

Timur Novikov 13 February – 21 April 2013

The most comprehensive exhibition in the UK to date of work by Timur Novikov (1958 – 2002), this will be an important introduction to the artist, pre-eminent and extremely influential in Russia during the 1980s and 90s. Novikov is best known for his use of fabric whereby he developed a style, at first charming in its formal simplicity with instantly recognisable (almost childlike) motifs, that culminated in manifestations of Neo-Academicism, a movement he led that insisted on a return to classical ideals of beauty. At this time his work became increasingly luxurious and tactile, especially poignant as during his last years Novikov was blind.

Like many progressive artists of his generation in Russia before the break-up of the Soviet Union, Novikov worked underground, first with a collective known as the Fellowship of Experimental Fine Art (1981) and then in his own group, the New Artists, which was more wholeheartedly dedicated to avant garde practice. The New Artists were postmodern in many ways, combining fine art with music, costume design, cinema and performance, associated in particular with the band Kino for which Novikov was a designer.

Coinciding with the Perestroika years, Novikov's fabric pieces at this stage reflect a youthful pop optimism which gained him international recognition: a large scale series of them were exhibited at the World Financial Center in New York in 1997. Flag-like, they convey ecological and anti-war sentiments with subtle humour often derived from his response to the sewing and patterns in the fabric. Two tractors make their way along diagonal stripes, while three kayaks negotiate the rapids of all-over paisley curves. Novikov often makes explicit reference to an horizon, using the line formed by the seam of the two main pieces of cloth as basis, for example, for the sun setting or a city skyline.

In 1989 Novikov invented the 'New Russian Classicism', ushered in by the New Artists who became known as the New Academy of Fine Arts. The group set themselves on a course against popular culture, preferring to follow old masters such as Raphael and da Vinci and searching out classical music and rare books. Dressed as dandies, with frock coats and velvet dresses, their commitment to New Russian Classicism was total and won the support of many foreign artists, including Pierre et Gilles and Brian Eno. The New Academy organised many exhibitions during the 1990s, featuring other St Petersburg artists, yet it was Novikov who shone brightest. The camp morbidity of his work, drawing on the complex and opulent aestheticism of Oscar Wilde, was restrained by the strengths of its composition.

From the late 1990s, with his sight lost due to illness, Novikov continued to develop his philosophy. His interest in art from the Far East, corresponding to the

aestheticism he espoused, is evident in his *Euro-China* series (2002), 13 works which combine embroidered thread and beads with Western old-master reproductions on tasselled satin. Similarly, the *Seven Pictures on Rice Paper* (2002) were drawn in Chinese ink to convey trees, houses and boats against mountainous Chinese landscape. They are the output of an artist at the end of his life yet still at the height of his imaginative powers.

This exhibition is co-curated with the artist's step-daughter Maria Novikova-Savelyeva.

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. Private view Wednesday 13 February 2012, 1-8pm
2. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
3. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon, registered charity no. 528892.
4. For more information, high-res images and to arrange an interview with the curator please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk

Sample images:

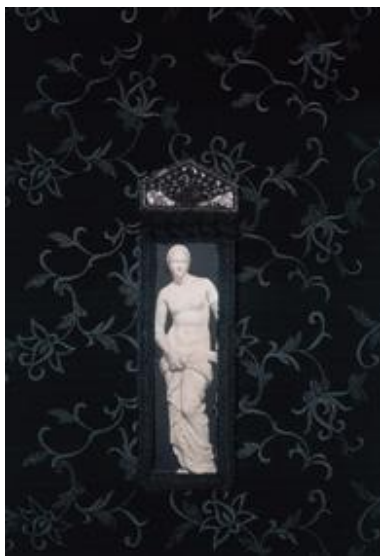
	<p>Timur Novikov <i>Botnichesky Harbour</i> (1989) Acrylic on textile 254 x 194cm Artist's family collection, St.Petersburg</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cont.</p>
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IKON

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Timur Novikov
Genuine Russia (1989)
Acrylic on textile
176 x 106cm
Artist's family collection,
St.Petersburg



Timur Novikov *Venus* (1992)
Photography, lace, beads, velvet,
glitter
132 x 102cm
Artist's family collection, St.
Petersburg