

АНТИКВАРИАТ

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Russian Avantgarde Foundation is just a year and a half but it has already succeeded in many endeavors. The Oscar Niemeyer's exhibition has been held in Moscow. Several monographs on constructivists have been re-published. Konstantin Melnikov's Museum will open in the Arbat area soon. The Russian pavilion has been restored in Venice. And this is just the beginning.

In the West they have never forgotten about the Russian architecture of the 1920's and 1930's. The works of our avantgardists are still studied and reviewed there. But in this country nobody has ever particularly advertised the architecture of that period. Konstantin Melnikov's designs were in the mid-1930's labeled: "Trickery devoid of any ideology." He was never permitted to build anything else in the USSR. Two Melnikov's works have miraculously survived in the Sokolniki area – the buildings of Burevestnik and Russakov Clubs. And in Krivoarbatsky Lane the unusual circular tower-like house mentioned in architectural textbooks the world over still stands.

A couple of years ago the media actively talked about the juicy affair of Senator Gordeyev acquiring the tower. Few people believed that a museum and not another business center will emerge on the site of the monument. Now there is no doubt: a museum will open there. The project organizer is Gordeyev's Russian Avantgarde Foundation. It is designed by the British Casson Mann Designers Bureau. No details are known yet, but it has been announced that the exhibition halls and services will be located next door and visits to the House itself will culminate guided tours. The first ones are tentatively planned for 2010.

The Melnikov's Museum is not the only project of the Foundation. Last summer it demonstrated in the New York Museum of Modern Art a series of Richard Pare's photos on "Lost Vanguard": pictures of architectural masterpieces from the 1920's and 1930's surviving in the territory of the former USSR. In Moscow Russian Avantgarde organized two exhibitions: of Alvaro Siza, the famous Portuguese, and of the living legend, Oscar Niemeyer. The Foundation has brought latest works by Niemeyer to the Museum of Architecture, those nobody has actually seen yet. On the opening day the Brazilian architect celebrated his centenary. Amazing, but the famous modernist is still working vigorously. Sergey Gordeyev, representing the Perm Territory in the Federation Council and working on the master plan for the city of Perm, actively consults the "Great Oscar".

Russian Avantgarde Foundation has chosen quite a symbolic headquarters for itself – Burevestnik Club designed by Melnikov. The monument has been saved from destruction. Leading architects hold lectures and master classes there. Rem Koolhaas and Luca Molinari have already lectured there. A permanent exhibition site will probably open in it in time.



Last year the Foundation distinguished itself with another celebrated undertaking: it supported the Russian pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The building designed by Alexei Shchusev in 1914 was practically in ruins: broken windows, leaking roof, moldy interiors... As usual, no money could be found for the repairs, but for Russian Avantgarde providing it.

The Foundation has a lot of plans for the future. New exhibitions are in the pipeline. They will surely show something from their own collection. This includes working drawings, archives and sketches by Zholtovsky, Leonidov, Fomin, Chernikhov, and Shchusev, the Soviet architectural magazines of the 1920's and 1930's. The mission of Russian Avantgarde is to make this heritage accessible, in particular, via Internet. The Foundation library holds a collection of books on the history of architecture. A real gem was obtained in 2007: the Foundation purchased at an auction the Divine Proportions (De Divina Proportione, 1507) by Luca Pacioli illustrated by Leonardo da Vinci. It was re-printed and also issued in the Russian translation. Another fifteen books on architecture has been published. Thirty more are planned for 2008 alone. Mr. Gordeyev and the managers of his Foundation strongly believe that they can succeed in restoring and continuing the lost traditions, while Russian architects will be once again included among the world's elite.

SERGEY GORDEYEV

Senator from the Perm Territory, a member of the Federation Council's Commission on Culture, the founder and President of Russian Avantgarde Foundation, the originator of a number of bills aimed at preserving the cultural heritage. They have started talking about Mr. Gordeyev and his Foundation after the news appeared on establishing the Museum in Konstantin Melnikov's House. Since then the Foundation has made itself clearly known once again by supporting the Russian exposition at the 52nd Venice Biennale. These days Mr. Gordeyev heads one of the most efficient teams of "cultural" managers in Russia. 

