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The Moscow Fall Art Season Sizzles

By Andrei Muchnik

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Detail of Pierre Huyghe's unnamed work from 2014, often referred to as "Human's mask." **Courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, London and Anna Lena Films, Paris**

After the cultural doldrums of summer in the Russian capital, the fall season is starting off with a bang. Here are our top picks for the best shows of contemporary art that you can catch early this fall in Moscow.

Moscow Biennale 2017

The biggest single event in the capital's art world this fall is the 7th Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art. Curated by Yuko Hasegawa, Artistic Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, the Biennale's main project is called "Clouds Forests" and will take place at the New Tretyakov Gallery. Clouds Forests juxtaposes the "Cloud Tribes" of artists raised in the post-Internet world and the "Forest Tribes" whose work is based on more traditional culture. Works of the Biennale participants — 52 artists from 25 countries — will be displayed in a dialogue with the New Tretyakov permanent collection. Olafur Eliasson, a Danish-Icelandic artist famous for large-scale installations; Pierre Huyghe,

French artist who works in a variety of media from films and sculptures to public interventions and living systems; and Björk, the Icelandic singer, actress and multimedia artist, will create new works for the Biennale. Russian participants include Anastasia Potyomkina, Ilya Fedotov-Fedorov and the creative association "Where Dogs Run." In addition to the main program, the parallel program promises to be particularly strong this year. Among the highlights: Constantin Brâncuși's retrospective at the Multimedia Art Museum, which will include sculptures and drawings as well as photographs and films from the Collection of the Centre Pompidou; and an exhibition of works by contemporary American artist Daniel Arsham, famous for his collaborations with the musician Pharrell Williams and choreographer Merce Cunningham. He will present nine large scale sculptures built specifically for the Karelia Pavillion at VDNKh. Events begin on September 19.

Various venues. For more information, see the Biennale site.

Treasures of Imperial Japan in the Kremlin

This fall two exhibition halls of the Moscow Kremlin Museums — the Assumption Belfry and Patriarch's Palace — showcase Japanese decorative art from the 19th to early 20th century. About ninety items on display all belong to the private collection of a world-famous British scientist, collector and philanthropist Nasser David Khalili. About a third of the items are various types of Japanese kimonos from the Edo and Meiji periods, including magnificent ceremonial examples. Masterpieces of silk embroidery, porcelain, metal and enamel artworks are also on view. Many of the items were crafted by the official purveyors to the Japanese Imperial court. Until Oct. 1.

Moscow Kremlin. Fri-Wed, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

October Revolution: Chinese Version

The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts will present the first solo exhibition in Russia of a leading international contemporary artist of Chinese origin, Cai Guo-Qiang. The exhibition is called "October" and is devoted to the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. All the works will be created especially for the Moscow exhibition, including a large-scale installation in front of the museum entitled "Autumn" — a heap of prams donated by Moscow residents with birch trees growing from them, which is meant to evoke a scene from the film "Battleship Potemkin" by Sergei Eisenstein. Cai Guo-Qiang will also create his famous gunpowder paintings on the first floor, while on the White Hall on the second floor will house another massive installation incorporated into the museum's architecture. Cai Guo-Qiang grew up in China, but later moved to Japan and today resides in the US. From Sept. 13.

The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. 12 Ulitsa Volkhonka. Tues-Sun, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.

Murakami in Moscow

Takashi Murakami, one of the best-known Japanese contemporary artists,⊠will have his first retrospective in Moscow this fall at the Garage Museum of⊠Contemporary Art. Often called "the Japanese Andy Warhol," his take on pop-art⊠and trademark smiley faces are easily recognizable. If some of Murakami's art⊠looks like cartoons or Japanese comic books – manga —it's no wonder: He began his career in animation and still returns⊠to it from time to time, such as when he directed an animated video for Kanye⊠West. One of the main attractions of the Moscow exhibit will be a replica of⊠his studio in Tokyo. The show opens September 29.

The Garage Museum of Contemporary Art. 9 Krymsky Val. Open⊠daily 11 a.m.- 10 p.m.

Jewish History and October Revolution

"Freedom for All? The History of One People in the Years of⊠Revolution" is another Revolution-themed exhibition set to open during the⊠centennial. This joint project with the Museum of Jewish History in Russia will⊠consider the cultural, political and religious aspects of the Jewish community⊠in Russia during the years of Revolution and subsequent Civil War. The⊠exhibition features paintings, including by Marc Chagall, Robert Falk, Issachar⊠Ber Ryback and El Lissitzky; photographs; books; as well as theater and⊠political posters and leaflets gathered from various museums, archives and⊠private collections. Many will be shown for the first time. The visitors will⊠also have a chance to study history from the first-person perspective by⊠reading letters or listening to voice recordings using old telephones and⊠radios. The narrators include Lev Trotsky, Mark Chagall, Vera Inber, and⊠Vassily Shulgin. The show opens Oct. 17 and is free of charge.

Jewish Museum and⊠Tolerance Center
. 11 Ulitsa Obraztsova, Bldg. 1A. Sun-Thurs⊠noon – 10
p.m., Fri 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

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