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"First project of such a scale and quality in over three decades"

Dmitry Butkevich on "Roberto Matta and the Fourth Dimension" exhibition.
Dmitry Butkevich of Kommersant-FM speaks about one of the most influential persons in the history of 20th century art.

The General Staff building of the State Hermitage hosts the newly opened exhibition "Roberto Matta and the Fourth Dimension." The artist is described as the last Paris Surrealist, and sometimes as an American Abstract Expressionist. Some argue that his works remind us of the creative legacy of Russian analytical Symbolists, like Filonov, or rather Chelishchev. This was not a coincidence, as Matta was deeply fascinated by the "fourth dimension" theories of Russian theosophist Ouspensky. Matta's huge "mindscapes" have affected the future leaders of the New York school – Pollock, Gorky, and Motherwell.

Roberto Antonio Sebastian Matta Echaurren was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1911. Having spent much time working in Paris, he fled to the US during World War II, but later was banned from entering the US again during the McCarthy years due to his left-wing views. He died in Europe in 2002. He is considered one of the most influential figures of 20th century art, though he has never fully associated himself with any one art movement. As the project co-curator and mastermind Oksana Salamatina puts it: "This is the person who has achieved a major breakthrough in 20th century art. He has dramatically changed the way we perceive painting. All abstract expressionist legacies that we know today is his creation."

This artist's works have never been exhibited in Russia, though there was an exhibition at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts several years ago, which featured some of his illustrations from books. So, basically, the Russian public gets to see Matta's works for the first time. The exhibition includes 91 items belonging to 23 private collections from all over the world, but mostly from the US. Knowing how difficult the cultural exchange between our countries is nowadays, organizing such a project seems like a unique achievement. Oksana Salamatina hopes that the St. Petersburg event can launch a "world tour" for Matta's personal exhibition. This exhibition is very much expected in the US, and, of course, in Moscow, Russia.