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The State Hermitage Hosts First Ever Roberto Matta Exhibition in Russia



"Roberto Matta and the Fourth Dimension" at the State Hermitage. The works of one of the last Surrealists, Matta was virtually unknown to Russian audiences. This is the first time his works have been shown in Russia.

The exhibition of Roberto Matta's work is part of the State Hermitage's Surrealist Year. Mikhail Piotrovsky, the general director of the State Hermitage, believes that this exhibition also matches other events related to artificial intelligence. "There are many things here: mechanics becoming biology; mysterious corners of the human brain, shaping up into the newest things in art. So the exhibition, great on its own, is also educating us, in intellectual terms and in the right way."

An architect and thinker, Roberto Matta did not consider himself an artist. He would say that he was trying to put thinking into shape. He was close to the ideas of Russian philosopher Pyotr Ouspensky, about the "fourth dimension," where space, movement, and time helped us understand the way the world is changing. The cube represents these reflections.

"Matta had it made with hinges, exhibited as a module that could be folded and unfolded. Now, naturally, it is in a fixed state, we no longer move this piece. For Matta, it was important to show that a work can change in process," said Dmitry Ozerkov, curator of the exhibition.

Matta approached the Surrealists in 1930s, working at Le Corbusier's office in Paris. However, he never fully committed to any trend in painting, experimenting on the edge of art and science. After the start of World War II, Matta moved to the US. There he started to paint in oil. Then he returned to Europe where he resumed his research of human nature, remaining a Humanist.

"There was the trial of the Rosenbergs in the US in 1950s, when they were convicted as Soviet spies and sentenced to death. Society was trying to protect them and asked to pardon them, but then came the new president, who pressed to execute them. This work expresses horror, as the last hope faded away and they were executed," explained Oksana Salamatina, curator of the exhibition.

Art collector Thomas Monahan first saw Matta's works in New York's Museum of Modern Art when he was sixteen, and they became friends for some 25 years. "I was shocked to see how space works in his canvases. By the way, Matta was the first one to put the canvas on the floor and start painting on it. Basically, he was among the founders of the New York Abstract Expressionist school in 1930s–1940s. My mission as his friend and art collector was to show him as a major artist in the world's best museums."

Over time, Matta became interested in monumental art. His huge canvases, called "mindscapes"—which were made with fluorescent paint and portrayed natural organisms as parts of technical devices—thrilled audiences. The two ten-meter canvases in the center were painted in the 1960s. It is *Internal Guerilla*—a guerilla movement against oneself. It's a huge vortex of passion created by one man.