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The Moscow Metro Celebrated in All Its Glory at Moscow Architecture Museum

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On May 15, 1935, the most beautiful metro in the world opened. And today, nearly 81 years to the day later, the Shchusev Architecture Museum is celebrating the magnificent Moscow underground system with an exhibition called "Moscow Metro. Subterranean Monument." Until mid-July, visitors can retrace the history of this symbol of Moscow in the exhibition halls of the Architecture Museum and be convinced once again that the metro system is not just public transportation, but a living museum beneath the earth.

The Moscow metro was one of the most grandiose construction projects of the Soviet era. Today it is considered a unique achievement of architecture and engineering that draws millions of tourists every year who want to discover the beauty of every single station.

Maria Kostyuk, one of the curators of the exhibition, told The Moscow Times that the project began last year on the metro's 80th anniversary, since the Architecture Museum holds a huge collection of drawings and blueprints of the first stations. "The exhibition was the result of our research," she said. And because it came out of research in their archives, "Moscow

Metro. Subterranean Monument" focuses on the first four stages of metro construction, between 1935 and 1954.

The drawings of such renowned architects as Ivan Fomin, Alexei Dushkin, Dmitry Chechulin, Alexei Shchusev and Vladimir Gelfreikh are exhibited alongside photo chronicles from the TASS news agency, photographs and documents from the Shchusev Museum and the Moscow Metro Museum, texts of curators, researchers, architects, and some other graphic and archival exhibits given by the heir of the architect I. G. Taranov. Here you can see sketches of the famous tulip-shaped columns, carved marble, elegant chandeliers and all the extraordinary ornamentation that make the Moscow metro an underground museum. Other sketches and blueprints on display remained only beautiful ideas that were ultimately not brought to life.

"With this exhibition our main goal was to show the architectural significance of the Moscow metro, the originality of the planning process and the unique way that the plans were implemented," Maria Kostyuk said. "We want to draw people's attention to unrealized plans and the many variations of architectural design, and we hope that Muscovites and visitors to the city will appreciate our exhibition and see its value."

Stations such as Sokolniki, Teatralnaya, Mayakovskaya, Kropotkinskaya, and Komsomolskaya are presented in their first paper incarnations, and you can compare the original ideas to what was eventually constructed. You can also see structures and details that were torn down and lost. Through the exhibition you move from the time when there were just 13 stations to today's 200, from a small system to the busiest underground outside Asia and fifth longest in the world, with over 300 kilometers of track.

The exhibition presents the Moscow metro as an architectural and artistic wonder, an important part of Russia's history and development. The curators hope that the exhibition will aid them in their efforts to include the main stations on the list of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.

Shchusev Architecture Museum
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