

WEISMAN ART MUSEUM

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## MIR ISKUSSTVA: RUSSIA'S AGE OF ELEGANCE

EXHIBITION DATES:

OCTOBER 8, 2005 THROUGH JANUARY 8, 2006

OPENING: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2005

*MIR ISKUSSTVA* OR, IN ENGLISH, "WORLD OF ART" WAS AN ARTISTIC MOVEMENT THAT FLOURISHED IN RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. IT INCORPORATED ARTISTS FROM ALL DISCIPLINES—MUSIC, LITERATURE, DANCE, THEATER, AND VISUAL ART—WHO SHARED IDEAS AND INSPIRATION. UNITED UNDER THE IDEA OF "ART FOR ART'S SAKE," *MIR ISKUSSTVA* ASPIRED TO CREATE A RUSSIAN NATIONAL ART PARALLEL TO WESTERN EUROPEAN ART.

FROM OCTOBER 2005 THROUGH JANUARY 2006 THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM WILL HOST A WORLD-CLASS EXHIBITION FROM THIS PERIOD, ENTITLED *MIR ISKUSSTVA: RUSSIA'S AGE OF ELEGANCE*. THE SHOW INCLUDES MORE THAN 50 PAINTINGS AND 40 DESIGNS FOR COSTUMES, STAGE SETS, SCULPTURES, AND BOOKS, ALL FROM THE STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM IN ST. PETERSBURG. *MIR ISKUSSTVA* IS TOURING TO JUST THREE AMERICAN MUSEUMS, OF WHICH THE WEISMAN IS FORTUNATE TO BE ONE. IT IS THE FIRST TIME MOST OF THIS ART WILL HAVE BEEN SEEN IN THIS COUNTRY.

THE PERIOD FROM 1890 TO 1917 IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS RUSSIA'S "SILVER AGE," AND ST. PETERSBURG WAS THE BASE FOR MANY OF THE MOST PROMINENT ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, COMPOSERS, WRITERS, AND POETS OF THE PERIOD. *MIR ISKUSSTVA* WAS PART OF THE FLOURISHING OF THE ARTS DURING THIS TIME.

*MIR ISKUSSTVA* WAS MOST ACTIVE FROM 1898 TO 1905, WHEN MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ORGANIZED EXHIBITIONS OF THEIR OWN WORK AND THE WORK OF EUROPEAN ARTISTS, PUBLISHED A MAGAZINE,

AND HELD LECTURES, CONCERTS, AND DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL ISSUES. EACH YEAR BETWEEN 1899 AND 1903 SERGEI DIAGHILEV, THE IMPRESARIO BEHIND THE RENOWNED BALLET RUSSE AND FIERY LEADER OF THE *WORLD OF ART*, ORGANIZED EXHIBITIONS THAT INCLUDED THE BEST OF THE PERIOD—THE WORKS OF RUSSIAN ARTISTS LEON BAKST, ALEXANDER GOLOVIN, ISAAC LEVITAN, MIKHAIL NESTEROV, AND VALENTIN SEROV, ALONG WITH EUROPEANS SUCH AS THE FRENCH EDGAR DEGAS AND THE AMERICAN JAMES ABBOTT MCNEILL WHISTLER. THESE EXHIBITIONS INCLUDED A DECORATIVE ARTS SECTION WITH CERAMICS, EMBROIDERY, AND SCULPTURE.

ALWAYS A LOOSE COALITION, THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES WERE BADLY DISRUPTED BY THE 1905 REVOLUTION. THIS ILL-FATED REVOLUTION STARTED IN JANUARY 1905 WITH A PROTEST MARCH IN ST. PETERSBURG THAT ENDED IN A MASSACRE. THE DAY IS KNOWN IN RUSSIAN HISTORY AS "BLOODY SUNDAY." IN MARCH OF THAT YEAR DIAGHILEV ORGANIZED AN EXHIBITION OF THREE THOUSAND RUSSIAN PORTRAITS, PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES, AND OTHER OBJECTS FOR THE TAURIDE PALACE IN ST. PETERSBURG. TSAR NICHOLAS II AND THE IMPERIAL FAMILY ATTENDED THE OPENING. AT THE BANQUET IN HIS HONOR, DIAGHILEV SPOKE PROPHETICALLY OF A "NEW AND UNKNOWN CULTURE WHICH WILL BE CREATED BY US AND WHICH WILL ALSO SWEEP US AWAY." OVER THE NEXT 15 YEARS *WORLD OF ART* EXHIBITIONS WERE PRESENTED SPORADICALLY; THE LAST ONE OPENED IN THE NEWLY RENAMED LENINGRAD IN JUNE 1924. THE *WORLD OF ART* RANKS HAD BEEN DEPLETED BY MANY EMIGRATIONS AND BY 1924 IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE COMMUNIST REGIME HAD TAKEN CONTROL OF CULTURE AND ART FOR ITS OWN ENDS. THE ROLE OF THE *WORLD OF ART* IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY WAS OVER.

NO OTHER EXHIBITION IN THE UNITED STATES HAS EVER BEEN DEVOTED TO THE *WORLD OF ART* AND THE BRILLIANT CULTURAL FLOWERING THAT TOOK PLACE IN RUSSIA DURING THIS TIME. TO FULLY ILLUMINATE THE RICH OFFERINGS OF THIS ART MOVEMENT, THE WEISMAN IS PARTNERING WITH A NUMBER OF TWIN CITIES PERFORMING ARTS GROUPS TO PRESENT A SERIES OF DYNAMIC PROGRAMMING RELATED TO THE EXHIBITION. PERFORMANCES WITH *MIR ISKUSSTVA: RUSSIA'S AGE OF ELEGANCE* WILL BE PRESENTED IN AND AMONGST THE ART IN THE GALLERIES, AS WELL AS AT VENUES THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CAMPUS.

WITH THE PROGRAM SERIES THE WEISMAN WILL ACQUAINT VISITORS WITH THIS LITTLE-KNOWN ART MOVEMENT THAT BROUGHT ELEMENTS OF WESTERN ART INTO RUSSIA AND, IN TURN, INFLUENCED WESTERN ARTISTS, PARTICULARLY THROUGH THE MOVEMENT'S BOLD PERFORMING ARTS AND ITS GOAL OF UNIFYING THE ARTS IN GRAND PERFORMANCES. INTENSELY CROSS-DISCIPLINARY, WITH VISUAL ARTISTS AND POETS WORKING WITH PLAYWRIGHTS AND PERFORMERS IN THEATER AND BALLET, THE *WORLD OF ART* FOSTERED A VITAL ARTISTIC SCENE THAT HAS RARELY BEEN EXPLORED OR UNDERSTOOD BY AMERICAN AUDIENCES. BECAUSE SO LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS PERIOD AND ITS ARTISTS BY GENERAL AUDIENCES, SOME PROGRAMS WILL FEATURE LECTURES BY WORLD-RENOWNED SCHOLARS. THESE EVENTS WILL HELP MUSEUM VISITORS UNDERSTAND THE WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS PERIOD IN RUSSIAN CULTURAL HISTORY AND CAN CONVEY THE INTELLECTUAL ENERGY AND ARTISTIC DARING OF THE MOVEMENT.

THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM IS LOCATED AT 333 EAST RIVER ROAD IN MINNEAPOLIS. MUSEUM HOURS ARE TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; THURSDAY 10 A.M. TO 8 P.M.; WEEKENDS 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; CLOSED MONDAYS. PUBLIC PARKING IS AVAILABLE IN THE MUSEUM RAMP AT A RATE OF \$2.50 PER HOUR OR A FLAT RATE OF \$5.00 ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. THERE IS NO ADMISSION FEE TO THE WEISMAN. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 612-625-9494.

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