



Zimmerli Art Museum | Rutgers

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EXHIBITION PROVIDES NEW INSIGHT INTO THE GLOBALIZATION OF CONCEPTUAL ART, THROUGH WORK OF NEARLY 50 MOSCOW-BASED ARTISTS

***THINKING PICTURES* FEATURES APPROXIMATELY 80 WORKS, INCLUDING MAJOR INSTALLATIONS, WORKS ON PAPER, PAINTINGS, MIXED-MEDIA WORKS, AND DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS, MANY OF WHICH OF HAVE NOT BEEN PUBLICLY DISPLAYED IN THE U.S.**

New Brunswick, NJ—February 23, 2016—Through the work of nearly 50 artists, the upcoming exhibition *Thinking Pictures* will introduce audiences to the development and evolution of conceptual art in Moscow—challenging notions of the movement as solely a reflection of its Western namesake. Opening at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers in September 2016, the exhibition will explore the unique social, political, and artistic conditions that inspired and distinguished the work of Muscovite artists from peers working in the U.S. and Western Europe. Under constant threat of censorship, and frequently engaging in critical opposition to Soviet-mandated Socialist Realism, these artists created works that defied classification, interweaving painting and installation, parody and performance, and images and texts in new types of conceptual art practices.

Drawn from the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection at the Zimmerli, the exhibition features masterworks by such renowned artists as **Ilya Kabakov, Komar and Melamid, Eric Bulatov, Andrei Monastyrsky, and Irina Nakhova**, and introduces important works by under-represented artists, including **Yuri Albert, Nikita Alekseev, Ivan Chuikov, Elena Elagina, Igor Makarevich, Viktor Pivovarov, Oleg Vassiliev, and Vadim Zakharov**. Many of the works in the exhibition have never been publicly shown in the U.S., and many others only in limited engagement. Together, these works, created in a wide-range of media, underscore the diversity and richness of the underground artistic currents that comprise ‘Moscow Conceptualism’, and provide a deeper and more global understanding of conceptual art, and its relationship to world events and circumstances.

“The artists featured in the exhibition greatly expanded and enhanced the scope of visual practices—blurring the lines between media. In their work, paintings entered installations, albums joined text and image; modes of disseminating propaganda were subverted, but often implicitly addressed. Yet, their work is largely missing from the global dialogue on the development of conceptual art in the 1970s and 1980s,” said Dr. Jane Sharp, Curator for *Thinking Pictures*. “This is in part due to their very real experiences living through the last decades of the Soviet regime, which made their work seem ‘other,’ and their own identification as ‘outsider’—not only within the Soviet Union but within broader international

art circles as well. With *Thinking Pictures*, we are engaging contemporary audiences in the cultural and historic contexts that bore this work, as well as its impact on both conceptual and post-conceptual art and artists.”

The narrative arc of the exhibition follows a series of major installations, starting with Komar and Melamid’s 1973 work, *Apelles Ziablov (The World’s First Abstract Art, Painting from the 18th Century by the Serf Artist, Apelles Ziablov)*. The installation features a series of paintings and archival materials by and pertaining to the semi-fictional character, Apelles Ziablov, who is cast as the newly discovered creator of abstract art. The installation is a parody of and commentary on art history, and the ways in which authorship and authenticity can be manipulated through history by voices of official and unofficial authority.

Other significant installations include: Ilya Kabakov’s *The Great Axis* (1983), which has never been shown in the U.S., and visualizes, through painting and text, the artist’s preoccupation with the co-creative role between artist and viewer, and the idea of modernism as a failed utopian project; a recreation of one of Irina Nakhova’s *Rooms* (1983-1985), in which the artist, in successive stages, covered her studio with blank paper and patterns to disorient viewers as they navigated the changing environment; and Viktor Pivovarov’s *Projects for a Lonely Man* (1975), which features six panels that chart an ordinary man’s apartment layout, possessions, daily regimen, and dreams. It also includes Pivovarov’s painted supplemental work to the *Projects*: fictional homages to six great Western masters, from Van Eyck to Morandi and Malevich.

These installations are augmented by paintings, sculpture, photographs, works on paper, and mixed-media works, which together follow the trajectory of two successive generations of artists who employed materials not only to enhance the scope of creative opportunity, but to comment on the experiences of their daily lives. The exhibition concludes with documentation pertaining to performance art, in particular to the staged actions of Collective Actions, which was led by Andrei Monastyrsky and included a changing roster of artists as participants and occasional co-authors. Additionally, archival material, drawn from Moscow Archive of New Art (MANI), will provide further historical detail on the varied, underground practices of artists within ‘Moscow Conceptualism.’

“In many ways, this exhibition represents the heart and core of the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection, the primary goal of which is to engage a wider audience with art movements that were previously only shared in very limited, inner circles. *Thinking Pictures* is an opportunity to provide a broad view of the depth and scope of art created by those working in the Soviet underground during the 1970s and ‘80s,” said Marti Mayo, the Zimmerli’s interim director. “Today, the ‘otherness’ of this work feels contemporary and immediate, as our global society continues to tackle issues of government censorship, artistic freedom, and extreme nationalism.”

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND CREDITS

Thinking Pictures: Moscow Conceptual Art in the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection is organized by Dr. Jane Sharp, Associate Professor, Department of Art History, and Research Curator, Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union.

The exhibition and accompanying publication are made possible by the Avenir Foundation Endowment Fund, The Thickman Family Foundation, and by donors to the Zimmerli's Major Exhibition Fund: James and Kathrin Bergin; Alvin and Joyce Glasgold; Charles and Caryl Sills; Voorhees Family Endowment; and the Jerome A. Yavitz Charitable Foundation, Inc.-Stephen Cypen, President.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a book, edited by exhibition curator Jane Sharp, that features a collection of essays exploring Moscow Conceptualism's historical significance within the globalized context of conceptual art practices, past and present. The book includes new scholarship, presented by major and emerging voices in the field, including Adrian Barr, Sabine Haensgen, Matthew Jackson, Yelena Kalinsky, Terry Smith, and Jane Sharp. The book will additionally contain a checklist and illustrations of featured works, as well as an extensive bibliography on Moscow Conceptualism.

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.

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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