

## **The Transition from the Soviet Union to Russia**

**The Kunstmuseum Bern is now showing one of the key collections of Russian contemporary art. Arina Kowner's collection comprises over 200 works of art by 48 artists from 1970 to 2008. The focus of the collection is the period of social and political transition in the former East Bloc from 1984 to 1996, presenting an art-historical documentation of unique epochal change. The show is part of the series of exhibitions in Bern on Russian contemporary art.**

Arina Kowner, a collector based in Zurich who originally came from Russia, knew or is acquainted with many of the artists whose works she now owns. As Kowner puts it herself: "Acquiring a work of art is mostly linked to a personal encounter." Correspondingly she describes her collection as a "great documentation of memories that had a vital impact on my life."

### **A dialogue that transgresses borders**

Leningrad and Moscow were the two centers in which artists from all over the Soviet Union came together. The exhibition reflects the different art styles and approaches as well as the typical subject matter for each of the two cities.

In the show famous Russian nonconformists are being presented who worked largely underground until 1989 because they refused to adopt socialist realism as propagated by the Socialist Party. Among them we find artists such as Grisha Bruskin, Vladimir Nemukhin, Dmitri Prigov, and Edik Steinberg. Additionally, there are also works in the exhibition of Leningrad artists who are still relatively unknown in Switzerland. For example, Sergei Bugaev, called "Africa," or Timur Novikov, the leading figure in Leningrad art and the city's art scene, and not to forget the very provocative Vladislav Mamyshev, who calls himself "Monroe" and also stages himself as the famous actress and icon.

The collector's interests extend beyond Russian art. She is fascinated not only by art that addresses transformations in Russian life but likewise by art that engages with the universal problems of existence. Therefore she is, of course, also interested in Western art. The exhibition will thus additionally show works from Arina Kowner's collection by artists such as Alois Lichtsteiner, Robert Mangold, Bruce Nauman, Markus Raetz, and Andy Warhol – in dialogue with Russian art approaches.

### **Bern as a hub for the Russian avant-garde**

Glasnost and perestroika opened up the opportunity for organizing exhibitions of unofficial art from Moscow and Leningrad in the West. They were the key art attractions during the 1980s and the early 1990s. Initiated by the Swiss diplomat Paul Jolles, Ilya Kabakov's first large exhibition in the West took place in the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1984. Bern developed into a focal point for the Russian avant-garde. In 1988, the Kunstmuseum Bern presented the now legendary exhibition *I live – I see: Moscow Artists of the 1980s*. In it the works already anticipate a break with political and social traditions. The exhibition *Avant-garde Underground – The Bar-Gera Collection* followed in 2005. The current show therefore is a continuation of a whole series of exhibitions on Russian contemporary art in Bern.

**Among others, we are presenting works by:** Grisha Bruskin, Sergei Bugaev (called "Africa"), Alois Lichtsteiner, Vladislav Mamyshev, Robert Mangold, Bruce Nauman, Vladimir Nemukhin, Timur Novikov, Dmitri Prigov, Markus Raetz, Edik Steinberg, and Andy Warhol.

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## The Exhibition

**Opening:** Friday, December 2, 2011, 18h30  
**Duration:** 03.12.2011 – 12.02.2012  
**Curators:** Matthias Frehner, Monika Schäfer  
**Admission:** CHF 18.00 / red. CHF 14.00

## The Catalogue (in German)



«**Passion Bild. Russische Kunst seit 1970. Die Sammlung Arina Kowner**». Ergänzend zur Sammlungsmonographie erscheint die Publikation, die u.a. Interviews mit der Sammlerin und den Künstlerinnen und Künstlern

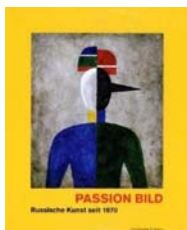
enthält. CHF 25.00. Katalog und Sammlungsmonographie zusammen CHF 89.00

## The Poster



F4  
(89,5 x 128 cm)  
CHF 20.00

## The Monograph (in German)



«**Passion Bild. Russische Kunst seit 1970. Die Sammlung Arina Kowner**». Hrsg. und mit einer Einführung von Arina Kowner, mit Beiträgen von Maria Chevrekouko, Sandra Frimmel, Sabine Hänsgen, Ada Raev, Jule Reuter und mit Künstlerporträts von Alexandra Engelfried. Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2010. 343 Seiten, Deutsch. ISBN 978-3-85881-199-8. CHF 75.00 (im Buchhandel CHF 99.00)

## The Special Events

**Öffentliche Führungen:** Sonntag, 11h:  
4./11. Dezember, 15./29. Januar, 12. Februar  
und  
Dienstag, 19h: 6./13./27. Dezember,  
3./17./31. Januar, 7. Februar

**Filme im Kino Kunstmuseum:** Das Kino Kunstmuseum zeigt im Januar u.a. den sowjetischen Kultfilm *Assa* (1987) von Sergei Solovoyov, an dem mehrere der in der Ausstellung vertretenen Künstler beteiligt sind, ausserdem Alexander Sokurovs *Russian Ark* (2002) [www.kinokunstmuseum.ch](http://www.kinokunstmuseum.ch)

**Kurs in Zusammenarbeit mit der Volkshochschule Bern:** Dienstag, 17h30 – 18h45: 17./24./31. Januar

**Vorweihnachtliches Konzert mit russischer Musik: Alexander Neustroev (Cello) und Oleg Lips-Roumiantsev (Akkordeon / Bajan):** Sonntag, 11. Dezember, 12h30. 11h öffentliche Führung. Eine Veranstaltung des Kulturvereins «OKNO – Fenster zur russischen Kultur». Ohne Anmeldung, CHF 35.00 (inkl. Ausstellungseintritt)

## The Exhibition is under the Patronage of:

His Excellency Igor B. Bratchikov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Switzerland

## With the support of:

Stiftung GegenwART, Dr. Hansjörg Wyss