

MOSCOW DIARIES

22 June — 20 August 2017

MMOMA, 10 Gogolevsky Blvd,
bldg. 2, Moscow

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V-A-C Foundation presents *Moscow Diaries* by the Center for Experimental Museology (CEM) and the Museum of American Art in Berlin (MoAA). The exhibition is part of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art's (MMOMA) programme *Carte Blanche*, which invites art institutions to implement their own curatorial initiatives at MMOMA sites.

MoAA and CEM examine innovative approaches to art theory and practice, exploring issues around authenticity and the role of the museum in defining a work of art. The exhibition takes as its starting point two trips made to Moscow in the late 1920s - the first, by influential philosopher Walter Benjamin in 1926, and the second by Alfred Barr, the founding director of MoMA New York, in 1928.

On his visit to Moscow Alfred Barr had a chance to see the works of Kazimir Malevich that would later play an important role in his story of 20th century modern art. In 1927 Malevich was given a solo exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery curated by Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov. Fedorov-Davydov was a young specialist who believed in incorporating Marxist sociology into the museum displays and developed the Complex Marxist Exposition. Walter Benjamin travelled to Moscow with a desire to see first-hand the promise offered by the proletarian state. During the trip he encountered writer Sergei Tretyakov who it is believed became a key source for Benjamin's famous essay *The Author as Producer*.

Barr and Benjamin live on through the Museum of American Art, Berlin, while the work of Fedorov-Davydov and Tretyakov has been instrumental in contextualising the Center for Experimental Museology's research and activities.

Moscow Diaries, in part, reconsiders fragments of the 1936 MoMA exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* curated by Barr and looks at the moment Malevich became an integral part of the story of modernism worldwide. A second part imagines a meeting between Barr and Benjamin at the home of Sergei Tretyakov, mapping outcomes from their encounter and reflecting on the experimental displays of Fedorov-Davydov. The exhibition examines the background for, and the development of, ongoing debates around aesthetics in the 20th and 21st century based on the fictional and historical intersections of people, events and ideas.

A Russian translation of the book *Walter Benjamin*. New works will be published to coincide with the exhibition.

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Founded in 2004, The Museum of American Art in Berlin (MoAA) is an institution engaged in exhibition and educational activities. MoAA's projects include reconstructions of the Armory Show, Gertrude Stein's salon on the Rue de Fleurus in Paris and El Lissitzky's Abstract Cabinet. The museum's collection includes copies of works by Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and other masterpieces of 20th century American art.

Produced by V-A-C Foundation, The Center for Experimental Museology (CEM) is a new platform set up in 2016 to study the museum as an institutional unit and medium. It focuses on the innovations of Soviet avant-garde museology, the history of experimental exhibition design and the reflections of Russian cosmists on the possible contribution of the museum towards the evolutionary development of the human species and the universe.

In 2017, CEM organised an international open call for researchers. Aimed at creating a thematic professional community, it will bring together specialists working with sociology, psychology, design, museum architecture, archival materials and field research, and look to reinterpret the museum with a historical or futuristic perspective.

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Launched in spring 2017, Carte Blanche is a new experimental programme by MMOMA, inviting art institutions to implement their own curatorial initiatives at MMOMA sites. With Carte Blanche, MMOMA aims to develop creative dialogue and synergy, strengthening cultural ties between state museums and other institutions. Guest institutions will select the theme, artists and format of the exhibitions they present, opening up new ideas to MMOMA's visitors and giving invited institutions the opportunity to address issues such as the implementation of their projects in a different context and familiarity with new audiences. Building on the activities of the museum, it will further MMOMA's ambition to broaden current perceptions of contemporary art.

V-A-C Foundation is the first institution to participate and presents four projects which analyse the format of museums and exhibitions, looking at new possibilities as well as existing boundaries and limitations. It expands on V-A-C's long-term programme which explores the role of the contemporary museum.

Further exhibitions throughout the year in the Carte Blanche programme include Kirill Savchenkov: Office of Sensitive Activities\Applications Group, curated by Katerina Chuchalina and Maria Kramar (4 September –10 November 2017) and Vladislav Shapovalov: Image Diplomacy, curated by Anna Ilchenko (16 November 2017–25 January 2018).

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V-A-C Foundation is dedicated to the development and international presentation of Russian contemporary culture – across a multitude of forms and within the framework of a joint exhibition, educational, and publishing programme. V-A-C Foundation considers artistic production as central to its activity and essential for understanding contemporary cultural processes and stimulating new answers to its challenges. The opportunities V-A-C Foundation provides, to engage with and interrogate international cultural practices, aim to expand the platform for homegrown talent and encourage an independent artistic language. As a key speaker for contemporary Russia, V-A-C Foundation establishes new cross-cultural dialogues and incites an exchange of ideas through new collaborations and alternative settings for bringing different artistic practices together within a single vision for arts and culture.

V-A-C has recently launched Palazzo delle Zattere, a new exhibition and education space in Venice and work is underway to develop a major art site in Moscow, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, due to open in 2019.

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Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA) was founded in 1999. It is the first state Russian museum that concentrates exclusively on the art of the 20th and 21st centuries. Today the Museum, with its five venues in the historic centre of the city, plays a vital part in the Moscow art scene. The Museum's permanent collection represents major stages in the formation and development of the avant-garde, especially in Russia. One of the Museum's priorities is to promote young and emerging artists, bringing them into the contemporary artistic process and to create inclusive projects.

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CARTE BLANCHE