

Report on the Factual Activities of the Museum Bureau



The administrative functions for the Museum of Artistic Culture were carried out by the Museum Bureau. Its first Director was Vasily Kandinsky, with A. Rodchenko as Deputy Director; he became Director when Kandinsky resigned in October 1920. The Purchasing Committee was part of the Museum Bureau and its members included the avant-garde artists. The criteria for selection were qualities of “artistic invention”, and purchased works became part of the Art Fund from which groups were allocated to over 30 museums across Russia. Purchasing would continue until 1922.

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The Museum Bureau was organised in 1918. In the first months of its existence, its activity consisted of developing theoretical questions of museum creation and acquisition through materials purchased for the organisation of museums. Then it undertook the organisation of an experimental Museum of Painterly Culture in Moscow, which at present is located at 14, Volkhonka St., apt. 10.

Regional museums began to be organised beginning in August 1919.

Organisational principles: to present as fully as possible the stages of development in artistic form, beginning with Realism up to the latest achievements in art, without overburdening the museum by repeating artists and individual stages in an artist’s work.

Furthermore, local conditions were taken into consideration, i.e., the presence of State [Art] Studios [SVOMAS] and the significance of a given place, and likewise, independent initiatives from the cities.

During the 1919-20 period, the Museum Bureau organised thirty museums in the following towns: Yelets, Vitebsk, Samara, Astrakhan, Slobodskoe, Penza, Simbirsk, Petrograd, Smolensk, Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Kazan, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Shuia, Ekaterinburg, Kosmodemiansk, Moscow, Lugarsk, Bakhmut, Kostroma, Tula, Ufa, Kishnyn, Tsaritsyn, Barnaul, Tobolsk, and Perm.

A total of 1,211 works have been distributed to the above-mentioned museums in the following types of art:

Painting – 952.

Sculpture and spatial forms – 29.

Prints and drawings – 230.

The average number of works per newly organised museum is

between thirty and forty-five, not including drawings.

At the present time the Museum Bureau has sixteen requests from cities to organise museums, of which six are feasible.

Between 1918 and 1920 the acquisition staff of the Museum Bureau acquired 1,907 works, which break down into the following types of art:

Painting – 1,315.

Sculptures and spatial forms – 65.

Drawings – 305.

Prints – 122.

The indicated works were acquired from 384 painters and printmakers, and twenty-nine sculptors.

The paintings acquired represent the following art movements:

rightist – 210 artists,

centrist – 236 artists, and

leftist – twenty-five artists.

Sculptors:

rightist – ten artists,

centrists – twelve artists, and

leftist – seven artists.

29 November 1920. [Signed] Rodchenko

From, Aleksandr Rodchenko. *Experiments for the Future. Diaries, Essays, Letters, and Other Writings*. Alexander N. Lavretiev, Editor. Jamey Gambrell, translator. John E. Bowl, Introduction. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005, 117-118. (Russian edition, Moscow: 1996.)

For list of artists see Museum of Artistic Culture, Documents, www.incoorm.org/museum.