

Editorial

 In its commitment to publishing research and to making its website a source of historical information on Russian Modernism, InCoRM is realising its founding Mission Statement to further knowledge of, to defend and to protect, Russian artists, their works and their legacy.

In the spring and summer of 2011, InCoRM was put to the challenge to protect an artist and her legacy in a most unexpected way. From an otherwise respected Moscow museum, the Tretyakov Gallery, its director and curators became the main spokespersons for a Russian collector and several art dealers in attacks on the art of Natalia Goncharova and on the publications of two Western art historians about the artist. (See “Goncharova – Catalogue and Book Reviews” herein.) Now InCoRM was obliged to protect not only the art of Goncharova but also the art historians publishing on her.

The Tretyakov Gallery staff and the group around them did not contact either of the Western researchers to propose a scholarly debate but attacked them outright in a Moscow press conference in late April and in on-line art market publications in May, June and July. Based only on looking at pictures in the books, their accusations claimed that “60-70% of the works reproduced are fakes”, their unsubstantiated assertions founded neither on first hand knowledge of the works nor on their documentation. By the end of June the percentage of the said “fakes” had dropped to 10% but, again, the accusers had still not seen the accused works, were still unaware of accompanying documents, and still had not approached either of the Western art historians in the spirit of debate and scholarship. The Tretyakov Gallery and their circle simply attacked.

The reaction of InCoRM was a Press Statement, “Art Historians Viciously Attacked”, published on its website, FORUM, on 3 May 2011. Following a second wave of attacks its second Press Statement, “A Question of Values”, was published on 12 June 2011. Announcement of these Press Statements was made to all the members of InCoRM by email and to the first one about 20 members responded to the President requesting that an extraordinary meeting of InCoRM be held as a matter of urgency. This meeting took place in Paris on 5 May and about 10 members were able to attend.

Discussed were the many aspects and implications of these unprecedented events that astonished the art world. A letter of support was sent to the authors of the Goncharova books, and the idea of extending an invitation to Tretyakov Gallery curators for a scholarly dialogue on the art of Natalia Goncharova was mooted for further discussion. The role of InCoRM’s FORUM was said to be extremely important as a means of direct communication on an on-going basis, and to this effect a few reactions to the Moscow situation have been posted. The only responses to InCoRM from the circle of the Tretyakov Gallery have been oblique and from third parties involved in the art market who, it would appear, instigated and powered this whole affair. At the very least, their remarks, which also claim to speak for the Tretyakov Gallery, reveal that notice was taken of InCoRM’s Press Statements.

- The aim of InCoRM is to bring together not only art historians of Russian Modernism and scientists who specialise in this domain, but also collectors, museums and gallerists who have significant interests and collections in the art historical trends belonging to it. It is therefore with great pleasure that InCoRM welcomes three museums who have joined InCoRM – the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. Articles about their collections will be forthcoming in the *Journal of InCoRM*.
- InCoRM now has over 50 members, about 20 being Experts and over 30 being Associate Members. InCoRM also welcomes students of art history and those in scientific training who are especially interested in Russian Modernism.

The Editors