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Bowdoin



Russian Propaganda Investigated in The Wolfsonian's Summer 2018 Season

Constructing Revolution: Soviet Propaganda Posters from Between the World Wars
(Apr 13–Aug 12, 2018), organized by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art,
reveals how the Soviet state wielded graphic design to inspire and manipulate the public

Red and Black: Revolution in Soviet Propaganda Graphics (Apr 5–Aug 5, 2018),
examines avant-garde art in books, periodicals, postcards, and portfolio plates
from The Wolfsonian–FIU Library

MIAMI BEACH (January 30, 2018) — For summer 2018, The Wolfsonian–Florida International University is tapping into today's fascination with Russian propaganda through two coinciding shows focused on early 20th-century Soviet graphic design. *Constructing Revolution: Soviet Propaganda Posters from Between the World Wars* (April 13–August 12), organized by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Brunswick, Maine, and the complementary library installation *Red and Black: Revolution in Soviet Propaganda Graphics* (April 5–August 5) will shed light on ties between cultural life and revolutionary ideology in the decades following the 1917 Russian Revolution. Both shows explore how designers were inspired by the utopian ideals of the revolution to develop new techniques of graphic persuasion on behalf of Russia's Communist dictatorship.

"With *Constructing Revolution*, the stars truly aligned," said Tim Rodgers, Wolfsonian director. "We recognized in Bowdoin's exhibition a rare opportunity to do what The Wolfsonian does best—present some of the finest examples of modern propaganda, reexamine objects from our

own collection, and offer fresh insight into a topic currently front and center on the worldwide stage.”

Bringing more than 50 Soviet-era posters from the private collection of Svetlana and Eric Silverman together with rarely seen works held by The Wolfsonian, *Constructing Revolution* showcases a number of key figures in the Soviet artistic avant-garde, among them Vladimir Mayakovsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Gustav Klutsis. The exhibition charts the formative decades of the USSR and provides a glimpse into this turbulent period of Russian history, when posters were employed to provide a new visual language converting Communist aspirations into readily accessible, urgent, public art. The resulting images reflect a remarkable degree of artistic experimentation, even as their content was strictly guided by the priorities of the Soviet state.

Highlights include:

- Dmitrii Moor's *Death to World Imperialism* (1919), which depicts a monstrous green dragon representing the dangers faced by the young Soviet state during the Civil War that broke out immediately following the 1917 Russian Revolution;
- A 1920 poster of a worker holding a banner for the May Day celebration, a design first produced in stencil for dissemination to local artists;
- Grigorii Shegal's *Down with Kitchen Slavery* (1929), illustrating the Soviet state's promise to liberate women from domestic tasks so that they could participate as workers and citizens on an equal basis to men;
- *Working Men and Women—Everyone to the Election of Soviets* (1930) by Gustav Klutsis, pioneer of the photomontage technique, which combines photographic images, text, and graphic elements into a single cohesive message; and
- A 1930 photomontage poster by Valentina Kulagina commemorating women's industrial labor for International Working Women's Day.

“These works speak to the paradox of the Soviet Union during its early decades, when utopianism went hand-in-hand with manipulation,” said Jon Mogul, Wolfsonian associate director of curatorial & education. “There is an undeniable sense of excitement, optimism, and experimentation in these images, though they also convey the sanitized and one-sided version of reality that contributed to the consolidation of a brutally repressive dictatorship.”

In conjunction with the exhibition, the focused installation *Red and Black* will feature roughly 20 rare books, periodicals, postcards, and portfolio plates from The Wolfsonian–FIU Library that reveal the contribution of Constructivism to Soviet graphic design. A key movement in the early 20th century, Constructivism applied abstraction and the machine aesthetic to the practical design of everything from architecture to household objects—all in service of the Communist vision of building a new, classless society.

The Wolfsonian has been recognized internationally for the attention it has given to political propaganda, a subject prevalent in both its mission and its collection of modern-age material, 1850–1950. Throughout the museum's 22-year history, dozens of exhibitions and countless programs have investigated how objects and images were shaped into tools of political persuasion in countries across the globe.

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About The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

The Wolfsonian–FIU is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collection comprises approximately 180,000 objects dating from 1850 to 1950—the height of the Industrial Revolution through the aftermath of the Second World War—in a variety of media including furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass, ceramics, and metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, FL. Admission is \$12 for adults; \$8 for seniors, students, and children ages 6–18; and free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, and children under 6. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 10am–6pm; Friday, 10am–9pm; Sunday, noon–6pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at wolfsonian.org for further information.

The Wolfsonian receives generous and ongoing support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; and City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council.

About Florida International University

Florida International University is classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as R1: Doctoral Universities - Highest Research Activity and recognized as a Carnegie engaged university. It is a public research university with colleges and schools that offers 196 bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs in fields such as engineering, computer science, international relations, architecture, law and medicine. As one of South Florida's anchor institutions, FIU contributes almost \$9 billion each year to the local economy. FIU is Worlds Ahead in finding solutions to the most challenging problems of our time. FIU emphasizes research as a major component of its mission. FIU has awarded more than 220,000 degrees and enrolls more than 54,000 students in two campuses and three centers including FIU Downtown on Brickell, FIU@I-75, and the Miami Beach Urban Studios. FIU's Medina Aquarius Program houses the Aquarius Reef Base, a unique underwater research facility in the Florida Keys. FIU also supports artistic and cultural engagement through its three museums: Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, The Wolfsonian–FIU, and The Jewish Museum of Florida–FIU. FIU is a member of Conference USA and more than 400 student-athletes participating in 18 sports. For more information about FIU, visit fiu.edu.

About the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the United States. Collecting commenced over 200 years ago with a major gift from the College's founder James Bowdoin III and his family that included Gilbert Stuart's magnificent portraits of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The Museum is housed in the landmark Walker Art Building, designed in 1894 by Charles Follen McKim. Located on the historic quadrangle of Bowdoin College, the building is graced by murals by John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Elihu Vedder, and Abbott Thayer. A \$20.8-million renovation and expansion in 2007 provided a stunning setting for objects as diverse as monumental Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud, Iraq; European old master paintings; and works by American modernists. The Museum is the centerpiece of Bowdoin's vibrant arts and culture community and offers a wealth of academic and educational programs. The Museum is also a prominent summer venue for major exhibitions such as *Edward Hopper's Maine* (2011); *William Wegman: Hello Nature* (2012); *Maurice Prendergast: By the Sea* (2013); *Richard Tuttle: A Print Retrospective* (2014); *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860 – 1960* (2015); and *This Is a Portrait If I Say So: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today* (2016), and *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (2017).

Fully accessible, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art is open to the public free of charge from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday; 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.