

Editorial

 Being a fairly new organisation and so that the aims, objectives, purposes, obligations, and responsibilities of the International Chamber of Russian Modernism, InCoRM, are known and understood, it was decided to open this second issue of the *Journal of InCoRM* by publishing the General Statutes of InCoRM and the Code of Good Practice of the Expert Members of InCoRM. These have been unanimously approved by all the Expert Members of InCoRM as of the date of publication.

The Statutes and Code of Good Practice are also found on the InCoRM website: [www.incorm.eu / About InCoRM](http://www.incorm.eu/AboutInCoRM).

Otherwise, this issue has two main themes.

The first reveals how Russian Avant-Garde art disappeared from around 1930, and how it reappeared from around 1990.

The second reveals something of the new non-invasive technologies and how scientists work with them. This is complemented by how their findings are supporting the work of art historians.

In the first theme, what is poignant is the oblivion that Russian Avant-Garde art suffered from around 1930, both in Russia and in the West. In Russia it was due to the political regime which made this art illegal by decree, while in the West it was due to a combined lack of works and lack of interest. This art was plunged into darkness – in Russia in museum reserves, vaults, behind cupboards or at the back of junk shops, and in the West in the want of publications and exhibitions.

With the fall of the Soviet regime in 1991, museum reserves and state vaults were opened, and underground collectors gave interviews and published their treasures. This was the time of the gigantic exhibition of over 700 works seen in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, and New York – *The Great Utopia*.

Art historians were no less ecstatic. Archives were being made available to researchers for the first time. With the rediscovery of so many works, a broader, more in-depth understanding of the enormous creativity of the first quarter of the 20th century was going to be written.

Among the rediscovered works were those unrecorded collections that had been stored for over sixty years in the State Depository of Modern Art, of which Vinogradov, mentioned in the interview with Valeri Dudakov, held the keys. The mystery of clandestine collecting in Russia is revealed. Art simply changed hands without recorded trace, showing why there can be no “provenance” for works the state had made illegal or which came from junk shops.

Some of these works were finding their way to the West in the 1970s and 1980s and this was the beginning of a few private Western collections. Two of them became public museums: the Ludwig Museum in Cologne and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection in Madrid. It was a time when recorded provenance originated with the gallery of sale and relied on its reputation.

The other side of the coin is found in the second theme: in the work of scientists today. For them, provenance is not only not a problem, it is also irrelevant. For the age, quality, condition, and viability of a painting can be determined by a range of highly sophisticated digital technologies. These are explained generally, and then specifically in the analysis of the pigments found in a painting by Liubov Popova. Now the art historians have cause to be ecstatic in a new situation, that of exchanges with scientists.

This interdisciplinary interaction is revitalising art history and is leading to the authentication of paintings. Russian Avant-Garde art, like German and East European artistic currents, are gaining from this. For both Stalinism and Nazism made modern art the victims of theft, requisitioning, and repression and this, in turn, destroyed the trails of ownership and so also the piece of paper guaranteeing a “provenance”. Thankfully there are now new means to take its place.

As Max Friedländer, the famous German art historian wrote, “It is indeed an error to collect a forgery but it is a sin to stamp a genuine piece with the seal of falsehood”. That no longer needs to happen when we have the active collaboration between good scientific research and responsible art history.

The Editors