

The Siberian Museum Games

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The European Council annually awards a prestigious prize to a European museum for “contributing to the development of European ideas.” The winning museum receives not only a modest sum of money, but also a symbolic award: the luxury of housing for a year Joan Miró’s sculpture “Woman with a Beautiful Chest.” In April 1998, for the first time the prize found its way to Russia, and, in defiance of tradition-bound expectations, not to Moscow or St. Petersburg, but to Krasnoïarsk in Siberia—which, for all intents and purposes, means to Asia. The events preceding this startling development so exceed the limits of what one could reasonably predict for the time and place in question that they beg for some explanation.

The story began in 1992, when a project was drawn up for a new cultural center in Krasnoïarsk—or perhaps even five years earlier, when a brand new Lenin Museum was built in the area.

On the Old Set

The question of what to do with the Lenin Museum arose virtually the moment it opened in 1987. Even then it was already clear that this institution, built on the initiative of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party,¹ could hardly survive in its original form. Over the course of a few years, various concepts for the modernization of the Lenin memorial competed for adoption. Some suggested transforming the edifice into a museum of political history; others, into a Siberian nature museum; still others favored an ethnographic museum. While the debate flourished without reaching any solution, the employees of the Lenin Museum continued to explain the task of the World Revolution to Krasnoïarsk school children. With

the disappearance of the Communist Party in 1991, however, the Museum came under the jurisdiction of local authorities, and a decision became imperative.²

The new concept for the Museum Center, as the former Lenin Museum in Krasnoiarsk came to be called, was developed in 1992. The idea was so simple as to be revolutionary: to open a museum for cultural groups with initiative that were ready to showcase their values within the museum's exhibition space. The idea presupposed a high concentration of activity as the starting point from which the values of the new, Postsoviet Russian culture would take shape, like crystals from a saturated solution. The Center should become "an experimental exhibition ground where long- and short-term projects develop in free competition, where expositions combine with lively activity, tradition with creativity and innovation, heritage with contemporary culture" (*Kontseptsiiia*).

Though today such a utopian vision may be dismissed as romantic nonsense, precisely such a model was adopted and began to operate. The most ingenious groups, which grew like mushrooms during that period, appeared at the Center: national communes, followers of Nikolai Roerich,³ all imaginable religious sects, the society "Memorial," an "author's song" club,⁴ a group of Tolkien enthusiasts, rock-climbers, unrecognized musicians, artists, etc. And on Sundays, local metal workers organized their own informal gatherings by the walls of the building. Center employees oversaw all these trends and ensured that the zeal, originality, and value of these ventures reached a public. The picture presented by the Cultural-Historical Center in its first years of existence could serve as a metaphor for all of "restructured" culture, which bloomed against the background of the ideological scenery of the previous system.

The earlier Lenin Museum did not showcase any serious collections. But, in contrast to other Siberian museums, it had an excellently equipped building, advantageously situated in the city, with a developed infrastructure and enormous open exhibition grounds. The Center learned to use this resource effectively. In addition to collaborating with lively local movements, it adopted a comprehensive program for "importing" traveling exhibits from other museums and from abroad, as well as an ambitious program of expositions created on the basis of collections housed elsewhere and focused on two themes: "East-West" and "Siberian Roads."

However, the Center's building was not only its primary wealth, but also its primary responsibility for the realization of these plans. The

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Lenin Exposition, designed by the Leningraders who also built the Krasnoiarsk region's defense works, was erected, as the phrase goes, to last forever and was extraordinarily aggressive in design (to compensate for the absence of exhibits). The tactic of "sneaking" modern life into this space demanded some kind of significant plastic concept. In principle, there were only three options: 1) to destroy everything, 2) to shut the new wing off from the previous interior, or 3) to engage it in a dialogue. The only question was, Who would do it?

As a participant in the project, I consulted with several architects, artists, and designers about the problem. Three of the more memorable solutions were as follows: Evgenii Bogdanov, after studying the blueprints and photographs of the building for a long time, finally noted, "I feel like piercing all of this through with some sort of poker." Citing lack of free time as the reason, he refused to work on the project. Aleksandr Melamid (at this time without Komar)⁵ observed, "What to do with the Lenin Museum? I'd place a big padlock on it and reopen it in fifty years—and then make a decision." Iuri Avvakumov answered immediately and very self-assuredly, "You don't need to look for designers in Moscow or New York. It should be people who live in Krasnoiarsk. I'm sure that they're there." As subsequent events showed, all three were correct in their own way.

New Territories of Art

The festival titled "New Territories of Art" took place in Krasnoiarsk in the fall of 1993. Though not the first, it was without a doubt the most prominent action of the Cultural-Historical Center at the time, and became the catalyst for all of its future projects. In essence, the festival became a "landing force" of contemporary art, most of it originating in Moscow. Aside from the exhibits—in which items from Andrei Erofeev's Tsaritsyno collection served as the core—daily seminars, discussions, lectures, film and slide shows, presentations of video-art production, and an extensive concert program with participating musicians from Russia, Germany, and England made up the program.⁶

Like any genuine holiday, the festival overflowed the walls of the Center. Even on the eve of the opening, participants and guests became witnesses to an unusual event. Representing the Moscow group "Art-Blia," Mikhail Labazov and Andrei Savin began to erect

a structure from building timber, packing materials, branches, and boards, resulting in what resembled a giant Sphinx, directly in front of the building on the bank of the Yenisei. Its appearance transformed the former Lenin Museum into the Cheops Pyramid, the great Siberian Yenisei River into the Nile, and the festival itself into an extensive, transcultural action, uniting carnivalesque and mystic features.

In the evenings, the Sphinx glowed with thousands of electric lights, casting a fantastical shadow on the facade of the building. Upon leaving the concert, the musicians climbed into this "Trojan Horse" and enthusiastically played improvised jazz, to the surprise of the public gathered on the riverbank and the vessels sailing along the river.⁷

May one legitimately consider the festival a museum undertaking? If the task of a museum (and specifically this one) is to overcome the split between cultures, then undoubtedly, yes: for bringing the values of the artistic avant-garde into cultural circulation differs little, in essence, from displaying monuments from remote and forgotten cultures. The festival broadened the horizons of Krasnoiarsk's cultural circumstances, and, as its name promised, extended the borders of the domain of art. Its meaning for the Center, however, was not confined solely to this.

Architecture and a Love of Geography

A group of young Krasnoiarsk architects stood out among the festival's participants. In the beginning, they helped assemble the Sphinx, then joined the discussions and other events of festival. It was precisely during the festival that a plan was conceived for the installation of an exhibit dedicated to the twenty-year anniversary of the Architectural Department (of Krasnoiarsk University), on the Center's exhibition grounds. The exhibit sprang up on the heels of the festival, using the same exhibition space and sharing many aspects of the "New Territories" exposition. It was the professional answer of the Krasnoiarsk architects Sergei Kovalevskii, Viktor Sachivko, and Vadim Mar'iasov to their Moscow colleagues, a witty dialogue achieved through purely plastic means.

In full accordance with the Center's concept, the exhibit demonstrated to a broad public the values of concrete professional interaction and cooperation. The basic mass of materials consisted of models, conceptual objects, and architectural graphics. Since the

architects assumed the roles of exhibitors, they erected a structure from these “bricks” or building blocks that rivaled the exhibits in complexity. The Center’s very building was simultaneously both a venue for activity and an active, lively exhibit.

One of the results of the exhibit became the Center’s concept of artistic development. It occupied a place among the exhibits of the “Architectural Twenty,” paradoxically accommodating within itself both the plastic design of the exhibit and many other plans related to the future. And since the architects did not leave the grounds once they had completed the exposition, these plans quickly began to be realized.

The opening ceremonies of the architectural exhibit were still under way when its creators became involved in preparations for a new one. The exposition “Life on the Yenisei” was mounted very close to the previous one; moreover, a few of the elements from the latter proved useful for the new theme. Along the trajectory followed by visitors to both exhibits was laid out the conceptual project “Yenisei House,” created by student architects, and an enormous, dynamic composition, “The Ark,” which hid the sculpture “Lenin with Comrades-in-Arms.” This rhymed with the finale of the exhibit, where busts of Marx and Engels, also left as a legacy from the Lenin Museum, were “hidden” in a marquee of polar explorers.

The exhibit “Life on the Yenisei” was created within the framework of the program “Siberian Roads,” intended as an interpretation of a region “that moved via the four elements—along ancient highways and waterways, by air and railroad” (*Kontseptsii* 46). This was an exposition that tentatively reproduced a journey along the great Siberian river from its source to its mouth. The exhibits took the form of an extensive panorama, where Lamaist temples adjoined Old Believer settlements, Scythian antiquity adjoined the remains of Stalin’s camps, and hydroelectric power stations and atomic-powered vessels sat alongside the Northern fishermen’s hollowed-out boats and rigging. Step by step, before visitor’s eyes unfolded a picture of life on the Yenisei, historically the artery connecting the North and the South, the border dividing the West and the East, and the meeting place of diverse, dissimilar cultures.

The theme of landscape, which surfaced for the first time at this exhibition, subsequently became a leitmotif in the designers’ work. Returning to it again and again, they searched for a means of expositionally “packaging” the relevant macro-objects. They worked with images of the boundary, the border, and the geographic

map. Afterwards they also used more than once the device of “linked” exhibits, weaving their spider web as they assimilated the enormous and complex building of the Lenin Museum building, intuitively finding in it new visual and semantic junctions, and recreating it anew. Furthermore, they did not allow themselves to touch one of the four floors of the Lenin exposition—the most characteristic one—leaving to their descendants the task of deciding the fate of this cherished corner.⁸

In fact, the Krasnoïarsk designers invented a new plastic language that fundamentally differed from the customary language of museum expositions, whose basic characteristics date back to the late nineteenth century. Modern art, a heightened sense of place, a love for the paradoxical reconfiguration of scales, and an ability to work with the huge spaces and large materials of heterogeneous exhibits—these were the basic factors that permitted the Krasnoïarsk team, after two years, to take on their next large project.

The First Biennial Exhibition

The idea animating the Biennial Exhibition entailed making use of the building’s potential to mount within its space a competition of small temporary expositions transported from various museums. Such a project allowed for the instant (though short-lived) realization of all of the Center’s ideas: to gather within its walls various museum collections, bringing them into dialogue with each other; to create a competition of exposition programs; and to make advantageous use of Krasnoïarsk’s geographical location, in the very center of Russia, halfway between Moscow and Vladivostok.

The First Biennial Exhibition took place in December, 1995. Skeptics claimed that in the best-case scenario, the undertaking would resemble a museum review of inter-regional proportions. The Krasnoïarsk organizers, who had long overcome any complexes regarding provincialism, however, declared that the Biennial would be international. Its success exceeded all expectations. Thirty-six expositions were mounted simultaneously on the Center’s grounds. Even without the foreign exhibits, which ranged from Japanese to German and French,⁹ the geographical coverage was impressive: from Vladivostok to Moscow, including all of Siberia, the Urals, and the most remote northern regions.

By the organizers’ design, the event coincided with three significant dates: the centennial of the Venetian Biennial Exhibition,

the film centennial, and the centennial of the birth of M.M. Bakhtin, the famous Russian cultural critic.¹⁰ Accordingly, the Biennial was tripartite. It consisted of a competition of expositions, a competition of museum videos and films, and the conference “M.M. Bakhtin and Contemporary Praxis in the Humanities.” The exposition part created a strongly felt environment, densely saturated with objects in space, an environment to which the video programs lent a supplementary dimension. And the discussion program made it possible to grasp the intensive cultural process literally unfolding before visitors’ eyes as these sundry elements united to form a multi-faceted whole. To borrow Bakhtin’s term, the Biennial became an exceedingly complex “chronotope,” which allowed one for a short time to take a head-spinning journey across the Eurasian continent while staying within the walls of a single building.

Two expositions shared the Biennial Grand Prix: “Five-hundred and One Buildings” from Salekhard and “The Reindeer Breeder’s Summer Camp” from Var’egan. Though both exhibits were presented by Northern Siberian museums, in their theme, materials, and execution they could not have differed more. The first exposition told the story of the Salekhard-Igarka railroad; its construction was begun in 1949, with the use of prison labor, but was suspended before completion in 1953.¹¹ The participation of designers from the Ekaterinburg studio “Artefactum” to a large extent guaranteed the success of this exposition.¹²

The second exhibit had nothing whatever to do with designers, but it likewise benefited from unusually subtle and sensitive spatial workmanship. A small plot of habitable surroundings was transplanted from the tundra to the building of the former Lenin Museum, while retaining the spirit of its original location. At the insistence of the creator, Iurii Bella, the exposition was set up in the Center’s basement technical shop, where enormous ventilation units served as a background. What resulted was an image of traditional culture, squeezed in from all sides by technocratic civilization.¹³

The Biennial gave rise to many other openings. Among these was the exhibit-happening titled “In Rooms” by Ekaterina Kandyba from Vladivostok, where children’s undershirts, rocks from the shore of the Pacific Ocean, and a collection of Russian proverbs were united in an intricate scenario; the exposition “Mysterious Guests”—a thoroughly ironic, yet quintessentially museum-quality exposition (although including not a single museum exhibit)

mounted by the proprietors of the exhibition grounds; and the installation "Skin of the Earth," presented by the Frenchman Olivier David.

Each of these expositions followed a completely unique course at odds with museum stereotypes. Anyone entertaining conventional notions about creativity simply didn't attend the Biennial. For that reason the pioneer spirit, true to Siberian traditions, predominated from the outset. Above all, innovative aspirations—whether in the area of ethnography, history, or the fine arts—found concrete forms in original museum-artistic expression. Speaking for the jury, Hayward Andrew Dempsey, the director of a London gallery, noted, "The participation of the artists to a large extent determined the success of the Biennial. Probably, museums of all types should strive for collaboration with artists, and generally, with people in creative professions. They provide a living connection with the present, they inject innovation and fantasy into our world" (*Pervaia* 27).

The Leap

Enormous distances hamper the even circulation of cultural flow between Russia's geographic center (Krasnoiarsk) and its outlying areas (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok). The only solution to this problem is the orchestration of temporally and spatially concentrated, large-scale cultural activities. Awareness of that fact prompted the organizers' decision that the Biennial take place in odd-numbered years, leaving the even-numbered ones for events scheduled by the Museum Center on the Point. And in October 1996, an international seminar took place, with the participation of representatives from Sweden, Portugal, and Norway.

One of the seminar's goals was the creation of a museum association. Over the last few years Russia had witnessed many attempts to establish an association of museums (or museum employees), all of which had ended in a fiasco. The Biennial breathed new life into this idea by forging connections that proved informal yet solid. The "Open Museum" Association created in Krasnoiarsk united participants, experts, friends, and fans of the Biennial, and was the first such project to succeed. Its quarterly *Bulletin* became the most lively museum publication in Russia.¹⁴

By the time the seminar convened, the Museum Center's expositions, true to form, had changed beyond recognition. The exhibit "The Clean House" was assembled from the "fragments" of the

Biennial. Continuing to master and develop the Lenin Museum's interior, the Krasnoïarsk project workers moved into the area of eco-art. The inversion of interior and exterior, a forest consisting of geographical maps rolled into pipes, a globe created in the tradition of Cubism (and simultaneously of kinetic art) were but a few of the exposition's elements whereby history adjoined geography and irony was achieved through purely visual means.

One additional element of the exhibit was truly remarkable. It would seem that everything one could think of already existed in modern art—the artist instead of his work, a television as the viewer of another television, and so forth—but until then no one had conceived of an exhibit that forced the visitor to leap from a height of three meters. The creators of “The Clean House” took just such a risky step. Or, more accurately, they ensured that such a step was taken by visitors to the exhibit. Dutifully following the route mapped out for them, visitors walked along little bridges, looking at various objects intended by the artists to represent the Yenisei, while simultaneously observing the real Yenisei flowing outside the window—when suddenly they confronted a precipice. Despite the soft bedding that lay below, one's breath stopped momentarily with the shock of it—though one had the reassuring option of turning back.

Maria de Seu Baptista from Portugal conducted a workshop during the seminar. She walked through the building, unwinding an endless thread along the way, lacing up all the exhibit space, while the workshop's participants hurried after her, hanging multicolored flags on the thread, either by instinct or according to some rules not apparent to the observer. Approaching the precipice, Maria—though completely unprepared, as she later confessed—leaped off without a second's hesitation; the participants, including the Center's director, Mikhail Shubskii, followed. This leap marked a decisive moment for the birth of the “Open Museum” Association.

The next step—the organization of the Second Biennial—resembled this leap, for the Biennial also operated by “planned unexpectedness.” No one knew what participants would bring to this forum, but expectations ran high, in the conviction that their contributions would be the last word in the art of museum expositions.

The Second Biennial Exhibition

- It's unlikely to find a city in the world where 46 museum exhibits open in the course of one day. Yet that was precisely the

number of openings in Krasnoiarsk on September 27, 1997, also the day of the Second Biennial Exhibition. Just as two years earlier, the building of the Museum Center on the Point turned into a multifaceted and multilingual Babylon where East met West and artistic installations rubbed elbows with museum artifacts. The Moscow art group "Art-Blia," returning to the city on the Yenisei after a four-year absence, installed two huge eyes on the facade of the Museum Center that were lit in the evenings.¹⁵

Two years is the optimal period needed to feel change, not only in the sphere of art, but also in our relationship to the past. Society changes, as does one's view of historical values. This process is inherently so fascinating that for this Biennial, which offered the opportunity to observe both concrete and conceptual changes, people managed to overcome severe financial difficulties so as to bring their exhibits from the most remote corners of Russia. The 1997 Biennial once again presented museums from the Volga to the Far East, plus expositions from Germany and Poland, and a few exhibits from several Moscow galleries that did not enter any competition.

The Surgut Art Museum's exhibit, "Odin's Steel?," took first prize.¹⁶ Its creators accurately grasped the Biennial's "rules of the game": laconism and a clean solution of an artistic problem, which virtually guarantee success. "Odin's Steel?" was the sole exhibit, consisting of a bearded figure encircled by two birds made from steel found by archeologists in the vicinity of Surgut, and embodied the intersection of two hypotheses—about the origin and the subject of the piece. Who is the steel hero—Alexander the Great¹⁷ or the Scandinavian god Odin?¹⁸ Leaving this question open, the exhibit showed yet again that to pose problems in the museum is no less important than to provide a single answer or solution. The jury noted the competently assembled advertising, souvenir, and presentation program, but only the exhibit poster and booklet were awarded first prize for "advertising" in the publishing competition. The most unusual element accompanying the exposition, however, was a folder containing the curator's correspondence with archeologists and designers from Moscow, Stockholm, and New York. The negotiations behind the scenes in preparation for the project (its "kitchen," one might say), when put on display, made for absolutely fascinating reading.

If ethnographic themes predominated at the First Biennial, the Second Biennial privileged archaeology. For reasons about which

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one can only speculate, in the last two years exhibitioners' interest in remote, estranged objects has sharply increased. Perhaps that fascination symptomatizes the end of the century, or, possibly, recondite objects challenge the professional pride of those working on projects: when operating with temporally and spatially distanced phenomena, it is more difficult, after all, to identify their significance, to make them accessible and meaningful to today's audience. Whatever the case, both classical and non-classical archeological expositions were widely represented at the Second Biennial.

The exhibit of the Novokuznetsk curator Marina Avdeeva, "One Hundred Views of the KMK Factory," attempted to aesthetically interpret the fate of a city that had become an appendage to the metallurgical industrial complex, while Krasnoarsk artist Viktor Sachivko's "The Heart's Protective Suit" was a visual realization of the "unconscious" city landscape. Both expositions—experiments of sorts in "industrial" or "urban" archeology—received second prize and special awards for their urban theme. The installation "Sands" from Vladivostok¹⁹ may best be defined as "archeology of the soul," and not only because visitors could make their own independent excavations in a child's sandbox. As closer scrutiny revealed, the buoyant little scene constructed by the artist was, in fact, a monument to the memory of childhood friends who had perished, a symbol of time "trickling away like sand."

These three exhibitions were essentially individual ("author's") installations. Each of them, however, unquestionably contained a subtext specific to the museum. They all participated in the overarching mission of the Biennial: to reveal not only a new content for museums, but also a new, modern language of interaction with the public.

Several expositions that actually consisted of ruminations on the language of museums appeared for the first time at the Biennial. "The House that Jack Built"—an elegant joke by designers from the studio "Artifactum," who created an exhibit illustrating the famous English rhyme—showed how absurd and polysemous such a concrete interpretation can be. A similar meta-commentary characterized the "Simbolarium" of the Krasnoarsk architect Sergei Kovalevskii. This exposition about expositions consisted of an exhibit that "recollected" the Museum Center's projects over the past five years, rising "above" the Lenin Museum expositions.

Although covers basically draped the Lenin exposition, the revolutionary leader's sly grin occasionally could be glimpsed

through the exhibit's multiplicity of themes and variety of individual artists' gestures. The enigmatic figure that proved to be Lenin's statue wrapped in white fabric stood beside photographs of the superstar Vissarion, head of a religious commune that was constructing a "wooden, ecologically clean City of the Sun" in the taiga in the southern part of the Krasnoiarsk region. This commune had its own exposition at the Biennial, comprised of paintings with a spiritual content displayed against the background of a luxurious rug that depicted Brezhnev.

One of the Biennial's sensations was the Zalari Museum's exhibit, which told the tale of the "Pikhtin Hollendrs," an enigmatic ethnic group living in the depths of the taiga in the Irkustk region. At the beginning of the century the Hollendrs came here from Europe, but their origins still remain unclear, though there are indications that they are Hollanders (Dutch) who resided for a long time on Polish territory.

For those who live beyond the Urals, Krasnoiarsk is closer than Moscow. For this reason, items specific to Siberia predominated in the mosaic of expositions at the Biennial. Deer totems and objects central to the shaman cult, eggs painted with geometric designs, and relics from ancient burial mounds all merged into a colorful, multi-faceted image of ancient Asiatic-Russia. The vividness and immediacy of this exposition suggested that for its creators this cultural history is part of their own everyday world, in which they build and regularly travel the road from the past to the future.

It is obvious that neither Moscow nor St. Petersburg could orchestrate a Biennial of this type—and not only because they are oriented more toward Paris or New York than toward Siberia. The two creative streams that in Krasnoiarsk so fruitfully feed into each other remain stubbornly separate in the capitals: contemporary art lives in galleries, while museum expositions are confined to museums. Perhaps that explains why, despite the wealth of their collections, the museums in both cities suffer from a striking dearth of ideas as regards expositions.

The overwhelming success of the Second Biennial was immediately apparent: the Krasnoiarsk public flocked to the exhibits en masse; participants, experts, and visitors enjoyed prolonged, animated conversations about what they saw; in the evenings, huge crowds gathered on the riverside to gaze into the eyes of the former Lenin Museum, which so unexpectedly had recovered its vision.

They looked with fascination at the sphinx that promised to pose many more riddles in the future.

Joan Miró in Siberia

The Biennial plays a timely if small part in the museum's ongoing development. It affords a forum for new currents in museum stylistics and methodology, and allows new leaders to enter the fray and acquire a reputation. Participation in the competition enables each museum to look at itself objectively, to assess its strong and weak points, to reflect yet again on its mission and presiding concept, to sum up, and to identify future undertakings. The people who emerge as winners at the Biennial are those who perceive current needs more clearly and respond to them most persuasively.

Competitions make museums competitive. They foster healthy pride and aggressive propensities in museum personnel; they help them to stay in good fighting form, which is necessary not only during competitions, but also in everyday work. Given the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in Russia today, in order to survive (let alone to develop), museums must be able to act energetically.

Paradoxical as it seems, competitions, which are predicated on the idea of rivalry, help museums to unite. Success breeds success, and the principle of using any victory for the good of the museum makes good sense. Today that precept is becoming an integral element of museum management, just as competitions are becoming an essential part of the infrastructure of the new, free, and uncensored Russian museum business.

Museums' desire to participate in competitions reveals their kinship with show business. The successful museum is not only a collection, but also a gripping spectacle. And, as in any creative sphere, museums have their astral flights and falls, their "hits" and "stars." The names of the Biennial winners—the museums in Var'egan, Salekhard, Surgut—will be preserved forever in museum history as the names of pioneers. The same holds true for the Krasnoiarsk Museum Center, which became one of the first Russian participants in the Competition for the Best European Museum of the Year and received the European Council Prize for its activities—Joan Miró's sculpture.²⁰

Miró's "Woman with a Beautiful Chest" will make its home in Siberia for a year. And this is not the exile one might imagine, but,

rather, a cultural mission, the goal of which is the inclusion of this huge territory in the cultural space of Europe and the world. The sculpture will not remain in one place. The Krasnoiarsk population intends to have it “work” 365 days of the year, making the rounds of Siberia. The small traveling exhibit will visit many cities. In each new place, a new symbolic exhibit, operating on the principle of association or consonance, will be added to it: an image carved in rock—a petroglyph—here, a shaman figurine there, and by the time Miró’s sculpture arrives in Strasbourg, it will be surrounded by objects that collectively offer a comprehensive image of Siberia.

Siberia, which for many years has been Russia’s place of exile and an appendage rich in raw materials, now is searching for its new image, battling with its traditional cultural isolation. The idea of the Biennial—a momentary concentration of many creative efforts—is the ideal means of surmounting geographical alienation and integrating Russia’s cultural space. The task of the Biennial is not simply to show museum collections (as “raw material” of sorts in the cultural sphere), but to draw projects into a competition aimed at their interpretation, at the creation of a quality conceptual product with which one can enter the international cultural market.²¹

Appendix

The Krasnoiarsk Museum Center on the Point Events and Dates

1987 A branch of the Central Lenin Museum opens in Krasnoiarsk.

1991 The decision is made to change the Museum’s profile.

1992 The concept for the development of the Museum Center as an open exhibition area is drawn up.

1993 The festival “New Territories of Art,” the largest-scale sampling of modern art from the capitals, arrives in Siberia, at the Museum Center. Now the event is popularly called the “Zero Biennial.”

1993-1997 A series of the Museum Center’s exhibit projects on the themes “East-West” and “Siberian Roads,” takes place using Siberian museum collections.

1995 The First Biennial Exhibition, with thirty-six exhibits, takes place at

1996 The First Biennial catalogue is published. The Open Museum Association is created on the basis of the Museum Center. The Association begins issuing its *Bulletin*, which, according to widespread opinion, is the liveliest museum publication in Russia.

1997 The Second Biennial Exhibition takes place under the motto "Urbi et Orbi." Forty-six expositions participate. A special prize for the development of urban themes is awarded.

1998 The Museum Center and the Open Museum Association, with experts from the European Museum Forum, plan to open Siberian museum studios.

1999 The Third Biennial Exhibition will take place in Krasnoiarsk, with a special prize to be awarded for the theme of children.

Translated by Suzanne M. Daly

Notes

1. In the 1970s and 1980s, fifteen Lenin Museums were built as part of a program created by the Ideological Commission of the CC CPSU in the larger cities of the Soviet Union (and in the capitals of a few socialist countries, such as Ulan-Batore). These expensive projects could only be called museums in the literal sense: for the most part, they displayed copies of the expositions in Moscow's Lenin Museum, and their main goal became "the ideological education of laborers and propagandizing Marxist-Leninist ideas." The Krasnoiarsk Lenin Museum was the penultimate museum in this chain.

2. See Gnedovskii, "Pamiatnik. . ."

3. Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), painter, graphic artist, theater designer, archaeologist and mystic, fascinated by India and the Himalayas, as well as Russian folklore (HG).

4. Author's songs were performed by their creators, who also penned the lyrics, especially during the 1960s. The best-known poet-bards included Bulat Okudzhava, Aleksandr Galich, and Vladimir Vysotskii (HG).

5. Residents of the United States for many years now, Komar and Melamid are most famous as practitioners of Sots-Art (HG).

6. The most representative Moscow collection of modern Russian art from the period 1950s-1990s is housed at the Tsaritsyno Museum. It was collected by the curator, Andrei Erofeev. Located in a depository that is a refurbished bombshelter, it is closed to the public. Only a few items from

this collection appear in temporary exhibits (see, for example, *Istoriia v litsakh. 1956-1996. Katalog vystavki*. M. 1997).

7. The Leonid Bazhanov group of curators, with past experience with a project of this sort, participated in the organization of the festival: Ol'ga Kozlova, Aleksandra Korneva, Tat'iana Mogilevskaia, and Andrei Tolstoi. Sergei Shutov presented the video-art, Nikolai Dmitriev answered for the musical portion, Il'ia Voznesenskii designed the exposition, and Evgenii Raitses, the printing program. Collaboration with the Moscow team proved a good curator's school for the Krasoiarsk artists. For the first time they managed to get the entire building working—including the huge screen, unused since the "Lenin years"—and to attract the attention of both the press and the public to the Center for a whole week.

8. On the Krasnoiarsk Museum Center's first exposition projects, see Gnedovskii, "Tri shaga. . ."

9. On the First Biennial Exhibition, see Gnedovskii, "Vremia. . ."

10. Ana Glinskaia authored the Biennial's concept statement.

11. That is, the year of Stalin's death (HG).

12. The designers' decree was written by Iurii Kalmykov.

13. For a more detailed discussion of the Var'egan Museum and its creator, Iurii Bella, see Bella, "My ne ischezne . . .," 16-18, Gnedovskii, "Tainy . . .," 8-19, 60.

14. See *Vestnik Assotsiatsii "Oktrytyi muzei,"* 1, 2-3, 4, Krasnoiarsk, 1996; 1-2, 3-4, Krasnoiarsk, 1997.

15. On the Second Biennial Exhibition see Gnedovskii, "Prozrevshii muzei," 72-74.

16. The exhibit's curator was Iuliia Nerush, the exposition designer was Aleksandr Konov, and graphic design was done by Iurii Surkov. For more on the Surgut Art Museum's program, see *Khudozhestvennyi*. . .

17. Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BC), who ruled the Macedonian empire from 336 to 323 BC, and whose name of Alexander subsequently was shared by three Russian emperors (HG).

18. The question raises the long-debated issue of the origin of the Russian state, specifically whether the ancient Rurik line of Russian rulers derived from the Varangians (Scandinavians) or the Slavs (of which the ancient kingdom of Macedonia was a part) (HG).

19. Artist Ekaterina Kandyba, curator Svetlana Voronina.

20. On the participation of Russian museums in the Competition, see <http://nauka.sibipress.org/stcl/vol24/iss1/6>

21. Inquiries about any aspect of the Krasnoiarsk Museum Center's and the "Open Museum" Association's activities may be sent to Muzeinyi Tsentr, pl. Mira 1, Krasnoiarsk 660097, Russia. Telephone number: +7 (3912) 223736. E-mail address: ana@muzey.krasnoyarsk.su.

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