

COMMISSIONER PREPARES HIS BOMB

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РОССИЯ

Vassily Tsereteli Is Confident: Our Pavilion at Venice Biennale Will Be Most Interesting and Relevant

On June 10 the 52nd Biennale, the oldest and most authoritative international contemporary art exhibition, opens in Venice. The curator of the Russian pavilion this year is Olga Sviblova, Photography Museum Director, and the commissioner is Vassily Tsereteli, Executive Director, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Corresponding Member of the Russian Art Academy, with whom we are talking today.

– Mr. Tsereteli, would you please tell us what is ready and what is to be done still?

– Practically everything in the pavilion has been finished. A new alarm system has been installed, the plumbing has been repaired, the façade has been painted. They began to bring authors' works in on May 15, now they are being assembled.

– Mainly, those are video installations. Why so?

– Actually, this is the question for Olga Sviblova. But the objective is clear: we wanted to present the new Russia, the fact that we have the artists dealing with modern technologies, combining mechanics with interactive means.

– For instance?

– Here you are: Julia Milner's project. It is named "Click I Hope". In it you can see the text in the languages of all the countries represented at the Biennale. When a person clicks on the words in a certain language they grow a bit larger. In this way people from all over the world can select the language that is close to them. The effect emerges of the continuously updated work in creating which you participate yourself.

– Let us shift from the lyrics to the prose. Was it difficult to look for sponsors?

– We have found not so much a sponsor as a partner. Russian Avantgarde Foundation headed by Sergey Gordeyev got involved in preparing the exposition allocating three hundred thousand euros for that purpose. It wants to completely restructure the pavilion later on. In fact, Mr. Gordeyev has saved the situation. But for Russian Avantgarde, you could have dropped the idea of any exhibition completely. Of course, there are other sponsors: TsUM department store, MasterCard and others, they have also provided money, but Russian Avantgarde has been the leader. Prior to its involvement the Russian pavilion was in a terrible state. Not only works of art could not be exhibited there, it was



just dangerous to enter it. Homeless persons used it for sleeping, everything was collapsing.

– Why has it been allowed to deteriorate so much?

– Originally the pavilion was owned by the Foreign Ministry that has a lot of other things to take care of. Then it was transferred to General Affairs Department under the Russian President and recently a contract has been signed transferring the pavilion to the Roskultura Agency management, so now it is in good hands.

– How will the opening ceremony go?

– It will happen on June 7 at 3:30 p.m. Nothing grandiose is planned. Everything will take just one hour: the ceremony, the official press conference, a small buffet lunch. Other pavilions will be opened at the same time.

– What do you think, will Italians be interested in our exposition?

– Not just Italians, everybody will be interested, since the pavilion is truly the most interesting and relevant. And the artists represented have good reputations, everyone knows them, everyone has seen their previous works. I think it will burst like a veritable bomb.

– There is an opinion that video installations are no art at all. What do you think about it?

– Well, you know, one can take a contemporary book and say: “This is not a real literature!” But who has a right to judge? Installations have been present since the 1960’s in major museums, they constitute one of the most interesting genres of the contemporary art, most advanced technologies are used in them. For instance, AES+F (Tatiana Arzamassova, Lev Evzovich, Evgeny Svyatsky, Vladimir Fridkes) have 3D graphics, photos made alive with the computer animation. But in fact everything starts with a hand-made drawing. Or take the Shower installation by Alexander Ponomarev. The real TV, today’s video bites have been taken as its basis. Some time ago, early in the previous century, just like this they were taking photos and making collages with them. Here you are recording this interview not on a cassette but on a digital media. Artists do not stand still either. ■

