



Zimmerli Art Museum | Rutgers

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EXHIBITION EXAMINES INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ON ART OF COLD WAR ERA THROUGH WORK OF 20 ARTISTS

DREAMWORLDS AND CATASTROPHES FEATURES PHOTOGRAPHY, PAINTING, AND SCULPTURE, WITH MANY WORKS ON VIEW FOR FIRST TIME

New Brunswick, NJ—January 19, 2016—On March 12, the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers will open *Dreamworlds and Catastrophes*, an exhibition exploring Soviet artists' engagement with science, technology, and design at the height of the Cold War. The artists featured in the exhibition captured the duality of the intense geopolitical circumstances and the sense of hopeful possibility created by technological advancement in Soviet military and space technologies. Works in the exhibition range from documentary photography, which memorialized scientific achievements and their influence on everyday life, to surrealistic abstractions that encapsulated the sense of a rapidly changing world, to kinetic sculptures that incorporated new technologies. Although created in the Cold War era of the 1960s to the 1980s, these works have a renewed relevance and immediacy as current global events have reignited American and Western European tensions with Russia.

Dreamworlds and Catastrophes includes nearly 60 works by artists from Estonia, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine, all of whom were operating in underground circles and whose work was not sanctioned by the Soviet regime. As such, their works critically examine the extreme nationalism that characterized the period and offer a wide-range of both political perspectives and artistic experimentations. Among the notable artists are **Petr Belenok, Jānis Borgs, Valdis Celms, Boris Mikhailov, Sergei Sherstiuk, and Alexander Zhitomirsky**. Many of the works on view will be displayed for the first time, demonstrating the diversity of art created by Soviet artists in this period. The exhibition draws parallels with the work of Western peers, such as **Robert Rauschenberg, Martha Rosler, Andy Warhol, Richard Buckminster Fuller, and Richard Hamilton**, and highlights the impact of the space and nuclear arms races on a generation of artists around the world.

The exhibition is curated by Ksenia Nouril, PhD Candidate in Art History at Rutgers University and Dodge Fellow at the Zimmerli, and draws from the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of

Nonconformist Art at the museum. The collection, which was developed by American economist Norton Dodge through regular business trips to the Soviet Union and from relationships with artists living in the U.S., is the foremost collection of art by Soviet artists working in opposition to government-mandated subjects, styles, and aesthetics. *Dreamworlds and Catastrophes* provides a new framework through which to examine the collection, and will remain on view through July 31, 2016.

“Norton began collecting Soviet ‘unofficial’ art during the Cold War, making his collection very much a product of that historical moment. This exhibition is one way to tell the collection’s story, highlighting the role of its creator as a mediator between American capitalism and Soviet communism,” said Nouril. “At the same time, this subject is very timely. We see history repeating itself, as there is a connection between the ‘official’ behaviors of the Cold War and today’s ongoing wars and political conflicts, and technology is playing an ever-increasing role in our everyday lives.”

The exhibition is organized into three distinct yet interrelated sections: The first focuses on the tensions between the superpowers of the U.S. and USSR via the nuclear arms and space races. Works in this section include documentary photography, representations of cosmonauts and the cosmos, and propaganda-style imagery that spoke to a prosperous Soviet Union. The second section surveys how artists used abstraction, surrealism, and even computer science to reimagine their earthly landscapes as well as the worlds beyond thanks to our exploration of outer space. The third and final section explores artists who used new technologies and theories to create works of kinetic art.

Among the exhibition highlights are:

- ***Pozitron* by Valdis Celms (Latvia), 1976.** A maquette for a large-scale kinetic sculpture intended for an electronics factory in Soviet Ukraine. The sculpture, which was never realized, would have rotated like a disco ball and was meant to induce relaxation and healing among workers. The maquette, along with installation diagrams and sketches of its colored light patterns, are being exhibited for the first time.
- ***In Memory of Tsiolkovsky* by Petr Belenok (Ukraine), 1987.** An abstract painting in a predominantly black and white palette, the work is a tribute to Soviet rocket scientist and theorist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, whose Russian Cosmism theory was very popular in the 1930s. Tsiolkovsky’s experimentations with rockets later became the basis for sending the first satellite, Sputnik, into space in 1957.
- ***The Cosmonaut’s Dream* by Sergei Sherstiuk (Russia), 1986.** A large-scale, brightly colored painting in the hyperrealist style made popular in the late 1970s and 1980s. The painting likely refers to Yuri Gagarin, who was the first human to be sent to space on April 12, 1961. After 108 minutes in orbit, Gagarin landed by parachuting out of his spacecraft shortly before his spacecraft touched down near a collective farm southeast of Moscow.
- **Photographs of Installation of *Artificial Space, Crystal* at VDNKH (Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow in 1972 by Francisco Infante-Arana**

(Russia), undated. Three documentary photographs by Infante-Arana and the group ARGO (Authors' Working Group) that show the different ways in which viewers interacted with the temporary kinetic spaces the artists' created. As seen in the photographs, a structure of repeated boundaries and planes that reflected and refracted light immersed the viewer in a kind of total installation in the Pavilion of People's Industrial Products at Moscow's largest and most well-known exhibition grounds.

- **From the Red Series by Boris Mikhailov (Ukraine), 1960s-1970s.** A series of photographs that captured the banality of state-organized Soviet military parades. The images highlight the impact, or lack thereof, of certain technological advancements on people's day-to-day lives.

Dreamworlds and Catastrophes: Intersections of Art and Science in the Dodge Collection is supported by the Avenir Foundation Endowment Fund. The accompanying brochure is made possible by Nancy Ruyle Dodge.

ABOUT THE DODGE FELLOWS:

The Zimmerli offers Dodge Graduate Assistantships to doctoral candidates in the Department of Art History who are committed to research on 'unofficial' art of the former Soviet Union. The program was established in 2002 with the generous support of the Avenir Foundation Endowment Fund in support of the collection gifted by Norton and Nancy Dodge

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The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum houses more than 60,000 works of art, ranging from ancient to contemporary art. The permanent collection features particularly rich holdings in 19th-century French art; Russian art from icons to the avant-garde; Soviet nonconformist art from the Dodge Collection; and American art with notable holdings of prints. In addition, small groups of antiquities, old master paintings, as well as art inspired by Japan and original illustrations for children's books, provide representative examples of the museum's research and teaching message at Rutgers. One of the largest and most distinguished university-based art museums in the nation, the Zimmerli is located on the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Established in 1766, Rutgers is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and a premier public research university.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission is free to the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers. The museum is located at 71 Hamilton Street (at George Street) on the College Avenue Campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick. The Zimmerli is a short walk from the NJ Transit train station in New Brunswick, midway between New York City and Philadelphia.

The Zimmerli Art Museum is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m., and the first Tuesday of each month (except August), 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and major holidays, as well as the month of August.

For more information, visit the museum's website www.zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu or call 848-932-7237.

SUPPORT

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