The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Tretyakov Gallery Takes High-Profile Exhibitions to Russia's Regions

'Genius of the Century,' a comprehensive look at early 20th-century Russian art, opens in Kazan

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May 08, 2017



Curator Olga Furman in front of the exhibit's main attraction: 'Swan Princess' by Mikhail Vrubel.
TRETYAKOV GALLERY

Since Zelfira Tregulova took the reins as director, Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery has focused on organizing blockbuster exhibitions that generate crowds. This trend was epitomized by the Valentin Serov exhibition in the fall/winter of 2015/16. The enormous lines to see the Serov exhibition became a cultural meme after the crowd broke the entrance door. Now, it seems, the Tretyakov is ready to share its know-how on large-scale exhibitions with Russia's regional museums.

"Genius of the Century," which opened last week in Kazan, is the result of a collaboration

between the Tretyakov Gallery and two leading cultural institutions of the Republic of Tatarstan: the Kazan Kremlin and the State Museum of Fine Arts. The exhibition is dedicated to one of the most productive periods for the Russian art: the two first decades of the 20th century.

The exhibition contains 53 paintings and eight sculptures from the State Tretyakov Gallery Collection and 20 paintings from the State Museum of Fine Arts of Tatarstan. Some works are frequently exhibited; some of them have been unduly forgotten. The equivalent of Serov's famous "Girl with Peaches" is a true gem of the Tretyakov Gallery's collection that rarely leaves its walls: "Swan Princess" by Mikhail Vrubel.

"It's a different standard for regional projects. Not a single Moscow museum has ever done something like this in the provinces. It's not just a touring exhibition, it's an example of cooperation between several organizations," said Zelfira Tregulova at the opening.

"Genius of the Century" shows paintings and sculptures by the most influential and significant artists of that time, including Mikhail Vrubel, Konstantin Korovin, Petr Konchalovsky, Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, Nikolai Rerikh and many others.

Olga Furman, the exhibition's curator, says that the project "has given an opportunity to unite artworks from the early 20th century that in 1920 were sent to the regions to help create local contemporary art museums. These 'family ties' between Russia's museums provide fertile ground for cooperation."

The "Genius of the Century" exhibition has allowed a series of artworks that have never before been shown alongside each other to be to "reunited." Among such works are "Provincial Fashionable Woman" (the State Museum of Fine Arts of Tatarstan) and " Provincial Fashionable Man" (Tretyakov Gallery) by Mikhail Larionov as well as "Shabbat" (the State Museum of Fine Arts of Tatarstan) and "Jewish Clique" (Tretyakov Gallery) by Natalia Goncharova.

The diversity and uniqueness of Russian art are the central concepts of the exhibit. Furman notes that the objective was to create "a comprehensive overview of figurative art from the 1900s to the 1920s." "The exhibition tells stories about artistic trends in Russia rather than stories about the individual artists," she adds.

Future exhibition projects are slated to take place both in Moscow and Kazan. A monographic exhibition of the art historian, philosopher and pioneer in multimedia art Bulat Galeyev (1940–2009) will be shown in Kazan, while "Legend of the Town of Sviyazhsk" will present the unique iconostases from churches of the island-town of Sviyazhsk near Kazan in Moscow.

"*Genius of the Century" runs at the Kazan Kremlin till September 27.*

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/05/08/tretyakov-gallery-takes-high-profile-exhibitions-to-russias-regions-a57925