


Editorial

 It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that InCoRM launches the first issue of the Journal of InCoRM. It will be published triannually – September, January, and May – and will contain articles on Russian art between around 1900 and the 1930s.

The Journal of InCoRM is a scholarly publication whose aim is to make available new research and archival discoveries in all areas of early 20th century Russian art. With its pages on exhibitions and publications, it also provides a catalogue of on-going events and recent scholarship.

One of the newest trends in art history is that of the contributions being made by scientific experts. Due to the increasing sophistication of digital technologies and the number of works being examined, scientists are beginning to compile data bases of artists' palettes and their craft of painting – brushwork, preparation of grounds, and so on. Although still in their early stages, these contributions are opening up new means for the understanding of an artist's creativity, while they are making significant advances in the authentication of works.

This interdisciplinary exchange between art historian and scientist is gaining authority in the arts and in archeology, but it is taking the lead in the study of the Russian Avant-Garde. InCoRM is proud to be at the forefront of this trailblazing.

This pioneering work is especially relevant – and necessary – today. For all readers must be aware that the world of Russian Modernism has been severely shaken over at least the last year or two with stories published in the press about “fakes”.

InCoRM is extremely concerned about these accusations because art historians must have confidence in the works they are studying.

Equally, InCoRM fears that art historians (not to mention the public) are being denied good and authentic works as a result of these accusations, works that would be contributing to a much better knowledge of an artist's creativity. The baby is being thrown out with the bathwater.

It is well known that so many Russian Avant-Garde works are missing – known from contemporary exhibition catalogues or installation photographs, for example. From documentary evidence it has been established that there may be as many as

over 2,000 missing works. These works were in the Museum of Artistic Culture, a network of over 30 museums across Russia founded in 1918, to finally be closed by government decree by 1929. Kandinsky was the first director of the Moscow branch and Malevich was director of the Petrograd/Leningrad branch, 1923-1926, when it was closed.

Some of the collections were purchased, others commissioned from artists in order to create representative hangings of modern art. On the closing of the museums, all these works were stored in the reserves of the respective museums, or in the State Museum Depository. These are the works that have been hidden away, lost in the mists of Soviet history and, due to glasnost, are now no longer considered to be “anti-Soviet” so are being released from the stores.

These and works in various private collections are the legacy of the Russian Avant-Garde. They are beginning to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of Russian painting, an art history that has been very thin due to lack of access to the stored works. Being one of the most important artistic trends in modern art worldwide, not only will a better understanding of an artist's work and of trends in general be possible, but this will lead to discovering the real place of the Russian Avant-Garde on the international stage of early Modernism.

On these works depend good art history and the wider issues of creativity itself. There is still so much that we do not know about Russian Modernism, which only the works, together with archival documents, can tell us.

That is why InCoRM so vigorously encourages the collaboration between art historians and scientists. This way, works can be prevented from going missing again due to misjudgements about them, and trust will be instilled in those that can truly be attributed to the hand of an artist.

Articles by art historians and scientific experts in which this interchange is developed, both separately and together, will feature in the pages of the Journal of InCoRM.

The appearance of the Journal of InCoRM is timely. Its only aim is to be a source and a resource of well-researched and authoritative investigations into Russian Modernism in general, and into the Russian Avant-Garde in particular. This is the only path to confidence in reliable information based on fact, and to credibility in the works of art themselves.

The Editors