Wallach Art Gallery Exhibition Traces History of Russian Documentary Photography

Moscow has been a powerful magnet for many Russian photographers of the 20th century. "Moscow: City, Spectacle, Capital of Photography," an exhibition on display in the Wallach Art Gallery through June 21, presents the work of 31 photographers, whose images have defined the visual experience of Moscow from 1920s to the present.

Diverse in form and strategy, the 90 photographs chosen for the exhibition trace the history of Russian documentary photography and offer insight into individual practices. From Aleksandr Rodchenko's constructivist visions and Evgenii Khaltiiev's humanist landscapes to Igor Moskvin's scenes of urban spectacles and alienation in the works of Russia's key 20th-century photographers, Moscow ventures beyond the expected image as a site of famous landmarks, architectural treasures and dramatic landscapes.

Early 20th-century photographers Boris Ignatovich and Arkadi Shashkov saw themselves in the vanguard of an emerging mass-media culture, defining photography as a camera across the visual experience of Soviet modernity. For nearly 70 years, Soviet photographers were assigned the duty of maintaining the ideological rigidity of the Soviet State. Yet, as examples of the work of Lakov Kahlip, Anatolii Egorov, Mikhail Mark and Mark Markov-Grinberg show, Soviet photographic practices were much more complex than has been previously acknowledged. The works of these photographers remain intensely compelling to the modern eye.

Contemporary Russian photographers, such as Lev Melikhov, Valerii Stigneev and Sergei Leoniev, engage the legacy of the Soviet documentary photography. But for them the documentary is a complex and multivalent genre, which incorporates subjectivity, ambiguity and reflexivity, commenting on social and cultural issues without losing sight of the position from which that comment is made. In the recent photographs by Vladimir Kupriyanov, Igor Moiduashvili, Anna Gorunova and Pakito Infante, the "real" space of Moscow is replaced by an imaginary and optical space of virtuality.

The works in the exhibition are on loan from Moscow's Cultural Center Dom and many are being shown outside Russia for the first time. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Wallach Art Gallery is publishing an illustrated catalogue with a scholarly essay by the exhibition curator, Nadia Michoustina, a Ph.D. candidate in the University's Department of Slavic Languages. The essay presents a nuanced history of Russian photography of the 20th-century and contributes to an interpretation of extraordinary images.

The Wallach Art Gallery is on the 8th Floor of Schermerhorn Hall. Gallery hours are Wednesdays through Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The exhibition is free and open to the public.

Albany Symphony’s David Miller Receives Ditson Conductor’s Award

By KRISTIN STERLING

David Alan Miller, music director and conductor of the Albany Symphony, has received Columbia’s 2003 Ditson Conductor’s Award for his commitment to the promotion of works by American composers. On April 25 during the Orchestra’s performance at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall.

During his 12-year tenure with the Albany Symphony, Miller has led the Orchestra in more than 27 world premieres—many featuring works by American composers—as well as concerti by other American composers. He has worked as guest conductor with many major U.S. orchestras, including: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Indianapolisp, Los Angeles, Minnesota, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, as well as the New World Symphony and the New York City Ballet.

In his citation, Bollinger praises Miller as a champion and skillful interpreter of contemporary, and especially American, music. Through concerts, educational initiatives and recordings, Miller has enabled the Albany Symphony Orchestra to affirm its reputation as a leading supporter of American symphonic music and one of the nation’s most innovative orchestras.

Prior to his appointment in Albany, Miller was the associate conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for five years, from 1982-1986 when he was music director of the New York Youth Symphony, earning considerable acclaim for his work. A native of Los Angeles, Miller holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master’s degree in orchestral conducting from The Juilliard School. The Ditson Conductor’s Award, the oldest award honoring conductors for their commitment to American music, was established in 1945 by the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia. Past recipients include Leonard Bernstein, Enrike Ormandy, JoAnn Falletta, Michael Tilson Thomas and James DePreist.

Forty Leaders Weigh in on ‘State of Architecture’

The Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation recently brought 40 of the world’s leading architectural designers and theorists together for a conference investigating "The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century." Among the participants were Dean Bernard Tschumi, Elizabeth Diller, Zaha Hadid, Michael Hays, Greg Lynn and Ben van Berkel. Renowned architects Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas offered the keynote lectures.

Gehry and Koolhaas have each received the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the equivalent of a Nobel Prize in architecture. Gehry in 1989 and Koolhaas in 2000. Among the many projects to their credit, each designed a major building in Los Angeles: Gehry the Walt Disney Concert Hall and Koolhaas the Universal Studios headquarters. In their lectures the men discussed several of their projects, both successful and the less successful. Gehry even confessed that for the first few years of his career several of his buildings leaked.

He also outlined the long road to building the Walt Disney Concert Hall, saying it was a "miracle it got built." The original design was to be in stone, which he envisioned would glow with ambient light in the evening. But as the process moved on, the stone was changed to metal. The interior was constructed of wood, because, according to Gehry, wood is psycho-acoustic—people think it sounds better. He also reflected on his projects on University campuses, including Bard College and MIT.

Gehry’s most noted project, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, has been described by Time Magazine as "The Building of the Century." Recent studies have shown that 80 percent of visitors to the city do so to see the museum and this one building is largely responsible for the 50 percent increase in the city’s tourism.

A common theme in both keynote lectures was the role of architecture in bringing people together who may not otherwise associate. This was particularly true of Koolhaas’ designs for Universal Studios headquarters. In order to foster communications, he designed the facility with four towers with specific facilities that promote interaction, provide spaces for research, communication, distribution and privacy.

In describing the process of designing this facility, Koolhaas said architecture is a slow and complex process and "architects are incapable of capturing and morphing the needs that we are supposed to articulate.”

As an example, he offered the client’s interest in a montage of alcohol, music, film and the Internet. With requests like this, thinking and invention are always needed, he said.

Koolhaas also offered details on other recent major commissions in the United States, including the student center for the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and the $156 million Seattle Library.

For Koolhaas architecture encompasses politics, sociology and anthropology. In his work he aims to define new types of relationships, both theoretical and practical, between architecture and the cultural situation.