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Moscow World Fine Art Fair

Overview | International dealers in Moscow

A showcase of contemporary art

The Moscow World Fine Art Fair, returning to the heart of Moscow May 22-29 for its third year, will see over half a billion dollars worth of art on display as dealers gather from all over the world to showcase their prized pieces.

In recent years, Russian art collectors have made headlines abroad, buying Russian art at record rates at auctions in New York and London. Moscow, in turn, is a city that has more billionaires than any other city in the world, except for New York, and the time has come for Russian collectors to start buying art in Russia.

This year's fair will again be held in the grand 19th-century Man ge building, close to the historic Kremlin walls. Sistine Crutchfield, the general manager of the event, says, "We want to keep the venue, as it is one of the best in the world." The Man ge drew some 55,000 people to the fair in 2005, almost double the number of visitors in its opening year, and organizers hope to attract even more attendees in 2006.

The Moscow World Fine Art Fair is organized by Art Culture Studio, a Swiss-based company. The foundation's head, Yves Bouvier, also owns an art-moving company, Natural Le Coultre, which is well-experienced in transporting hundreds of millions of dollars worth of art.

Over 80 exhibitors from 13 countries will display a vast array of art, ranging from ancient Scythian art to 17th- and 18th-century

furniture and contemporary art. Tanya Rappo, vice president of Art Culture Studio, says, "The fair is on its way to becoming one of the best in the world." Crutchfield agrees, adding: "I was told that we had all the most important people and all the important collectors last year." Old Master paintings, Asian art, and maps and manuscripts will also be on display.

Although many of last year's dealers are returning, this year's event focuses more on Russian galleries, particularly on contemporary art galleries that have not been featured very frequently before. Among the biggest names at the fair are Stella Art Gallery, the first gallery in Moscow dedicated to Western contemporary art with a devoted space for Russian contemporary artists, and Marat Guelman Gallery, one of the most famous Russian contemporary galleries.

The Swiss artist Patrick Mimran will stretch the physical confines of the fair as his series of playful posters, with slogans such as "Explanation Kills Art," and video installations are displayed throughout Moscow.

Diamonds to dazzle

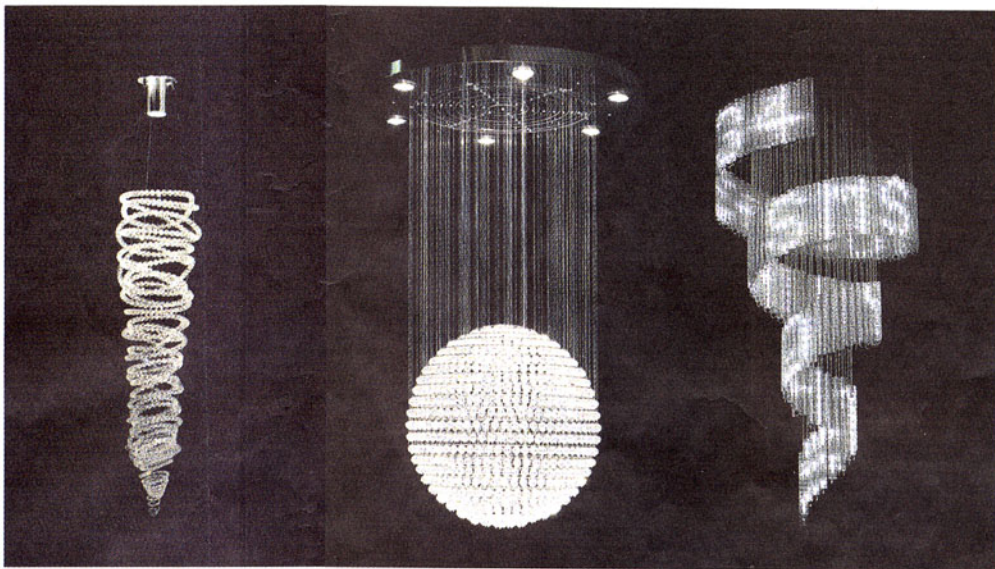
Last year's fair was a success for jewelers, and double the amount of jewelers will take part in this year's event to present an array of precious gems, with diamonds being a key focus among the jewel exhibitors.

"They're all coming back," says Crutchfield, noting that the jeweler Van Cleef and Arpels said it sold one piece worth an amount that will pay for its taking part in the fair for the next three years.

"It is a new market," says Marwan Chatila of Chatila jewelers, who will take part in the fair for the first time this year, "and there is an economic boom and a new class of clients who are willing to spend." Chatila will offer, among other pieces, a diamond and platinum necklace, adding that "diamonds are quite popular in Russia."

Chanel is another new dealer at the fair, bringing copies of its original jewelry collection designed by Coco Chanel as well as its dazzling platinum and diamond Comete necklace.

Also decorated to dazzle, the Man ge's ceilings will be adorned with chandeliers from the Swarovski Crystal Palace collection, including Michael Gabellini's Hoyer, which has 5,000 strands of crystal. ■



"Tulsa" (left) by Michael Anastasiades, "Mini Ball" (center) by Tom Dixon and "Lolita" (right) by Ron Arad are part of the Swarovski Crystal Palace collection, which will be exhibited in the Manège.

Q&A | Art Culture Studio

Celebrating Swiss-Russian relations through art

Tanya Rappo, vice president of Art Culture Studio, which is the main organizer of the Moscow World Fine Art Fair, talks about the event.

What is new at this year's fair?

This year, we will celebrate cultural and economic relations between Switzerland and Russia as part of the Swiss-Russian Year. There will be a few hundred events organized to celebrate the year, and the art fair is one of the most important events on the program. This is why we have decided to show more Russian galleries. We also have a much stronger presence from jewelers, and we have also decided to put an accent on contemporary art.

What will be popular at the fair?

The Russian public is very interested, as we know that a large part, nearly half, of the important sales in auctions [around the world] are Russian. The Russian clientele is always present, and there is enormous potential. They try to buy the best. They are very cultured, an extremely erudite clientele. We notice that the first thing they are interested in is Russian painters. There is practically nothing left in the market as all was bought a long time ago. Another aspect is 20th-century European art. There is a strong love for Impressionists. In furniture, there is not much interest in the 18th century but much more for Art Deco. There is also interest in contemporary art, but it is very new.

Will the works be on sale?

During the fair we do not sell, but at the end, if they like it, they can reserve it.

Who attends the fair, and how will it develop in the future?

It is a meeting place where people linked with art can get in contact. We have a lot of visitors – thousands of art dealers from all over the world. Our ambition is not to be a pure Moscow salon. Collectors go to the big art fairs, like Basel and Maastricht, and it's the same clientele who come here. It will be a place that no one can ignore. Then our ambition is to bring clientele from the Far East. ■



A very rare gilt and chiseled clock entitled "Périclès et Anaxagore" (circa 1803-1809) by François-Almé Damerat and Étienne-Louis Forestier.



MICHAEL ANASTASIADES ARTS CENTER