



Zimmerli Art Museum | Rutgers

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**Zimmerli Art Museum and Moscow Design Museum Present First Exhibition in U.S.
On Soviet Modern Design**

***Everyday Soviet* to Include Design Objects Alongside Works of Nonconformist Art
On View Through May 17, 2020**

Brunswick, NJ—February 20, 2020—The Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, in collaboration with the Moscow Design Museum, presents the first exhibition in the United States to explore Soviet industrial design from the postwar era. While creative innovation in design flourished in the Soviet Union in the years between 1959 and 1989, limitations in both fabrication processes and consumer circulation resulted in production shortages and left many design ideas unmade. As an outcome, Soviet design from this period is globally largely unknown. *Everyday Soviet*, on view through May 17, 2020, explores the material culture of this period through more than 300 objects loaned from the Moscow Design Museum, including household objects, fashion, posters, and sketches of products and interiors. These objects are further juxtaposed with a selection of approximately 85 works of nonconformist or underground art of the time from the Zimmerli's Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union, offering a holistic examination of the ways in which design and art developed concurrently.



Samovar "Sputnik", 1960s, Suksune factory.

Everyday Soviet: Soviet Industrial Design and Nonconformist Art (1959-1989) is co-organized by Julia Tulovsky, Ph.D., Curator of Russian and Soviet Nonconformist Art at the Zimmerli Art Museum and Alexandra Sankova, Director of the Moscow Design Museum. The exhibition marks the first time that works from the Moscow Design Museum will travel to the U.S. In conjunction with the exhibition, a book edited by Tulovsky and Sankova will be published by Rutgers Press in 2021. With some 250 illustrations, it will include essays by Tulovsky and Sankova, as well as by Aleksandr Lavrentiev, Professor and Vice-President for Academic Affairs of Moscow State Stroganov Academy of Design and Applied Arts, and Susan Reid, Professor of Cultural and Visual History School of Social Sciences and Humanities Loughborough University.

In the mid- to late-1950s, as the political climate softened and Soviet audiences were exposed to cultural movements from around the world through the First International Festival of Youth in Moscow (1957), new creative possibilities opened for both Soviet artists and designers. Additionally, two exhibitions on American

Abstract Expressionism and American kitchen and household design, shown under the auspices of the American National Exhibition in Moscow Sokolniki Park that followed the Festival in 1959, left lasting impressions, inspiring in turn nonconformist art movements and product innovations. Ideas for new products and interior environments were developed in collaboration with manufacturers across the country as well as by individuals working independently. Projects were showcased in exhibitions, capturing the futuristic aesthetics and the range of artistic visions for building a modern socialist society. While the desire to realize new ideas was vast—and often supported by the State—designers faced many structural hurdles. Factories, in particular, resisted changes to their production lines, opting instead to replicate the same items for decades. At the same time, because the planned economy of the Soviet Union did not support a more acquisitive, market-based consumerism, innovation was met with bureaucratic obstacles.

Since the public was not encouraged to replace old models with new ones, and because items generally were often in very short supply, consumers acquired limited goods and maintained them for years. As a result of this unique set of circumstances, design objects were imbued with significant cultural importance. Familiar objects, some unchanged for generations, penetrated people’s consciousness and inspired both personal and communal attachment and emotion. *Everyday Soviet* features a selection of these preserved objects, including electronics, kitchenware, furniture, and wall decor, capturing a very particular moment in Soviet history. The exhibition also includes sketches and posters that highlight some of the idealized visions that were not realized in the era, including views of the office and home interiors of the future.



Erik Bulatov, *Krasikov Street*, 1977. Oil on canvas.

These objects, which had a profound emotional impact on the public, also deeply influenced the development of art in this period. Nonconformist artists drew on and leveraged these emotional connections as they reflected on, questioned, and critiqued the state of Soviet society. Some artists positioned everyday objects within their wider conceptual explorations, establishing poignant cultural touchstones. For example, in his mixed-media work, *Untitled* (1975), Evgenii Rukhin enclosed an image of a religious icon inside an *avoska*, a reusable mass-produced net bag made of string, that is intimately associated with the hardships of Soviet life. Other artists looked more broadly at the

environments and everyday materials that comprised the Soviet experience of the time. Mikhail Roginsky, now one of the most renowned artists of the nonconformist movement, created paintings that spoke to the inherently charged nature of physical spaces and objects in the Soviet context. Drawing on the Zimmerli's extensive collection of nonconformist art, *Everyday Soviet* further highlights this dynamic interplay between functional design and Soviet avant-garde artistic movements.

“While some of the most prolific nonconformist artists have gained recognition, Soviet designers, especially of this period, have remained largely in obscurity, and their connection to artistic movements under-studied. With this exhibition, we are reviving this aspect of modern design, and revealing little-known connections between functional objects and cultural experience as well as the confluence of inspirations between Soviet art and design at this time,” said Tulovsky. “I am thankful for the collaboration of my co-curator Alexandra Sankova and the Moscow Design Museum, which has allowed this under-recognized history to be shared with new audiences and has added another dynamic lens through which to examine the Zimmerli’s collection of nonconformist art.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

On April 7, The Zimmerli Art museum will show the film *A History of Russian Design*, which was produced by the Moscow Design Museum. The film recounts the history of Russian and Soviet design from the 1920s to the present. The program will begin at 6:00 PM and is free to the public.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

The exhibition is made possible by the Avenir Foundation Endowment Fund. Additional support is provided by the Dodge Charitable Trust—Nancy Ruyle Dodge, Trustee, and by donors to the Zimmerli’s Major Exhibition Fund: James and Kathrin Bergin, Alvin and Joyce Glasgold, Michael McCulley, Sundaa and Randy Jones, Hemanshu and Heena Pandya, and the Voorhees Family Endowment.

ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM|RUTGERS

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.

MOSCOW DESIGN MUSEUM

The Museum was founded in 2012 and it is the first museum in Russia specifically dedicated to design. The museum collects, studies, and preserves Russia’s design heritage, introduces the viewers to the best examples and main schools of international design, and presents Russian design abroad.

The museum collection includes examples of domestic and foreign design from the avant-garde to the present day. These are the best works of constructivist artists, the most significant developments of Soviet designers and design associations, the works of contemporary Russian designers and cult objects of international design.

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