ART IN CONFLICT
An Exhibition by the Museum of Russian Art
ART IN CONFLICT
An Exhibition by the Museum of Russian Art

Press Release 1
About the Curator and The Museum of Russian Art 3
Images 4
Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Events Contact:
Christine Strom
Principal Ofc. & Admin. Specialist
Tweed Museum of Art
218-726-7823
cstrom@d.umn.edu
www.d.umn.edu/tma

Exhibition Contact:
Dr. Maria Zavialova
Curator
The Museum of Russian Art (TMORA)
(612) 821-9045 ext. 41
mzavialova@tmora.org
https://tmora.org

SOVIET ERA ART FROM THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART ON VIEW AT TWEED MUSEUM OF ART

WHAT:
Soviet Era Art featured at Tweed Museum of Art

WHEN:
Opening Reception: October 10, 2019, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Exhibition dates: September 17, 2019 – August 9, 2020

WHERE:
Tweed Museum of Art, 1201 Ordean Court, Duluth, MN 55812

Duluth, MN, September 2019 - The Tweed Museum of Art (TMA) at the University of Minnesota Duluth is proud to present Art in Conflict, an exhibition by The Museum of Russian Art, now on view through August 9, 2020, with a public opening Reception on Thursday, October 10, 2019 at Tweed. Thirty-four paintings, sculptures, decorative art and works on paper, on loan from The Museum of Russian Art in Minneapolis, create dialogues between nonconformist and state-sanctioned art during the final Soviet decades, from Stalin’s death in 1953 to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.
Juxtaposing nonconformist and socialist realist approaches, the display unfolds conflicting perspectives that dominated the multifaceted and volatile art scene of the final Soviet decades. Arranged as a dialogue of state-sanctioned and oppositional models of artistic production, the display invites a creative interpretation of what it was to be an artist living in the Soviet era.

Flourishing in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era (1960s to 1980s), the unofficial, or nonconformist, art movement was unmatched in its inexhaustible scope of creativity, courage, and variety. Nonconformists claimed the right to explore topics outlawed by the Soviet ideological apparatus. Their chief concern was not purely artistic. Rather, unofficial art responded to, protested against, and commented on the rigid doctrines of official Soviet art.

Official art adhered to the realist principle, whereas unofficial underground art explored non-realist modern approaches. Official art was atheist, whereas unofficial art tackled the themes of religion, spirituality, and metaphysics with relish. Most official art was gravely serious, which unofficial art was often not, playfully subverting and mocking ideological clichés.

There was one point in common though: both art movements were politicized. Government-sanctioned Soviet art was an instrument at the service of the political apparatus and thus, profoundly, ideological. Nonconformist art stepped forward to oppose artistic non-freedom, and inevitably entered the political arena. Conflict was a deliberate stance: non-official artists of the late Soviet era had to dismantle the insidious visual language of the Soviet establishment to discover their own idiom and voice.

The Soviet art scene had its grey zone: the art that chose not to take sides, but rather pursue purely artistic concerns and timeless subjects. But, in the highly politicized atmosphere of a totalitarian state, wasn’t the choice to be apolitical also a political decision?

**RELATED EVENTS:**

**Opening Reception at Tweed:** October 10, 2019 | 6-8 pm | with Mark Meister, Executive Director at TMORA, and Dr. Masha Zavialova. Free and open to the public.

**Visual Culture Lecture Series** with Dr. Maria (Masha) Zavialova, guest speaker at UMD
October 29, 2019 | 6 pm | Montague Hall Lecture Hall 80
ABOUT THE CURATOR:
Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, Masha Zavialova received her doctorate from the University curatorial projects and writes for art catalogues. She is an award-winning translator of African American women writing into Russian, a co-director of the folk performance group Nitka, and a board member of the American Siberian Educational Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART:
The Museum of Russian Art (TMORA) is North America’s only museum devoted to exploring the art and culture of Muscovite Russia, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, its former republics, and post-Soviet Russia. TMORA presents six or more exhibitions each year, with items from its permanent collection of over 5,000 works and Russian art from major collections in the U.S. and abroad. The Museum enhances its exhibitions by presenting subject specific lectures, seminars, concerts, and other unique events, which include independent scholars of Russian culture and other specialties who share their expertise with the TMORA audience. Housed in a beautifully renovated historic building, the Museum’s multi-level galleries provide a tranquil and intimate setting for its dynamic array of exhibitions and programs. About the Tweed Museum of Art The Tweed Museum of Art is a collecting art museum that holds in trust a historical and contemporary art collection of over 10,000 artworks on behalf of the University of Minnesota and the people of Duluth and the outlying regions. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Minnesota.

Hours and directions can be found at http://www.d.umn.edu/tma/directions.html or by calling 218-726-8222.
Gorbachev, 1991

Painted in the year of the Soviet disintegration, the work responds to the political realities of the turbulent time: the end of Gorbachev’s leadership and the Communist Party’s rule. The artist creates a metaphorical vision of the country’s transformation. Represented by red stars, the fog of Communist ideology is being blown away by the wind of change, revealing the Russian landscape with green fields, birch trees, and the river, same as ever. The painting is reminiscent of Alexander Blok’s well-known poem Russia (1908):

Well, now...It’s just another care,
A teardrop in the stream again,
With plains and forests here and there,
With figured wimples, - you’re the same.
Collective Farm Harvest, 1959

Soviet art passionately propagated the images of women as active contributors to socialist economy, avoiding traditional depictions of the cloistered feminine world. The revolution in women’s role in society fueled bold interpretations of the Soviet woman as a dynamic cultural icon. Soviet art questioned the age-old dichotomy of feminine and masculine as essentially different. Women were seldom portrayed as objects of beauty, neither were they stereotyped as seductresses, angels of the house, or damsels in distress.

The portrayal of abundant harvest on a collective farm is a leitmotif of many Soviet paintings. Frequently, these works depict women farmers shoveling heaps of wheat under the blazing sun.

**Gorbachev, 1991**

Yershov’s whimsical compositions balance at the intersection of classical realism and contemporary culture, including ideological symbols, pop art, and advertisement. In his works, the improbable encounters of different periods and incompatible styles set up the scene for a dialogue between them. In Gorbachev, a classical 17th century Dutch still life, made famous by Willem Heda, conceals another layer of imagery with Gorbachev's portraits peeping out of the round holes.

Born in the southern town of Essentuki, Valery Yershov studied at the prestigious Repin Art Institute in Leningrad. Yershov writes, "I was stifled by the classical tradition that prevailed in the academia and moved to Moscow, then teeming with life. I joined the artistic underground there." Yershov moved to Stockholm in 1988, later relocating to the US.