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2 Exhibitions Celebrate 90 Years of Vkhutemas

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Typical students at art and architectural school Vkhutemas in the 1920s.

Two exhibits now on allow visitors a glimpse of the legendary art and architecture school Vkhutemas, where some of the most famous of the avant-garde movement — the likes of Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko — taught, studied and worked.

Vkhutemas, a mouthy contraction of the Higher Art and Technical Studios, was created 90 years ago by combining two art schools: the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and the Stroganov School of Applied Arts.

"Vkhutemas, The Idea of Material" at the Shchusev Museum of Architecture shows 130 works by students and teachers at Vkhutemas, including Rodchenko and architect Nikolai Ladovsky.

"In our exhibit, we want to show the development of Vkhutemas chronologically. The main idea of the exhibit is the development of the school," curator Anna Ilichiyeva said. "The

school of Vkhutemas is alive today."

The Vkhutemas gallery, based on Ulitsa Rozhdestvenka where part of the original Vkhutemas was based, is showing an exhibit of designs, drawings and photos from the school. Part of the aim of the exhibit is to show how students worked and lived and to capture the spirit of the time.

Alexander Kudryavtsev, head of the Moscow Architecture Institute, the direct descendent of Vkhutemas, described the school as the "boiler where the new architecture was smelted."

One of the most renowned designs to come out of the school was constructivist architect Ivan Leonidov's diploma project to build a Lenin Institute and Library, which received international recognition.

Lenin once visited the school in 1921 and was shown the new art that the students and teachers were creating. It was not his cup of tea and he supposedly said, "Well, tastes differ" and "I am an old man."

His successor was not so amenable, and the demise of the school and avant-garde art and architecture was inevitable as the Soviet state decreed a move toward social realism and empire-style architecture. The school was disbanded in 1930.

The school, which many compare to Bauhaus, the German art school that combined crafts and fine art from 1919 to 1933, has always been less well known, and the exhibits are an attempt to raise awareness.

"Vkhutemas, The Idea of Material" runs till Jan. 18 at Shchusev Museum of Architecture. 5 Vozdvizhenka. Metro Biblioteka Imeni Lenina, Arbatskaya, Alexandrovsky Sad. www.muar.ru

"Vkhutemas, A Living Legacy" runs till Jan. 28. 11 Kuznetsky Most. Metro Kuznetsky Most. Tel. 624-2924, www.vkhutemas.ru.

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