


Editorial

 This 2012 issue of the Journal of InCoRM is devoted to collections of modern art in Russia at the confluence of the October Revolution of 1917.

The great private collections of Parisian Impressionism to Cubism, created by Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin, were nationalised in 1918 and became public museums, while the Russian Avant-Garde artists began to gain their place in Russian museums from 1919. This was thanks to early Bolshevik policy initiated and supported by Anatoli Lunacharsky, head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Narodnyi kommissariat prosveshcheniya*, Narkompros), which had replaced the imperial Ministry of Culture. Within Narkompros was created the Department of Fine (or Plastic) Arts (*Otdel izobrazitelnykh iskusstv*), abbreviated to IZO, to which the painter, David Shterenberg, was appointed the Director in 1918. Its activities were concerned with the reorganisation of the arts, notably the art schools and the museums, and the creation of new museums of modern trends called the Museums of Artistic Culture, or M. A. C.. The administrative centre was the Museum Bureau in Moscow and it incorporated the Purchasing Committee. Vasily Kandinsky was appointed Director of both in 1919, seconded by Aleksandr Rodchenko, while artists were members of the Board and the Committee.

Although over 3,000 works were acquired by the Museum Bureau to be allocated to over 30 museums between 1919 and 1922, when the budget was cut, then slashed altogether in 1924, by the end of the 1920s the works in the museum collections were falling under the scrutiny of early Stalinist policy decreeing that art should be the instrument of propaganda for the regime and the works "understandable to the masses".

The articles in this issue trace the rise and fall not only of the Avant-Garde but how French modernism also fell victim to government orders that art must depict the peasant and the proletariat and protect Russian minds from "bourgeois" and "capitalist values". From French Impressionism to Russian Avant-Garde, modern trends were purged and disappeared from museum walls between the early 1930s and the fall of the Soviet regime in 1991.

The unifying theme of this issue of the *Journal of InCoRM* is complemented by contemporary documents, 1919-1921, that are published on InCoRM's website, www.incorm.org/museum. They are by the artists who were the creators of the M. A. C. and present the aims and objectives of a new view of the museum, its educational purpose, hangings and activities. The M. A. C. exhibited truly modern trends in a truly modern museum.

The Editor