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Presentation of Unique W.B Yeats Edition Kicks Off Irish Week in Moscow

By Ruth Moore

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Artist and translator Valery Korchagin hand-printed only 20 editions of this volume of Yeats' poetry.

On Tuesday the State Literature Museum will host the presentation of a bespoke W.B Yeats book project to mark Irish Week.

The special edition, of which there are just 20 copies, is part of the Book Art movement. This offers artists a unique opportunity to give free rein to their creativity by creating an iconographic and exclusive work for current and future generations to enjoy.

Yeats is best known for his powerful symbolist poetry, which took inspiration from traditional Irish folklore. And although Russia would seem to be far away culturally and geographically, the intertextuality of Yeats' work is at the heart of this cultural collaboration.

Artist Valery Korchagin both illustrated and translated the poems within the book, making it an entirely original visual and linguistic work of literature. Korchagin is chief of the creative

atelier at the Studio of Book Design and Graphic within the National Center of Contemporary Art (NCCA).

The book itself includes ten of Yeats' poems about love, life and death. Among them are verses from "The Wind Among the Reeds," "The Green Helmet and Other Poems," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "The Winding Stair and Other Poems," and "New Poems."

Alexandra Orlova, an art historian who specializes in cultural cooperation through contemporary art, curated the project. "The idea of making this book came to me when I understood that Russian and Irish cultures have many links and correlations," she said in an email to The Moscow Times. "For Russians Yeats is an important figure. His personality is often associated with the Silver Age of Russian poetry. It is a common knowledge that W. B. Yeats was acquainted with the Russian poet Nikolai Gumilyov."

The Russian-Irish link is by no means a one-sided affair. Orlova previously worked on the exhibition "Unchanged But the Spirit" about the production of Chekhov's "Seagull." The 2014 joint collaboration between the Russian State Art Library and the James Hardiman Library in Galway demonstrated the strong interest of Irish people in Russian culture. "It became a discovery for me [during the exhibition] that Irish people enjoyed the "Seagull" so much they even made their own version of the play, but based on Irish reality," Orlova said. The new Yeats book edition is an opportunity for Russians this time to become further acquainted with Yeats and his poetry.

The book itself is made in the Livre d'Artiste tradition which was popular at the turn of the 20th century. The edition to be presented on Tuesday, March 15, has been hand-printed using the silk-screen technique. All elements of the book, including the case and the brochure that comes with the book, are handmade.

State Literature Museum. 17 Trubnikovsky Pereulok. Metro Smolenskaya, Barrikadnaya. museum.ru*. Tues. March 15 at 7 p.m.*

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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