

Always in the Vanguard

..... *Women Artists In and Out of Russia in the 21st Century*



We express our deepest gratitude
and thanks to:

Dame Barbara Stocking CBE DBE
President of Murray Edwards College

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Fellow in Slavonic Studies
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Edward Lucie-Smith and
Sergei Reviakin, curators.

Front Cover: **Anna Myagkikh, Untitled, Mixed Media, 150 x 145 cm**

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*Women Artists In and
Out of Russia in the
21st Century*

3rd-30th November 2013

New Hall Art Collection
Murray Edwards College,
Cambridge UK

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The Stronger Sex

Contemporary Russian women artists

We live at a time when there is great confusion, certainly here in the West, about contemporary art in Russia. It is now nearly a quarter of a century since the Soviet Union fell. No convincing narrative has emerged concerning the development of Russian art during that period. Western critics have gone on parroting the names of the artists who made international reputations for themselves during the last decade or so of Soviet rule – the so-called ‘perestroika’ epoch. They seem to know little or nothing about what has happened to the visual arts in Russia since the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on 26 December 1991.

This has not been entirely their own fault. The collapse of the USSR coincided with the heyday of Post Modernism – the art movement that marked the end of the long succession of Modernist art movements that had evolved, one after another, sometimes with one overlapping and competing with another, since the appearance of the Fauves in the first decade of the 20th century. Since 1991, the narrative of supposed progress in the visual arts has become more and more confused. We are now perhaps entitled to speak not only of Post Modernism, but also of Post Post Modernism – a kind of double negative in the continuing artistic story.

Yet some developments during this quarter of a century have surely been of great significance. Most significant of all has been the

way in which ‘contemporary art’, originally a purely Western concept, has become universal. This process began quite early in the 20th century, with the rise of Latin American art, often very consciously rooted in Pre-Columbian cultures. It accelerated greatly in the 1980s, most conspicuously in China, following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1968, followed by the death of Mao Zedong in 1976; and in Iran, after the Religious Revolution of 1979. It is now a ‘given’ – contemporary art is also world art. The disconcerting thing is, however, that it is currently much easier to create a narrative about what happened in China – three generations at least of contemporary artists – and also about what happened in Iran, than is to find significant threads that may help to lead one through the bewildering maze of today’s Russian visual culture.

This exhibition is a very modest attempt to find at least one path through the labyrinth. It begins from the established fact that women were always important in the development of the early 20th century avant-garde in Russia. I remember once having the first – specimen - chapter of a book I was writing about the history of art in the 20th century returned to me by the American publishing house to which it had been submitted with the plaintive cry ‘Must have more women!’ The chapter was about the Fauves. I had to explain, as gently as I could, that this wasn’t practically possible, as there were no female artists connected with the movement.

I would not have encountered this difficulty had I been writing about the early 20th century avant-garde in Russia. The major names are well known: Aleksandra Exter, Natalia Goncharova, Lyubov Popova, Zenaida Serebriakova, Nadezdha Udaltsova. It would be impossible to write about this wonderful epoch in Russian art without discussing them.

There are a certainly number of significant similarities between this galaxy of early talent and the artists whose work is exhibited here. Some are resident in Russia – in Moscow and St Petersburg, which continue to be the twin focal points of Russian cultural life. Others have chosen to live abroad – in London and in Amsterdam. In their cases, however, the displacement has been a matter of choice, not in any way enforced by political pressure. In the 19th century, during the great flowering of art, literature and music that suddenly brought Russia to the fascinated attention of Western intellectuals, Russian culture was instinctively cosmopolitan. Yet it retained a certain exoticism as well. It was the magical combination of the cosmopolitan and the exotic that created the sensational success enjoyed by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, when the company made its debut in Paris in 1909. Ballet was, until then, the epitome of a hide bound traditional art form. Russian genius seized upon it and turned it into something else.

The artists shown here are very different from one another. Some are well known, and are fully established internationally. Others are young enough not to have had any direct experience of the old Soviet art system. It is very difficult to make any direct stylistic comparisons. If I looking for things held in common, one of the things that strikes me is a common interest in the visually transformative – the fluidity of appearances. Also, very often, in interest in some kind of narrative, even in abstract work. One can perhaps go just a little further, and say an interest in visual magic.

Edward Lucie-Smith

The Way to Look

Living in England since 1991 I have witnessed albeit from afar an almost unbelievable transformation of Russia, the country of my birth. The kaleidoscope of duly elected parliaments, prime ministers and presidents, sweeping economic and social changes, rises and falls of tycoons were truly comparable to the excitement of the discovery of the New World.

The difference from the discovery of a new continent was that this brave new world did not emerge from scratch and still has vestiges of the old order. Some walks of life have more of it some – much less. The situation in the art world is the most peculiar.

We saw the birth of a modern art market with new faces and galleries following international trends and national fashions existing in parallel with the long established institutions dominated by the old guard exposing the past values. Curiously enough this retention of old traditions helped us to preserve artistic techniques and skills long forgotten in many other parts of the Northern hemisphere.

Notwithstanding the influence of the past and from abroad the Russian art world has clearly managed to develop its own language, but it is still one practically unknown outside of Russia.

As is rightly pointed out by Edward Lucie-Smith in his short but as ever concise essay, this is the result of post-post-modern art world problems. Another reason in my opinion is the lack of a general consensus on the state of Russian art within Russia's own art establishment, due to old allegiances and vested interests that have resulted in erratic and sometimes contradictory attempts to show current Russian art outside of Russia.

The organisers have tried to bring as little as possible of their own agenda into the selection process but instead have wished to show various artists unified by the origin of their birth and artistic skills. Hopefully they have succeeded in creating a unique visual experience, not by setting up a trend but by simply providing one particular way of bringing Russian contemporary art to the British viewer.

Sergei Reviakin

Marina Alexeeva

Born 1959

Education

Since 1999 – edits the artistic magazine
'The village life'.

Artistic groups 'Village of Artists' and
'Life, I love You'.

Mukhina Academy of Arts & Industry, St Petersburg, Russia



Selected Exhibitions

- 2013 Small retrospective», State Gallery Solyanka VPA, Moscow, Russia
- 2013 1st Biennial of the South, Panama city, Panama
- 2012 10th Multivision Festival, Erarta Museum, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2012 ARCO Madrid, Marina Gisich Gallery, Madrid, Spain
- 2011 4th Moscow biennale, Moscow, Russia
- 2011 Russian cosmos, Turin, Italy
- 2010 – 2011 New Year Party, Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, Russia
- 2009 Women in Contemporary Art, New Exhibition Hall, The State Museum of Urban Sculpture, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2006 RUSSIA FLY BY, HANGART-7, Salzburg, Austria
- 2004 Wild and Domestic, The State Russian Museum, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2002 ESTESTVO (The Nature), Lonnstrom Art Museum, RAUMA, Finland
- 2000 Flotsam.Jetsam (Suitcases), Kulturforum Burgcloster, Lubeck, Germany



Anna Karenina, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, triptych, part 2

Dasha Fursey

Born 1983

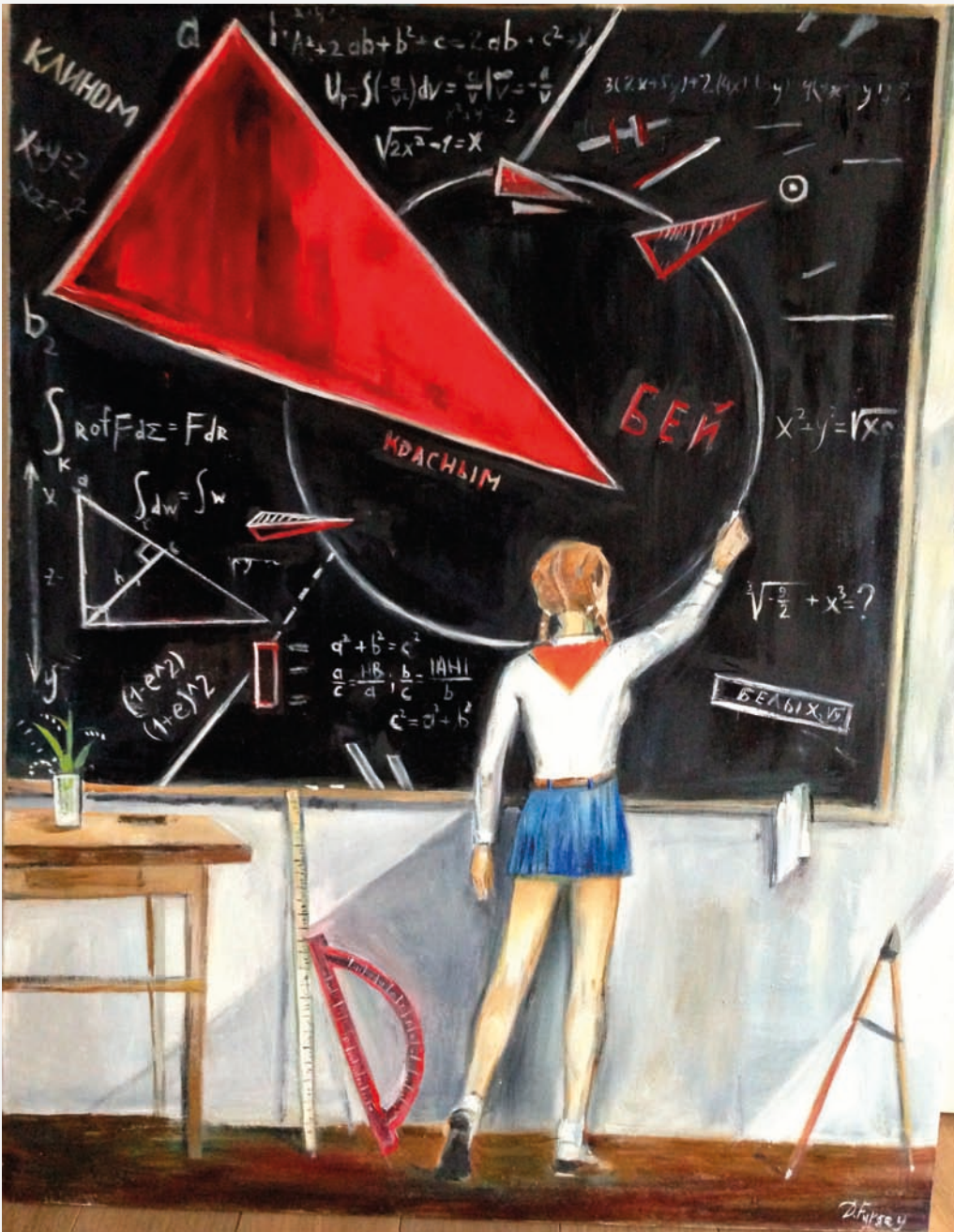
Education

Timur Novikov's New Academy of Fine Art, St Petersburg, Russia
Academy of Fine Arts (Repin State Institute of Arts), St Petersburg, Russia

Selected Exhibitions

- 2013 *Gaiety Is The Most Outstanding Feature of The Soviet Union*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2012 *Decoration of the beautiful. Elitism and kitsch in contemporary art*, Tretyakov gallery, Moscow, Russia
- 2011 *Portrait of Frederic Beigbeder*, Art-Paris, Paris, France
- 2010 *Carpe Diem*, Art-Moscow, Moscow, Russia
- 2009 *Agent Valkiry*, Gala Exhibition, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2009 *53rd VENICE BIENNALE, _Collateral Project UNCONDITIONAL LOVE*
- 2008 *Art Basel Miami Beach, Performance Don't Miss Contemporary Art*, USA





Revolution Formula, oil on canvas, 125 x 105 cm

Olga Kroytor

Born 1986

Education

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia
 Graphic Art Department, Moscow Pedagogical State University, Russia
 Free Workshops, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia

Selected Exhibitions

2011 Dissociative Identity Disorder, Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia
 2011 Employment History, Proekt Fabrika, Moscow, Russia
 2010 Art Diplom 2010, Lyceum of the Russian Academy of Arts, Moscow, Russia
 2010 Do Not Disturb, Biennale of Young Art, Moscow, Russia
 2009 Can't take it anymore, VCSI, Voronezh, Russia
 2009, Let me think, 3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Russia

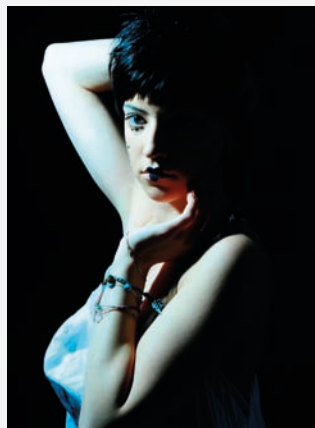


Long Way, 2011, collage on cardboard, magazines, 85 x 109.5 cm

Anna Myagkikh

Born 1991

The main idea I would love to get through to people is that in our computer age feelings and emotions often get suppressed and neglected, which, I think, should change in order for the humanity to grow as an intellect.



Education

Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, UK

Selected Exhibitions

- 2013 Contemporary Art Belem, September 2013, Lisbon, Portugal
- 2013 Art, Music and Politics Must Meet, March 2013, London, UK
- 2013 Art in Mind, February 2013, The Annexe, London, UK
- 2012 Barcelona Showcase, July 2012 Barcelona, Spain
- 2011 Barcelona Showcase, December 2011 Barcelona, Spain

Front cover: Untitled, mixed media, 150 x 145 cm

Nika Neelova

Born 1987

Education

MA Fine Art, Sculpture, Slade School of Fine Arts, University College London, UK
 BA Fine Arts, Sculpture, Royal Academy of Fine Art, The Hague, The Netherlands
 Stage Design Course, Professor: Oleg Sheynts, LENKOM Theatre, Moscow

Selected Exhibitions

- 2013 Gaiety Is The Most Outstanding Feature of The Soviet Union,
Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2013 Russian London, PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art, Russia
- 2012 Royal British Society of Sculptors Bursary Award Exhibition, London, UK
- 2011 3 Worlds in 1, London International, Group Show, Klaipeda, Lithuania
- 2010 Saatchi Gallery and Channel 4's New Sensations, London, UK

Awards & Prizes

- 2013 Sculpture Shock Award
- 2012 Royal British Society of Sculptors Bursary Award
- 2010 The Saatchi Gallery and Channel 4 New Sensations Prize



Histories of Deception, 2012, Ash latex antique wooden spindles wood, dimensions variable

Olga Tobreluts

Born 1970

Education

Computer Graphics, Institute Art+Com, Berlin,
Germany Architectural College, Leningrad, Russia



Selected Exhibitions

- 2012 The New Mythology, Church of Santa Maria dei Battuti, San Vito al Tagliamento, Italy
- 2012 Focus on Russia I, FotoFest 2012 Biennale, Houston, TX, USA
- 2008 TOBRELUTS, Moscow, Russia
- 2008 Tarquin and Lucretia, Zelinsky Museum, Kaunas, Lithuania
- 2007 Adventures of Black Square, State Russian Museum, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2007 Archive of Perestrojka Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma, Finland
- 2006 Sense of Life – Sense of Art. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg, Russia
- 2005 Europalia Russia, Belgium
- 2004 Art and Geography, National Museum of Art, Oslo, Norway
- 2004 New Akademy, Museum of Contemporary Art, Bornholm, Denmark
- 2003 Neue Ansätze, Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2002 Russian Symbolism, Ludvig Museum, Koblenz, Germany
- 2000 Heaven, Tate Gallery Liverpool, England
- 1998 National Gallery Warsaw, Poland

Awards & Prizes

- 1995 First Prize, Woe from Wit, The Third Reality Festival, St Petersburg, Russia
- 1998 International Award, The Manifest of Neoakademism, Karlsruhe, Germany

Back cover: Classic Walpurgis Night 1, print on canvas, vanish, 150 x 151 cm

Masha Trebukova

Born 1962

Education

Lithographic work, Galerie Piet Clement , Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2000

Graphic work, Frans Masereel Centrum, Belgium, 1993

Lithographic work, Royal Academy, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1990

Academy of Fine Arts (Surikov State Institute of Arts), Moscow, Russia

Selected Exhibitions

2013 Terug Naar Het Begin Festival, Church of Heveskes, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2012 Artraverse, Bilthoven, The Netherlands

2011 Passage, Borzo Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2009 TEFAF, Maastricht, The Netherlands

2006 KunstRai, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2005 SNS Bank, Utrecht, The Netherlands

2004 Haagse kunstkring, Den Haag, The Netherlands



Window, oil on canvas, 205 x 210 cm

Marina Usacheva

Born 1973

I often get my inspiration from my daughter, Anna. My Foxes series is about animals which live their lives like humans. The foxes are normal and happy people.

They move their houses, celebrates their brothers and sisters birthdays, travel to different countries together. Their nights spent with the favourite toys are filled with magical dreams. They wake up to spend the day surrounded by the warmth and comfort of the hearth. This colourful and happy world is the real family world. Come in and enjoy it...

Education

Moscow College of Arts (in memory of 1905), Moscow, Russia

Selected Exhibitions

2013 International Graphic Arts Fair, Central House of Artists, Moscow, Russia

2013 Family Circle, Gallery Palitra-S, Moscow, Russia

2009 Pushkin House, London, United Kingdom

2009 Gallery DVA, Moscow, Russia



Winter in Tuscany, Acrylic on paper, 46 x 61 cm

Exhibition Works

1. Alexeeva, Marina Anna Karenina, Triptych, Oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm each panel (p.7)
2. Fursey, Dasha Revolution Formula, Oil on canvas, 125 x 105 cm (p.9)
3. Fursey, Dasha Death-Cup and a Pioneer, Oil on canvas, 125 x 105 cm
4. Fursey, Dasha Daphne, Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm
5. Kroytor Olga Lond Way, Collage on cardboard, 85 x 109.5 cm (p.10)
6. Kroytor Olga Awakening, Collage on cardboard, 110 x 64.5 cm
7. Myagkikh, Anya Untitled, Mixed Media, 150 x 145 cm (Front Cover)
8. Myagkikh, Anya Complicated Biology, Gouache acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 cm
9. Myagkikh, Anya Biology, Acrylic, marker, crystals on canvas, 21 x 29.7 cm
10. Neelova, Nika Histories of Deception, Ash latex antique wooden spindles, wood, variable (p.12)
11. Tobreluts, Olga Road to Heaven, Oil on canvas, 142 x 240 cm
12. Tobreluts, Olga Classic Walpurgis Night 1, Print on canvas, vanish, 150 x 151 cm (Back Cover)
13. Trebukova Masha, Window, Oil on canvas, 205 x 210 cm (p.14)
14. Trebukova Masha, Construct Green, one of a pair, Oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm
15. Trebukova Masha, Construct Yellow, one of a pair, Oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm
16. Usacheva Marina, Forest Life, Acrylic on paper, 46 x 61 cm
17. Usacheva Marina, Winter, Acrylic on paper, 46 x 61 cm
18. Usacheva Marina, Winter in Tuscany, Acrylic on paper, 46 x 61 cm (p.15)

Special thanks to London Collectors Club and
www.vernon-lushington-gallery.com



New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College

The New Hall Art Collection, consisting solely of work by women artists, has evolved through gifts and loans from artists and alumnae since 1986. It is a growing body of approximately 400 works and is the most significant collection of its kind in Europe. The works are displayed in the Grade II* surroundings of Murray Edwards College (Chamberlain, Powell & Bon, 1960). The Collection is of international, national and regional interest as a base for the study of works by women, enabling viewers to trace movements in

art in a variety of media over more than 50 years, a period during which women have achieved unprecedented prominence in the visual arts. Prestigious artists such as Maggi Hambling CBE, Dame Paula Rego and Judy Chicago have donated works.



Murray Edwards College's role as a women's college and its sympathetic setting for contemporary art were determining factors in the establishment of a collection of work by women, a decision not based on assumptions that art is a gendered activity. The calibre of works received, the support of the artists, public and media interest and rich cultural content - in short, unexpected success and dynamism despite very limited resources - prompted recognition of its growing heritage and cultural significance in its own right.

Murray Edwards College
New Hall
University of Cambridge
Cambridge
CB3 0DF

Tel: 01223 763110
www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk

Back Cover: **Olga Tobreluts Classic Walpurgis Night 1, Print on canvas, vanish, 150 x 151 cm**



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