bureaucratization, and administrative intolerance after 1917 certainly promoted authoritarianism in the 1-party system

[220] Andromache Gazi, "Exhibition Ethics: An Overview of Major Issues," *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* 12, no. 1 (2014).

[221] There is some scholarship on the organizational 'trends' of museology through time and the connection between centralization in museums and nationalizing politics (monarchic, colonial, and socialist) but nothing on the potentially positive or 'innovative' aspects of that specific organizational form within museums. For more see Ivo Maroević, *Introduction to Museology: The European Approach*, Munich: C. Müller-Straten, 1998 and Yevgeniy Fiks, "Nationalization of All Galleries and Museums," in *Pedagogical Poem: The Archive of the Future Museum of History*, eds. Ilya Budraitskis and Arseniy Zhilyaev (Italy: Marsilio, 2014), 19-24.

and abetted Stalin's rise."[222] Centralization gets a bad rap, thanks in part to its commonly depicted causal link to the rise of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and Stalinism.[223]

However, at the same time he was making a case for the *dis*continuity between Stalinism and Bolshevism, Stephen Cohen was also laying the groundwork for a positive view of centralization and its potential for innovation. Cohen argued that ideology, and therefore centralization, can take multiple diverse forms and have multiple divergent effects:

> A given ideology may influence events in different ways, Christianity having contributed to both compassion and inquisition, socialism to both social justice and tyranny.[224]

There are different kinds of centralization and it would be remiss to deny all innovative potential due to a single strain's negative associations. Centralization has been traditionally interpreted as having an innovation-quashing effect but this thesis encourages a positive reconception of centralization by acknowledging the existence of and distinctions between different kinds of centralization and arguing that centralization had positive and innovative effects in its early Soviet museological application.

However, the historical nature of this thesis has concomitant limitations, mostly connected with the research's reliance on archival primary source document analysis. Chiefly, any analysis of such documents should be (and was) done with awareness and acknowledgement of the fact that the data contained within the documents was not "necessarily precise, accurate, or

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[222] Cohen kept this negative conception open to debate, however. ". . . to argue that these developments predetermined Stalinism is another matter. Even in the 1920s after the bureaucratization and militarization fostered by the civil war, the high party elite was not (nor had it ever been) the disciplined vanguard fantasized in *What Is To Be Done?* It remained oligarchical, in the words of one of its leaders, *"a negotiated federation between groups, groupings, factions, and 'tendencies.'"* In short, the party's "organizational principles" did not produce Stalinism before 1929." Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 53.

[223] "One of the most controversial issues arising from the Russian Revolution is the relationship of Leninism to Stalinism." For more see Richard Pipes, "Reflections on the Russian Revolution," in Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, (Vintage, 2011), 490-511.

[224] Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917*, 52.

complete recordings of events that have occurred."[225] Another important consideration to take into account is the fact that innovation for the sake of 'newness' and centralization for its own sake are not always desirable, particularly if existing policies and organization already meet institutional needs. Centralization does have the benefit of minimizing the room for error and confusion over what should be done or what is allowable but there are myriad situations for which centralization would not be ideal. Nothing is one-size-fits-all and requirements and needs are not the same for every department or institution. There are limits to what can be effectively centralized. Osip Brik acknowledged this in 1919 when he stated, "one must not assume that all institutional formations are the same"[226] and Sergei Chekhonin, graphic artist and first director of the Soviet State Porcelain Factory (1918-1923), argued outright against centralization, arguing that "the centralisation of museums has deprived national industry of examples [from private institutions and collections due to nationalization]. It is necessary to return the examples and to decentralise museums."[227]

In Lena Kolarska's "Centralization and Decentralization As Organizational Myths," she defined contemporary myths as "connected with the sphere of feelings. . . [,] as firmly surrounded by valuation. . . [and] as a presentation of value judgments in the form of empirical truths."[228] As previously established in this thesis, the organizational principle of centralization is surrounded by negative valuation and perception. But this negative valuation is not truth—it is a

[225] G. A. Bowen, "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9:2 (2009), 33, doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027.
[226] Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture (1919)," 290.
[227] Chekhonin was alone in this argument and there was never any serious faction against Soviet centralization at its advent. Sergei Chekhonin, "On Artistic Industry and the Museum of Art and Industry" in *Russian Avant-Garde 1910-1930, The G. Costakis Collection*, ed. Anna Kafetsi, trans. Igor Serebriakov (Athens: The National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum & the European Cultural Centre of Delphi, 1995), 778-779. http://www.incorm.eu /documents.html#d-1919.
[228] Kolarska, "Centralization and Decentralization As Organizational Myths," 145.

myth that can be dispelled with the awareness of the different centralizations that exist. The reconceptualization of the negative 'myth' surrounding centralization involves changing the critical perception with which centralization is viewed—so that centralization is no longer seen as the withholding of control by the few but rather as the granting of access to the many. This level and equity of distribution and access was what made early Soviet museology and its treatment of contemporary art and artists so innovative.

Conclusions

1. Artist-administrator positions, networks, and increased state support for museums all facilitate the centralized coordination and centrifugal flow of information, resources, services, and objects—and help achieve higher levels of cultural equity.
2. Differentiating between the different types of centralization (concentration of authority versus central coordination of the centrifugal flow of information, services, and goods) allows for its reconceptualization as innovative.

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APPENDIX A: Coding Rubric for Thematic Analysis

Rubric: Keywords/Themes Identification & Categorization
Indicators of Innovative Centralized/Centralizing Museum Policies and Programs

Keywords/Themes:	**Document/'Participant' Selection:**
A. Centralization (for definition see Definitions Glossary) - centralized, centralizing museum policies, procedures, programs, proposals, or positions (synonyms): center, central, centralized, centripetal, centrifugal	**Selection method:** non-random elite sampling, Publications and reports of the directors and administrators of the first Soviet contemporary art museums and their oversight organizations
B. Innovation (for definition see Definitions Glossary) - novel, unprecedented museum policies, procedures, programs, proposals, or position (synonyms): new, original, first, unprecedented, unparalleled	**Participants:** Narkompros (the Commissariat of Enlightenment and Education), the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund, the Unified Museum Fund, the Department of Fine Art (IZO), Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vasily Kandinsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Kazimir Malevich, David Shterenberg, Nikolai Punin, and Osip Brik

Recurring Thematic Categories Identified in Documents:

1. Soviet nationalization—which abolished private property and subsequently private art dealing and collecting and caused the government to become the country's sole patron of contemporary art
2. The development of a fully state-sponsored museology and its concomitant administrative bodies
3. The proposal of a new 'hybrid' museum position—the artist-administrator—whose duties were not only to be the overall administration of contemporary art museums but also the selection of works for acquisition and display and educational museum programming
4. The establishment of the first modern contemporary art museums—the Museums of Painterly Culture
5. The proposal for a contemporary art museum network—arterially linking the provincial Museums of Painterly Culture with the central Moscow Museum and the State Museum Fund and allowing for increased mobility in the exhibition of art.
6. The proposal for a unified State Museum Fund (or reserve) for all museum collections within the new Soviet Union

Main Emerging Theme:

Cultural equity - the systematic and centrally organized distribution and provision of access for all Soviet citizens to artistic-cultural resources specifically pertaining to the display, explication, production, and subsidization of contemporary art

Archival Document Analysis Rubric:

Document	Centralization keyword/theme	Innovation keyword/theme	Equity keyword/theme	Thematic Category
November 8, 1917 Soviet Decree on Land	X	X	X	1
November 22, 1917 Soviet Decree on Establishment of the State Commission on Enlightenment	X	X	X	1, 2
November 24, 1917 Soviet Decree Abolishing Classes and Civil Ranks	X		X	1
October 5, 1918 Soviet Decree on Registration and Protection of Monuments of Culture and Ancient Art, Owned by Private Persons, Societies and Institutions	X		X	1, 2, 6
July 29, 1919 Soviet Decree on Abolishing Private Property Rights on Archives of Russian Writers, Composers, Painters and Scientists, Preserved in Libraries and Museums	X		X	1, 6
Osip Brik, "The Democratization of Art (July–August 1917)"		X	X	1
Aleksandr Rodchenko, "To Artist Proletarians" (April 11, 1918)			X	1
Moscow Department of Museum Affairs, "On the Question of Museums: Record of the Discussion of Problems and Objectives of Fine Art Museums at the Art and Industry Board (January 16, 1919)" G. S. Yatmanov, Nikolai Punin	X	X	X	2, 5
David Shterenberg, "Declaration of the Fine Arts and Artistic Industry Department Concerning Principles of Museum Management Adopted at the Session of the Department's Collegium of 7 February 1919," published as part of the "Report on the Activities of the Department of Plastic Arts of Narkompros (May 1919)"	X	X	X	3

Anatoly Lunacharsky, address to the All-Russian Museum Conference in Petrograd (February 1919)	X		X	5
Sergei Oldenburg, speech at the first All-Russian Museum Conference (February 11th, 1919)				3
Osip Brik, "The Museum and Proletarian Culture: Speech at the Meeting of the First All-Russian Museum Conference (1919)"	X	X	X	2, 3, 6
Aleksandr Grishchenko, "Thesis On The Museum of Painterly Culture Adopted by the Fine Arts Department (1919)"		X	X	6, 5
Kazimir Malevich, "The Axis of Colour and Volume," *Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo*, No. 1, (Petrograd, 1919)	X	X	X	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Kazimir Malevich, "Our Tasks (1919)"	X	X	X	2, 3, 4, 5
Vasily Kandinsky, "The Museum of the Culture of Painting" *Khudozhestvennaia Zhizn* (Moscow, 1920)		X	X	1, 6, 4
Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau (November 29, 1920)"	X		X	2, 4
Vasily Kandinsky, "Artistic Life (Moscow, 1920)"	X	X	X	6, 4, 5
Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Report (June 7, 1921)"	X	X	X	2, 5
Moscow museums guide (1925)		X		4